

Cairo!
Joys and Tears

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All characters in this story are fictitious. Any resemblance between a character and a person, dead or live is purely coincidental.

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(1)

Nashaat Refaat Abu Al-Hassan parked his car near Foad 1st University in Giza. In 1949, few students had cars. This day he wanted to reach the university late. He did not want to be present when they declare the result of the final exam. He was in the final year in the Faculty of commerce. He wanted to be at the university when his colleagues knew the result of the exam. He was the son of Refaat Pasha Abu Al-Hassan, the renowned politician of the Liberal Constitutional Party.

In the university yard, students were two groups, the first abandoned Fez. The second group wore it. Nevertheless, all students were fully dressed; suits and ties.

‘Congratulations,’ a student shouted. He waved a hand to Nashaat.

He knew that he finally obtained his bachelor degree in accounting. His friends gathered around him and they decided to go to Gizira Club where they usually spent times there. This time they would celebrate. In fact, they celebrated every occasion and event with the high-class girls and some others from the foreign communities, in the club. On his way, he passed at the Post Office to telegram to his father to tell him about his success.

Refaat Pasha Abu Al-Hassan (*Pasha is a title equivalent to Lord*), was in his office when one of the servants brought the telegraph to him.

He read it and threw it on his desk. He would be happier if his son was graduated from Faculty of Law or was an officer in the army. All ministers were lawyers. His son chose to be an accountant. Refaat Pasha always believed that influence brings money. He was a Member of Parliament. He wanted his son to take his parliamentary seat as a step to be a minister. He could not see what a bachelor of commerce might add to a man from an influential family. He read the post and revised other reports from his employees in the building that his father and uncle had built to run the family business, the cotton and other crops, the export operations of cotton and other real estate business. This building was not far from the palace in which the family lived. At five pm, the driver was ready to take the Pasha to the palace. From the car window, he saw the farmers returning home after the working day. Some were walking and others were riding donkeys. From the second floor veranda of the palace Eetemad, his wife and parental cousin saw the car coming. She asked her three daughters to go to their rooms and to dress for dinner. Refaat Pasha took the direction of the internal stair between the first and the second floor without a word to the servant that opened the door for him and took his handbag from the driver who stopped at the double iron gate of the palace. The servant put the handbag on the desk in the study room. Eetemad was standing at the last step of the stair to receive the Pasha.

‘Hello, Pasha,’ she said. She kissed him on the cheek.

He kissed her on the cheek and smiled but he did not say a word. He entered the bedroom and she followed him. She helped him to take off the suit and opened the door separating the bedroom from the adjacent bathroom. When he immersed himself in the tub, she chose a

suit, a tie and a shirt for him to wear during the dinner. Then she took one of her dresses and started to wear it while he was having his shower. She made some fine touches to her make-up then she was ready to help him wear his suit. It took about one hour for them to be ready to have dinner with the daughters. They descended the stair to the ground floor where, twenty-two-year old Farida, sixteen-year old Fayza and five-year old Malak were in the study room waiting for their father. Fayza and Malak returned from Alexandria with the other driver about a quarter an hour before their father came. The farm was about thirty kilometers away from Alexandria, but the girls were used to riding the car everyday to go to school. They were studying in the French School, Notre Dame. Fayza the eldest daughter finished her study but she did not like to go to the university. Their brother Nashaat was graduated from Victoria College. It was the tradition of high-class families to send boys to English schools and girls to French schools. Malak ran at her father to show him a picture she drew in the school.

‘Madam said that I’m good at drawing and that I’ll be a good painter,’ she said.

He kissed her and said indifferently, ‘drawing is a good hobby. You can do that and you may go to Fine Arts College to study there when you grow up.’

Over the dinner, he told them that Nashaat was graduated. He was indifferent and even unenthusiastic. His manner made Eetemad tense.

‘You still think it would be better if he became a lawyer or an officer,’ she said.

‘Of course, I don’t know how his accounting degree will help him. We hire accountants. After all he will be a politician to take my seat in the Parliament,’ he said.

‘In the future of course after a long life, now he may see some of the family business under your supervision,’ she said.

‘Let’s phone him,’ Farida said. ‘We may go to Cairo if he won’t come.’

Refaat dropped the knife and the fork nervously. She looked angrily at his daughter. ‘How come he does not come? How come he forgets the annual memorial service of your grandfather, may God bless his soul?’ he threw the napkin on the table and left to the study room.

‘I want to have a word with you,’ Eetemad said to Farida. She left the dinner and the three daughters followed her.

In the girls’ room, Farida tried to defend herself but Eetemad was too angry. Eetemad finished her long lecture that brought tears to Farida’s eyes by saying, ‘First you did a mistake that you thought that your brother might forget his grandpa. Second, you did a mistake for the memory of your grandpa who is my father and your father’s uncle. You have to apologize to your father. You own an apology to your brother as well. Now you wash your face, correct your make-up and I’ll be waiting for you down at the reception to go to your father.’

When Farida was descending on the stair that joined the ground floor to the bedrooms, her mother asked the Nubian butler to go to ask the Pasha if he was ready to receive them.

The Nubian man approached Eetemad and said politely, ‘my master the Pasha invites you to his study room.’

The moment Eetemad and Farida entered the room the phone rang. The Pasha invited them to have a seat with a movement from his hand while he picked the mouthpiece. His face changed. They noticed that something serious happened and angered him.

‘How come you won’t come this week? Did you forget the annual memory of your grandpa,’ the Pasha shouted angrily.

Farida tried to hide her smiling face by her hands. Eetemad noticed that her daughter was about to laugh.

‘Go upstairs now. Dad is busy,’ Eetemad said.

Farida told Fayza about the Nashaat’s phone call and they burst into uncontrollable laughs.

‘I don’t see a cause for laughing,’ Eetemad entered the room. ‘You have to behave yourselves better than that.’

‘But there is a cause for these laughs mom,’ Fayza said.

‘I think it is time to sleep now. Tomorrow we’ll have lunch at Mahmood Pasha El-Sisi and his wife Golnar. Your brother will be here at the evening tomorrow. When he comes I’ll give him a lesson,’ Eetemad said.

Next day, Roh Mahmood El-Sisi, were sitting with Farida and Fayza laughing at the memories of the secondary school when both Roh and Farida were in the same school in Alexandria. Roh was older than Farida but the two years difference did not affect their friendship. Golnar and Eetemad were whispering. In the study room, Refaat Pasha and Mahmood pasha were talking about what their wives had agreed. They came out of the room after they finalized the marriage projects of their sons and daughters.

‘Next Thursday will be a good day. It will be the engagement party of Nashaat and Roh and of Abd El-Aziz and Farida,’ Refaat said as if he was saying something not known to wives.

Both Farida and Roh received congratulations from their united families. Abd El-Aziz Mahmood El-Sisi was a captain in the Royal Guard. Mahmood pasha called his son who welcomed the idea.

‘Nashaat will come this evening and he will be most happy if Mahmood Pasha receives him afternoon tomorrow,’ Refaat said.

‘Of course he is welcome at anytime,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

That evening Nashaat came from Cairo. His sisters hugged and kissed him. His mother gave him the cold shoulder. When he approached her to give her a kiss, she retreated backwards.

‘What’s the problem mom?’ he asked anxiously.

‘You forgot the memory of my father. He played with you much when you were a kid. However, you forgot that. I cannot believe that you forgot your grandpa. He’d asked us to bring you to him to see you before he’d died. You were the last thing he saw. He was also your father’s paternal uncle. Your father will talk to you about that,’ she extended a hand to show him the way to the study room in a sarcastic gesture.

‘Have a pity on me mom. You go first and calm him then I’ll see him,’ he said.

‘Oh, yes mom, you go first,’ Fayza said.

‘After all we have to celebrate Nashaat’s graduation,’ Farida said. She and Fayza hugged their mom and kissed her to forgive their brother.

Nashaat reached his mom, embraced her, and said, ‘you know that I loved my grandpa more than anything and I’ll never forget him.’

The Nubian butler came to Nashaat while he was still hugging his mother and said, ‘Mr. Nashaat the Pasha invites you to his study.’

‘He must have heard your voice,’ Eetemad said to her son.

‘Mom, would you come with me please. Your presence will do wonders,’ Nashaat said.

‘But don’t say anything. You just listen to him,’ she said.

‘Agreed,’ he said.

‘When I call you, you should come at once,’ Refaat Pasha shouted at Nashaat who just finished his words to his mother.

‘Of course dad,’ Nashaat said and walked towards the study room where Refaat was standing at its opened door. On his way he glanced back to make sure that, his mother was following him.

‘How come you forget the memory of your grandpa,’ Refaat started in a loud voice.

‘I did not forget my grandpa. You know that I loved him too much,’ Nashaat said.

‘And how did you dare join the Wafd Party?’ Refaat shouted louder.

It was a surprise for Eetemad. She never thought that her son might join the rival party of Liberal Constitutional Party that Refaat Pasha was one of its pillars. *(The Wafd Party means the Delegate Party – it was called the delegate party because its leaders had formed a delegate to negotiate independence with the British government. They formed the party later on and it was the most popular party during the royal era)*

‘I think you know that our family men are Liberal Constitutional.’ She said involuntarily.

‘I believe in Wafd’s ideas more than those of other political parties,’ Nashaat said.

‘What are these ideas?’ Refaat Pasha said sarcastically. Then he added seriously, ‘some students and workers rioting and talking in politics while they don’t know anything.’

‘Nahas Pasha is the leader of the nation. The Wafd is the party that represents people and it wins in any honest elections. Other parties win by forgery,’ Nashaat could not control his voice that was a pit higher than his normal when he was talking to his father. ‘Other parties are ploys in the hands of the palace and the English Ambassador.’

‘Do you label me a ploy? Dare you?’ Refaat Pasha shouted. He was shocked.

‘Sorry dad. I did not mean it. But everybody should have the choice to do whatever he likes,’ Nashaat said.

‘Tomorrow your sister will go to Alexandria for the hairdresser. You go with them and you pass at the Wafd headquarter in Alexandria to resign. Then you go to the Liberal Constitutional headquarter where you file an application to join the party. Of course, Refaat Pasha’s son does not need a recommendation because he will be the MP of Alexandria later on. Thanks to God, that Mahmood Pasha did not mention your joining the Wafd. At afternoon, we’ll go to visit Mahmood family. I agreed with him that you and his daughter Roh will marry,’ Refaat said in a quiet decisive voice.

‘I’m not going to resign from the Wafd and I won’t marry Roh. I have my plans,’ Nashaat said.

‘What plans are you talking about? You will work here with me to supervise our properties. Our main job is to cultivate cotton and export it,’ Refaat said.

‘No dad, I’m thinking of building a spinning and textile factory. We have the money needed for the project,’ Nashaat said.

‘You refuse to obey me,’ Refaat said angrily in a quiet voice. Eetemad felt the storm that will soon blow.

‘Go to your room now, Nashaat,’ she said taking the hand of her son and pulled him towards the room door.

Nashaat resisted his mother and said to his father, ‘no dad, it isn’t like that. I care about the family business like you. After all, the factory will be yours. But I have a dream and please help me to achieve it. I’m not ready for marriage and I want to give my dream a trial.’

‘Get out of this house,’ Refaat said decisively.

Eetemad fell on the nearest chair crying.

Refaat pointed with his index finger at the door and shouted, ‘don’t ever come here again. I did a mistake when I chose Roh for you. She deserves a better man; someone who is not crazy. Get out and I don’t want to see any of you.’

Nashaat did not believe that his father expelled from the family home. He stood standstill.

‘Get out,’ it was the loudest voice the family heard Refaat Pasha shout at someone. ‘You are not my son.’

Nashaat left the palace while his mother and sisters were crying.

(2)

It was a sad evening. When Refaat Pasha told his old friend Mahmood Pasha what happened the day before. Silence filled the place.

‘I understand,’ Mahmood Pasha broke in silence.

‘I hope our plans about Abd El-Aziz and Farida are still agreed,’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘Of course,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

‘But, I think we have to postpone their engagement for a while,’ Golnar said. She felt pity for her daughter and she was very angry.

‘I’ll never forgive this crazy. I don’t consider him a son anymore,’ Refaat Pasha said.

Roh left without excuse and went to her room. Farida noticed that her friend was about to cry. Between the girls, their love to the other’s brothers was their secret and they were sure that their mothers would plan for them.

In her room, Roh put her hand firmly on her mouth not to cry loudly. Her tears fell uncontrollably. Her mother entered the room. Roh threw herself in her mother’s arms and wept on her shoulder.

‘You shouldn’t do that. You’ll marry a better man,’ Golnar said.

‘I love him mother. I wonder how he didn’t feel that,’ Roh said.

‘Never ever I hear that again. From now on, we’ll have other plans for you. Your brother won’t marry their daughter until you marry first. I promise,’ Golnar said.

‘No, mom, Farida is a good person and Aziz will be happy with her. I know she loves him,’ Roh said.

‘But you must marry first,’ Golnar said. She did not give a chance for her daughter to talk anymore. ‘Correct your make-up and come for the dinner. Your birthday party will be next week. I’ll invite them. You think about Captain Soliman Abd El-Wahab your brother’s friend. He is an officer in the Royal Guard and I noticed that he admires you but he is afraid that his proposal might be turned down because he is from a middle-class family but his father is a manager in the government. We have enough money. He will be a General and Pasha in the future. I’ll ask your brother to invite him for your birthday party.’

Soliman Abd El-Wahab came to Roh’s birthday wearing the uniform dress, as it was the habit of officers then days. He brought a present to Roh and politely kissed her and her mother’s hands. Mahmood Pasha noticed that Golnar was treating Abd El-Wahab as a special guest. She called the servant who was carrying glasses of Champaign on a silver trait to serve him while she was engaged in different talks with him.

‘Sorry, I think you may want to dance,’ Golnar said.

‘No, thank you. In fact I enjoy talking to you Mrs. Golnar,’ he said politely.

‘I think you should say aunt Golnar. You are my son’s best friend and I consider you a son. Roh is busy with the guests. It would be a great favor for her if you asked her to dance with you instead of engaging in talks with old ladies,’ she said. She took the glass from his hand, put it on the nearest table, and added smilingly, ‘now your hands are free and you can go to Roh.’

Soliman was very intelligent. He understood that Golnar would agree if he proposed to Roh. Yet his social background made him to be conservative until he would talk to his friend Abd el-Aziz first. Otherwise, he would consider himself not sincere to the friendship. He took steps towards Roh and smiled. She smiled back. Her eyes were inviting. He understood that Roh and her mother chose him. He always admired Roh. The thought of that they noticed his admiration for her and their reaction was the feedback made him somewhat embarrassed. He felt the heat in his face. Usually when he felt that, his ears would become red.

‘I should have the pleasure if you dance with me,’ he said in nearly whispering voice.

‘Sure, this is my favorite song.’ She said.

They did not talk during the dance. Soliman was thinking about the reaction of Abd El-Aziz when he would know. He turned his head right and left several times to see Abd El-Aziz. He found him standing with Farida. He felt relieved when he found that Abd El-Aziz was rising his glass towards him in a gesture of greeting. After the dance, he excused Roh and went towards his friend.

‘Miss Farida Abu Al-Hassan, the daughter of Refaat Pasha Abu Al Hassan. Of course you know him,’ Abd Al-Aziz said.

Soliman kissed Farida’s hand and said, ‘Captain Soliman Abd El-Wahab. Congratulation for the engagement Miss.’ He hesitated then he said to Abd El-Aziz, ‘May we have a word please.’

‘Sure,’ Abd El-Aziz said. He waited for his friend to talk.

‘In private please,’ Soliman said.

Farida noticed Golnar and Roh gave Soliman some sort of a special treatment. She smiled and said, 'Excuse me; I'll go to talk to Roh.' She widened her smile and said to Soliman, 'congratulation.'

'For what?' he said it involuntarily as if denying committing something shameful.

'For what you are going to tell Aziz about,' she said.

'I don't understand,' Abd El-Aziz said.

'I want to marry your sister Roh,' Soliman said it as if he was confessing.

Farida could not control her laughs and hurried to Roh to tell her best friend the news.

'I'm really happy to hear these words. I think Roh will not find a man better than you will. I'll tell mom,' Abd El-Aziz said.

While Abd El-Aziz was talking to Golnar, Roh and Farida were whispered frequently.

'You surprised me Aziz,' Golnar said. 'I think you give me and your sister sometime after your father's approval of course.'

'He is a good person and I think he will be a good husband and father. He is very kind and very polite. He never went to nightclubs with me and other friends and he prays the five prays everyday,' Abd El-Aziz said.

Roh and Farida came and they heard that Abd El-Aziz went with his friends to some nightclubs.

'You didn't tell me that you went to nightclubs,' Farida said.

'Few times and now I don't go and I don't have time to go,' he defended himself.

‘I forgive you only on one condition. You take me to a nightclub when we marry,’ Farida said.

‘I agree,’ he said.

‘Don’t mention that in front of Mahmood Pasha and Refaat Pasha or both of you will be in trouble and you will never marry,’ Golnar said seriously. She looked at Roh and said, ‘Captain Soliman proposes to you. Your brother says that he is a good person. If you agree I have no objection provided that the Pasha agrees.’

‘Give me sometime to think about that,’ Roh said.

‘He is a close friend to Aziz and this means that we’ll be together in Cairo. For my sake Roh, agree,’ Farida said.

The two girls stared at each other’s eyes then hugged and Farida shouted, ‘congratulation.’

‘He has to talk to Mahmood Pasha first. Take him to your father and we’ll see what will happen,’ Golnar said.

‘I’ll tell him that you agree and Roh agrees,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘No, never do that. You don’t tell him that you’ve discussed the matter with us before he knows. You take Soliman to him and let him ask us if he accepts him as a son in law,’ Golnar said to her son.

Few minutes later, a servant told Golnar that Mahmood Pasha wanted her in private in his study room. Then it was the turn of Roh to go to the study room. When they returned Roh went to stand beside Farida and Mahmood Pasha asked the musicians to stop playing for a while.

‘I have the pleasure to tell you that I accepted the proposal of Captain Soliman Abd-El-Wahab of the Royal Guard to my daughter Roh,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

Refaat Pasha took the initiative and suggested that the engagement of Abd El-Aziz and Farida be in the same day. He asked Eetemad and his daughters not to invite Nashaat or even tell him.

Eetemad sent a monthly check to Nashaat as his father stopped supporting him but this was not enough to live in Zamalek or to keep three servants. He rented a small flat in Heliopolis area in Korba district. He kept only one servant who cleaned, cooked and washed his cloths. The leaders of the Waft Party found a job for Nashaat in Bank Misr, the national bank that was owned by Talaat Harb Pasha the renowned Egyptian economist and businessman. In fact, they were interested in upgrading the political carrier of Nashaat not because he was a clever politician. After all, he was young. They did that because he was the son of Refaat Pasha their powerful rival of the Liberal Constitutional Party. Newspapers wrote about the son of Pasha who went at odds with him and this enraged Refaat Pasha more and made him tell everybody that he expelled Nashaat from the family home and he considered him not a son anymore. Yet secret phone calls behind Refaat Pasha between Nashaat and his mother and sisters never stopped. Always Eetemad was advising her son to apologize to his father but it was too late.

It was a cold day in January 1952. Nashaat parked his car. Then he walked towards Bank Misr where he worked. He asked the café boy to bring his Turkish café as usual and started to work. ‘Sheppard Hotel was set alight,’ he heard sounds of several customers. He looked at them. He knew that hooligans set fire in many stores. Managers told

employees to leave the building to secure it. Police forces came to secure the bank. He drove through avenues avoiding main streets where no one exactly knew what was happening. Hooligans in the street and the Extinguishing Men found themselves paralyzed with fumes from many stores around them united in the sky making a great dark cloud covering metropolitan Cairo. He could reach Queen Nazly Street after about four hours driving. The government declared martial law. In spite of the curfew, he managed to reach a friend of him who was resident in Heliopolis at night. He found that his friend invited other friends to spend the night together as Groppi where they were used to spend night was closed because of the curfew. Some played cards and backgammon. All were engaged in a discussion to know what happened. The political inclination determined their opinions. Nashaat accused the British of doing that to send their troops to Cairo from Suez Canal to press on the government after the Wafd Ministry cancelled 1936 treaty and supported resistance against them. Others accused the Moslems Brotherhood group that killed two prime ministers of doing that because most of the stores and hotels that were destroyed were British and they wanted to topple the regime. Others accused the palace of doing that because King Farouk did not like the British. All had good backgrounds but none had evidences. 'Nobody will know the truth at least in the near future,' Nashaat thought.

Political groups from all waves and colors became very active. Nashaat started to attend many meetings of these groups. Usually he went with a friend who was a member in the group. Nashaat had many friends who gave him the opportunity. As the Wafd Party was

supporting resistance against the British, it was easy for Nashaat to help in this particular area. He traveled several times to Ismailia by night carrying weapons for the resistance. His duty was stopping the car near the city where others would take weapons from him. However, he attended many meetings of different groups and became a friend to many of their members. One day he was in a meeting of a communist small group and the Political Police attacked the place and arrested them.

Hassan Al-Sheikh was a mechanic in one of textile factories. He completed his primary school education. He was sitting in a corner of the prison cell when soldiers pushed Nashaat into it. Nashaat lost balance and fell on the ground. Hassan went to Nashaat and helped the new comer. The first thing Hassan noticed was that Nashaat was not beaten.

‘They did not greet you,’ Hassan said.

Nashaat did not understand the sarcastic statement and he did not respond. He looked around and tried to control himself not to cry. He heard about prisons and stories of detainees but he did not think that he would be one of them one day. He found a place between two detainees and sat silently. His tears fell. He wiped his tears with his sleeve.

Hassan sat in front of him. Usually marks of beating were obvious. And usually detainees do not cry. They knew that one day it would happen to them. However, their beliefs and their sincerity for principals made them ready to sacrifice.

‘I’m Hassan Al-Sheikh, a member in the Egyptian Communist Party. They arrested me a week ago.’

‘I’m Nashaat Abu Al-Hassan, a member in Wafd Party.’

‘Don’t tell me that you are the son of Refaat Pasha Abu Al-Hassan who is at odds with his father and joined the Wafd because of that. Anyhow, they don’t arrest Wafd members,’ Hassan said.

‘Yes, I’m. They arrested me with a communist group. I attend meeting of many groups and sometimes I help in sending weapons and ammunitions to commandoes in Suez and Ismailia cities. I’m not a communist. I don’t like communism but the officer did not believe me,’ Nashaat said. He cried and added, ‘he slapped me on face. He humiliated me. I’ll never forget it. When he knew that I’m the son of Refaat Pasha Abu Al-Hassan, he apologized, but I insisted that I would tell the story to our Wafd Members of Parliament when they release me. Even my father will not accept that although we are at odds.’

‘You shouldn’t have worked in politics. You think of politics as meetings with smart and tidy Pashas and ministers. Here is the real politics,’ Hassan said.

‘I share in the struggle against the British occupation like any other Egyptian. Sometimes I drive to Ismailia carrying weapons to commandoes there,’ Nashaat said loudly.

Hassan laughed.

‘I don’t think I said something funny,’ Nashaat said.

‘No, you said,’ Hassan said angrily. ‘It is supposed that carrying weapons to commandoes is a top secret. If guards heard what you said, they will torture you until you say everything about commandoes and their whereabouts. Even in this cell, the secret police may have agents. You are a dreamer. You read about policy, but you have no political experience. Rule number one in secret movements is the silence.’

‘I think all persons here are arrested because they work in secret movement. And, you made me nervous. You think that communists are the only nationals. All communists think that,’ Nashaat said.

‘One day you will know what communism is. Did you read about it? Did you read about capitalism? You read some books in the university and the newspapers. These readings do not tell you the truth. The truth is where poor live. Did you meet someone who work hard but he cannot afford dinner to his children? If you met him, you would give him a gift and you think that you did the good thing and God will send you to paradise. This man and others should fight corrupted landlords and take their land. The spitefulness should be his drive to build the fair community. You were born in a palace and you do not know the people whom you claim that you struggle for them. I’m one of them. I didn’t cry when they brought me here because outside I suffered more than here,’ Hassan lectured on him.

‘In every community there are rich and poor people. Poor people should not be lazy and work more so that they would earn more money,’ Nashaat said.

‘Yes, they should work in your farms and factories and be satisfied with what you give them as wages,’ Hassan said sarcastically.

‘If they are not satisfied with their wages they may strike,’ Nashaat said. ‘In Europe and the United States syndicates are powerful that workers’ rights are kept.’

‘In Russia workers decide for themselves because people owns everything. Men like you have no place,’ Hassan said and left to the far corner.

However next days relations changed to better. Nashaat found that his prison companions talk to Hassan with much respect. He discovered that Hassan was an intellectual. Their discussions were fruitful to Nashaat. He found that he should read more about different philosophies. During a discussion, he told Hassan about his dreams of building a factory. For his astonishment, Hassan proposed that he would help him to bring best workers. Nashaat said that he would give fair wages. He told Hassan that he admired Talaat Pasha Harb and Abood Pasha, the two Egyptian icons who build factories and residential settlements for employees and workers. What went wrong was that Hassan said that these two icons built workers' homes separated from employees and managers' villas. Nashaat responded aggressively and said that the two classes have different habits. The other companions or the comrades as Hassan used to call them shared and lost their temper and hit Nashaat. He hit them back. Hassan controlled the comrades. One hour later they started, another talk and all laughed together.

(3)

Refaat Pasha took a step into the office of Serag Zaki the secretary of the Interior Minister. He stopped and coughed faintly to draw the attention of the secretary to his coming. The man stood up and wore his fez. The secretary extended his hand to Refaat Pasha while moving towards him. Their hands met in the middle of the room.

‘His Excellency the Minister is waiting for you,’ Serag said politely. He opened the door between the two offices for the Pasha. However, he smiled sarcastically when Refaat Pasha gave him his back while crossing the door between the two offices.

‘Hello, it’s been a long time since I’ve seen you,’ the minister said. He invited Refaat Pasha to sit on the sofa and took a seat beside him. ‘Your Turkish coffee that is medium sweetened will be ready soon,’ the minister said.

‘Your Excellency has a sharp memory,’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘You know that I like you more than many others. His Majesty likes you also. There is a good chance that you’ll be with us in the next government. However, I want your son Nashaat to behave himself more. I know you’re at odds with him and you expelled him from the family home. You had to keep an eye on him. It would be great embarrassment to you and your chances if His Majesty or the press knew that he joined a communist cell,’ the minister said in a serious tone with a cold smile.

‘Communist,’ Refaat Pasha stuttered. Refaat’s grip on his stick was fixed and he closed his eyes and took a deep breath and added, ‘blasphemous, non-believer, oh my God.’ He turned his head and asked the minister, ‘are you sure?’

‘Yes, he was arrested with a communist cell. You have to talk to him. If His Majesty knew he would be too angry,’ the minister said and stood. He gave a piece of paper to Refaat Pasha and said, ‘his address. I ordered them to release him. He is now in his apartment. I gave instructions for censorship office not to give permission for anybody to publish the story.’ The minister extended his hand to bid Refaat Pasha a farewell.

When Refaat left the minister’s office and saw Serag standing to walk with him until the stairs, he asked Serag to bring a glass of water.

‘It is ready for you Pasha. I ordered lemonade for you also,’ Serag said. ‘Usually, one needs one of them before leaving our offices. Some need both. Some sit down for a while. Some asked me to call their drivers to support them. You don’t worry; most of our visitors do that.’

‘Water will be fine,’ Refaat Pasha said. He took a sip and put the glass on the secretary’s desk. While he was drinking, Serag returned to his seat. ‘Thank you,’ Refaat Pasha said and left.

When Refaat Pasha left, the café boy emptied the glass and returned it in a blue box that would be used for jewelries. Serag wrote on a small piece of paper “*Refaat Pasha, April, 2, 1952 – Communist son - Water only – Didn’t collapse.*” With an evil smile, he put the paper in the box with the glass and kept the box in a safe. ‘One day these boxes will worth a fortune,’ he thought.

Refaat Pasha kept silent during the road from Cairo to his Farm near Alexandria. Nashaat also kept silent. From now and then the father and son looked at each other and without a word, they turn their heads before their eyes met. When they reached the palace, Refaat

Pasha went directly to his study room. Eetemad and his sisters kissed Nashaat. They thought that the conflict between the father and son was resolved and the Pasha forgave Nashaat. However, when they knew Nashaat's story they did not say anything. They knew that the Pasha's rage would be unprecedented. The steps of the Nubian butler towards them increased Eetemad's anxiety.

'The Pasha wants you and Mr. Nashaat,' the butler said.

The girls could not explain words despite the high voice of their father and brother. They heard Nashaat defensive high voice repeatedly saying, 'I'm not a communist. I'm not non-believer.' Eetemad was the first person who came out of the room. She was crying and hurried towards the stairs to and ran her way to the second floor. Nashaat left the room and had a seat in the reception.

'You will not inherit anything,' Refaat Pasha came out of the room and stood few steps away from his son. 'You should leave the Wafd party and become Liberal Constitutional. You should leave Bank Misr and work here with me. You have to go to his Excellency the Interior Minister to thank him because he released you while your friends the communists and blasphemous are still in prison.'

'No, I won't do that. I don't care about the inheritance,' Nashaat said.

'Stop it,' Farida cried. She looked at her father. 'Stop giving orders to everybody. We are human beings and we can choose for ourselves. Every one of us dreams about the day that she leaves this house to live her life. Nashaat knew what freedom means. He did not do anything wrong.'

Refaat Pasha slapped Farida on face and Nashaat stood to receive her before falling.

‘You won’t leave this house until you marry Aziz,’ Refaat Pasha said. He went to his study and closed the door.

‘It is good that you’ll marry Aziz. He is a kind person, well educated and gentleman. Besides, you love him. Boys also know the meaning of girls’ looks when they love. He knew that you love him. He loves you more than anything he does. He told me. Now you smile. I know you will marry after ten days. He told me and I know that father ordered you not to tell me. Aziz did to keep our friendship. He is a good person. When you live in Cairo, you will see me everyday. Now you smile,’ he whispered to his sister.

She forced a smile for his sake.

‘Tell Roh that I don’t hate her. I love her as a sister and this is not enough. Aziz her brother understood. I hope she would understand one day. I wish her best of the best. But I have other plans,’ he whispered again. He kissed his sisters and left.

It was a great party in Mahmood Pasha’s palace. His son Abd El-Aziz was sitting beside his bride Farida and few steps away his daughter Roh was sitting beside her groom Soliman. Refaat Pasha insisted on not inviting his son Nashaat. However, both couples planned to spend the honeymoon in Mina House Obroy hotel in Giza near the pyramids. Both couples would live in Heliopolis near Nashaat’s apartment.

After the honeymoon, Farida and Roh spent their mornings in Sporting Club and in the evening, they met with their husbands.

Nashaat visited his sister frequently. When Soliman asked Roh about Nashaat and his story, she did not tell the truth. She said that she refused to marry him because she did not like him and added that he was not a gentleman.

It was Friday. It was the first time Farida invited Roh and Soliman to have lunch in her home. In the early morning, she went with Roh to Sporting Club as usual. Abd El-Aziz and Soliman met in Groppi café with other friends. Farida asked her husband to invite her brother and he welcomed the idea. He phoned Nashaat and asked him to come to Groppi to have café before returning to home to have lunch. He thought that it would be better if Nashaat and Soliman knew each other before having lunch together. When Nashaat came, three officers were sitting with his brother in law and Soliman.

‘Captain Soliman Abd El-Wahab my brother in law,’ Abd El-Aziz said to Nashaat.

For a second Nashaat felt uneasiness, but he hid it with a smile and presented himself, ‘Nashaat, Farida’s brother.’

Abd El-Aziz felt embarrassed because Nashaat said the name of his wife, as it was not proper to do so in men’s communities. He responded quickly to hide his embarrassment and said to Nashaat, ‘Have a seat Mr. Nashaat. They have good café and I know that you love it.’

Soliman decided to be very conservative with Nashaat. His class refused calling women by her names. They used words like Mrs. or Mother of a person in spoken language. Barely did he talk to Nashaat until they go to Abd El-Aziz place to have lunch.

During the lunch, Abd El-Aziz noticed that Soliman did not talk with Nashaat. He knew what made his friend too conservative with his brother in law. He told the story of her name to Farida and said that he felt shy and they laughed.

‘Why do you consider women’s names shame?’ she commented on the story.

‘Names of women are written in wedding invitations,’ Nashaat said.

‘The right thing is that one says Mrs.’ Roh said with a masked face. With a monotonous tone while looking at Nashaat coldly she added, ‘even in Europe they say that.’

‘However we aren’t in Europe,’ Nashaat stared into Roh’s eyes. He did not give her a chance to respond and added, ‘all of us know the Prophet’s wives by their names. We say Virgin Mary as well. Why did not we learn the respect of time and work from Europe? We import some social habits only that may or may not be right.’ Before she answers he looked at Soliman and said, ‘what are your views, Captain Soliman? I think the Europeans occupied us and we took some social trends and traditions. However the good things that made them advanced are not transferred yet. I think it is time for their army to leave this country, and the palace should have a role in battle for evacuation.’

‘You’re damn right Mr. Nashaat,’ Soliman said. He smiled at Nashaat and added, ‘however our society is shy when it comes to women. I think this shyness is because we’re eastern community not because we imported Madame and Mrs. from Europe. Most people in

our community use sons' names to call their mothers, for example they say Om Soliman or Om Mohamed.'

'If a woman had only girls, it would be a problem,' Nashaat laughed.

'They use her husbands' name and say Mr. and his group. The Egyptian version of Mrs. But they never use her name. If one did not marry and became old and spinster they invent a son's name and call her using this name,' Soliman said.

'Did you choose a name for your future son?' he asked Farida.

'I like Mahmood,' she said.

'From now on I'll call you Om Mahmood,' Nashaat said.

All laughed.

When Roh and Soliman returned to their apartment, she slammed the door.

'This Nashaat always makes me nervous,' she said. She looked at Soliman and added, 'and you gave him the chance to reason his ideas. He talked to everybody without giving the chance to anybody to respond. You should have told him that he was wrong.' She shouted.

'Don't ever tell me again what I should do,' he said calmly.

She went to the bedroom. He stayed in the reception. 'What would Nashaat feel if he knew that she was angry? He would apologize and say that he did not mean what she was angry about,' she thought.

'Take it easy. I didn't mean to angry you,' Soliman said to her while she was taking off her dress.

'But, Nashaat meant it,' she said.

‘I don’t think so. If he did that, I would stop him. I’ll never let anyone do that to you,’ he said.

She forced a smile.

(4)

Captain Abd El-Aziz El-Sisi of the Royal Guard Forces was on duty service in Abdeen Palace in Cairo. King Farok was in his summer residential Palace in Ras El-Tin in Alexandria. It was after midnight when a soldier knocked at his room's door. Usually he spent the nights reading when he was on duty. The repetitive knocking made him hurry to open.

‘What’s the problem?’ he asked the soldier.

‘Some forces encircled the palace. They want us to surrender and open the door,’ the soldier said.

‘You should have told me earlier when you noticed their approach,’ he reprimanded the soldier.

‘It happened quickly. Suddenly we found them encircling the palace,’ the soldier said.

When Abd El-Aziz reached the main gate of the palace, he saw tanks directing their canons to the palace and infantry forces ready for combat. Other officers came. He gave orders to them to defend the palace and not to respond to threats. The officers and soldiers were ready to fight.

‘Don’t forget that we swore in to be loyal to the monarch. I think the British Embassy is behind this treasonous act. They want to impeach the king like what happened in February 4. They want to clear their name from the Cairo fire and accuse the king of plotting it. Everybody goes to his place according to the plan of defending the palace,’ Aziz said to officers and soldiers. Although he tried to explain the situation, he was not sure that the British were really behind that.

All forces around the palace were Egyptian. In February 4, the British used their forces only. However, he had some doubts because all British forces were in Suez Canal area.

‘Aziz,’ a well-known voice not only to him but also to other officers came from outside the walls of the palace.

‘Who are you?’ Aziz shouted, not believing.

‘I’m Captain Soliman Abd El-Wahab.’

‘I cannot believe it. You do that. You betray His Majesty,’ he said.

‘It is not like that. Let’s have a talk. We don’t want to kill anyone,’ Soliman said.

‘We’re not going to surrender,’ Aziz said.

‘I’m coming towards the gate, non-armed and alone,’ Soliman said.

Outside the gate, midway between it and the tanks both Soliman and Abd El-Aziz met. Soliman was calm. Abd El-Aziz was enraged.

‘How come you share in a conspiracy against the monarch,’ Abd El-Aziz started.

‘It is a movement against corruption. We were defeated in Palestine War and nobody was tried. This movement will bring stability to the country after the disturbances since Cairo fire. This movement will start serious negotiations with the British for evacuation and independence. We are the Free Officers. Of course, you heard about them. Our leader is General Mohamed Nagib Pasha. All officers know that he is an honest man. We want the king to be impeached and Prince Ahmed Foad II becomes the new king. We want all officers in the Royal Guard to be with us. Impeaching the king saves the monarch,’ Soliman said.

‘Egypt is a constitutional kingdom. The corrupted parties are responsible for the defeat. The army should ask His Majesty to correct the political scene not to impeach him,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘It is too late for him to do anything. Perhaps five years ago he might have done that if corrupted politicians and groups had not been around him. He is weak now,’ Soliman said.

Before Abd El-Aziz respond to Soliman, an officer came to him from the palace and said, ‘The Navy in Alexandria sent a cable. They are with the king and ready to fight against those who want to topple him,’ the officer said.

‘You and your forces are not going to enter the palace and any advance towards the gates or the wall will be dealt with. We are ready to fight,’ Abd-Aziz said. He gave Soliman his back and went towards the palace gate.

In the early morning, Egyptians knew the news of the army movement. The sound of Anwar Al-Sadat told them. People supported the movement because they were fed up of the corruption and instability. Several Ministries in few days were enough sign that the political scene was worsening. The chronic poverty and illiteracy problems made people suffer. Besides the conservative people were too enraged by the bad reputation of the mother queen and her daughter after they had flee to America. General Mohamed Nagib was well known to people. Sadat was also a known figure because he was tried several years in Amin Osman’s assassination case. Osman was one of men who were loyal to the British. Although the court cleared Sadat’s name, many considered him one of the group of heroes who killed a

traitor. Lt. Colonel Gamal Abd El-Nasser was not known to Egyptians but too few persons who knew that he was one of the negotiators of the truce after Palestine War. His close friend Abd El-Hakim Amer was not known at all. Naser came from a poor family and was the founder of the Free Officers Movement. Aristocratic Amer was its co-founder with undoubted belief in Naser's leadership.

When Roh knew the news of the army movement in the early morning, she was anxious about her husband and her brother. When Soliman was on duty, he was used to phone her at 10 am. That day the telephone did not ring. She decided to go to Farida. After she dressed, the servant told her that Farida came.

'Did you hear the news?' Farida asked. She was very anxious and added, 'I think they entrapped in Abdeen Palace. I knew that the Royal Guard and the Navy support the king. I succeeded to pick up the Voice of America half an hour ago.'

'Soliman did not call me. Of course they will defend the monarch,' Roh said.

'How come the officers of the army do that to their king,' Farida said. 'Aziz was on duty yesterday. Perhaps they are fighting the rebellious officers now. I told the servant to tell him to call me here if called. I'm afraid,' she cried.

Although Roh was anxious about her husband and her brother, he could control emotions more than Farida. She turned on the radio to know the news. As soon as she did, the ringing of the telephone made her turn it off involuntarily and both women ran extending their arms to pick its mouthpiece.

‘Hello, how are you Soliman? Are you safe?’ Roh said.

‘Thanks to God, I’m safe. All of us are safe. We did it, Roh,’ Soliman said at the other end of the line.

‘You did what? Did you defeat the conspirators?’ she asked.

‘They are not conspirators. They are revolutionaries. I’m one of them,’ he said.

‘And what’s about Aziz?’ she asked.

‘He is safe,’ he said.

She felt that her husband’s voice was not decisive like when he told her about the army movement.

‘Is Aziz safe? Is he with you?’ her voice was somewhat higher and her sharp tone annoyed Farida.

Farida stood beside Roh to hear what Soliman would tell.

‘He is safe. He is inside Abdeen Palace now,’ he said. He decided to end the call. Not giving her a chance to discuss anything further, he added, ‘excuses me. I’ll call you later.’

The two women did not understand why Soliman was outside the palace while Aziz was inside it. After discussing different possibilities, they reached a conclusion that Aziz was controlling the palace while Soliman had some other missions outside. They did not predict that Aziz was besieged and surrounded by a force that was led by his brother in law.

Abd El-Aziz was standing among his officers and soldiers ready for the combat when an officer came to him carrying a cable for the command on duty. He read it. He asked the officer to call other officers.

‘His Majesty decided to abdicate. He ordered all loyal forces in the Royal Guard and Navy not to fight and to obey orders of General Mohamed Nagib. He does not want officers and soldiers to fight each other,’ he said.

Soliman and his forces entered the palace peacefully.

‘Are you going to arrest us?’ Abd El-Aziz asked Soliman.

‘Support the army movement and you will be with us. You won’t regret it,’ Soliman said.

‘But we allowed you to be in when His Majesty asked us to do to spare the army officers fighting each other. For me, I obeyed His Majesty until the last minute. I don’t know the officers of the army movement to support them,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘You know me,’ Soliman said.

‘I thought I knew you. If you trusted me you had to tell me before,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘It is not like that. I nominated you to be in the movement. I would tell you within few days. However, something happened and leadership of the movement decided to act sooner than it was planned. The leadership of the movement includes Lt. Colonel Gamal Abd El-Nasser, Lt. Colonel Abd El-Hakim Amer and Anwar El-Sadat. They are faithful to this country and they are honest. I think all officers know their names after the election of the Officers’ club. Sadat has a long history of struggle against the British and their agents,’ Soliman said.

Mentioning names of the commandship made Abd El-Aziz less aggressive. He asked Soliman to talk to Royal Guard Officers. It took ten minutes and Abd El-Aziz was talking to one of the leadership of the movement through the wireless set and expressing the support of the

Royal Guard unit in Abdeen Palace. Before leaving the palace, Soliman received orders that an officer from the infantry would come and be on charge of the palace. They did not arrest Abd El-Aziz, but he was told to stay in home for a while.

‘Just for one or two days Aziz, I promise you will be back soon. I trust you. However they do not know well. I arranged for a car to take you home,’ Soliman said.

After few days, the king left Egypt for Italy and the army movement changed its name to the revolution. General Mohamed Nagib became the Leader of the Revolutionary Commandship Council. Nashaat received the news of the army movement with enthusiasm. He decided to go to Soliman’s house to congratulate him. He sent flowers and bought chocolates from Groppi on his way to Soliman. He knocked at the door and their servant invited him to wait in the reception.

‘Hello Nashaat,’ Roh greeted him and extended her hand for him to kiss it.

After kissing touching the dorsum of her hand with his lips he said, ‘congratulation for Captain Soliman and for us all.’

‘Thanks,’ she said with a masked face and took a seat before inviting him to sit down. She crossed her legs and with a movement from her hand, she invited him to have a seat and said arrogantly, ‘In fact the revolutionary commandship called Soliman for something urgent. Of course, his responsibility became too much. Mine also, as I find myself obliged to receive his visitors.’

Nashaat stood up while the servant was coming pushing the tea tray car. She left him standing and started to pour tea in one of the two cups that were on the tray.

‘Have a seat Nashaat. Sorry, of course I don’t mean you. We’re a family. I’m talking about strangers,’ she said.

He sat down.

‘Since the revolution day, people haven’t stopped calling and asking for favors or recommendations. He doesn’t like that. He says that the revolution was against that practice first of all, but it’ll take time for people to understand,’ she said.

‘It’ll take time for people to know that they could get their rights without recommendations. However, not everybody comes asking for recommendations,’ he said.

‘I don’t mean you. However take care when you talk to him to avoid misunderstanding,’ she said.

‘I think you understand me and you would tell him,’ he stood to leave.

This time she did not invite him to sit down and said in a serious tone, ‘all of us know that Pashas of Wafd Party recommended you to have your job in Bank Misr,’ she said.

‘Don’t worry, I won’t ask him for any favor. Would you please tell him my sincere congratulations,’ he said and moved towards the door.

She followed him. She would about to say to him to stay.

He turned suddenly to face her while the servant was opening the door. He stared at her eyes and said, ‘when I had told my father that I would not marry. I meant I had other plans. I didn’t refuse you as a

wife. I wished you someone better than me. There was not a chance to explain that to you.' he took her hand and kissed the dorsum then added sarcastically, 'Princess Roh, I promise to take utmost care when speaking to your husband.' He left before she could respond.

When he left she went to her bedroom and took a small box where old her old photos were kept. She took a photo of her and Nashaat with his sisters and she kissed it then she put it near her heart. She wiped a teardrop not to ruin her eyeliner.

After about an hour Soliman returned and asked Roh about Nashaat and if she told him that, he would not be late. She told him about her conversation with Nashaat, she did not mention his words at the door just before leaving.

'I think he came to start a friendship with you so that when he needs something you would recommend him. He likes to be around people of influence. I talked to him arrogantly not to repeat it again,' she finished her story.

'I don't think Nashaat does that. And I don't have influence and if I have, I won't use it. Don't forget he was arrested with revolutionaries,' he said.

'With communists,' she said.

'And I don't like you to talk arrogantly with anybody for any cause. We impeached the king not be new kings,' he said. He tried to phone Nashaat but the phone rang continuously. He phoned Abd El-Aziz and he knew that Nashaat was there He decided to go to Nashaat.

Nashaat was playing backgammon with his brother in law when Soliman reached. It was obvious that Nashaat did not tell about the conversation with Roh.

‘Sorry that you came and I was not present,’ Soliman whispered to Nashaat when they were leaving together.

‘I know you have many responsibilities,’ Nashaat said.

‘No, it is not that. It won’t take more than an hour. I expected that you might apologize if I told you. I asked Roh to receive you. In fact, I apologize for the way Roh talked to you. I don’t like her to talk like that to anybody because I’m one of Free Officers. I talked harshly to her,’ Soliman said.

‘Roh is a sister like Farida. I don’t like her to sleep sad. For my sake go and say some soft words to her. I won’t sleep before you phone me and assure me that she is happy. In fact, Roh did not commit a mistake. If she feels slightest thing that may contradict your ethics she should be behave like that,’ Nashaat said.

When Nashaat went home, he went into deep sleep as soon as his body touched the bed. The phone rang and he woke up. He forgot his conversation with Soliman.

‘Hello, Soliman,’ he said and started to remember.

‘Didn’t you tell me that you would not sleep until I call you?’ Soliman said.

‘Sorry, I slept while I was waiting for your call because I was very tired. How’s Roh?’ Nashaat said.

‘Very happy after I told her that you supported her point of view. You are very kind. Good night,’ Soliman said.

**Nashaat put the mouthpiece back. He whispered while laughing,
'not kinder than you, Mr. Princess' husband.'**

(5)

Refaat Pasha was sitting with Mahmood Pasha at the famous Greek café Atinuos in Alexandria. They were reading the morning newspapers. Since the revolutions and they were not satisfied about what was happening. However, what enraged them most during the past few days was the invitation of the Revolutionary Commandship Council to the different parties to purify.

‘I think we just ignore them. If we follow their desire to fire some members then we confess that we have corrupted persons,’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘They think that they could give orders to the politicians. Ignoring them is the best policy. Next week, in the Political Bureau of the party, I’ll call for new parliamentary elections. The next ministry should return the army to its barracks,’ Mahmood Pasha said. Then he turned to face his friend and added, ‘what’s the news of Nashaat?’

‘I don’t know anything about him. Most probably, he’s with members of the Wafd who think that they are revolutionaries. Did Aziz call you lately?’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘I wonder these boys think that they could plan for us. Could you imagine that he asked me to call for firing some of our Pashas from the party?’ Mahmood said angrily.

‘I know that Nashaat goes to his sister. Roh and Soliman go there,’ Refaat said.

‘I’m astonished that Soliman is one of the Free Officers and Aziz doesn’t know that,’ Mahmood said.

‘He may be in the Free Officers with him,’ Refaat said.

‘No, he swore that he was ready to fight for the sake of His Majesty. If the king refused to abdicate they would fight,’ Mahmood said.

‘His majesty should not have done that. He should insist on fighting those revolutionaries,’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘No, this was a wise decision from His Majesty. He did not want his officers to kill each other. He sacrificed his crown for the sake of the country not to cause blood baths,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

‘I think it is a matter of time and His Majesty will return. Then these revolutionaries should be punished mercilessly,’ Refaat Pasha said.

In Cairo, although Abd El-Aziz was depressed because they sent him to one of the less important headquarters of the army, his wife Farida was in a good mode despite the nauseating attacks of pregnancy. Nashaat came to their house carrying a small pullover for the coming baby.

‘I told you Nashaat that I like to make woolen clothes. I made several to the baby,’ she said.

‘He or she has to have something from uncle Nashaat,’ he said. He looked at Aziz and added, ‘do you like us to play chess or backgammon?’

‘All the same,’ Abd El-Aziz answered unenthusiastically.

‘Let’s play backgammon before Soliman comes and starts chess. Last time he said, let’s play something beneficial. You played with him and I stayed about an hour showing you without a word,’ Nashaat said.

‘Soliman is kind and serious. He wants to do anything good at anytime. He is a dreamer and a man of ethics,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

**‘Do you think such a character might be a good politician?’
Nashaat was serious.**

‘Why not?’ Abd El-Aziz was astonished by the question.

‘I don’t mean politicians should be corrupted. I mean politicians shouldn’t be dreamers. They should be practical and pragmatic. They should accept what is possible not insisting on ideal solutions,’ Nashaat said.

Their conversation was ended by the voice of Roh coming alone. Her elated mood was not because she came alone but because she was proud that the Revolutionary Leadership called Soliman for a meeting.

‘Soliman apologizes that he may not come because General Nagib invited Free Officers for a meeting,’ she said it in a showy manner. She looked at her brother and added as if she did not know that he was not from the trusted group, ‘why didn’t you go Aziz? I think all officers are now members in the Free Officers Movement.’

‘They said that. In fact, they allowed only the trusted officers to join their movement. Don’t forget I was in the Royal Guards. They transferred me to an office where I work as a clerk not as an officer,’ Abd El-Aziz said with bitterness.

‘Is it wrong to be a clerk? I’m a clerk and I’m happy,’ Nashaat said with a smile to relieve Abd El-Aziz’s tension.

‘I don’t mean it. It is supposed that I’m an officer. I know about training soldiers, about arms. I cannot imagine myself a clerk. It would be better if I work with father. I think about resigning from the army. You are busy Nashaat. You work as a clerk and at the same time, you

go to the Wafd Party. I think politicians have much to do these days,' Abd El-Aziz said.

'I resigned from the Wafd Party,' Nashaat said.

Farida jumped and hugged her brother and said, 'at last you did the right thing. Tomorrow, you go and join the Liberal Constitutional Party.'

'No,' Nashaat said. 'All parties are corrupted. There is no hope that these politicians may do something good to this country.'

'You took a good decision Nashaat,' Roh said. She crossed her legs and added, 'in fact all parties are corrupted. I think it is a matter of time and these politicians will stay at their homes. People now need new thinking. The country doesn't need them anymore.'

'I hope you don't discuss your opinions with dad,' Abd El-Aziz said.

They talked about policy while they were having the dinner. Farida neither ate nor talked much. For Abd El Aziz, it was explained that Nashaat attacked old politicians. However, for his sister it was too much that she did. After all, their father was not corrupt. After midnight, Nashaat asked Roh to take her to her house as she came in a taxi. On the road, they were silent but she was smiling. From now and then she looked at Nashaat while he was driving. He noticed her but he concentrated on the road. When he parked the car, he got out and went to open the door for her. She got out of the car slowly while smiling at him.

'You have to mind your words when you talk with Aziz,' he said. 'Aziz is very sensitive that he was abandoned and sent away from the

real the army. We know that he dreamt of being an officer since we were children. He doesn't think of himself working but an officer.'

'Why?' she said. Tears filled her eyes. She could not hold them. Even her voice was interrupted by her spasmodic weeping. 'Why Nashaat? Why do spoil everything? Today, I'm most happy. Why don't you think of my feelings before talking to me? You know that Soliman tries to transfer Aziz. It will be a matter of time. However, even if I did something wrong, you should be more decent. I, I,' She gave him her back and rushed through the gate to the lift. The few seconds during which the lift was ascending she looked at him and completed her incomplete sentence whisperingly, 'I love you.' She was crying silently when she went to bed before Soliman would come and ask about the cause of her sadness.

(6)

The Liberation Authority was the name of the new political organization that the Free Officers formed to replace all parties. Dissolving of parties made Refaat Pasha and Mahmood Pasha without anything to do but memories. They met everyday and sometimes they went to Alexandria together just to have something to do. They read every newspaper and talked about policy. It was the same conversation everyday. Usually it started with one of them asking the other about a political decision. They agreed or hoped the new regime would fall. They put unrealistic scenarios about the return of the king. Although the revolution canceled titles, they insisted on using their titles when they talked to each other. The waiters in Atinuos in Alexandria called them with their titles for the tips. As if they wanted to support their point of view, they always talked about people resisting the revolution and their proof was the waiter calling them Pashas. Trials for old politicians started. They feared that they would be the next to be accused. They knew that Soliman being the son of law of Mahmood Pasha was not enough protection against trials. To flee away from thought of jail, they assured themselves, even falsely that the king would return. Even they arranged the names of the revolutionaries that should be severely punished. After a while, their meetings became less and less but never stopped.

It was six o'clock in the morning when Farida got up to breastfeed her baby daughter Noor. She tiptoed her way out of the bedroom to her daughter's not to awake Abd El-Aziz. Noor was sleeping like an angel in

her bed. Her nanny was awaked waiting for Farida to come. Suddenly the phone rang. The nanny went to receive the call.

‘Refaat Pasha wants to talk to you madam,’ the nanny said.

‘Tell him that I breastfeed Noor,’ Farida said.

‘I think something serious happened and that’s why he calls in the early morning. It’ll take one hour at least before they give him another line,’ the nanny said.

She stopped feeding her baby. Noor cried. The nanny took the baby and Farida hurried.

‘Mum, no, oh my God. It happened suddenly,’ she cried. She saw her husband coming and annoyed. Before he asked, she said to him, ‘mum died Aziz.’ She cried hysterically.

When Nashaat knew that his mother died, the first thing crossed his mind was that if his father had not forbidden him from going there, he would have seen much of her. He sat silent looking at her photo and crying. He would never forgive his father for that. Memories hunted his mind. He remembered how she had managed to keep her children safe from their father’s stiff behavior. How she always defended their father’s decision even when it was obvious that he went far in his preservationist opinions. Sometimes, he and his sisters felt that she had not been convinced of what she had been defending. He remembered one of her stiff stand against his father when he chose to study in the faculty of commerce against the will of his father who wanted him to be a lawyer or an officer. His father never forgot that and never forgave them both. He remembered how he did much effort to win his father’s heart to satisfy his mother, but the hardhearted father never gave him

the chance. Contrary to his kind mother, his father thought that expressing love was a sign of weakness. He wondered sometimes if his father loved anybody one day. He wondered if his mother loved his father or she married him because her father decided to marry her to his nephew. He found himself kissing the photo while weeping. His enrage overwhelmed him and decided to treat his father as a stranger during the funeral and the condolences service. Only one idea was in his mind which was his father prevented him from seeing much of his mother before she died. Sad and enraged he left the apartment. He drove to his sister's house. He decided to keep a frigid masked face to hide his emotions not to let his tongue slip a word that might increase Farida's sadness. When he reached there, Soliman and Roh were trying to comfort Farida while Abd El-Aziz was also doing his best to calm her.

'Mum died Nashaat,' Farida said when she saw him and started to cry again.

He took her between his arms. He could not control himself when he saw his sister weeping on his chest. He said involuntarily, 'God bless her soul. God saved her from her hardhearted husband. I know she suffered much to bear his dictatorship. He made her suffer.' He cried and sat on the nearest chair.

Farida was shocked at the way he talked about their father. She looked at her husband to say something. All the three were hesitant to say a word.

'I think it is not the proper time to discuss these things now Nashaat,' Abd El-Aziz said.

'I think Refaat Pasha is not less sad than you and Farida,' Soliman said.

Roh stood on the chair's arm and put a hand on Nashaat's shoulder and said, 'whatsoever you feel we are going for her funeral. For her sake you must control yourself more than that.'

'I wish I could see much of her. I haven't seen her since ten months when she was here after Farida gave birth to Noor,' he said.

Roh took his head between her arms to comfort him.

After calming him, they decided that he would go with Farida and Abd El-Aziz not to let him drive.

Abd El-Aziz was driving his private car. In the back seat, Farida was sitting silent. Noor was sitting on the lap of her nanny beside her mother. Nashaat was sitting on the right front seat and he offered that he might drive if his brother in law felt tired. In the other car, Soliman and Roh were in the back seat of the army car that was given to Soliman to use privately. A driver soldier was driving it. This offer was given to Soliman because he was an officer in the closest circle to the commandship after the thirteen establishing members. An offer was given to trusted officer and not related to their rank or army list.

'I didn't think of Nashaat that child. Children cannot control their emotions. They love much and hate much,' Soliman said to Roh.

'He is,' Roh said. She feared that Soliman might blame her because she took Nashaat's head between her arms. She looked at Soliman and added, 'In fact he will never grow up. His father was right to be hard to make a man of him. Nashaat's childish behavior caused embarrassment for his father.'

'But he is very kind. Those overreacting persons are like an open book. They always tell about their thoughts. They have no secrets.'

‘I told you before that he is just a big child,’ she said.

Roh and Soliman asked the driver to accelerate so that they would reach before Abd El-Aziz, Farida and Nashaat to give notice to Mahmood Pasha that Nashaat would come in the other car. Mahmood Pasha had a seat in the reception near the gate to receive Nashaat. When the other car parked, he went to receive Nashaat and embraced him.

‘You should talk to your father. Let her be happy in her grave. She wished you reconcile,’ Mahmood Pasha said to Nashaat.

‘But he prevented me from seeing her when she was living. I feel that there are many things I wish I would have told her about,’ Nashaat wept again.

‘I’m sure that she knows now what you wanted to tell her. Her first wish was that you talk to your father. I’m sure this was her wish,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

‘Did she tell you?’ Nashaat asked Mahmood Pasha while weeping.

‘I’ll take you to Refaat Pasha,’ Mahmood Pasha put a hand on Nashaat’s back and they walked to study room where Refaat Pasha was using his handkerchief to dry his tears. It was the first time Nashaat saw his father cry.

He hurried to his father, took his hand, and kissed it, ‘stop crying dad. I’m sure God chose the best for her.’

‘She was a good and kind woman. God fulfilled her will that Nashaat returns to you,’ Mahmood Pasha said.

Refaat Pasha stood and hugged his son. That made Farida, Fayza and Malak relieved. After the funeral, they had lunch together with

others who came for the condolence service. After lunch, men were having the coffee.

‘Nashaat is too emotional to be a politician,’ Soliman said to Abd El-Aziz.

‘I think he will be a good politician. Family problems are something that makes us emotional. Don’t forget that it was the wish of his mother,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘Or Mahmood Pasha said that to Nashaat,’ Soliman said smilingly.

The Police Station Commissioner came to present his condolences for the family and to tell Soliman the content of a cable for him.

‘Major Soliman, President Mohamed Nagib delegates you to present him for the condolences service to Refaat Pasha and his family,’ the Commissioner said. Still he used the titles when he was talking unofficial.

‘But I’m in civilian dress and I don’t have a uniform here,’ Soliman said.

‘Tell me your size and I’ll send a car to Alexandria to bring a complete military uniform for you,’ the Commissioner said.

‘Thank you,’ Soliman said.

When Roh knew that, her husband would be the representative of the president she started to talk about his responsibility. Her mother was embarrassed that her daughter became that showy. The mother asked her for a word.

‘Nashaat will know that your husband is the representative of the president in the evening. Nobody here would tell him that. Most women

here met the king in parties and most probably they prefer the old days,' Golnar said.

'I don't mean it,' Roh said.

'No, you meant it. But the problem is that women understand that you talk to tell Nashaat. His sisters know. Women would say that you still love him,' Golnar said.

'But I don't mother,' Roh's tears fell.

'No you do,' Golnar said.

Roh burst in crying. Farida and Fayza came.

'What's the problem?' Farida asked.

'Nothing but Roh talks too much when she is sad. She wants also to comfort you and your sisters. I thought that she should stop talking too much. When she stopped she cried,' Golnar said.

'Let her talk aunt Golnar. All of us need to talk,' Fayza said.

Golnar returned to her seat and noticed women when were smiling at their whispers.

In the evening, men were standing at the entrance gate of the palace, receiving people who came for showing their sorrow and condolences; old Pashas, ex-ministers, members from all old parties, villagers and others. Mahmood Pasha stood beside his friend Refaat Pasha and Abd El-Aziz stood beside Nashaat. Inside, attendees whispered about the presence of Nashaat and his reconciliation with his father.

Soliman wore his uniform in Mahmood Pasha's palace then came. Before reaching the gate, the Police Commissioner hurried out and

saluted him officially. The police station sent three soldiers with rifles to salute him.

While the soldiers were kicking the ground with their right heels and rifles' heels, the commissioner shouted loudly, 'the representative of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Egypt.'

'The president asks God to bless her soul and pays his respect and condolences to you and to your family Mr. Refaat,' Soliman said. His voice was a bit high that others would hear what the president's message was.

Refaat Pasha was enraged that Soliman did not use his Pasha title. Mahmood Pasha looked angrily at Soliman while Nashaat accompanied him to the special seat that was put for the official representative to be seen by all attendees.

'This boy is crazy. I should have a word with him,' Mahmood Pasha said.

'That's what they told him to say,' Refaat pasha said.

'Being one of them doesn't mean that he shouldn't be decent and respectable. He has to apologize,' Mahmood Pasha's voice was loud.

Nashaat was coming after he seated Soliman and heard the last sentence Mahmood Pasha said. 'What's the problem Aziz?' Nashaat asked. When he knew, he smiled and said, 'but the president was a Pasha and cancelled his title. Soliman came officially so he should express the views of the commandship.'

'You mean that you agree on humiliating your father,' Refaat Pasha shouted at Nashaat.

'It isn't a humiliation. Now all men carry one title which is Mr.' Nashaat said.

‘And I’m like others. I’m like any common. You mean it,’ Refaat Pasha said angrily.

‘What’s the problem dad of being like others,’ Nashaat said.

Refaat Pasha slapped Nashaat and said loudly, ‘if Mahmood Pasha hadn’t mediated I wouldn’t have allowed you to stay. Go out forever and ever never I see you here again or I’ll tell the servants to throw you out.’

Mahmood Pasha pulled away his friend and Abd El-Aziz took Nashaat away.

‘If you father hadn’t asked me to reconcile I wouldn’t have talked to him. I’ll tell him that now,’ Nashaat said.

‘No, please Nashaat. Keep quiet now,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

Soliman was about to leave and Abd El-Aziz thought quickly and asked him to take Nashaat to Cairo with him and Roh.

On the road, Nashaat kept silent. Roh did not know what happened between Nashaat and his father. She thought that Nashaat was silent because he was sad.

‘I think I should go tomorrow. If you want to accompany me Nashaat I’ll tell the driver to pass at you tomorrow morning,’ she said.

‘He expelled me and threatened that he would ask servants to throw me out,’ Nashaat said.

‘Oh, my God,’ she said involuntarily. ‘What happened?’

‘It is a long story. Aziz and your father were present. I didn’t say anything. He just wants everybody agree to his opinions,’ Nashaat said.

(7)

Egypt witnessed a turmoil against President Mohamed Nagib in March, 1954. He was forced to resign. Members of the Free Officers Movement were not well known to people. Because of the popularity of Mohamed Nagib things were about to explode. Abd El-Aziz was among the armor officers who supported Mohamed Nagib while Soliman as a member of the Free Officers movement took Nasser's side. Few weeks before Soliman succeeded in appointing his brother in law to a command of battalion post. In fact, this move was part of a bigger one to put loyal officers to the Free Officers movement in sensitive posts. Soliman did his best to convince the commandship that Aziz would be loyal to them. When Aziz took Nagib's side, this enraged Soliman. He went to the battalion to have a word with his brother in law.

'How come you support General Nagib against us?' Soliman said before sitting.

'What else should I do? If you remember when we talked about the new regime while you and your force were, surrounding Abdeen palace you said that Nagib was the command. I don't know why things deteriorated between Nasser and Nagib. I know that Nagib wants the army to return to barracks and let politicians do their job. After all you said that you were a corrective movement,' Aziz said.

'What could I say to the commandship after all the efforts I did to give you a post in the army?' Soliman said.

'I don't know what you are talking about. The revolutionaries said that they did all that for people. Nagib wants to build a democracy. I don't see any good reason to impeach him,' Abd El-Aziz said.

‘Please Aziz, don’t go to the end of the road,’ Soliman said.

‘I don’t understand,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘Don’t go with armor and artillery officers, who want to riot in the general commandship headquarters,’ Soliman said.

‘Sorry, but I think I’ll do,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

That evening, Nashaat went to his sister and found Roh there. They were listening to the radio that suddenly announced the return of General Mohamed Nagib as a president. Nashaat did not show much enthusiasm about the news. Farida received the news with joy while Roh was anxious.

‘You did not comment on the news Nashaat,’ Roh said.

‘Yes, I’m thinking about something else. I’ll go and ask father to give me the land I inherited from mother. I’ll sell it and I’ll start the spinning factory business,’ he said.

‘Oh, my God, Dad would die if you did it,’ Farida said.

‘I don’t think this is the right thing. The era of big capitalists has gone forever,’ Roh said.

‘Who talked about capitalism? The man who will help me is Hassan Al-Sheikh. I met him in the detention. He is a communist. I’ll pay to workers what they deserve,’ Nashaat said.

‘A communist? I think this is a bad choice Nashaat,’ Roh said.

‘The business is not about policy. It is a factory,’ Nashaat said.

Aziz became happy that efforts succeeded and President Nagib returned. Roh knew that her husband would not be that happy. She knew that they argued about the matter few days ago. She asked her brother if he saw her husband that day. When he denied seeing him, she

left, as she knew that her husband might come depressed. Farida and Aziz discussed the Nashaat's plans of selling the land when they were having the dinner. For Farida's astonishment, her husband was supporting Nashaat's point of view.

'In fact, keeping lands is risky now as the revolutionaries may cut the property again after their first limit to 200 acres. Who knows?' Abd El-Aziz said.

The day Nashaat went to the village, Fayza who received a phone call from her sister Farida about their brother's intentions, was very anxious. She said to her father that Nashaat would come and the father thought that his son would come to apologize and to stay with him to run the land and other properties. She could not discuss the real cause. She thought that if she talked to Nashaat that their father was ready to forgive the son, he might rethink it and postpone his intentions.

'Did anybody ask you to expel me out?' Nashaat said to the servant who opened the iron and glass door of the palace for him.

The servant did not reply but Fayza hurried and hugged her brother.

'I understand that Farida told you why I'm here. Where's your father?' Nashaat said.

'I think he's your father also?' she responded with a smile.

'He was,' he said seriously and aggressively.

'Please Nashaat don't do actions that you may regret it later on,' she said.

He ignored her begging not to have a fight with his father and went to the study room where his father was used to spend most of his time when he was in home.

‘I want to sell the land that I inherited from mother. I have no objection if you buy it,’ Nashaat said.

‘Get out,’ Refaat Pasha said.

‘I go out but tomorrow you will receive a note from my lawyer. This is my final word,’ Nashaat said. He left the palace.

In the evening Nashaat was in his flat when Farida called him. She was crying. She asked him to come to her home. He told her that he would pass at the lawyer then he would come to her apartment. After about half an hour of talking and crying, she proposed that she would go to their father and talk to him so that he might buy the land. After few days Refaat Pasha agreed to buy Nashaat’s land after Mahmood Pasha convinced him. That was better than confronting him in courts and the press would not have a mercy on Pashas those days.

Nashaat met Hassan Al-Sheikh and they decided to buy a factory that its foreign owner decided to sell it and to return to his homeland. At the same time, Nashaat started to attend meeting in the Liberation Authority. There Nashaat met with members from the Free Officers Movement and he was considered one of the national capitalists that the new regime wanted them to replace the old capitalists. He predicted that the Free Officers prepare the political scene to impeach President Nagib forever.

The relation between Soliman and Abd El-Aziz was not so good as before since Abd El-Aziz took Nagib's side during March crisis. Yet the relation between Roh and Farida was not affected. Both women tried to amend rifts between their husbands and asked Nashaat to help them. Nashaat decided to make a small party in Oberge the famous nightclub in Pyramids street because his factory started to produce. In fact, he did it to invite Soliman and Abd El-Aziz. That day when they came accompanied by their wives, they found that Nashaat invited two directors and their wives. They welcomed their presence. However after few minutes a single man came. They thought that he was another director.

'Mr. Hassan Al-Sheikh, our workers' boss,' Nashaat introduced the man.

At first Roh and Farida were not at ease to sit with a worker on the same table. They talked to each other in French. They discovered that Hassan shared them their conversation in fluent French. They also discovered that Hassan knew how to behave according to the high class protocols and they found him intellectual.

'Sorry, but who taught you the French language?' Roh asked.

'Michel Courier, the founder of the Egyptian Communist Party,' Hassan said.

'Did you know him?' Soliman asked.

'I was one of his closest friends and I consider him my teacher,' Hassan said.

Hassan, the two directors, and their wives did not stay for long. They left after dinner.

‘Take care Nashaat. These communists are troublesome,’ Soliman warned.

‘He is a good boss and workers respect him much. He is expert in spinning machines,’ Nashaat responded.

That night resolved much of the crisis between Soliman and Abd El-Aziz and they agreed on meeting again at the weekend.

When Roh and Soliman returned, they received an early morning phone telling that the Soliman’s father died.

(8)

Soliman's father was living with his unmarried daughter Samiah. After the condolences days he decided that his sister should live with him, as it was not accepted socially that a girl lives alone. In fact, Roh felt that Soliman would take that decision so she decided to tell him first. He appreciated much her thinking. Roh bought a new bedroom for Samiah and she went to help her to bring her belongings. She took Samiah to Farida. They treated her as a sister. Rapidly, a good friendship developed between Farida and Samiah. However, Roh nearly controlled Samiah's life and in fact, she liked her sister in law, but her domination instinct found Samiah a suitable person. Samiah also liked the aristocratic life that Roh was living. Soliman was almost always in work.

On Fridays, Nashaat saw Samiah frequently. He did not feel something special towards her. Once, all were having lunch together as usual. This time was Roh's turn to invite them. Samiah was studying in the faculty of commerce. She did not like accounting. Roh suggested that Nashaat might help her to understand the subject. She was in the third year.

'Nashaat,' Roh said while Nashaat was eating a fish dish that it was first time Roh put it on the table. 'Do you like this kind of fish?'

'Yes, it is very delicious,' he said.

'Samiah made it,' Roh said.

'You have to tell me how you do it. I think Aziz liked it too much also,' Farida said.

‘Yes I did,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

Samiah responded by a shy smile.

‘Don’t tell anybody,’ Roh said. ‘Let it be your special plate when we come to eat at your house when you marry.’ Roh smiled at Farida who understood what her friend meant.

‘Did you tell Nashaat about the accounting, Samiah?’ Farida said.

Nashaat looked at Samiah who smiled and said softly ‘would please help me to understand some difficulties in accounting. I’m in third year and I’ll choose management section. So, this year is the last one that I study accounting.’

‘You welcome. But promise me that you’ll cook fish after passing the exam,’ he said.

‘Thank you,’ Samiah said.

‘When do we start?’ Nashaat said.

‘Today, after lunch,’ Roh decided.

After lunch while Nashaat and Samiah were sitting on the dining room solving accounting problems, Soliman and Abd El-Aziz were discussing something more important that changed history of the country later on. They went to the study room to drink café.

‘Next week, we’ll impeach General Nagib. This is a top secret. It is good that Nashaat is busy with Samiah. I told you to know your opinion,’ Soliman said.

‘Although I like President Nagib, I think we’re at crossroads. His Majesty agreed to the Free Officers request to leave the country not to make a fight between his officers. Nagib should take the same decision,’ Abd El-Aziz said.

‘Then you’re with us,’ Soliman said.

‘Yes,’ Abd El-Aziz said. He looked at Soliman and asked, ‘will you force him to leave the country?’

‘Really, I don’t know. I think the only one who could answer this question is Nasser. He may have told his closest friends in the commandship, the Commandship Council, I mean,’ Soliman said.

In the balcony, Roh and Farida were planning another different plan, planning for union not for abdication.

‘It would be a great pleasure,’ Farida said.

‘But we need some arrangements. First, who tells Nashaat? Second, uncle Refaat Pasha should be with him when he proposes to Samiah and meets Soliman officially,’ Roh said.

‘I tell Nashaat. But I doubt that my father would forgive him after selling the land. Second, it is no secret that father did not like Soliman after he called him Mr. the day mother died,’ Farida said.

Roh thought for a while then said, ‘you tell Nashaat. I’ll find a solution. Soliman also sympathized with Nashaat when he knew that Nashaat defended him that day and your father expelled him from the house.’

Nashaat was sitting in his office in the factory when Hassan Al-Sheikh entered the office. Hassan was angry because Nashaat fired a worker after an engineer asked him to do.

‘Could I ask you a question?’ Hassan said.

‘Have a seat, Hassan?’ Nashaat said with a smile.

His quiet manner did not defuse the Hassan's rage who said, 'would please tell me why you fired workers?'

'It is only one worker not workers. Hiring and firing is the job of management not your job. When the engineer discussed what this troublesome man did, I decided that he should not have a place here. He is lazy and the engineer warned him several times. He tries to instigate workers against the management,' Nashaat said.

'But I trained him and he's a clever worker,' Hassan said.

'He may be clever but he is not active. When you say clever and the engineer says lazy then I agree with the engineer because he is the responsible about the production policy. It is final,' Nashaat said decisively.

'What if I insist that he returns or I leave,' Hassan said.

'Don't say it again. Anyone wants to leave he's free. We can hire another man. You take higher salary than others pay in other places. You just do your job. Don't interfere in the management job. You should obey the engineer's instructions. I don't want to tell you that again. I think you should supervise workers now,' Nashaat said.

That night Hassan Al-Sheikh met his comrades of the Communist Secret Movement. And they discussed the matter and decided to take actions. The first was not to meet frequently as the secret police was arresting communists. The most important action was that their decision to infiltrate the National Union that the revolutionaries established. They left the meeting one by one. Hassan was the last to leave the place. He did not return home. He passed at Serag Zaki's home. In fact, Serag and other officers of the secret police continued

their job in the service of the revolutionaries. The information they knew were valuable about secret movement. Hassan gave him a folded paper.

‘The weekly report,’ Hassan said while standing at the door.

‘Come in,’ Serag said.

‘What happened today between you and Nashaat?’ Serag asked.

‘Exactly as what you predicted,’ Hassan said.

‘This means that Nashaat is not a communist,’ Serag said.

‘I told you the day I was released that he was arrested because he attended a meeting to know about communists’ plans. I told you that he is not a communist and he will not be,’ Hassan said.

‘Then we’ll help him to have a higher post in the National Union. However, I’d like to put him in trouble before that. Tomorrow, tell workers to strike against impeaching of Nagib. And I’ll bring Nashaat. Don’t ever let him succeed in containing them. At the same time, you tell me names of the workers who will riot against Nasser. I’ll oblige Nashaat to employ some workers who are loyal to us,’ Serag said. He smiled at Hassan and said, ‘be ready. We’ll arrest you with the workers who will be fired.’ Serag gave Hassan some banknotes.

The plan succeeded and Nashaat received a phone to meet Serag in the interior ministry. Nashaat received a list of names to be employed and was told to fire some more workers.

‘Do you know who instigated them?’ Serag asked.

‘No,’ Nashaat did not tell about Hassan.

Serag smiled and said, ‘I know. You welcome at anytime. You have my phone numbers.’

Next day, Serag went to see the detainees. He tortured them. When the Commissioner of the prison advised him not to torture political detainees, he lied and said, ‘this is the orders of higher ranks.’

He left the prison and went to the office in the Ministry of Interior. He told his bosses that he arrested a communist cell. They asked about proofs. He said, ‘they confessed.’ Nobody cared to investigate his claims as long as security was kept. He was satisfied that he succeeded in portraying himself as an active sincere officer.

(9)

Nashaat knew from his servant that Farida wanted to see him urgently. He phoned his sister but she did not tell him anything. She said that she wanted him for something important and that they should discuss the subject. She was calm and even she laughed while they were talking. When he proposed that he would come to her home soon, she asked him to have his siesta then he would come to her home fresh. She asked him to cancel any appointment that evening. He objected to that because he was nominated for the next parliamentary elections and he would pass at Hassan Al Sheikh to plan for the campaign. She insisted. As usual, he succumbed to her will. He phoned Serag and excused that he had a diarrhea.

Serag was in his office. He laughed after he returned the mouthpiece. He called one of his aids.

‘Keep an eye on Nashaat as usual even after the elections. He will be our man in the parliament. Record his phone calls. Call me at night. Remind me to congratulate him for his engagement to Colonel Soliman’s sister. Don’t tell Hassan anything. Just say to him that his appointment with Nashaat today is cancelled. Don’t tell him why. Remind me to reprimand Nashaat for his lies. When he goes to his sister, he should tell me that frankly. Understand,’ he said to his aid.

‘Yes Sir, but should not we be sure that he agreed to his sister’s suggestion and that he would marry Samiah before you congratulate him.’ the officer said.

‘This isn’t your business. You know that we make surveillances on many persons. Nashaat’s voice is high enough to be heard by neighbors and porters. Colonel Aziz is under surveillance. He was one of the Royal Guards who did not support the revolution except when the King agreed to leave. He sided with Nagib first time. I know what happens in his bedroom,’ Serag laughed.

Nashaat went to Farida to find Roh there. Abd Al-Aziz was also present. He did not notice anything abnormal. He wondered why Farida wanted him urgently.

‘Is there anything wrong?’ Nashaat asked.

‘What do you think about Samiah?’ Roh asked.

‘She is very intelligent. She understands what I say during accounting lessons without much effort. I think she will pass with high marks,’ he said. He looked at Farida. He did not see any clues in her indifferent smiling face. He stared at Roh and asked devilishly, ‘is this the urgent subject? You want to ask about Samiah’s achievement in her lessons.’

‘I think you know what is in my mind,’ Roh said.

‘I got it,’ he said.

‘What is your opinion?’ Roh asked.

‘She’s very kind and pretty,’ Farida said.

‘There’s a big problem,’ Nashaat said.

‘I don’t think there is any problem,’ Roh said.

‘My father is the problem. You forgot that he would not come with me to propose. I don’t think Soliman may accept a man for his sister who comes to him without his father,’ Nashaat said.

‘Oh my God. We forgot that. Let’s try to mediate between you and father. And don’t forget that if you won in the elections, father would be proud of you,’ Farida said.

‘And if I don’t win,’ Nashaat said.

‘You will win,’ Roh said confidently.

‘Why do say that?’ Nashaat asked Roh.

‘Let’s solve the problem of Refaat Pasha. I could sort it out if he refused to come with you,’ Roh said.

‘Did you tell Soliman?’ Nashaat asked.

‘I’ll tell him today that Farida talked to me about the subject. I’ll tell you tomorrow. To cut short, Soliman will accept you whether uncle Refaat comes with you or not. This does not mean that his presence is not important. But I have my ways to convince Soliman. I see Samiah and you are good persons. Agreed?’ Roh said and stared at Nashaat.

‘Before I agree I want to know whom idea was it? Farida’s or yours?’ he smiled at Roh.

‘Am I a family member or not?’ Roh smiled softly at Nashaat.

‘Of course you are,’ Nashaat and Farida said simultaneously.

‘Then it is my duty to plan for two dear good person,’ Roh said.

When Roh was beside Nashaat in the car, he drove while he was smiling. Roh was smiling also. When they reached the building, Roh kissed him on his cheek.

‘Thank you,’ she said.

‘For what?’

‘For not letting me down,’ she said.

‘I should be the thankful,’ he said.

‘Why?’ she asked.

‘You said that I’m a good person,’ he said.

‘You’re Nashaat. But take care. She is an orphan. I’ll take the role of the mother in law,’ she said.

‘It is a marriage not a game,’ he said.

‘Life is a game,’ she said.

‘It is a risky game,’ he said.

‘This is my favorite one,’ she said and left.

When he was driving to his home, he thought about what if he obeyed his father and married Roh.

In her bedroom Roh was happy because Nashaat would marry a woman that she chose for him and most important that he was not in love with this woman.

Refaat Pasha refused Abd Al-Aziz’ mediation and refused to talk to Nashaat or to go with him to meet Soliman. Yet Roh convinced her husband to accept the proposal of Nashaat to marry his sister and in fact, Soliman was sympathizing with Nashaat in his familial conflict after he knew that Nashaat defended him the day Nashaat’s mother died. Moreover, Refaat

Pasha did not come to Cairo for condolences service when Soliman's father died. Shortly Samiah was engaged to Nashaat. Roh and Farida were busy in buying the furniture for the new bride. Shortly after engagement, Nashaat won elections and became a member of parliament, thanks to Hassan Al-Sheikh campaign and to Serag's tricks.

When Gamal Abd-El-Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, people received his decision with enthusiasm and support. Yet after three months, the tripartite attack on Egypt by Israel, France and Britain took place. He was forced to withdraw troops from Sinai. Shortly the international community led by the US that wanted to replace the British in the east and by Russia that wanted to prove itself as a global force took actions and the foreign troops withdrew. Abd Al-Aziz shred in the war and he was astonished that withdrawal decision reached before his brigade had the chance to fight the Israelis. He returned enraged.

'Soliman, they should have given us the chance to fight,' Abd Al-Aziz said while they were sitting in Groppi.

'I think the commandship had other calculations. They had to defend Port Saied. Anyhow the aggressors withdrew and their conspiracy failed,' Soliman said.

'The army needs a professional leader. Amer is too young to lead the army,' Aziz said.

'He is the most faithful to Nasser. The army has to be controlled.' Soliman said.

While they were chatting about the war, Farida's servant came. Something serious that brought her to see Aziz. Both Soliman and Aziz asked her.

'Madam Farida received a phone call telling her that Refaat Pasha died. She is in a miserable condition and asked me to come here to tell you,' she said.

'Did she call Nashaat?' Aziz asked.

'Mr. Nashaat is not in his home as the his servant told the madam that he left early to meet some of members of the parliament before coming at us,' the servant said.

Roh was ready to go to Farida after Farida told her the news. She was waiting for Samiah who was in her bedroom looking at the mirror. Roh entered the bedroom when Samiah was vaporizing perfume at her black dress.

'I think it is not proper that you go to the countryside with this blouse that exposes much. There, they are too conservative,' Roh said aggressively.

'I haven't another black blouse,' Samiah said.

'If Soliman saw this blouse you wouldn't wear it again,' Roh said.

'But he saw it the day father died,' Samiah said.

'But it is not suitable for countryside. You may take one of my blouses,' Roh ordered.

'But you wear a blouse that exposes also,' Samiah said.

'I'm a married woman. You are a girl. Anyhow, Nashaat will not be in a mode that he might notice what you wear. But

others will notice,' Roh finished her words and went to her bedroom and returned with a black blouse.

Samiah wore the blouse that Roh brought.

After condolence days, Nashaat brought Fayza and Malak to live with him in Cairo. The fourteen-year old Malak feared the change especially that she knew that Nashaat would marry. She liked Samiah but the effect of the Egyptian movies that ruined the image of the in laws especially female ones made her fear the new arrangements. Malak was twenty five years old and was happy that she would live in Cairo. She had artistic talents and she hoped someone would observe her drawings one day. Nashaat turned down Abd El-Aziz and Farida's request that the girls live with them.

'I don't know why you refuse that the girls live with their sister?' Aziz asked.

'Aziz, you're a brother. But girls should live with me. Don't forget that Fayza is a young lady and Malak is a teenager. Sometimes decisiveness might be needed. You may hesitate to give them instructions and Farida is not decisive at all,' Nashaat said. He thought for a second then added, 'I'd like you to be with me when I talk to Soliman about these new arrangements. When I proposed to him it was supposed that Samiah wouldn't live with my sisters.'

'I think he would support you. Don't forget that he brought Samiah to live with him after their father died,' Aziz said.

'I should talk to Samiah as well,' Nashaat said.

Both Samiah and Soliman welcomed the idea. Samiah thought that the presence of the girls with her might reduce Roh's trial to

control her life. Roh welcomed the idea much as she felt that these arrangements restrict the privacy of the new bride and groom.

‘I think we have to do something for the girls to take them out of the depressing mood,’ Roh said.

‘It would be appropriate if we waited for sometime,’ Nashaat said.

‘Malak is too young to wear black for one year. She has to feel that Cairo means happier life for her or she would be imprisoned in her sadness for a long time,’ Roh said.

‘Let’s women do that job, Roh and Farida could arrange some days out and they may take them to cinemas. Let’s meet here everyday so that girls go out,’ Soliman said. He looked at his sister and added, ‘it would be a good opportunity that Samiah and your sisters know each other better.’

‘I think I should find a wider place. I’ll start tomorrow to see apartments in Heliopolis. But I want to talk to Samiah in private please,’ Nashaat said. They went to the balcony and it took few minutes and they returned smiling.

‘How come Nashaat thinks that I have objections to his sisters living with me,’ Samiah said.

‘You shouldn’t have asked her,’ Roh said. ‘Any good wife should be proud of her husband when he does the right thing.’

‘But, I think that it will be her life and she should tell freely that she accepts the new arrangements,’ he said.

‘You are a gentleman Nashaat,’ Soliman said.

‘Of course he is,’ Samiah said while looking at Roh from an angle of her eyes.

When Serag knew that Nashaat was trying to find a larger apartment he phoned him.

‘Hello, Nashaat,’ Serag started. ‘Don’t you consider me a friend or what?’ Serag said.

‘Of course, you’re one of my best friends. I never forget your services during the elections. Has something happened in the Parliament?’ Nashaat said.

‘No, everything is okay as long as our sincere members are there. But you had to tell me that you want a larger apartment. Of course, Colonel Soliman cannot ask his colleagues for a favor for his brother in law. You had to give me the chance to do that. After all we don’t forget our sincere persons,’ Serag said.

‘I should be most grateful if you find me one,’ Nashaat said.

‘I found one. It is few meters away from Colonel Aziz’s apartment. You sisters can go to Madam Farida at anytime as it would take a two-minute walk. It is a governmental property. The owner was one of the corrupted politicians that the revolution confiscated their property. You just come tomorrow to my office and you sign the contract. I’ll arrange for moving your furniture and everything after painting it. I’ll send a decor specialist to supervise painting. It will take two weeks to finish it,’ Serag said.

‘Thank you Mr. Serag,’ Nashaat said.

‘It is my duty to serve sincere people and don’t forget that the bride is sister of one of our heroes,’ Serag said.

After Nashaat married Samiah, there were no problems regarding the relations between Samiah and the two girls. The main

problem was that Nashaat sometimes listened to Roh's opinions. This made some arguments between him and his wife. Moreover, Samiah became pregnant while Roh had two miscarriages.

Fayza started to socialize herself in Heliopolis Sporting Club and drew some pictures that showed her talent. She asked Nashaat to have drawing lessons who in turn asked Hassan Al-Sheikh to find one. Hassan told Serag who asked him to send Kamal Abd El-Wahid. The security guy liked to put everybody in trouble when needed. Hassan introduced Kamal, a young teacher. Kamal's dreams were greater than being a teacher in governmental schools. He saw himself a talented artist who one day may make a breakthrough. He was a communist and a hardliner and that was the cause that Serag wanted him to know Nashaat. One day he might use this as card to press on Nashaat. Letting a communist enter his home was something serious then days. The Political Police arrested Kamal several times. He saw the new revolutionary regime another unjust system that tried to deceive workers and farmers for the sake of the bourgeoisies. He falsely thought that Hassan was a sincere communist.

Nashaat's business was so successful that he thought about having a branch in Syria or the Northern Province as its name was changed after union with Egypt. What encouraged him was that Aziz was sent there. He arranged for a trip to see conditions there. Roh asked Soliman to visit her brother and her sister in law Farida there and he agreed. Roh knew about Nashaat's trip when he was discussing the matter with Soliman who encouraged him to do. Samiah had no idea about

Nashaat's plans. When Nashaat returned home it was late. Samiah was in her eighth pregnant month.

'Are you going to Damascus?' she asked.

'Yes, but, after you give birth; I cannot leave you pregnant in your last months alone,' he said.

'Roh plans to go there,' she said.

'I have no idea about that. Even if she plans to fly to Damascus, this is none of my business,' he said.

'She plans to go with you. She asked Soliman to visit Aziz and Farida and when he agreed she phoned me to ask me if I need anything from Damascus,' she was crying.

'First you have to know that the main problem between me and my father; May God bless his soul, was because I refused to marry Roh. I don't like to talk about it but I think time has come that you should know the story. Roh is a sister and nothing more. Even I don't like her interferences and sometimes I wonder why don't you stop her but I think that you don't want to angry Soliman,' he said. He thought for a while then added, 'tomorrow you phone Roh and tell her that will accompany me and we decided that Aziz and Farida may not have enough place for us all so that we'll stay in hotel while she stays at them. I think Farida will be happy when she sees our kid.'

'We cannot leave the girls here alone,' she said.

'Then, we'll take them with us,' he said.

'This'll cost much,' she said.

'I don't care about money. I never cared about it. It was my dream to make this business. You know that we have enough money. What is important is that you should not be angry. And please don't

talk about Roh more. You may stop her. However, my sincere advice is that you should not angry your brother so be diplomat when you handle the matter,' he said.

'I'll go to tell Malak and Fayza that we will go to Syria,' she said smiling.

Nashaat was in his office with a client wanted to buy big amount of his products to export them to Europe. It was a good opportunity for him to let the world know his factories' products. While he was negotiating the discount to encourage the client to take a big amount, he heard arguments between his secretary and a woman. The sound of the woman was not strange. He contacted the secretary through the Dictaphone and knew the voice. It was Roh's.

'Madam, please he is in an important meeting. Just wait for five minutes,' he heard the secretary.

Roh did not respond. She opened the door and entered into the office.

'You may wait five minutes until we finish,' Nashaat said decisively.

'I think we finished. I agree to your terms Mr. Nashaat,' the businessman said.

When the client left she smiled and said, 'sorry, but I thought you are sitting with a woman.'

'I'm married now. I don't mix work with pleasure,' he said.

'You still have some adventures,' she asked.

'Of course not,' he said.

'I think I have to take care of my sister in law Samiah,' she said.

‘I see,’ he replied indifferently.

‘Could you tell me why you’ll take Samiah and the girls to Damascus?’ she asked.

He asked the secretary not to let anybody into the office.

‘Tell her that she has to let me in without delay,’ she said.

‘Then I’m going to tell her not to do her job. It is her duty to arrange my schedules,’ he said.

‘I’m above your schedules,’ she said. ‘Now let me know why you are taking the girls and Samiah. She’ll have a baby and it would be difficult to enjoy the trip and take care of the baby.’ She lit a cigarette and crossed her legs while puffing smoke into his face.

‘First time I know that you smoke,’ he said.

‘Now you knew,’ she said.

‘Farida has the right to see the baby,’ he did not tell her that Samiah was angry that both of them would travel together. ‘The girls will be happy because they will spend sometime with Farida.’

‘And Samiah will be happy that we won’t be alone,’ she laughed.

‘You’re crazy. You’ll take us to a very dangerous path,’ he said.

‘I’m not the Wafd Party or the project that you had argued with your father about it. You refused everything when he tried to set plans for your life. You forget that I was special. If you married me I would set plans and your father would agree to what you wanted to do,’ she stood up. She stared into his eyes and said, ‘I’ll ask Soliman for a divorce.’

‘Are you crazy?’ he said annoyingly.

‘I can’t stay until he takes a second wife. I was at my gynecologist. He told me that after the two miscarriages, it would be impossible to

have a baby as I have an infantile uterus.' She cried and added, 'I couldn't go anywhere but here to talk to you. I know I was rude with your secretary but I wanted to talk to you.'

'You may go to Europe. Medicine there is more advanced,' he took her between his arms. His tears fell.

'You cry for me Nashaat,' she said. She wore her black glasses and they left together. Before leaving she said softly to the secretary, 'sorry.'

He drove the car without having an idea about the destination.

'Go to Mina House at Pyramids,' she said while sitting beside him in his car.

'Why Mina House?' he asked.

'Sometimes the revolutionaries have lunch in Hilton. Today Soliman is in a meeting in the command-ship,' she said.

They had lunch in Mina House Hotel. He asked her not tell Soliman about the divorce. She insisted that she would tell her husband that she was infertile.

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Nashaat was too excited when he received a phone call telling him that his wife had labor pain. He left the office and went to the hospital where Fayza was accompanying Samiah. He knew that Samiah had severe bleeding and doctors would operate. When Soliman came his sister was in the operating theatre. Roh came and noticed that Nashaat was more anxious than her husband. When doctors came out of the operation theatre and told them that Samiah gave birth to a boy, Soliman jumped and hugged Nashaat.

‘Gamal. His name is Gamal after Gamal Abd El-Nasser,’ Soliman said.

‘Yes, it is a good name,’ Nashaat agreed.

In the bedroom Roh was very nervous. She waited until Soliman wore his pajama.

‘You were too happy that Samiah gave birth. Don’t say that you were happy because the baby is your nephew,’ she said.

‘The only reason for my happiness you have already denied,’ he said. He knew that her mood was bad.

‘I think you should marry another woman to have your own baby. However I never agree to be a second wife,’ she said.

‘You start the same discussion. I’m tired now and I should get up early. Please, switch off lights,’ he said.

‘Before I switch off lights I want to hear it. Divorce me. I’m not going to be a second wife. It is a matter of time and you’ll marry. I know that. I don’t blame you. After all it is your right to have your own baby,’ she said.

‘I love you Roh. I’ll never marry again,’ he said and hugged her. He kissed her on mouth. His trials to have some intimacy were met by her frigidity.

‘What is this for?’ she said.

‘I don’t understand. We are husband and wife,’ he said.

‘Husbands and wives do that to have babies,’ she said and pulled the cover on her and switched off lights.

Fayza continued drawing and spent time in gardens. She went also to old Cairo where ateliers of Egyptian painters were present among residential old homes. She went to opera with her artists friends and became a regular audience in concerts of Om Kolthom, the legendary Egyptian singer. She returned late sometimes and that caused some tensions between her and Nashaat. What complicated the situation was that while they were having the lunch the telephone rang. Malak went to receive the call.

‘Someone called Kamal Abd El-Wahed wants to talk to you, Fayza,’ she said to her sister.

‘Who’s Kamal?’ Nashaat asked.

‘He’s a painter and a friend,’ she said.

He caught Fayza’s arm and said sharply, ‘sit down.’ He replaced the mouthpiece. ‘After lunch, I’d like to talk to you.’

Malak and Samiah felt the tension and talked to Fayza after the lunch. When Fayza and Nashaat were alone in the reception he was very nervous.

‘I think the word friend is not a suitable word to be said for a man. If he is a painter and you see him in a community then he is

colleague. Second, it is not right that he calls you here. Third I'd like you not to go to the ateliers of these artists anymore. Think about these and I'm not going to accept any objection,' he said and left the reception.

In Damascus, Farida received a letter from her sister Fayza telling her that Nashaat became very nervous and told her what happened between them. Aziz was writing a report that would be handled personally to the commandship in Egypt.

'When will you fly to Egypt?' she asked.

'Unfortunately, now the revolutionaries call it the Southern Province of the United Arab Republic. I don't know why they did not keep its name. They would have called it the Egyptian Province or the Egyptian State or anything but they should have kept its name,' he said.

'Are you going to suggest that?' she asked anxiously.

'They only hear themselves. For them I'm a son of a Pasha, an officer in the Royal Guard and I sided with Mohamed Nagib. I'm going to tell them that I have reports about conspiracies among Syrian officers to topple the regime here and to split. I hope they would believe me,' he said.

'Is it true that some Syrian officers want to split?' she asked.

'Yes, I discovered that it is not a rumor,' he said.

'Could you take me with you? I know it is a short trip but there're some problems between Nashaat and Fayza. Fayza is not the girl Nashaat knew when he was living with us. I know Fayza. I think I have to talk to her,' she said.

‘I was thinking about taking you to Egypt for good. I think it is not safe for Egyptian officers’ wives to stay here anymore,’ he said.

‘Really, what happened?’ she asked.

‘Mistakes from both sides; we were sincere but we committed mistakes. They were sincere but they committed mistakes. I think it is too late,’ he said.

‘What if they do not believe you in Egypt?’ she asked.

‘I have to do the right thing. If they did not believe me they would move me to Egypt and I think they would enlist me for retirement,’ he said.

Roh and Nashaat were used to meet once weekly in Mina House in Pyramids. When Nashaat told Roh about Fayza and Kamal, she blamed him.

‘What should I have done?’ he asked.

‘It would be much better if you told me to talk to her. Farida would solve this problem. After all, Malak is young and Samiah is a new comer to the aristocratic class. I think Samiah feared that you might kill Fayza,’ she said.

‘In fact if she met him again I would think about that,’ he said.

‘Really?’ she asked.

‘What else should I do?’ he asked.

‘First, this man Kamal does not belong to our class. Tell her to think about engagement and she will leave him for good. When I married Soliman, I discovered that he knew how to be a gentleman because he served in the Royal Guard. In fact, I discovered that he hides

his real persona of the stiff eastern man. That's why I want to leave him,' she said.

'I think we closed this subject. Still I'm here as a brother. Aziz is in Syria and I take his role. I think Soliman is a gentleman with eastern habits like all of us,' he said.

'I married him first of all because, because,' she turned her face to wipe a teardrop.

'I understand,' he said.

'And I want to leave him for the same reason. Being an infertile is not a problem for him. He accepted it. I don't care about children. You have a boy,' she said.

'What do you mean?' he said.

'Take me as a second wife after I get divorce,' she said.

'How come and Samiah is his sister?' he said.

'I see that the problem is Samiah and not the idea. Then, this is your problem. I go on my plans,' she said.

'Are you crazy?' he asked.

'Yes, when I love. If I had doubts about your feelings I wouldn't tell you anything. Woman's feeling is her best guide,' she said.

'I think we have to go to the airport now. Aziz and Farida's plane will land after one hour,' he said.

'You go. I'll be with Fayza and Malak. Do you mind that I talk to Fayza?' she said.

'Of course not. You are like her sister,' he said.

'And I'll be her sister in law. I promise,' she said.

(12)

It was a hot summer day when Malak was sitting anxious listening to the Radio to know the results of the General Certificate of Education. Before she heard her name Nashaat phoned to tell her that she passed the exam with high degrees. He knew from Serag Zaki. Samiah and Fayza congratulated her. She phoned Farida who decided that she would make a party for her that night. They went to Farida to have lunch with her and her husband Abd El-Aziz. He was at his new office. Farida phoned him to tell him the news. He was depressed after the army transferred him to a civilian job because of his report about Syria. They gave him a job as a director in the Ministry of Culture. He was responsible for publishing a series of low priced books. In fact, he did not know about the job but gradually he learnt how to deal with problems of censor and finishing books. He was forced to read books to reduce political censor problems. He had orders to refer writers to the State Department if their opinions showed any opposition. During the year that he spent in the ministry he read many books. Several times he contacted writers and asked them to change a paragraph or a statement that might carry double meanings. This created problems between him and Serag Zaki who became a colonel in the State Department. Many times Abd Al-Aziz complained to Soliman about Serag but Soliman was convinced that Serag was doing his job honestly and that the revolution needed such men for protecting it against its enemies. However Soliman never asked Abd El-Aziz to change his method of telling writers to credit their works instead of telling about them.

Roh phoned Soliman to tell him about the lunch at her brother's family. She said that she would wait for him to go together. She asked him not to be busy at the evening and night because of the Malak's party. Few minutes later she received a phone call from her husband telling her that he was forced to attend an urgent meeting. He asked her to have lunch with them and he would come at evening for the party. She went to her brother's house to find that Nashaat apologized because he had a meeting in the National Union and he would come at the evening. While women were waiting for Abd El-Aziz, Malak, Fayza and Samiah went to buy pastries for the party. Roh and Farida chatted together.

'How's Aziz?' Roh asked Farida.

'Still sad; He does not find himself in his new job. They want him to tell about writers and he does not do that,' Farida said.

'It is better for him if he resigned. We don't need money and he has enough,' Roh said.

'It is not that easy. They may consider that an uncooperative action. They may arrest him. Don't forget his report. He was referred to a military trial. Soliman and some colleagues saved his neck,' Farida said. She kept silent for a while then said, 'the good news is that he started writing after he read many books. He reads a book every three days. He writes a novel and a political book. The bad news is that he writes in the political book about his political expectations and predictions. I tried to tell him not to write in policy but he refused. Could you talk to him Roh,' Farida said.

‘Of course, it is good that Soliman would come at evening. I want to talk to Aziz about many things,’ she said and after starring at Farida’s eyes she added, ‘I want a divorce.’

‘Are you crazy?’ Farida said. ‘It did not happen before in our family.’

‘But it happens in other families everyday. Not every divorced woman is a slut,’ she said the bad word.

‘How could you say this word?’ Farida smiled.

‘And I’ll say more if it is necessary to convince Aziz and to let me get my divorce,’ Roh said.

‘Why do you want to have a divorce?’ Farida said astonishingly.

‘Because I love Nashaat,’ Roh said.

‘Oh, my God,’ Farida said.

The doorbell rang and the three women entered carrying pastries for the party. Malak and Fayza carried the pastries to the kitchen while Samiah joined Roh and Farida. Farida was about to faint when she saw Samiah.

‘How are you Farida? Are you ill? You are pale and putting your hand on your head,’ Samiah asked.

‘I’m fine. I have headache. I’ll take Aspirin,’ Farida said and left the room.

After attending the meeting in the National Union Serag Zaki went to Nashaat.

‘Congratulations for Miss Malak?’ Serag said.

‘Thank you. And many thanks that you told me the results,’ Nashaat said.

‘We’re a family,’ Serag said. ‘I want to have a word with you.’

‘Of course, let’s go to Hilton,’ Nashaat said. Hilton hotel was few meters away from the National Union headquarters.

‘No, it is just something about Colonel Soliman, your brother in law,’ Serag said.

‘I’m all ears,’ Nashaat said.

‘The good news is that he will be appointed an Ambassador very soon and I want you to be the first to congratulate him. The bad news is that he will marry today. He decided to take a second wife to have children,’ Serag said and fixed his eyes on Nashaat’s face to see the impression.

‘Oh, my God, his wife Roh will go crazy. I think she should not know,’ Nashaat said.

‘This depends upon his decision. With whom will he prefer to take as the Ambassador’s wife?’ Serag said. ‘Another thing, please Hassan will visit you tomorrow. I think you are kind enough to employ him again. In fact there are some troublemaker workers in your factory. It is our common interest to expose them.’

‘Sure,’ Nashaat said.

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Nashaat did not tell about the marriage of Soliman even to his wife. He never asked her if her brother had told her before deciding this step. However he felt anxious about the day Soliman would travel abroad. The phone rang while he was thinking about that. It was Roh.

‘Please we have to meet today,’ she was crying.

‘Why are you crying?’ he said and felt the timed bomb was about to explode.

‘Something serious, I don’t want to talk in front of servants,’ she said.

‘Then she knew,’ he thought. He left the factory and went to Mina House where they were used to meet.

Roh was wearing black sunglasses. She was dressed in black. Her hair was tied from behind. She was smoking when Nashaat came.

‘Did you know that Soliman married?’ she said. ‘Don’t lie. He said that he asked this clown Serag Zaki to tell you the news so that we might know and when I did not had a fight with him he thought that I accepted the new arrangements.’

‘Oh my God,’ he said. ‘Let’s discuss the matter wisely.’

‘Wisely is an easy word to say when one does not have an answer,’ she said while staring in his eyes. ‘I ask you one question. Did you know that he married and you did not tell me or even Aziz?’

‘Yes, I knew but I was waiting for the suitable time to tell Aziz. I did not expect that he told Serag to let me know so that the family

knows. I've never expected that Soliman might use me this way,' he said.

'How come Nashaat?' How could you do that to me? I'm Roh, Nashaat. If that happened to Farida wouldn't you tell her?' she said while crying.

'First there is no difference between you and Farida. You have to know that,' he said.

'You let me live with him while he was thinking that I'm the helpless wife. I'm not and I won't be. And I'm not like Farida. Farida is your sister. I love you. I know that you know. And I know that you love me. I see it in your eyes. Eyes never lie. You are afraid of saying it, that's all,' she said.

'I think we have to stop this argument. Let's think about the future. I think you shouldn't decide anything now. Calm and take your time then we may see what we'll do,' he said. He knew that his words will not convince her.

'This evening I'll go to Aziz and I'll live with him until I get my divorce,' she said.

'Let me talk to Soliman first. He is a stubborn and if he decided not to divorce you it would be another problem,' he said.

'I see that you want me to be free. Do you have any plans for the future?' she said.

'I try to fix things for you. Don't forget that I'm his brother in law. Samiah is the mother of my boy Gamal,' he said.

'Why did you call him Gamal? Do you admire the man or you do as others do now especially that you are a member of parliament?' she asked.

‘In fact and to be honest, both causes; I admire the man. I felt that he says what every Egyptian wants to say. At the same time I see calling boys Gamal became a social trend,’ he said.

‘Why didn’t you lie on me?’ she said. She did not let him answer and added, ‘it was enough if you said that you admire the man,’ she said.

‘Usually, I don’t lie,’ he said.

‘That means that you do sometimes. All politicians sometimes do,’ she said.

‘Of course, all politicians sometime do. However I’m not in the parliament now,’ he said.

She smiled. ‘I understand that you consider lies in the parliament are not sins,’ she said.

‘This is a good discussion because it distracts you from the main problem for a while,’ he said.

‘This discussion is part of the problem. Let me ask you the question differently. You said that usually you don’t lie. If Samiah asked you about the cause that made you come home later than usual, would you tell her that we were together?’ she said.

He hesitated and decided not to answer and stared at her eyes.

Fixing her eyes in his she said, ‘you will lie on her.’

He did not answer.

‘You did not lie on me because you love me. You are ready to lie on her because you don’t want clashes with your wife about the second women in your life,’ she said with a smile.

‘I think we came here to discuss your problem with Soliman,’ he said.

‘Our problem, not my problem. If you did not realize that you will just complicate it,’ she said.

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Fayza was in the atelier with Kamal. They were drawing. He was drawing a naked model. She was drawing an enlargement of a picture from a postal card that Kamal gave her as training. They were talking about politics. She started to read about communism since he gave her some books about it. He prepared some books for her and she picked two small books and put them in her handbag not to forget them. After about three hours the model wore her clothes and left. Fayza was used to come at Kamal atelier three times weekly. She told Nashaat that she was attending piano lessons in an institute. She never went there. Her excellence in playing piano needed no further lessons. However it was the only way to meet her lover. She decided to leave to go the music institute to wait for the car that Nashaat hired for her.

‘It is too early. The car will be there after one hour,’ Kamal said.

‘I’d like to buy some cloths before going to Heliopolis,’ she said.

‘Don’t you have enough cloths and it is an emergency?’ he said and approached his lips.

It was not the first time they sleep together. Suddenly the door was flung open by force. They were naked on a small bed that Kamal kept to spend nights when he was late. They came to arrest Kamal as one comrade in the communist cell fell and told them about his comrades. Without any discussion they took her bag and found the books about communism. They took her. Both of them were taken wrapped in bed clothes.

Nashaat was in Hilton waiting for Soliman. Since Roh left the home and lived at her brother the sequences were known but nobody wanted to start it. Soliman came with Serag. They had their seats around the table.

‘I understand that you asked me to have this meeting to talk about divorce,’ Soliman started.

‘I think there is no way to convince Roh to continue,’ Nashaat said.

‘And you don’t want her to continue,’ Soliman said. He turned to Serag and said, ‘show him the dates of their meetings.’

Serag took a paper from his pocket and gave it to Nashaat. ‘You will find only dates because the place was the same table in Mina House.’

‘Let’s talk business. You are a businessman and I think this is the shortest way to have a deal. I agreed to divorce Roh on my terms. I’m sure you’ll agree. I think big families don’t like scandals,’ Soliman said.

‘My meetings with Roh are not shameful,’ Nashaat started to be nervous.

‘Scandals are not about Roh. It is about Fayza, your sister,’ Soliman said and turned to Serag and smiled.

Serag told Nashaat that his sister was arrested with a communist and they found two books about communism in her handbag.

‘She was in her piano lessons,’ Nashaat said.

‘She never went there,’ Serag said. ‘I don’t know if you believe me or not we planed to arrest her with Kamal but what was not planned at all is the real scandal. She was in Kamal Abd-El Wahab’s bed when we

arrested them naked. For the sake of the old days I did not label her a communist or sent her name to the conduct police department.'

Soliman stood and extended a hand to Serag and said to him while shaking hands, 'tell Mr. Nashaat what he should do.'

'Divorce,' Serag said.

'I think Roh wants it too,' Nashaat said. He was thinking about his sister Fayza and about the scandal.

'Colonel Soliman divorced Mrs. Roh before we came. But he wants you to divorce his sister. You know that he is one of the free officers and it is not proper to let his sister be in law with yours after what your sister did, specially that your sister lives with you. Another thing, as Mrs. Roh asked for divorce, she should leave the house for him, she only takes her cloths. Your sister's scandal is the cause of your divorce, so you and your both sisters leave the house for Colonel Soliman's sister and you take only your cloths. Your son Gamal will live with his mother. Colonel Soliman sees that you could see him in the club but his aunts are not to see him forever,' Serag said.

'But you destroy my family and I don't think that Samiah wants that,' Nashaat said.

'You are a politician and a businessman. Miss Fayza is in my office and before you reach to your brother in law's house she will be there, of course wearing her cloths. We sent men to Mrs. Samiah and they took the belongings of the three of you. Miss Malak is now at Aziz house. Let's go to finish the divorce then you go to Aziz' house. I think that he, Farida and Malak need many explanations. I leave this part for you. Don't take it personal. Let's finish the hard time and of course between you and me business will go as usual. Another favor I did it to

you. We coerced Kamal to marry Fayza. Whenever you want him to divorce her, just tell me. Being a married woman is the way that may help you and her to explain things. In fact being a friend to both you and Colonel Soliman obliged me to serve you both as best as I could. Believe me this is the best deal otherwise you would face many problems and scandals. I'll go to phone my office to order them to send Mrs. Fayza to Aziz' house then we go to finish the deal,' Serag said.

When they reached at the maazoon (marriage registrar) Nashaat found the divorce form was filled. He signed it.

'There is a car for you to take you to Aziz' house. Give me your keys and I'll send a driver to drive your car from Hilton to there. I think it is not safe to drive today,' Serag said.

Nashaat gave Serag his keys. Serag picked two keys. The first was of the car. The second was of Nashaat house. 'I think you do not need it now.'

'Could you do me another favor please,' Nashaat's voice was faint and his eyes could not concentrate at anything.

'Of course,' Serag said.

'Ask Kamal to divorce Fayza,' Nashaat said.

'Let's go to finish that before you go to your sisters,' Serag said.

Roh was in the balcony looking at the street waiting for Nashaat to come. When the car stopped and he left it he looked upward involuntarily. Roh opened the door for him.

'Where is Fayza? I'll kill her,' he shouted.

'She's not in,' Roh said. 'She told us and we sent her to a friend of mine until you calm. After all Kamal married her.'

‘And he divorced her,’ Nashaat said. He went towards Malak and Farida. They were scared at his look. They never saw him like that before. ‘Where is she?’ he grabbed Malak from her arm.

‘Really I don’t know,’ she was too scared. She felt the trembling of his arm.

‘Calm down to see what we are going to do,’ Roh grabbed him from his arm. They faced each other. He let Malak’s arm free. Roh directed him to the room where she lived since she left her house. He found the belongings of his sisters at the ground. She closed the door. He sat on the bed.

‘Cry Nashaat; It is time to cry,’ she sat beside him.

He cried. They embraced.

When Aziz came he found Nashaat fatigued and the ashtray was filled. He continued to smoke silently. He asked Nashaat to have a discussion in the study room. He asked the women not to come. Farida and Malak sat in the living room crying silently. Roh did not follow her brother’s request and shared her brother and her lover their discussion.

‘What happened has happened. Let’s have a new start,’ Roh started the discussion.

‘I’m finished,’ Nashaat said in broken voice.

‘Never say it again,’ Roh said.

‘I know you are busy in your new job,’ he said to Aziz. He stopped as if he changed his mind.

‘What do you want to say, Nashaat?’ Aziz responded.

‘I want you to take care of my business for a while, but I think it would be too difficult for you to do that,’ Nashaat said.

‘You take care of your own business and of your life. Time solves many problems when we feel we have no solutions for them,’ Roh said.

‘You mean that I have to live with my problems,’ Nashaat said.

‘Yes, after all you are a politician. You manage a way out,’ she said.

‘Where is Fayza?’ Nashaat asked Roh.

‘I sent her to friend to spend some days at her,’ she said.

‘I’m her big brother and I want to know her whereabouts right now,’ Nashaat insisted.

‘And I’m her sister and I think I took the right decision for her and your safety. Or you consider me a stranger who should not interfere,’ she said. Sister in law she thought and promised her self to be soon.

‘Please tell Malak to be ready to go. We’ll go to a hotel until a find a place,’ Nashaat said.

‘Are you crazy,’ Aziz said. ‘You will not move until we find a place for you. I’m in no hurry. At least I find someone talks to me. Your sister is too busy with our daughter.’

‘I managed everything with Farida. Malak has to go to sleep now,’ Roh said. ‘We’ll not leave until everyone goes to his well furnished place.’

‘Are you leaving Roh? You should live here now until you marry,’ Aziz said.

‘I agree but I think that I’ll leave one day,’ she smiled.

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Fayza lived at Roh's friend for two weeks. During these two weeks Nashaat was very nervous and he did not stop asking Roh about Fayza's whereabouts. Secretly Fayza planned to live abroad. She loved Nashaat but she knew the traditions. She knew that she crossed the red line any man could bear. She did not want to deteriorate the situation more. She found a way to transfer her money abroad and booked a ticket to London. In fact Serag knew and called her but he found that a man whose sister fled the country to London would be in a weaker political situation and he could be manipulated easier. After all her reputation in London would be a stigma for him. Serag helped her. She phoned Nashaat from the airport.

'Hello Nashaat, I'm Fayza. I call to say Goodbye. I'll fly to London after five minutes. I managed everything and I'll write to you. Take care. Sorry for everything.' She closed the line before he could say a word.

Nashaat left the office and went directly to Aziz's home where he was living with his sister Malak. He opened the door with the key that his brother in gave him to use. He went directly to Roh's bedroom. She was wearing a pink robe after she had her morning shower. She was applying her make-up. While the robe was half opened he did not see anything. He was so enraged that his hand moved before his tongue. He slapped her on face vigorously.

'You deceived me. You hid her to allow her fly to London before I could kill her,' he shouted. His words mixed with the sound of slapping

on her face. She did not scream. Fayza came after she heard him shout. Suddenly he cried.

‘I don’t know what happened. I found him in my room beating me,’ Roh said.

‘Fayza fled the country. She is on her way to London now,’ he said.

Roh did not care about her bare body and took him between her arms. Fayza left them to see her crying baby.

‘Believe me Nashaat, I did not know and I did not plan for that,’ she said.

‘But you helped her to hide,’ he said.

‘It was my duty to protect you. If you saw her you would kill her. I love you Nashaat. Lovers protect each others. I know that you are sad. Your sadness kills me. I’m a practical woman but I have emotions,’ she said.

He saw blood drops coming from the angle of her mouth. He picked his handkerchief and wiped them. ‘I’m sorry Roh. I don’t know how did this happen,’ he said.

‘I understand. In fact the strongest angriness is that between lovers, isn’t it?’ she said smiling.

‘Yes Roh, yes I fell for you. I admit it,’ he said.

They kissed. Nashaat suggested that they marry after he would find a place. Aziz insisted that they marry and live with them until they would find a place and they married.

When Nashaat found a flat in Heliopolis near Aziz’, both Aziz and Farida suggested that Malak would live with them. It was Roh who

objected to the idea. She did not want Nashaat to leave his responsibilities.

‘Let’s ask Malak and she will decide for herself,’ Aziz said.

‘Malak is still young to decide for herself,’ Roh said.

‘I think both places are suitable and near each other and it makes no difference where I live,’ Malak said.

‘Your room is here and I think you should not be distracted by moving because the exams will start after one month only,’ Aziz said.

‘We prepared a room for her,’ Roh said.

‘And she has one here,’ Farida said.

‘Tell me Malak, which place do you prefer?’ Nashaat asked Malak.

She was carrying Noor, her niece and happy that the kid was smiling in response to her play. She looked at Nashaat and tears came to her eyes, ‘I know that I should live in your house Nashaat. But I cannot leave Noor. I feel that she became a part of me.’

‘And there is no difference between Nashaat and Aziz. I’m your older brother also,’ Aziz said while Farida was hugging her.

‘Your room is always ready for you. I think you may time to spend with us,’ Roh said.

‘All of us will do,’ Farida said.

Fayza spent her early days in London doing nothing but walking in the streets during mornings and she went sometimes to exhibitions of artists during evenings. She felt lonely and regretted her decision of leaving her country. After some weeks she had friends from the artists and the critics whom she met in the exhibitions. She was used to

participate in their discussion to start talking with them. Some of them admired her points of view and others wondered how such a woman knew that knowledge. One of second group helped her to find a job in a tabloid to write about arts. She started her job and started to read about arts seriously. At the same time she started to paint. She sent letters to Roh, Malak, and Fayza.

When Roh received letters from Fayza she always told Nashaat. She knew that he wanted to know his sister's news. However, he usually told her that he did not want to know anything about his sister after he knew that she progressing in her carrier and her life became somewhat easier. Always he reminded his wife not to mention his name when she wrote letters to her. He wanted to tell his sister that he was and would be angry with her forever.

The other problem that tortured Nashaat was prohibiting him from seeing his son. Soliman prevented his sister from letting Nashaat see his son. Serag warned Nashaat against trying to contact Samiah to see the boy. Serag told Nashaat that he would tell him the news of the boy and the rule was no news is good news. In fact that happened after Soliman knew that his divorcee married Nashaat. The obsessions hunted him and he started to imagine that his ex was adulterous. He started to make problems for Nashaat in the parliament and in business. Nashaat decided not to go for future elections after he found that his colleagues treated him as one of traitors of the revolution because of his background. He even became conservative in his development plans for the factory after many of parliament members taunted him as the

capitalist who wore a faked socialist face, a description that was enough to send him behind bars without investigations or a court rule for unlimited period. Serag treated him as if he was an employee in his department. The language he was used to talk to Nashaat changed. He meant to remind Nashaat always that he was threatened and only his personal protection was Nashaat's the only guarantee to life free. One day he advised Nashaat to buy new machines and he promised that he would do his best to put his factory in the round of one of members of Revolution Commandship Council if not Naser himself to visit the factory so that things might change for better. It was not a bad idea for Nashaat and he used all his cash to buy the machines. He even applied for a bank loan and he took it. The day the machines reached Alexandria port he phoned Serag. Serag promised to help him to finish the custom services work and to help him to pay the custom duty on installments. Serag fulfilled his promise and the machines reached the factory even before the paper work was completely finalized. However in July 1960, Nashaat factory was confiscated by the government in what was called nationalization as if the owners were foreigners. Nashaat knew the news and he recognized late that Serag deceived him.

‘Good job, Serag,’ Soliman said in the phone call.

‘I’m always at your service,’ Serag said.

‘What is about the custom documents?’ Soliman asked.

‘In a file on my desk, right now,’ Serag said. ‘This means that he smuggled the machines and he has to explain how in the court.’

‘Then arrest him for steeling people’s money by not paying the custom duties and investigate the case yourself. Don’t refer him to the court until I tell you,’ Soliman said.

‘One hour and he will be here accused of being one of people’s enemies,’ Serag said.

‘Do it yourself. You arrest him from his house. Of course his sisters and Aziz are at his house now to help him in his disaster,’ Soliman said laughingly.

‘At your service, I’ll go right now. Do we confiscate his wife’s assets?’ Serag asked.

‘No, don’t touch her or anyone of the family,’ Soliman said.

Nashaat was not talking much. He tried to think about what to do after he lost the factory and his cash. He did not even know if the government would pay the bank loan as the new owner or he would pay it. Memories came to his mind. He remembered the problem with his father over the land and how he bought it. He did not even know how he would spend on his wife. Tears came to his eyes.

‘Roh, I have to divorce you. I’m penniless. I can’t even buy you food,’ he said it struggling not to cry.

‘What are you saying? I’m your wife. I live with you and we have enough money to live,’ she said.

‘You have but I haven’t any,’ he responded.

‘It makes no difference,’ she said.

‘I don’t need my land. You take it Nashaat,’ Malak said and threw herself between his arms.

‘No, I’ll never do that. I’ll never steel your money or your properties,’ he said.

‘We are family. If they confiscated my properties would you ask me to divorce your wife?’ Aziz said.

Vigorous repeated knocking at the door drew the attention of everybody. When the servant opened the door, Serag and his men did not ask a permission to enter the house.

‘Would you please come with us?’ Serag said.

‘Why? You took every thing and I don’t think that I committed a crime,’ Nashaat said.

‘No, you did. You smuggled machines without paying the custom duties,’ Serag responded directly.

‘But you told me that I’ll pay in installments and the documents are in the custom departments in Alexandria,’ Nashaat said.

‘We did not find any there,’ Serag said.

‘Soliman is behind that, isn’t it?’ Nashaat asked.

Serag did not answer but eyes told.

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Aziz was in his office trying to contact his friends who were still in the army to help him so that they would free Nashaat. It was a month since they arrested his brother in law. Roh his sister and Farida his wife did not stop asking him to find some way so that Nashaat could be saved. Some of his friends neglected his request impolitely but others expressed sympathy. Few promised to help. One of these few had contacts equal to Soliman. He even visited Aziz in his office in the Cultural Ministry. When he knew the story he promised to interfere. He even called Serag from Aziz' office and ordered him that nobody should harm Nashaat or Serag would personally be asked. Further he asked Serag to come to his office in the commandship and not to tell anybody about this phone call.

Two days later Soliman was asked to be present in the commandship. In the waiting room he found Serag anxious and disturbed.

'Why did they want us?' Soliman asked.

'I don't know,' Serag said.

'It is the first time they ask me to come without knowing the cause,' Soliman said. 'Most probably they want us to deal with one of these sons of bitches whom stole people's money. What did you do with Nashaat?'

'Nothing until now,' Serag said.

'I told you to ask him to divorce Roh not to send him to the court so that I can remarry her as a second wife and I'll teach her some lessons then I'll divorce her,' he said.

‘Nashaat refused the idea. When we brought her to visit him she asked him not to do and he said that he won’t divorce her even if we kill him,’ Serag said.

‘I think you are sympathetic with him. We you return to your office send him to me. I’ll do the job myself,’ Soliman said.

When Soliman and Serag were allowed to face the General who called them he entered to see the astonishment his life. He saw Aziz in the military dress sitting in front of the General.

‘Of course you know Colonel Aziz. He returned to the service yesterday after we found that his report about Syria is right. I think you were in the committee that investigated the report that was proved right, however the committee did not give it enough attention. Conditions in the Northern Provision are worsening because you neglected the report and even the committee decided that it was incorrect,’ the General said to Soliman angrily.

‘Mr. Nashaat is on his way to his house now. I told him that we found the file of custom documents,’ Serag said.

‘Of course he understood that you stole it from the custom department according to orders of Colonel Soliman. Your last mission is to tell Mr. Nashaat that he was chosen to be the manager of his nationalized company and he could go to the parliament. Tomorrow newspapers should publish that investigations proved that he was honest and he welcomed the nationalization decision because he believes in socialism and as a socialist the commandship chose him to be responsible about the company that belonged to people now,’ the

General said. With a louder and harsher voice he added, 'Do you understand?'

'Yes Sir,' Serag answered in a trembling voice.

'Tomorrow you go to the Ministry of Education and you will work as the director of archives department,' the General said.

His words came as a shock for Serag who closed his eyes not to let tears fall. 'Yes Sir,' he forced it faintly.

'If you do any mistake or any corruption you will face a harsh trial,' The General said. After a pause while starring in his eyes he added, 'dismiss.'

Soliman was still standing as the General did not invite him to have a seat. Droplets of sweat started to cover his front.

'Colonel Soliman,' The General started, 'what you did is not contradicting to the revolution principals. You should not be such hypocrite who sacrifices the truth and his friends to have higher positions. You should not have asked Serag to do what he did of course. Don't ever mix family troubles with your work. If you left Nashaat nobody would have nationalized his company because in fact it was a small one and he was fair with his workers, but it has been decided and no one can change that. The compensation for him is to be the manager. You will go to Syria and you will have a copy of Aziz' report and you try to correct things where you work there. I'll send Aziz to see your work after two to three months. Be ready for that. Tomorrow you fly to Damascus. I don't like talking about family affairs but ask your sister to let Nashaat see his son at least once a week,' the General said.

'Yes Sir,' Soliman said.

'You may go now,' The General said.

When Soliman left the General looked at Aziz who did not show any facial expression while the General reprimanded Serag and Soliman and offered a cigarette for Aziz.

‘In fact Aziz, I don’t agree that you return army as a unit command. I need you here in the commandship,’ the General said.

‘I can serve in any place,’ Aziz said.

‘Please do your best to convince Nashaat to accept the offer to be the manager of his nationalized company. It is important for me after I supported him. He has to prove his loyalty to the regime now,’ The General said.

‘I understand,’ Aziz said.

When Nashaat returned home he told sarcastically Roh about the offer of being an employee in his own company and to work as its manager under the supervision of the minister of industry.

‘What is important now is to be relaxed. I love you Nashaat really and I thank you that you did not succumb to their pressure to divorce me. Did you do that because of your pride and dignity?’ she said.

‘No Roh, I loved you and I love you. In the prison I regretted not marrying you when father proposed. I regretted selling my land. Dad was right. I want to visit his tomb and apologize for him. My problem is how to make you happy,’ he said.

‘You made me happy the day we married and the day you did not agree to Soliman’s pressure to get your freedom and perhaps your factory,’ she said.

‘The president signed the nationalization decisions and it is over,’ he said. ‘Now you have a penniless husband and if you chose to be free I’ll do what you like,’ he said.

‘Nashaat you are a member of parliament and you will be the manager of a textile factory. We have enough. Let me manage everyday life and you think about your job,’ she said.

‘You mean that I accept the offer to be an employee in my own factory,’ he enquired.

‘Aziz called me and he’ll have dinner with us and I asked Farida and Malak to come and they are on their way. Aziz returned to the service and he is a colonel now,’ she said.

‘I should congratulate him,’ he smiled. It was his first smile since they arrested him.

‘Aziz said that what counts now is loyalty. You have to prove that you’re loyal to the regime and to the socialism,’ she said.

‘How could I ask someone to approve my plans for my factory?’ he said. He looked at her to say his last defence before surrendering to her will, ‘how could I accept that the ministry may send a committee to see if I manage my factory properly or not,’ he said.

‘You are a politician. Policy is the art of achieving the possible,’ she said and hugged him and added whispering in his ears, ‘you did not let me down and I’ll be behind you and I’ll give all the support a wife can give to her husband and lover. We can live and we can live in our usual living standard. Aziz needs your support to prove to his superiors in the commandship that he convinced you. After all we are from rich family that has titles and they categorically refuse this sector. Time

resolves much problems who knows what tomorrow will bring with it,' she said.

'I'll congratulate Aziz and I'll tell him that tomorrow I'll be in the office,' he said.

Next morning Aziz received congratulations from old friends in commandship, Soliman took the plane to Damascus and Nashaat headed a committee formed by governmental representatives to put plans for the factory. The three sent cables to the president thanking him for his trust and promising that they would do their best for the sake of the revolution and the nation. After few months the separatists in Syria succeeded to topple the government there and arrested Soliman. He returned after few days after they deported him. The commandship asked him to leave the army and to work as a manager in the tourism authority. Nashaat forced himself to adapt. Roh never complained of shortage of money. Gamal Nashaat was used to spend the weekends at his father house. Roh asked the boy to call her mum. He did but one day innocently the boy asked his father a simple question.

'Dad, how come I have two mums mum Roh and mum Samiah?'

'That is because you are lucky,' Nashaat said.

'No, that is because I'm the lucky one. I prayed to God to have a boy from Nashaat and that is why you have two mothers,' Roh said and kissed the boy.

The End