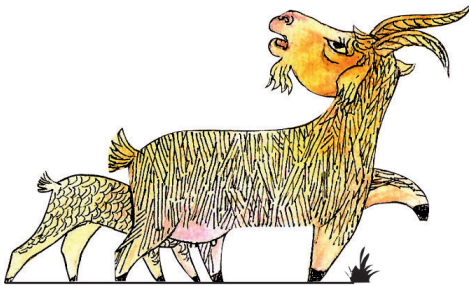


The Goat's tale of Freedom

Gasham Isabayli



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Artists:
Ilgar and Afer
Mehdiyevs,
Parvana Nuriyeva

Editors:
Marta Lawry
Tomris Babanlı

Gasham Isabayli
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STORIES



**"Grandfather, good morning!"
or How Elnur Considered
Midnight to be Morning**



Elnur didn't know how long he had been sleeping, when suddenly he heard Spotty Rooster making a noise. He jumped up from bed. He wanted to wear his shirt but he found out that he was putting on his trousers instead. When he pulled it on, his neck chattered. Now he put the trousers on breathing deeply. Then he found his shirt somewhere under the bed, put it on, buttoned it hastily and ran into grandfather's room:

– I gotcha and you can't get away! – He embraced his grandfather over the blanket. – Hey, man, you have overslept!

But Grandfather was snoring .

– Grandpa, grandpa!?

After a while the man moved:

- Yes, my sweet...
- Good morning, grandpa!
Grandfather was still snoring .
- Good morning, grandpa!
- Wwhatt?
- Good morning, grandpa!
- I cannot guess...
- Man, I say “good morning!”
- Morning, what kind of morning? Maybe you mean to say “good night?”
- You are joking, man, where is the night? It is morning,.
Get up, please, Crowing loudly Spotty Rooster has lost its voice!
- Rooster has lost its voice?
- Yes, yes!
- But my rooster is not crowing!
- Uh – huh, huh... Elnur clapped his hands, may I ask,
please, whose rooster is Spotty?
- Spotty? It is granny’s!
- You are serious, man?
- My rooster is inside me, sonny!
- How can it be inside you, dear man? May your rooster
be stolen by a jackal if it is so! Then show me your rooster,
please.
- It is invisible.
- And it doesn’t crow?
- How can it not crow?
- And it swallowed its tongue?
- But it is not morning yet!
- You think, I’m joking?
- Who says so, my son’s son?
- Then you don’t believe that it is morning already?

– It is because my body tells me, it is not time to get up yet.

– My dear man, just open your eyes and your body will get up immediately.

– But the thing is that my eyes won't open!

– So, open them and they will! Is it so difficult?

– Very difficult, Elnur, very difficult!

– In short, you don't want to get up and so you find somebody guilty!

– I am not guilty! It is the morning that is guilty. It is not morning yet. You remember I told you my rooster hadn't crowed yet? You think I am joking. Sonny, you I should know that everybody has a built-in rooster in himself. My rooster is my body and my eyes. After ninety years my body knows when it is morning and my eyes open at once. I am not on the side of the rooster bought in the market. They cannot make the body get up, the eyes open.

Elnur could murmur only:

– You say it is not yet morning, grandpa!?

– Go and sleep, light of my eyes! Sorry that my eyelashes won't open, then I could look at the stars and tell you the time. Good night, my father's son!

When Elnur said "good night", the grandfather was already snoring. When he was passing through the drawing room into the balcony he stared at the clock and whispered:

– Oh, my! It is only half past two!

The Lesson of “Hunger”



There were bare walls, a wooden floor, a ragged carpet, a patched blanket and a mattress and there was a little boy nestled down and sleeping as a kitten there. This boy had a bigger name than himself – Elat.[1]¹

– Mother!..

Elat, waking up, felt that he was alone in the room. He got up calmly, dressed, stepped into the corridor. His mother crossing her arms, stood near the window.

– Good morning, mother...

– Let Allah[2]² make your morning good, I beseech you!

¹[1] Elat – a nation

²[2] Allah – the God

The mother, embracing Elat, kissed him:

– How are you, my dear?!

– I'm dying...

– Let who don't love you die, my boy, what is up?

– I'm dying of gripes in my stomach.

– Take it easy, I'll give you some mint and it will be all right soon.

– Have we got tea?

– Yesterday's...

– Let it be!

– It's as cold as ice...

– Make it hot...

– Our gas-bag is empty and we have no electricity. Your father'll borrow some money from the neighbour and pay for them. When you return from school, you'll have hot tea, may it be the Allah's will!

– Have we got sugar?

– I've wrapped a balloon of water into the bed-sheet to keep it warm. Pour it into the glass; don't drink it hastily, you'll have a sore throat, drink sip by sip.

– Mother, why did we come here? Our village was nice. We had a warm house, enough bread to eat, cattle, light ... gas ... water. Here you must pay for everything. And we haven't got money!

– Could we live there? They wanted to kill us, far off from you, far off, they would have given our bodies to wild animals. Thank Allah that we could come here safe and sound.

– It would be better to die there than living here, Mother!

– Don't say such words, may I be sacrificed for you, Allah may punish us! Don't you remember how many of us lived in our yard there?! Where is your grandfather, your uncles and your grandmother? We don't even know where

they were buried! And your elder brother Sakhavat?
The mother wiped her eyes with a hem of her skirt:
– You have wounded my heart, my martyr son!
The mother began crying...

* * *

Elat put his textbooks and copybooks into the cellophane bag and threw it on his back.

– May I be sacrificed for you, don't go on foot, Father left some money, take a bus.

– I don't want to!

– The school is far, you'll feel sick, take the money.

– Did I go to school by bus in the country, mother? Give the money back to Father. Let him not go on foot. Who else is earning money, except him at home?

– May Allah help you!

His mother watched him till he disappeared: “We cannot even buy him a backpack!”

* * *

Elat went to school without eating anything that day. When his stomach was making a noise he coughed sharply not to give out his secret. But by his coughing he made unheard his stomach noise only for himself. The children hearing this noise laughed and he was ashamed. Some children put out feelers:

– A frog, rog, rog!

Entering the classroom, the teacher began the lesson:

– Today's theme of our lesson is “Hunger”.

The children first looked at each other and then at the teacher:

– Hunger?

– Yes.

The children uttered in chorus:

– Mmm...

– Who can speak of hunger?

The children shrugged their shoulders. From the back row a lean hand rose like a spike.

– May I speak, teacher?!

– Elat? Yes, please.

– If the mother taking an earthenware goes to ask for flour from the neighbor, it is called “Hunger”. The hunger is of three kinds: a weak hunger, a real hunger and a death hunger. When you feel that you want to eat, it is called a weak hunger. When you look for something to eat and don’t find anything and your stomach starts making noise, it is called a real hunger. And the last one is called a death hunger.

– A death hunger?! – the teacher frowned.

– Yes.

– What is it like?! – the pupils asked.

– A continuous stomach ache, noise from stomach, headache, a mist before the eyes, black water flow from the mouth, giddiness and nausea are the signs of a death hunger...

The children goggled:

– We didn’t know about these, teacher!

– I didn’t know of many things, either!

Having escaped from the Khojali bloodshed and living in one of the Baku godforsaken places, the Garabagh refugee’s son, a ten years old Elat, at last, got his first “excellent” mark from the teacher.

Plum



It was getting dark when my mom and dad left the house together.

– Aunty, please, look after the children. – My father said loudly, though he had never been a boisterous man. I understood this gesture of my father as though he wanted to come across as strong to the neighbors... as if we were not starving.

– Wo-o-ow! – My little sister clapped and started to dance, – what a big basket you have taken!

My middle sister grinned:

– Be assured, they will buy everything, even the whole market!

– I do not want anything but a plum. – My little sister smacked her lips.

My brother looked at her seriously:

– Hey, little thing, go and play with your doll!

– I wish they could buy plums!

- Why do you need a plum?
- Children eat plums at school every day.
- My dear, plums haven't ripened yet. If you eat too many plums, you will get a fever! – my grandmother embraced her warmly and caressed her head.
- Granny, but the children in our class don't get fevers!
- Hey, little thing, didn't I tell you to go and play with your doll?!

My parents returned home very late, when there was nobody in the streets. My little sister was sleeping.

– The prices are very high in the market! – my mother was grumbling.

– Could you buy plums? – Granny asked my mother, while looking at my sleeping sister.

– Just a glass of wild ones was left.

– Didn't you buy it?!

– Everything is very expensive in the market, mother!

– But what will you say to this child?!

– Only a glass ...

– Did you buy it?! – Granny was worried.

– We bought it.

– What about potatoes and onions?!

– Of course we have bought those!

– We have bread too... – Granny took a breath calmly

– We could hardly buy two kilograms of meat...

– That doesn't matter. We never bought meat in the village. We used to catch fish, clean it and make a meal. I began to eat meat after moving to the city. And I have high blood pressure all the time here.

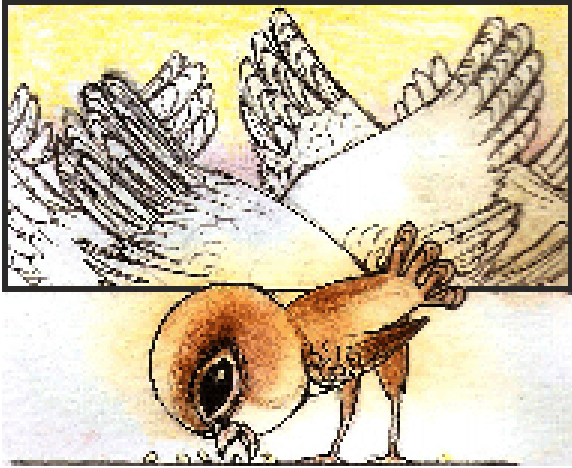
– Oh, mother, it is impossible to explain every detail to children. They always want to eat meat.

– Aunty! – My father turned towards Granny, wiping

his hands, – We should thank God!

– Some days ago I met Islam, our neighbor in the village. You wouldn't believe your eyes if you saw him. He had lost weight; his cheeks were sunken. Poor man! I asked him about his health. He said he was poor and complained of his hard life. – “What can I do? I have a big family. I must feed, clothe and support them. Every day the children wait for bread. The day before yesterday I did not have money even to buy bread. I tried to come home very late, but I couldn't. I wanted the children to sleep and not to see me in such bad shape. I even couldn't stand up straight. But they were all were waiting for me. As soon as I entered the room I saw their eyes staring at me. Then everyone sat in their places and put their heads on their knees... I swear! They cried until the morning...”

Sparrow



*M*y grandfather sleeps facing Gibla¹, but I sleep in the direction of the East. Every morning the Sun reaches its beams through the window and tickles my eyes.

I know very well what the Sun wants to say: “Yes, I know that sleep is sweet, but you must get up. It is time for you to wake up.”

I get angry:

– Why you don’t let me sleep?! – I turn my back to the Sun angrily.

This time she began to stroke my neck. I spoke with a sweet voice:

– Would you like me to get up, dear Sun?

I jumped from the bed quickly. I washed my face, took

¹ *Gibla – the direction Muslims face when they pray*

my book and put my little pillow on my head as I ran to the mulberry tree. I put the pillow on the grass under the mulberry tree, sat and pick up my book. Suddenly a heavy rainfall started and it sounded like a galloping horseman: clop-clop-clop.

The rain flowed down my neck, throat, chest and arms. I took the biggest drops and put them on the tip of my tongue.

At once I remembered the story “Elnur, Ekil and their adventures” and I recited a couplet from it:

Bend the branch, hurry,
Eat sweet mulberries.

The hens and chickens that were rummaging around the yard ran to me excitedly and hungrily.

- Cluck-cluck!
- Crow-crow-crow!
- Chirp-chirp!

Suddenly I imagined myself among wild animals. They grabbed the big mulberries that I dropped in the twinkling of an eye.

I saw that they were hungry, very hungry.

If they were not hens but children, the yard would have been very noisy with their crying at that moment. My grandmother, may God give her long life, is a very strange woman; she feeds them once a day. She hardly has enough to feed the hens. She feeds them... but unwillingly.

My granddad says:

– The one thing I hate in this world is “unwillingness.” As I was married to your granny unwillingly, she gives me meals unwillingly, makes my bed unwillingly, gives grass to the cow unwillingly, and feeds the hens unwillingly because they belong to me. That’s why the chickens do not grow well. So, they cannot put on weight, cannot lay and cannot even be hens properly...

- Granny, don't you hear?
 - What, sonny?
 - Crow-crow-crow!
 - Is it a turtle-dove, frog or turkey? How do I know?
- We have a lot of Cackle-clucks in the yard.
- Do we have turkeys too?
 - Everything is given by God! If God gives, why not?
 - Why don't you mention the hens? Are they harmful to your grain bag?
 - What has happened to the grain bag, sonny?
 - You will kill them.
 - Why has God given them eyes, legs, and beaks?
- Does anyone feed or water the birds that live in the fields or valleys? Why don't they die? They make nests, lay eggs, and hatch little birds. But "ours" only eat and drink, and do nothing...
- God gave that ability to wild birds. They can fly and search food for themselves.
 - God gave them ability, and I gave my hens a large garden; it has so many insects, bugs, and earthworms.

2.

This morning I was just beginning to eat the sweet berries when....

- Cluck-cluck!
- Crow-crow-crow!
- Chirp-chirp!

I threw my book on the grass and stood up. They all understood what I was doing at once. Some flew, some ran...some made it to the roof of the chicken coop before I got there. It was good that my granny did not see me. I took

a lot of yellow grain and scattered it to them; they began fighting and pecking each other ...

Suddenly... my eyes bugged out with surprise:

– Wow..! This is a sparrow! – Flying by, she saw the bird feast, but she didn't notice me. She burst into a feeding rack and pecked at the hens' grain: Wee...tweet...tweet... Chirp!... Chirp!...

As soon as I sat down she landed on my palm:

– Wee...tweet...tweet...

– Silly bird! How much do you want? You won't be able to fly! – I raised a fist over my head. Mo-o-om!...

My brothers Tofig and Abdul suddenly appeared in the yard:

– Give it to us! We want to play with it too!

– Is it a toy?

– But you are playing with it!

– She is playing herself.

– How have you caught her, son? – my mother shouted from the balcony.

– Ask her stomach.

– What do you mean?

– She's a glutton!

– A what?

– A glutton! Do you know the language of birds? I'm staying she's a glutton!

– Why is she a glutton?

– Let me ask her: “Oh, sparrow, my mom is asking why you are such a glutton.”

– Wee...tweet...

– Mom, she says that she is hungry!

– Why is she hungry?

– Oh, sparrow, my mom is asking why you are hungry.
... Oh!... She has lost her voice!

– Let me answer this question, son!

– If you can answer you will get a gold star, mom!

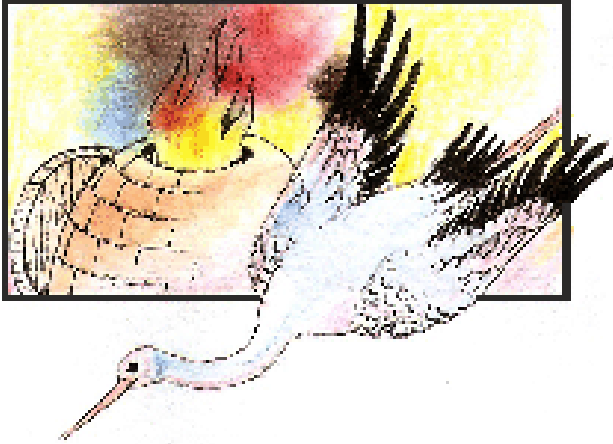
She is hungry because she lays eggs. As a rule she covers her eggs by sitting on them. But you have caught her, and the eggs are uncovered. After a while they will freeze to death. The future sparrows of our village will just be rotten eggs.

Suddenly I felt that my hand had become cold...

My brothers stared at the sky with their open mouths:

– She fle...e...ew a...way!

The Revenge of the Stork



- Son, Inshallah¹ I would like to be a bird, granddad.
- A bird? Why a bird? – my grandfather looked at me in wide-eyed astonishment.
- A migrant bird.
- A migrant bird?
- I will fly around and see the world.
- Suppose you fly and see the world, and then?
- Then I will nest and live in any country that I like.
- Come here – my grandmother called – look, we have guests.

As soon as my grandfather stood up I ran to the yard; my grandmother was looking at the sky with a hand above her eyes as if she was protecting them from the sun.

¹Inshallah - God willing

– Where are the guests, granny?

– Look at the top of your grandfather’s brother over there!

When my grandfather was born his father planted a poplar tree in honor of him.

And my grandfather called it his brother.

– What a joy!... – This was my granddad. – The nestlings have grown up! Welcome! Welcome! Go figure!... and where are your parents? May they rest in peace! Don’t worry! I will take care of you better than them! Thank you for coming back to your native land! Even birds must have their own native land!

– Why do birds need a native land, granddad?

– The stork doesn’t just go live in someone else’s nest like people do.

* * *

The young storks tidied up their nest for several days, carrying all kinds of brushwood. Then the mother stork laid eggs; we even did not know when she did it. One fine day we noticed twittering and chirping at the top of the tree; the mother stork’s nest was crowded; open yellow beaks and small quivering bald heads were seen in the nest. As soon as the parents returned with full beaks, the nestlings opened their mouths from ear to ear, trying to catch the food: chirp-chirp-chirp.

One day something strange happened with the storks. The parent-storks were feeding the nestlings, but two of the nestlings were twittering and trembling under the tree.

– Granddad! Granddad! Look here... Cats and dogs will eat them...

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– Storks are clever birds. As soon as they see that it is impossible to feed their nestlings, they throw some of them out from the nest in order to take care of the others.

– Oh, poor things!

– Oh, darling, we are the citizens of a democratic country, we can not interfere with the internal affairs of the storks; otherwise the United Nations Organization will become angry!

* * *

One evening when we were having dinner, something crashed down in the yard and bright light spread around. We ran out to see. My grandfather's brother, the old poplar tree, had split into two parts and caught on fire! The stork's nest had fallen down from the tree and was squished as flat as a bottlecap in the corner of the yard. The mother stork and her nestlings were lying around the yard in various places opening their mouths. Soon they trembled, and their bodies became motionless.

– My brother was shot with a shell. That means it is my turn now. – My grandfather took the shovel and began to dig a hole; he buried the storks while crying bitterly. My grandmother couldn't calm down:

– Ohhh... This is not a good sign! We must take action!

Our neighbor Arakel, whom I also called grandfather, came in a hurry:

– O, Hasan, what do you think of it now?! Today your brother was shot; tomorrow they will shoot you!

– What do you mean? Should we leave our lands and take to our heels, kirve¹ Poor bird!

– Dear granny, why doesn't he fly away?

¹*Kirve – Godfather. Azerbaijani families have a godfather for their sons.*

– Where can he fly, my dear?
– Back to wherever he came from.
– All his loved ones were here and we killed all of them!

- Why we?
- Aren't we called humans?
- Why doesn't he marry again?
- Is he a human that he should get married?

* * *

– One morning granny fired up the tandir¹ Grann-y-y-y! –
Granny ran outside when she heard my terrible voice.

- Oh, what happened, dear? You are as white as snow!
- Granny, the stork threw himself into the tandir!

– Oh no! Poor stork! – Granny took a bucket and ran to the pond for water. She was able to put out the fire after dumping three or four buckets on it. She picked up the burnt stork with a rake and laid on the grass. The bird opened and closed his mouth only once.

- Granddad also arrived and looked at the dead stork.
- Well done!
 - “Well done?!” For killing himself?
 - No, for his loyalty!

¹*Tandir- clay oven used for baking national bread*

* * *

The war opened its mouth like a dragon; dozens of people became its victims every day. The stork's tragedy was also slowly forgotten. It was a mild winter and we mostly spent our days outdoors, rather than in the house. One evening after dinner, we watched the news on TV and went to bed. Early in the morning, I opened my eyes to the sound of hail.

– Grandda-a-a-a-d?!

– Get up, dear!

– It's pouring so badly! Let me sleep a little bit more!

– Get up, darling, the enemy has come! They are shooting our house!

I was startled. Granny was fussing.

– If only we had left when Arakel left the village, we wouldn't be seeing all this!

– I am going out! Keep your eyes on my hand! – Granddad went out. After moving five steps, he jerked; he stretched his hands forward, stumbled two steps and leaned forward into the poplar tree. He waved with a weak gesture of his hand as if to say “Don't come!” Then he slipped down and fell on his back; his neck bent and his face was pressed into the tree trunk. Granny sighed deeply:

– Ohhh, my heart will explode now!

When I raised my head to the sound of a car, I saw a white Niva coming from the direction of Khankendi city; Granny took my arm and we went outside from the back door.

– But, what about granddad?!

– Darling...– the sounds of rifles didn't let my granny finish her words.

– 24 –

* * *

We walked all night. Our hands, feet and clothes were torn up. Lots of people joined us by morning.

– May God punish all Armenians! They ruined Khojaly too!

– Armenians are just a pretext. The main instigators of this violence are the Russians!

– Why don't you mention our own people? They left us here without support!

– As Mullah Nasraddin¹ Hey man, talk about reality!

Suddenly a firework was seen in the sky; all we could see became as white as milk. Granny took my arm and pulled both of us under the bushes. Then darkness covered everything.

We hardly made it to Aghdam city, the boundary of Highland Karabakh and Lowland Karabakh. We were taken to a school:

– The room with the “Fifth Grade” sign is yours. It will be uncomfortable to stay tonight, but tomorrow they will bring blankets and mattresses.

One day Armenians occupied Aghdam and we left for Baku; we moved into a slum and started to live there.

* * *

Every night I see the poplar tree in my dreams when I go to sleep. I see the mother stork with the ruined nest, perishing with her nestlings in my dreams. I see the father stork who threw himself into the tandir and was burnt alive in my dreams. I see my granddad's face pressed against the

¹*Mulla Nasraddin – oriental anecdote teller*

tree... and our Armenian neighbors crying,

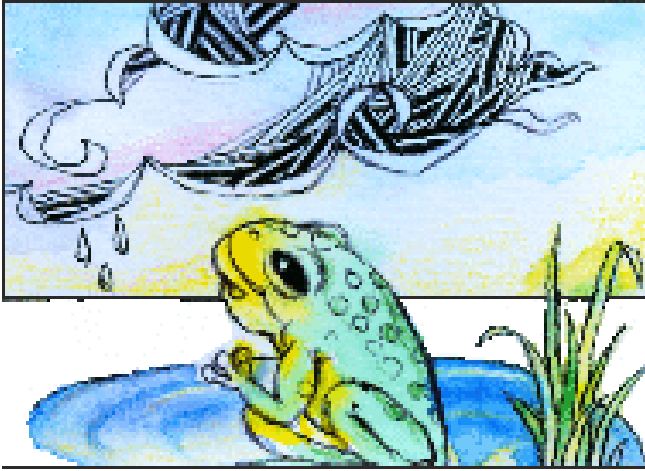
- Oh, Hasan, you should leave this slum!

- Where can I go, dear kirve? The land is like a man's wife ... is it possible to leave your honor?

TALES



The Cloud



*T*he Wind rose and started to pluck out the Sea... The Sea tried to calm down... but couldn't; it suddenly noticed that its breath was evaporating. Fog rose and took a shape of a bear-cub. The Wind drove it out.

The Cloud passed a long way over the blue waters. It became as black as coal when it reached the shore. On the other hand, it became so heavy that it was hard to breathe. When it opened its eyes, it found itself crawling on a boundless land.

– Ahh... Is it a desert? It doesn't have any water, grass, birds or insects... Isn't this poor desert dying of loneliness here?! Maybe...

The Black Cloud crawled till evening:

– The Sea couldn't wear me down, but the Desert has; my eyes are darkening. I will become completely blind if I wander one more day. What if... I rain down?! Why "what if"? The Black Cloud squeezed its eyes shut:

– Plink plonk... plink plonk... plink plonk...

It was turning white as it rained... It was plink plonking till morning...

– Wow... I feel so much better... I want to rain a bit more...

It started to rain slowly.

The seconds, minutes and hours passed... The Cloud suddenly noticed that its back was leaning on the ground and its eyes were looking to the sky.

- Ouch! Have I become a Lake? – The thought started to rattle around in its brain. – I hope my heart will not stop because of solitude! How nice was it when I was walking in the Sky, looking to the Earth and my peers were around me. But now... – It closed its eyes. It was suddenly startled by a sound. – Who are you?

– Who do you want me to be? It's me!

– Who are you?

– Croak...croak!

– Croak...croak? The Frog?

– You are right!

– What brought you here?

– I have come, because...

– Fancy meeting you here!

– Because you felt lonely!

– Thank you, dear Froggie!

– The Fish has also come with me!

– Thank you! I will not be lonely anymore!

The Lake was very tired. It didn't even notice when it

fell asleep. Its ears were filled with the Frog's sound when the morning breeze touched its face:

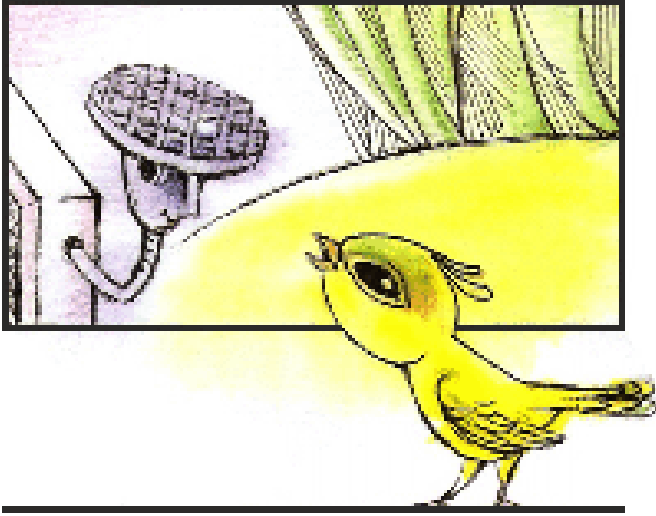
– Croak...croak... croak...

It saw that the birds were standing on its arms. The coasts become green as it licked them, and the bees and insects surrounded it.

Sometimes shadows would falling across its face. They were grey clouds which were in a hurry. The Lake started to toss up its waves:

–Where are you going? Come to me! Heeey... Don't you want to be happy?!

Freedom Tale of the Smart Nail, the Captive Nightingale and the Poor Old Woman



Neither its shoulders, nor its arms and hands were in their place. The only upper limb it had was its head, which was pushing out of its body; it was both round and flat... And another difference was... it wouldn't be right to say "it was missing a leg," because it had only one leg from birth. Although it was not considered disabled, it spent most of its time laying on one side. One day, its rest was also disturbed. It was picked up by the waist; they made it stand on its single foot and knocked its head it had just found rest. It jumped away and hit the ground; the

sound of thump came from beneath the table. It seemed as if the Carpenter had hit his own head; he started to roar like a bear:– Oh, you! – He bent down and crawled under the table. – Where on earth are you?! Look... where has it hidden! Come here! – The Carpenter took the Nail which had jumped from under the hammer in his hand. He came out from under the table hardly breathing and straightened up. – Do you think you can escape by jumping away?! Here you are; clickety-clack...– The Nail bent its head so that it touched its foot. The Carpenter angrily bent two parts of the Nail with the hammer– one to the North and another to the South, like divided Azerbaijan. Then he pulled it down to the ground and knocked its back.– You have given me a lot of trouble, but you are brave; you did not give up! He turned the nail from side to side and held it between his teeth.– I did not even wash you, good riddance!– Clickety-clack... The nail entered the wood up to its middle. – Do you see now? Wait a bit, I will teach you a life lesson: sometimes you need to bend to stay alive nowadays. Just a few minutes ago you were a simple Nail, but now you are a Bolt. You should be thankful for that, as I have made you more useful for people. They will like you more from now on! Do you know what that is called? Benevolence! – The Carpenter put the hammer down, opened a creaking door and went away.

The Nail giggled craftily.

– Ha...Ha...Ha... Look at his benevolence...

The door creaked once again. The Carpenter brought a Nightingale, put it into a cage and closed its door with the Bolt.

– Hey, Mr. Nail, you know very well that I brought you from darkness into light. Do you see that? – He showed him the hammer. – Keep calm! If you misbehave, I will knock

you so that you will bend forever. – Taking the hammer, he left the room.

This time, the Nail started to laugh bitterly.

He heard a sudden voice:– Don't worry!

– Hey, what do you mean “don't worry?” It's not your life!

The Nail started to look around:

– Look at you! Are you another benevolent creation, who has come to teach me?!

–You should be thankful for the life granted you by God!

– Hey... Nerdie...

– I am not a nerd!

– Then why are you trying to philosophize?!

– I just want to do good for you!

– Thanks! Who are you?

– We both share the same name and the same sorrow!

– I don't know anything about our names, but it seems you do not have any sorrow!

– Do you want to see me crying, then?

– It seems you cannot even cry!

– Why?

– What do you do for a living?

– I held a chain in the doghouse!

– For how many years?

– For five...

– Misery loves company!

– You are right!

– You have made a mistake!

– What mistake?!

– Misery is your business!

– Then what about you?!

– People don't call me smart for nothing!
– What do you mean?!
– That is none of your business!
– I do not know what is on your mind, but I know that you will not be able to leave here easily.

– My brothers and I took care of a cradle for six years and three children grew up in our arms. When they learned to walk, they threw us into a storehouse. Humidity and insects damaged the cradle... And we fell down around it like rotten teeth of a horse.

– What did the cradle do to the Humans?!

– You are talking about “Humans”! This word doesn't have a simple meaning! “Human,” who wants to become “God” all the time, does not recognize his past and present. He only looks toward the future! And why?! He does not even know the reason!

– What do you mean?!

– My brothers became rusty and died because of Human negligence and I have become a Bolt!

– Bolt?!

– Yes!

– Don't get irritated!

– For stealing the Nightingale's freedom?!

– Ohhhhh....

– Why are you whining?

– Ohhhhh... Ohhhhh...

– Hey, you... nerd!

– I am not a nerd!

– Are you afraid of the word “Freedom,” as well?!

– Ohhhhh... Ohhhhh... Ohhhhh...

– I am talking to you!

– You aren't letting me sle-e-ep...

– Sweet dreams! – The Nail took a deep breath; its chest swelled and it felt comfortable while exhaling even if its ribs tightened. Then the wood started to squeeze it again. It started to inhale and exhale. And it suddenly shouted. – I have fou-u-u-und it!

The room started echoing:

– I have fou-u-u-und it!

– I have fou-u-u-und it!

– I have fou-u-u-und it!

– I have fou-u-u-und it!

The Nail looked around and smiled:

– Even the walls are applauding me! I cannot free myself if I don't have enough space!

The Nail played this inhale-exhale game nearly all day long. As months passed, the claws of wood lost their strength, the Nail started to feel more comfortable, and it started to train actively as it felt comfortable.

Spring had just come. One morning, the Nail felt coldness in its feet. As it moved slightly, it fell to the ground. The door of the cage opened with a creaking sound. The Nightingale was frightened:

– Oh dear, maybe the Cat is coming to eat me?! – It looked around. – Oh! – It jumped, left the cage, flew around the room and sat on the steel frame of the window:

– Wonderful! What fresh air is coming from outside!

The Nail responded cheerily:

– Happy freedom day!

– Happy freedom day to you, dear Nail!

The Nail was embarrassed:

– Whaaaat?

– That's your freedom!

The Nail was at a loss:

– M-m-my freedom?

The Nightingale had flown away.

In early afternoon, when the Sun started to burn, the Nail heard a Raven's croak. A shadow came over the window before the croak stopped.

– Na-a-a-il?!

– Who is calling there?

– Even if we don't have the same name, we both share the same color!

– I don't recognize you!

– It's me, Black Raven!

– What brought you here?!

– I have come because of the Nightingale's request. – It entered the room unexpectedly. – It promised me it would sing at my son's wedding party! The Raven sat on the ground, looking around, and then it grabbed the Nail by the waist and flew up to the windowsill. First it stuck the Nail outside, and afterwards, it left the room itself.

– Oh! Ah! Don't let the Raven fly away! – The housewife ran at the Raven with a broomstick in her hand. The Raven flew away and went up. – That awful creature has stolen something!

The Raven made a loop in the sky and dropped down to a tree near the doorstep of a country house. An Old Woman sweeping the garden raised her head.

– Rav-e-e-n! I swear by your wings that I cannot make you happy today. I have neither a hen to give you its egg, nor a chicken to give us a hen!

– Caaaw... Caaaw... – The Raven jumped to the ground from the tree and stepped toward the Old Woman.

– I swear by your life, this isn't a broomstick, but a real

rifle in my hand! Don't come any closer! Otherwise I will shoot your head!

– Caaaw... Caaaw...– The Raven put the Nail on the ground and jumped away.

– Oh, what a good Raven you are! – The Old Woman took the Nail from the ground, wiped the dust off of it and hugged it to her chest. – Now I will have a place to hang my clothes! – She found a stone and entered her hut. She straightened the bent waist of the Nail and struck it into the wall; then took her clothes and hung them from the Nail. Staring at her new hanger happily, she went out to the garden. The raven was still sitting in the tree and staring at the Old Woman.

– Oh, I have almost forgotten! – The Old Woman again entered the house, but this time she came out with her hands full: – Eat it! This time you deserve it! – She scattered some barley in front of the Raven.

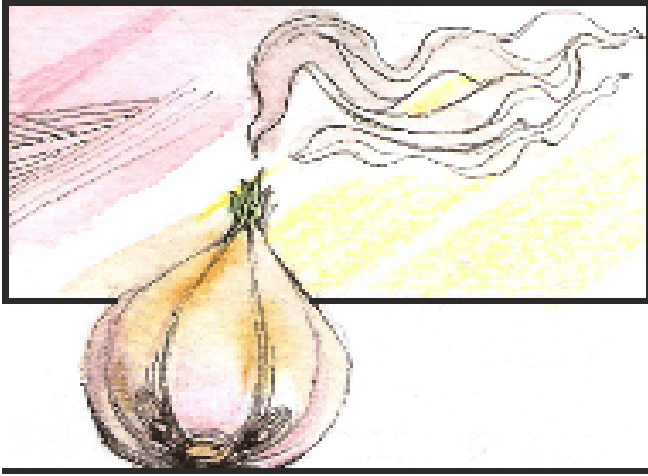
– Caaaw... Caaaw... – The Raven filled his mouth with barley and flew away.

The Nail was happy:

– How farsighted was such a small Nightingale!

Suddenly the sounds of warbling came from a pear tree in front of the hut; the Nightingale was singing a song of freedom.

How the Garlic Banished its Odour



1. Mother, Sham-Sham, Garlic and Odour...

Sham-Sham threw down his backpack and ran to his Mother when he entered the house. He jumped and kissed Mother's cheeks:

– How nice that I have you in my life, dear Mommy, otherwise I would have blushed with embarrassment today!

Mother looked at Sham-Sham in surprise.

– Ramiz's stomach started to rumble when the lesson started. And we started to giggle ... Teacher got angry: "Stop giggling!" Then such a sound came from Ramiz's stomach that even the teacher laughed. "Darling, why do you come to school hungry?" Poor Ramiz became as red

as a radish. How good that you give me breakfast every morning, Mommy!

– Don't you say that I force you to eat?

– Don't embarrass me, Mommy! – Sham-Sham lowered his head, pawed the floor with his toe and looked at mother craftily.

– Eat up, you shy boy!

– Ha...ha...ha... Thank you!

– Dear Sham!

– Yes, dear Mommy!

– You are Mommy's dear!

Sham-Sham paired his feet and put his hand on his forehead like a soldier saluting.

– Azerbaijani soldier Sham-Sham is ready to serve you, Mister Commander!

– Wow, what a way to say thank you, dear Sham-Sham!

– Would you like me to turn into a genie for you?

– Don't be a genie, but be as nimble as one!

– You can try me!

Mother grinned.

– Do you have any doubt?

– Then go to the pantry and bring some onions and potatoes, mommy's dear!

– You just spoiled everything, Mommy!

– Why?

– Going to the pantry is one of the few things that I hate in this life!

– Inshallah¹, I will never send you to the pantry after the birth of your little brother!

– You're so funny, mommy!

¹ Inshallah – if God wills it

A little while later, Sham-Sham's voice was heard from the pantry:

– My dear potato, let's go!

My dear onion, let's go!

Let me call one of you "groom,"

Let me call one of you "bride," let's go...

Sham-Sham was suddenly startled:

– Whose voice is that? Maybe a thief?

Sounds of busy whisperings came from the storage. The whispers suddenly stopped when Sham-Sham stopped talking. He put the onions and potatoes into a colander and left the pantry.

– They haven't taken me this time, again! – Garlic started to talk angrily.

– Why are you so impatient? One day they will take you too. – Garlic's Odour replied calmly.

– When?

– Everything has its time!

– Oh, how nice, why don't the potato and onion have their time then? People come to take them several times a day! But Garlic always has to wait!..

– ...

– Why have you lost your voice?

– Oh, I don't know!

– Of course you don't!

– Why do you say that?

– Because it is all your fault!

– M-i-i-i-ne? Why mine?

– Don't you know why?

– Where should I know?

– Because you are bitter and you have a very awful odour!

- What can I do, if God created me like this?
- Why has God created you like Odour, not Perfume?
- That’s none of your business!
- That’s my business, because I don’t agree with this act of God! Do you get it?
- Hey, Garlic, try to be smart!
- Don’t teach me!
- “Me” is not just “me”! – Odour shouted. – “Me” is also “You.”
- How does that work?
- It doesn’t have any explanation! If I were not “Odour,” then you wouldn’t be “Garlic”!
- I don’t want to accept that!
- That’s not something you can change! The Creator created us like this!
- Was it really necessary to create me with you?
- It’s up to you! Think of it however you want to!
- Why hasn’t He given me the smell of a rose?
- Dear Garlic, together we can heal lots of diseases!

Why are you so ungrateful?

- That ability means nothing, if people only remember us once a year!
- But they remember us, anyway!
- Do you know what?
- Of course not!
- I am fed up with you! Do you understand me?
- Fed up with me?
- Yes!
- Is that something new?
- New or old, doesn’t matter! Go and find a new place for yourself!

– You cannot live without me!

– Why can't I?

– You would become wormy!

The Sun set, and Garlic and Odour's conversation ended.

2. "Mommy, I couldn't find it!..."

The next day, in the evening, Sham-Sham went to the pantry again:

– Dear Garlic, where are you?

I have come to take you, let's go!

My Mommy has cooked noodle soup.

Come and make it tasty, let's go!

Sham-Sham started to smell the air, ran to the wall, looked under the shelves, and felt inside the onion sack because the pantry was half-dark. He couldn't find Garlic anywhere, so he ran and left the pantry:

– Hey, Mommy!

Mother turned her head to Sham-Sham.

– I couldn't find it!

– What couldn't you find, dear?

– Do you remember why have you sent me to the pantry?

– Couldn't find Garlic?

– If I have come without it, it means I couldn't find it!

3. "Eat, Orphan..."

Garlic was so mean to Odour that it left. After Odour had gone, Garlic started to feel emptiness in its body. Its head became too heavy for its shoulders and it couldn't

open its eyes; it was always sleepy. After a week, small black dots appeared on Garlic's body. One day, those spots shook, trembled and started to move. After a while, they turned into worms and covered Garlic's body, saying:

“Eat, Orphan, eat all you can,
Eat slowly, don't burst your belly!”

For two weeks, Odour had been going around knocking on doors; wherever it went, everyone banished it. As it couldn't find a shelter anywhere, it sat and thought. It remembered the past and its eyes filled with tears:

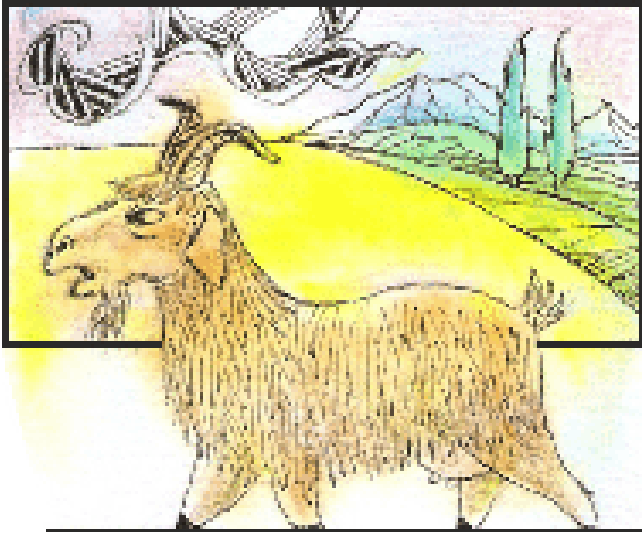
– How I miss Garlic! The world is cruel; no one knows what will happen tomorrow! Let me go and see what has happened to Garlic!

Odour looked everywhere in the pantry. Finally, it saw Garlic's clothes near a box.

– Oh N-o-o-o-o! – It hugged the clothes and wept. – Why did I listen to you and go away, why? It was you who lost your mind, but what was I thinking?

The rays of the setting Sun lightened a dark corner of the pantry; a small, yellow part of the Garlic still remained under its clothes.

The Goat's tale of Freedom



1.

The She – goat shook her head so angrily that her ears lapped and her beard trembled as a broom:

– I cannot stay here any more! That's not fair! – The She-goat left pasture with her Kid behind.

When she reached the end of the village the dog stopped her way:

– Where are you going , goat? Why do you leave us?- the dog stanchd his tears with his tail-end .

– I go to the place where my legs take me.

– Why legs?

– Goats are in such a bad situation today that our legs are cleverer than our heads.

– Oh, Goat, don't follow legs, otherwise you will be a hunt of wild animals.

– It is better to be a hunt than to live here. I will get rid of this place once and for all.

– And what about your Kid?

– What Kid?

– Your last-born child that follows you everywhere. You lived splendidly, but the poor Kid is very little!

The Goat bleated and licked The Kid. The Kid started to suck her mother on bended knees. The Goat kicked and The Kid jumped aside:

– How long are you going to suck?

– Oh, Goat! Be a dear, do not go away!- The dog said.

– Don't hinder me!

– Why?

– I am angry!

– Wow! With whom?

– I am angry with the owner.

– You can not get angry with your owner!

– Why not?

– Because he is cleverer than us!

– Do you mean that we are crazy?

– We are not crazy, we are not clever either.

– Show proof!

– If we were clever we should have lived independently.

– Aren't we free?

– You must have home in order to live freely at first.

Then you must have food.

– Does it mean independence?

– Yes? It does!

The Dog opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue:

– But what is this?

– The piece of meat!

The Dog looked around in astonishment:

– What do you say?

– Oh, Dog, this piece of meat is a tongue when it has opportunity to say something. “Something” is not a word yet. The first circumstance of “Freedom” is ability to say your words of heart. – The Goat spoke as a public figure.

– And what do you want?

– I want to eat grass, the next day – barley feed, the third day – lucerne. Can you eat meat every day?

– I only gnaw a bone.

– But if we have freedom we will not depend on anybody! That’s why I am going to seek freedom for myself!

– Do go if you have decided. But do not be sure of your legs, otherwise they will make you a hunt of wild animals.

But The Goat did not hear The Dog’s words. She left that place carrying her kid behind her.

2.

Half an hour later The Goat and her kid met The Cow on their way:

– Hello, darling!

– Hello, dear!

– Where are you going with your kid?

– I am going to seek freedom for myself.

The Cow goggled at her in surprise as she heard this word for the first time. Suddenly she came to senses:\

– Have you got another child?

– What do you mean?

– Isn't "Freedom" the name of your kid?

The Goat shook her head and ears so angrily, that her beard trembled:

– Oh, Cow, you are so stupid!

– Why?

– Don't you know what is "Freedom"?

– No-o-o...

The Goat looked at her Kid:

Let's go, my kid!

The Cow followed the Goat with her eyes for a while and bellowed:

– Well.. the Goat is very sly, maybe she discovered a new pasture.

3.

When they reached the forest they met the Camel:

– Oh, hello, big-beard!

– Oh, hello, thick-lipped!

– The cattle is returning from the pasture to the village now. But where are you going?

– I am going to seek my freedom.

The Camel roared and looked at The Goat steadily:

– What do you say? – The Camel didn't hear her answer and turned ear to The Goat.

The Goat got angry:

– I am going to seek my freedom. Have you heard me now?

The Camel rose his head and roared with laughter

– Do you find it funny?

– Which village are you coming from?

– From Uncovered village.
– Wow...
– What’s the matter?
– You are seeking freedom in a long way of.
– Why?
– Freedom is in your own village.
– If so, why is everyone looking for it?
– No one is looking for it beside you.
– Why are you so sure ?
– I see, you are fed up with living!
The Goat offended:
– You or me?
– You are, of course!- The Camel roared with laughter...
– Don’t laugh, say, what do you mean!
– You know that I am travelling for months and see a lot of villages, cities and people. I have seen so many victims for freedom.

The Goat looked askance at The Camel :

– What do you mean with these words?
– Oh, this is not really your field, Goat!
– You have grown old and become foolish, dear Camel!

The Camel laughed loudly:

– Ha...Ha... Ha... Go away.. You will remember my words when your throat meets knife.

4.

The Goat and her kid reached the big market in the sunset.

– Mom, I am thirsty! – The Kid bleated.

The Goat jumped and entered the market:

– Good evening, Miss, can I get some water?
– Carbonated or non-carbonated?

– We do not need carbonated water. We always feed on grass. We are in need of pure water!

– Oh, Goat, this is the gas-cut-water- the water filled with gas.

– Dear Miss, the water itself contains gas. Pure water does not need gassing. Oh, I remember. Upon me long-beard, once I drank such water and I had a lever-ake for a week. Please, give us half bucket water, for god’s sake.

– Have you got money?

– Money? What is it?

– Sorry, This is not charitable society, but market!

– I know it.

The Kid again rested his head against his Mother. The Goat got angry:

– Step aside!- then looked at the saleswoman:- We are very thirsty! Feel sorry for us!

Suddenly the store manager came in:

– Hello, Goat!

– Hello!

– How can I help you?

– Miss does not give us water.

– Why?

– She asks for money.

– Oh, dear Goat! Do you know what is free of charge nowadays?

– No, I do not know!

– The air is free of charge as yet. I heard that the air will also be payable soon.

– It means that the poor people will be exhausted!

– Don’t draw me into politics, I have to grow up my children. You want to drink water, do it and go away.

– We have drunk water and eaten grass free of charge until now!

– Where?

– In the farm of our master.

– It was possible that time. Your master could give you grass and water gratuitously. But we need money now.

– Look here? I haven't got money, but my bosom is full of milk! Milk me and give me water instead of it.

– That's a good idea! – the manager looked at the shop assistant gladly. – Daughter, wash the bucket and bring here, please.

The Goat astraddled her trailing legs. The manager put the bucket on the ground, sat on a big wooden box and started to milk her joining his thumb and forefinger.

When half of the bucket was filled with the milk The Goat kicked twice.

– What's the matter, Goat? You will spill the milk! My teats hurt! Leave some milk for my kid.

– Don't worry! – The manager stood up and called the shop-girl. – Daughter, take the milk and give it to my wife to boil. Fill the bucket from aryk (channel) with water and bring it for The Goat and her kid.

The Goat shook her head and lapped her ears so angrily that her beard trembled as a broom.

– Why from aryk (channel)?

– What else did you expect? – The manager asked.

– You have to give us water from market! We did not agree such way !

– First of all, we did not agree what kind of water I shall give you, secondly, you cannot drink carbonated water! And we do not have non-carbonated one in the shop.

– Never mind! I am compelled to conform to circumstances.

The shop girl returned with the bucket full of water-mother and her kid drank their fill.

– Do you have any grass to eat? – The Goat asked The manager.

– This is a grocery store! We have product just for people.

– And what shall we do then?

– I can find grass for you. But do you have anything else to sell?

The Goat shook her head and lapped her ears after a moment's reflection.

– I have good wool, if you like, do flatter it!

– Let me call my neighbor.

Not long after the neighbor came sheared The Goat and went away. Then he brought armful of hay for The Goat and her Kid. After satiation they again went to the grocery.

– The cheese is familiar to me. – The Goat protruded her beard.

– You are right, it is made of goat milk.

– How much is it?

– 20 manat for kilogram.

– And how much is barley?

– We do not sell barley.

– I am just interested in its price.

– 30 kopeck for kilogram.

– And how much is the knot of clover?

– Haven't you come from village?

– Yes, I have.

– Don't you know that clover is sold in the village.

–My master had haystacks, but there was no price on them.

– One haystack is 3 manatnow.

– And how much is the goat milk?

– 6 manat for litre. How much milk do you give in a day?

– 3 litre.

– Woww... You are like a fluid river!

– I am a pure-bred goat. My strain is from Europe.

– People go to Europe nowadays, why have you come here? Poor you, We live in the East!

– At first my ancestry was brought from Sweden to Turkey and after reproduction it was sold. We are famous Sanan goats!

– Why have you left the village?

– We were forced.

– Why?

– I am looking for my freedom.

The manager was surprised.

– What?

– I am looking for my freedom.

– Is that so?

– What do you mean?

– Why are you looking for freedom?

– Why?

– Because you are European, freedom is in your blood.

But be careful! Don't let them cut your beard.

– Who is in need of my beard?

– Sometimes the beard is useful for defaming somebody.

Dear Goat, we live in the East. Be careful, there are so many methods of punishment here!

The Goat shook her head.

– As a secret, why do you need freedom?

– Why do I need? Look, my master earns 18 manats just from my milk every day, but he does not spend 2 manats for me. Besides it I give birth to two kids in every six months. Do you know , what a hard thing a birth ?! This is not a cesarean operation when surgeons operate on mother and get a child. Neither mother nor child understand the process of birth. That’s why children cannot live without medicine. At every trifle they have to go to the hospital. How children can understand the meaning of the life if they did not feel the first difficulty of birth? When they grow and have no luck they commit suicide. While giving birth to kid our shout rises even to God. But you – the people usually abstain from giving birth after three times childbirth. But we do it till the old age. Once I said to my master: “I work very hard for you, please take care of me. If not, let me go and look for my freedom.” He laughed and called me “Freedom lover” . And I was offended with it. I took my kid and left the pasture.

– The manager smoothed The Goat’s head down:

– You did the right thing!

– What do you mean?

– Your freedom is here.

– Is that true?

– Trust me! Upon my white beard!

– Let’s go then!

– Let me ring up for the car.

The Goat started to sing and dance:

– *Oh, Freedom! Freedom!*

Welcome to you!

*Embrace green field,
Embrace meadow!
Make me cheerful!
Make me joyful!
Oh, Freedom! Freedom!
Welcome to you!*

Not long after a big lorry came . The doors of the lorry were opened and two young men got out.

– Let me introduce you The Freedom –lover Goat!- The manager of the store said seriously.

Young men smiled amazingly.

The manager sold The Goat and The Kid them and put the money in his pocket.

– Now, Goat, these two young men will be your new master from this day.

– Master?! – The Goat could not finish her word. The fellows tied her and her kid, threw them to the body of the lorry.

5.

Two months The Goat and The Kid were not taken to the pasture and to the garden. But they were given a lot of barley and chaff. Sometimes a terrible thought struck The Goat: “Maybe our new master feeds us for cutting” .

The Goat and her Kid fattened day by day, but could not see and missed daylight. At last The Kid said:

– Dear Mom, is this the same freedom that you looked for?

The Goat was obliged to answer:

– Yes, darling!

– What a bad thing the freedom is!

The Goat was obliged to affirm it:

– Yes, darling!

– One morning their new master entered with a man.

– Which one will be the first? – The new master asked.

– If we cut The Kid his mother will hear his terrible shout and her meat will lose its taste

– How you want.

The butcher snatched The Goat . The Kid jumped on them:

– Mom, don't leave me alone! Where are you going?

– Dear son? The Camel was right, but I didn't believe him. I am a victim of the Freedom!

– But you said that we found our Freedom!

– I lied you, dear son, forgive me, darling!

– But... – The Kid could not say anything more. They pushed him and closed the door.

They led The Goat to the green grass. The new master pressed her legs. The butcher controlled the knife with his finger . He pulled The Goat's head to the back and started to examine her neck. Suddenly, when he was ready for cutting the door of the garden opened.

– Hey, man , stop! Don't do that!- The manager of the store ran to the garden quickly together with a man.

– This man is the real master of The Goat!- The manager showed the man standing near him.

– But what about my money? – the new master asked the manager.

– At first, say me where is The Kid? - The real master of The Goat asked.

* * *

Some minutes later The Goat and The Kid were sitting on the body of the lorry and looking at the road.

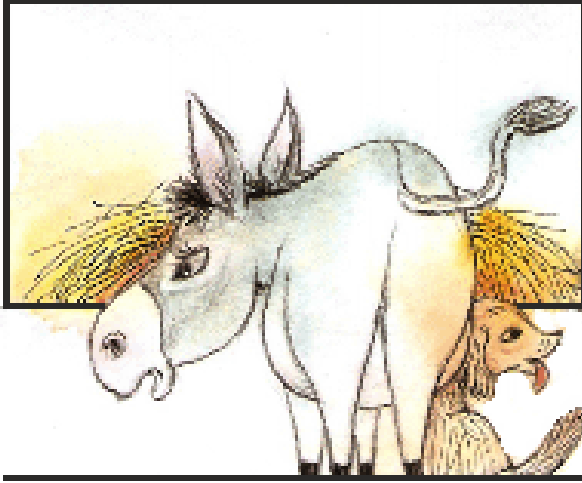
– I will kiss The Camel’s lips as soon as I find him. –
The Goat said thoughtfully.

– Why, mother?

– He was right saying that the Freedom is in our own village. But will we find it or not, this is the question of the time! – Then she began to sing her song:

*– Oh, Freedom! Freedom!
Welcome to you!
Embrace green field,
Embrace meadow!
Make me cheerful!
Make me joyful!
Oh, Freedom! Freedom!
Welcome to you!*

God...Dog and Donkey



The Donkey had just woken up. She yawned and turned on her back; she kicked her hoof in the air and stood up. Putting her rear hoof back and front hoof forward, she raised her head. Suddenly her lower jaw detached from her upper jaw, her mouth opened as far as her ears, she exhaled all the breath left in her chest and started to yell:

– Hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw...

At that time, a Dog entered the garden. After seeing her smiling eyes, grinning teeth and wagging tail, the Donkey loved with the Dog with all her heart. It turned out that the Dog was also thinking about the Donkey. They approached each other and touched their noses. Donkey's mouth suddenly opened:

– Hee-haw...

But the Dog was ready for that. She shouted:

– Bow-wow...

They became friends at that moment. They were such good friends that they missed each other if they were apart for half an hour. Kindness has one bad feature: if there is too much of it, it will end with a fight.

One morning, the Dog and the Donkey were talking to each other behind a stack of hay; the Dog was sucking a bone left from yesterday, and the Donkey was either plucking the grass or chewing some clover. Suddenly, the Donkey raised her head from the ground and looked straight up. Then she looked at the Dog with smiling eyes and yelled:

– Hee-haw...

The Dog removed her mouth from the bone and stared at the Donkey in surprise:

– Bow-wow?

– Sister, dear sister!

– Yes, darling?!

– Have you heard the news?!

– What news?

The Donkey smiled happily:

– I will have a baby in a few months!

– May God help you!

The Donkey's eyes opened widely:

– Sister, dear sister, I will give birth myself!

– I understood, and that's why I said 'May God help you'!

– God?! Who is God?!

– Don't you know?

– How can I know, sissy, if I haven't read about him!

– God – is the one who created us!
– Me as well?
– Yes!
– You mean, my mom and dad?
– Your mom and dad were also created by God!
– You mean, my granny and granddad?
– You think like a donkey! – The Dog angrily turned her back on the Donkey and started to dig.
– Hee-haw...
– Why are you yelling so loudly?! Be polite, please!
You are making me deaf!
– Please dig slowly, then! A stone almost hit my head!
– I see that the doors of your head are closed! Maybe a stone can open them!
– Hey, the stone could cut my head!
– Where is justice, if the stone doesn't cut your stupid head?
– Why stupid?
– Because you don't know God!
– Who is this God that you keep going on about?
– God is the one who created the ground and the sky! I mean, everything!
– I don't care about the sky, dear sissy! What I need is just the ground! Everything I need is here! My grass, water and a feed rack!
– You are an atheist then!
– What does that mean?
– Please lower your voice!
– You want me to shut up?
– Shutting up is better than talking like an atheist!

- You are croaking like the mullah¹ of our town!
- I'm not the one croaking, but you! Speak kindly, please! What does the mullah of your town say?
- He says: “Hey, people, the Devil has misled you! You will die because of the world's wealth!”
- He is right!
- But he just sits around at funeral ceremonies eating too much of the people's dolma²!
- Should he die of hunger?
- He even takes a pot of it home with him!
- You are such a strange Donkey! Shouldn't he feed his children?
- So, you mean, dolma cannot be considered the wealth of this world?
- Hey, you have become a real Devil, with ears and a nose!
- Who is the Devil?
- God's enemy!
- Why are they enemies, then?
- What kind of question is that? Because the Devil doesn't get along with God!
- Dear sissy, that's the Devil's own business! That is not our business to interfere with him!
- Why shouldn't we interfere?
- Don't you accept democracy?
- There isn't any democracy in the case of God and the Devil! We should support God!
- Hey, Dog!
- Yes?!

¹ *Mullah – a Muslim clergyman*

² *Dolma – a national dish of Azerbaijani people*

– It is the 21st century now! The whole world is talking about democracy! But you... Don't make me angry, otherwise I will kick your mouth so that it will tear!

– What did I do to you?

– Then why does democracy exist?

– It exists for people!

– Then, doesn't God love democracy?

– Godless!

– What does Godless mean?

– It is someone who doesn't accept God!

– You should see him, in order to accept him! – The Donkey lowered her head and plucked a wisp of grass.

– God cannot be seen! – The Dog barked angrily.

– Then why does He exist?

– God exists for praying to him!

– What does “praying” mean?

– It means respecting, talking to and loving!

– I cannot love someone that I cannot see!

The Dog barked and left the garden. The Donkey slowly went to the feed rack, as if nothing had happened. The Sun set after a while.

* * *

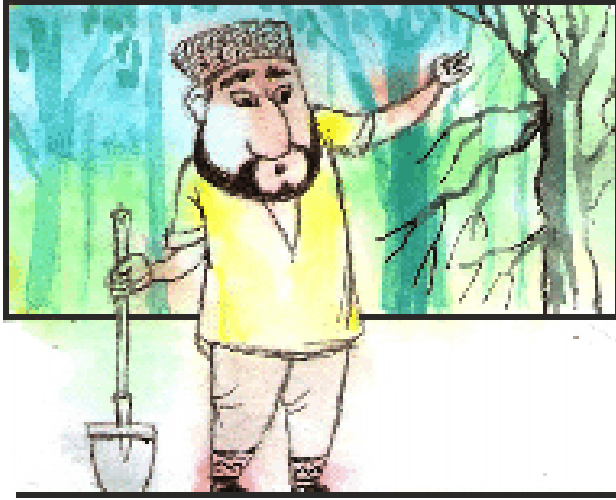
The Donkey had just gone to sleep when a shadow came across her face. She opened her right eye slowly, but couldn't see anything. She closed her eye again. She felt that the shadow was holding still. This time she opened both eyes. She still couldn't see anything. She started to think: “What if the thieves have come to steal my grass! I would die then! Oh!”

– Donkey?!

– Who are you!
 – It’s me!
 – Don’t you have a name?
 – God!
 – God?! – The Donkey jumped from her place. – The man that the Dog was talking about?
 – I am not a man!
 – Who are you then?
 – God!
 – Isn’t God a man?
 – God is the Creator!
 – What do you want?
 – Don’t you recognize me?
 – How can I recognize you if I have never seen you?!
 – I am invisible!
 – Invisible?!
 – Yes!
 – What do you want from me then?!
 – I want you to know your God!
 – Have you left everything and come just to say that?
 – Isn’t it enough? Don’t you know your God?
 – Who said that?
 – Dog!
 – I know my God!
 – But Dog said that you are godless?!
 – Dog was mistaken! I both know my God and also love him!
 – Well done!
 – Why “well done”?
 – That’s a nice thing to know and love your God!
 – Mister God!

- Yes?!
- That God is not you!
- Who is he then?
- Humans!
- Humans?!
- Please, don't interrupt me! I should go to work early in the morning! So, let me sleep! Good night and sweet dreams!

The Scientist



After my grandmother's death, my father asked and begged grandfather to marry, but he didn't:

– Can I possibly replace her?!

– You are an old man, maybe she will be a companion to you.

– I already have one!

My father was confused. My grandfather winked at me and smiled:

– I have such a big garden, with so many trees, is there any better companion than them?

My father did not bring it up again.

We continued to live together under the same roof. But my grandfather did not eat anything my mother cooked.

– Daddy, are you ashamed to eat our food?! – My father expressed his dissatisfaction.

– Am I a dog or a cat? – My grandfather got angry.

– God forbid, daddy, why would you say that?

– Everybody must eat the fruit of his labor, sonny! Then he will feel better. I will cut off the hand which is unable to make a glass of tea or cook a bowl of oatmeal.

He was a man of the past, so my Granddad woke up before the dawn.

One evening I started to twitter, as my Granddad called it:

– Granddad, why are you so afraid of the director?!

He looked straight at me and frowned.

– Hey, man, don't you want to sleep?!

He suddenly clapped and laughed loudly:

– Ha... ha... ha... That's in our blood!

– What?!

– Wisdom!

– What does “wisdom” mean?!

– In today's language, it is called omniscience! You have even started to talk with gestures. You speak with an “undertone,” which means with an inner meaning.

I lowered my head.

– Once I asked my mother: “Mommy, which time of the day did you give birth to me?” I should say that at that time, women could give birth to children themselves. But nowadays, neither can mothers give birth, nor do children know how to be born. Giving birth is a hard thing, but being born is much harder yet. The mother who suffered in childbirth would cherish her child. A child who suffered in birth knew the value of his life. We did not commit suicide when a girl we loved let us down. I've talked too much,

haven't I?! Well! My mother told me that she felt pains in her belly at 1 am and early in the morning, at 5 am, they finally heard the sound of my first cry. My aunt looked at me and said that I would be a scientist, because I had a large forehead. I have finally become a scientist, but in the sphere of gardening. My dear Sham-Sham, I used to wake up at the same hour of my birth and I still do that now. Each time it makes me feel like I am coming to life again and again!

I started a question attack against my granddad:

– Aren't you lonely?

– Because I came to this life?!

– No, because you go to the garden every morning... all alone?

– I consider each planted tree a part of me! Before I was alone, but now there are hundreds of me! Do you think I can be lonely among my small creations?

– What patience you have, dear Granddad!

– Why?!

– Doesn't your heart explode because of loneliness?

– You haven't understood the meaning of life yet!

– Why?

– My heart is not a bomb!

– But you don't talk to anyone for hours!

– Dear Sham-Sham, you are mistaken, because I talk to my trees!

– Don't try to convince me, otherwise I will come and listen to you in the garden!

– I will hang you from your ears, if you come and listen to me!

– Ha... ha... ha...

* * *

One morning my Grandfather left the house and didn't come back all day. We were worried about him.

– Sham-Sham, let's go and see where Grandfather is.

We walked around the garden. Grandfather had disappeared as if he were a needle. I suddenly heard a rustle. I saw that, even if it wasn't windy, the leaves of a tree were moving. After looking attentively, I saw that...

– Hey, daddy?!

– What's up?

– Come here!

– What happened?

– Look, Granddad is here!

– Where?

– Look...

– Has he hung himself?

– No, God forbid!

– Thank God! Dad, you made us worry a lot! Oops, Sham-Sham, why isn't Grandfather answering?

– Come a bit closer!

– Where?

– Granddad has become a tree!

The Gardener



There was not any tree in the garden smaller than the Gardener, but the Gardener was older than all of them; there were two years left until he would be a hundred years old. There were only a few people in the village the same age as him, and all of them were sick. They either slept all the time or watched TV and complained to God:

– Oh God, why don't you take me away?!

But the first thing the Gardener did early in the morning was raise his hands and pray to God:

– Oh my God, I am so happy that you gave me one more chance to live in this bright world!

He went straight to the garden:

– Good morning, my dear children, how are you doing today? How was your night? – He stood under each tree for a while, looked at them and caressed their trunks with his veined hands.

The trees also seemed satisfied.

One day...

Whisper...whisper...whisper... – The garden was filled with sounds; the trees started whispering.

– No, this life wasn't given to me without a purpose!

– Is that how you respect the man who gave you life?

– I am thankful to him!

– Being thankful sounds a bit cold!

– Then why do people use that word?

– Just to please someone!

– I would also like to please the Gardener!

– We need the Gardener to live a long time! If each of us gives a year of our lives to him, then he will live for another hundred years. If the Gardener dies and the winter is harsh, then do you think they will allow us to keep standing on our roots? They will cut us down and put us into the fire.

Those times were fair and God listened to the prayers of all creatures.

He took one year from all the trees' lives, except the Elm tree, and gave them to the Gardener.

– Thank you, my dear trees! I am so pleased with you! I will give you back ten times as much as these years you have given!

The trees were becoming younger, higher and greener day by day.

The first thing the Gardener did each morning was go to the garden, stand under the Elm tree, and caress it before caressing all other ones. He felt that the Elm tree was ashamed.

It was early spring. One day, the Gardener entered the garden and saw that the Elm tree had dried up.

Apple



*T*here was an apple on the top of the apple-tree. It imposed face to the Sun and the Moon when they appeared on the sky. That was why one of her cheeks was red, another was yellow. The birds flying in the sky and insects on the trees used to mock of the apple:

Look at her, She is left alone!

Look at her, She is left alone!

The apple that did not like to talk behind somebody's back always smiled. It meant that I was not offended with you whatever you say! Just she knew that she was not alone, she had a neighbour leaf which had joint stalk. She liked this leaf so much that she gave a nickname to it like her own name "Apple – leaf".

As soon as the sky was strewn with stars, two friends started to whisper with each other thinking ahead over the future till the morning. I cannot say anything about the apple-leaf, but the apple did not think about the past, she dreamed only for future. She was so cheerful that she could exaggerate even her little joy and it seemed her like a huge mountain. She often stood face to face with the wind, her cheeks were hailed down with storms and she was burnt by the Sun many times but she never cried. She had a good feature – to see kindness in everything. That was why she was happy and could always make herself happy.

As soon as the breeze started to blow she began to dance and sing her song:

*Wow, I am swinging, I am swinging –
I am swinging on the twig!
Wow, I am swinging, I am swinging –
Future will be happy, I think!*

Once when she was singing and making merry herself the stalk broke. She fell from her twig and found herself on the air.

When she found herself between the ground and the sky she was terrified and sighed:

– Ouch! – At that moment she fell down the ground.

She heard a voice under the stomach:

– Mind o-u-t... ! You have hurt us!

The apple looked up and down but did not see anybody and smiled:

– Maybe this is my fallen side offended with me and is gabbling.

This time she heard laughter :

– Tee hee...

– What is the matter? Who is making fun of me?

– Tee hee...

– Hey, who are you, do not laugh at me! – The Apple got angry.

– Oh, so terrible you are, tee..hee...!- That was the same voice.

– Why are you laughing at me, have I got horns?

– You have fallen on our heads. Do you even dare to ask?

– Ah! – The Apple became happy. – Is that you, weed?

– Where have you got this courage to ask who am I?

– I am sorry for troubling you. You know that I have not fallen of my own free will.

– Well do I know that you have become ripe. That ‘s why you have fallen from the tree.

– No-o-o... I haven’t ripened yet. The breeze did it.

– Oh, dear apple. The fact is that you have fallen. I hope you are comfortable here.

– It is not “ a good place”...

– What?

– It is the best one!

– God bless you, you have startled me very much!- The weed laughed.

– But on the top of the tree I was close to the Sun. It is a little colder here.

– Oh...- The weed opened arms and embraced the Apple.

– And what about now?

– Thank you , I have got warmer a little.But I am very sleepy now.

– You have changed your place, that’s why. Have a nap,take a rest and you will feel better.

The Apple closed her eyes.

Seeing it The Apple-leaf shed a few tears:

– Poor me! I was left alone!

Poor me! I was left alone!

These words were said in a whisper but excitedly. The Wind blowing on the sky heard these words and got down without thinking. It quickly plucked the Apple-leaf from the twig and threw it on the Apple.

Oh... It is getting cool!- The Apple startled and opened her eyes. – What is this? Apple le- e- a-a- f ?!

– Hello!

– Hello! How have you gone down, Brer?

– I missed you so much after you had left me. Suddenly I noticed you sleeping without blanket. I thought that you would get cold and started crying. It turned out that The Wind heard my crying. So plucked me from the twig and covered you.

– How do you like this new place?

– It is very stuffy here . There is not a breath of air.

– You have changed your place, that’s why. Have a nap,take a rest and you will feel better.

* * *

Every morning The Apple-leaf asked after The Apple’s health:

– How are you, Dear Apple?

– I am getting yellow, darling! – The Apple answered cheerfully. _ And you?

– I am getting pale and pale! – The Apple-leaf answered sadly.

The Apple became more tasty and aromatic. But The Apple – leaf had turned pale.

One day Sham – Sham walked in the garden with his Grandfather. Suddenly he took his Grandfather's hand and stood in front of him:

– Hände hoch!

The Grandfather raised his hands quickly.

– Ha...! Ha...! Ha...! – You are frightened, aren't you, grandpa?!

– Why not? I fought in the war and it seemed that enemy soldier is near me with the gun in his hand.

– Close your eyes!

– Would you like to play hide– and– seek with me?

– I cannot say anything to you now, this is a secret!

Close your eyes!

– I have closed.

– Don't look!

– All right!

Sham– Sham picked The Apple up to his Grandfather's face:

– Grandpa...

– Yes, darling!

– Open your eyes!

– Wow! – The Grandfather made a step back . – What is this?

– A [ei]...P[pi]...P[pi]...L[el]...E[e]...

– It looks like the apples of fairy tales!

– Take, Grandpa, eat and become younger.

– What a pleasant fragrance has this apple! – The Grandfather smelt The Apple and raised it above.– Look at this apple! Its redness is from the Sun, the yellowness from

the Moon. But all the rest are from the earth.

When Sham – Sham and his Grandfather took the apple and went The Apple asked them pitifully:

– But me?

As The Grandson and The Grandfather were talking they could not hear poor Apple's voice.

– But me? – The Apple-leaf cried bitterly.

The hoarse voice was heard somewhere near:

– Come to me, I can meet you with open arms!

The Apple-leaf became happy:

– Who are you?

– Who am I? – I am your Mother!

– And what about The Apple-tree?

– I am her Mother, too!

– The Earth?!

The Sea and The Storm



The Sea was grumbling like an old woman:

– How long am I going to be water?!

The Sea became self –satisfied since it felt its expanse looking at the world. It seemed to The Sea that just it was located between The Sky and The Earth:

– How long am I going to be water?!

Suddenly it heard a voice:

– Aren't you tired?!

The Sea looked around:

– Who a-a-a-re you-u?

– Who-o-o-o-sh, Who-o-o-o-sh!

– Don't you have a name?

– Can't you see me? I am The Storm!

– The Storm? What does it mean?

– Strength.

– And what is strength?

– Just a moment! – Suddenly everything mixed by rushing and wailing wind. – The Sea raged so terribly that it seemed the world was all upside down.

– I have recognized you!

– Who-o-o-o-sh! Who-o-o-o-sh!– The Storm did not pay attention to The Sea’s entreaty.

– Heyy..., Storm...!

– Who-o-o-o-sh! Who-o-o-o-sh!

– Heyy..., Storm...! Don’t make me angry, otherwise I ‘ll show you how to do harm!

– Who-o-o-o-sh! Who-o-o-o-sh!

The Storm started to roar.

– Who do you think you are to do me harm?!

– Who-o am I?! I can overturn ships! I can drown people! I can put children in tears!

The Storm began to smooth the waves of The Sea at once:

– Are you The Sea?

– Yes? I am!

– Why are you grumbling so much as an old woman?

– I am fed up of being water!

– But being water you have become The Sea! The Sky is over you and The Earth is under you. You have become The Sea because of them.

– If I were not water, I would have travelled all over the world. But now there is a whirlwind of turbulent emotions inside of me. I am even unable to overcome my seaside!

The Storm casted a glance at The Sky, at The Earth and at The Sea, then at himself.

– I cannot drain you, The Sea, it will be unforgivable sin against you! – saying it The Storm rose up to The Sky with a whistle and joined to clouds

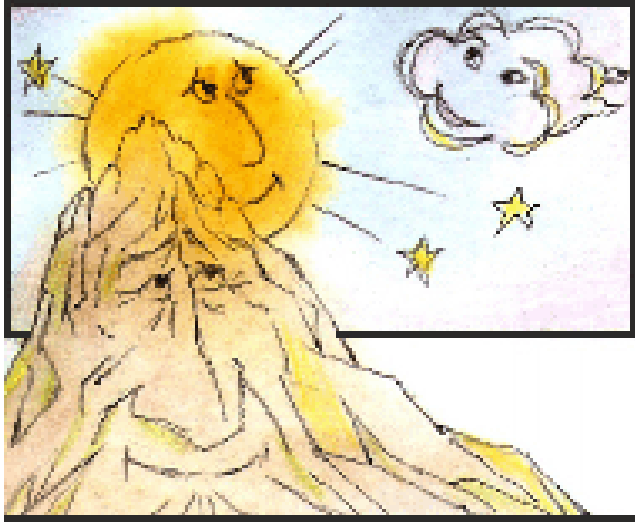
Having left alone The Sea started grumbling again:

– How long am I going to be water?!- The Sea gave a long sigh and stared at the horizon.

The Storm returned only hundred years later and saw a group of children playing in the gravelly soil in the same place. The children were telling a story:

– Once upon a time there lived The Sea ...

The Old Mountain and The Small Lake



*T*here was a huge mountain on the upper part of the valley. The sloops of that mountain were as plain and smooth as a palm. According to geologists- the mountain had grown old. As distinct as people this mountain was afraid of neither old age, nor the word “old”. When someone asked him: “Who are you?” he used to answer : “I am an old mountain”. When it was getting dark The old Mountain could not keep his eyes open. That was his natural feature . Mountains always get up and sleep with The Sun either they are young or old. That’s why they are longevous.

One morning The Old Mountain was awaken by the

daylight and startled. Something strange was happened that day – The Sun had risen deep in the valley.

– Oh, the lion of the sky is at my feet!- The Old mountain laughed loudly.- Ho...ho...ho...

– Heyy...– The creaking noise was heard from the valley.- Tell the truth!

– What truth? – The Old Mountain asked.

– I am not The Sun!

– But why are you shining?

– I am Lake, my water is shining!

– But you were not in this place yesterday!

– The Earth shook at night and made me came to the surface.

– So, you are a lake, aren't you?!

– Yes, I am.

– Tell the truth!

– What truth?

– You cannot be a lake!

– Why? I have water and banks, I have even got talkative tongue- my waves.

– You are very little... Will you be offended if I call you “Small lake”?

– No, I am not offended! I will not be made shorter! by calling “small”!

The Old Mountain was staring at The Sun.

Not long after The Small Lake stared at The Sun. The Sky seemed to him as a long way where the flocks of birds and herds of elephants passed.

– Heyyy...! –The Small Lake shouted loudly in order to make The Old Mountain hear him. – Heyyy...!

– What's the matter? – The Old Mountain asked angrily.

– Don't birds and camels live in the Earth?!

– Yes, they do.
– But why are they in the sky now?
– Ho...ho..ho.. – The Old Mountain roared.
– Your voice will nearly deafen me! – The Small Lake peeped. – Do you find it funny?

– But you are so funny! There is neither bear nor camel in The Sky. They are clouds.

– Clou-u-u-ds?! – The Small Lake mumbled.

The Old Mountain again looked at The Sky. The snore spread around as soon as it was getting dark- The Old Mountain was sleeping.

Myriad of stars fell thick and fast on the breast of The Small Lake.

– Oh, it is wonderful!- The Small Lake played with the stars till the morning.

One day The Small Lake was bored. Neither the birds, nor the clouds paid attention to The Small Lake from the sky. Even The Sun hid behind The Old Mountain winking for a moment.

That evening The Small Lake got tired of playing with stars and started to wait for The Moon. The Moon was blurred on the breast of The Small Lake rolling from The Sky. Suddenly The Old Mountain took a deep breath – The Moon was broken like glass. The Small Lake had just collected the pieces of The Moon when it became dark everywhere was plunged into darkness – The Moon rolled and fell behind The Old Mountain.

As soon as The Small Lake closed eyes she had a dream about The Moon. – she embraced, tossed and stroked The Moon.

– Do not be lonesome,– The Moon said,– I shall come and play with you every night!

And one day...

When The Old Mountain got up and looked down he was astonished. – The Small Lake had disappeared. He became unhappy:

– The nature has strange features.- sometimes It gives you friends and sometimes takes them away hiding under the ground. Poor Small Lake! She could not even see the Sun rays to her heart's content. What shall I do? On the one hand- my old age, on the other hand loneliness will be my friends!

Suddenly he heard rustling over his head:

– Heyyyy... Old chap, good morning!

The Old Mountain startled and looked at The Sky:

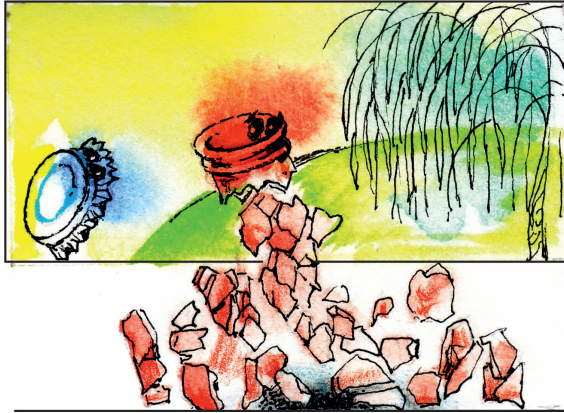
– Good morning! Who are you, dear?

– This is me – The Small Lake!

– The Small Lake? Strange to say, what are you doing there?

– I have become a cloud!

Bottle of water



1.

When Sham-Sham reached the park of Officers with his Grandfather his hand carrying bottle of water became heavier suddenly. His fingers weakened – the bottle fell to the ground with a thud and broke down.

– Grandpa...

Grandfather turned back:

– Has it broken ?!

– Yesss...

– Don't worry! Sometimes the man has to suffer losses in order to estimate profits.

The flattened fragments of the bottle moaned:

– And what about us?

Neither Sham-Sham nor his Grandfather heard their voice. They entered the water– pavilion again.

Glass fragments could not calm down:

– Poor us! Poor us!

The cap of the bottle got so angry that started shouting:
– Stop bothering me with trifles!
Glass fragments started to cry:
– But we have broken down!
– Big deal! “They have broken down”!– The cap mimicked them.
– We also have souls! In some minutes we shall be thrown into dustbin.
– “We shall be thrown!” It is not the end of the world!
– Isn’t it the end of the world? We mean nothing to the world!
– Do you think that you would be more like your former selves?
– What can we do else?!
– Think about yourselves!
– Since now?
– It is better to think heedful than to cry vainly!– The cap advised them like a white –beard man.
– But we are not able to think now!– The glass fragments sighed.
– Everyone who has a head on his shoulders is able to think.
– We were a bottle before breaking and you were our head.
These words somehow smoothed the stomach of the cap:
– Do you really think so?
– Of course!
– Hmmm... – The cap was sunk in thought.
– Please, think instead of us! – The glass fragments started screaming.
– Me-e?! – The cap was so happy that it just sat doubled over. – Shall I think instead of you?

– Yes, please!
 – Your ears can hear, can't they?
 – Yes, they can!
 – Your eyes can see, can't they?
 – Yes, they can!
 – Are you reasonable?
 – Yes, we are!
 – What are you waiting then?– The cap stared at them.
 – What can we do?
 – Join together!
 The glass fragments could not believe their ears:
 – What did you say?
 – Join together!
 – Shall we join together?! –It seemed as if the glass fragments were woken up. – Oh, dear cap, please...
 It seemed that the cap understood what they were going to say:
 – Are you out of your mind?!
 – Why?
 – I can think instead of you, but I cannot join instead of you!
 – Say us how to do it!
 – Let each of you join to its broken piece.
 The glass fragments started moving –ting a-ling... ting a-ling... ting a-ling...

2.

When Sham-Sham went out of the water-pavilion and reached the park of the Officers he suddenly shouted:
 – Grandpa..
 Grandfather stopped:
 – Yes, dear!

– Look there! Is that the bottle which I had dropped some minutes ago?! It seems that it had not broken down. It stands upright.

Grandfather screwed up his eyes and looked for a while:

– Yes, just the same bottle, darling!

– But it is empty!

The Breeze and The Wind



When The Wind blew weakly it was The Breeze which got into the pond creeping as soon as it woke up. The sounds of a reed-pipe immediately spread around when it softly quivered reeds and canes:

– “Bzzz.... Bzzzz...”

Different birds came flying from the sky, sparrows and starlings flew down on the reedbed. Frogs were giving a loud croak.

The Breeze was very cheerful those moments:

– “Bzzz.... Bzzzz...”

One evening The Breeze got noisy. It swelled up, grew

and turned into The Wind in three days. Its voice became rude and husky:

– Swoosh! Whoosh!

The Wind shook the top of the trees, smashed thorns and shrubs and people's view was obscured by the Wind. The wind blew with great violence from North to South and from East to West. It wandered through the world, damaged and destroyed everything on its way. At last it returned the former places. The Wind remembered its childhood- when it used to be the Breeze:

– It would be well to play the reed-pipe! – it jumped to the pond and hold on the reed by teeth. At once the rude voice spread around:

– Wooh...wooh...wooh..

The birds flew away, the frogs stopped croaking and closed their ears with their legs.

The Wind was taken aback:

– Maybe I have forgotten playing the reed-pipe!– It again snapped at the reed.

– Wooh...wooh...wooh..

The Wind got so angry that darkened, swelled up and turned into the whirlwind. It fell on the pond smashing thorns and shrubs. The whirlwind left the pond wiping out everything by a loud roar. Stillness descended around.

The Breeze blowing from somewhere was hardly out of breath while seeing the pond:

– Wow... What shall I do now? Where shall I play hide-and-seek? Where shall I play the reed-pipe? – It thought and thought... And suddenly shouted:– Oh, what am I waiting for?! – It started blowing around the reeds and canes trying to raise them up. At last The Breeze managed to do it. It

started to blow gently. The pleasant sounds of the reed-pipe spread around at once:

– “Bzzz.... Bzzzz...”

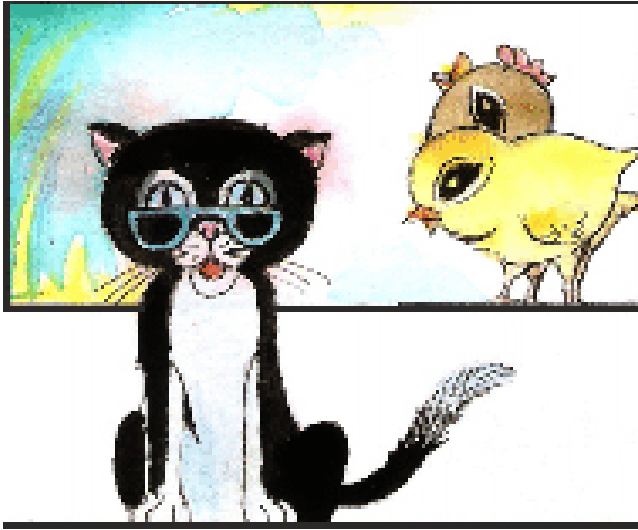
Different birds came flying from the sky, sparrows and starlings flew down on the reedbed. Frogs gave a loud croak taking away their webbed-feet from the ears

– “Bzzz.... Bzzzz...”

TALE NARRATIVE



The Deadly Fight of The Grey Chickens and Black Cat, The Famous Thief



1. Mother Hen and her Chicks

Mother Hen hatched 11 chicks. 4 of them inherited her snow white feathers, 5 of them inherited her dark black eyes and the remaining two inherited her ash gray feet. As long as they were small, they would stand by their mother, eat, drink, and follow her around. When they were five steps away from their mother, she started tousling her feathers and knocking the ground with her beak:

– Cluck-cluck... where in the world are you again?

– Cheep-cheep... Mommy, we are not around the world, but under the bush!

– What in the world are you doing there again?!

– Mommy, what world are you talking about? We can't see it.

– Oh you silly creatures, what are you rummaging over there for, I mean!

– We are looking for a vermin!

– Which “chicken” are you looking for?

– Oh, mommy, it seems you are getting old, because you don't hear what we say. We said “vermin,” not “chicken.” – And they started to hit each other's beaks.

– Come here immediately!

The chickens promptly ran and hugged the Mother Hen.

The chickens were growing up hour by hour. As they were growing older, they were becoming naughtier. But naughtiness is not as bad as you think. As the famous Fighting Rooster said: “If you are not a naughty chicken, then you will be a lazy hen!”

Let me talk a little bit about their naughtiness. Two chickens of the Mother Hen were naughtier than the other nine siblings. They always went too far and had become very strong-willed. They went away laughing and wandered to great distances, leaving their mother, sisters and brothers at home. They were looking for grain and water... they even followed butterflies and reached the insects' homes sometimes. The Mother Hen became very angry when she couldn't find them and hit the ground with her beak:

– Cluck, cluck, cluck...

Some time later, the footsteps of the two chickens were heard from the garden:

– Cheep-cheep-cheep...

– Oh goodness, where have they gone?! – the other nine chickens hugged their mother.

The Mother Hen started to cackle:

– Cluck, cluck, cluck... Come to me, immediately!

– Cheep-cheep-cheep... Oooh, mom, why don't you let us breathe freely?

– Can't your sisters breathe freely with me, as well?

– No, because you don't let them!

– Heeey, what are you saying? Have I stolen your breath, my babies?

– Yees, that is why we are arguing here!

– Then what were your lungs breathing till now? Wasn't it air?

– It would be better if it were poison, instead!

– Ohhh, why do I have such angry children?

– Mommy, you immediately call us to sit by your side when we enter the hen-house and don't let us see what is happening in the world. You directly push us inside the hen-house with your wings. That's enough! We want to live independently!

– Grow up to my age, then live as freely as you want!

– Grow up to your age? Are you kidding us?

– Why should I kid you?

– Look, mom, do we have legs? Yes, we do! Do we have wings? Yes, we do! And we also have sharp beaks. What else do we need for independence?!

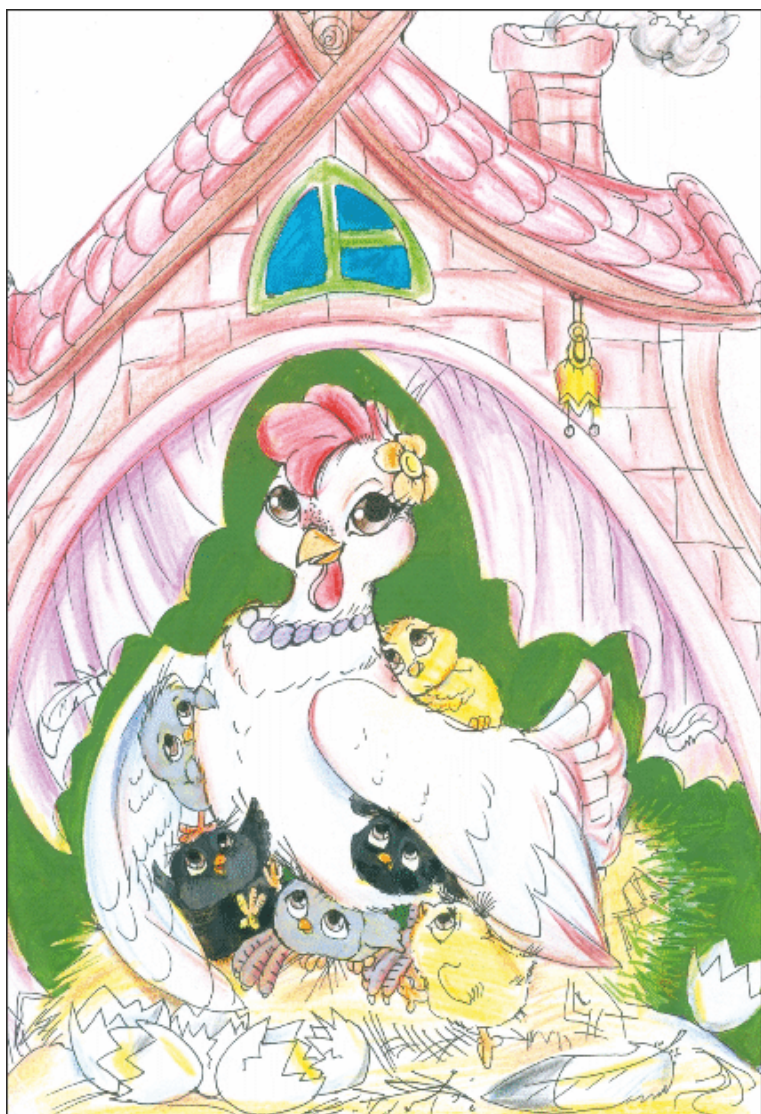
– Stop chirping "Independence! Independence!" What do you know about independence?

– Don't take us under your protection, don't call us to you, don't feed and scold us! That is independence!

– Your beaks have not hardened yet, so you must be fed. You are not wise yet, so you should be scolded and your feet are not strong yet, so you should sit by my side. Have you seen yourselves in the mirror?!

– Why should we? What do you mean by that?

– Look how little you are!
 – As little as a chicken?!
 – My dear, small chickens, if only you knew how many strong enemies you have!
 – Who are these “strong” enemies?!
 – The first of them is – rain!
 – Rain?! But we have a shelter – the hen house!
 – The second one is – wind!
 – Wind?! But we have the wall, to protect ourselves behind it.
 – The third is – the sun!
 – The sun?! But we have the shade of the trees.
 – The fourth one iiiis... Do you know what the fourth is?
 – Whaaat?!
 – Cold!
 – Cold?! But we have our mother’s wings!
 – Ohhh, my sweeties! Why are you sitting there? Come, I will cuddle you with my wings!
 – But it is not cold yet!
 – My darlings, you have one more strong enemy. I didn’t mention him, because I didn’t want to scare you!
 – Who is he?
 – Who?! Black Cat, the Famous Thief!
 – The Black Cat?! – The chickens started to boast. – This stupid Black Cat cannot do anything to us. Otherwise, we will jump and peck out his eyes!
 – Don’t jump into his mouth instead!
 – Into his mouth?! Cheep-cheep-cheep... We will not, we will not! Cheep-cheep-cheep... You are such a coward, mother! You are such a coward, mother! – The chickens’ voices gradually faded away as they ran to the edge of the garden.
 The Mother Hen started to look around and call them back, but she didn’t hear any sound in response except the echo of her own voice.



2. Face to Face with Black Cat the Thief

Mother Hen waited till the sun went down.

–God forbid, if the Fox smells us, she would eat us alive, my darlings! Let’s go back! – They ran to the hen-house and closed the door firmly. – Turn on the TV; let’s see what’s happening in the world. – As the Mother Hen and chickens finished watching a movie, the screen suddenly went black.

– Darling, look out the window and see-- do the roosters have electricity?

The black chicken ran to the window.

– Cheep-cheep-cheep... Yes, mom, they do have light.

The TV screen lit up again and showed an announcer:

– Attention! Attention! This evening, at half past eight, on the coast of the Kur River, in Khalsa garden, a pair of grey chickens, who lost their mother, came across Black Cat the Thief...

The Mother Hen started to beat her head with her wings.

– Oh, my poor chickens! Oh, my poor darlings!

– Oh, mom, stop screaming. Let’s listen to what the announcer says! – The chickens started to chirp.

– The Black Cat – the announcer continued, – is clenching his teeth in order to eat the chickens... Dear spectators, see for yourselves this moment, which was recorded by our cameraman who happened to be passing by:

The Black Cat put his right foot ahead and left paw on his waist. He started to play with his moustache:

– Ye-e-e-e-s... Mister yellow-beaks! Have my words offended you?!

– Which words?!

–That I have called you “yellow-beaks”?!

– Open your eyes and look at us attentively, we are not yellow-beaks, but grey chickens! And we are not “misters” for you!

– O-o-k! I’m not arguing then; let it be! I see you are very quick-tempered!

– We don’t have any idea about being quick-tempered...

– That’s a good feature...

– We don’t care whether it’s good or bad, take it for yourself!

– Meow...meow...meow...- The Black Cat ran back and started to laugh out loud.

– Why are you laughing so hard?!

–You are soo funny, mister grey chickens!

– Haven’t we warned you not to call us “mister”?

– You are such a sweet dodgers that, even if I try to be angry at you and eat you alive, I cannot do it!

– And you think we are afraid of you?!

– Meow...meow...meow...

– Why are you snickering again? Go on your way!

What have you given to us that you cannot get it back?! – The chickens started to chirp together.

– I haven’t given you anything! Buuuut... My appetite tells me that I can get something from you!

– What language are you speaking? What do you mean by “appetite” and “getting”?!

– “Appetite” and “getting” mean that I don’t have to hurt you... come quietly and climb into my mouth; let me put each of you into my cheeks, chew you and see how nice you taste!

– Be careful when you chew us-- we are fluffy. We might get stuck in your throat.

– A-ha-aaa! What do my poor ears hear?



– Don't call them poor, because they hear quite well!
 – You are such brave misters!
 – Haven't we warned you not to call us "misters"?
 – Ok, fine, fine! You are grey chickens who are not afraid of me!
 – We aren't even afraid of our mother! You are just a coward for us, we aren't afraid of you!
 – Hasn't your mother told you about me?!
 – Don't be a chatterbox. Tell us who you are then!
 – Meow...meow...meow... I like your courage, but I'm afraid, you will faint, if I tell you my name.
 – Look at him! I think he's afraid of us!
 – I am afraid for your lives, poor nestlings!
 – That's none of your business!
 – The, let me say, I aaaam...
 – Don't bother us! Just say what you want to say!
 – Meow...meow...meow...– The cat started to laugh out loud again.
 – Why are you laughing like a shameless child again?
 – Have you ever heard about Black Cat the Famous Thief?!
 – So what if we have?
 – That's me!
 – Are you that Black Cat, then?
 The cat stroked his moustache:
 – Yes, the world-famed Black Cat the Thief is in front of you and is preparing to crunch your bones with his teeth!
 – Oh boy, we are fainting with fear! What is he talking about? Then, you are that famous Black Cat the Thief? – The chickens looked straight into his eyes.
 – Maybe... you think I am a mouse? Yes? Squeak-squeak...
 The chickens suddenly stepped back and raised their heads:

– We don't care if you are the Black Cat or a mouse!

The Black Cat was going round the chickens, sticking out his waist, puffing up his tail and sticking out his tongue:

– I s-e-e-e-e! You tasty little nestlings, are you going to try to run away? What if I snatch and swallow you?

– Haven't we warned you to swallow us slowly so we don't stick in your throat? – The chickens ran and pecked the cat's eye.

– Oh, ooooooouch! My eye is falling out! – When the cat raised his hand to hold his eye, the breeze from his hand hit the chickens and they fell over. They broke their wings.

– Cheep-cheep-cheep...– The chickens were both floundering on their beaks. Some policemen who were passing by heard this hubbub and came to the scene. They immediately tied the Black Cat's hands and pushed him into the car. They took the chickens to the hospital in an ambulance. Now the Black Cat and the chickens are in the recovery room. According to the doctors, the chickens will be discharged after a week. But the Black Cat's condition is not good. Dear spectators, stay with us! We'll be right back after these advertisements!"

– Thank God! Thank God! – The Mother Hen stood up and opened the grain sack. – Come closer, my darlings, come closer. Take a beakfull of barley each. Throw it to the garden, for other birds to eat.

– Why to waste it, mommy?

– Let it be alms for my grey chickens!

3. The Grey Roosters, The Black Cat and tears...

The naughty grey chickens had grown up and became the Grey Roosters. They didn't understand that they were meat, soft and tasty meat. Who wouldn't want to eat tasty meat? Maybe it's ironic that God created more carnivores than herbivores. So, the Grey Roosters were always in the garden. One day, the Freckled Rooster and the Tufted Pullet invited them to their house. When they stepped outside, they suddenly jumped in fear and huddled together. The Black Cat was sitting on the sidewalk and staring at them. He had black sunglasses on. But the Black Cat didn't say anything to them, and was just staring.

The Grey Roosters waited for a while, but saw that the Black Cat didn't say anything. They started whispering to each other. Then they raised their heads and walked over to the Black Cat:

– Good afternoon, Black Cat the world-famous thief!

– Meow...meow...ooow...– The Black Cat bitterly smiled. Then started to talk as if he was talking to himself. – Those days are behind... They passed as fast as lightning... Happiness will never come back to me. Now I don't have any fame, except my color and name. Once, my color was the sign of my courage and bravery, but now it's a sign of bad luck. People don't want me to cross their road. They are afraid that I will bring misfortune to them.

– What happened to you, Mister Black Cat? – The Grey roosters looked at each other.

– Can't you see?!

– See what?! I cannot see anything now!

– Whaaat?!

– Who are you, kind creatures who wish me “good luck”?



– We have just said “Good afternoon” to you!
– “Good afternoon” means the same as “good luck.”
– We don’t know...– The Grey Roosters shrugged their shoulders. – We thought it is just a simple word.
– Of course, it is a simple word! But it’s a blessing said for the sake of God! Who are you? I couldn’t recognize you!
– We...we...– They looked at each other. – We are... the Grey Roosters!
– Grey Roosters... Grey Roosters... Gre-e-e-y... Roosters... No, I don’t remember you. I have memory problems.
– Hey, Black Cat the Famous Thief...
– Haven’t I told you that I am just a simple Black Cat now?! I cannot do anything but beg and eat!
– Did you know any grey chickens?
– Of course... Of course... Is it possible not to know such heroes? To be honest, even though they made me blind, I always praise their Mother Hen for bringing them up in such a brave spirit! – The Roosters lowered their beaks and remained silent. – Why don’t you talk? You didn’t say who you are?!
– We are guilty, Mister Black Cat!
– “Guilty”?.. Is that your name?
– No! No! That’s not our name! We mean that we have sinned, we are guilty!
– I have asked your name. What relation does your guilt have to your name?
– We are those grey chickens that you knew...
– Yo-o-o-o-u?!
– Please, forgive us, for God’s sake!
– Those brave chickens are you? Well done! Well done!

If I only could see you! It means the proverb“Heard about the hero, but didn’t see him” applies to me!

– We have grown up. We have grown up from grey chickens and become roosters. We are called the Grey Roosters now.

– Oh! – The Black Cat put his hand on his forehead. – Since I became blind, I see everything in the dark and think that everything remains the same and doesn’t grow up.

– Forgive us, Black Cat! Please, forgive us for the sake of God!

– Forgive?! For what?! God has already forgiven you! If you didn’t blind me, I would have eaten you! God saved your lives!

– How do you make a living now?! Probably no one volunteers for you to eat him!

– I put my hat out and live off of the money they put into it. Sometimes I stay hungry for weeks.

– Don’t you go anywhere?!

– Where can I go, if I don’t have a home?!

– Wait a minute! Wait here a minute! – The Grey Roosters immediately returned home and ran to the garden. They went directly to the kitchen. Granny was frying a steak in the pan. – Give us a piece of that, dear Granny!

– Why, don’t you have any grain?

– We are going to take it to the Black Cat! You know, he is blind now and has been hungry for days.

Granny put a slice of bread and two fried steaks into a plate and gave them to the Grey Roosters. The tasty smell of meat tempted the roosters; they wrinkled their noses and winked at each other:

– Let’s taste it!

Then they scolded themselves:



– No, we shouldn't eat someone else's food! Let's go.
– When the Grey Roosters returned back with the plate, the Black Cat deeply inhaled:

– Woww! What an amazing smell?! Is it a smell of meat coming to my nose?! Well done! Well done!

– Who are you talking to, Black Cat?

–Nothing... I have just smelled meat. Perhaps I am hallucinating in hunger.

– It's not a hallucination!

– What is it then?!

– Reality!

– What do you mean by reality?

– We have brought you some meat!

– Wh-a-a-a-t?!

– Here you are!

– May God bless you! Give me that! My mouth is watering!

But the Grey Roosters acted carefully; they used a tree branch to push the plate to the Black Cat. Then they started to crow:

– Bon appetit, Black Cat!

The Black Cat put his right hand into the plate:

– Do you know what I have just remembered, my dears?

– What?

– I was teasing you in our first meeting, do you remember?

– Of course! Of course! You were calling us "Mister" all the time. And we were protesting!

– Well done! You have an amazing memory! Now it is my turn to protest to you...

– Protest? Why?

– Don't call me "Mister" anymore!



– Why?! But you deserve to be a “Mister”!

– Maybe you are right, but I cannot be called “Mister” anymore. It is very hard to bear this name. Not everyone can carry it on his shoulders. And neither can I!

– Why?!

– I beg you, don’t call me “Mister” if you respect me! – Then the Black Cat took the plate with one hand and threw the meat into his mouth with the other hand. He chewed it for a while and then swallowed it. – Amaaaaazing! My mouth finally tasted something wonderful! May God bless you!

The Grey Roosters miserably stared at each other and looked down.

The Black Cat was biting pieces of meat, chewing and swallowing it, licking his lips and biting it again.

– Why are you eating so slowly, Black Cat?

– When I wasn’t blind, I could find meat at every step and ate it quickly. To be honest, I couldn’t taste it. I ate until I was totally full. I would get so full I couldn’t breathe. Blindness taught me so much. It turns out that you shouldn’t hurry in anything. Scientists say we should eat in order to live. We shouldn’t compete with our bellies. But know, if I eat once a month, the taste remains in my mouth for a long time. That is why I eat slowly, in order to fully taste the food. – The Black Cat was praising the Grey Roosters after swallowing the pieces of meat: “May God bless you!”

In their turn, the Grey Roosters were sighing and weeping. After they wept, they cleaned their beaks with their wings, whispered something and turned to the Black Cat:

– Black Cat! – The Black Cat was completely satisfied; he was mumbling, licking the piece of meat, tearing

and chewing it. But the Grey Roosters were calling him stubbornly. – Hey, Black Cat! Hey you, Black Cat! – After a while, the Black Cat swallowed and turned his head to the Grey Roosters. – Black Cat!

– Yes, please!

– We were calling you for a long time!

– I live in such hardship! I haven't eaten anything since I became blind. I am so happy to eat that I have lost all my senses. Excuse me, please!

– It's okay!

– I'm listening to you!

– May we ask you a question?!

– Of course you may!

– Why don't you go to a doctor?

– You are rubbing salt on my wound. I have forgotten to say that when you pecked my eye, they took me to the hospital and after that, they wanted to imprison me. My thief friends heard about it and broke me out of the hospital that night. I also neglected myself and didn't go to a doctor for months!

– Why?!

– To be honest, I also had lots of money, but when I became blind, my wife took everything and left me.

– And what about your children?!

– Oh! You renewed my sorrow! Can an ignoble wife give birth to noble children? They also left me and went with their mother.

– Don't be sad, Black Cat! We will not leave you hungry! Don't lose your hope!

– May God bless you! My hope keeps me alive! And let me give you advice. While you are young, you haven't seen



the hardships of this life, keep your faith and don't believe everyone.

– Thank you for your advice! – The Grey Roosters squawked.

– Darlings, we live in such time that it is dangerous to trust anyone! I had given some money to my younger sister to keep for hard times. Long live my sister! She took me to a doctor a few days ago...

The Grey Roosters shook their wings with impatience:

– What did the doctor say, Black Cat, what did he say?!

– Long live the doctor, he examined me for an hour. He said, I am a little bit late, but it isn't too late, Black Cat the famous Thief... Believe me, he said that I will be able to see!

– Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! Thank God! Thank God! We were so worried about you, Black Cat! – The Grey Roosters shook their hands, crowed and jumped about.

– I will have surgery next month! – The Black Cat smiled and put another piece of meat into his mouth. He was tearing it, putting between his teeth, slowly chewing and then swallowing.

– Black Cat, we think it would be better if no one ate meat in this world!

But the Black Cat was busy eating and didn't hear the Grey Roosters. He was enjoying the taste of the meat.

Mr. Donkey Donkeyson



1. Bzzzz....

“Bzzzz..... Bzzz.... Bzz...”

The Lion awoke to the sound of flies in his ears. He angrily pulled his right paw out from under his head and slapped at his left cheek.

“Useless creatures! They don’t even let us enjoy our sleep in the morning!”

Suddenly he snapped awake, as if someone had hit him. He slowly squinted his eyes open and peeked out from between his eyelashes.

Then he gasped. There were thousands of wide eyes staring straight into his face. He shot upright as if he had been bitten by a snake and stood on his hind legs. He saw... his own subjects of his kingdom. The fear in his eyes turned into rage. In his anger he pulled his body back and threw his head forward. He opened his mouth wide to scare those “useless creatures” who had disturbed his sweet sleep:

“Buzzz!”

The noise that came out of the King of the Forest’s mouth wasn’t even as loud as the buzzing of a mosquito. It didn’t even make a hair tremble on any of his subjects, the wild animals who were waiting for his command. The Lion was embarrassed. He slouched his body, let his legs go limp and slowly laid down, fixing his eyes on one point in the distance. Finally when he recovered, he looked around. The fox caught his eye.

“Bushy Tail!” This time the King of the Forest’s voice came out in a squeak, like a baby mouse.

“Bzzz....”

“Straight Ears!”

“Bzzz.. Bzzzz.”

“Crooked Paw!”

“Bzzzzzz...”

“Gentlemen, what is wrong with us?! Do we have sore throats? Did we all lose our voices?” the Lion asked, shaking his head.

All around him, everyone was buzzing.

“Bzzzz...”

“Bzzzz... Bzzzz....”

“Bzz... Bzz...”

“We don’t know!”

“We don’t know!”

“We don’t know,” everyone was saying.

Suddenly all the wild animals heard a loud sound of a donkey’s bray coming from the edge of the forest! “Hee-haw! Hee-haw!”

The Lion turned his blood-red eyes towards the Wolf, who was called Straight Ears. The Wolf got up from his place and left. Before long he came back with the Donkey. The Wolf held the Donkey’s ear with his teeth and kept hitting him with his tail to drive him forward as he brought the Donkey to see the King of the Forest.

2. “You’re glad to see me, Your Highness”

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, welcome!” the Lion purred, coming close and licking the long-eared donkey’s neck.

The Donkey was very afraid. But then he realized that the Lion didn’t seem to be licking him hungrily, and he became completely confused. He thought to himself, “What did he say?! Welcome?! Praise the Lord—this is unbelievable. Lions used to kill my ancestors and bring them to places like this to eat them. But this Lion is respecting me like an elder! He called me Mr. Donkey Donkeyson! And that coming from him—the very King of the Forest! And look at the way he is petting my neck! Strange things happen in life, I guess! Maybe... maybe they’re trying to trick me. Maybe they’re trying to make me happy at first and then they’re going to skin me for supper. Yes, that’s it. This trickster is a psychologist. He knows that if I’m afraid, my meat won’t taste good; they won’t be able to tell if they’re eating meat or grass. In any case, I shouldn’t just be silent; then the Lion will think I’m arrogant.”



The Donkey tried to squeeze his throat tight so his voice would sound more delicate but he ended up yelling even louder:

“Hee-haw! Hee-haw! You’re glad to see me, Your Highness, you’re glad to see me!”

The Lion furrowed his eyebrows and beat the tip of his tail on the ground in anger, asking “What?!”

“You’re glad to see me, Your Highness, you’re glad to see me!”

“How do you know if I’m glad to see you or not, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?! Are you mocking us?”

“God forbid, Your Highness, God forbid! I’m a creature of faith. I never speak with bad intentions. It’s just that I’ve been writing poems for a long time, and my tongue got tied. I meant to say ‘I’m glad to see you!’”

“Sooo.... You say you’re a poet?” – The Lion smiled.

The Donkey bowed his head, pawed at the ground modestly with his front hoof and looked up at the Lion.

“It might sound immodest to say so, Your Highness, but I have to admit that I am!”

“Have you published a book or anything?”

“I have not yet had that honor, Your Highness!”

“Why not?”

“The government used to publish books; they sold the books like straw and made good money on them too. They were fair to authors, and gave them small money for their books, like an honorarium. But now the times have changed; now you have to pay to get your own book published! Or else...”

The Lion quickly raised his right paw, gesturing for the Donkey to stop talking. Then he looked around and saw the wild animals standing stunned and silent in one corner.

“Bushy Tail!”

The Fox bounded over and bowed before the King of the Forest:

“Yes, Your Highness!”

“What was that you were talking about the other day?”

“About what, Your Highness? I don’t remember.”

“You were saying somewhere in the world they pay honorariums to authors?”

“Oh yes, Your Highness, you’re right!”

“Where was that?”

“In the country of Belarus. I read it on the internet with my own eyes. Whatever they publish, whether it’s good or bad, whether they make profit off it or not, they pay the author.”

The Lion lifted his left hand and waved the Fox away. Then returned to the Donkey:

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, what do you think about that? Does it sound good to you?”

“Your Highness, you mentioned Belarus. But going there is easier said than done. That’s a long way from here, over mountains and valleys. And in the middle there’s the Russian Army which has invaded the Crimea. It’s really messed up over there right now. No one knows what’s going on. God forbid, something might happen to me there. I might get hit by a stray bullet! Never mind dying... I might lose my reputation!”

“What do you mean, your reputation?”

“I mean my status as a poet, Your Highness.”

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, speaking of the Crimea, what are people saying about that? Who does the Crimea belong to?”

“Your Highness, do you mean the Crimea today, or historically?”

“Both.”

“If you really want to know the truth, historically the Crimea didn’t belong to Russia or to Ukraine. It belongs to the Tatars. Almost 600 years ago the Tatar people started living there. And 240 years ago the Russians took the Crimea away from Turkey. Today the global union considers the Crimea as unconditionally belonging to Ukraine.”

“But Bushy Tail here says that they held a referendum, and the people of the Crimea voted to become part of Russia.”

“Your Highness, first of all, the Tatars, who are the real owners of the Crimea, didn’t vote on becoming part of Russia. Second, we have four donkeys in our family, I mean my foals—five counting myself. Let’s say tomorrow seven bears come into my barn and say, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, pack up all your things and get out of here; this barn is ours. I would say, no, sirs, this barn is mine. They would say, prove it! I would say, my father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all born here, lived here and died here. These are their graves. Now we live here.

“The bears would say, that’s not enough proof. We’re going to have a referendum and see what the people want. And who do they mean by “the people?” Themselves. So what do you think, Your Highness? If we have a referendum with 7 bears against 5 donkeys, who is going to win?”

“The 7 bears, of course.”

“Now you’ve got it! This is the same trick the Russians played to take the Crimea. I’d been surprised if the Russians don’t start slowly putting pressure on the populations of

other countries and forcing them out! And even then, the ones who will end up getting hurt over it are common Russian people.”

The Lion nodded his head in agreement.

“Why don’t they understand this issue as well as you do?”

“Your Highness, do you think everyone has a good head on his shoulders?”

“Anyway, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, we’re on a tangent. What I wanted to say was that even if a poet is hungry and poor, he should at least have his own book!”

“A man is measured by his strength, Your Highness. And by strength— we mean money! For example, our neighbor Wild Jackall; After becoming the mayor, he started having people write books and publish them under his name. He’s always talking about how he got inspired and wrote such and such. He’s always winning awards too. And he took on a very ‘humble’ nickname: Wild Halal Jackal! He shows off so much; he’s always posing, as if he wasn’t the one digging around the sheep barns! One day he gave me an autographed copy of his thousand-page book, Selected Works. It was hard-bound, on glossy paper, printed in a font with letters the size of horse teeth. You could stand back ten steps and read it. Your Highness, I was drooling over that book right down to the floor. I completely lost control of myself, I was so smitten.

Like the people say, you work all year like a donkey, you sweat, and you earn a few cents. I’ve saved up half a bale of hay while my babies go hungry. And even that won’t amount to anything. They say the publisher owns a herd of buffalo. I’m going to go work in his fields for a couple of

months for free, and give him the hay, and get him to print me a big book!”

“Why big? Readers don’t know about you yet; can’t you start small?”

“No, Your Highness, a poet’s book has to be big!”

“Why is that?”

“For starters, they don’t publish books for people read them anymore, because no one actually reads. Second, the bigger your book, the greater a poet people think you are.”

“So you’re going to spend all that money and even work extra to do this... will this be worth it for you in the end?”

“Yes, Your Highness, it will!”

“Is it a secret or can I ask what you’ll get out of this?”

“It’s not a secret to God, so why should I keep it secret from you? From now on, everyone will call me ‘Poet Donkey Donkeyson.’”

“That sounds great!”

“Thank you very much, Your Highness, thank you very much! May all the donkeys be humble servants under your paw.”

“You’re a poet and an inspiration seeker... you probably know a lot then.”

“Of course! Of course! May all your loved ones rest in peace. When we were just learning how to bray, my late grandfather would scold us, saying ‘Do you all want to turn into mules? You’re not going to be donkeys by braying like that! Bray smarter!’”

“What do you mean by ‘bray smarter?’”

“Your Highness, let’s take you for an example. God is our witness that you probably don’t bray willy-nilly.”

“Whaaat? Since when do I bray?!” the Lion angrily

raised his right paw and started to beat the tip of his tail against the ground.

“I’m sorry, Your Highness, I’m sorry! I forgot we’re not all donkeys. I meant to say roar, not bray! When you see your prey, you start seeing red, and you’re only interested in the strength of your voice; you don’t look at musical notes or anything.”

“What do you mean, musical notes?”

“For example, when we bray, we try to use our voice’s notes, accents, and even exclamations perfectly. Singers call that ‘musical ornamentation.’ I remember well how when we were foals and we would bray incorrectly, my grandfather would rear up and holler, ‘There’s no poet without a book, and no shepherd without a staff!’ He would leave bite marks all over our necks.”

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, humans have considered themselves the “supreme creations” for thousands of years, but you donkeys have been of invaluable service to them not only with your work, but also with your reputation, and even your breeding. There are many things that I won’t say—no, that I can’t say, because it would be shameful!”

“Thank you very much, Your Highness, thank you very much! May all donkeys be your humble servants under your paw! You’re putting me on a pedestal!” The Donkey looked around proudly. He wanted to bray a little, but then he saw the Lion’s terrible face and he faltered.

“There’s no household where they don’t mention you every blessed day. It’s no secret that you have played a big role in people’s upbringing, especially in families. There are thousands of educators, scientists, and academicians, but no one is as famous as you in human society.” The Lion was

slowly inching toward the Donkey, which made the Donkey nervous. The Lion passed him, took a drink of water from the well, and paced back towards him. “The fact is, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, the point of what I’m saying isn’t just pretty words.”

The Donkey froze. He wasn’t sure if the Lion was mocking him or speaking seriously. He dropped his ears low and looked at the King of the Forest in astonishment. Every now and then he let out tiny braying-type sounds:

“Hee... hee...”

The Lion repeated:

“The point of what I’m saying isn’t just pretty words, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson... then what is it?”

“It’s facts, Your Highness!”

“And what do facts require?”

The Donkey looked silently into the Lion’s face and brayed a little:

“Hee-haw...”

“What?!”

“Our intelligence will never be enough to understand the wise words of a lion, Your Highness!”

“Facts require explanation. Or else it’s not a fact; it’s a pretension. For example, let’s say a baby in a house is crying. His crying is so hard, you might think someone was cutting it into pieces. What educator has ever written an essay on ‘How to calm a crying baby?’ Don’t think too hard; you won’t come up with one. It’s no secret that most authors don’t know how to write books about real life. And Russian books... they’re all garbage. Those ‘hardworking’ authors wrote and wrote until sweat covered their foreheads and their fingers were calloused, copying down other people’s

words like chickens with their heads cut off. Then they signed their own names on the top and compiled lovely books out of what they had plagiarized from here and there. The books are useless. But uneducated parents are another story... they make fun of their children with one sentence: ‘You donkey of a child, stop braying!’ As they say, stones should make noise... how does that saying go?”

“...Children shouldn’t.”

“Or when a boy is too wild... all it takes is for his father to shout, ‘Donkey! Aren’t you going to give us any peace and quiet?!’ Have you seen someone throw a stone into a pond of frogs?”

The Donkey nodded his head in agreement.

“They all go silent.”

“But what do you say about this: one fine day a housewife drops a dish and it breaks. Her husband sweeps the accident under the rug with his words: ‘A donkey won’t go back to the place where he made a mess!’... ”

Hearing these words, the Donkey was enraptured. “Your Highness, I swear by the spirit of my brother, Gray Donkey, who fell victim to the claw of a hungry wolf, you are one hundred percent correct!”

“It’s not hard to find examples. Let’s talk about law enforcement—police. When they trap a person in their net, they not only call him by your name, they even call up your forefathers from the grave to curse him! They create the impression that the person they’re judging isn’t a person at all, but rather an animal!”

The Donkey couldn’t restrain himself any longer. He bucked, kicked one leg, and began to bray:

“Hee-haw-haw!”

“What did you say?” asked the Lion in surprise.

“Forgive me, Your Highness; someone would have to have a heart of stone not to respond to this kind of praise! I’m just a donkey made of flesh and bone!”

“Don’t look down on yourself, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson; you don’t have to be so modest. You’re a poet, after all!”

The Donkey dug the ground with his right hoof. With his left eye he looked at the Lion and smiled. “Thank you, Your Highness. May all donkeys be ready to die under your paw!”

“There’s no need for thanks, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson! You work so closely with people that your character has rubbed off on them. Now tell me about people. What are their shortcomings?”

“Your Highness, if I list a thousand things, it won’t be enough to begin! Let’s start with how they treat us donkeys. They make us work from morning to evening, then they set us out to pasture. They don’t even put a blessed tuft of hay in front of us because we’re tired from walking so far. They even expose their own faults with a proverb, saying ‘so-and-so works like a donkey’! There you go. They make an example out of how hard we work, but they go along behind us and beat us with branches as soon as our feet slip even a little. They take us for granted as if they think we weren’t sired by a father and born from a mother, as if we sprang from the ground like mushrooms!”

“Now tell me, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, how is the health of these most intelligent creatures? Do they get sick?”

“Oh, yes, Your Highness! They get so sick they are unable to get out of bed for months and years.”

“I can’t imagine!”

“It’s true!”

“What do they do to deserve that?”

“It’s their own fault.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Your Highness, God made you meat eaters, and he made us plant eaters. But people eat both meat and plants, and whatever else they can get their hands on that’s softer than a rock!”

“Ooooh boy! I guess people don’t have manners about eating at all!”

“But the devil can take it. Let them eat what they will. But they take the beautiful things that God has given us and ruin them before they eat them!”

“How’s that?”

“They cook everything!”

“Wow!! But what about all the vitamins and minerals in the food? You’re telling me those poor people are just living on wood!”

“And you think they’re decent, Your Highness? Even if we are starving or foaming at the mouth, we would never eat even a crumb of what the people eat.”

“Why not?”

“It disgusts us!”

“Aaahhh... I understand. So you’re disgusted, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson!”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

“The food isn’t so disgusting. I know something more disgusting!”

“What’s that, Your Highness?”

“For example, what they call ‘sex!’”

“Sex?!” The Donkey furrowed his eyebrows in

surprise. “I’m not sure I heard your wise words correctly, Your Highness.”

“What’s wrong with your ears then?!”

“You’ve been misinformed, Your Highness. I swear by the souls of my ancestors, we don’t have sex!”

“Why are you making this about yourself, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson? I’m talking about people, for heaven’s sake!”

“Ohhhh...” The Donkey smacked himself on the head with his front hoof. “By all means, please forgive me! Now let me say something and you listen, Your Highness! We animals have intercourse once a year, except for goats and sheep. But people have taken this issue to an extreme, and they call it sex. They even teach their children about it in school!”

“That’s crazy!”

“Cross my heart and hope to die!”

“That’s indecent!”

“God knows that our goal is to increase our population. Humans’ goal is immodesty!”

“What is immodesty?”

“It means to do something for pleasure!”

“But why do you say immodesty?”

The Donkey got angry:

“Your Highness, the most important mandate we have from the Almighty Creator is to be fruitful and multiply. In times past, they used to call that ‘intimate relations.’ But there’s not a single animal on the planet who would have intimate relations face to face! Even the monkeys which people proudly call their ancestors wouldn’t do something that stupid. But people... God forbid... and do you know how they do it? You’d think they have no God. Even though

God considers it a sin, during sex they start to have debates and discussions! That's why people in human society are born with two heads, four legs, conjoined, armless, mentally handicapped, with cleft palates... in a nutshell, they're born with a thousand different disabilities and those people become a burden to society, as God's punishment. So there you have it-- that's the pleasure that these intelligent creatures derive from sex. I don't know what else to call it besides immodesty!"

"Just between us, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, is sex pleasurable for people?"

"Thank you for asking such a great question! The gladness of our hearts that we feel just one time is more than what people feel all their lives combined."

"God, what a pitiful species!"

"Your Highness, they're worse than 'pitiful.' They've become totally shameless!"

The Lion beat the tip of his tail on the ground and shook his head in consternation.

"Your Highness, now that we're on this topic, I have to tell you something. I know if they find out I've said it, they'll pile straw on my back, but I can't withhold this from you."

"What?"

"People abuse us."

"What do you mean?"

"Your Highness, people are killing off our generation for their own good by the thousands, maybe even by the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands or more."

"How?"

"Your Highness, we are a totally different species than horses, and we would never dream of having relations with

a horse. But people get us aroused and throw us onto a mare. We have what she needs. Then the mare gives birth. Do you know what she bears?! The world's saddest creature: a mule! A mule isn't fully male or fully female. As they say, no one has ever become a grandparent by siring a mule. Our identity as donkeys is subjected to this evil. And may God not make them cry; that's not all the humans do to us..."

"Why are you blessing them? Why don't you curse them by saying 'May God make them cry?'"

"Don't say that, Your Highness. If people are doing this much evil while they are in a normal state, just imagine what they would start to do if God cursed them!"

The Lion shook his head slowly.

"Sooo... what I was going to say... Your Highness, people have also begun... pimping."

"What do you mean, pimping?"

"Your Highness, we haven't seen things like this in the animal world. But people... there are some people who find girls for each other, make them become their wives, they fix them up with men... that's what pimping means."

"That's strange!" The Lion furrowed his eyebrows.

"Speaking of strange, there's something even worse, Your Highness. The worst is that people have even started to pull us into their evil pimping."

"You mean they find husbands for you?!"

"No, no, Your Highness. They force us to have intercourse with girls and women."

"What?"

"It's true."

"And you do it?"

"What else can we do? We don't have any other option."

One day a girl was floundering around. If the police hadn't come in time, our baby beast-boy would have died."

"Have any of them actually given birth to your offspring?"

"Your Highness, humans are the most clever beings in the world. Would they let that happen?"

"I've been paying attention to your speech, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, and noticing your knowledge. It's amazing—you're like a professor!"

"Thank you very much, Your Highness! Thank you very much. May all the donkeys be your humble servants!"

"But what about our problem?"

"What problem?"

"Have you ever seen people suffering from this problem we have?"

"May you never have any problems, Your Highness! What are you talking about?"

"You don't see it?"

"What?!"

"You don't see what has happened to us?"

"No. What?"

"Nothing?! You don't see that we've all lost our voices, we've lost our identities? We don't know how to fix this. We quit school after the elementary grades and started hunting. What can we say to Bushy Tail? He studied all the way through and got his master's. If he hadn't been so distracted by chickens, he would have been a PhD by now. And now he can't remember how to yelp. Tell me now: when people lose their voices, what do they do about it?"

"Your Highness, don't be fooled by how people talk about their science and their knowledge. It would take at least a thousand years for them to catch up to us."

“I had no idea!”

“Yes! It’s true! What do people know about medicine?! Let’s take donkeys as an example! When we get sick, we die in 2 or 3 days and get on with business. But people... man, when God wants to take their souls, they steal them back. God sees the other side and comes back to earth!”

“You mean they resist God?”

“No, Your Highness. They can’t trump God. They just haven’t had enough of this world, so they take medicines by the handful to prolong their lives by five or ten days!”

“But what are we supposed to do, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson? We don’t have medicines.”

“It’s better not to, Your Highness.”

“What do you mean, it’s better not to have medicine?”

The Donkey suddenly reared up on two legs and brayed with joy:

“Hee- haw!”

“What did you say?”

“I figured it out!”

“What did you figure out?” the Lion asked, taking a step forward.

“Don’t you have a book of musical notes, Your Highness?”

“What are you talking about?”

“We don’t just bray willy-nilly. God gave us a certain way to do it. It’s a song; it’s music. And the key to music is notes. One time—forgive me for saying this—I acted like a donkey and chugged down half a bucket of ice-cold water from the refrigerator. In the morning when I got up, I realized I had a sore throat. I couldn’t speak at all for three whole days. And on the fourth day when I got my voice

back, I wanted to bray for joy. But do you know what noise came out of my mouth? Buzzzzz.... Haha, can you imagine that? Hee-haw! Hee-haw”

“Donkey Donkeyson, why are you laughing? Are you making fun of us?” the Lion asked angrily.

“No, no, Your Highness! God forbid! What are you saying? I swear I’m laughing at myself!” The Donkey started to tremble in fear.

“But you still have your voice today!”

“I’m taking about that time in my story, Your Highness!”

“How did you get your voice back?”

“I understood that I had forgotten how to bray. I ran to the barn. I took my sheet music from the haystack and started to practice. I practiced for one hour, two hours, three hours... finally I got my bray back. Hee haw... hee haw...”

“I don’t remember ever roaring with sheet music!”

“Your Highness, animals must have sheet music. On any given day, I bray at least five or six times. For one thing, it’s healthy. I’m clearing out my lungs. And for another thing, it’s practice. You’re different, Your Highness. You’re a meat eater. But we Donkeys are plant eaters so our memory isn’t very strong. We have to practice often. Hee haw!”

The Lion swiftly raised his paw and the Donkey ducked his head back.

“That’s entirely enough! We didn’t bring you here to bray and keep rubbing it in!”



3. Donkey Donkeyson's Music Lessons

The Donkey gathered up his tail and sprinted away. He passed through the crowd of animals so quickly that he left them in a cloud of dust as he disappeared behind the trees.

“Straight Ears! It looks like that blockhead just left us!”

The Wolf bolted forward. Within a few minutes they Donkey appeared from the other direction with a huge book of music on his back. With his foals following behind, he came and stood before the Lion.

“Who are these, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?”

“They are my children, Your Highness.”

“What are they doing here?”

“I brought them along as my assistants, Your Highness!”

The Lion furrowed his eyebrows. “What kind of assistance are they going to give you?”

“They’re going to do background vocals.”

“Why on earth do we need background vocals?”

“They’re going to repeat what I sing to help you remember the notes better.”

“Are you going to teach us our own sounds?”

“No, Your Highness, I’m going to teach you my sound.”

“Why yours?”

“Because this is my sheet music for braying.”

“So you mean from now on we will all bray?”

“I guarantee it one hundred percent.”

“But what about our own identities?”

“Your Highness, today there’s no place for talking about identity. If you want your voices back, I will teach you to bray. Or else you will all just keep on buzzing. My old noble master, may he rest in peace, used to say that a

voice is invisible, but it's very powerful! God forbid, if your voices remain trapped inside your bodies, they might give you a heart attack or cancer.”

The Lion looked around angrily. The Fox came forward and fell at his feet:

“Your Highness, it's better to bray than to die!”

“Do you all agree?”

“Bzzzz...”

“Bzzz.... Bzz...”

“Bz...” The animals were crying out from all around:

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”

4. Donkey Donkeyson Sits Like a Nobleman

The Donkey arranged his children and then approached the Lion:

“Your Highness, I'm going to need two stumps.”

The Bear did a somersault and disappeared into the thick forest. A little while later he came back with one stump on his shoulder, kicking another one along the ground in front of him. The Donkey put the music on one of the stumps and got ready to sit down on the other one. He lifted up his left leg to cross it over the top of his right leg, but he crashed down onto his forehead. He untangled his legs from his head and said “hmpf.” He quickly got up and brushed the dust off his hide, saying,

“I'm sorry...”

The animals whispered among themselves. The Lion smiled:

“Are you OK, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?”

“Your Highness, if I were hurt from one little tumble like that, they wouldn’t call me a donkey!”

“Where did you learn how to sit cross-legged like a nobleman?”

“Like I said a minute ago, my master was a nobleman. He always used to sit like that.”

“Do you know the biggest secret of sitting like a nobleman, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?” The Donkey blinked his eyes, looked at the Lion and mumbled, “No, Your Highness!”

“First you actually have to be a nobleman!”

The Donkey lifted his head happily.

“God willing, I will be one soon!”

“How?”

“I’ll change my last name!”

“What does changing your last name have to do with being a noble?”

“It’s connected, Your Highness! From now on I will be called ‘Donkey Nobledonkey!’”

“You can’t become a noble just by changing your name; you have to actually have nobility in your ancestry!”

“Who cares about our ancestry, Your Highness? The most important thing is for us to be noble ourselves.”

The Lion changed the subject. “Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, don’t you want to start your lesson?”

“Of course! At once!” The Donkey nervously flailed around, then he finally became still and began to warm up his voice. “Hee... hee... aah... hee-haw... hee-haw... hey... That’s good. Your Highness, please come closer.”

The Lion stepped forward.

“Thank you.” The Donkey bent his head down and squinted at the music. After a while he straightened up and looked at the Lion. “Please, sing ‘Hee.’”

“hiii...” the Lion squeaked.

“A little stronger...”

“Hee...”

“Not like that, imitate me: Hee...”

“He... he...”

“It’s not working, Your Highness. Surely you have more power than that!”

“I can’t do it any other way.”

“Please, get angry!”

“Why?!”

“Get angry so you’ll pull your throat tight and your voice will come out stronger.”

“I need a reason to get angry.”

“Your Highness, have you ever had a prey that got away?”

“Once I attacked a long-horned buffalo. Somehow I wasn’t being alert enough. Suddenly I found myself between the buffalo’s horns, in the air. He threw me to the ground and ran away.”

“Hee-haw!”

“What did you say?!”

“That’s great!”

“Why is that great?”

“Get angry, Your Highness! Get angry at the long-horned buffalo for running away from you! If you can’t be angry at the buffalo, then be angry at yourself for not being able to catch and eat him!”

The Lion got so angry that he shouted “Harrrr” instead

of “Hee.” The Donkey nodded his head in approval and turned to his children:

“One, two, three...”

The foals, who had been waiting for his command, quickly stood up and sang:

“Hee... Hee... Hee... Hee... Haw... Haw... Haw...

Haw...

Hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw...

I’m a donkey, yes, of course!

I will never be a horse!

I don’t gallop, trot or play;

I roll on the ground and bray!

Hee... Hee... Hee... Hee... Haw... Haw... Haw...

Haw...

Hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw...”

5. Hee...Haw...

After three days of practice all the animals had begun to bray. They were even doing it so loudly that the forest was filled with the sound of their braying. The Lion had a mountain-sized pile of fresh clover delivered to the Donkey’s front door.

The Donkey was in a better state than he had ever been before. Every day from morning until evening he and his children ate hay, drank water, rolled around and brayed.

The nightingales were the first birds to get tired of all the loud braying in the forest, and they all flew away. Then the sparrows, starlings, thrushes and crows followed. There was not a single bird left in the forest. One day all the farm

animals gathered and lined up in a long line around the edge of the forest like diamonds along a ring to find out what was going on there with all the braying noises. They sent in the magpie to spy and find out what was happening. The magpie came back quickly:

“I didn’t even see a single donkey in there. The braying noises are coming from bears, wolves, and foxes! Even the King of the Forest, the Lion, is braying!”

A commotion rose up among the farm animals.

“What an insult! They should pay for this with blood. How on earth did these meat-eating animals start talking like one stupid plant eater?”

But the animals were too afraid to go into the forest. Instead, they went around its edges yelping, snuffling, howling, and bellowing. As the months went by, they gradually heard less braying sounds from the forest. Every now and then they would hear a yelp or a howl. And one day, they heard:

“Roooooooar! Rooooar!...” The Lion’s roar shook the forest.

All the farm animals ran away in the blink of an eye.

6. Bad in Return for Good

“So-oo, gentlemen,” the Lion began to address the wild animals. “Now we all have our voices back. We’re back to our usual selves. Go on out and hunt as you did before.”

Then he stretched out on the ground and rested his head on his paw. He had just closed his eyes when he heard a loud sound in the forest:

“Hee-haw! Hee-haw!”

The Lion jumped up to his feet.

“Is that our teacher I hear?”

“Yes, it’s him, just as you said, Your Highness!” the fox yelped as he sprang up on his tail.

“Gentlemen, now that our voices have returned to normal, let’s invite our teacher for a celebration!”

The Wolf sprang forward. Before long he was back with the Donkey in front of him, leading him to the Lion.

“Welcome, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson!” the Lion smiled.

“You’re glad to see me, Your Highness, you’re glad to see me!”

“Weren’t you able to become a nobleman by now, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?”

“Your Highness, it turns out that everything depends on money. I paid two cartful from that clover mound you gave me, and they made me into a noble right away. Now I’ve become famous everywhere under the name Donkey Nobledonkey!”

“That’s wonderful! Congratulations!”

“Thank you very much, Your Highness, thank you very much! May all the donkeys be humble servants under your paw.”

“Nobledonkey, what is that you’re carrying?”

“Your Highness,” the Donkey said, handing a book to the Lion, “may God bless you! I gave three carts of clover to the publisher, which he needed to save his buffalo from starvation, and he published my book!”

“That’s great news!” The Lion took the book and began to look at it carefully. “But what didn’t they write your name on the cover of the book?”

“They wrote it, Your Highness.”

“Where?”

“See the picture of me there? And the words coming out of my mouth?”

“Hee-haw?!”

“That’s right, Your Highness!”

“Why did they write ‘Hee-Haw?’, after you paid all that to get your name changed?”

“They were afraid, Your Highness! They were afraid to write my name!”

“Who was afraid? What were they afraid of? What’s scary about that?”

“The publisher was afraid, Your Highness!”

“The publisher?!”

“Yes, Your Highness! He said that it would be damaging for the government!”

“What do you mean? When they make you work day in and day out it’s not bad for the government, but when they write your name down it’s bad for them?!”

“We’re a small species, Your Highness! The power is in their hands!”

“Whose?”

“The publishers.”

“Whatever publisher can’t print the truth has no business being a publisher at all! Wouldn’t it be better for that person if he sold potatoes and onions in the market, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?”

“Your Highness, I forgot to tell you what the publisher said. He said that if he wrote my name, the higher-ups would skin him alive!”

“They’re still afraid of higher-ups?”

“Who is brave enough to disobey them, Your Highness?”

The Lion was deep in thought for a few minutes. Then he suddenly lifted the book up in the air and started to circle around the Donkey. The Donkey started to turn around and around to keep facing him like a sunflower following the path of the sun. Then the King of the Forest stopped and threw the book to the ground. The Donkey dropped to his knees, stretched his stomach out along the ground and started crawling towards the book.

The Lion roared:

“ROOOOOOAAAARRRR!”

The Donkey, startled, fell onto his back and was left with his feet in the air. The Lion pulled his right paw into a fist and shook it in the Donkey’s face:

“Get up!”

The Donkey sprung to his feet. His whole body was shaking, and his head was heavy.

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, you know that we all became your peers for five whole months.”

“What do you mean, Your Highness?”

The Lion bellowed: “That’s just it! It was meaningless!”

“Cross my heart and hope to die, Your Highness, I can’t understand what you’re saying.”

“I mean we were braying!”

The Donkey dropped his gaze to the ground.

“I submit to the truth of what you’re saying, Your Highness.”

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, do you realize that for five months we haven’t tasted meat?!”

“I submit to the truth of what you’re saying, Your Highness.”

“Mr. Donkey Donkeyson, you have insulted us deeply!”

The Donkey started. The Lion picked up the book from the ground and started hitting the Donkey over the head with it.

“Why don’t you speak, Mr. Donkey Donkeyson?! Repetition is the mother of knowledge. Let me say it again: you have insulted us deeply!”

“I don’t remember what you’re talking about, Your Highness, I don’t remember!”

“Well, it won’t be too hard to remind you!” The Lion reared up on his hind legs and suddenly opened his mouth. “ROAR..... Tall Ears!”

In the blink of an eye the Wolf pounced and sunk his teeth into the Donkey’s neck. He picked up the Donkey and thrashed him on the ground. The Wolf tore into his stomach, crushed his chest, and divided up his carcass. There was just barely enough meat for everyone to have a piece. As they ate, they slowly dropped their heads to the ground. Before long, the whole forest was asleep and snoring.

7. Good in Return for Bad...

“Bzzzz..... Bzzz.... Bzz...”

The Lion awoke to the sound of flies in his ears. He angrily pulled his right paw out from under his head and slapped at his left cheek.

“Useless creatures! They don’t even let us enjoy our sleep in the morning!”

Suddenly he snapped awake, as if someone had hit him. He slowly squinted his eyes open and peeked out from between his eyelashes.



Then he gasped. There were thousands of wide eyes staring straight into his face. He shot upright as if he had been bitten by a snake and stood on his hind legs. He saw... his own subjects of his kingdom. The fear in his eyes turned into rage. In his anger he pulled his body back and threw his head forward. He opened his mouth wide to scare those “useless creatures” who had disturbed his sweet sleep:

“Buzzz!”

The noise that came out of the King of the Forest’s mouth wasn’t even as loud as the buzzing of a mosquito. It didn’t even make a hair tremble on any of his subjects, the wild animals who were waiting for his command. The Lion was embarrassed. He slouched his body, let his legs go limp and slowly laid down, fixing his eyes on one point in the distance. Finally when he recovered, he looked around. The fox caught his eye.

“Bushy Tail!” This time the King of the Forest’s voice came out in a squeak, like a baby mouse.

“Bzzz....”

“Straight Ears!”

“Bzzz.. Bzzzz.”

“Crooked Paw!”

“Bzzzzzz...”

“Gentlemen, what is wrong with us?! Do we have sore throats? Did we all lose our voices?” the Lion asked, shaking his head.

All around him, everyone was buzzing.

“Bzzzz...”

“Bzzzz... Bzzzz....”

“Bzz... Bzz...”

“We don’t know!”

“We don’t know!”

“We don’t know,” everyone was saying.

“Bushy Tail!” the Lion bellowed, “What kind of hardship is this, that went away and then came back?”

“This isn’t just a hardship, Your Highness!”

“Well then, what is it?!”

“This is God’s punishment on us for acting unjustly!”

The Lion held his head in his hands and started to think. Suddenly the animals started to nudge one another and point. The King of the Forest had tears streaming down his cheeks.

“You know what’s under the earth and what’s on it... why didn’t you stop us from killing this innocent animal?”

“Your Highness, did you really think that I would die?”

“What should we do now?”

“Oh, you bloody-mouthed predators!” There was a sudden screeching noise from the sky. The wild animals were startled. When they looked up, they saw an owl sitting on a tree branch above them, staring at them with wide eyes as he flicked his eyelashes. “Was the Donkey’s meat tasty?!” he asked dryly.

“We hardly got to eat big enough morsels to taste it, Honorable Owl!”

“So ask your stomachs!”

“You wise creature who did not bow down before King Solomon, we have done a terrible thing. We don’t know what to do now to set it right.”

“There’s only one option for you. You have to collect the bones of the dead donkey and bury them on the highest peak of Black Hill so his spirit will rest in peace.”

“Bzz!!!”

“Bzzzz...”

“Bz...”

“What are you saying?” the Owl asked angrily.

“Will we get our voices back, Mr. Owl?” squeaked the Lion.

“Are you trying to negotiate with God?” asked the Owl.

“Heaven forbid! Heaven forbid!”

“If the spirit of the Donkey is at peace, then God will forgive you too.”

“Bzz...”

“Bzz... bzz...”

“Bzzzz...”

“What are you saying?” asked the Owl, becoming more furious.

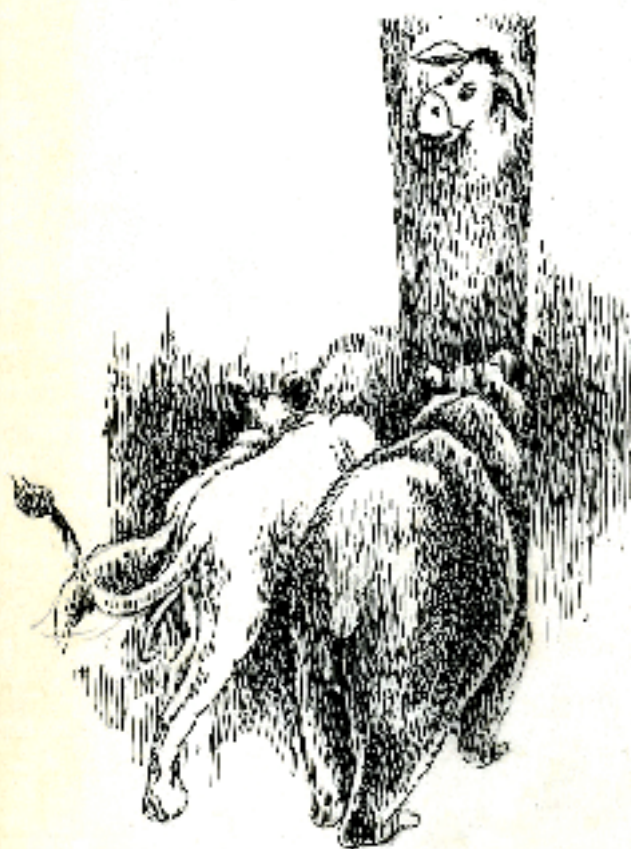
“God willing! God willing! God willing!” The animals answered in unison.

The Owl flew away. The wild animals started to collect the Donkey’s bones from the ground, from under bushes and beside trees, crying as they worked. The Lion picked up a hip bone in his teeth and started moving forward. The other animals followed behind him, carrying the bones.

As the sun began to set, the animals climbed Black Hill and dug a grave. The Bear placed all the Donkey’s bones in the grave, tossed a handful of dirt over the top and stepped back. The wild animals buried the Donkey with tears in their eyes.

A little later the Bear brought a tombstone made of black granite. The picture of Donkey Donkeyson carved onto the stone was sparkling against the black background. Under the picture, one of the Donkey’s poems had been engraved:

I’m a donkey, yes, of course!



I will never be a horse!
I don't gallop, trot or play;
I roll on the ground and bray!
Hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw... hee-haw...

They placed the tombstone and smoothed over the surface of the grave. The animals cried so much that they grew tired and they all fell asleep around the grave. They didn't open their eyes for five whole days. On the sixth day early at dawn, the Lion felt like someone said to him, "Get up!" He looked around and saw that bright green grass had grown over the grave. The Donkey's portrait was looking straight at him. He thought he saw the Donkey wink and widen the corners of his mouth into a smile.

The King of the Forest leaped up from his place and burst out with joy:

"ROOOAAARRR!"

All the wild animals joined in with their voices:

"AWOOOO!"

"YELP! YELP!"

"GROOOOWWL!"

The Jinn



Bismillah!¹

- Bismillah!
- Bismillah!
- Bismillah!

Granny touched the ground and then put her hand on my head. She did it three times:

- I’m taking your fright!
- I’m taking your fright!
- I’m taking your fright!

Having said so she shouted towards the end of the fence:

– Go to hell, goddamn thing! Frightened my dear child!..

I was playing in the yard when our neighbour’s dog attacked me and torn out my trousers.

¹ *Bismillah – In the name of God (arab).*

– Just you imagine if it bit the child! – Granny touched my trousers. – Let’s go darling. I’ll wash the door-chain and give the water to you to take your fright².

– Where are you, let the ground open under you! I’m tired of calling you! Go and fetch some water, the child is frightened, – Granny abused her.

My aunt tired and sick of Granny’s scolding her because of me said:

– Here they say “Armenian came, God help us!”

– You yourself are Armenian, – I answered.

Having made a great noise she fetched a cup of water. I pushed her away with my shoulder:

– Don’t stand before me as a Yezid³.

And she looked at me angrily:

– Here they say:

Do for him your best

He wouldn’t care less.

Granny took the cup, put the door-chain into it three times and asked me to drink it.

I could hardly have three sips of it. Granny was very glad for me:

– My child is very brave, mashallah⁴, may God keep him from bad eyes.

Then she gave me another trousers to wear and a butterbread:

² *A sort of belief in Azerbaijan taking the fright off (author)*

³ *Yezid – a person which didn’t give a chance to his prisoners to drink water.*

⁴ *Mashallah – God praise (arab).*



– May I fall a victim to you, when you are frightened, say “bismillah” and the goddamn things will run away from you.

– Who are the goddamn things, Granny?

– Pull your ears, pull your ears, – Granny said and neighed, then pulled my ears, her own ears and added:

– I speak about the Jinns⁵.

– What is a Jinn, Granny?

– Unseen beings.

– What do they do?

– What can they do, they do harm to themselves.

– Tell me, for God’s sake!

– They do harm to men.

– What harm?

– They take men out of their flats, at night, and drive them mad.

– Your deceased aunt Inghilis told me that my father-in-law became an outlaw during the first years of the Soviet government. One day when he was riding on a horseback he saw a festivity in Davadushan⁶. He stopped at once and saw a dozen of merry men. They surrounded him and took him to a table. They put a plate before him and said:

– Eat as much as you want, but don’t say the thing that you know.

⁵ *Jinn (Moslem mythol.) – one of a class of spirits lower than the angels, capable of appearing in human and animal forms, and exercising influence over mankind for good and evil.*

⁶ *Davadushan – a place in Kurdamir region between the villages of Khalsa and Beyi.*



He told that when he uttered the word “bismillah” everything and everybody disappeared before him. And then he understood that those people were the Jinns.

– Tell me Granny, what they meant by saying “don’t say the thing that you know”?

– This is the word “bismillah” that they are afraid of so much. When you say it they disappear.

– Will the Jinn be as big as this house?

– It is as little as my old galosh. By the way, tell your father to buy me the new ones. But they are very strong.

– But Granny, Father says that Man is the strongest of all.

– The Man is stronger by his wit, my boy.

Granny took a pin from her collar:

– Let me fix this pin on your collar, the Jinns are afraid of such things, keep it on your collar carefully. In old times when seeing the Jinn men stuck the pin into its dress, so it stayed and served that man.

– But you just told about its being unseen.

– When it is willing to it is seen.

– Hasn’t it hands?

– Can there be a Jinn without hands? Granny looked me surprisingly.

– Why then doesn’t it throw the pin away?

– I don’t know, my dear boy, when I see it I’ll ask about it.

– Can you see it Granny?

– I don’t think so, my dear. Those are men having no sins that see the Jinn, let alone prophets and the God. We have got enough sins now, we, men.

– Tell me about Jinns, Granny!

The Dog, The Cat and The Man

They were three:

a dog,

a cat

and a man.

All three were hungry.

The dog putting his jaw on his hands was dozing.

The cat putting his head on his stomach was snoring.

The man sat still in the middle of the room. Lying on his back he looked at the ceiling and counted the logs.

All three:

the dog, the cat, the man were hungry.

Tired of sleeping the dog snarled:

– Mrrr...

Tired of snoring the cat murmured:

– Miaow...

The man dying of hunger began to count the logs again:

– One... two... three days already I'm hungry. There is a noise in my stomach and there is a fur in my mouth. Four... five... six... my intestines are all dry by now... Seven... eig... he couldn't utter the word.

– Wow-wow-wow – suddenly the dog got very angry.

– He might have found fault with the cat. They can't live in peace, just can't... eight... nine... the logs are all rotten. The ceiling will come on me some day. Ten...

– Wow-wow-wow... wow-wow...

– God, help us! – He jumped out into the yard. – Oh, my! What is he doing! Boh!

The dog pulling something by his teeth, shook his head to and fro. The man couldn't understand anything. "He must have gone mad!" – he thought. Having taken a stick from the ground he jumped towards the dog.

– What do you want, goddamn thing!?

When he raised his hand to hit the dog the stick dropped from his weakened fingers. He saw a little girl in the mouth of the dog.

– Boy, save me from this scoundrel, please! – pleaded the girl.

... Bump... he hit the dog and the dog releasing the girl ran into the pile of tatak⁷. The man came up to raise the girl but couldn't. She was very heavy and as if he was pulled down. He left the girl there.

– Damn it, I might have broken my backbone.

– Ha – ha... the girl laughed lying on the ground. – Don't try to raise me, boy, you can't do it.

– Why?

– Because I am a Jinn!

– What?! – the man jumped back. – Bismillah! – Having said this he did a salavat⁸. Looking round he saw nobody and smiled:

– Hunger makes me mad! – Then he went towards the verandah.

– I want to do good to you, – he heard a voice.

⁷ *Manure briquettes used for heating (author).*

⁸ *After praying moslems put their right hand down their faces (author)*



The man raised his head and saw the Jinn sitting on the doorframe.

– What a mess I’ve got into, – thought the man.

– Nothing of a mess, – said the girl, – you have saved my life and I want to do you good for it.

– Why are you making fun of me then. Why are you calling me “a boy”.

– How old are you? – the girl asked.

– In my forty three.

– I also thought so.

The man interrupted the Jinn:

– Don’t think thoughts. You should ask me who I am, what my age is...

The Jinn asked sharply:

– And what do you think of my age?

– Four.

– Dishonest you are! – cried the Jinn and the man startled. – We stay in our mother’s womb for five years before we are born, and you say I’m four! Don’t forget that a Jinn’s year is equal to your ten years.

The man stood still, he couldn’t say a word. At last the Jinn asked:

– How old am I to your mind?

– Four.

– Subtract one.

– Three.

– Add five beside it. – The Jinn showed her fingers.

– Thirty five? – asked the man with surprise.

– Add a zero after it.

– You don’t say so! – The man said. – Are you laughing at me?



The Jinn repeated with indifference:

– I told you to add a zero after it.

– Three hundred and fifty?

– Subtract seventcen from thìs.

– Three hundred and thirty three...

– Young man, there is nothing to be surprised at.

Don't forget that the Jinns live at least one thousand years.

We don't get old, don't die. Even if we die we rise again.

The difference is, that if we die as a woman we rise again as a man, and vice versa.

– You say you don't die? – the man asked thoughtfully.

– If the man kills us we don't rise again that is why the man is our greatest enemy.

– And if the dog eat you, what would become of that?

– It would be bad for itself.

– Why?

– If it had eaten me, it would have eaten my body, not my soul. And my body would have eaten its body from inside and it would become a jinn but with the difference that it would be my body and its soul.

So I would do it a harm until it died.

– How does it all happen? – The man kept his lips tight.

– Has a man a body? Yes, he has. And a soul? Yes, he has. Where is a body and where is a soul? – The Jinn stared at him. – You'll say that the soul is in the body, won't you?

The man nodded.

– And what about Jinns?

– It must be the same.

– Why?

- The men are much alike the Jinns, – said the man.
- Why then you are called men and we are called

Jinns?

– It's because that the Jinns are magicians, – answered the man with fright.

– Don't pretend to be innocent. Three are such magicians among the men that can cut the Jinn's throat with a feather. – The Jinn got angry. – Know and remember... – and suddenly she began to whisper something.

– Oh, my God, who is this?! – The man stepped back.
– Standing beside you and looking at me.

The Jinn smiled:

- Guess who it is.
- It looks like you. You are alike as two peas in a pod.
- I called it to be seen to you. – The Jinn said.

The man was surprised.

– Don't be afraid of it. It is my soul. Do the same as I tell you, – the Jinn said. – Put your hand on its head.

The man put his hand on the soul's head. It became flat.

- But I don't feel anything under my hand.
- I told you that it was a soul, not a body. Now move your hand, – the Jinn said.

As the man moved his hand the soul was separated into several parts, then became unbroken as a fog.

- This is a miracle.
- Now take me by my hand, – said the Jinn.

The man took the Jinn by the hand with shiver. Just then the soul became longer and thinner and turning abruptly entered the Jinn's nose as a smoke.

- You see, our souls come back to our body when

the man touches us. Then we become men. And if we die at this moment we never rise again because our souls perish with our body. I am a mere poor, weak living-being until my hand is in yours.

– How is it so? – the man asked with a cheerful surprise.

– Look how! – the Jinn jumped away suddenly. – My friend, you were very glad to know about it.

– How did you know?

– We can guess what men think about us.

And a little later she added:

– All the living-beings see us except men. I was returning back from my aunt's when the dog caught me. You came out to know what the noise was. And I remembered my grandfather's words at once: "Be seen to the man and he will help you". And you have saved my life. Now it is my turn.

– What turn? – the man asked.

– It's my turn to save you, – said the Jinn.

– To save me? From what?

– From poverty.

– My poverty comes from the God. How can you save me from that?

– Come on, let's go! – Having heard the God's name the Jinn got angry.

– Where to? – The man was frightened.

– To the country of Jinns.

– So you have come to harm me, haven't you?

– My dear, I am the daughter of the padshah⁹ of the

⁹ *Padshah – the king*

Jinn country. I am not able to do you good here. So my father will pay for your service. Do you understand?

The man was upset. “So I approached the end”, – he thought. “The Jinn’s padshah will drive me mad”.

- Ha... ha... ha... – The Jinn clapped her hands.
- Why are you laughing? – The man asked.
- Haven’t I told you that I am a Jinn?
- Who says you are not?
- Haven’t I told you that I can guess what think of?

Mrr... Mrr... Mrr...

Following the Jinn the man left the yard. The dog was barking, the cat was miaowing.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

They reached a river. The Jinn jumped forward. Looking at the water she uttered:

Mrr... Mrr... Mrr...
Brr... Brr... Brr...

The river shook, the waves rose very high.

Sharr... shurr...
Sharr... shurr...

The Jinn became as red as a cock's comb, hit the ground with a foot, jumped into the air and fell down in the middle of the river. She did not sink into the water. The Jinn began kicking the water:



Mrr... Mrr... Mrr...
Brr... Brr... Brr...

Suddenly the river stopped flowing in the upper part. And the down part of the river went by flowing. The Jinn took the man by the hand and they crossed the ravine of the river.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

They reached a mountain. The Jinn stared at the mountain from below, then she began to utter angrily:

Mrr... Mrr... Mrr...
Brr... Brr.. Brr...

The mountain shook and there came strange sounds:

Sharrag... shurrag...
Sharrag... shurrag...

Having heard that the Jinn became as red as a cock's comb. She kicked the ground so angrily that she flew into the air and dropped on the top of the mountain. And began to kick the ground as a horse:

Mrr... Mrr... Mrr...
Brr... Brr... Brr...

As if the mountain waited for that: it crumbled into two parts with a strange noise. It gave way to them. They crossed the road.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

And they came to the country of Jinns.

The Padshah of jinns



The man looked around and saw that the place was so overcrowded by Jinns that there was no room to swing a cat. They were working so quickly that their hands were hardly seen, their eyes were running in different directions, their lips were not touching one another. All went out. Suddenly the ringing of bells was heard.

The Jinns stopped working and stood still. Then they began moving to and fro. Suddenly they jumped away and again stood still. A palanquin flying over their heads came to the square on the shoulders of forty Jinns. They put it on the ground carefully and stepped away.

A small Jinn with a crown on his head, wearing a golden coat and a golden walking-stick in his hand came out of the palanquin.

– Father! – the girl crying jumped forward.

– My dear! – The padshah throwing away the walking-stick took the girl in his arms. They kissed each other. Then the girl pointed to the man with her head. The padshah fell head over heels and stood before the man. The crowd shouted.

– You are the man that saved my daughter, aren't you?

– Yes, your majesty, – answered the man awkwardly.

– Don't be afraid of me, say what you wish and I'll do it for you. – Having said these words the padshah stared at the man. The man shrivelled. Hearing no answer the padshah said:

– Do you want me to smooth down the Gaf¹⁰ for you? Or shall I order to build a high castle for you to live in?

¹⁰ *The Gaf – a mountain in the Caucasus.*

The man was afraid to say a word. But on the way to this country the girl told her not to take anything that her father would give him. She told him to ask the padshah to spit upon his tongue.

– Your excellency, spit on my tongue, – the man could say these words at last.

The padshah of Jinns looked at his daughter angrily. He guessed it was she that had told the secret.

– Why are you looking at me angrily, Father? – Having asked this the girl flew and sat on the padshah's shoulders.

– Will you take another thing, – the padshah took a diamond as big as a hen's egg out of his pocket. – Take this, go and buy the whole world.

The man was taken aback when he saw the shining diamond. He wanted to take the thing when he saw the angry look of the girl. He could hardly pull himself together.

– So, what do you say?!

– Spit on my tongue.

– Maybe...

– I don't want anything else...

The padshah shouted angrily:

– Hey, Malikha! – A Jinn as black as coal appeared before the padshah immediately with a sword in his hand.

– Shall I cut his head off or...

The man stepped backwards.

– Come nearer, – the padshah ordered him, – come nearer!

– I don't want, your greatness...

– Come nearer!



The man stepped forward hesitatingly.

– Open your mouth! Pfuì! Close your mouth. – The padshah spat on the tongue of the man.

The man saw that everything and everybody was speaking to each other. He understood the Jinn's wuffing now. The grasses, the trees, the birds, to cut short, everything had its own language.

The thing that he was surprised at was that he heard and understood all this. He cried out with joy. And threw his cap into the air. The Jinn's jumped up to catch it. Every Jinn having a piece of the cap in his hand landed on the ground. The man looked at the padshah.

The padshah held his hand before himself. The Jinn's put the pieces of the cap on his palm. The padshah whispered something quietly and puffed at his palm. The cap was the same as before.

– Take it, and put it on! – The padshah saying this gave the cap to the man.

– But you made haste, your desire was stronger than yourself. I wanted to show you the grass of immortality. You would have found it and became as immortal as your Prophet Khizir.

– May my parents be your victims, tell it to me! – The man pleaded.

– One might meet such things only among the men!

– What things?

– Greediness! – The padshah didn't even look at his side. – Hey, Malikha! Put the sword into its place. See this man off and come back.

– Father, let him take the man to his place, he might lose his way. – the girl caressed her father's beard.

– Let it be so, see him off to his door and come back.
– He turned to the man. – Man, you already know the language of everything. If you use this knowledge against anybody or anything you'll have much trouble, and if you don't do so you'll have no difficulty further on. If you take all the grasses and flowers will speak to you. You'll eat them and be safe and sound. If you do good you'll be able to find the grass of immortality. – the padshah smiled.

– Father, father! – The girl grasped her father's neck.
– Let me add something. Do let me.

– No, I'll tell about it, too. – The padshah looked at the man again. – Take any stone from the ground while you are in my country.

Give us way

Malikha leading and the man following him they left the square. They were in haste.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

They came up a high mountain. The man remembered that it was the same mountain that he had passed through. But it was not divided into two parts.

Malikha stopped the man and stepped forward.

*We must travel long and far,
Give us a chance to go ahead.
If you don't, I'll order –
You'll be thrown out of your bed.*

The mountain began to speak:

*Are you taken prisoner by man,
On your collar there is a pin?
Do you serve him from now on,
Are you not a Jinn?*

*You know me well, every my path,
You kicked me with all your might,
You can overcome my height
Be it a day or be it a night.*

Having heard these words Malikha was very angry and become as red as a cock's comb. He hit the ground with a foot, jumped into the air and fell down on the top of the mountain. And began to kick the mountain as a horse:

*I'll divide you into two parts,
You know my magic well.
Give me way or otherwise
I'll send you into the hell.*

The mountain shook and with a strange noise it crumbled into two parts and gave them way.

Malikha went down, took the man by the hand and they went on. The mountain remained there complaining.

The man looked at Malikha with surprise.

But he pulled the man behind him.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

And they reached a river. The man looked at the river,
it was flowing as before.

Malikha stepped forward:

*We must travel long and far,
Give us a chance to go ahead.
If you don't I'll order –
You'll be thrown out of your bed.*

Suddenly the river began speaking:

*Are you taken prisoner by man,
On your collar there is a pin?
Do you serve him from now on,
Are you not a Jinn?*

*You know me well, come, pass me well,
I'll not frown on you.
Step over me, don't be afraid,
I'll not drown you.*

Having heard these words Malikha got very angry
and became as red as a cock's comb. He hit the ground with
his foot, jumped into the air and fell into the middle of the
river. Then he began kicking it:

*Stop at once, otherwise,
I'll shout and cry,
I'll call all the Jins
We'll make you dry.*



Suddenly the river began to shout. The upper part of it was frozen and the down part went by flowing.

Malikha took the man by the hand.

*They went on and on,
Through the hills they'd gone.
They went on and on,
Through the ravines like flow.*

*Passing the bitter wormwoods,
Passing through the sweet-roots
They went on and on,
Like the wind they flew.*

And they reached the village. Malikha stood in front of the man:

– Show me the stone!

– Which stone? – The man looked at him surprisingly.

– Oh, yes, just a moment. – He took the stone out. – Here you are! – He held it up before his eyes. – Oh, my God, it is gold!

– You forgot our padshah's first advice. If you had taken much of it you would have been the richest man in the world.

– This is enough for me, – said the man angrily, and put the gold into his pocket. “If he went to hell I should look at the gold as much as I wanted”, – the man thought. Looking at Malikha the man saw him smiling. Suddenly the Jinn shouted so sharp that the man sat on the ground.

Malikha read his thought.

When the man looked up he saw that the Jinn had disappeared. He put his hand into his pocket to take the gold out.

But it was not there. The Jinn took the gold with himself.

I am hungry here

The man was not short of food. Every time he sat at table three appeared there plates before him with everything he wanted. Having said “Bismillah” he put one of the plates on the table-cloth and eat much as he could. Then he wanted to put the other plates aside but they disappeared in the air. And he couldn’t stand up for a while. He didn’t understand anything.

There appeared three plates:

*One was the dog’s,
One was the cat’s,
One was the man’s.*

But the man didn’t give anything to eat to them. And though he eat as much as he could he became hungry soon. And he was starving until the dinner time.

When he took ill he went out. The flowers called him:

Pick me up,
I’ll cure.

He picked up the flower, smelt it and became safe and sound as before.

So, the man had everything to eat but he was hungry. The cat and the dog were starving, too.

The man leaning against the cushion as usual was having dinner in the verandah. The cat also was trying to get something from a small bone without any meat. Suddenly the dog looked up at the verandah. The man did not notice it. The cat putting aside the bone greeted the dog:

– Miaow...

The dog greeting the cat complained:

*I'm hungry, I can't even bark,
Before my eyes there's only dark.
We need three loaves of bread,
You're eating, I'm nearly dead.*

The cat smiled ironically:

*I've got nothing, but a small bone,
He eats everything alone.
Tomorrow the camel will die,
You'll have some meat, don't cry.*

The man having heard this took the camel to the market and sold it. The next day at breakfast time the dog looked at the side of verandah.

*There is nothing to eat,
Where's the promised meat?!*

The cat was aware of everything. And he got angry with the dog:

*Wait a little, don't grive
We'll have a fun, we're on eve:
Tomorrow will be dead his horse,
We'll have much to eat, of course.*

The man having heard this stopped his eating, took the horse to the market and sold it.

Tomorrow came. The dog looked at the man eating the breakfast on the verandah. He was very angry:



*Where is the camel, the horse is where,
We have got nothing to share.
You ask to wait and to wait,
What'll bring us the coming date?*

The cat was sick and tired of his master. And the dog's words made him very angry. He jumped on the railings:

*Wait a little, till tomorrow,
It'll be the end of our sorrow.
Soon the master will die,
And you'll have your meat pie.*

At this moment the man stopped short, he couldn't swallow the bread and choked. He tried to swallow the slice of bread, was out of breath and died.

– Wow – wow... – the dog barked under the verandah.

I was frightened.

– You, goddamn creature, came again! – Granny threw the cup at the dog. The cup striking on ghe guyum¹¹ fell into the ditch.

*Bismillah!
Bismillah!
Bismillah!*

Repeating this three times Granny put her hand on the ground and on my head:

*I'm taking your fright!
I'm taking your fright!
I'm taking your fright!*

¹¹*Guyum – a brass jug for fetching water.*

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Gasham Isabayli
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