

The Cradle of the Dead



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Chapter One

He gathered all his strength in one of his feet and hit my sole with that. I jumped up like a spring and could not contain myself. I said: “Fuc...” When I got furious, I cannot behave myself. He blew air in his nose. When he became angry, he reacted like that. He raised his hand and slapped my face and said: “Shut up ass hole. If it will be on your own, you’ll lie down until noon.” Damn him. He had fleshy and heavy hands. I was going to cry so I turned my face to another side, to the window not to let him see my tears. It was still dark. My brother always had gotten up sooner than me. He had put on his rubber boots and had been standing in the yard like a monkey. Dad made him cheeky. He considered us as his slave. He made us work for him twice than what he gave us and at the end, he was still expecting more. I felt sleepy so badly as I preferred not to eat anything for two days and just could sleep one more hour instead. But I was

sure that dad would not leave me alone. I wanted to attack my brother and squeeze his neck to that extent to make him forget how to flatter dad since then.

I followed them slowly. A cold breeze was blowing. I had closed my eyes and dozing off while walking behind them. It was a long way to reach the field. I kept falling into pits or hitting the stones which were on our way accidentally and these made me get up in the middle of my naps. Dad lit a cigarette and the smoke of tobacco and brimstone filled the air. I longed for a puff drastically. I opened my eyes widely and kept looking at dad's hand like a dog looking at meats in a butcher's shop while filling my lungs with the cigarette smell. When he smoked half of it, dad handed it out to my brother. After having some puffs, he turned to me and without drawing dad's attention said: "Do you want some puff?" I looked at him furiously and refused to answer. Sometime later, it would be school season would be open and I would get rid of them, both. My brother would not come to school anymore as he failed so many classes that they had dismissed him. He was older than me for two

years but he had been studying in one lower grade when he was still at school. Most of his classmates had gone to the city to continue studying there. He had no brain in his skull, no mind to study and no power to work. He had just chance. Damned dad liked him as much as he disliked me. Dad was at his back so much. I took my revenge whenever possible. For instance, when selling the potatoes to the middlemen and when loading potato bags for them, I suddenly let one side of the bag go to make him fall to the ground. This caused everybody to laugh at him except dad. The middlemen tipped me twice more than him. When taking money from them, I gazed at dad's eyes. I knew he was feeling bad. I was happy as my brother could not come to school anymore while each time I remembered that, I was going to cry. I was always like that and like girls I fell into tears immediately and uncontrollably.

It keeps raining continuously. Everything is wet or damp, everything, our hair, clothes and the ground beneath us. Working on this wet, muddy and slippery ground is dangerous. Big and heavy stone carts are

moving in steep ways with a lot of difficulties but if the local workers were working as much as others, things were moving ahead smoothly. I had no other choice except getting along with that. I am the foreman here and they hate that. If I do not take things easy, they will make troubles doubtlessly. Here nobody is seeking troubles as we may lose our jobs in a case of any problem and then our situation is not clear at all. It is for the boss' presence that local workers could not make us leave our jobs yet. The boss has always supported me and I always tried to keep him satisfied. When I had asked him to let me be the night guard, he accepted. In the beginning, I did not desire to share things with the writer. I don't have a good feeling about him but I cannot afford to watch all spots at nights. While in the beginning, we got accustomed to fighting with sleeplessness and it had happened that we did not have the chance to sleep fast even a night for weeks, now we could not tolerate not sleeping each every other night. Sometimes one hour of the night takes as long as a day. I needed to have a partner for this job. I considered with myself that he is

my compatriot and we can get along with him so easily. We can save more money by being night guards. My brother decided to gather as much money as he can have a shop in the city which is near this mine but I am thinking of returning home, our country, our own village. Now, it's a long time passing the war and I do not believe if a person desires to make troubles for us or even if a person remembers the war, itself. I missed my siblings especially my sister. If she was not in my heart and mind, it was possible I could not bear difficulties up to now. If I can return, I won't leave her alone again. By passing of each day, I felt more regretful. I always reproach myself for leaving her alone but I had gotten unbelievably frustrated. After all those incidents, I could not stand being in the village. I do not know how they are now and what they are doing. Dad's face is always before my eyes. Tonight, it is very nice and gentle. The dawn rain is very imagination-provoking and revealing. The moon which shows herself from behind the curtains of clouds makes you be yourself,

your real one, the very thing you always kept escaping from it.

When the schools got open, I had not to work on the farm. When I woke up at dawn, my brother was not in his bed. I did not get used to being alone. Damn him as when he was present, he was on my nerve in a way and when he was absent, in another form. At those days, I could at least sleep for one more hour and when I did not feel like attending school, be absent from attending the school. My brother was really crazy as he never could get a passing mark but played the role of a little bird for everybody once as I did the slightest mistake. Then dad began to lash me with his chain. I did not like school at all but it was better than payless working for dad. Besides, there were girls at school. Our school was in the next village and we had to walk there all the way. Most days, I arrived at school late and the mullah hit the back of my head. I regarded it nothing. It was not painful but when he hit, just a sound was echoing in my head, just that. Then, the classmates began to laugh. They became choked with a 'shut up!' shout of the mullah. While grinning,

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I put my hand on the back of my head to pretend it was paining and made a beeline to my seat. The girls were sitting at the back of the classroom. We, the boys, called each of them with a nickname like chubby, pea, frog and slovenly. I will never forget the last one as she always had a cold and her nose was running. In the line or at the time of leaving the class, I jostled her. Before my brother dismissal, I had to pay attention not to let him notice that as if he noticed me jostling her, at nights, I could not sit on a spot because of smarts and pains caused by dad, who had hit me with his chain while cursing: "Dog father, bastard! Are not a man with a family?" I felt relaxed as there was not my brother there anymore to report. I kept jostling the Slovenly and when looking at her eyes I was winking her. The first time I winked her, I felt something very strange. It was the break time and when I was passing her, I looked down as if I had overlooked her and jostled her strongly and when I looked at her to tell it was accidental, she stared in my eyes. I felt really cool. Her look was in a manner that did not cause me frightened at all. I grinned at her and

out of a sudden I winked her while kept staring into her eyes. She was transfixed and for some seconds she stood like an idol and then she moved away. Since that day, I was always standing behind her in line or when we were leaving the classroom. Little by little, other children began to pay attention to me and sometimes they made snide remarks but they did not bother me until when a boy from that village began to make trouble for me. The bastard guy kept standing between me and her in line. I could not stand it at all as I was among the tall and bully boys of the school. He was twice bigger than me as he had attended school some years late than its due time. He had a bully face and strong hands; his neck was as thick as a donkey. Everybody was afraid of him. I knew I could not afford him. Each day which passed, I became irritated more as everybody had known that I had considered just my own right to stand behind the Slovenly so they began to call me with snide remarks. I was down so much that I wanted to tear him into pieces. Finally, once I took the leap in the dark and stood behind the Slovenly. I was scared. Everybody

was afraid of him that I tried to soothe myself by repeating to myself: "Be brave! What the hell is he going to do?" When he entered the school, I swallowed my saliva but my hands got cold out of fear. I kept encouraging myself by saying: "He isn't really strong, he is just big. If you react fast, you can hit him. Maybe he disregards you and leaves the battlefield for you."

I pretended to be care-free. I kept my notebook before my eyes while peering at him. When getting close to me, the right came to me and hit me so forcefully that I fell out of the line on the ground. I got furious, ran to him and jumped up. I hit his neck as I wanted to break it. He turned to me as if he had been waiting for an excuse to fight. He slapped on my face strongly. In the twinkling of an eye we were rolling each other on the ground like two snakes. All schoolmates were encircled around us and while screaming, they were cheering and booing. I was a real tumult. He was really fast and agile. In a second, he punched one of my eyes and hit my nose with his head. I got confused and fell on the ground. He jumped on me. I was

crushing under his big body. He put his fingers over my face and pressed them against my eyes as he was going to take them out of my skull. With all difficulty, I moved his fingers lower toward my mouth and bit them. I was cutting his nails under my teeth. He began to groan like a shot dog. The kids began to scream louder. I was going to come out from his big body that suddenly everybody got silent and left us alone. The guy stood up from me. The assistant superintendent of the school was pulling his ear severely. My clothes were covered with spots of blood. I took my nose with my hand to stop of its bleeding. One of my eyes was starting so badly and I could not open it and tears kept running through it. All my body spots were paining. I stood up and with the back of my hand I cleaned my eyes. The assistant superintendent let the guy go and came toward me and slapped my face strongly and said: "Dog fathers! You think here is a stable that you do whatever you wish." The guy stood few steps over there and was licking his fingers like a dog. The assistant shouted: "Take your shoes off." I was no given the bastinado before that but I dreamed about it

a lot. In our school, the school servant and a big student took two sides of the bastinado and the assistant caned the soles of the student. At times when one was given the bastinado, the school was horrified and quite silent. When one was given the bastinado, it was both horrifying and funny for me as the student rolled himself to left and right sides while attempting to make himself free. Facing such reaction, the assistant hit him more and more fiercely to make him quit moving and be lashed listlessly and while just weeping and begging for letting him free. At that moment, the assistant would become calm and after hitting the student some more times, would finish punishing him. I said: "I ate the shit, sir! Swear to God, It was not my fault..." He did not let me finish my words and this time slapped my face more strongly. I felt my face was burning. He told the servant to bring the bastinado. We took our shoes off and lay next to each other on the ground with our feet being kept upward. The guy was quite care-free. He was lying in a relaxed manner. I desired not to be belittled before him so I stopped begging the

assistance for forgiveness. Two big boys of the last level of school took two sides of the bastinado and the assistant began to hit us with a fan-belt of a mini-bus. The first blow had an unforgettable smart and pain. Its pain began from my sole and like a burning flame moved up to my brain. I pressed my finger against each other in a form of a fist and pressed my teeth against each other in a way that I felt my jaw was going to be broken. Damned assistant was hitting very strongly because it was the beginning of the day and he had a lot of energy. If that incident had happened near the noon, he was not such energetic. At noon, he always was sitting in the sun like a dog and kept nodding off. The guy was neither moving nor screaming as if his skin had been as thick as a donkey. My sole was smarting as if it had caught fire. I closed my eyes and moved my feet severely. While I desired to get rid of the bastinado, I did not want to beg and to cry but my patience was at its end. I pressed my nails to the dust of the ground and was scratching it. I had known that the assistant will not stop until I began to cry but I did not want to be humiliated before that

guy. I was panting. The sound of the whip got in harmony with my screams. Finally, I burst into tears but the bastard assistant continued his hitting. He was waiting for the guy to cry and scream but unlike me he kept silent. I was crying and begging: “I ate the shit, Sir.” But it was useless. I was going to faint that I did not know what happened that he stopped hitting us and said: “To remember not to have a fight like dogs and jackals.”

My sole was bleeding and I could not put them on the ground. I took my shoes in my hand and walked to the line on my heels. The guy put his shoes on and stood behind the Slovenly. I lost the game so badly.

Since that day, the guy got cheekier and was standing behind the Slovenly and pressed his body against her before everybody effortlessly. Again I was attending the school late not to stand in the line. I left the classroom after all students had left there. I was calm apparently but I was dying of the bad feeling I had inside myself. I kept saying myself: “God damned you, Clumsy! How chicken-hearted you are! You

have to do something.” I always planned how to retaliate him. My problem was no one accepted to help me to hit him as everybody was afraid of him. I decided to face him down by all possible means.

My dad had a knife which he had inherited that from his father and liked it even more than his life. It had a nice haft and a strange blade. Dad told everybody about its story. I had heard that more than one thousand times. Its story which its truth is known by nobody was that once dad's father on a snowy day had saved a person from wolves. The saved person was a lord or something like that and as a gift, he gave my granddad that knife. It was a unique knife that nobody saw a similar one like that.

One day morning, I got up sooner than usual. Dad and my brother had already left home and my mom was pouring pieces of dried bread and dried used tea leaves before the chickens. I scared of dad even when he was not home. I went to the chest which was a big wooden one covered with a thin patterned tin. I opened its door with a slight sound. Inside it, there

was a lot of stuff: Dad's new shoes that he would not put them on even once in a year, beautiful dishes we put before guests, and a new lamp which was not taken out of its wrapping. I finally found the leather bag of the knife. I was sweating out of fear. I looked at the outside unintentionally. Mom was carrying a bunch of provender in her arms toward the cow stable. I untied the bag, took out the knife. It was fantastic. I tied the bag again and put the empty bag back in its place. I stared at the knife for some seconds and when I took its blade out, I felt there was nothing I was afraid of. I desired to attend the school sooner to hit the guy back. I had to do so that day. Mom had put some bread and cheese and a glass of tea on the breakfast cloth. I took a morsel of cheese and bread. I put the knife in my pocket. I ran downstairs. The stable door was open and mom was pouring water in the manger.

Here unlike my village, at the first days of spring, it is raining a lot. There, it is raining more in falls and winters. In winters, here, it is mostly snowing. Coldness and freezing make working stopped. There

is no farm here, just mountains and mines, full of smokes of vehicles and sounds of explosion. The positive point is that my brother and I had gotten used to the sound of explosion in the war. Besides, Here, you do not have the constant worry that a person explodes himself among the people and kills everybody. I am not afraid of death. Many times, I wished to die but peacefully and in my own village our at least by casting lots like when you accept to fall victim for your comrades and you will wash yourself up in a cold river and when coming out will drink a hot, dark coffee and will ask forgiveness from your comrades. Then, for the first time, you will put your head on your brother's shoulder and will cry up to that degree that everything calms down in your existence and nothing will be left to bother you.

At noon and when returning home from school, I did not feel as previously. When the guy gave up, everything was over. All school students were afraid of me since then. When leaving the class, I stood behind the Slovenly and nobody dared to look dagger at me.

When I took the blade out of the knife shaft, the guy was going to piss in his pants. He was breathless. I saw the fear on his face. He could not believe I attacked him with a knife. This made me braver. I told him: "I will make your mother grieve for your death." He could not shake a finger. I put the knife on his face and cold-bloodedly rubbed it two or three times over it. Each time, I pressed the knife harder against his face. He did not say a word or even move. A narrow blood line reddened his scarcely-grown beard. I said: "No problem for this time but if seeing you do something wrong, I'll make your mom mourn for you." Then I cursed him as much as I could. Then I ordered him to get lost before my eyes and slapped his face so fiercely that its sound echoed the classroom like a firework.

When reaching home, I wanted to put the knife back in the chest but I could not make myself accepted to do so by all possible means. I told myself that if dad found out the knife was missing, I would turn a deaf ear to him. In its worst case, he would slap my face or

would hit me with his chain. This would be like the previous hitting I had experienced.

Since then, I was always carrying the knife in my pocket. At school, when I took it out, everybody was wondered by the carvings on its haft and its three-edged blade. I was afraid of nothing. I was always standing behind the Slovenly. The kids who became my followers now, caused the line to move slowly when leaving the classroom to let me have more time to press my body against the Slovenly's. I was looking at the bully guy and winked him. His eyes got bloody out of fury but he dared not to step forward.

One day, when I was backing home, three guys showed up in my way. Later, I knew they were the Slovenly's brothers. They did not let me shake a finger, two of them held my hands and the third one who was the youngest hit right between my legs. If they did not hold my hands, I could hit them all just in a second. After the guy's blow, I could not breathe. I felt something was exploding inside me. They rubbed

me behind the trees on one side of the road. I could not do anything. I wished my brother was there.

When they let me go, I desired to cut my hand vessel with the knife. I felt I was dipped in a river right in the middle of the winter. My feet were senseless. At those moments, most probably my brother was separating the wheat grains from the straws by throwing up the straws into the air flow. He was putting his fork in the straws and threw them up in the air. Then, the straws were moving aside and the grains were falling before his feet. I was mixed up and exhausted. I had a scaring feeling, even more than scaring. I felt pain in all spots on my body. My eyes were moving around while I could not see anything. One of them said: "Did you get what we will do to whom overreaching himself. The youngest one hit my buttocks and another one spat on my face.

It began to rain gradually. I was lying down there on the bed of a dried brook while I held my knees to my stomach and pressed them firmly against myself.

Dear brother, when we promised each other to write our memories to each other, I desired to make the long and tiring nights of guarding short. This idea came to mind when during the winter we had to wait jobless in the wooden cabin for it to become warm. I began to write. Writing made me peaceful and calm but not as desired. Writing for yourself will not calm you as effectively as expected. You have to write for others. Asking for sympathy makes you feel tranquility in a real sense. To tell you the truth, I did not believe you would write too and I expect you to read my writings in its best way. Even now, I can't believe you are writing and even more freely than me, without hesitation and fear. Lucky you! I am jealous of you.

Anyway, I am happy you write and happier as you read my writings. I know how difficult it passed for you too. I regard myself the person at fault as I was not around you when you had needed me. But let by gone be by gone. I had experienced things even one thousand times worse than those you had experience. I also wanted to kill myself. I have words that not being able to express them developed a complex in

me, pressed my throat as if they had been going to suffocate me but I still do not dare to write about them like you. I hope once I find the courage to write to get rid of them.

Let's promise to keep whatever we write to each other as a secret between us like two real brothers as they had not happened or they had not been expressed. As if they had all been mere imaginations and fictions. Since now, I put the notebooks in the drawer and lock it not to let anybody read them.

Honestly speaking, I never have talked with a person such freely and peacefully. I feel we are close to each other.

I came to my senses by hearing the wolves' howls. It had gotten dark. I was by the road quite perplexed. I had no idea what to do. I desired to get myself lost. Finally, I burst into tears. The sound of my weeping was echoing in the darkness and was becoming faint. My face got quite wet due to the rain and tears but I still felt the guy's spit on my face. Even after passing all these years, I still feel its wetness on my face and

sometimes I unintentionally rub my hand on its spot to clean it.

After a while, I suddenly noticed that I was before our home stairs. Dad and my brother were sitting at the dinner cloth next to the hearth and were eating dinner. Seeing the flames of the hearth made me calm a little but I had no strength in my feet to go upstairs. It kept pouring and repeatedly the lighting made the surrounding white. Each step I moved up was like going up a mountain. I stood at the back of the door and pushed it inside slightly. When it was opened ajar, the room heat stroked my face. I went home so late. Dad was angry. It was clear from his face that he wanted to make a fuss about that. I wished he had hit me with his chain to such extent that all my body parts would have had bruises. Mom was sitting away from them at the room corner and was knitting something while moving her lips. She suddenly got up awkwardly as if noticing my presence there at once. But she did not dare to step forward. She had a look at dad and sat down again and her long skirt covered the ground surrounding her. I desired to put my face on

her lap and cry. Dad raised his face and blew air in his nose and was going to curse but as he noticed my state he forgot that. Mom was not quit staring her knitting. I moved a step toward her but I could not move any steps further. The last time I had slept on her lap was many years ago. It was the night I had a fever. She kept me on her lap and was caressing my hair. It did not last more than some minutes as dad called her and she had to leave me alone.

The sound of Dad's mouth while chewing could be heard again. My brother crushed an onion with his fist and put it before dad and tilted his neck toward me. "Where have you been up to now?" Without waiting for my response, he pointed to the bowling mom had put for me next to the hearth. If I stood there for one more minute, I would begin to cry. I went to the next room slowly. I put my mattress on the ground and put my head under the quit. I pressed my eyelids down and began to cry without any sound. I became miserable, really miserable.

I could not sleep even a second that night. I covered my body with the quilt. The knife was still in my pocket. At midnight, I took it out. My brother was snoring. I brought up as if I had been putting the knife in my throat. The knife fell among what I brought up and my body covered with the liquid from my stomach while I put my hands before my mouth in a form of a bowl. I brought up so much that nothing was left inside me. I got transfixed in my bed and was breathing the smell of what I had brought up. Nasty! Nasty! Nasty! I called myself nasty more than one thousand times. I was shivering. I began to vomit. I urinate in my pants. It was going to be the day. I put the knife in the quilt through a hole on it. The positive point of that night was that my brother fast slept all night long. I had known he would get up sooner or later. I did not desire him to see me like that. I put the quilt on myself upside down and hid beneath that.

When my brother got up, I was still awake. I wished instead of going to school, I could have gone to the farm with them. I wished I had died during the summer. When he left the room, suddenly I felt alone

and empty. I burst into tears again. The more the day was passing, I felt worse. Then when the sun was in the middle of the sky, I could hear mom washing the dishes.

It had gotten warm and the flies were flying around me. At school other kids and I caught them with our hands and kept them in our fists and then gently in the way not to kill them, we took both of their wings. They got hilarious without wings. We put them on the benches. They were mixed up as they could not get what had happened to them. They took some steps, and then they were leaping to fly but could not and stayed still in their spots. Maybe they were imagining they were flying. At those moments, I kept thinking of the flies. I did not know whether to attend the school or not. If I were older, I would go to the city to join the army. I wished to have a big machine gun and would have attended the school to shoot everybody down. I haggled a lot with myself and made myself to attend the school because if I did not attend there, everyone would find out something had happened and if they got that, I would be thoroughly disgraced.

When I reached the school the first class had finished and the kids were in the yard. The boys were chasing each other and the girls were sitting in the sun by a wall. I spied them from behind a line of trees. It was unbelievably difficult for me to enter the school. I moved forward with all its difficulty. When I saw the Slovenly, I felt a butterfly moving in my stomach. Her nose was running as usual and she was standing alone. I wished no one else had been there except me and her and I had hit her head on the ground to crush it completely and to stop her nose-run forever. It was all her fault. When the bully guy saw me, he whistled loudly. Everybody stopped looking at me. I looked down and moved forward through their looks into the classroom.

The school became my nightmares like the night times. I could not be calm even a minute. My heart always beat restlessly. Something was smarting inside me. I just liked to look at the flames of the hearth. Out of my misery, dad was bothering me less than past. When he beat me once or twice, I felt more relaxed. I did not defend myself or I even did not escape. He

acted grudgingly and did not bother me anymore. I was going to school from another way not to pass by that brook. But I felt a constant fear. At school, I was not talking with anybody. Just that guy winked me when we looked at each other accidentally. I became coward. I repeated myself to take the knife to take his guts out of his stomach with that. But I dared not. When he was winking me, I just looked at him. Then I would look down and keep walking on my way.

I am going to like the writer little by little. I did not have a good feeling about him on the first day. Perhaps, it was because of his face which is similar to people of the city. He was recruited there after us. I was not happy as one of my compatriots began working in the workshop. Maybe it was as I was scaring, others found out that we were foreigners or maybe it was one of the properties of living abroad that you don't desire to see your fellow citizen. Maybe as in abroad, you try to forget everything or you are embarrassed to be seen while acting obediently like a slave or acting like the natives of that foreign country.

He has delicate long fingers. He is mostly like schoolboys than mine workers. At lunchtimes, he sits next to me and after the lunch, we talk with each other. As he says, He has a lot of debts. He was supposed to pay them back after his book sale but due to someones' conspiracy, he could not sell his book. His creditors sued him and not to be imprisoned, he had to escape and to leave the country illegally. He claims of having dangerous enemies. He acted against one of the high ranking police officers. He said that his story caused his scandal. He hopes that one day people read his story to know the real face of that officer.

He traveled from a country to another one that at last he arrived here. It is a small world. When he recognized that we are from his country, he got afraid a lot. But he came to this conclusion that doubtlessly we are also fleeing from something that made us accepted to work in this small country and this mine. When he was saying these, I suddenly frowned and got up to leave him but he apologizes me immediately and did not continue his words anymore.

He is decided to write a story when we have to guard at nights to save himself from this situation by selling that. He is not a bad man and one feels close to him and tells him all his secrets. But who knows if whatever he says about an officer and a conspiracy or even the fact that he writes important stories and he is a broken writer are not but fictions.

When summer came, again the middlemen showed up. At first, I could not look at their eyes. I felt everybody knew my story and was talking about it. But gradually, I felt better. I talked warmly with them and put the potatoes bags in their trucks two by two. I tried to make my dad and brother feel bad. Unlike my brother whose face still was beard-less like girls and had a low voice, I had thick mustaches and manly voice but at nights my stomach began to smart and I felt a bitter taste in my mouth. At nights, I kept sitting with the middlemen around the fire to fall asleep as sitting there. At dawn when the fires had turned to ashes and it got colder, I was waking up suddenly. I found a quilt from a tent and wrapped my body with it while my dad and brother were sleeping in the tent

and the middlemen in their trucks. I wrapped my body with that quilt and when remembering that day, I was going to bring up but I could not. I calmed myself down with dreams. In my dreams, I became so rich that I could buy the whole village and everybody there was my worker. After some years of drought, when there was no water in the surrounding village, while hungry, people came to me to beg for food. I would give whoever I like potato and meat. They would kiss my hand. It was really cool. The Slovenly had married the bully guy and came to me with her father and brothers to beg for food but regardless of their begging, I refused to provide them foodstuff. When they fell on my feet, I would hit their buttocks and ordered them to go back to their own village and to leave the Slovenly behind to take them foodstuff. When their faces got red, I stared into their eyes and winked them. They had to follow my orders. When they were kissing my hand, I dropped my saliva at their necks. These dreams made me relaxed and calm.

The summer was gradually finishing. I wondered to go back to school or not. It was indifferent to attend

school or not. I hated cold and freezing grounds in winter. I hated ploughing. I hated to be with my dad and brother from dawn to dusk. I knew that the bully guy would not attend the school anymore. I wanted to attend the school to bother the Slovenly again. I wished to find here alone somewhere to show her brothers how I would retaliate them.

But the Slovenly did not attend the school that year. She had to marry someone. I was the biggest guy in the school. I desired to hit all smaller kids but I did not dare to. I got coward and clumsy. I just dare to act in my mind. In my thoughts, I bothered the whole school, everybody, boys and girls, even the servant, the assistant and the teacher. I sat calmly in a corner and made dreams. I needed to go to the restroom several times a day. In my dreams, I was a teacher and gave all children the bastinado. I made them kiss a hot heater in the winter to hear the sound of the burning of their skins. At the end of my dreams, I hated myself and my clumsiness and the fact that I was just daydreaming. I knew that I was growing up. I became

a man but I felt a fear constantly. I was afraid of any look or whisper of any pissy adolescent boy or girl.

One day morning, I saw dad was shaving his beard through the door. The thick blond beard covering his face got disappeared so soon. While he looked younger, I shuddered. I could not recognize him. Mom was ironing dad's new clothes with a coal iron.

I was going to believe people's words. Some days later, it became clear in the village that dad proposed a girl of the school village from her family. I knew her as she was at our school. At first, it was not important for me but later I was getting nervous. Dad gave money to a minibus driver to buy him a gold ring from the city. I disliked mom more than others as she supported dad more than other times. She sewed a shirt for dad and was not sleeping in his room anymore.

Dad was gradually selling out all of our properties. I never liked him but I could not believe him to be bastard and dishonest to that extent. Once, when I was back home from school, I saw the stable door open

without our cow inside it. It was a stormy day and a strong wind was blowing in a way it was going to take the trees out of their roots. Mom was gathering the clothes hanging on the ropes hurriedly to take them inside. I asked her where the cow had been. As usual, she could not reply so I looked at her face from a close distance and said: "I asked about the cow." She could not talk and just produced unclear sounds from her throat but with her hands, carrying the clothes signaled something that I got what I had guessed was right. Some days later, I heard the girl's father asked dad to give him our cow. I could not eat anything because of the sadness. We were losing whatever we had gathered in years with a lot of difficulties. I was hopeful that once dad would die to let me inherit a piece of land and some cows and sheep but the consequence of dad's deeds was by starvation.

I had to do something. I told myself to take the knife and when once dad's new wife was alone in an alley, kill her with that. But thinking of the knife made me paralyzed. I did not know if I could hold it. Finally, I made my decision.

I repeated my plan many times in my mind. One day, I decided to put it into practice. Some days before that, I had traced that girl and had learned from which alleys she was going home. She was going home with three other girls but before reaching a pomegranate garden, she proceeded her way home alone. On the day of implementing my plan, I ran to the garden. There was nobody in the alley. I jumped into the garden from a spot in which there was a crack in its wall. The garden was overwhelmed with small and yellow leaves of pomegranate. As far as one could see semi-naked pomegranate trees were standing behind each other. I scared from the silence of the garden. I rolled the chain firmly around my wrist. I had to take her fast and to pull her inside the garden. Sweat was running from all my body spots. Since she appeared, I was haggling with myself. My hands were shaking. I told myself: "Act like a man." The girl approached step by step. She held her notebook before her face and was reading something. She paid no attention to her surroundings. She was walking so smoothly in her plastic sleepers that no sound of her footsteps could

be heard. She passed before where I was standing. I got transfixed. She was about to move away. If she reached the end of the alley, I could do nothing. I gathered all my strength. I jumped into the alley holding my chain. I approached her step by step. I took my steps as smoothly as her not to make any sound. It was just one step to catch her that she turned back and our looks tied up into each other. My mouth became dried and I could not move my tongue but as I saw the fear in her look, I became brave. Her notebook fell from her hand. She turned back to escape but I did not hesitate and made her stumble. She fell on the ground. She was to get up again that I hit her sides with the chain. She began to wail while rolling around out of pain. I grabbed her collar and pulled her up. I put my hand on her mouth. The blood running from her nose fell on my hand. I said: "You made my hand dirty, nasty rat!" she could not talk and her whole body was shaking out of fear. When I felt her narrow bone with my hands, I felt braver as if the fear I felt for some past years inside myself got vanished at once. I pulled her toward the garden. I

was carrying her in the middle of the garden as nobody could hear her from there. I pissed in my pants out of excitement. The wind flow hit yellow leaves of trees to my face. Suddenly I heard someone while calling my name shouted: "Where are you?" I got transfixed. At first, I thought it was my imagination. But it was my brother. God damn him. He would never come after me before that. I had no idea what to do. I got awkward. His voice got closer. I hit the girl on the garden wall and pressed her neck. I moved my head close to hers and whispered: "If you tell anybody about this, I'll kill you like a dog. Got it? Got it?" She nodded off. I left her right there and moved away. I was hot. If my damn brother would not show up, what fun I might have had.

Brother, I don't know why I am writing these. That innocent girl had no fault at all. What could she do? Her father forced her to marry dad. Her father was a wretched person too. He had some seven or eight young children. Dad went to propose his daughter by knowing that man's misery and poverty. At first, her father was refusing her daughter marriage with one

who was as old as himself but later when dad talked about offering him our cow, he changed his idea.

I went to their home several times with dad. The first time, I stood out and at their home door waiting for dad. I had no idea why dad was meeting them. I had thought that dad had been there to talk with her father about working on the farm. But dad told me everything next time. He told me every detail of his own life. He told me that mom was fifteen years older than him and he always wished his wife could talk with him even a word because as you know mom was dumb and dad was forced to marry her by his father not to be forced to spend a lot for his marriage and wedding party. He was also expected like other people of our village to have seven to eight children. Perhaps considering these all, dad had the right but now that I review the past, I notice he did not talk with his new wife much. While she was not dumb like our mom, she was stuttering. Even if she could have spoken well, she had not dared to talk with dad well.

It was not easy for dad to lose such a good cow. He had plans for that. Everybody was talking well about its race and people asked dad why he had not been going to find her a mate. In response, He was always repeating that he was looking for a bull of her race. He had been supposed to buy a good bull if the following year harvest would be sufficient and we would earn enough money. He had planned to make the stable bigger.

Among all these, the most wretched person was dad's new wife. When dad and her father were talking about the last agreement, her weeping could be heard from the kitchen. I was really moved with compassion but I could do nothing. Or maybe I could, I don't know. The night of the first day we had met them in their home, she could not sleep out of happiness as she had considered dad was proposing her for me and when she got the reality, she just kept weeping for some days. Poor girl! What could she do?

Before bringing her new wife home, dad broke down the wall between our bedroom and his to have a

bigger bride-chamber. My brother and I had to sleep in the stable. The minibus driver of the village brought some color from the city and we painted the new room walls. All the labors were fallen on us. Dad was euphoric. I had not seen him like that before. Mom was also helping us. She covered dad's bed with new sheets and put vases of shepherd's needle on the edge of the new room window. I was burning with fury.

Dad brought her new wife home so simply and quietly. The first night, mom slept in the kitchen but the next nights, she slept in the hall. Since the day dad brought her wife home, I did not step in the rooms upstairs. I did not desire to face dad's new wife. She was always escaping from facing me too. When I was home from school, she did not leave upstairs rooms.

Dad made her pregnant so soon. In her first delivery, she gave birth to a twin, a boy, and a girl. Dad could not contain himself of happiness. He killed two sheep and invited all the village residents to eat them. When he was meeting a person, he repeated that one of the

children was a boy as though he had not had a son before that. In our village, it was common that as the father found out their children were boys; they were going to die of happiness. They kept laughing and having fun with everybody but whoever had a daughter was down and everybody teased him and kept asking him: “will you give your daughter to my son?” The poor guy had to keep silent while his ears got red out of anger. All those fathers having sons could not get along with their sons when they would grow up and grow mustaches. They would become each others' arch enemy. My dad also made me puke and I was sure he had the same feeling toward me. When the twin was born, it got worse as I was sure nothing of that home would belong to me. I was sure sometime later dad would not let me and my brother stay in a house with his young wife and would make us leave home to prevent others gossip about him. His new son doubtlessly would own the whole home and farm which we had suffered a lot for it. My brother was quite care-free about all these. Since dad's marriage, he did not talk even those few words he

once uttered. He became like mom. He followed whatever dad was saying immediately. He made me angry. I also felt pity for dad's new-born son when seeing dad was keeping him in his arms and throwing him up.

Yesterday, I read one of the books of the writer. I had never liked criminal or detective stories. I liked poetry more than fictions. While being in the village, sometimes I took a poetry book and would go to a calm place by the river. I daydreamed that I was reading those poems in a populated big saloon and the people there were clapping for me after each poem. I enjoyed this way of reading poems. Enjoyment caused by things when they belong to you is always more.

I did not enjoy the writer's story. It was about an old man who was murdered and a young officer was to find his killer. Story characters were familiar to me. The story got on my nerve. They had arrested the victim's brother as the murderer. I could not read it thoroughly. It is intolerable that your brother kills you.

I told the writer that all his story characters had been familiar to me. He said: “It is always like that. Everybody identifies himself with a book character as he is reading that or he considers he saw the characters somewhere. It is quite true as we are all similar to each other. If we write world people’s stories, we will notice many of stories are being repeated for thousands or perhaps million times. While people are different from each other apparently, they are one in reality. In the world, unlike the great number of people, there are not a lot of roles. The question is how you play your role. This becomes clearer in stories. Many times, I mixed up my stories character with each other.” I believe he wants to hide the weak points of his stories by these words. I have already read such stories, pointless stories that everything is mixed up there without any order. In my opinion, stories have to be simple and fluent and not confusing and hilarious that you can’t follow it. Anyway, I am not going to read the writer’s stories. All in all, all stories frighten you. If you think rightly, they are all horrifying.

Those days I was really depressed. I hated everything and everybody. I always rebuked myself and repeated to myself: “How long do you want everybody do whatever he wishes to you? Do something.” I wanted to fight against everybody but I could not and this made me angrier. I hated myself more than anybody else. I needed to do something to prove myself how manlike I am.

It was raining heavily for several continuous days and the school was closed. I had to stay in the stable. Dad and his wife and children were having fun upstairs. Dad carried each of his children one by one on his shoulders and mimed funny things for them to make them laugh. But, my brother and I had to be imprisoned in the stable like two orphaned calves. I tried to talk with my brother several times to let our complexes to be expressed a little but that damned brother was like haunted people. He kept looking at clouds without saying a single word. It was all dad’s fault. Mom had become her maid, my brother his servant and there was no difference whether I was there or not. For me, dad was also dead. I was dying

of sadness. I was getting really crazy. I fought myself a lot but I had to put an end to everything.

I got up at midnight. My brother was snoring. His quit was not on him completely and his head had fallen on the ground from his pillow. It was raining less heavily than before. I took a gunny sack from one corner of the stable and sneaked out. Everywhere was muddy. It was cloudy and quite dark. While being bent down, I moved toward the rooms. I paid all my attention to the windows so suddenly my foot got to stick in a muddy pit up to my ankle and I fell down on my face. All my body was covered with mud. I got up with difficulty and took my foot out but my shoe came out of my foot and stayed there. I fumbled it. It was full of mud. In that situation, I could not climb the wall. I was going to refuse myself of following my plan by arguing myself that as since the beginning of your plan, you had been facing problems, there was a Godly point in that. I faced back to the stable but I could not convince myself to enter that. I told myself: "Let's put an end to everything once and forever. Boy! Show yourself how brave you are." I turned to

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the home and went to the back side of it. I took my shoes off and climbed the wall like a cat. From there, it was easier to go to the roof. I had done that more than one thousand times before. I went to the chimney step by step. Dad's sleep was light and it was possible he got up at every moment to put more logs in the fireplace. I did my best not to make any sound. The sound of raining was also assisting me not to let people hear my footsteps. The wind was stronger on the roof and it was circling inside my wet clothes. I was freezing. I kept my hands next to the chimney to let them become warm. Its heat gave me energy. I took the gunny sack out from my shirt and put it inside the chimney pipe and like a blade of straw; I came down from the roof. I put on my shoes and was about to proceed that one of the children began to cry and dad's wife lit a lamp. The lamplight was casting out. The shadow of dad's new wife had the child in her arms fell on the ground. She was walking across the room. I was terrified and dared not to move. When the child got calmer, she sat at the window and stared at the stable. I bent down in darkness. The child was

quite calm but she was not leaving there. I was so cold. Damned girl! She kept sitting there. I was dying of coldness and fear. Finally, dad called her loudly and said: "What are you doing there?" She awkwardly went in and turned off the lamp. I moved fast. While I was wet completely, I felt a heavy burden was unloaded from my shoulders. My brother was still fast asleep. I went to my bed and slept comfortably. I got up in the morning as my brother was calling me. He was talking with himself so loudly to make me awake. He was saying: "Why is he late? Why?" I took my head out of the quilt and saw him putting his shoes on and was walking across the stable. He got so wretched that would not leave the stable until my dad ordered him. I desired to know if my plan was successful. I got up. I got transfixed by seeing my muddy shoes. I had the chance that my brother had not noticed them. I pushed my shoes with my foot under gunny sacks. Then I opened the stable door. My brother like a sheep whose stable door had gotten open jumped out and ran to the rooms and stood by their door.



Mehdi Bahrami (1978/Kerman)

belongs to the young and talented generation of writers of the contemporary Iran. In his novels, he focuses on the marginal and extreme situations. In his first novel, *the Cradle of the Dead*, he deals with the question of war and offers a different view on the issue from the official discourse. In his second novel, *The A Pianist*, he takes the case of the famous Iranian conjoined twins, Laleh and Ladan, and represent it as a metaphor for Iranian national identity, torn between pre-Islamic and Islamic identity. He currently works on his third novel, *The Bedouin*, which explores the origins of violence in Middle East and its relations to language.

Bahrami lives with his family in Kerman, Iran and through his job maintains a very close relationship with his fellow citizens whom he depicts in his novels.