

Treacle from Hourie Syrup

Soré

Remembering my older sister Zulfé was and had been a daily object of my world of seeing. Some people who were not from our family called her Zulfé Békes. I learnt the meaning of the word 'Békes' many years later when my mother told me her full story. Zulfé Békes had an almost round face, an apple face, and she looked like a red apple to me. She was not white as the snow like all Mezour girls. She was transparent. I could see the veins and muscles under her skin. I could even see her red purple blood running in these veins. Her face was as red as an apple or tomato sometimes. My mother often called her Soré, which meant red. But I always called her My Zulfé. Being small at the time I believed beyond reasonable doubt that she belonged to me. I owned her. She was six to seven years older than me. I remember her large purple eyes. They were weird looking eyes as if she was not human. Her beauty was talked about far and wide among the Kurds, although to me she was just My Zulfé. Nothing was special about her, even her purple eyes. She was just My Zulfé and nothing else. She was annoying at times. She would pick a fight with me for the sole reason of tackling me to the ground and smothering me under her. I would scream and yell for mother's help when My Zulfé bit my cheek hard. First my hands were secured above my head and being small there was no way of defending myself. I could not even bite her, because she was smarter than me, and would bite me first, and I would cry and scream in agony. My mother, who was often busy somewhere, would yell at her, "Soré, what are you doing to your brother?!"

My Zulfé would yell back, "I am eating him mother!"

That would be the end of my mother's rescue mission, which was frustrating. I cried so hard I peed myself for being unable to defend myself against her. But she always gave me her share of sweets if we ever had them. She also carried me on her shoulders at times, or on her back, or on her puny hip. She would get me to reach out for ripe figs from the high branches of our frontyard tree. My Zulfé also fed me when my mother wasn't home. She would play with me and make me win, eventhough I did not know the games she played with me. She would play on her behalf, and play on my behalf as well, and then tell me that I won. I got a reward most of the time, it was food or a biscuit she had saved. I felt exhilarated at winning, eventhough I did not know the game at all, whatever the game was she played with me. She sometimes chewed nuts, almonds and mint leaves in her mouth, mixed them with syrup then fed them to me using her fingers. She played my mother and she called me Kuré Min, which meant my son. At the time I did not know what it meant. I knew that was my name in her language, her name was My Zulfé in my language. She belonged to me. That was My Zulfé. She had dark purple eyes, unlike human eyes. But she was My Zulfé and I was My Son. If someone asked me what is your name, I would answer, "My Son."

I was three or four, I could not remember exactly. My mother would call me by a different name and I thought it was weird. I did not know why she did not call me by my real name, My Son. One night a group of people visited us from what I later knew as the Sulivan tribe. I did not know what the commotion was about. Suddenly there was plenty of food presented to these people, then they left. A month later my mother said, "Soré will be going away to her new relatives."

I did not know who these new relatives were, or why would she want to go there. She did not know them. I knew she did not know them. Her only relatives were my mother, my father, my little brother Pirrash, and me, My Son. She did not have any other relatives. I knew something was wrong but did not know what it was. My Zulfé was due to go away, far away and leave us to be with her new relatives. They had come to take her from me. My mother and father did not even object. How could they give away My Zulfé? She was mine, not theirs. Even she did not object which infuriated me. I was very angry with her. How could she leave me when I owned her? She was mine. She could not go. On the day she was about to leave with her new relatives I locked myself in the attic and absolutely refused to get out. I was very hungry and thirsty, but I refused to get out even when they offered me food and drink. My Zulfé begged me to open the door so she could speak to me and tell me something. I yelled, "I am not listening!"

Although I was angry I cried and cried because My Zulfé was going to leave me. My Zulfé herself created a commotion at home and refused to go with her new relatives unless she saw me first, but I would not open the door. My Zulfé told her new relatives to go away, she was not going with them. But my mother and father forced her, or persuaded her. I did not know. My Zulfé cried and cried, saying she won't forgive me for hurting her. But I wanted to hurt her. I wanted her to cry for betraying me. The whole purpose of locking myself in the attic was to hurt My Zulfé. My father eventually broke the door and took it off its hinges. Even before he slapped me I shat myself. He hit me so hard I couldn't remember what happened afterwards. I think I woke up naked in a bucket of water and my mother was washing me and cleaning the blood off my head. I was very angry. I did not speak to my mother or father for weeks, maybe months. I decided I would go silent for the rest of my life since My Zulfé was not there. They took My Zulfé away from me. There was no point of talking. I only talked to My Zulfé. She used to sing me very beautiful songs like Lawké Kanza every day, and each night too. Because my mother was busy working all the time My Zulfé even taught me to speak. I even thought My Zulfé was my mother, my mother was her mother and therefore my grandmother. But at the same time I thought My Zulfé belonged to me like an object I had. She was maybe my big toy and I would put my arm around her neck before we slept, otherwise I would not sleep. Or she would put her arm around my neck and she would sing for me, "Sleep My Son sleep, tomorrow the sun will shine and the birds will tweet, tweet, tweet."

I also hated my mother calling me with the strange name instead of my real name Kuré Min which meant my son.

Every time there was a mention of My Zulfé at the house I walked away and did not want to hear about it. She came back once with a man and I ran away from the house, not returning till I saw them leave. They looked for me everywhere but I did not let them see me. If she had stayed the night at our home I would have stayed outside and slept on the streets and let the Awoooka eat me. I did not want to show myself to My Zulfé, or let her see me. I was very angry. She was My Zulfé, not their Zulfé. My anger never subsided. If her nickname "Soré" was ever mentioned by mother or father I would go on hunger strike, or leave the house. They would have to find me and my father would give me a belting, and my mother would wash the blood off me. The more he beat me up the more stubborn I became. I was that angry. I could never forgive My Zulfé for hurting me. Years later when I was about six, my mother said she was visiting some of her relatives and she wanted to take me with her. I did not know who these relatives were, nor did I care, but I went with her. My father came with us in a taxi. My father sat in the front with the driver and my mother, my little brother Pirrash and myself, My Son, in the back.

After we crossed the old English bridge I could see farms, fields, hills, mountains, small rivers, ponds, trees and creeks. I thought we were going to the end of the world. We went very faraway. We crossed many towns and villages, big farms and small farms. We saw many animals and birds. We even saw very big cows, unlike the cows I used to see. They called them GaMésh, water buffalos with very large horns. There were many of them I thought they would eat us and the taxi when we were surrounded by them. Pirrash was crying, but I did not know what to do. I was scared but there was no other route to run away. We were right in the middle of them. The taxi stood still till they cleared away and went, leaving a huge cloud of dust behind. When we reached the village near a very large and wide river, as big as our river Du Jila in the city of Nineveh, I saw many boats. The Sullivan too called their river Du Jila. We got out of the car and my father paid the driver. It had taken hours to get to these relatives of my mother. There were so many children gathered around us I thought they were going to take our little Pirrash from us. I feared for him and I hoped my mother would not let go of him, and allow these children take our Pirrash. My father asked a few children about someone's house and they directed us towards some alley. A number of children ran towards that alley and disappeared. As we arrived at the alley I saw a big woman wearing Kurdish costume but they were different from the one my mother wore, even her headgear was different. It was big, ornamented, laced, beaded, and fluffed. There were coins, or gold nuggets and chains dangling from her headgear, which was covered with an engraved golden cap. The big woman was running towards us bare foot, the children opening the way for her scared she might trample them and squash them like bugs. She was running towards us like a crazy and wild animal on a stampede. I was scared because she was heading towards us. Her whole massive body shook, her big breasts went up and down, right and left. I thought she came to steal our Pirrash from my mother, but then her eyes were on me, right on me. I was so scared I could not run. My legs stiffened and did not respond even if I wanted them to. I also nearly shat myself. But before I had actually done it to myself I was tackled to the ground and smothered under this strange, wild and crazy woman's huge body. I did not know if I was aware of what was going on, but I remember her biting me hard, gnawing on my facial flesh. The blood from my face was running profusely, almost drowning my face I believed. She was also releasing liquid from her own face which mixed up with my pouring blood. I could sense my face had been eaten whole. Perhaps she was later going to eat my limbs - the arms then later my legs. I did not know if she was going to eat my body because my head would have been inside her stomach by then. She was eating my flesh and she was crying not me. I was bitten but she was crying. That was not fair. I would have cried but I was so scared I was holding to my hole not to shit myself. That wild and crazy woman was eating me alive. I had heard it was in that village where Awooka ate children if they left at night. But it was day time. I hoped she would finish me quickly because I might not hold on for too long and may soil myself soon. I did not scream at all. I forgot about my mother, my father and little Pirrash. I even forgot about myself. I just wanted her to finish quickly because it was extremely embarrassing to shit oneself in front of so many children. I would be the laughing stock of the whole village. I was waiting and waiting for her to finish me and swallow me as quickly as possible, but then she released my cheek and started kissing me still crying. She then moaned and carried me like a doll and buried her face in my clothes and smelt me deeply. My eyes were so bleary at the time I did not see anyone, or even hear what was said clearly. But I knew there were muffled talk, yells, and screaming children. I did not understand a word. I was just waiting and holding onto my hole. She kissed me on the mouth repeatedly, then bit me again. She was like a wild leopard which licked its prey before eating it,

or while eating it. By then I thought most of my face had been eaten and swallowed by that crazy woman. She repeatedly called me My Son. I squinted and squinted to see who was that crazy woman but did not recognize her although her voice was somewhat familiar, even her eyes. I came to my senses, and thought why was that crazy, wild big woman calling me My Son? Only My Zulfé called me with my real name. I did not know that crazy woman. She shook me violently, “Do you remember me? My Son? Hah, My Son. Do you remember me? I am My Zulfé.”

With an extremely frightened and choked voice I managed to say, “No you are not.”

I heard my father and mother laugh. My mother said, “Yes son, she is Soré.”

That crazy woman wiped off her tears and mucus with my shirt, and distanced me from her big chest, “Look, it is me, My Zulfé. My Zulfé.”

I choked and my tears ran like rivers. I wanted to get away from that crazy woman. I did not know her. Even if she was My Zulfé I did not want to see her. I was angry. I was injured. She was not My Zulfé. She kissed my mother and Pirrash, then kissed my father’s hand before we headed towards their alley. Meanwhile I was trying very hard to get away from that crazy woman who pretended to be My Zulfé. But her grip was like a steel lock till I gave up struggling. I feared her so much I was unable to call for help, or even open my mouth to complain. She would not stop kissing and licking me, calling me, “My Son. You are My Son. Who is my son? You are My Son.”

She rubbed some of her bite marks on my face with her thumb. Only then I realized she had not eaten my face and the massive amount of blood that poured out of my face was just her tears and saliva. But my face did ache because I was bitten hard, everywhere. She carried me away while talking to my father and mother on their way to somewhere. I could not remember everything she said, but I remember she said to them, “You are lucky I am home today because last night my son was sick, so I didn’t go and tend to the herd.”

I did not know what she meant by the herd, or why she wanted to tend to them. But I was curious when she talked about me being sick last night, even though I was not sick at all. I was not sick even today before she bit me and made me so scared I was about to shit myself. What a lying crazy woman I thought. Of course I could not tell her that. I was in her mercy and I was just hoping she would release me just a little bit, just a little bit, so I could breathe normally. Then I would jump and run and run and never look back. I did not care if my mother and father wanted to stay with her. I did not know her. The crazy woman said, “When the children burst into our house and told me you were here I left my son with Khatoon and didn’t even have the time to wear shoes to run towards you.”

Again that lying woman was saying she left me with Khatoon. Although I imagined Khatoon to be a giant talking tree with long stretched arms, who kept children in a nest before eating them, I doubted her story about leaving me there. I was never there today. I remembered I was in the taxi coming all the way from Nineveh with my mother, father and my little brother Pirrash. I remembered all the towns and villages, fields, farms, hills, mountains, creeks, birds and animals on our way. But I did not remember ever being nested in Khatoon. I wondered why my mother did not tell her she was a liar. I could not understand. I would if I was brave enough to speak. My face was very close to her giant bosoms. Every time my nose touched her ice coloured skin it turned purple or pink red. Many times I forgot about what they were talking about, just hearing the blood running through her visible veins. I could even hear her heart like a giant mill engine that kept pumping none stop gushing springs, like Wohsh Wahsh, Wohsh Wahsh, Wohsh Wahsh. Woh Woh Wah Wah, Weh Whih Wah Wah. I could hear so many voices coming out of

her body that I could not describe. But it was like they were like from outer space with so many people talking in strange languages and many things happening. We arrived at her house that had a very large frontyard. It was huge. We went in and she shut the door and locked it. I really lost all hope of escaping now that she shut the door. She made sure it was locked so I would not escape. She was an evil crazy woman with bad intentions. She was going to eat me that night, I knew it. I just knew it, but I did not understand how my parents could easily be charmed with the big witch and let her take me to do whatever she wanted to. They had given up on me. I was extra. They had Pirrash to raise, so they did not need me anymore. Especially my father who did not need me. His only solution for me was to slap me so hard he would render me unconscious. He did not need me anyway, so I did not worry about that. It was my mother who I felt acted strangely by letting that crazy lying witch take me, maybe to eat me that night. I said to myself, "Oh well, I will wait till she eats me, then I will be all right."

Balladeers

Early Friday morning I drove my motorbike to the city of Duhok, later to AméDi, then to the Nihél region, which took me two hours and a half. I passed through twenty seven checkpoints manned by either Arab security services or military police. While armed Arab occupiers in checkpoints asked every passing passenger for their identity card, one look at my identity card and they waved me through. After I passed the city of Duhok and much later the village of BaGéra there was a checkpoint manned by Kurds, Kurdish militia loyal to the Arabs and belonging to Raffan Bé Sivki of the Dask tribe. The Arab checkpoints either confiscated or asked the people who carried food and heading to the forbidden areas to return them to town; however the Dask tribesmen and Raffan Bé Sivki's militia did peculiar things. I stopped my motorbike behind a line of cars. The Dask tribe militia forced all the occupants of cars and trucks to get out of their vehicles, then frisked them from head to toe including testing the shoes, before turning everything in the vehicles upside down. They honked and barked at Kurdish women about their address in the forbidden areas, and vigorously checked their identity cards. They not just confiscated their food which these poor women purchased from the city of Duhok, with money they hardly managed to save, the Dask tribe militia poured the purchased flour over the women and children's heads. They poured the thick creamy sesame butter in Kurdish women's shoes then ordered the women to wear their shoes and parade in them. The Dask tribe militia poured Kurdish women's tea and sugar over the women's heads and into their clothes, then poured any liquid available including oil or petrol on top of the mix. The militia then forced the Kurdish women to parade for a distance along the street with constant barrage of obscene swear words. These Dask tribe militia poured variety of food ingredients the passing passengers had brought with them onto the bitumen and dirt, then ordered the owners to step on the mix and jump up and down to create dust, while the Dask tribe militia laughed and swore at them. My turn came and I was carrying two bags of tea and sugar inside a large big bag, and tied to the back seat of my Nineveh number plated motorbike. Two of these armed Dask tribe militia looked at me thoroughly with derision. One very dark and ugly Dask tribesman whom I guessed had Arab ancestors of some sort, honked in Kurdish, "Where are you going?" Instead I spoke in dark Arabic language, and with the same accent and the same vocabulary used by the Arab president Muhammed Al-Awaj Bin Al-Auja. I yelled in contempt, "Talk correctly you dogs sons of dogs."

It politely meant I do not understand your gibberish, speak Arabic. The Dosk Chata nearly shat themselves, and retreated a few steps and raised their hands in a soft salute. There were over twenty of these Dosk tribe militia, all of them were armed to their teeth, not just on the road, but some were guarding the hills surrounding the road and protecting the checkpoint. I was unarmed and carrying forbidden items, tea and sugar.

After I passed the town of AméDi and left the main road towards the village of Sigéré in the Nihél region, the military police checkpoint refused to let me pass claiming it was too dangerous because the 'Enemy's agents' were controlling that area. I returned to the main road, headed to the settlement of BerChie where the BerChie villagers had been brought in to live, and past it. I stopped and checked the air in the wheels on my motorbike. With that pretext I surveyed the surrounding hills, and the road for any Arab military bases or prominent outposts. When there were none I rode my motorbike down a ravine on the north side of the road, then up on the path of a dry creek and further up a hill where I was spotted by an Arab army outpost. There was a very dark Arab behind a swiveling Russian four barreled anti aircraft machine gun. He directed it towards me and sprayed my direction with probably hundreds of bullets. I could hear the whizzing of large bullets, the air explosions they caused, and the many wild oak tree branches breaking, the leaves falling, birds and wild animals torn to pieces. With all that noise and carnage I had someone repeatedly whispering in my ears telling me, "Don't stop my son. Don't stop my son."

I pushed that East German motorbike which was not equipped for rough terrains through rugged paths and steep ravines. I went down into the dry creek bed and continued my zigzagging among rocks, stones, branches and dirt till the dark Arab could not see me anymore. After over an hour's rough ride among hidden hills I did not see Sigéré. Men, women, children, maraz, cows, chicken, ducks, donkeys, mules, horses, goats, sheep, dogs and one rabbit were all dead. Pieces of pure Kurdish flesh, arms, legs, heads were strewn everywhere. Many of them were burnt. Broken jars and assorted terracotta were everywhere. The surrounding farms were black from the resulting fires. My mind became numb and I fell off my motorbike onto the ground, while the bike was still running lying on its side. I was stunned and unable to move my face muscles, or bring about feelings for these beautiful people who had nothing to protect them from the dark Arab Muhammed Al-Awaj Bin Al-auja and direct descendant of the founder of Islam Muhammed. These Kurds of Sigéré were devout Muslims just like Muhammed Al-Awaj Bin Al-auja and his soldiers. I stood again and lifted the bike, drove through the ruins but did not see the woman who smelt of Kurdistan. Sinem. The woman who made the perfume Kurdistan. Her house had turned to rubble, and she must have been under with her four children, terracotta and alien writing and symbols. I parked the motorbike, touched and kissed pieces of terracotta that had flung from her home. I left the big bag of tea and sugar near her kochick under the burnt and torn large nut tree. All that Kurdish meat was food for the wolves and hyenas that night, and I did not want to stay. I left the ruins and climbed a hill with as much speed as I could muster, then slowed and went down sideways. I followed a few dry creeks and hills to the west. Grand Laal and Gulé's ballads rang in my ears. I did a big circle to the north avoiding any Arab army posts. Two hours and a half later I ended up on a high plateau, and below was a very steep dirt surface with a few rocks. In the distance there were a number of scattered Arab army outposts on hilltops, and behind me was the continuation of grand Mount Lin. I did not want to make noise or move too fast or give the Arabs any sign of my presence in that particular area, since they had knowledge of my presence, and most probably were waiting for me to appear. I parked

the motorbike behind a large boulder, and prowled my way around the wild oak trees on the edges of the plateau for a possible way down. The East German machine was not designed for the paths I had taken, and certainly no motorbike was designed to get down that plateau towards the hills below. I climbed a long wild oak branch that had another younger branch protruding from it and bounced myself against it till it broke. I fell safely onto the ground, although flipped and fell on my back after the fall. Feeling a few pricks on my back I stood up and rolled the bike over the branches and their twigs, tied it to the branches with an elastic rope that had hooks from the two ends. The load had become heavy but I shifted it slowly towards the edge, pushed from one side then moved to the other and pulled which almost drained my energy. Lying on my back after that great effort the smell of dead bodies and burnt flesh still singed my nostrils. Gulé sang 'Lé lé Kinné' and Laal howled 'SaidikooOo~ooOo!'. After all the effort and sweat and looking up at the skies to see the legendary large black crows that aged thousands of years circling above the village of Sigéré, I wondered if life was worth continuing. The ancient crows slowly glided down towards the village.

Nafal Kin

Nafal wept silently. I handed her tissue to wipe her face with. She told me about her husband and cousin who was uneducated and she married him under duress, although she was in love with someone else. Her husband worked as concrete mixer in the building industry, and was a stocky man with muscles. I gave her more tissue as she eased into constant weeping. I wanted to hug her but there were two many white Arab women and nurses who may have passed by us in the corridor. I said to her, "Why would someone who is so beautiful so sweet, sweeter than honey would want to put on makeup? The makeup itself should put on some of you on itself to taste better and look beautiful."

The most unusual words coming out of a Kurd's mouth made her stop even breathing. Nafal stopped crying because I broke her chain of thoughts and bitter memories. She was confused between what I said and what she said, and her lingering pain, then when it clicked. Nafal smiled with tears flying out of her sweet Kurdish eyes. She was crying and laughing at the same time. It was a very odd occurrence that bemused me. Even her mucus flew out of her nose, which I quickly wiped off with a tissue in spite her attempt to turn away. She was a muddle in her emotions. I kept handing her tissue after tissue to wipe off her tears of joy and pain together. Her nose too. I also picked up the wet tissue from her hands and carefully put them in my pocket that had sweets in them, various chocolates from the woman I called Chocolate. I took a nicely wrapped chocolate and shoved it in her hand, "Look, your tears turned to chocolate."

With confused green beauties she stopped laughing and crying, gazing at me and the chocolate. I took more chocolate out of my pocket, "Look, all of your tears turned to chocolate. The mucus laced tissue will turn to makeup, and I will sell for a thousand Dinars each."

Nafal laughed, her tears flying like a river, and I kept giving her tissue. She finally ran out of the corridor. Forgetting she was in hospital, all that beautiful grace sprinted away like a springbok.

Symbol of Occupation

Again it was early in the morning when the two tall and awesome Zébar women dressed in purple and pink butterfly Kurdish dresses came to the shop. They exuded of honey, wafted of flower scents. They were the royal Zébar family, wife and sister of Arad Zébar who happened to

be brother of the slim and tall Talaf or Talo Zébar. They stood by the storeroom door till I went and opened it for them. They entered with the grace of deer steps. A while later my boss Salah came followed by a number of dark Arab Baath Party members and secret service officers. Apart from my boss eleven of them came that day. I turned the lights off, turned the sign on the door to close, shut the door, then left towards the alley upon orders to bring lots of tea and sugar. Ten minutes later I came back to the shop, entered and locked the door, then handed the Arabs their tea, and went inside as the Royal Zébar women had taken their baggy pants off, and lied on their backs, revealing their perfectly round icy red buttocks with silky rainbow pubic, honeypot red apricot vaginas and pink starry anals. I put the rest of the tea on the floor, and left the room. Two dark Arab Baath Party members went into the room while carrying their cups of tea. My boss turned the radio's volume up, and the regale of Zébar moans and pleasurable pains rocketed rhythmically but at two different tones, a deep one from Arad Zébar's adorable wife, and a softer one from Arad Zébar's delectable sister. It was pure Zébar symphony performed by the Zébar royal women, and conducted by the dark Arabs' penises. A chubby dark Arab secret service officer and his horse like faced partner were telling the other dark Arab members of the Arab Baath Party about their latest feat. The chubby dark Arab said, "He was a mule. A really stubborn son of a whore. He would not say a thing. We tried everything with him. It took eight of us to hold him onto the ground. We stripped him naked, and fucked him. We tied him up with chains, both his hands and legs. The son of a whore head butted one of us and knocked him down like a log. Son of a bitch killed him. We beat him with tubes and steel rods, and broke his ribs. We fucked him every morning. Some of us mounted the arsehole more than once, but the dog wouldn't yield. We shoved a bicycle bar into his anal many times and took out lots of shit and blood. But the cunt wouldn't talk. We couldn't face him because he spat at us the motherfucker. We took his fingernails out, and he wouldn't cry, and he wouldn't tell us. We took his toenails, but the bastard was as stubborn as dumb as a rock. We broke his fingers, we broke his toes, and he would spit at us. We plucked his teeth out with pliers, and the son of a whore still spat at us. We drowned him in the toilet hole, and let him eat and drink our shit and the dogs' shit but he wouldn't tell us anything. Some fucking mule. We broke his arms; we smashed his face; we broke his legs, but he wouldn't talk the mother fucker."

One fat frog-eyed dark Arab interjected, "Did you try and cut his eyelids, or plug his eyes out? It worked many times with many of these donkeys' brothers I can tell you."

The chubby dark Arab said, "No. We wanted him to see what we were doing to him."

The first two dark Arabs came out of the storeroom and a second pair of dark Arabs went in to fill in the Zébar honour with their black seeds and restart the Zébar serenade from the mouths of wife and sister of Arad Zébar. The long faced dark Arab secret service officer said, "That dog had to succumb. He wasn't made of steel. I knew how to get to him and told him, 'I will fuck your mother and little sister,' but the dirty dog had the balls to spit at me. I chopped his balls with my knife and shoved them into his mouth. The dog spat his balls at me. I chopped his dick and put it in his mouth, the rotten dog bit at it and swung it and hit one of us in the face. We pierced his feet and wrists with hooks and hung him from chains facing the acid container. It was weird because we had broken his arms and legs. I kept telling the Kurdish dog what I was going to do to his little sister. The dirty bastard spat at me. I told the men, 'Let us give him the Russian work.' We lowered him bit by bit and slowly towards the acid container. The Kurdish dog kept yelling and abusing us and our great leader. The bastard. It took the chains six hours to lower him completely into the acid container and dissolve that Kurdish dog."

The second dark Arab couple left the storeroom and the third couple went in to hump the Zébar arses without seeding them, because they had already released their seeds in their pants listening to the Zébar royal family's songs of praise. The two Zébar queens blasted painful groans I thought they just died, but the moans went back to normal rhythm of Zébar ballads and sagas. The chubby dark Arab secret service continued their story, "That Kurdish dog was so beautiful, he was more beautiful than the two cunts inside."

His long horse faced dark Arab friend helped him, "He was tall and strong. I have never met someone as strong as him. The Kurdish dog."

The chubby dark Arab secret service continued, "His blonde hair was like gold, long silky gold the mother fucker. His eyes, his blue, more blue than the sky you just wanted to fuck him."

The tall horse faced dark Arab said, "Believe it or not he was an engineer the bastard. From the university of Nineveh. We never suspected him but professor Aabid pointed him out to us, and we picked him up from there."

I was standing behind these dark Arabs, but did not shake, was not shocked, and my heart did not stop. They were talking about Gavan Goy, son of big blonde Rewsh and brother of teenage Bay Boon. Gavan Goy was dissolved in liquid acid just like his legendary Peshmerge father being dissolved by the same dark Arabs with the same Russian help. Gavan Goy's utmost arrogance was a power added to his super human character and superb beauty. His utter defiance and arrogance would have melted if he had ever met Gulé of Nihél the young soprano of the village of Sigéré. If ever there was heaven, then they had met because they were match for each other.

After the Arabs left with my boss Salah the wife and sister of Arad Zébar the government official, and brother of the head of Kurdish militia known as Chata, Talo Zébar who destroyed Kurdish villages and burnt them for the Arabs, came out of the storeroom out of sort, walking like penguins as the Zébar honour between their white soft thighs was tenderly sore. I could have given them the Wolf Saliva, but I did not, and I was not going to if their vaginas were torn to shreds. They picked up the shoe box full of Arab money and which had the photos of the dark Arab Muhammed Al-Awaj Bin Al-auja and direct descendant of the founder of Islam Muhammed. I went to the storeroom and picked up the blood stained tissues and cotton from the two prayer carpets. That time there was a lot of blood spilt by the Zébar tribe to free their land from the Arabs. All of it came out of their women's vaginas. Oh Gavan Goy, God of the Kurds where are you now. Where are your pieces that were not dissolved in the Arab acid. Gavan Goy, God of the Kurds was my friend at university, he was my childhood friend, and he was never a member of the Internal Organization or Peshmerge. However, they still gave him the intrinsic and cultural muslim Arab treatment.

Nesreen

I laid the plate down and left the storeroom. Images of the voluptuous body moving up and down, her massive breasts with firm flushed nipples dancing away and towards her synchronized breathing chest, while talking and giggling were an art form of a professional exotic dancer. Her long dark hair stroked his face as her head danced right and left. I hit the register counter with my pelvis because I did not see it, and I nearly screamed from the pain. I sat down in the chair behind the counter's register. I thought I had dislocated my hip, or broke it to pieces from the impact. I was in so much pain, I felt numb. Later I recovered from the pain and went to serve my customers. Half an hour later, the blonde husband of Salah's sister left the storeroom, and

the shop without looking back. The Kurdish woman came out dressed in her blue jeans and red blouse. She came out and smiled at me, and immediately said in Kurdish, "Thank you. I believe the tight fisted Muslawee did not pay for the tea, am I right?"

I nodded. She took a bundle of money from her bag and gave me ten Dinars, my wage for the day, "This is for the tea, and keep the rest."

She put the money in my hand and bent my fingers over it, then released it. While she obviously had sweet Kurdish eyes, they did not resemble the Zébar women's almond shaped eyes. Hers were rounder, bigger and blue, as blue as the sea. Her hair was dark as the moonless night. She took out large dark glasses from her bag and put them on, then blew a kiss at me, and left with a big smile on her face.

A month or so later the voluptuous Kurdish woman wearing blue jeans came, took her large dark glasses off inside the shop, and browsed through the sections. She picked up seven pairs of lacy lingerie, three colourful shirts, five pairs of shoes, and a pair of jeans. She came to the counter and asked, "Is there a change room I can try all of these?"

There were too many items on her arms. I pointed at the storeroom, "You better go there because it will take you a long time to try them all."

She walked towards the storeroom door, then turned back, "What is your name?" I told her. She smiled and said, "I am Nesreen. My real name. But if anyone else asks you my name, it is Sabha."

It hit me that she chose the name of the mother of president Muhammed Al-Awaj Bin Al-Auja for her profession. So whoever was fucking her, was fucking the president's mother, the esteemed Arab prostitute Sabha. Sabha went to the storeroom, while I sold a pair of shoes to a white Arab woman who did not seem to want to purchase anything, but she often came, browsed and left. On that occasion I said to myself, tease her. I walked by her and threw a comment, "You cannot afford it."

She was angry and turned to me, "What do you mean by I can't afford it. I can, and I can afford two. Take them out for me, these ones."

I took the pair of shoes out, and handed them to her. She tried them, and they were perfect, although she was big. She was still agitated at my accusations. She strode towards the counter and slammed the money on it, "Just because I don't wear good clothes it doesn't mean I can't afford it. I can afford it. I have a lot of money."

I put the pair of shoes in the bag and wished her well. As I was silently chuckling at her fuming departure, Nesreen called my name from the partially open storeroom door. I went in there, and there she stood in front of the long vertical mirror wearing a pair of red shoes. She was looking at herself in the mirror, then turned to me. Her full of life body that looked like snowy hills spattered with pink red blood, bulging massive breasts with hard yet soft pink red nipples, and fat lip vagina surrounded by silken red pubic under the lacy underwear sent a warm chill through me. She turned around full circle. Her round snowy buttocks were inviting for love. Her thick thighs were smooth as and curvy as the bottom part trunks of large Aspen trees of upper north Nineveh and beyond. I had passed my erection state inside my quadruple layered socks. She smiled and said, "Do they look good on me?"

My voice was sort of hoarse or choked as my muscle chests were tense, my groins were extremely warm and wet but I managed to say, "You are very beautiful with or without." She smiled, opened her arms and said, "Come to Nesreen's chest Shirein."

Shirein was what Kurdish women called young men if they did not know their names, or even if they did, they still called them Shirein which meant sweet. Barely able to walk I turned around and left the storeroom with shaky legs. A customer called me for help. I could not even talk, I signaled I would be with her in a minute, while I went and sat down in the chair and busied myself with the register arbitrarily just so as to get my breath back and perhaps I could stand on my legs without shaking. So Nesreen was a red head but dyed her hair pitch black for Sabha's sake. After probably an hour Nesreen came out dressed in the new jeans and new red pair of shoes, while the rest of the items were in her hands including her old bra and underwear. She grinned and said, "I finished. I want to take them all. How much?"

I showed her a note with the figures minus the discount. I said, "Because you bought a lot of items one pair of shoes is for free."

Nesreen took a big bundle of money from her bag and counted, while I filled a number of plastic bags with her purchases. I also put her worn bra and underwear in a separate bag, and her old shoes in another separate bag. She paid me the correct amount of money without the discount then added another ten Dinars, and said, "This is for you."

I pushed it back and told her, "You already gave me a lot last time. Take this one too, you must have a discount."

The smile never left her bright as the snowfields of Kurdistan's face. I knew women like her received a lot of attention and demeaning comments from almost everyone, but it was not my habit or intention. I only saw her beauty regardless of her profession. Nesreen returned the discount money, took out another ten dinars and added it to the first one forcibly, and shoved them in my shirt pocket. When I tried to prevent her she grabbed my hand with a swift grip and squeezed, then pulled it towards herself. I pulled it with all my might. Nesreen giggled, ran her tongue over her lips, then looked into the bags and took out her old and worn underwear, and gave it to me, "Here take it and have sweet dreams of me when you are awake or when are asleep Shirein."

Her Kurdish was music, a bit thicker than our Mezour accent, but sweet. My mind was telling me it knew the accent and had heard it but it was in the far distance, and could not distinguish it or give it a name, and I did not dare ask her anything or talk to her about anything. I may have had my bit of reservations about her profession, but did not degrade her, just felt sorry and sorrow. I elegantly folded her underwear and put it back in its bag. It felt alive and warm as if I was folding her flesh that dropped out of her buttocks in the shape of underwear. Nesreen said, "Why don't you take it? If you don't like it you can sell it to any rich Arab, just tell them it is Sebha's underwear and you get more than two thousand Dinars for it. Or you can go to the Car salesmen and they would give you a car in exchange. Trust me Shirein."

Nafal Kin bee

It was a very long time not seeing Nafal, a very painful period of not hearing her voice, smelling her, or even better, feel her touch. Over a month had passed when Nafal came to the shop. She went to the counter and waited, while I was busy with a number of customers. I was happy to see her. I missed her badly. It was she who made me an expert on women and women's vaginas, periods, discharges, habits and eccentricities. We were soul mates. I ached to see her, and there she was standing at the counter waiting patiently. Well rather she was examining whatever treasures I had inside the counter. I was so happy to see her I thought about getting rid of my customers and leap towards her and hug her so tight, squeeze the life out of her, although I

could not, and I refrained. She could read that. While she left the counter to the underwear section, my heart followed her before my eyes. I finished with my customers and strode towards her, and waited for her to turn to me. She did it slowly but for me it was like ages. Even without smiling her warm sweet eyes were a delight to see, they were a sea of compassion, she said, “Happy to see me?”

I could not say it. She stroked my arm, “How is my Shirein?”

Full of breath, “I am alive when I see you. What happened to Nafal Kin?”

Nafal Kin said, “I was in hospital bed for a day before transferring myself to home for a peace of mind and body. But I didn’t like what you did when you came over. You didn’t even bother to come and see me in my bed. You could have just said hello. You didn’t ask about me. The whole time I could hear you prattle with my uncle’s wife. What were you talking about?”

“About you.”

Nafal Kin asked, “What?”

I smelt her, “Hoshyar beat you up and perhaps his mother and sisters were outside watching, and they did not intervene.”

Nafal kept silent, and there were dark clouds passing by her sweet Kurdish eyes. I said, “They even left you there perhaps to die, while they went to a wedding and danced their legs out.”

Nafal kept gazing at me, but one of the underwear pairs which she had picked up fell off her hands. I bent, picked it up, kissed it, and gave it to her, “He went to the wedding too? He bashed you senseless and went and enjoyed himself?”

Nafal Kin stuffed the items in her bag, and was about to leave. I touched her arm. Nafal stopped without looking at me. She whispered and I could barely hear her, “The only reason I come here often is not to buy items from you but to see you, and enjoy a meaningful chat with you.”

Nafal Kin turned, gazed at me and audibly said, “But you spoil it for me. You ruin it for me. What do you want?”

“Nafal Kin, why don’t you run away from your husband and his family? I can help you.”

She covered her face with a hand breathing heavily. I touched her arm. She dropped her arm and shoved my hand away, “What do you want?”

I nearly wept as I could not speak anymore. She took a deep breath and released a long exhale that felt as if it were the breeze of the Mezour valleys straight into my face then walked away from me, and I thought she was leaving the shop. I ran around a section to block her path but she turned to the couch, while looking at my action. Nafal Kin sat on the couch, and I strode towards her. I faced her standing, “How sick were you?”

She looked at a few customers trying garments. I went and helped the customers, shut the door, and got rid of the last ones, then returned and sat next to her. Nafal Kin said, “I had an abortion, and lost my child. It has been dead inside me for many months. The bad beating I had from Hoshyar may have killed the fetus in my womb, and I didn’t know till I started bleeding. I thought I had endometriosis down there but it wasn’t. I had the abortion under anesthetics but I could still hear my boss doctor Allawee joke about my vagina and telling his colleagues how elastic it was, Asian rubber he called it, and this and that without using medical terms. He was very rude, very insensitive because I was working for him, and now I was examined and operated on by him. I wished I was dead as he put his hand inside me, which he shouldn’t. You only use instruments to chop the fetus to pieces and use clamps to take the pieces out, but he also used his forearm. I felt it all. I felt every thing he did to me. I think I died hundreds of times. Even the hospital’s general manager came to see me lying there on the operating theatre with a number of other Arab doctors and technicians. They all came to see the Kurdish nurse’s vagina.

I thought I had better be at home rather than being checked on by Doctor Allawee and many other Arabs. I had complications and no amount of injections of Penicillin or Valium were enough to stop the bleeding and pain associated with it. No cream I tried was any good. I sent for the Wolf Saliva as a last resort. After you left I applied it to my vagina. I felt it sticking to the walls and creeping around and over its surface like a living thing.”

Nafal Kin demonstrated with two digits from the right hand into the palm of the left hand, “It stretched and went into where the injuries were, and around the walls. It worked its way to stop the bleeding. It cooled down the heat generated by the wounds inflicted by the dead fetus and later doctor Allawee. Before you turned up I could not get up for five days. I used to shit in a utensil in my bed, but the girls in the house refused to take it away. I requested a bucket, and emptied the utensil I used into it. My room stank of my shit. I was unhygienic.”

I managed to say, “So it was good that I did not come into your room and say hello after all.” Nafal Kin had a suffocated bittersweet short chuckle and a soft hit on the very spot she had done before. I stood up fearing she would hit me again, but she stood up with me. I waved my nose in front of her face with my eyes shot, “You always smell of Kurdistan.”

Nafal Kin had that long sweet and sad Kurdish gaze into my eyes when I opened them. She then slowly stretched her right arm and bent my head and buried it in her chest, then stuck her face to the back of my head, and wept silently. She dropped her bag, raised my head, and shoved it against her shoulder, and squeezed me to the point of suffocation. Her big white, thick, pointy bra pressed hard against my chest. But she breathed loudly, then whispered in my ear, “Aaaah, if it were a different life Shirein.”

My breathing returned after I nearly fainted when she loosened her hug a bit and whispered again, “I will go to the Barwar Jér region and look for my mother and sister. When I find them I will bring them here. I will give you my sister to marry, all right?”

Nafal Kin pushed me away, and I breathed then nodded but then my expressions changed to concern, glanced to the window over the sections then back at her, “Nafal Kin, I am afraid the Barwar Jér region falls into the forbidden areas and no one is able to go in or out without being killed by the Arabs.”

She begged, “But I must see them.”

Bay Boon’s sport

Mother Rewsh came late Thursday to pick up her work. I picked up the note from the counter and started explaining the alterations on each item, most of which were familiar, but one of them were five pairs of the same size for a woman who had different size of breasts, the left was larger than the right. I asked mother if she could pad the right cup in the five pairs. Mother Rewsh said, “Hmmm. And how much padding do you want me to put son, from the top, from the bottom. I need to see the breast to decide how it is going to end, if not for balance for good looks son.”

Oh talking to my mother about such intimate things was extraordinary. Mother Rewsh asked, “Have you seen it, or touched it Shirein?”

I went blank. Even if I did I was not going to tell mother. She added, “Did you get a good look? For example was it tilted this way, that way, and if you noticed where her nipple was in comparison to her other nipple?”

While talking to Nafal about anything and everything was normal because she was a nurse, talking to mother Rewsh was a bit reserved, in spite her teasing me at times. She said, "Son, get a good look before you tell me do this or that. I am not taking it this time. There are five of them and I don't want to ruin the lot. They cost you money."

I nodded. Rewsh said, "If she let you, have a squeeze."

I blushed, but that was her way of teasing me for rejecting many of her offers to hook me with girls who were her clients. Rewsh wanted me to appreciate the woman's body, and think of it as pleasure, but my mind was not set up for that purpose in life, and it did not even click with me most of the time. Rewsh said, "Son, about Bay Boon. I don't want her to play sport anymore."

Relieved she changed the subject I asked, "Why Rewsh?"

She pulled a sigh, "People are noticing. She is attracting eyes. I don't mind the Kurds, but when she competes she competes against Arabs in other schools, and Arabs see her."

It struck me the idea of being leered at by the Arabs, and who knew what they would do. Bay Boon was a gazelle, a tall daisy. Mother Rewsh said, "She is competing tomorrow at the main stadium, and I don't want her to go. When I opened the subject with her she nearly ate my head. Do you want to come and see her son?"

I arrived at mother Rewsh's before her as she took the bus. I went into the house, and knocked. Bay Boon opened the door, and she immediately bombarded me with her complaint. She said, "I want to compete. I promise I will beat them all. I will even give them head start and will still beat them. I will get the first medal. You come and see me how I run."

I held her hand and walked her to the wall and we both sat on the mattress on the floor. I said, "Kin Kin."

She said, "No Kin Kin. I am Bay Boon."

I said, "Bay Boon Kin Kin."

She grunted. I said, "I am sure you will beat all of them. Not just the girls, but the boys too. I know you are good, you are better than good."

Mother Rewsh came in and sat next to her machine. There was that aggressive look from Bay Boon towards her mother. I said, "Do you know what I imagined you would do? I imagined you competing in the Olympics, and stand side by side with the best sprinters in the world. The whole world, people of planet earth watching you. Five continents full of people of all shapes, sizes, colours and languages will look at Bay Boon, cheer her and call their children Bay Boon. I am even sure you can beat the East German girls. You are more skilled and powerful than they would ever be. You will win the gold medal, and the whole world will stand up for you. The whole world will sing the Arab anthem in Arabic, and you will lift the Arab flag, and they will lift the Arab flag, and they will say an Arab girl won the Olympics. The first Arab girl to win gold in the Olympics."

Bay Boon was absolutely puzzled. She said, "But if I won. Why would they give the medal to an Arab girl?"

"Because they will consider you an Arab girl. You."

Bay Boon said, "But I am Kurd."

"There is no such a thing as Kurd. We do not exist, not in our own country, or abroad in the foreign lands. They say you are an Arab."

Bay Boon still could not digest what I said. She said, "But they can't call me an Arab when I am Kurd."

"Well, yes they can. The Arabs rule this country. In which language do you study at school?"

Bay Boon said, "Arabic, but."

"There is no but. You study Arabic, you belong to an Arab country. They will say she is an Arab, and if you say you are a Kurd, they will hurt you."

Bay Boon was puzzled even further, "Why? I did not do anything. I did not hurt anyone."

"When you study in Kurdish language, the people who send you abroad are Kurds, and they raise the Kurdish flag, they will say she is a Kurd, and you are allowed to speak in Kurdish, and they will sing the Kurdish song for you in the Olympics."

Innocent Bay Boon questioned, "And when will I do that?"

I thought I was going through circles with that teenager. I said, "Do you remember the day you came to the shop?"

Bay Boon said, "Yes."

"What did mother Rewsh do when she took you out of the shop and got you into the taxi?"

Bay Boon said, "She covered my head and would not let me see the street where people watched me."

"That is true. They were men. Arab men, and they were there to steal you, and take you away from your mother, and make you disappear like Gavan."

Bay Boon asked, "But why?"

"Have you seen the cat eat the mouse?"

Bay Boon said, "Yes, when she is hungry."

"The Arabs are hungry too. They are Awoooka. They eat Kurds. You are a Kurd, they will eat you."

Bay Boon had the slightest idea that being eaten was not a good prospect. Although scaring her in that fashion was odd, the Arabs would not eat her. They were not cats. They were Arabs. They were worse than cats eating mice. Cats ate because they were hungry, and mice were their food. The Arabs were not hungry for food. While she was thinking about this, mother Rewsh said she will make dinner. Bay Boon said, "So am I going to the races tomorrow or not?"

"Well, what do you think I have been talking about since I arrived?"

Bay Boon said, "I know mother doesn't want me to go, but I want to. How about you?"

As smart as she were in math and other subjects at school; as skilled and athletic as she were that girl, she did not get the message, or her young mind refused to take it on board. Her teenage desire to compete and be herself was very strong, and no amount of catastrophes were enough to dissuade her. That was not cartoon she sometimes watched at her friend's house in the pretext of studying. I did not want to go back and tell her all what I had already told her, "I do not wish you to compete anymore."

Bay Boon said, "But I want to go."

I nearly yelled at mother Rewsh to come and help me. I said, "How much do you love mother Rewsh?"

Bay Boon said, "A lot."

"How much do you love me?"

Bay Boon thought and thought, "Not as much as mother Rewsh."

"Do you think we want the good or the bad for you?"

Bay Boon said, "But I said it. Don't you have brains in here?"

Bay Boon poked my head with her finger. I said, "No."

In spite the stress she was going through trying to convince me with her desires Bay Boon laughed, "Really?"

Gavan

Bay Boon and myself passed three checkpoints including the spot where Gavan jumped off the military Gaz 62 truck, and waited for me at the intersection of Sheikhan road and river Khoh Sar waterfalls. Gavan would then paddle us back to Nineveh. At every Arab checkpoint he claimed we were from a village nearby, which sometimes he made up, names of villages that did not exist, and wanted to buy a pan from the city. He loved to say the word qazan which meant deep pan. Apart from his famous sport's cry: "Hatta ta!" he would say, "Do you want me to hit you on the head with the pan?"

Mother Rewsh would often cook us Kurdish cuisine like Eprakh or Kottil of some kind. We would take it with us to Nineveh's Eucalyptus forest, and finish it at our camp with a few other cuisines each one of us six friends would bring. After finishing the pan, most of which was raided by Gavan himself, he loved food and ate a lot, he would go and wash the dishes on the riverbank. Meanwhile we stood behind him and whispered wicked comments about him, about his long legs, his long arms, his long hair, long this and long that, a list of longs, or Shérko would go much further than all of us and say he even has a long dick. Although we whispered he always heard us, and would stand up with the pan in hand, "Do you want me to hit you on the head with the pan?"

Waraz would respond, "What are you, panhead?"

The chase started and we scattered in different directions to confuse him, and he would stop not knowing which one of us he would chase. We knew if Gavan chased one of us he would catch him no matter how fast and how early we had run away from him. It was often Zeidan who would be caught because he was the shortest among us and the heaviest. Watching him run away from Gavan, while Gavan catching up with him, running beside him and pleasantly asking him to stop was the highlight of the run. Gavan would grab hold of Zeidan's arm, while Zeidan protected his head with the other arm. Gavan would lift the pan up and threaten, "Do you want me to hit you on the head with the pan?"

If it was not Rojan who was caught he would give us the signal to attack. It was then that we advanced and threw Gavan with leftover food or clumps of dirt and grass, or mud from every direction. Once Gavan succumbed and cowered down protecting his face and head with the pan, one of us would pull the pan off his hand and yell at him, "Do you want me to hit you on the head with the pan?"

We would then carry him and throw him into the river, "Hatta Ta!"

That was how we treated our volleyball captain. But then Gavan was not an easy person to give up. He would chase Rojan for as much as Rojan had the capacity to run, grab Rojan, lift him over his head, bring him back to the riverbank and threaten to throw him into the water, knowing Rojan never liked to swim and did not even know how to swim, and refused to let us teach him swimming. Terrified Rojan would beg, "I am your servant put me down Gavan. Don't do it Gavan. You know I could drown. I am your servant, you wouldn't want me to die."

Gavan would forgive him, but at times he would throw Rojan into the Du Jila River then jump after him and take Rojan out breathless, coughing and had swallowed water. We could have saved Rojan but we enjoyed these moments and laughed at Gavan carrying Rojan over his head, and threatening to throw him into the river, and pretending to forgive him then threatening to throw him, then pretending to forgive him repeatedly, while Rojan was distressed and in panic mode. With all that in mind Rojan never gave up giving us the signal to attack Gavan after each pan threat to one of us.

Whiteland

I was still pointing the finger at her, “Yes, your golden eyes. When we were young you said: When I grow up I want to marry him. Me.”

The laughter went dead and the looks became serious, all the young women waited for her answer. After much thought and mulling of ideas she said, “Yes, I remember that.”

She paused, glared at me, swept looks with the other girls, then back to me, “It wasn’t me. It was my sister Ravand. She married Waissy. Do you know Waissy?”

Puzzled I answered, “No.”

The golden-eyed young woman said, “The boy who hit you with the ball and sent you to fairyland. Ravand is in Iran now, and Waissy is.”

She beckoned to the north. I understood he was Peshmerge. The golden eyed then said, “We all have fiancés.”

She beckoned north again. That was a blow to my ego and my desires. All of them, not a single one of them was available for me, not one syrup, not even a trickle? Seeing my stunned face the golden eyed young syrup said, “You are disappointed I know. Even if we did not have fiancés we would not think of you. Even if you were the last man on earth, we would not bother with you. This is life, so take it as it is.”

I may have heard her teeth grind, and facial features becoming tense and bitter. She breathed then added, “Maybe if you were here before Ravand had gone you might have had a chance with her, because she always asked about you. But you never showed up. We never heard about you or from you. You can only blame yourself. We are all taken.”

The ten Mezour syrups had lovers of their own, and each lover was ten times if not more better than me, stronger than me, handsomer than me, far more superior than me. These very tasty syrup Mezour young women would not exchange one single strand of hair from their lovers’ heads with my whole body. Their men were supreme creatures. They were Peshmerge.

It turned out one of the women sitting with aunt Perie was Ravand’s mother. They were all listening, and came and sat behind me. Ravand’s mother hugged me from behind and gave me a kiss on the cheek. She may have said something but I could not remember what she said. I had lost power in my legs and arms too. I wanted to get up and distance myself but I was spent. It nearly came to the point where the white curtains were drawn over my face and everything went white. White everywhere with no shadows. It was white darkness where you could not see a thing but white. I went blind in a white white Whiteland. I remembered Waissy. He was the cheeky boy among the lot. He had a cheqok, a folding knife which he played with almost all the time without injuring himself or anybody. He would swing it and twirl it and throw it in the air and catch it like he was playing with a paper ball. When the boys asked me if they could keep the photos of football greats I gave them all up, and they could not hide their pleasure. Waissy although liked to have Cruyff’s photo, one of Perie’s sons took it, he did not mind taking Yashin’s. Waissy was a very skilled football player. He was their goal scorer, and the boy with magical hands and feet. He dribbled and left the defense rolling on the ground behind him and faced the goal, then the easy part where he scored goals. They asked me to play and I wanted to play as a striker because I dribbled just as good as Waissy and I showed them, but they insisted I went to the goal and became goalkeeper. That was the norm to give the goalkeeping task to the little ones, as they never felt the goalkeeper to be an important part of the game, and they hated

to be standing there only to be made fun of and a goal scored against them. Waissy was with the opposition, and all his shots were deflected by me. I suffered a lot from his missile balls, my small hands and arms were sore. My shoulders were aching. But I soldiered on. I was in so much pain but refused to cry. Waissy could not score in the first half of the game, which drove him crazy. He would dribble all the way to the box and to protect myself from his missile, I ran towards him, and stole the ball with a quick and clever foot touch. I was a striker after all. He tried to run me over or step on me at times but the other boys warned him not to. Waissy did swear on a few occasions but I did not care. I knew he could not score with me. In the second half he dribbled all the way to the goal area then dived and rolled on the ground pretending to have been tripped, and his foot was twisted. The boys objected to his antics and accused him of faking it. They awarded him the penalty anyway. Waissy may have been able to score from the penalty area if he wanted to but there were other things in his head. Revenge from the humiliation of a little kid standing in his way and frustrating him was on the horizon. I was only ten years old, and he was around sixteen. Eventhough I predicted he might score from the penalty spot I still stretched my arms wide and prepared myself to jump to either corner of the goal post to save it. Waissy left a long ground between him and the ball then sprinted forward. My heart was thumping so fast and hard, I felt I was going to faint. He shot the ball directly towards me with such force and power that I did not have time to put my hands in front of me, and even if I did my arms would have broken. The ball hit me straight in the forehead, but not my face to my luck. If it ever went into my face, my face would have gone inside my skull, and I would be dead. If I had survived the impact, my face would have stayed inside my skull like a bowl, and Kurds would have called me bowl face, or frying pan face. Even worse, they would not bother saying it but they would say: "How about an omelet," or: "Would you like a frying chicken," or: "Do you want your potatoes simmered red?"

Kurds often called each other not by name but by such abnormalities in the body and especially in the face. I only saw white, and nothing but white. While I was in fairyland I could hear the commotion around me, and even felt being carried away, touched and massaged and wet cloths running over my face, and many people talking to each other, and talking to me but I had no response. I was in white, Whiteland. I remember hearing shouts and screams. Waissy's father had grabbed Waissy swearing at him and bashing the devil out of him. I could hear Waissy's screams for mercy. His mother was begging and trying to get Waissy out of his father's punishing arms and legs. I remember hearing Ravand crying and consoled by her father. Ravand kept asking, "Is he dead mother?"

What a life, what a turn of events, Ravand ended up marrying the very man who killed her future husband. I eventually woke up in a woman's arms lying in her lap. She was telling me a story when I was in the white.

"Hata Ta"

Feeding Nafal Kin and blackmailing her to eat and come back to life through massaging her feet, kissing her hands, and treating her like a baby and God may have not been enough. Her view of Kurdish men was very low in spite me reminding her of her brother, her lover, and her father all of who were Peshmerge, who fought to free their land from the occupying Muslim Arabs. To Nafal Kin I was all of them and a lot more. In our long silent meetings on that coach at the shop, I sometimes talked about our band of brothers, our mischief, games and adventures. I wanted to

instill in her that not all the beautiful men were dead as she imagined in her brother, lover and father. There were others who were alive and I offered to take her to their homes and meet them. She did not respond, except I knew she listened and may have eagerly wanted to listen to my stories about them, but refused to acknowledge it. If Nafal Kin did not like what she heard she would have given me a sign, a withering look, a glare, a pinch or told me to shut up. I wanted Nafal Kin to have faith in Kurdish men, not all of them were Donkey's Brother. I also told her about the semi final volleyball game where our water was poisoned, we may have drunk toilet water, just a bit, poured into our clean water bucket, contaminated it and we were sick. I was very sick. Zeidan, Gavan and Shérko were less sick than me but were still not fine. Rojan and Waraz did not feel it because their immune system was strong. We played, and I vomited twice during the game. Only excessive soft fizzy drinks lasted me the game. We nearly lost, and it came to the wire when both Rojan and Waraz helped Gavan by yelling at him: "Hata ta!" The cries charged Gavan, and he yelled at the opponents from the suburb of Gula: "Hata ta!" With every ball he landed on their court, the cry came loud. Gavan won us the game when I nearly blew up our chances, because I could hardly return a ball, and most of the points were against me. It was so bad the opposition's ball hit me in the head, my face, my chest and stomach without being able to respond at the right time. The opposition knew I was the weak point and took advantage. I drank someone's shit. It took me three days to get over the white Arab bacteria through vomits, and constant stomach cleaning by drinking Ava Mast: a mix of yogurt, water and salt. We decided to only have soft drinks during the game, and we must open the bottles ourselves and not drink from an open bottle. It was the right call, but the left call came from our manager Shérko. We did not have a court or club but hired courts from other clubs we had demolished. The final game for the State's Champion trophy was against Esood Al-Arab, a professional club with immense resources of the Arab Baath Party. It was a black Arab club with trainers, gym, swimming pool, baths, recovery room, massage room and restaurant. Shérko had been betting on our win with the money he saved from our many Olympic games on the Kany Kibreet sands, and in the river Du Jila. That year we were on a high of becoming very rich as we betted on our wins. We did not fear any team as long as we had Gavan as captain and Shérko as manager. With every win our money tripled and quadrupled and grew larger and larger till we thought that was it, we cracked the roof of poverty and we were going to play with money our way, the band of brother's way. Shérko put all the money we won into the final game too. We could have bought an entire suburb with everything in it including properties, cars, trucks and factories. With the prospect of becoming financially powerful, unlike typical Kurds we did not lose sight of our brotherhood. We did not discuss the money, only the games ahead. We left the money to Shérko for his brilliant mind. We played Esood Al-Arab many times before and steam rolled them. Among Shérko's punters were the governor of Nineveh, the heads of secret service, police, and other security services, members of the Arab Baath Party, rich white Arabs, rich Kurds, high ranking army officers. They paid big money. For the final game many of them punted on the opposition, although we were absolutely certain of wiping them with the court. Still there was money from Kurdish and white Arab businessmen who bet on our team, which we called Kíví. Wild. The night before the game Shérko was called to a meeting with high profile members of the Arab Baath Party at their Nineveh headquarters. They told him point blank, "Tomorrow's game you lose." Shérko had known it was a serious business when he was ordered to forfeit the game, and tried to get something out of it since he was our cool-headed businessman. Shérko wanted at least his money back from the betting, but they laughed at him. Shérko requested half the money but they

shook their heads. He asked for a few thousands of Dinars but they kept shaking their heads. One of the black Arabs lost patience with Shérko, pulled his pistol out of his belt, and was followed by the rest, all of them pulled their pistols' safety levers, and pointed them at Shérko. They called him Donkey's Brother. They threatened to rape his mother and sisters Rangeen and Vaheen in front of him then rape and kill him. They also told him if the Kíví forfeited the game they will let us live. None of us had a home phone, and while we slept fine that night Shérko who could not, was in a race against time. No soft drinks were going to save us from the inevitable. That night Shérko hired a taxi where he went knocking on the doors of all the people who bet on our win to bet on the Arab team, and recoup their money, but no one had enough money to waste on lending him money to recoup our money. He was sworn at, spat at and was threatened with beatings, and being shot like a dog when he told them what was going to happen. Shérko saved many from becoming bankrupt like us. He did not sleep that night. The dread of losing all our money, the horror of being humiliated by an Arab team we would have quashed like a bug, and loss of faith in us and Shérko was too much to bear. The bet was still on to the punters' luck. As for us the bet on us was dead, and the punters who were bigger than Shérko would have sucked his blood if they knew what he did that night. They had suspicions when punters changed sides, but Shérko provided them with a legitimate excuse, I was still very sick and was certain to bring the team down. We went to the sporting center in the suburb of Gula, the same court where we smashed Gula team a week earlier. We were surprised Shérko had not come with Zeidan. I had delivered Gavan then went to the transport depot and brought Waraz and Rojan who had come from the city of Duhok. I drove the bike to Shérko's house in the distant suburb of Zangil only for his mother to tell me he was asleep. I woke up the wreckage of Shérko who told me what happened apologizing profusely. He had a quick breakfast and we headed to the suburb of Gula and its sporting club and court. Gavan was furious, he said he will personally go and strangle the Arabs in their bedrooms. We knew he could do it to a few but not all of them, and that would be our end with our families. We were not a militant group, but engineers who believed enlightening our people was the key to liberate them from the Arab occupation. We also thought sport was one of the gates into the hearts and minds of our Kurdish people. We had a following who cheered us, especially Gavan. He was on their tongues. He was the Kurds' hero. The Big Fish. Our supporters yelled, "Hata Ta!" The cries of the spectators came blasting with him at every ball he landed on the opposition's court. There were very few girls coming to the games, but there were tens of thousands of them waiting for the news from the braves who attended the games. Gavan scored every time he touched the ball, but all of us helped the opposition, especially me. Gavan knew we were helping the opposition. He yelled and rallied us to play and not let our fear overcome us, mostly to protect Shérko's scheme to save our punters who changed sides for the upcoming year. We deliberately trailed the Arab team by a few points to make it believable. Gavan spent most of his time watching the opposition's habits on the court if he did not have the ball. When he had it he did not target the court floor but their faces, "Hata Ta!"

Toté

Toté warned me not to go there, but I was determined. I left my bike at the bottom of the jagged hill, which was topped by the leopard's rock, and climbed up towards the distant Jéniik way above that hill, up the mountain. The more I climbed the more rugged the path became where I had to climb big rocks, and tricky footpaths alongside dangerous cliffs. I had to grab hold of tree

branches protruding from the cliff to continue on the narrowing path, which climbed further and further on the side of the cliff. I thought I finished the cliff only to find myself stranded with the footpath being either none existent or too narrow to be called footpath. Toté had told me she had not been there for fifteen years, so she had not seen her parents for that long and she did not know if they were still alive. I thought surely there must be a better way to reach the Jéniik above. I decided to climb the cliff instead of continuing on the footpath, which I did not trust anymore. Although Toté had warned me not to deviate from my path, I still climbed and when I was tired I rode the branch of a tree and waited for my energy to reload, muscles to take a break, and my lungs to calm down. After seven breaks and looking at the valleys below, and the distant Mezour villages all of which were abandoned for protection from flying helicopters and fighter jets, I wondered where heaven would be other than where I were. I looked to the side and saw an eagle's nest with small fluffy chooks. I wished I could touch them or get closer to have a better view, but the nest was hard if not impossible to reach, unless I dangled myself from a rope from the top of the mountain. I would have been in trouble if the eagle was around. Soaking up the splendour of the Mezour mountains and valleys I climbed up the cliff to the top, where the land became a bit plain but steep. I helped myself clinging to the wild oak tree branches till I reached an almost flat land with an abundance of flowers, butterflies, dragonflies, and many insects buzzing around like planet earth when it was in its beginning, or rather heaven. Among the many spectacular looking birds of paradise I recognized the Rashavok with long tentacles on the sides of its long black tail. I sat in the grasses and flowers waving some insects off me, and wondering if it was a dream or reality me being there at that moment. A large black bird which was larger than the Rashavok with blue patches under its wings and a very long and wide tail, and two tentacles longer than the tail flew passed me almost gliding and carrying wild fruit in its beak. I sweated a lot in my climb and had become very thirsty. I stood up and went looking for water to replenish my body. Toté had told me about springs at the end of the cliff footpath, above the Jéniik, and a creek through the Jéniik and below, but I had climbed the cliff and was not climbing down for the water. There were no instructions about the location I was in. After the cliff footpath I was to follow the creek up, but I was faraway in that piece of ancient earth. I heard a sound and when I looked there was a sleek gazelle jumping in the grass and fading among the trees. Toté had told me if I saw gazelles or elk then there were hyenas, wolves and leopards, but what was I going to do if we met. I neglected my search for water and decided to follow the outlines of the Jéniik ahead of me. I was going to find the creek and that would have been my thirst quencher. But the trees were getting thicker and thicker the more I climbed towards the Jéniik above. Upon climbing a steep ground I stumbled upon a group of wolves. They were playing, wrestling and licking each other when everything stopped still, and they all looked at me. I stared at them too, not out of curiosity, but out of sheer amazement, disbelief, and I was not sure what else. I was not scared as much as I was surprised to see them so easily. They were very beautiful shiny red. I was exhausted, thirsty and in their territory. Easy and good for them self delivered fast food. I did not have a weapon on me apart from my pocketknife. It would have been useless against the wolves' fangs. Toté warned me not to get bitten, because one bite was enough to kill me. Wolf saliva was deadly to pray but drugs for their own wounds. Climb a tree, Toté had told me, if I could not find another elevation such as a cliff face or large rock. I climbed a tree when they moved to circle me. Self preservation made me climb the tree like a cat, fast and accurate. It was a black and purple fig tree. The wolves had plenty of time to wait surrounding the tree, but I did not have that time. I was thirsty and hungry. The figs were still small, green and bitter. I would die of starvation and get eaten later

on by a mountain lion, a leopard or by the wolves if I fell down. Moments earlier I was in heaven, but heaven had a price. The prospect of being eaten alive made me forget most of what Toté had told me. After sitting on the highest branch for a while I regained my senses when Toté's words came to my head again, "Talk to them."

Hilarious. Muslim Arab blockade must have driven any and every logical sense from Toté's head. That was weird I thought. Pity such a very beautiful woman had the brains of a child. I also believed hunger, strife and illness had eaten Toté's mind. But I had no other choice in that wilderness. I had nothing to lose by having a chat with red beasts that used deadly fangs and saliva for their survival. I told them about my favourite subject, and the woman who lived inside me, or myself inside her.

Purple Sprites

Bay Boon clung to her brother tight, and we drove out of the city of Zakho, and the very deadly gully of Zakho, where at least one motorist died a day. That young woman's voice regaled in my head telling me, "Drive slowly, there is no rush, let the night fall, let the stars blink, and the comets shoot through the Ka Diza. Look at where my house was every time you pass, and you must know your sister is always with you. She sees through your eyes and beyond your vision." After traveling south alongside the Sullivan plains, and darkness covered the land, and jewels sparked up above, a waft of heaven smell hit my nostrils and came out of my eyes. I stopped the bike on the side of the road. I turned the lights off. Bay Boon asked why did we stop. I told her to look in the far distance west of the road into the Sullivan plains and the horizon. Images shaped the skies, and the air glistened in waves of exotic forms, and creatures that may have lived in the far and distant constellations played. Shades of purple sprites were clouded with crimson wafts. The hues frolicked in capricious tempos to tunes of My Zulfé's lullaby Lawké Kanza, the metallic boy, who traveled from the far distant stars to observe the humans in the valleys and mountains of Kurdistan. Light emanated from Lawké Kanza's arms, chest and back. His feet did not touch the ground, and with the blink of an eye he moved from one horizon to the other. Kurdistan's elements in rivers, mountains, volcanoes and hurricanes were at his disposal anyway he wished. When a Kurdish woman kissed him he earned a pulse, but lost the elements. Isn't that funny Lawké Kanza, aren't you sweet Lawké Kanza to be defeated by a kiss?

Bay Boon looked everywhere with the helmet in hands when I turned to look at the outlines of her angelic face. I said, "Kin Kin, did you hear that?"

Bewildered she asked, "Hear what?"

I turned away to the purple sprites, pointed at them and asked, "Kin Kin, look at there and everywhere is My Zulfé who whispers in my ear mawkish tunes of being in the sphere with me." After bypassing the words she did not understand, Bay Boon shook her head, "Only darkness and a few stars."

I could not believe she could not see the obvious, or perhaps the tall daisy was teasing me.

Disappointed, I tapped her knee but she did not put the helmet on, "I want to drive."

Bay Boon driving the bike was never on my mind. A car maybe, maybe not, but a bike driving woman was impossible. I wished she could be a pilot but it was not in the logic of things where we lived, where we did not have the freedom to live, let alone have the right to other things. Bay Boon repeated her request. She resorted to blackmail, "I won't tell mother Rewsh about the whispers and I heard nothing."

