

Dr Tayeb Bouazid

# Beehives

**Vol. 1**

**A collection of short stories**





## **Foreword**

This is a collection of SHORT STORIES edited by Dr Bouazid Tayeb, a creative writer, who thought to put between his readers' hand a series of collected tales from North Africa – a ground he thought it as fresh as green grass. The author lives by the idea of sharing the other readers in the different parts of the world certain experiences and feelings related to the African ground. The tales depict different settings through which the author tries to mirror his own experiments. Stories foreshadow different writing veins, traditions, hopes and aspirations to which young Africans grope to.

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# 1

## **A Penny for your Thought**

The lane seemed interminable, darkness veiled the grassy ground near the valley where the crippling river made way through the field. He sat there to take a bit of rest and implored the dawn to reset its light on the lost track. He sided the tree and profoundly slept. A mid-aged father with a heavy load seeking refuge on Turkey land. He had gone grey before his time, a man tired of walk and walk along the hilly mountains and the spruce forest. His grey beard started to grow wild of problems.

When I approached him, he was not able to talk. I gave him some food and water and gradually his refreshed memories peeped again. He started to recollect his scattered wits.

“Where do you come from?” I asked

‘I came from the Syrian borders. The militia was chasing us. They killed my wife and my two daughters

and as you see I escaped alone and I did not stop walking for nearly one week without anything to eat.’

“Please come in and sit by my side. I have many things to tell you.”

“The day war started in Syria, I was away from home, working on the mountain. I was a farmer in my own piece of land that my ex-wife left for me. I used to live with her. She died six years ago and gave me two boys to feed. They often helped me in the land and in keeping some animals. As my life situation started to worsen because of the country agitation, in addition to my own social position, I thought to remarry and find a wife that could share my family load. So, I remarried and decided to build a small house under town. I lived peacefully with my new life when suddenly the war broke out. In the first days, my former sons left the country for Algeria and asked me to follow but I reluctantly said no.

I did not reckon I would leave my hometown one day. I did not even believe to abandon the arable land to flee elsewhere. My wife did not approve of this and implored me to leave. Hesitatingly, I packed what I could and travelled light. Militia were chasing us with helicopters and ambushes everywhere. We were twenty evaders who escaped that day through the frontiers. It was cold and dark and the moment we were about to cross the river, a rocket fell on my wife in her wading on the river – she screamed and moaned; yet, no time to rescue her. Someone pushed

me on my back to pace up – there was no time. Most of the fellow men died. it was very obscure and I could not follow the tracks. I was preoccupied with the idea of coming back to find my wife and my two children but it was too dark to see your finger in the air. I kept on my place silent, musing about what to do next. The noise of bullets everywhere, helicopters revolving around flickering light in search of hidden intruders.

“what did you do next?”

I slept the night there and towards the very small hours I moved a little further to gain the frontiers before the sunlight. The soldiers then had regained their barracks thinking escapees had gone. It was a great silence and I succeeded to arrive to this place after nearly one week walk.

“Poor man”, I said, “you need to rest now, you are near to the safe zone, militia would not come here – It is Turkish territory. I gave him food and some water and I did not want to leave him until he recounted to me thousands of other stories.

“Ok, have a rest now and be all ears” He retorted

“When revolting, angry protestors rioted against the police after the death of the Tunisian boy, my neighbor was working in Tunisia at well digging in the region of Sidi Bouzid. Agitation started massively and everything was looted and set on fire. Foreigners were advised to leave the country. So, my neighbor decided to leave Tunisia back home. I used to sit with

him and he related many stories of confusion, murder and violence and wished the state would appease and calm down the situation to go back there. But unfortunately, the contagious disease spread to many other regions. The days revolt started in Syria, he believed the political situation would be worsen than in Tunisia –

“The chair in Syria is dear,” he reckoned. “Victims would be far greater. See how often the tongue reflected a presentiment of what could occur.”

By and by, Syria was greatly affected and my neighbor was accused of helping protestors with war tactics as he had just arrived from Tunisia. He was imprisoned and no one ever heard about. His wife billed the court but in vain – He soon disappeared. His wife, with her small three kids, went back to her family – Her father was a handicapped victim of the French war, lying on bed. She could not stay looking at her father dying, so she decided to work as a cleaner in the company. The very amount of money she gained would go to her family. She worked for few months to see at last her father dying. What a pity? Miserable conditions follow one another.

With the aggravation of the Syrian situation, her former house was put on fire – there was nothing to hope for in a burnt land – politics dominated the scene – brothers killing one another for nothing – religious ethnicities and radical strong headedness was the order of the day. People demonstrating in



streets started to arm themselves and kill others blindly. Since then I had not heard about. She might have subdued the same fate as the other Syrian refugee – escapees to many other countries.

Do you see how savage to see friends disappearing, children abandoned and vestigious buildings put to ruin?

We really do not know where the situation would go. And in his recounting about life, he sometimes kept silent for long until I asked him a penny for your thought, man – and then he went on recounting another story. The stories of wars did never end. The only victims were the poor innocents.

When the day got clear, I walked with him to the nearest camp and asked the official rescuers to take care of him. I gave him my phone number and my address in case he would keep contact. The man did not leave me with his eyes as if he wanted to say something but he could not. One month later, I received a phone call from the man – he wanted me to pay a visit to him. When I went there, his state was not better off, I found him a little bit ill – he did not stop from musing, from reflecting – a deep sigh is always on his face – a sigh that keeps man thinking for long about how could the human state change between now and then –

“War” he said “War – The fiend of all – the devilish nightmare that reaps souls to no return.

**JULY 2013**



## 2

### Fate

Souvenirs remained souvenirs – this is a semi-fictional portrayal of a poor family of modest income not overwhelming up to do – composed of a mother, her husband and two daughters of conservative original descent. The mother’s name is LAVINIA – 52 years old, she worked at home with a tenacious determined will to feed her breadwinners with sane income, she prepared some earthenware utensils which she used to sell on market days.

Her eldest daughter, RACHEL 23 – a rather red skinned shy girl, of mean demeanor, self preserving in her attitudes and prepossessing. She rather appeared open minded with psychologically well balanced personality. She was a student in Archaeology. Her second daughter, CAMELIA 19, she was seriously ill, deeply affected by her injuries that, in the course of time, she felt engraved in her heart.

Their father MARCEL, was 64 years old. He was a handicapped person who fell from a windmill and got a back break. Since then, he had been lying in bed with little effort to deploy. His poor surrounding deplored his situation and he had no other living source to look to. Marcel had long been a hard worker well known in the vicinity by his manly adventures –

In the nearby, there existed a rich landlady named Mrs. Joan. A well brought up lady of mid – fifties known by her generosity and strong decisions – She possessed thousands of acres with a wide range of ranches, cattle and milking parlors. Mrs. Joan was a good mistress for her own property – she enjoyed this job since a long time and she, as usual, wanted to preserve her ancestors’ pre-occupation to raise livestock to sell milk to the village nearby.

Andy who was aged 23, a dynamic ambitious and industrious youngster went to his aunt lady Joan’s farm to spend his summer holidays in the company of the breath taking greenish pastures amongst the shepherds and the herds and the multitudes of extended spruce forests.

There, he met RACHEL and soon he fell in love with and soon he evoked his deep latent lot to her with plenty of affections and love sensuous feelings. Bit by bit and in her cozy company, Andy grew mature and responsible. He grew in constant muse about his new company and soon he felt submerged in her social problems.

Andy was affected by his girlfriend's situation, so he went to his aunt and mediated for a promising job to her mother, LAVINIA to, at least, overcome some of her hard living conditions. Andy went on recounting the family wretched living conditions stating the father deplored condition to his aunt. Aunt Joan was all ears and accepted to offer her services to the subsisting family. She soon appointed Lavinia as her assistant in the workshops of textile/pottery different sites.

During their free time, ANDY and RACHEL made tours in the natural beautiful landscapes around the workshop. One day, and to their surprise, Rachel discovered the first premises of a Gold Ore as sensed through the dust where a rippling creek crossed. The ore seemed dormant for long years then as nobody dared find it out. Rachel immediately contacted Lady Joan and soon a deal was met so that the secret remained a secret. Together, they mapped out to give air to the new project and promised Rachel to keep it a secret for her to exploit after her studies finish.

Marcel's life situation worsened and illness ailed his tormented spirit as it persisted through his weakened body. He succumbed after a long suffering. Now, the family situation was at its dire situation; Lady Joan and ANDY offered the miserable family a new lodging in the farm not far from the workshops to keep Aunt Joan company, facilitated the work and gave more chances for Lavinia to supervise. Soon,

LAVINIA was appointed staff manager to manage Aunt Joan's working affairs. Her daughter CAMELIA was sent to ORVILLE to be hospitalized – another page opened in the caring of Camelia's Health state.

RACHEL and ANDY had already separated as the school year had come to an end. ANDY who, studied economics at ORVILLE, heard about CAMELIA; so he visited her from time to time and offered his services to appease some of her heart biting awes. Life went by and days constantly renewed and visits had become rituals.

One day, CAMELIA confessed her love to ANDY; an idea which he had never thought of. So he stood perplexed and could not believe his eyes and though he tried to make her understand that he had a love affair with her sister RACHEL, CAMELIA insisted on her love; doctors had already stated that she was emotionally disturbed and she could risk her life in case of any love fluctuations. Hence, the matter got complicated, and Andy got confused.

ANDY who did not know what to do, accepted his fate and day by day he grew in love with CAMELIA openly showing his heart felt emotions – He rather translated his outer feelings into latent direct intentions as he, from time to time, went on listening to her with a great care as if appointed to direct her meditative intentions. He felt no space to escape to; he was rather stuck in a quagmire.

CAMELIA was recovered from her illness and she

too was appointed assistant to her mother in the workshop. Rachel who was meticulously keeping eyes on Andy's attitudes and motions, came to learn about the relationship between her sister CAMELIA and ANDY. She instantly chew the cud and became overwhelmed with craze. Her mind got divided against itself as whether she should help her sister emotionally disturbed state or continue her love with ANDY. A serious situation to deeply meditate up with careful reflection. So, at last, she preferred to help her sister and therefore she wished hearty success to the couple. Finally, ANDY got married with CAMELIA.

LAVINIA achieved a great success in her enterprises in the various workshops. Rachel got engaged with her schoolmate. During summer holidays, Rachel and her husband visited JOAN'S farm to exploit the GOLD ORE. There, ANDY and RACHEL met near the creek for an evocative heart – throbbing souvenir. A souvenir that was knit under high strains of pure sacrifices and devotion – A souvenir that grew out of nothing to engrave its trails on both sisters' hearts showing simply that love remains love and no one dared relinquish his own possessions to the other without Godly traced fate – Fate is in most daring time beyond our willing to change – accept it but never lump it – it is part of our existence.

Days went by and Camelia gave birth to a young girl that her mother decided to name Rachel – a gift to

her husband to remain in constant love with the picture of the true Rachel that ever engraved his mind – a modest souvenir Camelia could genuinely offer to satisfy her husband’s lust and meet the wants of Rachel who was engaged to one of Lady Joan’s trusted clients at Orville. Now, Lavinia is no more distressed – both her sisters are nicely wedded – she was well satisfied and could devote herself more to Lady Joan and to her daughters’ young babies. And though she was widowed she enjoyed commuting between her daughters to see their lives embalmed with success – This is a genuine souvenir that the promising life could offer a depressed person and change his course, from a down trodden wretched creature, into a well to do living being. This is another print in one’s life. Again, fate is at the doorsill – accept it and never call it bad names.

**The end**



### 3

## A Nostalgic Appeal

It happened in 1989 in a rural region, amidst some broken reed houses and huts, stone wall roman architecture remains that pervaded here and there, a sign of the Roman presence in the area. Green patches all around, and on steep hills, there grazed herds of sheep. A poor shepherd in his mantle cloak and shabby clothes following his cattle in heavy trodden paces trudging his feet over the dry deadwood, musing about the unknown future, to quickly overcome the big dire circumstances and become rich one day.

The man stood in his mid sixties and seemed not having married early. On the other side of the slopes, an old wife of fifty bending over a green patch, tilling the land and uprooting weeds. It was an autumn nice day and everything was calm there on the hilly mountain.

The poor family consisted of two sons and one daughter. Amir 15 years old, he was the eldest boy. Omar 12 years old he helped his father in the farm and herding from time to time – His young daughter aged 10 was always at home especially when the mother was out. Amir was an aspiring child, very ambitious and dreamt to be a future doctor. He was determined to give schooling to himself and prove that self-education was often a right policy to conduct in life. In the company of his father, they often sat under the tree to discuss home matters. At one circumstance, he consented with his father to send him down to the village to be educated under the care of his uncle –

Amir went on with his dream and enrolled at the comprehensive school, made some acquaintances and enjoyed his new life there until he got his baccalaureate. However, his uncle proved very harsh with him and Amir could not bear the new life of pressure; so, he decided to leave to travel to Tunisia. There, he enrolled at the university and worked in a restaurant at night to collect some money for the study expenditures. His new boss was a very gentle man and man of letters so he gave a special care to Amir and helped him to further his studies.

Amir stayed there for one year then he travelled to France in the company of two Tunisian businessmen. Revolts, as news reported started in his home country and Amir was a little bit anxious to

what would happen to his family there – Looting, burning peoples' properties, damaging fields and green orchards; mass killing were orders of those days. Reports also emphasized some losses among people especially the intellectuals and the elites. Rural exodus was massively deployed and people fled seeking a safe refuge.

Things were getting worse – Amir did hear of the news and could not do without but continued with his dreams. With half remorse, he was determined to settle in France and make his own life. Once in France, Amir established himself in a small motel seeking a stable life. He was very discreet in his actions and attitudes within the new environment lest someone would spy on him and kill him. Prudently, he acted as a wise man confiding only in his two Tunisian partners. He worked as their assistant and translator and at the same time he studied at the university.

The first year was very hard for him. He studied during the day and worked at night until the small hours; hence the very hours he spent on the bed would not suffice. He found it really tough to make both ends meet, to be familiar with the harsh climate of the north – cold, loneliness and hard work. But still he made it at last with a bit of fervor – like tenacity. In his routine errand to the nearby hospital he met a polish nurse of a Turkish descent, made acquaintance with her and discussed about the different life

matters. He then fixed her another date to meet.

Meanwhile, Amir dreamt if circumstances favored him he would marry the Turkish girl and together they would make a stable home in France. He then would go to his home country, bring back his family and settle in France forever. Yet, to fulfill such a dream, Amir thought he had to work hard and never give up. Sometimes, another nostalgic appeal dictated to him that he would study harder and went back to the country after university studies finish. In fact, he was undecidedly sure which way to take.

Amir who used to receive letters from his family had long since had no news about. The situation in his country, as reports often claimed, worsened because of terrorism and rebellious acts. Rural region inhabitants had almost all shifted to the most agglomerate areas. Rural houses and dwellings were demolished, animals killed and most of the villagers left their homes and their properties. Amir was a little bit perplexed, no news from his parents and his neighbors except some scattered bits of news from the countrymen he met at the faculty or in the hospital where he worked.

Day by day, Amir's impatience grew bitter and that emptiness in contact affected his personal life – the girl he decided to marry had gone far to another hospital and she did no more appear in the nearby. All the doors seemed closed before his eyes. He persevered in his studies with a constant pace to

finally succeed in his final year gradation as a general oculist practitioner in the hospital. He, many a time thought to pay a visit to his family; yet as there were no news about, he dropped the whole matter.

According to the latest news, it was reported that Amir's family was living with his uncle now and his mother had lost her sight. Everything was gone, animals, the trees and the green fields taking Amir's dream for a final setting all with it.

Amir now was locked and confined to a very limited space – he could not leave any further – even his girlfriend abandoned him. Alone, striving two different worlds – the one of his parents with all its pre-occupation and the one he would want to build with his proper fate. He believed that behind every squeezing issue there were solutions and with a bit of patience one could achieve power and regain his energies – Soon, an idea sprang into his mind to go and find the nurse and asked for her hand. In his constant muse, the postman arrived with something for him – It was a letter from the Immigration officer requesting him to present himself tomorrow at the main headquarter.

Perplexed, Amir could not understand the relationship with him and the immigration officer, he thought he would be relocated home after having built half of his future under strain and pressure – He went on for interminable night thinking about what the news would bring to him. The dawn had gone a

bit further; Amir got up and was ready to receive the shocking news or the appeasing good omen words. Flashes went fast before his eyes as stations where he paused to fill up lost energies. Once there, and to his surprise, he found his mother and his father. He could not believe his eyes. They came under the company of an old kin. Indeed, parental intuition was rather strong, immeasurable and predominant – both father and mother, at such an age and even without knowing about the new country, they sold their possessions to come and see their eldest child. What an adventure to reward? Amir stood confused to see his father become aged and his mother, who wept for long for his departure, suffering from myopia.

In such peevish circumstances, Amir took her immediately to the hospital for eye surgery. The old mother was carefully cared after under her son's personal supervision. Thank the providence, how sweet and delightful to have kith and kin meet after such a long silence? A jolly atmosphere full of warmth and hot welcome. The old father could but stand beside his wife as Amir treated his mother's eyes. Amir's growing satisfaction was at its highest to have completed his studies successfully and be able to treat his own mother with his proper hand – sweet is the fruit after hard toil.

Meanwhile, Amir, who was very ambitious to marry the nurse, went after her for long until at last he found her. He explained to her his parents'

situation and that they came to see and give consent to his marriage and see the bride. He proposed for her marriage and was ready to ask for her hand but she hesitated saying that she could not go with him back to his hometown because of insecurity; he implored his parents to stay in France and lived there with him but they did not accept for the simple reason their two children were left alone.

Amir who was divided against himself, between his new life plans, how to satisfy his bride or go back to his hometown and satisfy his parents' lust. After too much churning, he decided to leave France especially when his mother regained her eyesight. Amir with bitter anger packed for his return, arranged for the flight and the whole family finally found itself in her new abode. The return to the mountainous life was over and impossible, their old house was put to fire and there was no security in venturing for any new project there. Hence, Amir opened up a small eye polyclinic and received his regular patients. He slowly started to forget about France and about the Turkish nurse who was a thorn in his affective life.

Amir greatly built on castle dreams he could never accomplish – say they were just pipe dreams. Amir's own happiness was incomplete; he could not yet see his small brother and sister. His brother was engaged in the army while his sole sister got married and she lived in another town.

In the course of time, Amir's life was heading towards stability, work was in its perfect order, turmoil and agitation around the country were at their verve, no more moving out at night, avenge was perfectly apparent, people avoided meetings, curfew, discretion and seclusion pervaded all on the whole atmosphere.

Three months later Amir's father died and then Amir discovered how dearest were the parents who brought him in hard circumstances, to travel and see him in France, got him back and lived with him for while. A great devotion that would see no rewards – And though his life with his father was short lived, Amir discovered that whatever one did for parents he could never compensate for the loss. It is an immense gift to preserve. If chance were on your side and it happened to you to live with your parents, make it do before it is too late – a friendly counsel to disseminate namely to those disrespectful to their parents.

To satisfy his oldest mother, he got married with a good breeding neighbor – another nurse in the adjacent polyclinic. In this respect, Amir's intention and view is to find a good partner sharing the same occupation to work together. Amir's life in such circumstance was satisfied – a self satisfactory feeling overwhelms the whole family – Stability and prosperity were regained – Now his mother witnessed Amir's first daughter with whom she playfully transfer her feminine instincts and compensate for



the lost years.

And though her age, she took care of her little girlish creature with an off-hand tenderness to see the future progenitor growing in an age the youngsters were more or less passionate with their private ends rather than with their bloody history, devoted compatriots and wise guiding spirits. The old mother instinctively related her suffering to the little girl in a more relaxed atmosphere; hence, recalling to her mind that political stability and economic prosperity were not offered but fought against – only future women could spread the seeds of those pictures and images of blood shedding, suffering, misery and oppression – the feminine voice would bear it, the feminine voice will multiply but will never fade...

**The End**  
**July 2013**



## 4

### **Paradise Under Mother's Feet**

Once upon a time, on a hilly mountain, there lived a big family with plenty of arable land, creeks moving here and there flowing with fresh pure water. The father and his seven grandsons were all laborers. He married three of them, two had immigrated to France and two worked with him in the field. Their mother was rather ill and suffered a lot. After many months in bed she died. The father remained alone.

Hence, his sons decided to remarry him. Festivities were prepared, the father got married and the whole family lived in peace. The eldest boys did not approve of his marriage because of their father's heir but the smallest children enjoyed having a second mother to care for them and unite the family. Days had gone and the small boys grew up under the care of their mother in law – Their father who grew grey and old sensed his days approaching, gathered his

sons and recommended them they should love their mother and consider her as their true supporter. He reiterated and insisted they should respect her –

“Paradise is under your mothers’ feet” He claimed – These were his echoing words before his death.

No sooner than three months later, the father died and the whole family was now disrupted – The eldest grandsons separated and built their own families and the last two children went with their mother. They were all ears; they liked keeping closer to their mother. They worked and worked hard in their fathers’ share, cultivated the land and bred animals, sold milk in the week market. The biggest grandsons did not resist cultivating the land, they sold their shares and departed to the town.

The small family soon started to grow in business – Now they had constructed a descent house with electricity, they had used an electric water pump for irrigation. Their mother advised them to enlarge their land investment by introducing many milking parlors, honeybees, cultivate orchards and introduce greenhouses. The agro-business project started to bring in profits and soon milk distributors visited them to collect milk. Money started to grow as mushroom.

Yet, the fortune they lived in did not live long – there were three constant years of rain shortage, the land parched, the milking cows were affected by disease and everything seemed lost. Just few acres that

were irrigated; they were used by the family to subsist. Everything seemed scarce – Famine stroke the region, drought ravaged the young shoots and soon everything faded out. The two brothers went to their grandsons in town to borrow some money to buy the necessities of life but their demand was refused. Their grandsons gave them deaf ears.

Then they turned to the bank for some loans but they were refused on the prejudice they were not permanent workers and there was no guarantee they would pay back the money. The brothers went confused with rage; all the doors seemed closed before them. They returned very upset and morally they felt degraded. They went home, they looked at their wives and children who were bare feet and hungry and got grim. Seeing their affected state, mother who was keeping some gold and jewels under her pillow, gave them to her sons to sell in the market. With the sum gained, they bought many reserves of food to keep them as long as starvation persisted.

One night, the two brothers, under their mother's patronage, sat and discussed the matter – They decided to sell everything and follow their brothers to the town to find jobs.

'The land did not give anything' they thought.

"No," mother said – "You have to remain in your father's land – the treasure is here – If you worked it hard and do not be discouraged, it comes the time when fortune will return. The land is the big treasure;

it does never fail you if you will not fail it. Work it out, cultivate it and leave things for the providence rain will come, rain will come.’ Shouted the mother.

And as it was said, night brings counsel – they went to bed and reflected upon what their mother said and the next morning they met – They agreed to listen to their mother as they did in the past. They went to their mother and apologized for their wrong deeds.

“Yes, mum” – we had to work out your advise and be patient. The next day, they got up early and started to turn up the land – a land as solid as steel for it had long been dry. They went on cultivating the land for one week non-stop until they had finished it all and until the furrow felt free and water then could deep follow the roots.

Days passed but they passed long for the two brothers: mother worshipped heaven for gentle drizzles that would water the thirsty acres. She worshipped and worshipped and asked God to lessen from the dramatic situation – Soon around midnight, a gentle breeze signaled the coming tempest. Few moments after, the breeze turned into a strong wind moving herewith heavy clouds of blissful rain –

The thunder flickered with constant flashes of lightning – There went the first droplets caressing the dusty soil to turn it to muddy field. Water came down in flows and moved around the lanes covering the furrows. Roofs sent roaring sounds, trees were

breathing as corpses invigorated; everything seemed afresh after long expectations – the soil swallowed these heavy flows of water as if the land was deeply parched. The rain came down as heavy as it could, the dusty soils sent their perfumed scent – a scent that reminded the humble creature of God’s mysterious blessing who turneth the dead land into living in an instant.

The mother’s dream and worship to God turned a bless. The land seemed no more thirsty as bubbles came out of the pools and vapor seemed afar. Everything was perfectly breathing out as if oxygen revived the thirsty throats, the enfeebled voices of the rural citizens. Life regained its beautiful shape. Soon after the tempest, there came a sunshine. The dawn had extended to the far horizon and the drenched plants and flowers seemed to smile and awakened from their disturbed night dreams. Bliss regained the melancholic hearts and everything peeped gay and vivid. Even the larks that would fly low, rewound their wings in revolve – a sign of continuous joy. What a picturesque image to recall to souvenir, to the past days when nature was at its primeval?

Brothers who were turning the flow of water coming down the slopes towards the houses, had then finished, they were all wet; they were all drenched to the bones with their boots completely covered with mud. They entered the house where their mother now aged but wise. She forced her walk leaning on a

wooden stick. She was expecting her sons to enter – she was all along the rainfall surveying them work. Her tender spot was present with them and in her gasping act she wished them success and better achievement. The feminine instinct veiled around the two sons and protected their deeds.

“Mother”, they said – “You are right – God did not upset us, he rewarded us with this blissful rain – the field had been watered and the orchards would revive and everything would be lively as it used to be – Blessed be God – Almighty the supreme – Hallelujah!”

Then the whole family sat around the hearth – they were all dreams and hopes for the near future. When the day opted for the new light, the brothers and their half lamed mother went out to have a glance to down fields and far horizons, they saw the blue azuring sky as clear as crystal – only birds chirping, revolving around their heads – Meadows had turned gay – no more thirst they all claimed. What a nice picture to take.

Within those water abounding season, there grew plentiful of fruits, orchards, vineyards, wheat and corn. Children playfully ran within corn fields snatching the ripe heads of flakes – cattle freely grazing on the adjacent moats; grass had interminably grown to inches high. The two brothers working on the land, tilling the ground and cleaning the weeds. All the family seemed busy – housewives at home



preparing the dinner on wood, a traditional plate that tasted sweet and the smoke of burned semolina on earthenware utensils was scented from afar. A very commemorative congregation of the family – traditional food with traditional utensils, with a fresh sifting from the water well, would relieve the thirsty his avidity for a forever drink.

“Your words were rightfully put mother – Everything then was shipshape. We had to venerate you mum – in fact paradise is under your feet – if everyone respects their mother, he will never deviate from the right course set upon.’

God’s donations and bliss fell upon the family for all its members worked night and day and they could not collect what the season had given out as product that year. They hired some fields, and orchards for seasonal farmers to cultivate, they opened up many projects and bought fresh milking parlors to renew the old enterprise a new, to sell milk, and dairy products – They bought some agricultural machinery that helped them for massive crop reaping. Their social well being was then very positive; they became wealthy; they hired some youngsters to help them in the farm.

They deposited extra money in the bank and lived as kings in their castles thanks to their patient mother who paved the way for their success – God bless you all mothers – Really paradise is under their feet for those who sought to reach – Just a bit of respect, a bit

of care, be all ears to what they say, follow their advice, protect them when they turn aged, spoil them when they became babies – after all they are the source of your existence, it's their perspiration that catalyzed your inspiration to become a man, an adult, an aged whose memory fades with time – beware, the child is the father of man.

**August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

## 5

### **The Deceived Bride**

Divorce – a nasty word to utter even profane in religions for its bearings remain bitter forever. Its stains scared the skin, ailed the heart, weakened the body and secluded the guilty. The story I am going to narrate defied the beliefs for its true existence. It happened in the South of Algeria at a time people thought that money gained through professional begging would serve for something. According to witness and evidence, it was said that a beautiful young maid whose intention to wed a wealthier person would solve the mystery and open up the doors to completion.

Attracted by a southern wealthy lover, a young maid accepted his offer for marriage. After so much inquiry about her partner and his social position, his breeding and his family, Selma 22 accepted to marry and live with her future husband in a distant oasis,

southern Algeria in a vast mansion. She was really very fortunate to share the new family prosperity and great wealth; plenty of arable land and dates orchards.

Days passed and Selma seemed to enjoy her new life there. Everything was offered to her service. She got a young maid to help her in the household and she nearly did nothing hard. To her comfort, she really grew well and she dreamt of sharing the good wishes of the same blessings with her girl friends. Selma's sole anxiety was her parents who live very far from her. Hence, She, from time to time travelled north for short visits to her parents. It happened, one day she met her old acquaintance with whom she preferred to discuss her private ends and secrets. In their daily routine dialogue, the young maid proposed to Selma the possibility of finding a husband for her.

When she came back home, Selma told her husband and he suggested she could give him some time to think about this matter. Two days after, he came to her with the good news. He proposed to her saying

– “I found the best fellow for your best friend.”

And so went the matter and the young maid was informed. She accepted to marry and be near to Selma. This could be a nice opportunity to share. They would certainly share many things together. She would be living in prosperity as Selma did and why not dream of the many privations she got in her home in the north?

Days gone by and the young maid was impatiently waiting for the new horizon to open up with the different perspectives. Marriage went in haste, everything was roughly prepared and the young maid's parents were a little bit anxious because they did not have enough data about the new family but as experiences went with Selma, they soothed themselves gradually believing things would go evenly right. Even Selma did not know anything about the bridegroom but confided in her husband who went on praising the new fellow.

With marriage, as experience had shown, one might reap the unexpected – we might dream and dream and at last this would prove a day dream – a pipe dream. The wedding days had been perfectly achieved, the wedding procession, the husband demeanor, clothes and manners were decently shaped but soon things took another turn. Once she arrived to her home, she was badly welcomed and not ever well cared for. The young bride was totally neglected and she started to suffer in her new home for only cold welcome and hard work.

Things started to worsen and her parents growing rage soared; so they did not believe staying arm folded. There was no contact between her and her parents who decided to pay her a visit. They phoned to her husband and he came to meet them at the bus station.

Parents did not even know their daughter's

residence and they only followed the husband who was driving the car for long hours. Pausing from time to time to give an air to the exhausted car. The distance seemed interminable and the husband was driving with no mere words uttered. Darkness overwhelmed the distance, everything was quiet, the driver agaped his mouth wide; he lacked in rest and did not sleep for long. Little by little, the car roared dashing the silence of the mute night.

At last, they arrived, the paradise like dwelling the husband offered his wife was no more; mere huts planted along the Algeria Libyan border – there was no mere sign of life, parched trees, sand everywhere, only scorpions creeping here and there. Water was put in dinghy plastic jugs and rubber tires, some goats grazing on plastic satchels and some deadwood played with moving up through the air.

When her mother arrived there, she fainted to see what miserable conditions her little daughter was suffering. Life was inexistent, everything was inert and dead only heat flaming the very dry crops...

According to her mother, the husband was married with seven wives and he did not work at all. All his wives were made professional beggars. They all travelled at night, they moved to a nearby place to change their clothes to beggars using shabby clothes and disguised themselves to be transported to different places, to move to different houses asking for money and looting peoples' properties. During the

first days, the young maid did not notice this, but only later that she realized that no one was in the house except herself.

She was abandoned to herself without any food to eat. When her husband came late in the evening, she asked him about the other women and he answered they were all working and that if she did not accept to work as they did she would live in famine. She had to choose between begging or dying of famine.

The young maid did not believe her eyes. She regretted bitterly of having been misled in such a swamp – to die far from her parents and be secluded from the rest of the world at a time she built many castles in the air. She went on reiterating that most of women borrowed young babies to beg with. She even attended a case where a woman beggar took another's baby from his mother without permission. And when his mother asked her to give it back she threw it down and the baby died.

See how such misfit husbands profit from their wives. Begging was really professional and a money profiting business. The young bride phoned to her parents again and so they came to see her. This time they came to take her forever. Her mother was very severe and she could not bear the situation any longer. She asked her daughter's husband to take his wife for a few days to see her father who was severely ill; so he accepted. From that time on, the young bride was marked by that nasty experience that she would

never forget. Her father promised her she would never see her husband again and a divorce notification was sent to him. After his wife's complaint, the husband was fined and sentenced to six months imprisonment, together with his wives who stole many people in the region.

Life again started to invigorate the young bride's life and this time her fate reappeared to marry one of her relatives who promised to let her forget her shocking experiences. It was as she expected, everything went well for her – she married him and now she had got daughters with him. In her visiting tours she met Selma her former friend – they evoked this traumatic experience to which Selma was rather ill felt ever since.

Appearances are most often deceitful especially with marriage; for marriage brings consent and demands long periods of reflections. Life had shown through many turns that money was never the end to everything but rather comfort, spiritual commitment and internal consent that join partners in heaven before it joined them on earth – We should not confide ourselves to time – a wolf is a wolf.

**August 2013**



## 6

### **Something that Itches my Heart**

At last, she made it – In fact she made it at times one thought there would be no more life on the rise. It was the darkest and hardest autumn ever seen. The weather was dark, gloomy and rain was cats and dogs with heavy thunderstorm, clouds everywhere hanging like a veiled mist. People and animals took their stead lest be affected. Yet, she was walking alone, alone through the somber corridor musing about what the future would hide as expectations.

The sunrays often cast their shadows on the grassy lane helping her see the path overhead. Samia, a young promising girl of twenty two was still studying at tertiary institution with plenty of aspiring projects. She seemed smart enough to know how to manage her own life. Engaged to her cousin, she still waited for him to come from a neighboring country. He had suddenly disappeared without previous

consent and now she was overwhelmingly expecting his return to no avail.

The whole story started when life within his surrounding was too much repugnant. He disliked everything and was all the time complaining about his friends. He decided to travel to Italy without any legal papers; so one day, he arranged to escape his home country with a group of his best friends. The night they departed they arranged to see a gentle seaman who offered his services to lead them on an infrequent sea road. The weather was stormy, hazy and the spell of hue covered the sky.

It was the best night to travel incognito. Darkness, only darkness that covered everything and the dinghy was like a feather on the surface of the water – Six friends stooping and lying on the boat, only breathing in and out or whispering in the ears. The route seemed interminably long, anxiety nearly killed the small amateur navigators. They travelled all the night, there was nothing to eat or to drink; parched throat, dried mouths; they were all fears, only their eyes glittering and flickering under the flashing moon.

Hours passed and the dawn started to give its rays – the Island was on the rise – Before they came on shore, they settled down in water and continued their way through swimming. The water was extremely cold; their bodies shivered – stomachs ached, faces turned blue and they were almost frozen. Once they reached the shore, they quickly dispersed through the

bush, everyone searched for clothes to cover his body. Coast guards were patrolling along the seashore. Unfortunately, they did not see the dinghy that was nicely hidden.

The six men then penetrated into the forest and made their way directly to their destination – A farmer’s house not far from the Coast. They sent one companion to the farmer’s house to spy about. He knocked at the door and he was introduced in. After few minutes, the man went out and waved to his friends to come down. They had, in a peevish hurry, arrived in to see the farmer’s hospitality right in his eye. He invited them to sit down. They were very tired of the long night strife. He offered them some beds to have a short nap and later on they would discuss about the next step.

When they woke up, the farmer gave them their future passports and some currency and asked them to go in search of work, but with prudent counsels he insisted that they should not walk together but stay together through contacts – And so the six friends each went along to what his destiny would offer him. Later on, reports reported that two of them were caught and now they were questioned by the Italian police and they might be deported. With the other four, there were no news. Omar, our great hero, was the most educated of all and he was their chief, their manager who mapped out for everything.

Omar was a skillful painter who did not find what

he wanted in his country, wanted to try his hand elsewhere. In his wandering through small enterprises, he found a temporary job with a few Maghreb immigrants. He spent the night with them which spared some *pesetas* for him. He worked hard to prove to his boss his interminable skill and at the same time to attract his attention.

The boss was very satisfied of Omar's work so he permanently engaged him in his workshop. Now, Omar's stability was nearly assured. He worked there for four years and made a small fortune that in his dreams would share with his beloved once he returned to his home country. There he would get married, build a nice house after his girlfriend would finish her studies. Between now and then, Omar paid a glance to his past; he took his pen and sent a letter to his beloved young girl Samia that he did not hear about for four years. She, many times, wished to send him messages but as she had no specific address or destination she could not. Look, how life and circumstances would change the human's course.

Samia finished her tertiary short term course and was forcibly married to a member of her family without her own consent and the absence of Omar's presence – Something that impaired her whole life – She suffered a lot and she did never taste the sweetness of that parental marriage. She was very patient holding fast to her fate to bring her Omar back one day. He loved her too much but

circumstances separated them – he knew her mother, her father and her eldest brother and was once for sure he would marry her.

Time had gone by since he sent her a letter but no news about. He sent other messages and forgot about until it came the day when he received, at last, a message from Samia. She wept bitterly about her forced marriage and she wished him to come immediately to see her in such miserable conditions.

She found nothing but she constantly wept and lamented her fate. In her letter she was still determined to divorce her husband and marry Omar. She planned not to have children with her husband as a precaution and at the same time a preparation for divorce. Omar, reading her news, thought to join his suffering to that of his betrothal. He asked for leave and took the next flight home.

Samia, in her ephemeral abode, did not stop reflecting and she often sat for long chewing the cud, making fuss with her husband, creating pretensions to ask him for divorce – The husband on his part, suffered indifference with her, he was absent from home all the time and turned to alcohol and drugs. He beat her many times and the last time he offended her and scarred her arm; she complained to justice and the case was finally terminated – DIVORCE – She now enjoyed her free time – and she remained listening to her itching heart as it itched for continuous turns making her a happy widow before

her time. She lived by hope to see her Omar off rise.

When Omar came home, he went straight ahead to Samia's family and blamed her father and mother for not keeping their words – Samia heard the news, she looked from the window to see her heartthrob lover defending his case. Distances seemed very short now and hearts are getting nearer and nearer. Meanwhile, Omar met her brother and confessed his love to his sister and asked for her hand. Omar was ready to take risks and join his future bride – Matters were settled and everything passed shipshape. Omar decided to take his wife and join Italy again with the hope to live a stable life far from parental oppression.

See at last she made it – what a sacrifice to do. What a life to lead after too much painstaking – Marriage is a sacred feeling – they said two marry in heaven before they marry on earth – If you believe in your partner, you can reach your dreams and the husband is generally seen as an extension to his wife – Two identical pairs, two joint hands through thick and thin. If I were Samia's parents I would share her ideas about her future marriage, because the final loser is the one who does not choose. Now, both Omar and Samia shared the views that sweet was love marriage after a long consent – the consent of the wise; for we might play and score goals but we, at last, would lose the game.

**July 2013**

## 7

### **The Adopted Child**

It was three o'clock in the evening when the whole city received the first bombing. Houses got demolished and smashed by the big canon roar – People started running hurly burly in all directions. No one could know where to go. It happened in a quick time that did not give a chance to people to even pack their matters. The father was away and the small family dispersed – The mother went with her daughter and the small child was collected by his neighbors.

The weather was very hot and dusty – only the whirlwind and the bowl dust creeping over the suburbs of Tikrit – Iraq. The sun was hot parching the passing birds in their want for water to drink. Streets were abandoned and no souls seemed distinct in the growing haze and fog.

The running car was still moving on with a high

speed lest other bombs could reach the passengers. The child was unaware and did not even sense the destination he was taken to. The distance seemed interminable. He was just watching the desert landscape in its grim view – the smell of shattered windows and burnt wood – the smell of cartridge coming out of the rifles. Everybody was seeking refuge as curfew was about to take place on the main roads and entrance of towns. Few minutes then, the car stopped and the family got off.

Ali the child was pushed into the hall and made walk for a safer place. The father clicked the door open and asked his followers to follow him to a large room behind the yard. The new residence seemed safe and now the members set themselves free, went to the kitchen to eat something. The neighbor had got two small daughters and took Ali as his son. He loved boys and thought they could help him in the future as the history marked. Day by day, the neighbor loved the son too much and did not even for one considered him as adopted – he got familiar with him and always took him whenever he went out with the intent to acquaint him with the new city streets where he might see his father.

When the son's father came from a travel mission, he found his house demolished and the family dispersed. He did not even know what happened – He asked the neighbor about what had happened but the true dwellers were all gone. He just



heard from people that the district was bombed – that was all. The father who remained perplexed did not know where his family was. He contacted relatives and soon he received a call from his wife who was living with her daughter in her parents' house some twenty kms north of Tikrit.

The mother was also impatient for her son; she thought he went to his father's friend in the nearby suburbs but finally the son did not go there. Hearing the news, his mother veiled herself and went out looking for the child but no signs seemed possible. The father, on his turn, went to his friends but there was no boy there. The father grew impatiently crazy. The child disappeared and no one knew where he would be. Many suspicious ideas passed by minds and all thought he was killed in the bombing – They even went to refugees camps but in vain.

Meanwhile, the child was enrolled by his neighbor to further his studies – He got the same privileges as normal children. The neighbor was busy taking care of him. The son too, was very polite with his new family and he started regarding them as his true parents. The first days were hellish – like and he was weeping all the time but later on he got accustomed.

Days went by and the child scored good school results and graduated major with a privilege to receive a grant scholarship to further his studies in England. How happy and festive the moments were for the

adoptive family to see the child growing mature with success.

His former father and his mother moved everywhere and left no stone unturned in trying to find traces leading to their child. They went even to the police station lest someone would declare about the child. They read all the notices but no sign seemed on the horizon.

The mother who was weeping all the time did not even for one accept her child to die and in the course of time, she lived by the hope to find him one day, to see him at least for once. Her heart was weak and affected and growing depressed as time moved by.

Tired of searching for his lost child, the father got an idea to visit the press and make an announcement might someone find him could inform his parents. Then he declared and made written a short announcement with his phone number attached. One week later, he received a call from his neighbor asking him to come to the given address. The father accompanied by his wife and his small daughter went there and met their neighbor. He told them the story of their son and how he managed to evade him and save him from death and how he stayed up for his upbringing and education until making him grow mature and adult. He told them the boy was not with him and that he was pursuing his studies in England.

Now both the father and the mother looked recomforted, a bit of relaxation and hope covered

their faces – Optimism started on the rise yet still they wanted to see their boy after thirteen years of absence. On their insistence to see their child, the neighbor gave them his address and helped them with a phone number in case they lost their directions. The next day, the father and his wife took the flight to Manchester. There, they took a yellow cab to their son's residence. To their surprise, they found him absent; he was at the university and did not come back until late in the afternoon. They waited for long wishing only to see him. Time was growing cold and dark and the family seemed persistent.

In their perverse reflections and shaky minds, they thought the son would not recognize them and might escape whenever he saw them. At last, the son appeared and the whole family hid itself behind the tree waiting for him to arrange himself and open the door. His mother could wait no longer, she jumped on him and hugged him violently. The son was abruptly shaking and did not understand anything. To his surprise, he saw his father and his sister standing upright before him. They all hugged him and told him they were his parents. He could not believe his eyes. He was a little bit doubtful because he thought everybody was dead and gone with the Iraqi bombing.

But feelings of nostalgia still overwhelmed him – He wept and wept and the family went into the hall. They passed the whole night talking about the bad

souvenirs that marked their life stories. They discussed different matters and arranged to go back home and hope for another new way of life.

Father and mother came back home, bought a new house and arranged for their son's marriage. It was the adopting father who reluctantly ceded to give back the son to his proper family. And on the father's insistence, the adopting father dictated a condition to marry his daughter to him so that relations will keep on. The adopted father still considered him as his own son and it was very difficult for him to leave him like that. So, he married him to his daughter and since then the two families got tied more and more, and to their blessings more progeniture came forth and they all sought to build a new nation as strong as the hope they lived by. An Iraq as solid as imaginable – an Iraq that would never kneel though mortal trapped cars, daily blood shedding and the silent killing of the perched snipers.

**The End**

## 8

### **The Prisoner**

The story took place during the Liberation War Algeria. It was nearly freezing and the frost in its silent creeping almost affected everything, the roofs sent a slight fume standing in hazy rows caressing the lofty trees bare and sordid. Standstill and lifeless barren nature outdid the screaming noise of fighters. The rural regions were all but silence and darkness – even dogs reluctantly barked of famine and cold.

The band of fighters looted the sloping mounts in search of a hot place where to hide from the enemy's flickering lights. From time time one heard helicopters patrolling the dark sky, veering sedately in search of intruders. It was a very painful cold weather, the wind was interminably strong and chill hurt directly the face making it as solid as a stone. The few fighters finally made it by entering a deep grotto at the foot of the mountain. They were terribly tired of being

chased for three days where they walked non-stop. Their bare feet sent patches of cold blood and most of their clothes were wet. They did not even eat for long.

On the morrow of the shameful rising sun amidst the half veiled horizon, a shepherd who was interminably passing the river saw the shape of one guard, stopped to see what exactly the mirage was like. To his surprise he saw an armed observer keeping guard. He stopped him and after a discussion the shepherd was introduced into the cave. After a minutely observed interaction, the shepherd explained everything about the whole village and the terrible ordeal it suffered.

The shepherd lived just under the molehill. He was soon released and asked to seek some food but to watch out his foot tracks lest some enemy observers would see him in or out. Later on, the shepherd peeped with a bag on his back. A freedom fighter went down and took it from him. Meanwhile, as the shepherd pursued his ways in search of his herd, he was encircled by a army group. He was deported then to the Camp where the Algerian prisoners were kept. Fortunately he did not reveal any secret.

Poor Omar, the shepherd – he was the breadwinner of six children and the guard of the village at night. He worked hard to preserve food for his dependents. Now, he was imprisoned and the whole family was left to itself. With the providence help, the villagers used to donate to his family, to assist the

housewife feed the babies. At that moment, the Algerian families were almost the same, living simply on what the land could give – wood for fire, no leisure, no luxury, no tv to watch except telling stories at night to make the young children sleep or sit around the hearth relating the war events.

Diseases, namely small pox, typhoid, malaria and many other diseases were massively ravaging the citizens. Poverty was the order of the day and everyone was to the other; there was a great unity amidst the whole villagers who volunteered, served and offered their services to help one another. Solidarity against the enemy was their common goal. They did never renounce to their sufferings and as long as Omar was captured for a great cause, they kept feeding his family until the day he would be released.

The French army did not keep prisoners for long – When the interrogation was over and the conviction about the detainees proved less dangerous, the prisoners would be released yet put under caution.

Time passed and the detainees' state started to deteriorate so soon upheavals and riots within the encampment gained amplitude and according to some news some prisoners escaped. They fled north to the nearby mountains where the groups of fighters passed by. After one week of travel, one of the prisoners accidentally met the group of freedom fighters. Indeed, He was Omar himself who had

chosen to go straight to the mountain and did not even pay a visit to his family. He was easily forgotten since he could never be seen. At some detainees' camps, prisoners did not receive visitors especially in their probation stay.

Omar told them about the situation in the camp and offered his services to the group. He was not easily admitted and in case his candidacy would be approved, he had to practically demonstrate his ability in doing something successful.

After a discussion with the group leader, he was assigned missioner to blow up the bridge after the group departure – to cut the liaison between the two ridges of the river. He volunteered for the mission and the operation began. The day seemed very short – It was the beginning of winter – Darkness started to cover the dim horizon and the wind was bitterly blowing and you just heard the rippling water coming down the slopes. The group had already made way to the other bank of the river passing through the bridge.

Omar, the prisoner remained last to make sure the whole group was safe. He kept abreast of any intruders observing him, he went under the bridge attached some bombs to the extremities of the bridge, lengthened the cords and pushed them along the sides with some additional ties that lied on the forest. He was ready to blow everything once the enemy would follow the fighters.

Omar was decisively devoted to the cause and



decided not to leave the place until the fighters would be far from the danger. He spent the night there to finally, at dawn, the first army group peeped its way on the bridge. Omar with his traditional binoculars was surveying their movements – one, two, three lorries; two jeeps after followed – they are full of soldiers ready for fight. Leaving them to reach midway, Omar lit the exploding cord and the fire moved slowly making way to the unexpected flame. Soon the fire reached the powdered peak and the whole bridge blew up.

The great demise; the great flame ablaze. Most of the French soldiers died and the few plunged into the river – Omar then proved to his new social position. He joined the whole group and was hallowed as a hero. The whole group celebrated the event before they headed north towards the Algerian-Tunisian borders.

It was the season of snow; snow had in some places reached three meters high and it was very difficult for the mean fighters to walk or move from place to place. They moved hard, with the meanest food to subsist – bare footed, they walked in file as Indians one following the other – the tracks were not easily found and they walked closer to one another lest losing tracks they would collapse. In fact, some of them could not continue their ways so they abandoned. And later on, they died.

Only five freedom fighters were then slowly

snatching at the snow that encircled them and reaching even up to their necks. They could not stop; they were trapped by the heavy snow flow that covered their ears, the wet heavy clothes and the frost that numbed their feet. A spell of cold air deafened their ears; yet they resisted passing the valley to finally reaching a half covered reef where they dispersed the snow to have a rest. What a rest, they stood gazing at one another as robots only slow breathing lowered their chests.

Just near, they observed a grotto, lit up their torch and entered as wild beasts fearing not other wild creatures that lied within. They soon lit a cold fire and turned around it for a cordial congregation. Soon life regained their bodies, they started moving their numb feet and fingers and recounted their experiences of the wicked tempest.

As the group leader died, Omar was elected the new leader to lead the group to Tunisia to transmit some secret documents and bring in some material aid. The weather was still getting fiercer and the distance up to the frontiers seemed endless. The four fighters decided to continue their ways whatever the circumstances – After getting ready, they got on, package on shoulders, they made way.

They had to walk the very thirty miles on foot before seeing the first village before them. Some Tunisian compatriots were waiting on the other side of the frontiers. But how to cross the spruce forests as

they were covered with snow. Silence everywhere and walking in cold weather with the meanest noise possible through the wild forests was not an easy task. Omar walked in his constant steps observing right and left – there was no meanest fault to commit. The fields down seemed mined and barbed wires extending here and there some of which were electrified. Getting the helm was not an easy task for Omar who was still Fresh in this position. He wanted to accomplish it in its right form, to reach his destination safe and sound.

French patrolling dogs with their distant barking load broke the silence there in the valley and were hazily heard. The patriots moved slowly with their eyes perched high, might some helicopters pass unnoticed. They cut across the mountains to avoid being watched. Half of the distance then crossed, they sat for a brief pause. They were all patience, bravery and stoutheartedness.

“Let’s stop here comrades – we had half an hour to regain our breath and health – and then we resume our course. Check up with your feet and take something to your bellies. We would soon arrive.” Omar said. The pause was short and the mission seemed to end up successfully. They had reached the long barbed file where they had to be on their alert. They had to cut it and creep to the other side unnoticed. Omar prepared the traditional scalpels and got down alone to prepare the ground for his

friends. He went down and down and started cutting the first line, then the second and finally the third. He then asked his friends to join. They all went creeping like babies, wet, brave and fearful. They moved and moved without even turning their heads backward; there was no time to lose.

At last they made it before the light flickered around – they entered the Tunisian borders – Friends waived to dash over and keep staying down – A patrolling jeep was roving along the frontier line – fortunately they did not notice anyone.

“Wow,” acclaimed Omar – finally we made it – later on, the patriots were warmly welcomed by Tunisians who offered them a great welcome. Mission accomplished. Omar’s position was now on the rise – He handed the documents and received others.

Soon contact was established and the friends were directly taken to meet the general liaison officer for more interaction about the Algerian situation.

After one week stay, Omar and his friends prepared themselves for the return. Omar took the lead as usual – the whole band was heading way towards the other destination. Snow was at its fullest scale degree, cotton balls drifted in the air, vision was not totally apparent. Only footprints left a second to be recovered. From time to time, rabbits paws printing the frosty soil, a sign that the track was not yet ever beaten. Something re-comforting to the fellow in their lowering heads shape following one

another in a great unbroken silence. Between now and then, Omar stopped to take a bit of traditional tobacco and poked its smoke in the air breaking hence the dense fuzzy frost.

Long was the travel and so the distance without food nor a hot drink to refresh the cold throats. After nearly forty miles walk, Omar and his comrades stopped for a brief pause in the nearby grotto far from the enemy's watch. They prepared a quick hot tea, sifted some, swallowed bits of home bread, checked their arms, dried some of their wet torn socks and resumed their cold voyage as cold as the weather they fiercely encountered. They were all but a tenacious hand in hand wielded effort, a one hand in one glove –

They sensed the mission entrusted to them and in their deep, there lied a belief, a conviction that they would be soon rewarded – the great heavenly reward, to die as a martyr or stay alive as a hero – a name that could live as long as history lived.

Now, the comrades were closer to the hometowns; they were about to arrive when suddenly they heard the engines roar and soon they were encircled. The first shots, machine gunfire from everywhere. Omar stopped and asked his friend not to shoot. There on the top, Omar paid a glance and he saw another band of his first companions facing a French troop.

Omar descended the steep silently and surprised the enemy from behind – They opened fire on the French paratroopers and killed four of them and the

others escaped. Omar joined the first band and they all continued their way discreetly hiding themselves. Fortunately, the weather was harsh and no more French troops follow except an helicopter that revolved around.

The freedom fighters could not move anymore that night; everything was silent except the blowing of the wind and the howling of wolves. Wolves would turn dangerous at night when food turned scarce – The comrades slept as babies; they were very tired. Early at dawn, they got out of the cave and walked down the hills to the nearest river. They carefully followed the ditches until they were stopped by a sudden light. They were encircled. Omar who was closer to his subordinate handed the documents to him and ordered him to escape along the river.

Omar sided on his right and started firing; meanwhile, the escapee had long been farther than possible. He started running and running with the intention to transmit the documents sound and safe. Omar's friends were killed and Omar was taken alive.

What a sad adventure for Omar? No more chance for his dead friends for whom a great resentment was felt on his ashen face and on his affected heart. He wept for them all when some tears drifted along his meager cheeks. A French officer looked at Omar; he recognized him and murmured between his lips – That face was not stranger to me – He reckoned having imprisoned him before.

Omar was directly taken to the encampment to be tried. This time, life would not be safer with him. The sentence would be serious and grave. There came the time when the French army announced Omar's Day of Judgement – The doomsday had yet but come. Amplifiers blown by French soldiers patrolling the village announcing Omar's sentence to death. All the villagers were invited to observe Omar and paid him a final tribute. His family did grow in remorse and regretted for not having met him ever since. His six children with half covered bodies and barefooted aligned along the barbed wire to witness their father in his last stand.

What a stand? To die as brave, a hero; a martyr whose name will be written in blood. They drifted tears especially the youngest child who was hugging his mother for protection. Omar was finally hanged amidst the yell of the crowded noise of the observant – Women yelled and yelled – a positive sign that it would be profane to weep a martyr but bless him within the great providence Blessing heaven.

Documents had reached their destination and the freedom fighters had already prepared themselves for an assault on the camps the following nights killing most of the French army and saving all the detainees. Fire was set on ammunitions stock which took long to extinguish. The escapees evaded to the nearby caves. The next day, the French helicopters flew lowly on the village, threw some bombs on the shabby huts which

set on fire, killed some animals and impaired trees.

And so the escapees formed a new army of freedom fighters; trained themselves and became chasers of the French. The French killed the fighters and the fighters killed the French and so was the enigma until the liberation war was declared. One parable one could learn from the war was – If someone lived by a great cause that here within his heart boiled up, he would suffer greatly yet at last he would make it go. The Algerian liberation war was not donated but gained through the sweat and sacrifice of Omar and his comrades – symbols of the whole nation – a legacy for the next progenitor to live on, to commemorate the vistas that long before them there existed a generation as solid as steel that did never fuse but the more it got hot, the more it strengthened.

**August, 2013**



## 9

### **The Story of the White Hungry Wolf**

The winter of 1946 was the harshest season upon Algeria, North Africa. It snowed for days non stop, the weather was frosty and in certain cases reached 10 below zero degrees Celsius; everything seemed icy and cold. The Algerian inhabitants used to build open fires made mostly of dry wood that they collected, cut and arranged in stacks for the winter and also from the dry remains of animals namely cows. Families of that time turned around the hearth to tell stories or eat couscous with natural cow butter and milk – a main course of the time.

Wheat turned into semolina powder and baked often accompanied by milk or whey and some dates was also a delicacy of that traditional ritual favoured course enjoyed by old fathers and mothers. That was a luxury diet for the poor class. The population at that time was almost primitive, poor and deprived of the

meanest necessities of life. There were no factories where to work – Algeria was under the French colonial rule and the majority of the youngsters took part in French-German War. They engaged in the army by force and the remain middle aged worked in the colonizers fields and gardens with almost symbolic fees from the sunrise till late in the evening.

People suffered a lot – darkness, cold, hunger, diseases were cutting people's lives short and at certain times they thought that was an apocalypse – Hunger was everywhere and neither people nor animals found something to eat. Wild hungry animals came down to the villages and attacked domestic animals – horses, mules, cows and even fowls. So by a winter dark night, snow was heavily falling and its density obscured the open spaces outside, you cannot even see your own footprint if once you got out. The weather was frosty to the extent that you only heard the snowballs hitting the thatched bare roofs. From time to time you heard a barking dog or a nay of a horse in the open barn. News spoke of a dangerous wolf at large and it had already killed some animals.

People were ready to receive the guest's attack at any moment. They prepared some traditional tools to defend themselves. Everything was standstill, even water got frozen and you could notice rods of frozen water coming down from the extremities of the roofs – a sign of coldness.

The mule in the next stead gave out a strange

sound; it seemed to be attacked by some wild wolves – In fact, when Omar, the grandfather peeped his head out of the window, he noticed a group of wild wolves turning around the chained mule – Dogs were very silent; they could not show themselves lest they would be attacked too – Poor donkey, it was attacked and slaughtered.

Omar got out and started shouting but the fierce hungry wolves could not move – Omar persisted in his shouting and suddenly the neighbors awoke and came to his rescue. This time they made it in dispersing the hungry wolves.

Wolves did not go far; they were observing the inhabitants watching the dead mule; they were sure to go back to satisfy their hunger. Wolves went up the hill and slept down watching the peoples' movement under. A white wolf was their leader; he moved and moved and his eyes were fixed on the movement of the crowd here and there. He approached the barn and made himself look closer – The mule was covered by a rag and left alone.

Making sure that no one was watching, he climbed the slope quickly and informed the whole company; the wolf turned around his friends and murmured in whisper that the route to was safe and that they should get down and be as silent as possible lest the grandfather might notice them. The whole group followed the chief and down the hill they went directly to the barn for a festive delicious meal. They

went down and turned around their victim and started the party.

After they had finished, they went back to the forest through the thick snow that the population could not cross. The wolves were dancing, satiated and howling to other friends signaling the abundance of food elsewhere.

Early in the morning, Omar went to the barn to see the mule but to his surprise he did find only the skeleton, the victim was devoured to the bones. The hungry wolves repeated the same attacks, as reported, but each night they changed into another house under the intelligent leadership of the white race. People started complaining about the situation. News started to spread out everywhere and people thought of preparing traps to the wolves but they did not succeed.

By a white clear night as reflected from the covered space surrounding the village; the light of snow as the ground was utterly covered. Most people were sitting around the fire treating their domestic affairs when suddenly a noise of firearms started; it was not very far from the village; people went out to see; yet nothing seemed apparent; then people entered their homes; they stood before windows and observed what happened outside – Only a group of armed soldiers patrolling and advancing in quick paces towards the row of huts, forcing doors open and looking for suspects.

Everybody was hand up, no more movements; they pried the inhabitants and looked inside rooms to seek hidden arms but they did not find any. They took some suspects; they were accused of giving food to the mountainous patriots. In fact, that was a false alert and later on, they did discover the truth; so they released the arrested. Two nights after; a group of patriots who were starving, came down to the fringe of the village where a well known volunteer lived.

They entered the house leaving two watches out for patriots. They asked the owner to prepare some food for them in two hours' time to take it with to the cave where the other patriots resided. Again, hunger forced every creature to get out seeking food. Snow did not stop and footprints were not easy to follow; it was good for the patriots to be not chased and discovered. Though a famine stricken family, the volunteer slaughtered a sheep and quickly prepared food. In three hours time, everything was ready. The patriots packed everything and went up the mountain.

Half an hour after, the French patrolling group went directly to the volunteer's house. They arrested the owner and sensing the fresh patriot departure, they tried to follow them. A faint evasive path gave them some suspicious signs so they went after the patriots for a distance then came back. Wolves were also patrolling the surrounding.

The chief patriot put some meat behind him for

wolves to follow the track. Meanwhile, the French group who was back home to the camp was attacked by the group of wolves who killed three soldiers while the rest escaped.

Back to the village, the news of the dangerous wolves attack spread quickly. The volunteer was released as no accusation proved true against him. He did not say a word and kept silent during interrogation. The story of the white wolf reached everywhere and soon the French army decided to trap the white wolf and its companions. Hence, they did everything to lure the hungry wolf but they did not succeed.

They, at first wished to chase him up to the hilly mountain, but they were afraid of the patriots' attacks. Two months passed, the French group went on an alert, two of their horses were attacked. They decided to use horses and go after the wolf. Snow did not stop for days and the weather was still frosty. They selected six experienced horsemen and climbed the mountain following the wolves tracks. The vision was difficult and rather hazy, one could not open up his eyes except with special glasses. The more horsemen went up, the more difficulties they faced; they felt suffocated and lost within the dense forest covered with snow.

They turned wet; they shivered and lost their ways so they went down empty handed. Meanwhile, the wolf and the team were howling on the top as if inviting the soldiers to come. But, unfortunately, the

armed guys were afraid and could not face the enemy. That was a great challenge – the wolf was observing them from afar. Down towards the end of the day, one might feel that time was fleeting and days were very short. The inhabitants, due to the war time, went home early to avoid problems leaving the floor to wild animals including wild pigs, foxes and wolves to descent the town and rove along the gardens, the yards and the barns looking for something to eat.

Though animals were surveyed, yet, wolves as usual did have something to eat; they killed any creature especially female wolves that were more dangerous – they had cubs to feed and could kill anyone approaching them.

In fact, that night, wolves killed two horses belonging to the French army. This time the French troop decided to follow the wolves and so they prepared themselves and started chasing the wild animals, following them even to the top of the mountain. In their way, they accidentally met with some freedom fighters and they exchanged fire. Of course, that was a serious incident – two Algerian casualties and three French soldiers dead.

The Algerian patriots continued their way while the French withdrew. Tomorrow, the French came in a great number chasing the Algerian and the white wolf that seemed siding with the Algerian native fighters. The French followed the wolf tracks until an open hole near a cave. They perched themselves there

waiting for the wolf to come up. They built fire and prepared puffed smoke in the hole forcing the wolves to get out but the chief wolf was not stupid enough for *old birds are not to be caught with chaff*. The wolf had three other holes to escape from. The French waited and waited but in vain. So they went down home with a bitter remorse.

At night, they waited for the wolf but he did not come down to the barn as usual as if he knew he would be trapped. Three days after, the wolf came in mass and killed other beasts and went away; That was catastrophic. Then, the French decided once more to encircle the whole area where the wolves resided. So, they surrounded the place and started shooting, they built fire and threw meat everywhere to lure the wolves to come.

Wolves were squeezed for three days and nights. They were very hungry – At last, the female wolf followed by five cubs went out looking for food and the first sniper bullet hit her in the belly, she barked – a sign of disaster and fell down with her young cubs sleeping on her lap. Then came the turn of the white wolf that was very angry. Seeing the mate on the ground, he tried to escape but another bullet hit his right leg but he managed to escape.

Soon the whole group evaded and the French soldiers started shouting words of fear – the wolves attacked them – three injured soldiers were immediately rescued. The war seemed interminable.



Back home, the French were very angry for missing the opportunity to kill the chief wolf. Soon, fear reigned over their hearts. The white wolf and his race mate returned to another cave keeping the young cubs with them. This time they changed the place and changed other tactics – wolves did not attack at night but at dawn. The white wolf did not show himself for days, it seemed the injury was serious and some new wolves replaced him in their attack. They attacked the French reserves for many times and at last the white wolf was trapped and caught and put into a cage where he was kept as a lesson for all its friends with a severe punishment for its attacks fell upon him.

In fact, the wolf was bravely respected and symbolized a sign of war on them. He was regarded as another villain working with the Algerian freedom fighters. The brave white wolf stayed in the cage for long until he turned grey; he was enfeebled with age and left the forest with a great pride as if he stood in grandeur a hero passing the message to the next progenitor to keep on the fight.

Algeria had not yet got its freedom – struggle in life was often interminable. The attacks on the French stopped for a while and then resumed but this time without the white wolf's command. When the white wolf health deteriorated, he could not move because of his injury, the death that subdued the female partner, the solitude in the cage and the absence of friends and partners made his awe deeper – ; he

decided to retreat from this life; to abandon his wishes and intentions and would then die as a brave.

The story of the white wolf was recounted by the past generations to the younger ones; those who did not live the Algerian sufferings and miserable conditions, the atrocities of wars and the millions of patriots who devoted themselves to the independence of the country. In reality, the story of the white wolf was a good deed and an allegory for those who did not believe that even wild animals shared this great cause – The Algerian Liberation War.

**August, 2013**

## 10

### **The Story of the Man Biting his Nails**

He was still biting his nails – a sign of remorse that he could never hide in his ailing heart. He stood up then kneeled to fold his arms around his head in a state of lunacy. The man escaped death as he was chased five times, imprisoned thrice to come back to his decimated family. The whole family was eradicated during the times of war. He was the only patriot left among the fifteen who departed to liberate some comrades at the frontiers. Poor Fellow, no chance to survive at an era where there was no sweetness except to die for an injured country.

Only swallows roved secretly from place to place. He wandered and wandered on the lone bare streets by an autumn afternoon. Leaves were incessantly thrown here and there and the gentle breeze blew the dead branches – Melancholy everywhere even birds twitterings were no more heard. The smell of death

and smashed bodies scented from afar. The man, barefooted, was still admiring and gazing at the ruined buildings that looked like Kabul grottos annihilated to an end only three pillars with empty hollows jerked on the nearby trees.

Yet, the man was still moving at slow paces as if he was searching for something unidentified, unknown. He was rather confused and then he pretentiously fixed his eyes here and there as if he was evoking ancient souvenirs – He did not recognize the buildings, the streets and even his house. Everything was strange to him. He then moved and admired. The swallows that looked at him from afar sensed his approaching; so they hid themselves from being observed.

Now, he stopped and fixedly admired a building and talked to himself – certainly that looked like my ancient house so he made way to the building and entered to see his small room completely demolished and only the big picture he fixed some fifteen years ago, half torn whence the wind played within. A tragic state within a tragic thinking; the man could but recall some pictures of his children and his wife. He shifted to the next room but the same pictures came to his mind. The fuzzy dim view he tried to recollect was not sufficient for him to situate the right destination to the members of his family – He got out then one of the swallows (woman in black and white) was clothing herself in such garment as a lament for the demise of the

husbands of the village – She approached him and said

“Your wife and your two children were taken by the French army.’

‘Ok, ‘ He said nodding with his head economizing words as if he was stupefied and shocked.

The man then continued his way walking and walking and asking everyone he met about his lost family but no news on the rise. The village seemed quite empty and quiet and even the used barking dogs disappeared. Long and interminable was his day, hunger and tire chased the man so he leaned against a tree far from the main road and slept – You could see only his mean body shaking from cold that he sometimes moved his numb feet and limbs. He was in a chaotic state. The next morning a shepherd with a few sheep passed by and saw him.

At first he could not approach him thinking the man was a lunatic or an injured person but after a few gazing at him, the shepherd moved a few steps and awoke the man, who stood up with surprise

“Don’t be afraid, the shepherd retorted – ‘I’ll do no harm to you’I am Omar the shepherd of the village.

Omar contemplated the Man’s face and recognized him – He helped him walk and they both headed towards Omar’s hut. There, the man was cared for, he was given some milk and dates and some pieces of baked semolina and then the man insisted to resume his way. Omar told him about what happened to the

village and the villagers. They had all escaped; some were taken to prison.

After long walks, the man met an old fellow and offered his services to the patriots but he was refused; so he continued his way through the forests; yet at times he did not find anything to eat; he was obliged to hunt animals and fish in the creeks or went after some wild fruits. One night, he ate from a dangerous tree and soon his body turned red of allergy; he was about to die and suffered a great intense fever where his body shuddered as a leaf blown by the wind; he moaned all the night. Fortunately, he ate some bitter herbs in the nearby that soothed some of his pains. The man was escaping the places where the French patrolled so he went cross country looking for the easiest ways to the next village prompted by the idea he could find his family.

Once he arrived to the next village, the man went directly to an old acquaintance where he spent two night unobserved. He learnt from his friend that he was wanted by the French police. The man packed his things and took some food with him and rejoined the patriots on the other side of the mountain. Time passed and his wife and his two children were released yet they had no home where to go to. Their former dwelling was demolished so they went to his old acquaintance who helped them stay in his extra room.

In villagers, the Algerian situation, at that time, was very wicked and wretched and the wealthiest

person was the one who possessed some few semolina and pieces of dates. Everything was rare and mean – people gardened, reared some animals and ate from nature.

The family persisted; the mother dug the garden and helped feed her two children with what the land could offer. The neighbor wished to communicate with the man but he could not. The woman fell trees and branches to prepare fire in the open hearth to keep the small room hot, she tried to bring the family warmth but without father, the breadwinner, everything seemed tasteless. She acted as a brave man; she watched out for everything and did not leave her duty for one day. She shared the neighbor's household together with his wife and lived as a united family.

One night, while everything was at a standstill, the neighbor heard some noise on the roof so he went out and to his surprise he saw the man. He came to buy some food for the patriots on the mountain

“Come in,” the neighbor said

“Well, let's get in.” At first, he did not inform him about his family but when he saw him biting his nails and fingers he announced the news.

“Your family is here with us,” said the neighbor, and without letting him finish the whole story he jumped on him and hugged him with joy. Then, together, they went knocking at the door and the wife got out with a small candle that she directly pointed to the face of the man – She recognized him and

immediately she dropped the candle and jumped into his arms – Children hearing the noise, woke up and joined the mother. They sat under a flickering petrol lamp to whisper about their stories; each one on his side narrating his story without succession.

They ate together and drank coffee. At night, the neighbor went to the village store and informed the owner about the food package the man had to take with him the next morning. The store owner prepared his mule and wrapped everything on, and on the next dawn, the man departed towards the mountain with a big promise to come back with the money to repay the owner. He also promised to come back to the family. He thanked the neighbor for this great hospitality and the great service he offered to the family. Now, it was over than six months and there was no news about the man.

**The End**



## 11

### **The Story of the Old Aged Mother**

By a night fall, it was raining heavily and the road seemed slippery, the weather was foggy and the poor driver could barely see the turning over signal when he suddenly sided off to smash directly against a tree. The man who was accidentally unhurt was taken immediately to hospital but unfortunately, he survived the traumatic shock. However, he lost his wife who was severely affected and succumbed in her incontinence sleeping in the midway. She left two small sons who were at her sister's house – She died very young and her husband was extremely shocked – The event took him long to overcome. The victim's sister could take care of the two sons for two years but as she had four other daughters, she could not take care of them all –

She suggested to the husband to remarry for his own benefit and for the benefit of the kids who

needed someone's affection better than her to protect and compensate for their mothers. She took charge of finding a good wife for him. In three months time, the father re-married and now his two sons were well cared for. The new wife considered them better than her sons – they grew well and protected. The husband loved her very much and the more she loved the orphans, the more he loved her.

Commuting to his work, the husband had a daily travel of 100 miles. One day, his car broke down on his return home; so, two misfits attacked him, robbed him of his money and stole his car after killing him. The body was found thrown on the moat nearby and the corpse was taken to hospital for an autopsy by forensic specialists whose final results concluded that the man was suffocated to death.

Poor new wife – now she had six small children to feed. She barely could make it with the little money she earned. She decided to work as a cleaner in the nearby school and she persisted and persevered until the children turned adults. She married all the daughters and now she lived with her sons. They were both married. Their wives were very harsh with the mother and wherever she moved to she was dimly viewed.

She was given hard tasks to do and worked as a servant just to subsist. Her life grew bitterly worse. She kept everything for herself but weeping whenever she found herself isolated in her hut. As whisperings

to sons' ears grow ampler, and with time, even the sons started to despise their mother in law. Hence, one day they conspired to throw her in the old aged house so as not to disturb their lives anymore.

Sensing their plan before it is realized, the mother in law went to the police and complained about. The two sons were summoned and confessed plainly that they could no more accept her because of their wives. The mother was weeping all the time – She claimed she helped the sons since they were very young; she made them grow up comfortably and she did never harm anyone's feelings. She was a real mother for them but see how such demeanor could at the end emerge.

She did not stop lamenting her fate and scorning the first day she was brought forth to life. The grandmother packed her things and went walking to the orphanage. She was all desolation and isolation – an old lady in need of consolation. Nobody, no daughters or sons could come and see her at this miserable state. Life went by and the lady formed a good company there. She met many new faces from different localities of the country.

One day, someone came to see her at night – She was one of her daughters who married in France. When she went home and did not find her mother, she asked for her everywhere but nobody told her the truth – they simply told her she went out one day and she did not return. Then, The daughter made her way

immediately to the old aged house and asked the janitor at the hall of residence who gave her the room number.

The old lady opened the door and to her surprise, she found that it was her eldest daughter Nadia, a married immigrant who came to spend her holidays in Algeria. They ran to each other, hugged themselves for long and wept. They wept the long absence, they cried for the mother's state and they blamed the circumstances that led the mother to such a state. The girl did not know about all this; otherwise, she could have taken her with to France. They sat on the bed for a while, then the daughter packed her mother's clothes and went away. The daughter took her directly to the hotel where she resided. She was very surprised to hear her mother relating the facts about the two sons and their wives.

Tomorrow, the eldest daughter went to her brothers in law and disputed with them about her mother blaming them for this ingratitude and the indifference. Since then, the eldest sister decided not to leave her mother for an instant – she rode with her all along the prairies and rural regions, making various tours, stopping here and there to take photos. It was really a pleasure to invigorate a grandmother's spirit after long bitter days of cud. The mother started to forget some of her fore bearing dilemma. The eldest sister prepared a passport for her mother. She decided to take her to France to live there before her eyes.

Once there, the old lady lived as a princess and everything could be perfectly shaped. Hearing about her, her sons in law wrote her letters asking for invitation but she took a promise not to receive anyone. In this sense, she continued her life in extreme comfort far from any disturbance. Every afternoon, she walked with her daughter's small kids in the nearby park.

Soon the message of the thrown away mother spread out to the other sisters who decided to abandon their sons since then. All the daughters decided to build a house to their mother in Algeria, a place that could congregated all the members of the family where they would meet every summer. It is good to keep kith and kin in commemoration, if of course, this is built on mutual respect and love; yet, if it is built only on selfishness and egoism, it is better to cut any relation off. And though blood is thicker than water, sometimes it is better to drink water than to drink honey for even honey has some disadvantages – it can kill if it is not properly used.

The story of abandoned grandmother is very frequent in Algeria where many cases happened – This is bitter fate for mothers and the aftermath of all will be catastrophic for children who do not really understand the meaning of having a mother or a father or one of them alive until they all disappear. On that day, there grow only remorse and regret, but Alas! a broken china could never be repaired – Take it

as counsel – profit from your parents before it is too late – paradise stands there within, try to find it, make use of it and turn it a treasure that could never end and is never used up.

**August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

## 12

### **When the Sun Rises**

The weather was tenderly clement and the spell of the fresh air fused within the dark morn, signaling the coming of the first sunlight that seemed to peep nowhere for the miserable family under the lead of an old mother and her two shabby poor children, sheltering themselves from the shattering death that overwhelmingly left no decimated soul on earth. The epidemic diseases were spreading out at an era the absence of modern medicine and cure were totally apparent.

The mother and her two little chicks were feeding themselves on the branches of trees and some wild vegetables roots that she threw in the broth to boil and to appease the bare throats through little sifts; a pretended food that never satiated the belly. She sang the poor lullabies to make her little sons sleep and did not disturb her with their intense questioning. Behind

the haze and the half cloudy sky, the morn shameful sun red rays there emerged from behind the hill. The mother in her measured paces tiptoed towards her sleeping kids to cover them with the little torn rags she possessed then secretly she dived into the hollow leading downtown as usual.

She went there to sit by the dark corner extending her legs and folding her arms while laying a small earthenware plate on her lap for people to put some coins in. The floor was cold and rather wet from the cold night. She waited and waited for some passersby to drop some blessing coins for her, one passed, the second and the third was a woman she turned to the lady and dropped three French francs into the hollowed bowl that echoed – a sign of its emptiness. The woman gazed profoundly to the old woman with a pierced tender spot as she wanted to mean something she rather expressed through her gaze and heart.

The miserable woman seemed right and was not a pretence she said in herself. She felt another sensation towards the lady because she herself lived the taste of being hungry, thirsty and appalled. Hence, the more the time grew up, the more pedestrians started to double in size. The mother was shaking her body from time to time; she felt very cold and her limbs were numb and at certain times she felt them detached; for the very clothes she wore did not even suffice for cleaning her eyes, cleaning the very



droplets of water coming down from her eye, she wept her fate, her circumstances and her lone state far from family members and alone living wild as an animal.

She thought it was high time to stand up to change to another corner. This time, she felt more prosperous for the day: a group of tourists on her chance day were passing by. They all dropped many coins for her; she was pretty well treated and soon happiness started to draw on her face and forehead. She collected her rags and went directly to the nearby store, she bought some necessities of life and headed away towards the cave on the hilly mount.

After few climbings across the steepy lane, there she arrived yet her two chicks were still sleeping. She sat down, washed her face and started preparing some coffee with milk for her and for her children. Once everything was ready, she woke them up to take the first breakfast in their lives – they were all the time moaning for not eating anything they craved for and that in reality did never come up. The two children ate with a great avidity as if they did not eat for long, that was the bitter reality they used to eat once but twice and thrice after two or more days the interval between one uptake and another seemed to have no precise time depending on the availability of food.

Children used to fast as their mother did; they ate and ate thinking they might not be served for a couple of days. The mother was shame fast and resolute and

knew how to put by the very remaining pieces of food or money for the rainy day. Two days after and for the first time she decided to get down town with her two small children, the very beautiful creatures. And though poverty stricken, they went down and sat near their mother as usual, tending their hands for the passersby, begging what could the generous hands donate or abstain from.

At times, the poor creatures did not understand anything from the people's flow and how did all these crowds live and feed and find times for luxury. Anyone who passed by was accompanied by a father that the poor children questioned their mother about. The story was long and long; the father who did marry very young was prompted by his uncle to immigrate to France before the Algerian Revolution started and he was married to this old lady with whom he lived just for one year and left to France using falsified papers. Since then, he did not return to Algeria and he did not show up. His parents waited for him to come back but nobody knew about what happened to him.

Ten years or more passed and the young maid, after losing both her parents, someone asked for her hand so she accepted for her faith dictated for her to marry anyone who came lest she would turn to a street walker. She accepted anyone who could be a good husband and with whom she would build up a decent home and life. She married and the couple

lived happily for many years without having children; yet fate and the unexpected circumstances hid for her what she could never dreamt of.

The Algerian Revolution broke out and the young husband, fearing to lose his wife, he took her to her uncle to live with while he engaged himself with the patriots forming groups of militia in charge of protecting the villagers from the French attacks and burning fires. He engaged himself with conviction to serve his country till death.

At the beginning, he visited his wife and talked to her uncle and sent her some money but bit by bit no news came from him; he went up to the mountain and was appointed a minor leader charged of document transmission from place to place until he was caught and imprisoned. He, in fact, did not stay long in the prison before he escaped. There was no news from since then at times the French reinforced their control over Algerian citizens, barbed wire everywhere with curfew established every evening and no one dared get out at night; no one could break the silence of the night and even barking dogs were quietened and if they barked they would signal the approaching army in their casual patrol.

There passed very cold nights and darkness reigned over the cities and villages and you could hear the breathings of the French jeeps in their slow passing and the flickering lights surveying the surroundings. The nights seemed interminably long

and still longer as no news of the neighbors or friends – everyone was given to himself and no one knew whether there were some dead bodies that night; hence, people regained their souls only when cocks stood up, they stood brave sending their shameful voices from their cold fresh beaks to announce the morning prayer. Soon, the sun rose and the movements started on the dirty and dusty lanes, the spouts sent the vapor of Pacha traditional coffee as it boiled on the wooden charcoal and the flavor of wheat semolina burnt on the earthenware stoves giving the taste for a congregated breakfast that the Algerian families longed for at the time poverty reigned everywhere.

There were no class privileges at that time and every scholar covered himself with torn raiment and patches on trousers and mostly long ‘gandouras’ and ‘burnous’ traditionally made at home. Everybody was nearly living the same social conditions: simple life within simple and modest primitive conservative society; generosity was a good quality at that time and people used to help one another at times of need. The spirit of consolidation was very recommended among the villagers.

The husband showed no sign of life for the latest news reported he was killed on the frontiers and was buried there as a martyr and some of his affairs and papers were found with his wife who unexpectedly found herself pregnant. She was proud of herself to

give to life twin babies that she brought up with her to the mountain. Now they were aged six years old each.

The lady departed to the cave after her last uncle died. She thought she could escape anyone, the misfits and the French. She was full of positive hopes to be able one day to give her two chicks a good schooling, and after the Algerian independence would be gained, she would be ready to sacrifice her life for them. The old mother continued her begging rituals and one day she descended down town as usual; she sat on her daily corner to wait for her share of the passerby's donations when a well clad lady stood before her, leaned to whisper to her ears some words.

"Where do you live?" "Where is your husband?" she continued questioning "if I offer you a work will you work?"

"Yes", said the old lady.

Then they moved together directly to the lady's house where they sat. She offered her and her children a hot breakfast with fresh milk, some loaves of home bread and some fruits she laid in a basket. The old lady accepted the work as a maid in the household when the lady was busy teaching in the primary school. The old lady did her job perfectly that she was very proud of; she worked while her two children played in the yard and bit by bit she offered them a small room downstairs and soon the old lady became very acquainted with her boss. She, in fact, turned to be a good companion for the lady was living alone

and with no children. Life then seemed very enjoyable and the war seemed intensified between the Algerian patriots and the French army who did their best to annihilate and eradicate the Algerian movement.

The two children were taken to school under the lady's tutorship where they grew well and studied hard to soon succeed in their studies. Then they went to the French comprehensive school under the assistance of their mistress who was a French volunteer teacher for the French soldiers and colonizers' children and daughters. She succeeded in enrolling the two scholars who did not vary in complexion from the French children. They learnt French well and soon they were loved by their teacher whence they succeeded in their school years.

Later on, the war was on its end and the mistress was forced to leave to France; so she proposed the old woman to take her and the boys to further their studies; so their mother accepted, the boys were schooled in a private school and their mother found a work there. They rented a room and the small family lived peacefully until the two boys graduated.

The lady got married and changed her residence but she was bitterly attached to the boys and to their mother, and though the distance, they often met to evoke the ancient souvenirs.

Once the students finished their studies, the whole family decided to go back home. It was the era of post-war in Algeria, everything was in perfect joy,

colonizers packing their household lot and the country seemed living at a mess. Everything was void for the French staff in administration, teachers in schools and doctors in health centers had all left.

The whole family came to the village that was utterly changed; the old lady went to her ancient dwelling but she did find nothing, so she spent few days at the neighbors'. Some news reported that her small brother had returned from the mountain and now he was looking for her and coincidentally they met so they rented a house and came to live together.

The family reunion, after a long absence, was an eternal joy, an endured jollity that could never be missed. Days gone by and her second husband who was reported dead did not in fact die but left his papers with his friend who was shot to death. People did not know the dead only from the papers found; hence, the living husband came back to the village tracing his souvenirs and asking people about his wife's family. He asked after her eldest uncle and he was informed he was dead just after his departure, then he went on in his research until a neighbor informed him that a lady was living with her brother; she was living somewhere in the nearby.

And so, he went to the destination and to his surprise he saw his wife that did grow with age. He recognized her, so he immediately knocked at the door and he introduced himself and then he was asked in. What a festive moment to see his ex-wife

after a long absence as there was no divorce acclaimed at that moment. He rejoined his wife that did not refuse his demand. The husband did not even know that he had got twin brothers with her and did not even know the moment he left her she was pregnant and the most surprising thing was when his two adult boys entered and saw him. Their mother introduced them to their father so they hugged for long and wept all together.

The atrocity of the war did not give chances to people to live together or to taste the sweetness of life. Then the small family regained peace after a long separation: the two graduates found jobs and bought a nice house for them and one for their uncle who got married after. The old mother and her two sons did not forget the mistress so they sent her letters and went to visit her in France many times as well. The mistress craved for a fresh visit to Algeria where she said did help her grow mature and she was very pleased of the nice moments she spent in Algeria teaching the young kids there

She, until then, did not speak bad of the Algerian citizens who helped her keep nice souvenirs of the country. Now as good relations were set up, they exchanged visits and even she attended one of the twins' wedding and tasted the delicious 'couscous', the main ceremonial course. In fact, the arrival of the mistress to the village was in itself an eventful event – everybody remembered her good deeds and she was



regarded and venerated as a family member; she did never sided with the colonizers and she soon learnt that the Algerian people were good at heart and deserved assistance. From that day on she was greatly welcomed and she wrote a book on the Algerian war in which she recounted how the villagers suffered and the ordeals they reaped beside the harsh climate of the long days she witnessed.

**August, 2013**



## 13

### Truth is Out

At last the man was released from prison, the evict was found innocent. Headlines and newspapers captions announced his total non adherence to the revolt movement and the upsurge. Thank God.

“The sting is always at the end” cried the prisoner after being crawled over the cold wet sand naked body and feet. He appeared old and aged, his white growing beard covered his small rounded lips and his words did not come out well uttered. A mid aged man full of wisdom as he did not speak much but when he did, his words came as piercing as thunder spark. Life indeed pierced his heart; a breadwinner of the first class, six shivering little kids to feed. He worked non stop, felling wood in the nearby forests, selling the wood on market days using an old intelligent donkey. *Said* the farmer, the woodcutter and the village mason was a well known person whose hands were most of

the time open to indigenous people like him. His heard voice was there for the needy and the hard workers.

One day, *Said* went away for a far distant land in quest for a remedy for his ailed wife. She was terribly sick and doctors of her time advised her to stay at home and wait for her fate, but, Alas for the poor husband and the six kids – who cared after them! He plunged in his somber mind thinking in pensive mood how to get his wife cured. Life seemed long before his eyes and he thought he could find the best way to overcome his dilemma.

He took a wise decision that could help him get out or rot in midway – to go and search for the curable vegetation, an herb prescribed by an old sage, an herb that grew only some hundred miles, located within mountainous spaces whence its destination demanded blood and venturing risks

*Said* made his decision not to retreat whatever the circumstances. He saw the plant in his dreams to the extent that it became part of him, a stuck picture pesting his mind all the time.

Time had gone by and the necessity to haste for the remedy made *Said* pack his humble lodging, trust his kids within a neighbouring residence, prepared his old donkey and set off by an early dark morning to the unknown destination

The rising moon seemed not to peep as he wanted it to be, the early morn was rather shuddering for the

uncovered feet and body. The donkey seemed too tired and ill fed, the slowing pace was a true sign of tiresomeness – the two creatures decided to join the risk for a long journey whose end was fuzzy. The great challenge was more than the fear, they trudged feet together crossing along the spruce forests in half darkness, a moat, a river, a sloping mount, a rest and a muse.

Said had long thought of the curing plant and the moment he could reach it and pick it for sure. Yet, he did not falter from setting up the course. He was resolute and steadfast though calamities surrounded him from every side. Sensing the desire for a nap, said unpacked the donkey, set aside by a lofty tree and slept, yet that was but a short nap, he could not sleep for long his stomach was empty squeezing itself.

Three nights and days had passed and though time was fleeting it was rather cumbersome for Said who saw in the trip a long risk that worsened day after day. Solitude and fear killed him, alone in a strange land full of dangers and wild animals. His defense was a primitive knife that could not even deliver him from a simple knot. His incredible story started to dwindle and he began losing verve. His old donkey could never continue his desired route: hence collapsed in midway. Said saw in this unprecedented event another load to add. What a disastrous feeling to go by and live?

Poor fellow, in his solitude, he chewed the cud for

himself alone. Wolves sensing the dead corpse of the donkey howled all the night inviting one another for a festive meal. Said's fear grew longer and dim. He hid himself in a distant place and was obliged to spend the night on the top of the trees lest some wolves attacked him. He decided to walk the days and slept the nights until he reached his destination. He did walk for miles on his bare feet that were bleeding though padded with thick torn raiment.

Between now and then, the plant seeker roved mistakingly taking another route and often adjusting himself following the trodden passage ways. He at last arrived to the intended destination.

He gazed at the range of green patches and all the plants seemed the same. His sought vegetation was bitter and sour. He started tasting the herbs until he found his renowned plant. He bent down, picked some petals and smelt them for long – the presentiment overwhelming his heart, the feeling he could not reach his wife before time. He immediately harvested what he could to his own force load and went fast returning on the same route. He went as fast as he could to bring the remedy on its due time – Long miles and miles he crossed non-stop until sleep had reddened his eyes.

Said had done his best to reach home through the labyrinthine pathways; made his own principles more plausible at times his suffused dreams were about to evaporate; yet still his lust not yet reached. He went

fast to his old residence, as resolute as ever; Yet to his own surprise an old acquaintance told him the news that his wife had already gone – she passed away the night he had been in a desperate gloom facing the unknown destination.

Poor Said, he could have gained more time with his sane donkey; but alas nothing could stand in its fixed place, he did not relinquish. He gathered his young scattered kids and set to another destination seeking refuge in the free land at large. In his itinerant roving, Said was caught and imprisoned for helping the rebels in their day to day shift. He spent three years without even one day judgment. His kids grew in misfortunes and regained senses to become adults. They waited for long to grow mature enough to release their imprisoned father. Long were evidences collected and the verdict known. The poor family reunited in another circumstance and soon the kids had other kids and the grandfather forgot his moan.

**December, 2013**





## 14

### The Hospital

It was an invigorating evening of a july summer vacation, the eldest son made a visit to his diseased father. The father was rather aged and did not feel well. Some fever started daggering his enfeebled body. He could not stand from pain – a stomach-ache pained all his body and he was whirling as a baby on the soft mat. Numerous stomach crises came and went and the old father stood standfast resisting to. He passed by a time of absent mindedness with a spell of death. In fact, death started to creep in his body – it seemed to start earlier and did scatter its signs all along. He fainted from the intense pain, lost his consciousness to regain it after a while – he forgot everything. His kin were all standing around observing their breadwinner in his repetitive swoons – no one could dare give a helping hand.

After a while, when the degree of pain reached its

zenith, they decided to take him to hospital, at least, to sooth some of his intense pain. Leaning on the eldest child's shoulder, the father left the house trudging his numb feet to lay on the back seat of a limousine. Once in the hospital, the doctors gathered to see his case, injections were given, and the blood pulse was taken and he was again left alone suffering to his own fate. Soothing liquids were administered to him; he was then examined by another doctor who prescribed some medicaments to buy.

“The case of Your father is not very serious, you can take him home” and if pain persisted bring him back to me.” Said the physician.

“Ok,” said the eldest child. Let's take him home. “

A couple of hours later, when the effect of pills started to fuse, the fever came back for another visit. The father was shuddering like a leaf in the blowing wind. His teeth chattered and he asked for more blankets until he became all wet. It was night and the means of transport were scarce – it took few minutes to walk and search for a vehicle to hire. Doctors in the nearby village did not work at night and the poor father had to be transported to the hospital again. That created another panic to the whole family who were on their alert. Only a small modest torch flickering from afar, a promise from a driver to pass by in the very coming moments.

Ouf, the car at last peeped in the darkness. The father slipped into; the eldest child and the father's

brother dived into and the car moved up the hill towards the hospital. When the car stopped at the entrance of the emergency service that was nearly empty. Doctors had left for another emergency – The father was nearly half dead, fainting in the car with someone holding him fast to his chest.

More than half an hour passed, a staggering doctor came from afar. He was tired before his time. He asked for the man to come, made him sleep on his back; got out his stethoscope and started moving it on the father's body asking father for a perpetual breath in and out. The physician turned around the half dead body and could not understand. He left the father, went out for a few minutes and came back with two other doctors. They made all the observers out and started examining the father together. It seemed the father's age had come to its end. They knew the father's days started to perish; yet they did not want to inform his sons about the case. Few minutes after, they asked after the eldest son to sign on the entrance register and decided to keep the father for a dead night. They asked his family to go home.

What a dreadful night for the family waiting for the unexpected; a night that could not bring the bird of good omen – they were half desperate for their father's case whose night seemed long and interminable. Only a thread of hope to which they clang to, a thread not even thick enough to lead them for the next morn. The father was administered some pain soothing

infusions and left alone moaning in the cold bed; he turned around himself more than often, talked to himself and fainted motionless. No breathing, no moaning until the dawn when the nurse came in her patrolling routine to find out the dead corpse. The father was dead two hours after his parents' leave; no one would care – he died as doctors predicted.

A hopeless case in a hopeless situation – no medical care and no uptaking especially for the needy. The poor remains poor and his evil signs would still rove on his next progenitors' dwelling until they in turn perish. The whole family bereaved their dead and even a solemn departure was not yet prepared; his young children could not even sit with their father and see his waving smile and weavering oath.

**July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

## 15

### **When Mountains Meet**

“People meet but yet not mountains” an old saying came fast through the mouths of human souls. In fact; the world seems small to let people meet and remember one another in a world perfectly weaved with plenty of emotional drives and multitudes of intentions. The road is long and interminable; the boy in his long travel crisscrossing the valleys came to a hollowed cave to which he relentlessly sat to gather his scattered wits. His muscles seemed enfeebled by the continuous strivings against the jungles remains, his torn raiment reminded the heavy load his mind had undergone.

He sat then leaned then slept and soon he was taken to its profundities. He did not move anymore as if his soul had left his body. The sun in its setting shadowed his body that was pervaded in a shapeless sign. The edge of the forest was densely inhabited by

wild spruce trees and firs and when the boughs met they sent out a white fume, a good scent for the diseased chest.

The boy now grown up with age, in his hallucinating mood, he started to remember his burnt abode to which he invested much of his deployed efforts. His lost father too did greatly manage the cabin into a hut where the family members did congregate. It seemed everything was gone with the wind, the hut and the cabin pictures were gone; yet, their vision within the boy's frame of mind was still present. He remembered his father, his mother and his two brothers. He turned around many times and in each rotation he sighed in despair as if he wanted to stand; yet he could not. He walked a lot and he was very tired. The night seemed long for a forlorn boy who stood helpless in harsh circumstances. And though he was too young to remember the misfit who pained his family; yet, he strongly portrayed the picture. He grew in revenge and wanted to reach the city where the so called rogue dwelt. With a strong determination he scrapped the floor, wrote something on as he was planning or drawing the route to. His hand in the half lit light of the small moon shaped something on the ground – he observed calmly, leaned into a pensive mood, gathered his load then escaped through the branches of the dense forest.

The forest was breathing with the appearance of the fuzzy light from the distant sun. Only his shadow

traversed the moats and the cedar trees. With trudging feet he advanced but his tenacious look was piercing the far horizon looking for the city in quest. There, I believed lied a few houses on the other side of the mount. He stopped and swiftly scraped the sweat from his forehead then continued his way.

Two hours of hard walk seemed to make from a desperate man a wild horse with good intent. He rejuvenated his soul and though he did not know the place; yet, he decided to conquer the unknown in search for the misfit who did harm his family. The first man he met was an old aged creature who welcomed him and passed greetings. He stopped him and asked for the bulging man whose picture was still fixed in his memories.

The old man gave him three names of robust men with their approximate residence. He walked and his raiment followed him as a shade from his intense poverty. He had nothing to care for. He lost everything yet in his desperate mind there existed a man who did harm to his parents. He decided to take revenge. He chewed the cud and made it a dream to fulfill at times circumstances were not in his favour. He saw the first man yet he did not give him any importance; he believed that was not the true case.

Moving into another street, he stopped at the given description, waited out along the narrow street and pretended to ask the passers by for some donations – He approached the house, knocked at the

door when the bulging man appeared. The man's eyes suffused with a splendid sharp squinting view and his voice roared heavily. The grown up boy did recognize the thick voice so he bent his head and scattered his fist open asking for a donation to which the robust man paid no attention. He immediately slammed the door in his face.

The boy now was certain the man was his targetted hero. He waited for him all the day long and then it came the night. When darkness veiled along the somber corridors of the city, the introspective man climbed the drain pipe to the dressing room where the robust man was heavily sleeping. He managed to enter the room unobserved. He made sure no one was there except the heavy trunk lying on the floor; so he made his way to and stabbed him many times with his sharp dagger.

Before his death, the man stood beside him and talked to him and made him recall his parents' events and the burning of the house. The man was astonished to see a remainder of the family. He thought all the members were dead and he could never imagine that blood could never be swayed but strained in the human's mind to an everlasting end. He made him remember and to his weak defence he slayed his throat again retorting

“Not only people meet but mountains also’. One should never escape his fate; it is a matter of tit for tat. The way you think you escape your fate is in in itself



part of your fate to die as you made the others die. Now, take a deep long sleep through which you would remember that blood would never be shed in vain, it haunts its shedder to an everlasting grave.

**July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014**



## 16

### **The Voyage**

It was a great finding, a marvellous dating, and a surprisingly nice event friends meet after a long absence. The weather was rather humid and hot – it was the sixteen of July of 2014 summer hot day. The passengers gathered on the coach station waiting for their turns to take a seat. The passageways were thronged with visitors and sea side resorters. Most people were hurrying north towards the sea. The traveller sided near and took his map to opt for the right destination. He mounted a bus that did not directly take him to his right destination. According to the targetted point, he preferred travelling by installments to cross country the various places and discover his own pleasure.

From a far position, the traveller was perfectly seen as he sided the window and got a newspaper and started doing some crossword puzzles. The bus was

moving rather slow because of the heavy traffic; the dense heat started to emerge and fill in the spaces – Soon a suffocating atmosphere started to load the passageway; the bus was not properly ventilated. We saw men who started standing and leaving their places in search for an an open window, window panes did not resist the parching sun; tension grew up and passengers all stood up and asked the bus driver to stop. They shouted and shouted yet the bus finally did stop – they all got out; some with a fainting spirit; others vomitted and some went directly to the moat to sit and refresh their heads with some droplets of water.

“What a cursed voyage,” the passengers shouted –  
“Ok, be patient, we shall see to the matter.”  
Retorted the bus driver.

Ten minutes after, there came a new bus and all the passengers embarked and a great joyous spell sighed on their faces – the bus was a far better than the previous – it was more ventilated and more spacious. Passengers felt more comfort. The blissful new atmosphere inspired many of them to evoke their souvenirs and talk about their past experiences. After too much familiarity and a long distance travelling, the open hearted started to whisper. As they were sitting in twos, the passenger’s day seemed at its own fortune. He sat beside a lady that seemed rich and prepossessing.

They talked and talked and bit by bit they got to

know each other – It seemed more familiarity was on its rise, they started doing crossword and exchange ideas; the lady was rather educated and she looked midway between the forties and the fifties – She showed him some of her photos and her family: the man did the same and soon they got confident as if their long acquaintance renewed. Half way to the beach, the bus stopped for few refreshing moments; the two creatures descended to take some drinks. Now, they came to each other as old acquaintances.

The man decided to pay the bill but she refused. She wanted to prove her social status as a well to do lady. She paid for everything.

Once on the bus, curious socratic questions started to emerge with the long talk: the lady talked well and her smooth running tongue pierced right in the man's ear as a wizard; he was completely absorbed by her perverted talk and her majestic manners; she lured his senses and soon he was gaping to her and looked as an attentive listener. The lady was not a native and she came to the seaside town from Tunisia. She came to visit an old acquaintance. The man was surprised he did not know about until the last moment. When they descended, they exchanged emails and phone numbers and promised to meet.

Days gone by and the man, who was deeply injured by the new creature, was almost as dizzy as a wild animal. He moved along the beach with the intent to see and meet the Tunisian. He got out his

mobile phone and dialed the number but only ringing in vain. He did the same thing nearly for five days until he had got out of his forces – He was enfeebled, his voice fainted and he started to lose hope.

See how fate played its role, see how the fortunate soul finds its mate. As the traveller was sitting on the perched café by an isolated corner holding a newspaper as usual, his mobile phone rang. She was the Tunisian, she implored to meet him and she strongly apologized for the long delay to which he negatively reacted. He jumped in joy and he immediately descended towards the beach. He moved and moved and stopped to dial a number. It seemed she gave him a right destination where they could meet.

“Ok, I’ll be coming” he nodded his head with a great joy.

He packed his newspaper under his arm and rushed to the spot. Long were his gazes as he dropped down the main alley leading to the endpoint. He was completely overwhelmed with joy, a joy he had long forgotten.

There, the young maid was on her turn fixing him; his shape appeared to her as a mirage moving, drifting apart. When they at last made sure of their sight, they exchanged a great smile before hugging each other for the first time. A hug that ever left a great bliss in their hearts. They smiled to each other and decided to move ahead to a quiet place to sift a drink.

Discussions and hot debates on trivial matters started from both sides to end in a marriage compromise. They both agreed to marry after a parent's consent. Unfortunately, they did not stay for long; so he accompanied her to the train station to Tunisia. She mounted the van and she was all hope to see him for eternal congregation. She was all joy as the premises of love started to creep in her veins.

Days gone by and marriage seemed to fix its seal on both parts: phone calls doubled and it seemed more consent was on the rise. Finally the couple agreed for a marriage and the celebrations started. Now, the new maid is joyfully welcomed in her new residence in Algiers. She realizes her dream thanks to her random visit to Algeria. Often times, voyages and travelling broaden the mind and the heart and marriages often dictate their own settlings; a fate to gain a partner does not come out of the blue but it is often mapped out and even so it fails. One should bear it to the bone that finding out the other half is a matter of faith and luck; one may meet one at times this is better than an arranged marriage. Let marriage to the providence and good faith; hence, wait and see, it is always greener on the other side of the fence.

**July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014**





## 17

### The Road

The story of the road had long been evoked. For long, the road takers roved unexpectedly facing risk and danger. Many road takers, according to witnesses, had been faced by catastrophes. The road taking, even for professionals, seems often full of risks. Many tales including the hero of *building the fire* on the klondaic, the *story of the pilgrims* in the Canterbury Tales, Sir walter raleigh's *voyages*, John Smith in his discovery to the new world... had all been an exciting flair, a pleasant scent that nurtured the spirit for more adventure. The adventure of discovery to the unknown that the old man went on reiterating to his nephews – the story of the old man who decided to travel to a distant place alone at times where the road was crowned with fear, wild beasts and the haunting spirits.

The man dreamt he would walk to meet a man, a hermit of good deeds living in the distant mountains,

a seer who lived amidst the caves overseeing the sea on the other side of the high mountain. He had promised to receive something from him before the coming of winter. It was autumn and the weather was rather fresh. The old man, puzzled with the dream he faced, started decidedly to make wake to the high mount in whatever the circumstances.

His target was carefully aligned in his mind; so he took the road that steeped along the jungle to the river then to another plain then the valley. There, sensing his intense tiresomeness, he fell asleep lying with his torn raiment on the bare soil. He fell unconscious for more than four hours, to wake up under the noise of the herd of wolves surrounding him. He woke up, took a piece of log and started to wave to the wolves that changed their course. The old man was rather smart, he did not trust the revolving wolves, he climbed to the top of the tree, settled himself well and attached himself to the boughs and kept watch of the roving wolves under. He nearly spent the rest of the night perched on the tree. When dawn began to peep, he descended the tree and followed his way to gain more time.

As he walked, he trudged his feet heavily and turned his piercing eyes peevishly lest he faced a wild beast.

Amidst the jungle, he was terribly afraid, alone only the noise of the chirping birds, the howl of wolves and the sighing of the forest. Leaves under his feet cracked and in his slow caressing to the fields, he

tried to avoid disturbing the sleeping fowls. What a walk, what a terrible atmosphere especially when one is alone. As he walked in fear, he sensed a breathing voice behind him so he stopped to make sure of. He gazed into the profundity of the spruce forest but only the branches moving under the breeze and their echo travelled along the mounts. Again, he climbed a tree to see at least where the rest of the road was and make sure what was left to cross.

Everything was green, the forest seemed long and the jungle was getting denser and denser. He was caught in a quagmire that he could neither continue nor return. He decided to headway to the unknown destination, a cave in the far distant mountain. How to reach it and when? Many questions that pestered his mind repeatedly. He descended the valley until he reached a small running creek. He stopped to wash his face and drink. He opened his pocket flat to take a piece of semoulina that he gulped down with a handful of fresh water.

“The road” he retorted is the first enemy to mankind; a road taker is a risk taker.”he went on reckoning.

“What came next grandfather? Tell us more” said the small children in their grown curiosity. Ok –

The man then stood up, gathered his force and climbed up the first hill. Now, he seemed desperate yet full of energy and vim. He was a little far from the

danger of the forest; now on the slopes he could control the wild animals and see from the top their movements. He now breathed a puff of fresh air that gave him another fillip for walk. He stopped to gather a piece of log he took as a leaning tool to help him walk and defend himself against beasts. The day was too long for him for he walked nearly for two days and he had not even stopped for a consistent meal. He decided to rest and eat something before the sunset for he knew he would not eat for another day.

Time ran fast and after half an hour, the man seemed to have collected sufficient energy that could help him reach the other cave on the other side of the mount. The quantity of water he sifted seemed to evaporate after a long crossed distance. The man crossed the river, climbed the slopes to finally reached the cave he long desired. His eyes opened wide, he gaped of joy thinking he had reached his goal to see and meet the mystic man he saw in his dreams. But once there in the cave, the man saw not the mystic; that was just a pipe dream, a mirage that floated over his spirit. He went into the cave moving through the steepy lanes where at last he saw a burning fire. He stopped and to his surprise the man in his long white beard appeared. He held him by the waists, lifted him up to the sky then threw him down on the floor.

“What on hell you wanted?” shouted the mystic – “You followed me in here, why did not you give up following me for a while?”

“The truth is that I saw you in my dream and I promised to meet you.” “Look to my dreadful dire state” said the traveller.

“Ok, come along then.”

The mystic took the traveller by the hand and they both dived into a dark corridor leading to a vast clear space where the mystic seemed to dwell. A large space with plenty of small windows each giving off light adding another charm to the setting.

“Take a seat”, the mystic said – “Since you have come from a far distant land, I am going to invite you as my guest for the night through which I would tell you many things about LIFE.

“Listen my boy, life is an interminable road, harsh to trod, easy to take; yet, unsure to reach the goal through. The road taker is an adventurer; for the day he departs he should make sure when to return; this is wise enough for the nonwise; yet it could have sense for those who know how to cross it. Life moves exceedingly fast these days, but you as a traveller and road taker, you need to weigh your pace; you need to trudge your feet and measure their weight. If the road for a layman is just a distance to cross to reach a destination; for the wise trotter it is not only a distance but a course, a whole philosophy and a doctrine where the road taker had to leave his prints on its soil.

The problem is that one may live for long yet he dies as a broken reed; a lifeless log that is thrown here

and there. The road is rather harsh and risky the more we get mature and responsible. And the problem is that we have to take it. Hence, you need to know well how to take it. The road is somber, it is not flowery, it is paining for the bare footed, the poor and the maimed, the foolish and the non wise. Then take it or lump it, the road is a must. Good night, see you with another dream.

**July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014**



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