

Tayeb Bouazid

The Feminine Instinct

EDILIVRE

Preamble

The present narrative marked the beginning of the Algerian Revolution in its fullest traits. The story took place in North Africa, particularly in Algeria the springboard of the sparkling upheavals around the year 1956 in a small locality overwhelmed by the harsh living conditions and the severe snow fall and frost.

The main character was a female figure called Leila who shifted from Algeria to Tunisia and then to Morocco in search of material support that fuelled the Revolution in its prime.

The main events revealed the trends to which the Algerian revolution cobwebbed right from its start to see the neighboring countries share the Algerian their own calamities. The broken hearted male and female figures of the story added another picturesque image to the scene which started with remorse and bitterness of fight and misery to end up with the great departure of the breadwinner-the sole source of life.

The moral lessons one could derive from the story while perusing its chain of events would reveal that colonization

whatever its shape would only generate lethal commitments and cause the citizens to suffer. Its stains would burn everything for the long term range and its aftermath was but a dead end, a mirage but a dream that even after the independence, its moral traces would fragrantly be witnessed.

A sample case was Abdelkader, a former Tunisian husband who sought refuge in France but did not have a chance to make a proper living there and where he finally got cold feet and passed his whole life on a wheel chair, an injured but a bleeding victim whose trails followed him to the grave.

Chapter One

The world of Leila

The eye of heaven unveiled the slopes, the rising coq hardly sent his voice, and the curfew still pervaded the shabby village extending in length to the adjacent mountains ; thus creating an atmosphere of obscurity and dullness amidst the poor region. The village which habitually consisted of poor indigenous people seemed immersed in its dark hue covered by mountains in range resembling a block of aroused clay in their pointed peaks lifted to the high sky.

The heaven in its dark hue added another spell of melancholy that pervaded upon the damp pastures that the fall rain had laid upon its wings. Everything seemed dry though the gentle drizzles that pervaded the soil. Nothing seemed positive except the gentle breeze playing by the first days of autumn. The leaves in their eternal departure fell down whirling in their farewell trotting and caressing the wet soil as if to their eternal demise paid tribute.

The village in its serene atmosphere signaled a great misfortune. An atmosphere where poverty, routine and

melancholy spread its wings. The great leaders had all joined the mountains to fight for their liberties. Hence, leaving the lunatics and the young children roving in the bowl of dust.

The breadwinners whose force could defeat time had all joined the fighters in their pursuit of liberty. A self commitment to the Algerian cause, to fight the intruders with whatever means available. They longed for their own liberty – A liberty they had long dreamed of to regain.

Women and grandfathers were left alone ; they were sitting by the grand yards overlooking the mosque. They had it as custom to congregate in the mosque open space relating their miserable stories as told by words of mouth from their ancestors. Grand fathers used to collect stones to sit on ; they turned around and started telling jokes to kill time or playing traditional games. Yet, they surveyed the enemy in its constant move.

Poor great men whose half naked bodies shivered, reluctantly plunged their bleeding hands under their torn shabby *gandouras*. Long covering pieces of cloth grand persons wore especially at times of prayers and which serve as a protective shelter against chill and frost.

Between now and then, the great village leaders rose up their eyes looking at one another, with a remorse vision, they sifted the message in code. Yet behind every gaze, thousands of ailing misfortunes there remained latent envisioned. Freedom was their sole preoccupation ; they all longed for the day their dreams would see daylight. They were fed up of colonialism that had remained a bore for their life.

They sighed at each inhaling act and the more they went on rolling about their past, the more they got closer

to one another. Something more than human blood relation that related them. They spent more than three hours exchanging ideas and planning for the future rebellious acts against the French who deliberately came from time to time to disperse them with force.

But as there were no recreational activities and everything seemed somber and monotonous, the modest laymen preferred to sit in the open places to kill time. Possessing a radio or a TV set was a luxury of the time. Hence, with too much naivety, jobless grandfathers went on relating their own calamities or scrutinizing the world events within the absence of communication media.

It was the time where neither the colonizers nor the Algerian citizens confided in the circumstances ; for there were many villagers who were arrested, sentenced and kidnapped to no return. Hence, it was reasonable that the common laymen asked about one another ; a fact that had become a common trait where people, during the fifties, had become more meticulous about one another.

The French often lived by the idea that those grandfathers were pretenders ; they sat there in the open space waiting for the midday prayer ; yet they were preparing for something and that time could never pass in vain. But, that was not always the case.

The French colonizers were all armed and they used to protect themselves and their properties by recruiting some local turncoats and rogues against some material lures. Hence, one could easily see them patrolling along their residences with their show off parades. Indeed, they were also on their alerts for from time to time we heard that victims had succumbed to their death. In fact, there was neither peace nor tranquility on both sides.

Moving a little bit further and not far from the scene, the French paratroopers roved along the creek in search of truants that hid on days and appeared by night. The French thought the real intruders had to be harnessed at the moments they peeped, early at dawn and late in the evening. So, they pried every corner in quest for what they termed misfits ; those creatures who had to submit to their destinies without any act of reaction or rebellion. Hence, any suspect move would lead its precursors to a final decay.

Algeria, in the view of France and many disloyal countrymen, was but another district of the Republic as once was being told and believed by turn coats. Colonial Algeria was subjugated, and rather bleeding under oppressions. It endured great misfortune moments where the issue of identity and personality were nearly abolished. Illiteracy was a marking feature that added to ignorance and lack of knowledge.

The conditions of living were at their utmost atrocities ; diseases, ill health and lack of food ; in addition to oppressive measures felt upon their shoulders. The indigenous population left their dwellings for a safer place in the mountains – the only refuge for the depressed and the best shelter for the deprived.

And even on the tops of the mountains, Algerian poor rural farmers were chased from their arable land to go and live elsewhere. Their properties were distributed and shared among the colonizers who were ready to decimate the whole tribe in case of rebellions or resistance.

For the onlookers down town when strolling along the dusty streets, they could observe within the suffused haze a foolish man roaming abandoned to himself, well known to the countrymen and to the French by the name of *Said the*

dervish of the village. He was never done harm to—a man of fifty five of age, moving along the streets barefooted, his sole living source the collected garbage and the food remains of the camp. Poor Algerian fellows subsisted upon the donations of the colonizers who deprived them of everything.

Said was regarded as *a marabou* – a piteous man of the village that nobody dared approach ; he was religiously much venerated on the ground that his witty words pierced the solid mount. And even the French feared him because he said many things that eventually proved true.

Said was idolized as a religious person who lived by what people gave him ; and the very coins he collected were put into a hole on the tree. He even did neither know the value of money nor the value of time. Said had for long been orphaned ; his parents died while he was very young ; so they left at the mercy of the society where he grew a rogue, and a houseless child.

Since then, Said had been roving and eating from the ground. He dwelt around in a small wooden cabin at the edge of a forest where most wild beasts roamed and sniffed at the rotten food he often collected.

When moving along the streets of the village you might discover plenty of lunatics similar to Said's case ; yet they differ in degrees ; some had where to go – parenthood or a neighbor to shelter them and to recollect at times of cold weather and frost. These were a little bit sane whereas others were left to themselves. And just as you move on your left, you find a little girl living alone.

The girl under case was the heroine of the story that the villains marked her life with their oppressive measures. She started young at times her contemporaries were but

dreaming and sleeping unconscious. Though she was little yet maturity and duty to defend her country had long been raised in her. She instinctively had the sniffing for the right duty accomplishment. She wished to speed up her growth to be able to fully prove her maturation in the field.

In complexion, she appeared brown skinned with a long curly hair that the dust had long penetrated and water had for long not yet been damped. A girl of twelve years old that did not taste the sweetness and the warmth of an ordinary household ; she lived in the open.

So, from her physical appearance and external outlook, it seemed she did not like to be harnessed and wished to live in a savage setting. She dwelt the village since a long time and she did live with her parents at times her infancy was in its blooming full.

Now, she lived with her uncle as an adopted child without a complete care the true father would give to his daughter. He allotted her a dirty cold corner in the additional part of his house. As she felt alone and without a total assistance, she pretended foolishness in using her childish manners. She skipped as a lambkin and moved from place to place keeping watch of the different armed forces' actions.

She did not wash herself for long so that the French army would leave her alone undisturbed. That was a successful policy long practiced with the soldiers who showed a great admiration for the young maid. Girls at the epoch used black coal and tar to spread on their faces with the intention not to fall a prey and victim to sexual assaults.

In fact, the girl was named *the female wolf* of the village ; she showed her teeth at night when everything was standstill ; she acted ferociously and she was very wise as

she was always planning to get out of Algeria to seek help. A great dream and an upsurge that needed some sunlight, an emotional support and a careful hand to pursue.

Leila, was her coined name as she was known to act at night and got some contacts with freedom fighters on the mountains-she was serving a liaison agent between the secret services and the freedom fighters. The reason behind her marriage with freedom fighting was her own sought dream that sprang up from her parents' lethal death the day they were coldly executed before her eyes when she turned to be eight years old.

From her recorded diary, the story of her parents' execution went on-I remembered well the night the French paratroopers smashed the door open to grab my father by the neck and dragged his body along the dusty floor to end up out of the room ; then it came the turn of my mother who was screaming by the pain caused by the soldier's fist who squeezed her fell of hair to the degree of its uproot.

Then, the French jeep came hurrying to the spot to load the two victims to an unknown place where they were interrogated. After that, they were transported to the encampment to see with official for their final witness. They were tried by a military jury in a close session.

In the absence of the defenders, the verdict was openly announced – my parents were to be executed for having transmitted some secrets folios to the freedom fighters. The papers were found within my father's baggage when he was about to cross the river leading the Algerian shelter.

It was a sunny day and my uncle and I were summoned to have a last look to my parents and paid tributes to. When we arrived to the camp, everything was silent and the atmosphere of death reigned over the barbed wires that sent

its pointed ends to the sky ; the camp was long, vast and sad-

At the front door, we presented our invitations. We were directly taken to a long dark corridor leading straight to the first cell where both parents were lying half dead of starvation. Their bodies were bleeding as they were violently beaten. Blue scars were deeply marking their necks and faces.

It seemed that my parents refused to tell the truth and their release was nearly impossible as they persisted in hiding the truth-My parents resisted temptations and punishments to the detriment of surrender. The reason the enemy could have no chance of getting, even a bit of the hidden truth.

Then came the crucial moment to see both my parents out to the open space where two couples of soldiers who reloaded their rifles, stiffened to attention, aimed their guns at their targets and that all happened in a wink of an eye-They shot my parents dead. I screamed with anger and grabbed my uncle's feet and loudly wept.

That picture would never quit my mind and the more I remembered that sad event, the more energetic I felt to take revenge.

As an infant she was suspected of following the patrolling army and pursuing its actions ; a fact that made the camp chief order for her arrest. She was then deported to the French camp where she adopted lunacy as a trick to get herself out of that catastrophic confinement. She spent many dark nights alone in the open space as a test for her madness pretention where she managed to make it out at last.

She lived in the French encampment for nearly four months but later on she was released under her uncle's paid caution on condition not to quit her dwelling. She

was put under watch for one month then when things got stable, she was left to her uncle's supervision to live in peace. But still, she could not feel freer to act and move. Her uncle did put some strains on her and she found no other outlet but to submit to his command, at least, for the time being.

The great history recounted itself, the whole things occurred before the independence day Algeria, where the situation started to worsen as the villagers started to observe a constant curfew that did not permit to Leila to act. She was full of verve and enthusiasm to bring in changes to her countrymen's states ; yet time did not allow for the right moment and did not show its pruning.

Leila's enthusiasm was like an internal fiery agitation waiting to burst out if it were well ignited. Her strong desire to meet freedom fighters and have her first contacts was gradually growing in shape. Yet she did not falter to act. She was constantly thinking of an abrupt start to test her physical and mental abilities.

Winter was drawing to its start, the days began to shrink and darkness started to reign over the living dead village whose empty street revealed the damp dust to its fullest ; mud overwhelmed every corner and the pavements were leaking all along to make the simple walking lane a daily constraint. When roving along the lanes ; one could only see alley cats sniffing at the thrown trash.

Cats mowed hungrily as they lengthened in shape seeking something to eat by those cold and frosty evenings. Dogs' barkings were heard in remote, breaking the silence of winter night ; but *Leila the wolf* had her instinct feelings for a night stay, to meet her comrades on the slopes. She was on her alert with her eyes pointed to the dark corners

waiting for a passing torch or a flickering lamp in the nearby.

I was shuddering of fear ; my body could feel numbed as the dark covered everything. I could have been caught by any kidnapper because no one dared see his own hand. Only the whoop of night birds and the yelp of the wolf cubs that broke the silence of the night. My eyes were looking right and left for a flickering light and often times I saw some animals' eyes as they roved the nearby.

The scene was terribly terrifying and in the absence of companies, one could easily drop the matter and go home.

Leila went and came back as she planned. She did awake certain dormant consciousness of her country girls, who joined her for a few nights, but as it was a little bit risky and adventurous, she did not want to get them involved. She wanted them to retreat to their homes keeping the secret not revealed. In their turn, girls relinquished home and helped her from afar as she planned.

The girls of the village were engaged to the new project of helping Leila ; they would assist her in finding medicines, food, clothes and anything of interest that could help the freedom fighters. Indeed, the women of the village loved Leila too much and knew about her courage in going deeper with her cause. And all along their silent prayers they joined hands to ask the Almighty to enlighten her path.

Days went by yet the *little wolf* got fiercer and suffused with plenty of vigor that sprang through her eyes-A little girl with a giant mind as wise as Solomon in his piteous rituals. Leila was known to all except to the French army who let her pass the curfews without any legal permit. They were accustomed to her smiling innocent trait that often stood deceptive.

In fact, Leila knew how to intervene and when to do so. Hence, with her counterfeited manners and mocking smile and her servitude to the French, she knew perfectly when to unleash her pride and when to act upon her will.

One night, as she climbed up a tree to observe the freedom fighters coming to see her, she fell down to the ground, her knees were covered with blood and fainted. Fortunately, she was taken by the fighters to receive some aids in the grottoes. When she regained her consciousness she found herself surrounded by the greedy companions whose main preoccupation was to free Algeria.

When the night fell upon the slopes, Leila went back home with plenty of experience to blow up a castle. As small as she tended to be, she struggled to give a name to herself among her villagers and defend her rights in the haze of perfected foolishness. She did not falter to claim for her rights and the rights of others. She started some secret congregations every night where she met girls of her age. They all agreed to get out the next day and assembled near the town hall to protest for their undeniable rights.

When the promised day came, some thirty young girls went directly to the French town council asking for more liberty to be allotted to them to go shopping or to do some business or visit friends as the long curfew hours were long.

Leila did not show herself but acted wisely-she was following the girls with plenty of laughter and mocking words. The French officer received some delegates and both agreed on certain curfew hours to be amended. Girls now could breathe out some fresh air and concoct their projects.

Girls were then sure Leila's compromise would work and so, the little girls went home with a vital promise to lessen from the long curfew hours. Leila observed the scenes and

decided to pass for another action the next day when her perfect instinctive mind would work well. On the contrary, she preferred working at night when all the people retreated to their beds.

Now, Leila seemed to grow mature enough to take responsibility. As days had gone by, Leila did profit from her elders and from the surrounding atmosphere that gave her the right insight to take actions. She was rather bold and impenetrable girl who measured things with a wise mind. Leila's instinct as female grew constantly towards her elder sisters who left for Tunisia some months ago. She admired with impatience the day she would meet them and pass to actions.

Borders were carefully controlled, yet with the help of freedom fighters the little sisters managed to escape and organize themselves into acting groups. When her adopting uncle heard about Leila and her secret work, he turned mad and was haunted with rage. He did not believe himself to have hosted such an angelic girl that though she fell from the tree, she hid the secret and did not show it to her uncle, knowing for sure it was not yet the time to unveil the truth. The truth is truth and should no more be heard.

Her uncle, a man of fifty nine, looked rather old and his beard started to grow grey with escalating social plights. He was rather energetic and did not want to stand before problems. When the news came poked to his nose, he discovered that Leila was not yet eligible for confidence. From that time on he confided the truth but to himself and never let Leila knew about it. He lived by some pretensions that Leila's long life was a little bit suspicious. He thought Leila did hide something from him the day she came to live with him.

However, Leila was wiser than her uncle ; She often thought of herself that in fact *“old birds could never be caught by old chaff”* ; she let her uncle go out and she started prying his baggage and to her surprise she found out that her uncle was he himself a turn coat. He worked with the French army as a translator and he often had secret meetings with the French in the non suspect new addition built at the side of the town hall.

What a moral dilemma to see a flowering plant faint and fade in the wake of days ? *“What a big man with the smallest mind came to cede freedom fighting at the time Algeria stood on the brink of independence.”* Leila thought.

Leila discovered the truth and learnt many lessons from her uncle’s deeds ; yet she did not say a word ; she kept quiet as long as her uncle adopted her and made her live with him as kin. Her strained life did not yet allow her to disrespect her uncle though internally she perfectly knew the bitter gull she had to drink.

“Vain hope “said she.

The world was too small for birdies to fly – and she went on reiterating her old slogan “live one day a cock rather than thousands years a hen” -a turn coat whose valor deserves a burning fire, whose fiery ashes deserve a throwing pack upon his face.

“Poor uncle”, fie upon his choice, a disloyal who sold his countrymen for a bottle of wine, some puffs of cigarettes and a promise to reach the Promised Land.

These were just mirages of an enfeebled mind taken away by a torrid dust that when the sun rose up in its time would melt –

Leila, in her grim view would utter sensitive her fiery longings in a world full of cowards. *“Liberty, a dear word to*

utter, easy for a running tongue, difficult to grab and henceforth, the ruling maxim in vogue was that liberty was to take and not to give.”

Now, Leila was about to turn fifteen and as she felt it, a growing tension would soon ignite between her and her uncle who constantly met the French secret services to divulgate some secret information. Many a time she caught him flagrant yet she pretended not to see him. She observed his deeds ; yet she silently thought of an excellent healing remedy.

Her uncle seemed to turn the point a little bit over and Leila did not get patient. So one night she did tell the fighters about her uncle’s work so they surveyed him and he was caught red handed. Her uncle did not deny ; witnesses were all around and he was soon off to the custody.

Omar, as the villagers called him, an intimidating poor and shabby uncle to her. This time, he was caught and he would pay the cost. He was taken up to the grotto for interrogation. Leila continued in her counterfeited madness and when she was asked about her uncle, she laughed as usual, making the same manners as she used to do. She did never pretend to know.

She liked it very much when her uncle was arrested, at least for sure, no more news about the village to spread up to the other side of the fence.

“An aching tooth was pulled down,” Leila thought.

No more risks for the village from then on – Look how the world was small yet in the smallest eyes it grew bigger. Leila was moving here and there as a mobile school with fresh challenging principles to spread. And wherever she moved she was very well respected, a girl in full bloom with a growing maturation for her own country to see

daylight. Hence, with her every constant move, she scored a goal which redirected her will towards independence and full responsibility.

Leila now discovered her social position within her country young girls where she acted both a small teacher and a growing learner. She now knew how heavier was the load to lead the unconscious minds to the flowery path ; though for sure she knew that a dagger was pointed on her back.

When the freedom fighters burst out the first rebellious compromise on the morrow of the first of November 1954, Leila turned 15 and she decided to climb up the mountain and fight to the extent that she was sent down to the village on the ground she would be abused and lost her mission as a secret liaison.

Leila did not resist to the authorities' decision and she descended down town to continue her mission as a conscious riser. Leila, the heroine doubled in her efforts and successfully managed her own affairs. Leila was commissioned to go to Tunisia for some business and so she accepted the deal. She thought of many invocations she would reach throughout her young career.

Arrangements were prepared, and Leila was ready to go on with her new mission. Now, she turned mature to know and determine her own identity during that colonial period. She, as a tenacious woman longed perfectly to the new days that would mark her own adventurous plans.

The war started and Leila was needed on the Tunisian borders. She knew some lessons on first aid giving and counseling. In two days' time, she was immediately summoned to join her compatriots on the front.

Thus, on the eve of her departure, she evoked the

souvenirs of the bitter past, remembered her slaughtered parents before her eyes, and envisioned her elder girls sitting alone under sexual assaults, remorse and the turn coat uncle who sold his country-the combination of such disastrous stand made her weep.

Leila did not yet filled up her grown up years to the brim than she was summoned to leave ; yet in her growing sense there existed another growing continuity on the land of our Tunisian friends-she departed for the unknown destination.

Hence, by a morose serene awakening dawn, everything was terribly inert ; Leila and some of her compatriots started their early walk, following one another as an Indian file. The weather was a little bit clement ; birdies had not yet gone after their worms. The young volunteers followed one another with certain stepping-they were all energy and verve, filled up with a great conscious ripening mind to successfully fulfill the mission entrusted to them.

Sacks on their backs with the very few food they could amass and that could ensure the trip ; and though it was not really a trip in the true sense of the term, yet for them as civilians, it looked a mission of a special concern where the premises of a long hope would see its daylight in the long run.

Chapter Two

Leila's incubation period

Leila's flashback as she recounted it in her diaries was rich and full of adventures she did not want to keep everything for herself but self gratify some of it to her forthcoming descendents. She professed her mind saying.

The night I departed, there was a long silence that reigned over the village ; a kind of prudence was felt, my uncle was captured by freedom fighters and the French secret agents had no news about him for long-they started suspecting some villagers and I was pretty sure the truth would never be out and I was certain I could travel incognito and willingly depart unnoticed. Yes, that was what I did. I packed a few loaves of home bread from gray semolina made of corn and milled wheat and some cold pieces of dates.

That was the most precious pieces we held in our possessions especially after the departure of my uncle who was the breadwinner. And though I liked my uncle I started to hate him the day I discovered the truth about his betrayal-In a way, I got rid of him and his congregations

with the enemy that daily lasted until late midnight.

It was the beginning of autumn and the night was a little bit hazy ; a walking man or woman could not be seen clearly for some drizzles were coming down in a sequenced move. The night was gloomy and the wind was in its verve-rain soon started and I was standing under a tree waiting for some friends to accompany me to the nearby forest. I was a little bit anxious for being delayed. More than a quarter of an hour yet my leading companions did not peep.

Suddenly, a faint voice was whispering there in the dark.

“Come on Leila it is Mohamed.”

I recognized his voice and soon I joined the troop and we climbed the first slope which started to get muddy and the climbing was not as easy as I imagined. I was dragged and tugged along the trees until I reached an even place.

“Hold on, another friend shouted at me “Another slope and we would arrive.”

“Ok, I said waving my hand to the guide to move on.”

We joined hands and walked one after the other in an Indian file. We were drenched to the bones and I started shivering as a leaf and without my friends’ constant bravery we could never reach our destination.

When we arrived to the grotto and entered I saw another world, fire was waiting for us, dinner and hot tea. We sat immediately near the hearth landing our hands to the incessant flames, warming our bodies and clothes. It was then that I started to regain my consciousness and I did recognize some of my old acquaintances-we exchanged greetings and saluted one another in a very modest way.

The leader of the group then asked me to join the

other women in the adjacent side to start our dinner. Meanwhile, the busy job started to emerge as we got acquainted with the present congregation.

“Sitting beside an old bird could help gain experience” I began telling myself. Hence, I went directly and sat near an old woman soldier who welcomed me and started showing me some of the photos of the freedom fighters who were ambushed last week.

“*They were very young*” I retorted

“*Yes, too young to fight*”

Then she showed a grand lady who killed three paratroopers and joined the Tunisian borders.

The lady was speaking to me with an energetic air and a brave reaction with an envy to go immediately and fight whatever the circumstances.

The day was interminable and I was very tired as my eyes started itching, they got red and the contour of the eyelids started to give out its blue color. I was overwhelmed by an envy for a nap-My head went up and down and when the lady in uniform saw me in that state ; she came, held me by the arm and took me to the bed which was not well equipped apart from some rags extended and a modest blanked with a pillow.

I slept there as a lifeless body, only sneezers sent their voices-everybody went to bed and we were called to get up early tomorrow for our historical adventure entering the Tunisian border through *Shall* and *Maurice* barbed wire.

A groping experience that often left the adventurer muse about its outcome-whether positive or negative, a departing step into the unknown, an uncertain fate was waiting for each one of us. I remembered I did wake up many times during that night. I was trembling, as it was

my first experience to travel at night, in a cold weather and far from my home. I was a teenager and I was a little bit scared to see myself grew up amidst the pines and the spruce forests.

Chapter Three

Crossing the Tunisian Borders

I remembered the dawn we crossed early in the morning-It was a little bit cold and the drizzle was still on its fall, the mere clothes we dressed in were not enough to let us resist the cold wind but we headed our way breaking the silence morn, walking with careful steps lest we fell down in the deep hollows.

We walked for long miles crossing the spruce forests, traversing the deep dales and rivers, drenched, we waded the rivers and the wet clothes especially socks and trousers were painfully painng as we tottered the steeped hills.

We had no chance to sit or pause to wring the damped garments we wore until we reached our destination. We had already sent some of our friends to go before and cut the barbed wires so that we could easily escape without any waste of time. Meanwhile, we did have some rest to swallow and take a bit of chewed preserved food to our drenched and empty bellies.

While moving within the forests, we often met some wild beasts that managed to frighten us; namely the

hungry female wolves that did not find too much to eat. We were often caught into dilemmas ; to fire at the dangerous animals ; one could risk his life by waking up the enemy about our presence in the region or avoid the animals which forced us to change our courses.

The dark night seemed long and we walked hand in hand for not being lost. We could not show any light or lighter or fire lest the enemy would be on the watch. We trod and trod and in our move, we felt the harsh mission we were about to accomplish. The whole night seemed to reign up on our minds as a mist veiling on our souls ; yet we did not falter from being the course guide for the forthcoming generations-

We should give lessons of bravery, of thirst, of hunger, of patience to fight or be killed on the battlefield-Before all, our country deserved such sacrifice-the goal should be reached and then the day would rise and the sun could reach our bodies to see our new offspring jerking, jumping on the free stone, the elevated tree and the singing creek.

"There we are" whispered one of the leading man.

A faint light was flickering on the other side of the forest, signaling to us to move straight ahead. We immediately headed down the slopes until we reached the border line which was cleared of the barbed wire. However, as we reached the front line ; our guide reminded us to be careful of the many land mines buried under the ground and that any mistake would lead to death.

The enemy had long thought of cultivating land mines in the hot places where running water flowed, thinking animals and freedom fighters would stop to quench their thirst. Hence, it happened many days ago, when two horses were blown up in the creek nearby. That was an

alerting incident that made people move cautiously.

We crept as snakes and crawled under the cut barbed wire, the land was still wet and I felt water directly teasing my body. I was heavily charged and I could not move as easily as I thought it to be ; there was not enough space to even change our position. It was more than one hour that I started creeping on my belly as a snake ; a young girl whose age was around nineteen, I did grow in the way to Tunisia under the electrified wires.

Now, though my age was nineteen, I felt growing rapidly – a gained day replaced a day gone, for everyday I gained some experiences in how a human being can defeat nature and resist to temptations ; I learnt a lot of things about the costly price of belonging to a country ; now though I was an orphan, I discovered that being an orphan had never been a problem to me and that If I believed in an ideal, I felt everybody was my father and my mother and in fact we were and would all orphans be in this life.

Hence, the more we understood our responsibility, the more we felt mature. Maturity resided in the growing soul and not in the growing body ; for we may grow elephants in size but mouse we grow in mind.

I reckoned,

“life was my first school and contact was my best teacher-we were no more alone but our angelic spirit surveyed us and encouraged us to stand in the face of every misdeed and wrong.”

We were assigned to lead the future of Algeria to a chaste sanctity where free souls would praise the continuity. We were just agents of good deeds and the longer we lived, there came an end to our efforts and we would cede the charge to another load carrier.

Days after nights, a successive series of light and darkness chased us the more we penetrated the somber muddy lanes. When we at last arrived to the predestined spot, we crossed the spruce forest and went creeping directly to the other side of Tunisia-A great welcome was waiting for us. We followed a given track leading to the mountain hole-It was there then that we met some Tunisian leaders who gave us a warm hospitality and a hot meal with a quantity of tea served in double.

Great heads, in fact, had to meet and only mountains could not meet ; for there was the right moment leaders should meet and discuss the future of nations. I was the youngest girl of the time and the team ; a reason that I did not easily swallow for being not given importance though I recorded in my head every compromise between the two colonized frontiers.

Then at that time, I understood that fraternity was on its solid ground between Algerians and Tunisians who showed more than often their serious cooperation-the fight against the common escalating enemy.

Chapter Four

On Tunisian Green Land

The December days were tiring as frost started to show its spell and one would barely walk on the asphalt floors without controlling where to put his feet. The sun rarely warmed the earth and the days were short and one felt the harsh weather in the quick disappearing of the sun rays coupled with the blowing wind and showers of cold rain.

The small droplets drenched our clothes then penetrated straight into the flesh. It made the bodies shiver especially with the absence of warmth and lit fire.

I personally was moving in the corners of Bourguiba street looking at the green rows of trees that stood on both sides. The streets were almost empty due to the harsh climate and I enjoyed looking at the vast thoroughfares, just walking and let myself driven by the hope of finding a vacant room where to spend the night as dizziness had long ago crept and dwelt my eyes.

The French army still used their dogs up and down patrolling the night and the empty streets, looking for

truants and looters whose poor states forced them to invade the colonizers shop in search for valuable things that would help them resist to life temptations.

Tunisia was not yet liberated from the shackles of the French and so did the Maghreban brothers Morocco and Algeria. The North African nations were all suffering constraints that led most of their populations to migrate and shift seeking a decent living.

Hence, on the morrow of the independence, I was strolling with my two young sisters of the fight, we washed ourselves neatly, dressed well with what some of the Tunisian friends had offered us. Thus, we seemingly looked as French in our civil clothes and fell of hair and nobody could suspect us of anything. It was for the first time that I saw myself as free as air, moving and skipping from place to place.

We moved along Bourguiba's Square, following the slogans and ban holders who moved along the street raising them high. At least, our chance gave us the honor to attend the independence ceremony in Tunis. I was looking at my Tunisian women friends in their peaceful march and the tears came down upon my cheeks as warm as that day of the season. The evocative souvenirs teased my brain and I longed for the same independence for Algeria whose days were bitterly long and harsh.

As my eyes contemplated the processions in their rhythmic march, the souvenirs of freedom flashed in my eyes and the hot droplets intentionally came down from my eyes and in me plenty of images of the passing away figures had passed in series.

Then I travelled in a steady pace and a roving mind to stop at the dead end-the furious colonizer that curbed the

flow that nipped in the bud and killed the fetus in its prime.

People shouted and yelled and they started running towards the main headquarter, cars blew their horns and the mixture of the sounds gave a shivering to the body, a sense of great pleasure and happiness piercing the silent world – THE DAY OF INDEPEDENCE – a sweet day people dreamt to reach where some fighters had gone to no return while others on their movable chairs on wheels looked at as robots, nodding in mute their heads to the long processions.

Now, as a bit mature girl I started to sense the responsibility entrusted to me So, two days later, I started having contacts with the friends of my cause, the cause I crossed the barbed wires for and the long bitter days were enhancing me to go ahead. I started my contacts day and night. I was very enthusiastic, a young girl full of dynamism.

My first meetings were with some Tunisians leaders who devoted themselves to the Algerian cause ; they helped me raise some money for the freedom fighters and made my complaint traverse the different parts of Tunisia.

That humane act I could never forget, the hospitable people of Tunisia made me feel as if I was living in my second nostalgic home for everything was perfectly in shipshape. It was there that trust and confidence gave me another shape, another fillip to step forward. I quickly get involved with the Tunisian current and move to find myself an amateur militant negotiating the new deals.

I worked for six months nonstop and I collected a great amount of money and sent it to the borders for the men in charge. Once the sum was safely collected, the People on the other side of the fence did send me their

ample gratitude and the more they thanked me the more I immersed in my job until I got plenty of sympathizers here in Tunisia ; they were all ready to serve my cause.

News had spread out like a wild fire that I was wanted by the French army. The secret services wanted to meet me and investigated about my uncle's death. In fact, he was found slaughtered and his body thrown on the moat. They certainly had some false news about my own commitment in his massacre. They for sure suspected me of being involved as I was the next heir.

The French paratroopers launched a wanted notice on my behalf and searched for me everywhere in the village but for no avail. They pried all the places but still no traces found. They sent after me thinking I would tell them something about my uncle and the freedom fighters ; but for me the file was closed the day I left to Tunisia.

For certain precautions and security measures, I was notified then not to return to the country until Algeria would be independent. So, though I knew many sympathizers and friends in Tunisia yet my actions were too limited in Tunis. I was even scared to travel to long distances lest some patrolling troops might rove in the nearby for check in points. My mobility within the confinement of Tunis suburbs was very restricted to daily shopping or business.

I used to life in Tunisia especially along its narrow squares and traditional lanes ; I liked too much strolling in the traditional markets where the cars could not move a lot and the police could never penetrate. I used to walk through its tiny streets with a great vigilance. I was too much afraid of being caught by civilian intruders. I was on my alert for the harsh days passed had taught me

thousands of things and in my mundane contacts with events, I discovered the good and the bad and all my acquaintances were fruitful.

And there came the maturing age when I reached 23. It was there that I started sensing the possibility of thinking of my future home that was constantly teasing my mind. I always related my marriage with the independence of Algeria and in that sense I was not better than Queen Elizabeth I who married England and preferred her to a good husband. I thought about my future relations and I did try to find my real partner for certain moments I was too preoccupied to think of such matters.

Many Tunisian female activists advised me to marry for protection but still in my mind there was a purpose to achieve first. There was a chronology that I had to respect in the course of time. I was thinking of not having time to devote to my husband and I might fall within a quagmire that would curb my actions as an activist. I relinquished from such a day dream and thought to relegate the matter to the proper day when things would be squared up.

Chapter Five

In Morocco

But that came the day when I made an acquaintance with a young Moroccan fisherman and a small business man who tried to tease me for days. Unfortunately, I could not listen to my heart for the first time but when he insisted on asking for my hand I reluctantly accepted and he proposed to take me to Morocco to hide there for the time being until things would settle up and he would come back to Tunisia to find another dwelling or hire a house and live in tranquility.

I confessed the man was very prepossessing and I did ask the consent from my bosses and with their accordance I decided to get married. And in my mind the day dream Algeria and its independence was another phase in my mind I thought to marry a Moroccan and that act would enable me to cross another border to find out another support for my country.

That what I suggested to my husband who accepted to help me collect money and support for Algeria. When everything was arranged, I travelled with my husband by

boat to Morocco. I remembered well, that night when we departed, the sea was extremely rough and I prayed God not to die on the water but live to see my country independent.

Thank God again, everything passed well. A few hours on an agitated sea, only the seagulls were following us as if we were flesh victims. I was alone looking at the waves in their fury and seasickness made my head feel dizzy. My husband was looking at me and I was almost in my 26th years of age. I felt mature enough now to decide for my future. With an open arm, I walked towards my husband and I whispered in his ears to ask the captain to move faster ; for I wished to reach the dry land earlier before.

The Moroccan weather was a little bit clement, the new atmosphere and setting seemed calm and friendly. We were moving slowly as we neared the harbor and then the boat stopped along the bay. I dropped down on the plywood covering the coast line and walked hand in hand with my husband. We took a car to Meknes where we decided to spend two weeks there.

I remembered on my first week, I met my companions who had travelled from Tunisia and the best souvenir that stroke my mind was a woman whose advice filled my brain ; she was named Jihane – a dweller from Meknes, but originally she descended from Marrakech. She opened her arms wide to welcome and greet me.

Algeria was a great gate for Moroccans they liked it to the bones. Meknes, a great ancient city whose ancient town and the new one made it look grandiose in the great French colonial city division, the high class and the poor one-two different parts of the same city whose walls surrounded the old city dating dated back to Moulay Ismail whose dynasty was deeply rooted in the Moroccan

History-a great man with great values.

Jihane was nice and welcoming girl ; she did never say a harsh thing to me. Really I enjoyed my time very well and as I started to get used to life there. The best things I admired in Meknes was the traditional market where olive packs were nicely displayed, the snake charmers blowing their pipes, together they added another charming panorama to the scene where tourists from the different parts of the world swarmed the place standing in circles, taking photos and watching the snake charmers playing their tricks.

And though my presence with Jihane, roving the market was nice ; yet my ears were cocked here and there ; listening to the news and observing under a cautious eye.

I heard the news that the French secret agents were still chasing me so I decided not to get out for days and Jihane was visiting me every day. She was a true sister to me. I was a little bit scared especially when my husband disappeared and news said he was arrested because I was the suspected wife.

I waited for him for three months but no news about him so I arranged to go back to Tunisia ; for at least there, I would have some close friends to help me. I arranged things with Jihane and she could see with a captain to bring me back to Tunisia. In three days' time, I succeeded to travel incognito. I used a scarf to cover my head and dressed my hair in an Italian style so that I could pass without problems.

I travelled with a false passport. Jihane accompanied me to the port checking point and wished me a safe voyage. I managed to collect great sums of money that I had already sent with some Tunisian friends. I remembered many soldiers were surveying the port with

some photos in their hands but fortunately I tied my hair and cut it from both sides to look European. My complexion looked European and my blue eyes changed the whole stature.

Chapter Six

Back to Tunisia

At last, I arrived to Tunisia ; my friends were waiting for me. In Tunisia, people were now invigorated and full of energy. They got their independence since days and since then they were witnessing festive moments of cheerfulness.

There in my lonely stand, I stopped for a while, uncovered my head, breathed out some fresh air and whispered to myself-

Look, Leila the great girl had toured the big Maghreb and came to settle back in Tunisia where many friends invited her to marry one of the Tunisian sympathizers and she accepted temporarily to live with him. They lived in peace and they loved each other believing in the true solidarity between the two countries.

Her beloved partner was not too old to pair up : he was 28 and she was 26. Leila did not really enjoy life in a country where she felt not on her right frame of mind especially when she started evoking the past souvenirs of the old acquaintances that had passed away.

In a short retrospect, Leila started hallucinating about

things engraved in her mind.

The souvenirs where she lost her dearest male friends and whose social positions were more than fathers and mothers to her. Leila saw many upheavals within the darkest nights of the snow covered forests and the incessant blowing wind with the killing frost and chill. She remembered the slopes and how she could climb them at night especially her longest night on the pine tree when she fell down the ravine.

Though leila was very young, she was very energetic and in value and trust, she rather weighed thousands of men. She counterfeited madness to reach her goals that were just passing as a mirage.

Now I felt awake, I sensed my feet on a solid ground as if I lost my consciousness for long and then there came the second awakening after the long collapse of my dreams ; my evasion from Morocco was not an easy event to forget ; it marked my spirit for long and I learned too much to redirect myself on the good track. People who chased me were everywhere, they wanted to choke the babe in its prime ; yet the voice though fainted would never cede.

The ripened days had come and as long as I lived in a cozy state with my friends the Tunisians ; I thought my life would continue apace in its crawling traits, I tried to make things appear smooth and soft. My female surrounding suggested I should remarry in Tunisia to keep life going and the idea would make people think then I had become more mature and cede to my liberation activities and at least would drift the eyes that ogled to me and admired my lust.

In fact, my queries were interminable, I often thought to find a good husband for me, a husband that would teach me more on how to become an emancipated woman, a

woman fighter moving from passing the hat around neighbors to a rebellious woman showing her male deeds at a time women seemed rare.

The idea of finding a partner seemed to tease my brain and on the first occasion, I seized the opportunity to show my female instincts to a Tunisian politician who greatly favored the Algerian cause.

He was the man that kept my respect from the first glance, a man that seemed to descend from a good ground, full of shame, with a full stature and physical burst. He looked wise, well positioned, who grew in prudence and secrecy and who did not show up for often. And though Tunisia was in its independence days, he did not move a lot and was satisfied with the great modesty he could bear.

While I was moving through the streets of Tunis, the capital, I felt a kind of security and serenity because the lanes were buzzing with pedestrians in their to and fro the different stores where one could not be easily noticed. I did ponder on certain shops to do business with a kind of freedom.

People were in an utter occupation, some were sitting outside in the terrace sifting their hot tea with mint, and others were gazing at the different shop windows busy selecting items for their children. In viewing such flashes, I retorted in myself saying that such congregations were missing in Algeria-a dead country under a controlled curfew.

After too much muse about whether to accept to marry or not in such a peevish time, I deliberately confessed my acceptance as a final decision. Hence, my Tunisian friend introduced me to the politician and soon we engaged in a marriage compromise. Things were going

shipshape at the beginning ; we exchanged visits and we often met and had tours in the public gardens.

While we relaxed in our perfectness of good company, I sensed something wrong with my partner. The image I once formed about him started to suffuse in my eyes. He was most of the time silent and sometimes he evaded my pertinent questions as if his mind was occupied by a nuisance, a petty problem that I no longer spare time to discover.

I started my queries around the places he mostly frequented and I discovered that my man was also wanted by the secret services. I remembered when we met for the last time he was wearing a smoke and a blue costume with a tie. He was chewing tobacco as a westerner.

Soon, an idea sprang to my mind. I saw him travelling and in my day dreams things would never pass without stains. In fact, my dream came true. The man did not come up for long. I tried to phone him but no phone rang, no exact address ; he suddenly evaporated from the scene.

Another problem had to be added to my diary that was full to the brim. An inevitable fact that I had to confront-the moment I came to breathe out some fresh air, I felt suffocated. No news from my husband, nothing to spare in such a mystery that I had to penetrate another time and discover the enigmatic part of such a sudden disappearance of the bodies and why especially the one I myself contracted for marriage ?

My husband had certainly travelled to another place ; he hid himself from sight as I first presumed. In such circumstances, I felt lost and thought in my own view that both the evil and the devil were following me on that night ; I felt them as black as obscurity. A stain that had

come to block my life. The man I chose for marriage disappeared as if the ghost haunted my fate and violated my profane borders.

I woke up and on my couch I lied for single moments where I plunged my head beneath my lap and cried my fate. Then, looking at myself, while standing before the mirror, I thought to myself with a great optimism, an optimism of a mature woman that greatly suffered and grew up with time. Marriage was never too late for a rebellious woman to achieve. Again, sorry for the thought but there were priorities to fulfill first.

My marriage in its true sense would be complete when I saw my country in its full liberation, in its full bloom and as she mused she wept again when the evocative souvenirs flowed as flashes in her mind. She sighed and relentlessly sat to herself fixing her gaze as long as wide extended horizon overlooking the terrace of her green villa.

Suddenly the phone rang ; it was her girlfriend from the neighboring sight. She was on her way to re comfort her. When the bus stopped, Farida her closest mate mounted up the stairs and knocked on the right door next to the stairs. Leila opened the door and Farida hurriedly came into.

Long discussions were taking place and as time started to shorten its wings, Farida and Leila separated for a night stay. Tomorrow would show up with many other miracles that Leila had long wished to see. In her loneliness, she sat wishing to share not a partner her dreams but another dearest thing that would push her dreams a little bit further ; a long life dream that none except the brave would reach.

Indeed, in her isolated bedroom, Leila was busy

counting the sums of money she collected from the different places and in her mind she thought that this could be the last batch to send to Algeria. She lived by the great idea to see one day Algeria independent.

A few months after, the situation in Algeria was on its verve and the freedom fighters doubled in their efforts by obliging the enemy to collapse and surrender. Lots of riots and rebellions accompanied with many attacks had blurred the French who did witness a constant social unrest.

The war reached its zenith and spread out down to the cities where the armed enemy could not confront. Many ambushes were made and thousands of victims from both sides were announced on the Radio that Leila kept constant in her ears.

The voice of the radio speaker and the energetic enthusiasm ensued here within, gave me another motivation for adventure. I forgot my two promised marriages. I was more than a simple creature but a beast with another new go. I wished I could be fighting with my peers there on the Algerian soil.

I was unfortunately chased more than ever and the only distance relation I could keep with me was my small hand pocket radio that I hid in my breast for fear it would be found and I would fall into the trap.

You could not imagine how appealing was to my senses to hear the voice of the speaker when shouting. He filled up my nerves and stimulated my sinews. After a long struggle, there came the day Algeria got its independence. What a great feast for me that I did celebrate far from my home country.

The day approached and my departure towards Algeria was on its verge. I packed my things and I decided

to travel light. On hearing the news, many friends of mine hurriedly came to see me off for a free independent Algeria. Indeed, they came in mass ; they were all from the different parts of Tunisia and Morocco. They came especially to share me my happiness and prove their fraternal ties.

A happiness that I kept in myself for long and it grew with me ; it was all in my inside ; a happiness that I visualized in the thousands of Algerian minds at the moment. When my friends started hugging me, tears overwhelmed my cheeks ; a sensation more that ever warmed my body ; a feeling of consolation, a mixed picture of divorce with the external material world that I long relegated to the past souvenirs ; the separation between mates and how long that was bitter and sad ; the disappearance of my both compromising husbands at a time I needed their assistance.

Yes, that was my fate as an Algerian girl who suffered perdition, isolation, seclusion and exile. Hallelujah ! God did not falter to meet my expectations and did lead my honor to see my countrymen in their independence day.

I wept for my fate and in my weeping I told myself, there was no way to weep ; the long struggle was still waiting for me. I thought to go home with that nostalgic appeal teasing my brain. I wished to fly through the borders and the days were too short to see me on the verge.

Two days after, I met my companions and we prepared to return home. In my deeper insight an idea was roving in my mind-how to welcome my countrymen and my villagers that I had long forgotten. That was another page in my personal agenda and history to recount and to turn.

Chapter Seven

Leila first landing in Algeria

I remembered well the day we entered Algeria through the north eastern part crossing the village of Sakiet Sidi Youcef, a small village on the Algerian-Tunisian borders. A village that was half Tunisian and half Algerian where realistically the population lived together and had both nationalities as they were once bombed by the French bombers witnessing many casualties and lost souls-A fact that strengthened ties between the two brother countries.

The villagers of that community were too hospitable ; we were welcomed with flowers and plenty of food that we longed to sit around to taste. It was there that I sensed my consciousness regained and I really felt at home.

A cozy atmosphere, a congregation of thousands of families coming from the different parts. It was a decisive moment for me to consider myself now as a mature militant, a grown up lady whose responsibilities were seen day by day. That was the day the heroine passed the frontiers with a great pride and self esteem-a gentle woman in her military uniform holding a heavy load on her left shoulder.

As usual, I was walking hand in hand with my mates singing often and dreaming of meeting the comrades on the other side of the country. The weather was rather fresh and cool and we preferred walking to riding as the distance seemed short.

Then, with too much re comforting hearts, we moved and moved crossing the forests in swift paces. And while I was prompted by a strong desire to reach my country, I felt as if someone was pushing me behind and instead of walking heavily with too much degree of tiresomeness, I had the impression that I was flying swiftly to forget the dales and hills below my feet.

I reached the destinations in a quick time. And in my hallucination, I saw the first Algerian village that peeped behind the blue mount that seemed from a far a long chained row of old houses where smoke was still on its first puffs.

One could only see the fumes covering the cloudy sky; the charcoal smoke emanating from the old dusty chimney where certainly the ladies were cooking and preparing some semolina whose flavor traversed the lofty trees to surround our noses in a tasting smell. That great smell of roasted clay reminded me of the primeval days where all the families were gathered around the hearth.

My father used to tell us stories especially at night by the long December nights. My mother was also listening to the narrator and correcting him from time to time. Father did not remember the stories well so thanked to my mother that she redirected him. We felt united the more laughter was shared and the mean delicious courses were swallowed with a great avidity.

Poor past days, where were you in comparison to the

present days ? While walking and approaching the village, we observed some shepherds from afar ; they waved their hands to us ; a sign of the great welcome.

Entering the village from the northern gate towards my old dwelling, I noticed my buildings on ruin and at first I did not recognize my house as it was demolished by the French paratroopers when they were chasing me. I heard from people of my village that my uncle was killed two days after my departure and my family was deported to another place.

I moved alone on the dark shabby buildings taking notice of the devastations caused to my native town. My poor dwellers were moving along the tiny lanes in their poor dressing where they appeared as ghosts. Fear, poverty, dirt and nothing to blame them for-that was the real picture they realistically showed.

A miserable life characterized by the absence of nearly all the necessities of life. There was no sane water and no electricity, no schools and no recreational activities. Some old parents were sitting on stony rows, some were smoking and others were wrapped in their dirty *gandouras* and *burnous*.

What an obscene scene demarcating that life time. On the other slopes, some women were fetching water in their pottery jugs. They smiled to me and did not recognize me for I left the place since a young girl and most of that generation ceased to live. I stopped them and we discussed for moments.

“Welcome to our village” one lady said

“Welcome too ; this is my village also.”

“Who are you ?” The lady retorted

“I am the eldest girl of Si Amar, the fellow who lived

there in the corner and I left the village at the age of sixteen, one year after the French killed my father.

“I heard about your family when I came to dwell in this village for the first time.

“Ok, let us go inside and have a cup of coffee.”

I followed the ladies in and we sat and started talking while the lady was preparing for us some coffee. It was a very modest coffee on a modest fire, a metallic jug suspended to a metallic wire filled up with water and put on charcoal that the lady invigorated with a wooden fan. It was red, in a few moments, and as we were exchanging the conversation, we heard the water boiling and the lady appeased the vapor by adding two and three spoonful of grinded coffee.

What a flavor, what a smell and what a taste ? I frankly professed that I had long not tasted such an aroma that nearly sent us out of the room. Its smell could reach the other corner. Two sifs and you would regain your lost consciousness. That warm act made me sigh for the very jolly moments ; thus reiterating to myself that *women were women and men were men and not hen sure men and coq sure women* as DH Lawrence once coined the term.

Chapter Eight

Healing Injuries

Turning off one page, and closing my eyes for a moment I saw the flashes passing over my eyes. I compared my old colonial village and the post colonial one – and to my gaze I saw myself standing before my house that I did not recognize in my hometown. What a hometown? Everything was devastated, only ruins pervaded here and there and I could simply stand agape for I did not even recognize my native birthplace. I gazed at some villagers who in their turns gazed at me and in their inner minds they might be saying-

Look at that strange girl ; she might be the descendent of the French.

I did not say a word but I was roving perplexed, counting the demolished houses and the houses left in ruin. Almost the whole village was decimated. I saw some lines of smoke coming out from an old house. Hence with a great curiosity, I passed by where an old man, seeing me past, waved his head to me as if inviting me to come closer to him.

As an activist, sensing her duty in the reconstruction of the village, I moved towards him. When I came nearer to his wife, an old lady of seventeen or so came out of the grotto and asked me to sit. We sat in the vicinity of the door and the lady entered the room and came up with a jug of whey and some parts of semolina baked on an earthenware traditional stove. The girl bent down, picked some loaves and handed them to me.

I liked such a congregation. I took one part of the baked bread and took two sifts from the jug and took a seat to listen to the old man and his wife talking in turn.

The old man gazed fixedly at me as if he knew some of my traits. I did know him later on-I knew him from his faint voice that was a very distinct voice. I listened to him narrating the story of the village and how the great men, the elite and the intellectuals were judged. Many dwellers were deported and imprisoned. The old man recounted the story of many villagers who were executed just after discovering my uncle's corpse.

While exchanging talks, I confessed to him my identity and he was also doubtful about. He thought he had seen me before and that face was not too strange to him. I recalled his memory and then he was able to find my family. In fact, he was an old neighbor, a good friend to my father. And when I reminded him of my father's death, he wept and the picture he saw me in on that day made him look at me again. Indeed, he was present at the scene and he saw me shouting the day my father and my mother were executed.

The old man showed me my house that I could not recognize from the first glance. He walked with me all along the village and introduced me to women of the

village. They were all good welcome ; hence, many ran to me and hugged me and kissed on my forehead. Some naive women prepared some food and came running after me, some gave me money : others invited me to their homes.

I was ashamed and encircled by groups of women who yelled with joy ; they seated me on the ground and asked me to narrate the story of my departure and how the exile was like. They were very curious to hear the reactions of the Tunisians and the Moroccans.

I was like a blunt ; I could not answer their questions because I still did not believe whether Algeria was independent after such a long time. I was perplexed and a little bit shocked ; I was still traumatized and my mind was rather split against itself whether to burst out in joy or to refrain from being pained. A joy combined with fear and sadness of the atrocities and demolitions of the village kept me like an invalid.

I was just looking at the groups of women who looked at me in a very curious state. They showed me by fingers as if I was the sole heroine who descended from Mars. Boys in their dirty and shabby clothes, half naked with long hairs and barefooted, were moving along the pavements gazing at my moves. Something had pierced my heart when looking at those innocent creatures. No schools, no appropriate diet and more acutely poverty that was marked on their faces.

They still skipped as innocent lambs. Their mothers were left to themselves dragging their half shoes along the dusty lanes ; you would only see them passing as mirages, floating upon the air. People of the village were jobless, gathering some of their sheep to the nearest slopes to graze on the remains of the burnt land.

Facing such a disaster, I thought to start organizing myself as true activist. I would rather set a plan of reconstruction. I promised the ladies to see them the next day for a more action day where things would certainly take another form.

Some of my male friends met the men of the village to start a working plan on how to clean the streets and help relocate the homeless and find out some necessities of life for those who lost their homes.

*Night brings consent as the old maxim says
After rain there will be sunshine.*

In fact, the day had risen, women were on their alert. When I came down from the place where I passed the night in, I saw all the ladies of the village congregating in the open space near the town hall with plenty of useful tools in their hands. They were all ready to work, to clean and to organize the village they lived in.

Night brought consent and the dreams I saw that night turned true.

I saw myself leading a group of ignorant women, getting high on mountains looking after mint. Then we found green patches of the minted herbs ; so we gathered and filled up plenty of sacks and came down to the village to distribute them freely among the villagers.

When I recounted my dream, they told me that was a good sign of a long future prosperity-the ignorant people would see light thanked to your devoted spirit. Support would come to you and you would start anew, a fresh teacher that redirected the path of thousands of lost women whose life was battered with idleness.

From that inspirational step I got much energy to continue my path in the evolution, the progress I wished to

achieve in my lifetime. I gathered women around me and I felt much energetic, I opened a women's club where I taught them many crafts with the help of some experienced ladies. The workshops were organized in a way that women came and went back according to the occupations offered.

We used to volunteer to clean the streets, help the needy and the poor and defended the homeless, we shared in the elections and we got representatives. The role of women started to give its fruits through vocational training centers. We used to make pottery and textiles objects that we sold in the markets.

Chapter Nine

The Return of the Bridegroom

Leila's preoccupation was with the villagers and the way the village should be kept clean, hence, her own desires to see her day come bright. The husband she was engaged with in her stay in Tunisia sought to see and meet her for that period. He came and in his visions a bright image to build his new future. Rafik was his name, A Tunisian who supported the Algerian cause at a time his own country was under oppression.

Rafik considered Algeria his second home and he never faltered to give her his own person. After he suddenly disappeared from sight, nobody knew about him for long, a thing that made his wife flee Tunisia without even giving sign.

Rafik the courageous man, after being released from his cage, he recounted his own life story saying :

I did not know exactly who was running after me, the detective agents followed me for many days and chased my family. There was someone close to me who directed the French to my residence. The moment I got out of my house,

three men followed me until a dark corner where they squeezed me and put me under custody for months then I was interrogated another time until something was thrown on my head and obscured my vision.

They immediately took me in a car to an unknown destination I had no idea about until I found myself under forced interrogation. When they found me guilty they released me under caution.

When I returned home my memory was fatigued and I could no more remember the events as occurred to me. I caught a date with a neurologist and was treated for one month after which my nerves started to revive. I sensed then that energy started to return to my body. I stood for a long stroll in the green pastures where I liked to be alone and isolated for the first weeks.

I hated everything ; a sense of disgust to humans started to creep in my mind. Then bit by bit, life returned to its normal course. I did no longer deviate from my normality. I discovered myself as the first day – a native son. I started to regain my intellectual abilities, to smell the invigorating fresh air of the historical past.

I began to see my days with Leila. Hence her pictures did not leave my mind and I soon depicted her in her true picture defending Algeria and I wished I could help her with all what I possessed. She loved me too and soon we were in mutual mental contact. She wished to back me up, yet circumstances separated between us.

The strong desire to see her another time, made me seek her for long weeks and days until some of my compatriots told me about her. I came to Algeria, especially to the village where Leila resided, the village of Sidi Moussa. I came to her

dwelling and in my inner self a great smell for her odor. A distinct creature that marked her prints on my skin like a birthmark.

A wolf as she used to call herself-Indeed the wolf like traits in her own person made the French soldiers fear her movement and her actions. She was very brave and obstinate. She rather showed more manly traits than womanish. She knew when to act and how ? She taught me great lessons I did not learn at any school-How great was she ?

The day I started my search, I was certain that I would find her ; that certitude made me move from place to place without even losing hope. Her mental vision was for me another fillip that pushed me apace. I remembered the distance I crossed through the dense forest alone in cold weather. Though the climate was bitter and harsh, yet the long distances before the pride to meet my dream girl surpassed everything.

I stopped on the lofty mountains to see myself travelling high in the volatile space as a bird, to come closer to my wife. A bird view upon the down built village gave me a sense of my wife's location. I drifted down and in my mind a cross country lane that led directly to my wife's dwelling.

I remembered the first man I met was a shepherd that when seeing me very tired, hungry and thirsty, stopped me and offered his services to me. He was a happy shepherd, handsome and very helpful. He gave me food and water to drink. And as we sat to discuss seizing the opportunity for some rest, I started to recount to him my story as a preparation to introduce him straight into the subject matter.

When I described the girl to him, he could find her but with difficulty. Then little by little he could describe her to

me. He showed me her home and the place she spent most of her time in. I could not really hide my pride towards the good news and the shepherd sensed the message without being conveyed.

Soon, I packed my bag, thanked the shepherd then followed my path leading to my wife's house. When I was moving, my feet were heavy though and I sensed my heartbeats in an escalating velocity. I wanted to see my wife, I was a little bit scared and a feeling of despondency, a feeling that she would reject me, she would not recognize me, she would perhaps refuse to see me at times my intentions towards her were as pure as crystal water.

I felt myself closer to her the more I stepped forward. When I reached the place she worked in, I stopped and I turned fixing my eyes on the doorsill with a great envy to see the unexpected after a long insomnia over the bitter cold days and frosty nights.

Chapter Ten

The Meeting and the Great Feast

When she opened the door, she gaped and she was totally perplexed ; she did not expect to see me after that long absence. She could neither invite me to enter the house nor to refuse me. I rather felt the same If I were in her position. A few minutes of contemplation, she let me in. Now, she seemed quite sure of my presence beside her and that would stand for everything. When I sat on the chair, a strange feeling crept in my veins-there was more than a kind of familiarity attracting me to her.

I sensed in myself a nostalgic magnetism driving to her past and soon that feeling started to fade out. I sat near a table where she could face me to exchange common matters. Now, there seemed to grow a long bond of social ties.

I asked her whether someone had already asked for her hand to which she answered negatively. She was still chaste and wanted to regain me to further the marital ceremony in a more cordial atmosphere. She stood up and hugged me the moment some hot tears came down from

her piercing bright eyes.

“I really missed you, where have you been my dear for all this long time ?”

“Listen my dear, it is a long story to recount” and before he gave himself a comfortable seat, he started telling his own experience.

When the civil agents opened wide the door of my residence, I was not ready to expect such a violent act from their part. They put some handcuffs on my hands, veiled my face to not know the direction they took me to. We travelled for a few miles and the car was moving from corner to corner as if we travelled miles outside the city. Yet, my experience told me they were not taking me outside the town. But the car was turning in a vacuum, whirling like an object rotating around its fixed pivot – It was just a camouflage.

After half an hour, we stopped and I was made to land down on the pavement-They guided me upstairs to a cold place where I started shivering like a featherless birdie. They unveiled my head and I could hardly see the faces surrounding me. They were just a mirage but lengthening shadows moving in their circular move to tease me. I was afraid because I did never have such experience. One of the onlookers approached me and took me by the hand towards the next room where I sat.

They offered me a hot cup of coffee and I was put in a peaceful mood. The chief gave me a cigarette and started harassing me with plenty of anticipated questions. Hence, at each time, I answered them showing the same evidences. Many interrogations were given to me in succession. They wanted to prove that I was the real man they wanted to meet, to question and in most of cases to know through such gregariousness that I was the man who blew up a touristic

resort last summer.

Something that most of the time I noticed was that people were money devotes. They did not like to give their offerings to the needy but to the non deserved. I wanted to stress that act of good conduct to show to my citizens that it was never too late to mend and be patient at time more abuse was put on our heads. They interrogated me thrice in a day and they let me go.

I passed around three months doing the same thing until they decided to let me go at large. In the mean time, I was following your news day after day and I often met some of your friends who gave me your news.

Indeed, I was very astonished pursuing your state of being especially when I heard about Algeria's independence and immediately I thought you would join your country ; an idea that petted my mind to go after you and see your actual state. Thank God ! Hearts crave for hearts and the chance with its blowing wind let us meet again.

And thus, the story went on, the Tunisian host took his seat and sifted his tea with a solemn comfort and within himself an emotional impulse to have found his beloved sound and safe. He followed Leila to Algeria with his good intentions as he planned it before the independence.

The Tunisian wished to build up a cozy family and throughout their convivial interchange he asked for her hand for the second time and to which she positively retorted. She accepted then because she thought she was a little bit stable in comparison to the old past. Now, she could stay, talk and listen to her future partner and be all ears.

Then within two months the dowry was offered and the feast was prepared. The couple met on their first honeymoon under the villagers' applause. All the women

of the village came from different localities to witness their teacher's wedding-hence offerings were collected and Leila's eve night was illuminated with candles and yellings. What a nice festive ceremonial party where the poor from the different parts came summoned to quench their thirst and ate to the name of the Providence.

Leila and her bridegroom were waving to the guests with ample smiles. Indeed, the night passed and the future projects were on the rise. Leila had long projected to help the village women to create a vocational training association to help illiterate people gain some experiences in handicraft. She also projected to create some clubs where the youth could practice sports and train themselves through reading at libraries.

Many courses were organized in this regard and hence voluntary campaigns started to emerge under the assistance of the local banks. In not more than six months, Leila's endeavors started to give their fruits. Abdelkader, the Tunisian was always assisting his wife and backing her up. More success started to rise and now Leila was renowned for her active part in all the domains. She could help thousands of the youngsters with stable jobs and soon the village got cleaner, active and entered sports contests.

After three years of stable residence and a peaceful mind within a quiet village where every person showed a great respect and where no soul was harmed. Everything was perfectly seen ; Leila's mind set things squared up especially the cases of the orphans and the adopted.

Leila had helped the needy children and had built an orphanage that worked to their service night and day and she herself with her husband took charge of the center. All the young boys and children loved her. Leila's bountiful

deeds were praised by all.

Leila suffered a lot in her past times especially the years she spent in isolation and as an orphan. She chewed the bitter days under the frosty nights and shivering seasons. She was very patient to see her dreams fulfilled in her grown up wrinkles. Leila's good hearted intentions saved her many times from the dangerous beasts while she spent her nights on the branches of trees. These were some of her diary recordings when she opened her booklet and recounted to the youngest children sitting around her like a mother whose tenderness was split amongst the orphaned.

Leila's most of her time was spent within the congregations, she cooked and cleaned, advised and nursed the poor. She looked like *Mother Theresa* but on an Islamic ground-she often wept the incessant bad moments when she evoked the sad souvenirs when most of her mates were decimated. What a price to pay for an independence that most of the youngsters today playfully impair ?

And while she was gradually seeing her life growing and getting mature, some news from a Moroccan visitor reached her ears. It seemed her first lover from Morocco came to see her for a future marriage. Leila was not sure of the news sources ; yet, she remained prudent and she made inquiries about. The day came indeed and the Moroccan with the help of a guide came directly to her dwelling.

He came out of the hired taxi and met some neighbors ; he asked about Leila's residence and all the people met told him that she was remarried ; yet he could not believe anyone. Slowly and prudently he came towards her gate and rang the bell. Leila opened the window pane and to her surprise she saw the Moroccan in his true physical stature ; the same Moroccan she met and made

acquaintance with at X time on a Moroccan land.

She felt a little bit perplexed and embarrassed. Fortunately, her husband was not there ; otherwise, the case would be a little bit embarrassing. For a while, she thought to herself, what would be the matter ? To see him ; to send him off or not to talk to him at all. Before all ; he was about to marry her in Morocco if it were not for the bad circumstances. She decided to see him. He was a tall man wearing a smoke and a pipe in his left hand.

A patient man of mid forties stood near the door, a man with a good intention as he seemed and though she took time to open the door ; he looked fixed on the doorsill as if he was sure she would peep between an instant and the other. In fact, that what happened-

She opened the door slowly as if she was hesitatingly exasperated to see an old acquaintance that her fate for the first chance did not smile to her ; yet she opened the door wide open to see the physical stature standing before her. He nodded his head and bent down – a sign of respect : she reciprocally responded and he said something and she responded and thus he went with a quick pace – an onlooker would easily deduce that a negative response was launched. He mounted the taxi again and regained the same road he came by.

Chapter Eleven

Leila's mind division against itself

After rain there often seemed to be no sunshine ; as the sky got cloudy and the same rain stopped to rain again and the sky got grey-a grayish color that affected the atmosphere to no end.

As the case of Leila ; the tranquility of mind she lived with her husband in her small village did not last long ; hence after more than eight years living together ; her Tunisian husband decided to live elsewhere. He decided to leave Algeria to France in search for a more prosper material world.

And though he had two twin brothers with Leila, he decided to go and live in France. Leila opposed to such departure ; yet he insisted. Indeed, Leila's principled concept to go and live in a country that she saw killed most of her best comrades was not an adopted idea from departure. She refused to think about the matter at all.

So, after too much debate, Leila's husband decided to leave and left sorry to quit his family. Leila did not oppose to such departure on condition he would depart alone-she

kept her twin brothers and decided to take them to the orphanage to live with them there.

Poor little birds, the moment they started seeing daylight, their father disappeared. As for Leila, the same state of mind overwhelmed her spirit-she was accustomed to loneliness and all the children in the orphanage were members of her family. Leila found it good to change her dwelling to come nearer to her real offspring ; at least then she would be able to see her orphans day and night. Her eyes were always on the move ; she visited the small children in the dormitory, played with them and helped them go to bed through her old stories and active lullabies.

Leila spent whole nights between her small room and her adopted orphans' big dormitory until they grew up and started going out, shopping for the center and helping the poor and Leila, in her household. Leila enjoyed such a company and liked it very much when the small children surrounded her, jumping on her lap and all shouting *mother, mother*.

In such tenderness, Leila evoked plenty of souvenirs about Algeria and its compatriots who died before her. She wept and in her inner self, a deep remorse that remained marked on her cheeks. She hugged them all the way she could ; hence, she hugged the smallest children in their turn and passed her lenient hand on their hairs gently and with each caressing act some blessings went up.

Days gone by and no news from Abdelkader except a silence that tore the darkness of the cold night. That season was harsh and winter snow started earlier that month with a heavy fall. Nobody was out except some foolish and homeless that Leila tried to give bed to with a hot meal. She went out with some companies and gathered the

beggars to give them a bed stay and a hot meal too.

In her nocturnal patrol, Leila's eyes would never to bed go undisturbed. She loved humanity to the extent that she devoted most of her time to the needy until her body faded, dwindled and the wrinkles constantly appeared on her cheeks. Her enfeebled body started to cede to life and in the long run she began feeling tiredness.

No news yet appeared from Abd-el-Kader who departed for nearly six months. It seemed, as weather forecast reported that winter in France was harsher than that of Algeria and work there was not available; hence certainly Abd-el-Kader would bitterly suffer. Gone the days and the nights followed and the hearts in remorse grew bitterly old, Leila had lost her sweet dreams in an age full of shortcomings that she could never have thought of.

Fortunately, she saw her young twins grew bigger under her protection and wished to see them older than that to help her harness and reign successfully upon the miseries of the wicked world. Nine months had gone from the Christian calendar yet no news from Abdelkader came out until the day the postman of the village came with an unexpected message.

When Leila opened the letter, her hands were shivering; she was hesitant about herself and doubtful about what could that letter bring about. As a courageous woman with brave determination she decided to open it and take the risk. The opening lines would read thus :

My dearest Leila

The words I tried to collect in this dead sheet of paper did not come easily as my mind sparingly ought not to disturb your tranquil life by such an unexpected dispatch. I would rather feel sorry and embarrassed to send you this

letter as I felt myself doing fault to heaven, to you and to the young offspring.

I regret causing such a mistake to you. I did not mean to offend you but I would rather apologize for being frantic with you. I departed under your own person's consent and I would not have departed without having taken you with me ; yet you refused to join.

Let me in remorse ; recount my experience to you after I left Algeria. I really suffered bitterly – the weather, the bitter cold, joblessness and oppression. I lived miserably until the recent month where I got a decent job. I beg you another time to come and join me with your proper will, of course.

My life was as always, your life that beneath your respect, I engaged myself to service you in whatever circumstance. I loved you as always ; yet, I could not live in your native town. As an ambitious man, I would rather die in exile than to live in humility and bad circumstances. I took it an oath to live decently though that would entreat my life. Don't forget my dearest Leila to pay my best tributes to the young birdies.

With love

Abdelkader

Leila, curiously, started reading the letter with a great patience ; she read it twice with the hope to see between the lines a lenient word that could soothe some of her pains, yet nothing was deeply affecting except some superficial emotion that did not really invite her for such a scrutiny. She folded the letter and put it on the night table and went to bed. *Night would bring consent as once it was told.* She slept that night and in her dreams she saw Abdelkader moving from place to place as if he was expecting an answer from her part.

At least, Leila's reception to the letter could bring some hope to her social state. She rather appeared a little bit re comforted. At the beginning, she was thinking about Abdelkader but once she heard about him ; her mental state regained its normality. She did not hurry in responding to his letter ; hence she left him waiting for about one month but when she decided to write to him, she knew what to mean in her letter that fell upon Abdelkader's thirst as poison – a lethal like weapon that he would never expect-a liquid not as fluid as gull. That was a running excerpt of it

Dear Abdelkader

Forgive me for being frantic the first day I met you in Tunis. I did confess my true personality to you ; my trust in you had never faltered its course as I pledged too much sincerity upon your own person. I loved you from the first glance but at that time I had never thought to relinquish to my own desires, I followed my instinct as a woman seeking tranquility and serenity, secrecy and bounty.

Let me but recall to your memories that sometimes a woman is worth thousands of men in deeds and life principles. My parents had grown me like an oak tree not to die from the top but resist to frost and chill. Your departure to France would never hamper my lone course in life-I would rather follow my traced plans till the end and none would stand before my face. My two gems of chastity would be my best defenders at times things might take another turn.

My dear Abdelkader-feel free to act upon your own choices and rejoice upon your fate. My twins and I would never stand on your projected life. And though you managed to desert your cozy abode, my apologies would guard your temperance and protect your soul-Go, you are free and if ever life would dictate to you to change your

mind, I beg you to have a back glance to your young birds that, in the course of time, would grow impatient to ask for their father the more they got conscious.

Leila your faithful wife

Leila who was having the letter in her hand folded it and turned the page in her mind forever-the past remained past and she chewed the cud and bit her lips for a while before she moved the very few steps leading to the front window overlooking the garden. Fortunately there was the beauty of the landscape surrounding her house. She greatly took as company at times of her great growing distress.

Leila's humane feelings made of her a good friend to her surrounding ; the vastness of her heart can overwhelm the orphaned children's own sufferings. She but opted to share their calamities and stood by their times. She felt the divorce as a universal term that any human being might endure.

She thought to herself to share warmth with the abandoned children and as things were evoked to her memories she hurried to the orphanage with the intent to visit the birdies and forget for a while the sorrow her husband inflicted upon her.

And as she stepped into the hall, children ran to her and hugged her from all sides-she kneeled and wept kissing them altogether with a great force ; the force that her internal stature would offer within a fatigued age that relentlessly did not spare any human.

The weather that evening got dark and the spell of rain with the first premises started to come down. Warm droplets caressed the dirty lanes giving the dust more moist and damp that evaporated with the evaporated drops giving a smell of herbs and dirty soil. The drizzles came

upon the roofs teasing the eaves and the window panes giving that envy for a nap.

Leila admired nature and looked at her small infants playing there in the yard. She looked at them, sometimes with an elevated spirit, observing their growth in a gradual shape and sometimes she looked at them with a piercing eye of pity. Poor orphans that life twisted upon their wings-a forced divorce that neither religion nor legislations of the whole world would tolerate. In short, that was her fate that she had to accept with a smiling remorse.

Time, that precious grace that God endowed humans with is but an endowed test upon life ; a treasure not to waste as life experience had in the long past shown – time *and tide wait for no man*. Leila rolled upon her sleeves and glanced at her watch at times images from the very past flashed upon her eyes.

And in their evocative decadence tears flushed and came upon the enfeebled eyes – she wept. In her turning the page over the dead past, at the same time, of the same hour, of the same year, Leila used to cherish her youth under the company of thousands compatriots who had lost their souls with the folded time.

What a time that fled from our hands ; we rejoiced and soon our embodiment with fun and humor faded as the flowers of late spring. Leila felt her days dwindling like a candle that lit people's paths ; yet, in itself a shrinking power that pulls its demise as a growing worm, a vile enrobed in slow death.

In her roaming through the vastness of her spirit, Leila decided to turn the page and think of how to rebuild her life from scratch. She thought to collect her scattered wits though it was not easy without a husband under whom she

felt more secure. She thought alone to stand by her two children, put them under a secure social position where they could serve their nation and countrymen.

She insisted their schooling should be kept to a maximum, to study hard and succeed, to help the mother whose age started to deteriorate. Leila's main preoccupation was to see her offspring succeed in life depending on them in a world where only *the fittest would survive*.

Chapter Twelve

Abdelkader's life in France

Life for the exiled Abdelkader seemed harsh and hard and the days gone had shown their bad prints on his life. The more he went on in solitude, the more he felt secluded. The image of the bright future he formed once in Tunisia then in Algeria seemed out of joint ; no more positive hopes, no more solutions for his hopeless case – a clandestine immigrant roving in Marseille streets with thousands of similar compatriots whose dream resembled those of Ousmane Sembene's *Diouana*.

He went on in his dreams to the point he stopped many times to wonder whether chance would smile at him one day but there seemed no more chance for the forlorn. In fact, premises were signs and no doubt that the happy coming events would cast their shadows before.

Abdelkader hunted jobs for many months and he left no stone unturned seeking a decent job he could procure. He enrolled in the joblessness office namely on the dole list and received the very French Francs that could not even help him live for himself. Bit by bit the harsh circumstances

started to affect his dwindling physical stature. He once was affected by pneumonia that he contracted through his frequent sleeping in the streets and in the open under the cold bridges.

The open chill and frost attacked his lungs that had already been tired by heavy smoking he resorted to at times of distress. According to some witness, the last time Abd-el-Kader was seen, he was looking upon the river down the bridge, he was admiring a flock of seagulls in their organized flights. His concentrated gaze gave the impression that he was suffering nostalgia-a strong appeal he held for long. He craved to see his sons ; yet he could not renounce to his defeat.

He was defeated by the harsh time but he did never relinquish-an orphan whose origin marked his mind-a torn spirit between Tunisia, where his parents, as old as oak trees were waiting for his help.

He but observed them from a far, a listless creature that could not hold water he stood as void a recipient that could no more be used.

His mind was also divided against itself when he decided to leave his wife-a wife that he always considered faithful to him, a wife whose pride had helped him evolve to the days he found himself in. He stood in remorse-a blank sheet blown by the autumn wind-a cursed creature that demons whistled in his ears to hear the sounds of his twins in their feverish moans ; yet he did not turn to but a deaf ear.

Men were not always men-Life was the great test for them-*either to live as a cock or to die as a hen*. The hen in its gleaming stature might yield eggs that served for sources of protein that served the body boost to its full

shape. The cock had nothing to lose except to stand on its groom and send its piercing voice recalling spirits to the mundane.

“Wake up men, there was no room for permanent dreams.”

Abdelkader, as if he heard my voice and the sound of the cock, he wagged his ears and took a few steps forward. He started moving to joblessness center and that time chance smiled to him.

He found a job as a night supervisor in a cement factory. He was asked to have a test to which he was scared to be rejected because his physique was not in its good form. He coughed before his recruitment days. Unfortunately; he was accepted on condition he was on the dole list for long. On the first days of his work, Abdelkader showed a great courage to please his manager and was ready to work extra hours to save up some money that he presumed to send to his family.

Abdelkader seemed to resist; and though his mean stature, he worked for more than eight years where he got accustomed to the French régime, he ate in the factory refectory to put some money by and once at home he cooked some simple cheap meals to subsist. The spirit of meanness still haunted his mind; he wanted to return to his homeland with abundant reserves. Yet his dreams were short lived.

The dormant pneumonia woke up as a dormant volcano and soon Abd-el-Kader felt himself taken to the hospital after he had fainted while moving through the factory lanes when he was inspecting the defects of a damaged pump.

Pneumonia affected him hard that time; he found a

great difficulty in respiration and he lost consciousness many times. His case, according to doctors, was a little bit serious. Abdelkader stayed in hospital for more than two months then he was allowed to go home for a permanent leave.

He could never return to his work and was marked by practitioners as an invalid. He did receive medical treatments by the factory insurance corporation. Abdelkader had no human support except some of his countrymen-one Algerian and another one a Tunisian by father and a Moroccan by mother. They helped him in turn, prepared food and did the washing for him.

Abdelkader, now distressed, felt his days getting to the dead end, he asked for the Algerian to come. He begged him to send the money to his twins in Algeria. He gave him the residence address, together with a letter he wrote to his wife.

The moments he joined hands with Farid, the Algerian, tears came down flushed from both eyes and in his deep memories the pictures of his dearest wife that circumstances and the desire for wealth obsession blinded his inner eye to opt for exile with the intention to get richer ; yet life was mocking at him at a moment he thought too malicious to play trickster.

Abdelkader asked Farid to kneel by his side and whispered in his ears to transmit the message of love to his tender spot that though the long distance that separated between the couples, yet his love grew deeper day by day.

Farid took the letter and folded in his pocket together with the sum of money and went out. Two days after, Farid arrived at Houari Boumedienne's international airport, Algiers. Fortunately, he was not pried as he hid the money

in a safe place lest he could be caught he would pay it dear.

Farid took a taxi and went directly to Leila's house. The great jolly moment made Leila feel the snapshot, the palm of her left hand itched a lot to the point it turned red. As superstition went on, "*There must be some good news*" She thought to herself.

She did not even think about the matter than someone knocked at the door. The newcomer was Farid who came rushing to the house and in his latent personality the responsibility of the heavy burden to turn back the gift as it was assigned to him.

When Leila opened the door, she was prompted by two great ideas – To face the reality of her husband who was dead alone and Farid came to announce the bad news or to receive some good news from Abd-el-Kader who had not written for long.

Leila was the iron woman with her feminine instinctive power as she could discern the ultimate voice at times of distress. She sensed the fear of her absent and distant husband. Something wrong had certainly occurred to him. Something that she could predict – Abdelkader must be seriously ill.' She thought.

She gazed at Farid but she could not say a word : she was waiting for him to break the ice and as she predicted, Farid at last wanted to say a word ; he confessed his mind and informed her of Abdelkader's case ; he handed the envelope where a big sum of money laid down. She opened the letter in front of Farid and started reading it with a great curiosity and before she could finish, tears came down upon her cheeks.

He did revive in her dormant feeling the great sense of love-the feelings that took her for a few minutes to fly to

France and get a glance upon her beloved. She thought to herself ; she questioned her mind and returned to the letter then she could resume with a hard toil.

She felt enfeebled and started to gaze at Farid for a while then she addressed Farid and asked him about Abd-el-Kader's state. She invited him to sit and take a cup of coffee and recount her story of her husband that she listened to attentively and swallowed its words with a great avidity.

When Farid was narrating Adelkader's story, Leila was thinking of a rescue plan that could bring Abdelkader to his country Algeria to remain with his wife and his twins. She begged Farid to go again and bring Abd-el-Kader back to Algeria. She took the sum of money, wrapped it well and handed it back to Farid. Leila insisted that he should go and bring Abd-el-Kader to his sons. Farid agreed to go after Abdelkader and bring him back to his home address in Algeria.

Farid went home and on his couch that evening, he sat recollecting his scattered wits in tranquility, he rewound the reel in his memories and Abdelkader's past and made the analogy as assertion to what he thought of that queer personality.

And to his surprise he found that Leila had really a feminine instinct when she decided to re lodge Abdelkader to her nearness though he was the faulty man in his renouncing of the separation. Farida made the balance and the counter balance and in the course of time, he sided with Leila's strong decision to go and bring Abd-el-Kader back.

The adopted idea was favored by all the villagers who did celebrate the event with a great hail to Leila and to the young lambkins. The guests came around Leila and were ready to support her choice ; a good idea that showed

Leila's good intention. Leila heard about the news that her husband stationary state did glow positively. She curiously wished to see him soon.

As intentions went so the accomplished desires. Farid did convince Abdelkader to join him to Algeria. Abdelkader in his turn thought the idea was presumably good so he accepted. Two seats for the next flight were booked and Farid got out of the whole process a sordid hero who decidedly arranged to meet his offspring.

The promised day had come-Farid and Abdelkader descended the airplane ladder and to their surprise, Leila, in her tired stature stood erect looking at the shape of her former husband with a piercing eye, an eye that hid the bitter souvenirs, the first days she met Abdelkader in Tunisia and how strong was that man. He was in his full bloom with an endless energy.

She marched along the main entrance gate to welcome him, at least with a solemn tribute that she still kept in her broken heart. Yet, she did not show it, she sensed it in her deep where none but herself knew where the shoe pinched.

There their shapes appeared, two men upcoming along the corridor holding two suitcases that made them stagger.

After completing the customs services, they headed directly through the check point then at last they got out. Farid and Abd-el-Kader looked straight before them when all at a sudden, Farid saw Leila and started shouting and waving to her.

Leila, accompanied with her two sons moved in a regular pace to meet their guests. She directly headed towards her husband and shook hands with, helped take his baggage and led him directly towards the waiting taxi. Then the trip home went off.

Abdelkader's face looked pale, his body was enfeebled. He was holding a satchel full of prescribed list of medicine. The traits of sufferings were deeply wrought in his lifetime. He was rather energetic and could resist to the mundane sufferings. Leila's instinctive power dictated her to eternally side with the needy and the poor.

When acting in such a humane feeling, she perfectly knew that her husband the Tunisian could never return to his home country because of the Tunisian situation, the hurly burly and the agitation Tunisia witnessed could never host a broken hearted listless person. She thought only the great nation could collect the lost and could offer a welcoming heart to the neighbors. She decided to rescue and save her husband at a time husbands were dear and sincere.

Leila thought the world would be too harsh with her if she would lose this opportunity of doing well to the needy. She confessed and acknowledged Abdelkader's help to her the days she was collecting money in the dearest regions of Tunisian, she but saw in her husband the perfect man who helped her though the short acquaintances she got with.

That was a perfect example of the proverb that reinforced the idea of the enduring friendship – *short reckonings make long friends*. She then came closer to him and in the course of time, their reckonings started to grope and gave fruits. Soon they entered into contact that would lead in a few months to that promised union.

Those were just some flashes that came floating in her perverted mind each time she gazed at her husband's enfeebled body. His lowered face would tell many secret stories that Abdelkader lived in exile, in loneliness detached from his homeland, and neglected by his same

community beyond the seas – a community he thought would rejoice some of his pains ; but in reality that dream of going to France and live as a prince had no longer a place in the face value of reality.

He was prompted by the idea to go and prepare the ground to Leila and his two sons ; yet life had never smiled to him since he had left his homeland. He did not even enjoy his life there, a life of a marginalized creature whose fluctuated identity did not encourage him to gain a decent living, a decent house and to get a decent job. He lost everything but the big house would never falter the strong ties that held well the Arab ties.

Leila, though she subsisted to her own life with the rare coins in her possession, she had never got the fancy to stretch her hand to people. Leila joined her husband and decided to start her services and her husband's upkeep. She went to the market and brought some mutton to prepare a very nice soup that she would serve to her husband Farid.

She thought of him for not having for long eaten such a main course. In fact, there was a mutual respect between Leila and Abd-el-Kader who repeatedly did confess and apologize for his first departure.

Chapter Thirteen

The Departure

The couple had lived jolly moments for long days and had seen the proper company. They had preserved their unison and had seen their children grow in serenity. Abdelkader received his financial due from France, an additional lot for the family to live by. The whole communities rejoiced at Leila's comfort and were all servitude to the couple.

But unfortunately, Abdelkader's fate seemed too short to see more daylight. He suffered for many days and he could never stand up, lifeless bodies sitting on his wheel chair, just observing things pass before his eyes. Leila did her best to help him but no one could save-a lethal disease itched his insane body and shrank his corpse to the minimum size. Abdelkader could not resist for long so he succumbed to his death at a time his sons started to grow to adulthood.

One had to believe in one's fate ; the soul had to dwell apart and had to depart to the Almighty God. The heaven would for sure compensate for the young birds their loss.

Leila observed the obsequious ceremony within her own confinement. She did her duty to see the bereaved corpse in his final stead. Abdelkader was inhumed in Leila's hometown amidst the glorious martyrs of the Liberation war.

Days had gone and the mourning page had quickly been turned. Leila then started to build her new life anew relying on her two children. She worked as a part time cleaner in the town hall adjacent to her house to help her children keep on their studies. She worked hard and was able to save plenty of money to send one of her children abroad. And in the course of time, she persevered to see her second child open a small vegetable store then together they thought of his marriage.

Samir was his name, an active boy who suffered poverty and since a boy he started helping his mother. He engaged to a local nurse that worked in the nearby hospital. Hence, the marriage ceremony did not last long to announce the festive feast.

All the local residents were invited and came in mass. They were all joy to share Leila's grandiose party. Samir got married at a time his eldest brother came back from France. They both worked together to entertain themselves and bring forth their mother to her ancient jollity.

But no one dared see and predict what the future might dictate. A few days after the ceremony, Leila got severely ill and soon she succumbed to her death. She at least had seen one of her dream fulfilled-a son married. She had departed with the other dream to see her second child celebrating his own wedding.

Alas, that was her fate; she died when her two children then had stepped to adulthood. POOR Leila

whose demised corpse was solemnly buried in the local cemetery under a crowded mass of her kith and kin. Her old acquaintances came from the different parts of the country-She was hailed a martyr whose deeds had superseded the man's imagination – a long processing file followed her to the grave to see her off.

Leila was evoked by all and was remembered for her brave acts during the revolution period-She was recalled to mind through her genuine manning and her pretensions of lunacy that tricked the French armies. In a nutshell, Leila died but her work did last forever-

Leila departed to the eternal stead and was for sure welcomed by the angelic spirit: her soul would rove around the precinct of her town, sending blessings to the whole community, to cover under her wings her two powerless children whose life would no more be orphaned.

The two brothers grew in unison and helped themselves to live their decent life. It was reported then that the eldest son had finished his studies and came back home to occupy one part of his mother's dwelling. He visited his mother's grave for a devotional high respected tribute and a divine call of forgiveness. He intended to become a senior teacher in the college. He was engaged to a girl of his own family that devotedly showed a great love for his deceased mother.

Ever since, the two brothers lived close to each other and shared the big compromise to live in prosperity and helped each other and lived by the great dream to see Algeria in peace and tranquillity – a maxim that their mother once devoted herself to at times liberty was but a dream – a term that only the steel man could resist to bear.

Both brothers wanted to live by their mother's

principle that life was but a short nap for those who do good to others. She died but she left everything behind.

Seeing their father on his deathbed would bring them more conscious that good company needed to be strengthened because life, as their parents lived it, was not a bed of roses and if one opted for the great company, he had to respect the feminine progenitor. In fact, the female instinct evoked leniency and humane feelings – a unique feature namely endowed to women whose talented spirit endured life with its pains and sufferings.

Their mother died but within her laps there was a feminine instinct that one should never neglect; for women's role, as a supporting force to man, is a cornerstone in man's standing, that without women, man's dwelling state would never see daylight-hence, a great hail to women should be observed-*for behind every great man there is a woman-*

Indeed, *women* enter hearts instinctively and spread their leniency as a cobweb that unites the common rank and file under an umbrella termed the *Feminine Instinct*.

The End

July 2015

Cet ouvrage a été composé par Edilivre

175, boulevard Anatole France – 93200 Saint-Denis

Tél. : 01 41 62 14 40 – Fax : 01 41 62 14 50

Mail : client@edilivre.com

www.edilivre.com



Tous nos livres sont imprimés
dans les règles environnementales les plus strictes

Tous droits de reproduction, d'adaptation et de traduction,
intégrale ou partielle réservés pour tous pays.

ISBN papier : 978-2-334-01561-5

ISBN pdf : 978-2-334-01562-2

ISBN epub : 978-2-334-01560-8

Dépôt légal : novembre 2015

© Edilivre, 2015

Imprimé en France, 2015