

THE PILOT

Dedicated to Civil Aviation

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ABOUT THE NOVEL

The Pilot is a spiritual novel. It tells the tale of Nare and the people in her life. It explores the mysteries between earthly life and heaven. Separated by distance, even death, from those they love, it reveals how people hold onto hope of reunion.

The story speaks about love and separation, loss, pain, failures and the way to success. The characters of the novel are ordinary people with different destinies. The philosophy of this novel is not only existence but dignity. It's a romance that expresses the power of love.

The pilot is one of the main characters of the novel who used to be a poor young lady whose parents and younger brother died in a car accident.

The novel is about desires and ambitions. The strong ambitions make not only dreams but even illusions come true as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AWARD WINNING AUTHOR NOBLE STAR FOR LITERATURE 2020 ANAHIT
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Poetry books: The Queen Of Metaphors, My Intoxicated Ink, The Phantom's Dolphin, Words In Flight, The Canvas Of My Soul, Where I Meet Myself, Ink And Quill.

THE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON BOTH PAPERBACK AND KINDLE.

CHAPTER ONE

AIRPORT

The taxi stopped at the gates of Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan. Nare crept out of it like a small bird flown from its cage. Her boyfriend followed her, opening his wallet to pay the driver. Nare's dark eyes and her boyfriend's blue eyes hugged each other like two pieces of coal and two drops of the sea.

"John!" she said in a weak voice. "I have never flown before. I wish I were able to fly with you".

"Yes, darling!" John whispered, sadly. "I wish I were able to place you in my travelling bag. I did my best to take you with me, but I failed. They reject most of the visa applications from unemployed and homeless people."

Nare had already tasted bitterness in her life and the world's injustice. She had no property or money.

"I have a little time before going through the passport control. Let me photograph you before I leave," John said to Nare with a sad smile.

He took the camera out of his pocket to add more photos of his beloved woman not only to his camera but also to his heart. The taxi had already gone. John shot a few pictures of Nare's dark and deep eyes. Nare and John had been online friends before John visited her. As an eastern young lady Nare was shy and reserved.

"John, you have been here for ten days. If you stayed longer, we would light more and more candles in the churches standing for centuries in my ancient land," she said.

Nare held John's hand so firmly as if she hoped to prevent John from going. A plane took off, speeding up higher and higher. Nare looked up to catch its sight. She had seen many flocks of cranes before.

"Why have the white feathers of the bird turned into silver?" she asked herself.

The iron crane disappeared in the sky. That wasn't John's flight. They both walked into the airport building. There were crowds of people inside the airport. John handed his passport to the airline check-in agent, who asked him a question in a very polite way.

"Your final destination, sir?" the check-in agent said to John.

"New York", replied John.

Nare knew Air France would take John from Yerevan to Paris and from Paris to New York. John's silver crane would land in Paris for fuel then continue its flight to New York like a huge bird that could land for some water. After John's passport and airplane ticket had been checked, he turned to Nare.

"I am so sorry. I wish I were able to take you to my place," John said.

He opened his wallet again.

"Here is some money," he said. "Do pay the taxi driver to take you to town."

Their hands embraced each other. The coins found themselves in Nare's cold palm.

"Good flight, John!" she cried.

John bound himself to large crowds of the passengers and slid through the departure gate. She looked around. The lit bulbs of the airport reminded her of shiny stars.

"I won't go back, no, I won't," Nare whispered and her dark eyes suddenly changed into bubbled black clouds.

She expected John to gift her with wings. Now her hope melted like a soft snowflake. It was the very snowflake that wasn't being kissed by a sunray but a grey cloud of smoke. She lived with her uncle's family. She was poor. Her misery was mirrored on her pale but beautiful face. She used to spend most of her time sitting before her computer. She had a lot of friends all over the world. She always shared her thoughts and emotions with them. That's why she thought the cyber world was her borderless home. Her friends were so nice to her, but John was the only person who not only spread his voice via the internet but flew by air to touch her neck and to kiss her onyx eyes as well. They had been together for only ten days. Now she was watching the travellers a bit jealously. Nare's eyes climbed up, but her words got stuck in her throat.

"Here is the air that had brought John to me. The same air was taking him away," Nare said to herself and tried to stretch her hand towards the flying airplane in despair.

Nare did not leave the airport though John had already gone to his home city. Nare kept on wandering at the airport with her secret thoughts and silent monologue. She no longer believed that her computer would open the door of the cage in which her heart's nightingale was trapped.

"Nare, nobody will offer you his vehicle," she kept on speaking to herself.

The people were too busy to notice her quenched shape that was wandering around the airport. Suddenly her eyes met an old man. He had his passport and plane ticket in his hand. The man's wrinkled face reminded her of a grey cliff, and the tears from his eyes were likely to be rain drips sticking in the deep wrinkles of his cheeks. Nare wanted to know who he was and where he was going.

"Grandfather," called Nare in a friendly voice.

"What's wrong? What has happened? Why are you crying?" she whispered quietly.

"Everything is all right," the old man answered with a faint smile. "I am going away. I am sick and old. Only God knows if I would be able to come back home again. My only daughter lives in Madrid. I am going there. My wife died when our daughter was ten".

The old man paused for a moment and said, "What's your name?"

"Nare", she replied.

"What a good name! Where are you going, Nare?" the old man said to her.

"Nowhere. I came here to see off my boyfriend two days ago," Nare replied.

"Two days ago?" the old man asked her in surprise.

"He might have already arrived in New York," Nare said to him in a quiet voice.

She herself got surprised that she had been in the airport for two days. These two days had passed quickly like one minute that flew from the clock's face. Now other passengers were getting ready to fly by Air France. There were so many flights, so many open gates to different parts of the world. She was lost in her thoughts, when the old man's voice called her name.

"Nare, you are much luckier than me. You are not going away. I am leaving my hut overlooking the proud mountains of my village," he said.

"Proud!" Nare said to herself.

"Our mountains are proud, indeed," she said.

Her voice wasn't heard by the old man as she spoke to her own soul.

"Grandfather, the world is too huge to be a hut," she said. "I don't have a hut but I have the world which is located in my computer."

The old man didn't understand why Nare's dignity was hurt. His pain was different. He was parting with the oak tree beside his wooden fence, which was much older than him.

"What is this young lady's pain?" the man wanted to know but he didn't say anything to Nare.

He walked towards the check-in counter very slowly.

"Your final destination?" the young lady at the check-in counter asked him without taking her eyes away from his passport and plane ticket.

"Madrid," the old man answered, lifting his traveling bag with his trembling hand.

He looked around as if he had lost something which he wanted to find at once. He knew he wouldn't come back. He seemed to be photographing the last pictures of his country, using his eyes as a camera.

"These pictures will never disappear from his eyes," Nare said to herself.

Leaning on his walking stick, the old man slid with a lot of memories through the departure gate and followed a great number of passengers. Nare's thoughts were with the old man during the day. John's blue eyes were two peaceful lakes tempting her from afar. She looked at the sky for another airplane. Time seemed to have stopped in her thoughts. Nobody asked her why she was there. She suddenly fell asleep on a chair in the waiting room. The bright lights erupting from a lot of bulbs didn't hurt her weary eyes. She woke up again. She didn't know what time it was. The place she found a shelter was never empty or quiet. She was thinking about nothing but flights. She felt weakness for the first time. She struggled to rise on her feet. She walked towards the airport café. The money John gave her for a taxi was enough for a cup of coffee and some

sweets which she used to keep in her schoolbag when she was a schoolgirl. However she didn't need any sweets at the moment but a cup of bitter coffee.

CHAPTER TWO

NARE AND PIERRE

Nare looked at the timer. It was 6 am. The sun hadn't risen yet, but the café was washed by the rays from the bulbs. She came in and sat at a table which was near the open door of the café. It was symbolic. She always thought about the open roads through the sky. A handsome man in a uniform was sitting opposite her. Nare noticed a cup of coffee and a large chocolate bar on his table. Nare put her coins on her table to count. The man stood up and walked to her.

"Bonjour mademoiselle!" he greeted her in his own language.

Nare looked at him. She didn't know French well.

"Good morning!" she replied.

"Do you speak English, monsieur?" she said to him.

"Yes, I do. My name is Pierre. I am working for Air France. I am a pilot. I still have some time before I start my flight. May I sit at your table?" he said.

"Do please!" Nare whispered in her tired voice.

"What's your name?" he asked her at once.

"Nare," she answered, smiling.

The coins were still lying on her table.

Pierre looked at the coins and said, "Nare, wouldn't you mind if I pay for our coffee? It would be my pleasure."

"Thank you, monsieur," she whispered with a shy smile.

"Do call me Pierre," he said.

Nare put the coins back into her pocket. Pierre ordered two cups of coffee, two large chocolate bars, some pancakes and a bottle of lemonade. For a few minutes they were eating and drinking in silence.

"Nare, what have you been doing here since last night?" Pierre broke the silence.

"I have been watching these silver birds. How do you know I have been here...Pierre?" she said to him.

Nare's face turned pale. Nare came to the airport to see John off. She wanted to fly herself. Pierre noticed her sadness.

"I see you love metallic eagles," he tried to joke as he wanted to change her mood.

"I also love breathing cranes," Nare said, cheerfully.

Pierre was doing his best to understand her. She seemed so extraordinary. He noticed her wandering around the airport. He noticed her fatigue.

"Why? What's her aim?" he thought.

He had given these questions many times to himself.

Pierre couldn't figure out her purpose and intention. He was a pilot. The silver bird, as Nare described, was a toy in his skillful hands. Due to his skills, the plane was able to fly thousands of miles. He always managed to understand his machine, but he failed to understand Nare.

"How long are you going to watch them?" he said.

Nare liked his French humour.

"How long? I don't know," she replied.

Nare's tongue trembled as if it was a leaf caught by a crazy wind.

"A wounded bear cub always appears in my dreams," she said. "It forces me to fly away. Pierre, it's not me, it's the bear cub."

Pierre looked at her, puzzled.

"Is she mad?" he thought.

"I met an old man here," said Nare. "He was going to Madrid. He had a hut so he had a home. He used to grow vegetables which he sold in the nearest market. His disability and age didn't allow him to keep on working hard in his garden any more. He needed care. His only daughter did her best to invite her father to Spain. The old man had to leave his hut behind. That's why he was sad. His eyes will always look back. His eyes will always sketch a return ticket in the huge horizon. The roof of his hut will call him back."

Nare's face grew pale again, as she added: "No roof will call me back as I don't have any."

She continued to speak: "The wounded bear cub found itself in my soul. I would be free from it when I flew like a bird through the departure gate."

The sweet lemonade suddenly turned into sour vinegar inside Pierre's mouth. He had a look at his watch not to be late for the flight. He felt relief finding out it was too early to rush to the airplane. He turned to Nare again.

"I live in Paris," he said. "I was born in Gavr, where my childhood was spent. I was the only child of my parents. My parents usually quarrelled. My father often came back home smelling of wine. He was rude to my mother. I was too young to understand what the matter was. One day I had a courage to ask my father why he was often angry with my mother. He patted my head and kissed my forehead. I still remember his words. He said he loved her more than anybody else and anything else in the world. He filled his glass with more wine. I asked my father if he loved me. He kissed my forehead again. There were tears in his eyes. Later I found out that my mother had a lover. After my father had discovered her secret love, he devoted himself to the red seas of wine. I was twelve when my parents got divorced. My mother begged me to forgive her before going to leave home. Soon she took the airplane to join the man because of whom she stopped

caring for her family. My father lost his job and started to dive through the waves of wine much more often than he used to do after he had argued with my mother in his craze. His loneliness made him disabled. He was unable to take care of me. He sent me to a boarding school in Gavr. After I had been in the boarding school for a month, I decided to escape."

He paused for a moment and exclaimed: "Nare!"

His voice trembled for a moment.

He said to Nare in a quiet voice: "The wounded bear cub chasing you these days entered my soul when I was a boy of twelve. It wasn't me but it was a bear cub who was so restless. I used to hear it crying. It forced me to go away. It wanted me to hide myself from the people whom I knew. The wounded bear cub commanded me to flee from my past and present. I thought if I stayed in a remote place, I would be able to flee even from myself. I do not remember how I managed to creep out of my school building without being noticed by anyone. I reached the English Channel. The waves were running like blue horses, carrying ships and boats on their backs. I didn't have money to go to England by boat. The wounded bear cub kept on speaking to me in a boy's voice. It was so much like my own voice as a boy. It commanded me to swim. After I had swum a short distance, I was captured by a man. I was taken back to the seaport. I was angry with the man as I did not realize that he had saved my life."

Pierre paused. He looked at his watch.

"I'm sorry, Nare," he said. "I have to go now. The plane is waiting for its pilot."

He smiled but his chestnut eyes seemed to be less brighter than they were a while ago.

"Nare!" he continued to say. "You will never be able to travel without your visa and your airplane ticket. I would have bought you a plane ticket if you had had a visa. Here is some money. Accept it as a sign of respect for a short but such pleasant conversation. Take a taxi to town at once. There's no point in staying at the airport. Au revoir, Nare."

"Goodbye, Pierre," Nare exclaimed.

Nare smiled as soon as she understood that she had been talking to herself. Nobody had been sitting at her table. She had been alone all the time. Nare hesitated for a moment. She didn't know what to do. She did not want to leave the airport café. She saw more and more people coming to the café. The café became overcrowded soon. A young woman with a child about five years old came and sat at her table. Nare did not want any company as she was upset.

No sooner had Pierre left the table than Nare started inventing Pierre's life story. Maybe Pierre's life story invented itself while Nare was sleeping on a chair in the airport café. She was still with her thoughts, and she did not want anyone to bother her.

"My daughter wants to eat something. You would not mind if we share your table, would you? There aren't any other vacant seats in the café," whispered the woman to Nare.

"No, I would not," replied Nare. She had a kind heart, and she always tried to be helpful and supportive.

"What a lovely daughter you have!" Nare said in a friendly voice.

The woman, who spoke Armenian to Nare, turned to her daughter and said a few words to her in Russian.

"My daughter does not speak Armenian. She was born in Russia. My name is Lucine. My name is Svetlana in Russian. My husband calls me Sveta," she said to Nare.

"I prefer to call you Lucine," Nare said and smiled.

"I am Nare. Nice to meet you Lucine," Nare exclaimed.

"Yulia, be quiet!" Lucine said to her sweet daughter, whose curly hair was like a wisp of wheat.

"We have been in Armenia for a month. Now we are going back to Ecatherinburg. I was born in Armenia," said Lucine. "My family left Armenia, when I was at Yulia's age. My parents taught me to speak Armenian. My mother died recently. She suffered from cancer for the last few years. She was on her way to join the angels in Heaven, when she requested me to go to Armenia. She closed her eyes in peace. Nare, I have done my duty. My mother will be pleased with me now. I cannot see my mother, but I am sure she contacts me with a touch of any breeze and with voices of mild rains."

Nare noticed some tears in Lucine's eyes.

"Why did your parents leave Armenia?" Nare asked Lucine that question in her haste.

"I do not remember as I was a five-year-old child," said Lucine and bent down to pick up the spoon, which Yulia had dropped.

"Nare, my father had started his own business, which went wrong some time later," said Lucine. "He fell into debt because he had been cheated by the people whom he trusted. My parents had to sell our house. Soon my father had nothing except some money for our airplane tickets. My family settled in Ecatherinburg. My parents didn't like the frosty winters there, but they didn't have another choice. My father kept on carrying the pain of his lost property, and the pain forced him to be even more ambitious. He was a proud man, so he struggled against our family's poverty for a few years till he became successful. He had promised my mother the warmth of our own house even in the harshest winters in our new country. Nare, my father worked hard and built a house in this northern city. After we had become homeless, we felt frost in our sunny world. My father always said that only your own roof could be the deepest root in your land not to enable any wind to sweep you away. He meant a house or an apartment by mentioning "Roof." My parents had never expected to own a house a long way from our native land before. However my parents kept on missing their sky in which the bright bushy hair of the sun shone like gold. Nare, my father died unexpectedly when I was a schoolgirl. My mother sometimes suspected that my father might have been poisoned. Nare, my father was an honest man, and he never did anyone bad. After my father's death my mother regretted leaving Armenia for Russia," Lucine said to Nare.

Lucine kept silent for a few minutes, then she spoke again with tears in her eyes, "the criminals were not arrested as many police officers were corrupted."

Nare was listening to Lucine quietly. The old man's glance had been chasing Nare time by time. Suddenly Yulia spilt the juice all over the table.

"Shame on you, Yulia!" Lucine shouted with a slight smile.

She apologized to the waitress, who rushed to wipe the spilt juice.

"Nare, I'm sorry. We have to leave the cafe. The child is ill-bred," said Lucine.

"Don't say so, Lucine! She is a golden haired doll," Nare said joyfully.

"I will be going through the passport control in twenty minutes' time. What time is your flight, Nare?" Lucine asked Nare in a friendly way.

Nare's heart started to beat quicker.

"My boyfriend flew to New York. I am not flying anywhere," said Nare.

Lucine took out a piece of paper from her handbag and wrote her telephone number and home address on it, which she handed to Nare. She thanked Lucine in a tender smile that had just appeared in her dark eyes. They waved to each other.

CHAPTER THREE

NARE'S FLIGHT IN HER DREAM

After Lucine and her little daughter had left, Nare felt lonely though there were crowds of people around her. She was still looking for John's blue eyes. Her eyes were jumping to cling to the sky to recall the two blue bulbs on John's face. She knew John was away. She wouldn't have visited the airport if John hadn't departed.

"John may have already been at home for a week or so. Why am I at the airport?" she kept on giving this question to herself.

Nare sometimes wondered if her relatives were looking for her. She didn't tell anybody that she was going to the airport to see her boyfriend off. She sometimes thought that she had been with John in her dream. She thought the airport was an image that was stuck in her eyes, which were closed during her sleep.

"Have I been sleeping all this time without waking up? Am I still in my long sleep?" she continued to question herself. "It could have been a mirage, couldn't it?"

She thought John and the people whom she had met at the airport were mirages or sirens, arriving and departing through the transparent air. The airplane which had brought John, took him away again. Suddenly Nare felt she was unable to keep her eyes open any more. She was so tired and sleepy. She walked to the waiting room, took a seat and fell asleep. Her sleep was peaceful, and her eyelids were soaked in the sweetest nectar.

"Mademoiselle!"

Nare heard a familiar voice. She turned back.

"Hello, Nare," said Pierre.

"Hello, Pierre," greeted Nare.

She recognized the man in a uniform.

"Ah, Pierre! I didn't expect to see you again," she said. "I always thought the air would steal people to hide them forever."

Pierre smiled sadly.

"Nare, the air hides only those who go to Heaven," he said. "Even airplanes never meet God and angels though the airplanes travel through the highest roads of the sky. They both land and take off, because life goes on. The airplanes take people away, but they also bring them back. Never do angels find anyone in the world, even if they miss those whom they have left behind."

Pierre patted Nare's shoulder. Nare remembered seeing her parents and her four-year-old brother off to Heaven. Her memories began to lead her to the sight of a dug hole with plenty of soil.

"Ah, Pierre's thoughts must be wrong," said Nare. "Everyone's life begins and ends. The last leaves of the mortality tree fall on the last page of every person's longer or shorter story. Why did Pierre say that angels never find anyone in the world? Maybe they sometimes fall off Heaven for someone, whom they had cherished or... even failed to meet during their lifetime. "

Nare had been lost in her thoughts when she heard Pierre's voice again.

"Nare, why are you still here?" Pierre said. "How long have you been here? I wonder how long you are going to stay at the airport. Do you have money for a taxi? Don't worry I will pay. *Rentrez chez vous et reposez-vous. Tu as l'air fatigué.*"

Pierre told Nare in French to go home and to have a rest, as she looked tired. He took out his leather wallet from his pocket.

"Home," exclaimed Nare. "I have been wandering around this departure gate all this time."

Pierre recognized the wounded bear cub that had flown from his childhood and settled in Nare. The same hurt bear cub captured Nare, which used to be with Pierre many years ago.

"How long has it been ruling Nare?" Pierre said to himself. "It won't leave her as it is sticking its claws deeper and deeper into her thin neck."

Pierre felt unhappy being unable to free her from that mad bear cub.

"Nare, you dream of travelling by air, don't you?" he said to Nare.

Nare didn't say a word. She looked up and paused.

"I have neither money nor a visa," replied Nare.

Her voice seemed to have dropped from a violin string.

"I can't offer you a business class flight, but you will fly with the crew," Pierre said without any hesitation.

His voice was firm. He was sure he was taking a risk. He would be fired from his job. He knew it was illegal to take a passenger in the airplane cockpit. However the silver bird didn't refuse to welcome Nare. She sat comfortably in the very head of the bird.

"Bonjour!" A voice sounded in Nare's ears.

It was one of the members of the crew.

"Are you a new pilot, mademoiselle?" he said to Nare.

The young man joked cheerfully. It was the second pilot of the flight. The cheerful man in a uniform was surprised, as he had never flown a passenger in the cockpit of the airplane. Pierre smiled. He felt some relief. The airplane ran on the ground for a few minutes and jumped up to

float in the sky. Nare was watching the crew silently. Pierre didn't say a word during the flight. He was on his duty. All his attention was focused on the equipment which seemed so new to Nare.

"We will land at Charles De Gaulle in ten minutes," Pierre broke the silence.

The huge bird's legs touched the ground at last. Nare turned to Pierre.

"Pierre, you have just freed me from the bear cub. I don't hear the wounded bear cub, snoring in my soul any longer," said Nare.

Pierre was happy. He thought he had not managed to swim across the English Channel to free himself from the wounded bear cub, when he was a boy. He had been unable to cover the distance through the sea, as he had been captured by a man and brought back to the seashore. However he helped Nare to cover a long distance through the airways.

"I am at Charles De Gaulle now," Nare said to herself.

The same pictures were in Nare's eyes. There were crowds of people speaking different languages. Pierre took out his mobile phone from his pocket and dialled. Nare heard Pierre speaking French. Nare didn't understand all Pierre's words, as her knowledge of the French language was poor. As soon Pierre finished his phone conversation with his wife, he turned to Nare.

"It was my wife," he said. "I told her I arrived at Charles De Gaulle a few minutes ago. I let her know I would be back home very soon. I always miss her when I am away. She misses me too. Now she is waiting for me to have dinner together."

Nare smiled, but she didn't say anything. She was too excited to speak.

"I am happy that your air voyage came true," Pierre said quietly to Nare.

Nare was happy to leave the wounded bear cub behind. Due to the courageous French pilot she realized she could be proud of herself.

"Good luck, Pierre!" Her voice didn't tremble any more.

"Are you going to find a shelter at this airport too?" Pierre said to Nare.

Both his eyes and lips were smiling.

"The wounded bear cub has already left me," said Nare. "Goodbye, Pierre!"

Nare ran out of the airport building without waiting for Pierre to accompany her. She went to meet Paris. On her way to the city she was thinking about the airports. They reminded her of the longest veins all over the world's body. The travellers whom she met seemed to be small and big rivers, flowing through those veins. She was one of them. She didn't expect anything from the world, as she was a tiny drip of dew that might be swept by her own destiny's winds one day, but she wouldn't guess that mysterious date. Nare heard her heart beating.

"Thank you, Pierre," whispered Nare.

Her tongue sounded with her pulse. Pierre wasn't there to hear Nare. She was going to greet Paris. Nare woke up and looked around. She touched her eyes, and some drops of salty tears appeared on her fingers. She realized that she had been dreaming. Nare tried to sleep again to go back to her dream, which had just gone. She closed her eyes but she couldn't sleep. Nare realized that Pierre never told her anything about his life. He might have been a happy child in his family whose parents had never been divorced. Pierre neither told Nare about a single episode from his life nor flew her to Paris. He had just invited Nare to share his table in the airport cafe for a few minutes before his flight. Nare was deep in psychological crisis after she had lost her parents and her younger brother. She was also being treated badly by her uncle's family, who could hardly bear her presence, but she did not have anywhere to go.

"No, no, it was not Pierre's story. My classmate, Aram told me about his only toy teddy bear. Aram's mother left him as she married to another man. Aram's father started drinking, and he was intoxicated almost every day. Aram's teddy bear kept on persuading Aram to escape," Nare said to herself.

"The bear cub belonged to my classmate. Aram had never had any other toys in his childhood as his parents had never cared to buy more toys for their son. I don't know anything about Pierre's childhood, but Aram's childhood was before my eyes as we were in the same elementary school together, and his home was not far from mine. Yes, yes, the bear cub was Aram's only toy that talked to him with Aram's tongue. I don't know why Aram's teddy bear comes to my thoughts. I don't know why my childhood's toy bear returned to me through all these passed ages to be with me, and what made my soft toy bear wounded like Aram's only toy bear. Unlike Aram I had many nice toys in my childhood, but non of them returned to me. Why did my toy bear appeared from my past? Why is my bear cub wounded at present? It was not wounded when I was a child. I took care of all my toys as a little girl. Aram escaped from his home. Later I heard that he was found and taken to the boarding school. I have never heard from him since then. Yes, yes, now I see that Pierre did not tell me anything about his life," Nare whispered to herself and smiled.

The sweetness of the chocolate that the French pilot had bought for her did not remove the bitterness of her life's dramas. However, Pierre's image glued to her mind not only as a type of hallucination but also something different that she could hardly figure out.

"Fly, Nare, fly! I have already taught you to take the plane off," Nare said to herself as if it was Pierre, speaking quietly in her ear.

CHAPTER FIVE

NARE'S FANTASY

Nare was sitting in the kitchen at her uncle's house. She heard her uncle's voice.

"Anna, why hasn't Nare switched on her computer for two weeks?" Nare's uncle said to his wife.

"I am afraid that she might have some mental disorder. I think her boyfriend, the American man discovered it, and he decided to forget Nare forever," Anna said.

"No, my darling wife, I don't think so. Nare's destiny is not kind to her. That's why she behaves like this, but she doesn't do anything wrong, does she? She spends most of her time in her room," Nare's uncle said.

Anna hesitated for a moment and said to her husband, "why doesn't she fancy watching TV with us either?"

"If she found a job, she would be able to rent a shelter," their daughter-in-law said suddenly, who had overheard their conversation.

"Something is wrong with Nare's brain. She keeps on saying that her childhood's toy bear has returned to her as a real bear cub," said Anna.

"We can't do anything. Nare lost her home and all her family members. She has nowhere to go," Nare's uncle said sadly.

"Arpi advised me to give her for mentally ill patients' care. Most of the places for such patients are free so we will not have to pay any money. She will find home there," Anna said and looked into her husband's eyes.

"Anna, forget it. She is my dead sister's daughter. I will never forgive myself," Nare's uncle replied with a bit anger in his voice. Anna, mind this, Nare has nowhere to go. She must stay with us. If her American boyfriend comes again to take her to America, she will go with him. I want her to be happy," Nare's uncle said loudly.

"Her American boyfriend? He will never come for her. Nare says that she can no longer find him among her contacts in the internet," Anna spoke even much louder than her husband.

They were arguing so loudly that Nare could overhear them.

At the moment Nare's eyes pictured the apartment where she used to live with her parents. It was their own apartment. There was a piano in the sitting room. Nare's mother was a teacher of music. Nare used to listen to those classical and folk melodies, when her mother was giving classes to her pupils in their cozy living room. Those melodies became silent as if they had never existed. What about her flight to Paris? Didn't Pierre's silver bird take her there? Lucine's voice came into her ears. Nare thought of Lucine's father, who had promised Lucine's mother a roof, which meant home. Nare put her hand into the pocket of her jacket to touch the piece of paper, where Lucine's phone number and address were written. She smiled when she found it there.

"Ah, I haven't invented Lucine. What about Pierre? Have I ever met him? Yes, he invited me to sit at his table. What else? No, I have never been in the plane cockpit," she tried to separate fantasies from realities.

Nare was sure she had met Lucine with her little daughter, Yulia. She had also met the old man. Nare knew that she had met Pierre, but he had never shared his cockpit with her. She remembered saying goodbye to John at the departure gate. After his plane had taken off, she stayed at the airport. She couldn't understand why she didn't leave the airport, after John had flown home. The old man in tears was real. Lucine and little Yulia were real. Pierre, the pilot was real, too. Only her flight was unreal. It was her crazy fantasy, which appeared in her dream, while she was sleeping. She invented her seat in the cockpit to reach her destination, as her misery had never allowed her to travel. Her uncle's son opened the door of the kitchen.

"Nare, don't worry! Be a bit practical! You are so beautiful that you may have a chance to be happy with another man. Wow, girl, you may even meet a rich businessman," he said, trying to sound funny.

"What about love, Armen?" Nare said in surprise.

Armen didn't give a reply. He knew Nare looked like an angel. Nare still missed John. She still imagined the empty hut of the elderly man, whom she had met at the airport. The silver bird belonging to Air France was still floating in Nare's dark brown eyes. Nare switched on her computer again. She knew she had friends in many parts of the world. This time she wanted to talk to the angels, who used to be her family's friends in the same earthly life. She was disappointed, as she couldn't find a way to contact them.

"They will probably find me soon," she said to herself.

She typed her message, "Hello, my dear angels! Have you met my parents and my little brother, Levon? He was with his favourite toy elephant in the car. He was probably playing with it, when the accident happened. Have you met my cousin, Sargis? He joined you when he was eighteen."

Sargis was her uncle's son, Armen's brother. He had suffered from blood cancer. Sargis had always been very kind to Nare. She believed he would give her good advice as he did. He was very clever. Whenever Nare was caught by depression, she asked him for help.

"Ah, Sargis!" she said. "I need to talk to you. Would you type a few lines for me! Ah, no reply again. Sargis, I know you are my facebook friend. You haven't unfriended me, have you? Mom and Dad never visited facebook. Little Levon was four years old, so he couldn't read and write. Sargis, have you met them in Heaven?"

Nare cried looking at her cousin's profile.

"He won't answer you, Nare," Armen said, looking at the computer.

"Why are you messaging him? He is dead. He is out of the internet. He doesn't see and hear anything which exists on our Earth."

There was some sadness in Armen's voice.

Nare's eyes searched for John's profile. John was offline. Nare touched her cheeks. She wanted to find John's kisses. John's lips were away. She was still patting the shades of John's lips all over her face, when she noticed a new friend request. She moved her computer mouse to accept it.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "The angels have sent my message to my mom and dad."

The picture made Nare's tears flow. Her parents had been photographed together, before the car accident happened. Now they are looking at Nare with their peaceful eyes. Nare was too impatient to wait for them to send the first lines to her.

She started messaging in her haste, "Mom, dad and my little brother Levon, how have you been there?"

She suddenly recalled Pierre's words that she heard in her dream. His voice entered her ears.

He said, "Never do we meet angels."

"My parents are angels now," Nare whispered. "I am going to have a chat with them. Ah, ah, they are messaging me."

"There will be flights in your life," the message said. Nare read those lines a few times.

"My dear mom and dad, have you been watching me since you left?" she asked.

"Little Mouse, take care," the message said.

These lines appeared in her private message. Nare smiled, but her smile was sad.

"They still call me Little Mouse though I am twenty two years old,"

Nare said to herself, swallowing the tears up dripping from her long eyelashes.

She looked at the screen again to continue her chat with her parents, who had left for Heaven.

"They are not here any more," she screamed.

Armen's wife heard Nare's scream and rushed to her to see what had happened.

Arpi thought that something was wrong with Nare's brain. She did not like Nare, but she did her best not to show it.

"Arpi!" Nare exclaimed. "Your computer skills are good. I have lost them in the internet. Do your best to find them again!"

"Whom have you lost, Nare?" Arpi said.

Arpi was puzzled and a bit annoyed, but she tried to be polite.

"My parents," Nare replied.

"Take care, Nare," Arpi said without looking at Nare.

Nare's voice trembled, but she did her best not to cry.

Arpi left the room without saying a word. Nare was alone again. No, she wasn't alone. The wounded bear cub was with her. It wasn't snoring. It had woken up to talk to Nare. Nare's father was cheated by a dishonest dealer. Losing his property, he suffered so much. Nare was still in the school building, when that horrible news flew to her like a black crow. Her parents and her only brother were killed in a car accident. She was a high school student and old enough to understand why her father lost his control and crashed.

"He was driving his car, but his depression was driving him," Nare said to herself, crying louder and louder.

The wounded bear cub suddenly spoke in Nare's voice.

"Have you forgotten what Lucine told you?" the bear cub whispered in Nare's ear. "You don't forget what Lucine told you, do you?"

"No, I don't," Nare said to the bear cub.

Lucine's parents ran a café, where the migrants from their home country usually gathered to speak their own language not to forget it. The café was their small land far away from their native country, where they were born and grew up.

"Nare," the bear cub whispered in Nare's ear again. "I used to be your toy Teddy Bear. I am still with you. Pierre didn't fly you anywhere, but you will be able to get your own wings."

The silver plane began to float in Nare's dark brown eyes. A great idea was born in Nare's brain.

"What if I buy a plane ticket to Lucine's place," Nare said to herself.

"I will be away from my uncle's family," she said to her invisible bear cub.

"Fly Nare, fly high, and everyone will respect you," replied the bear with Nare's voice as usual.

She took a few coins out of her pocket. She counted them and laughed at herself.

"These coins are enough to buy a bottle of milk," Nare said to herself.

The coins seemed to be very cold. While touching them her fingers became frosty.

"Are all coins cold like ice?" Nare asked herself. "Death makes bodies as cold as these coins are."

She smiled ironically without moving her eyes away from the coins. She bent her head to look at her feet. She knew she wouldn't be able to walk thousands of miles. Nare never stopped thinking about John. His blue eyes reminded her of the open sky, patting both birds and planes. The night before she had had a strange dream. In her dream she saw a vivid rainbow slide down and call her name. She knelt on the rainbow, and it carried her through the sky. The impressions of her night dream were suddenly interrupted by the sounds of footsteps under her window. A man was standing at Nare's uncle's door step. He was obviously looking for Nare.

"Bonjour Pierre," she exclaimed, creeping up the window sill.

It was Nare's cousin's friend, Saro. He wasn't wearing a uniform. He was in a shirt and blue jeans. He didn't understand why Nare called him Pierre. He wanted to know why Nare greeted him in French.

"Nare, I have good news for you," he said. "A small toy store needs a shop assistant. I think it will be a good job for you. Although you are in your twenties you still like your toy bear. You will enjoy selling different toys and seeing happy smiles in many children's eyes."

CHAPTER SIX

JOHN AND MARY

John was sitting at his desk. He was looking at the photographs, which were lying before his eyes. Each photo seemed to be a piece of the whole saga, belonging to every season.

"It's a winter fairy tale," he spoke to himself.

"This is the spring's emerald dress."

The photo telling a summer saga, smiled at him with sunlit eyes.

"Here is an autumn tale. Every season writes something on its last page."

All the gone ages that were stuck in the photos seemed to be legends to him. It was a cool autumn day. John put on his coat, took his camera and left the photography office for a walk. He needed to take more and more photographs of Mother Nature in the autumn's arms. He always went to the park where he had his hospitable bench. On his way he was looking at the skyscrapers, which touched the clouds with their high heads. He arrived at the park at last. The vivid leaves reminded him of some colourful pieces of fabric, hanging on the branches of the trees. The leaves were rustling as if they were singing their last song. The mild wind was whistling a tune to accompany the leaves' last song. John was wandering about the park by making his camera be busy all that time. Then he decided to return to the bench for a short rest. To his great surprise he found someone sitting there, whose face made his heart beat much quicker.

"Nare?" John said and struggled not to cry. "Nare, my darling, I have always believed that miracles may come true," he went on, after a pause. "You are here with me in this beautiful park. One secret voice might have told me to leave my office at this hour. When did you arrive in New York?"

The young lady with her puzzled glance was listening to him silently.

She looked puzzled, but she said calmly, "Mister, I don't think I have ever met you. My name is Mary."

John laughed and said, "Nare... Nare... stop teasing me. I know you are Nare. You came here from Yerevan."

The lady got even more puzzled, but she replied politely, "My parents came here from California. I was born in New York. My parents divorced when I was a child. I was raised by my grandmother. I think you might have taken me for somebody else by mistake."

"No, no, it's you Nare! Don't tease me, please! I had a plan to fly to Yerevan for you, but my darling, you flew to New York yourself to meet me, and I will never let you go," said John.

John embraced her to kiss. The lady was likely to be in a shock.

"Mister! What are you doing?" she screamed.

"It's you, Nare. I recognized you at once. I don't think I have gone mad," said John.

She said, "Mister, I am Mary. I usually come to this park, but it's the first time I have met you."

"Your dark eyes, pale cheeks, nose and lips are the same as if you jumped out of this photograph," John exclaimed.

John put his hand into his pocket and took out a photograph in his haste.

"Look at it carefully! It's you in this photo," he said. "I keep it in my pocket to feel your presence all the time."

Mary's lips trembled. She didn't know what to say.

"Could it be my clone in another part of the world?" she said to herself.

Mary remembered neither her previous face nor her terrible illness which stole her from the earthly life. She didn't know why she was sent to the world again. John was a handsome man. He was a real gentleman. Mary fell in love with him at first sight.

"Mary!" John called her name in the way as if he was unable to believe that her name was Mary instead of Nare.

"There's a good cafe not far from here," he said, more calmly. "I would like you to join me for lunch. Of course, this cafe doesn't serve green dolma, but we can have pizza and cheese sandwiches."

"What does green dolma mean?" Mary asked John in surprise.

John first tasted green dolma during his stay in Armenia.

"Why is it green?" Mary said.

"Wow, you must remember introducing me to green dolma. It is made of green vine leaves," John whispered and his blue eyes seemed to be lit with a nostalgic smile.

John looked at her puzzled face and patted her shoulder. Mary's whole body trembled, when John's fingers were touching her neck tenderly. Her bloodless heart seemed to be beating. Her dried veins were travelling all over her body to wake up her silent pulse.

"No, no I am not a ghost. I am alive," Mary thought happily.

John kissed her neck and shoulders. He began to kiss her beautiful eyes. They both were ignited by hot passion.

"No, no, John!" Mary whispered.

She wanted to stop him as she felt his passion's fire. It was erupting from his heart and heating his lips.

"What's wrong, my darling?" John's voice trembled.

Mary didn't answer. She fell in love with John at first sight as if she had known him for a long time. Her eyes were full of tears. They were dripping from her long eyelashes like the drips of the morning dew. She knew she was dead. She understood that John would never be with her as they were in different dimensions. Those thoughts were stinging her so painfully that she could have burst out crying.

"Nare...okay...Mary, what would you like me to do for you?" John said. "I would give the whole world if only you were happy. For now I have an idea. Let's go to the cinema. I haven't been there for ages. Wow, I have an even a better idea. I want to dance. I know a great dance club where I used to visit very often. Do you like dancing, my pretty lady?"

John tried to do his best to cheer Mary up.

"Yes, I do. I used to be a good dancer," Mary said to John.

"You are not a good dancer at present, are you?" John said. "Have you forgotten how to dance? I will train you. I am still good at dancing."

John didn't know that Mary was an angel come down from Heaven, that's why she told him she used to be a good dancer.

"Yes, John, let's go!" said Mary, unable to control the temptation of being in John's arms.

Soon they arrived at the club where John used to dance in his youth. It was an old club that had been open for many years. It was lit with colourful bulbs. The melodies of music were shaking the couples like the breeze playing with the rustling leaves. Mary and John started their first dance without any hesitation. They embraced each other in such passion as if they were two halves of the same body. Mary kept on hearing the sounds of the waves rising from John's chest.

"John, your blue eyes are tempting me," Mary told him with a faint smile which was familiar to John.

John wondered if he got intoxicated with a single glass of wine.

"Nare, why are you playing a trick on me?" John said. "Why are you driving me mad? Many times you have told me that my blue eyes are the very sky in which your life's sun shines brightly and cheerfully. I am sure you are Nare. I believe that you came to New York to meet me. Please, stop teasing me! Do tell me you are Nare! Don't be crazy, my honey baby! I am neither intoxicated nor mad. I recognized you when I met you in the park. My memory's cells aren't dead. I can bet you insist on being Mary to find out if I still remember you, Nare. My love for you has the same dimension in which my breath is heard."

Mary was listening to John with tears in her eyes.

"Dimension!" she screamed.

She was about to cry, but she went on speaking.

"I am so sorry, John," she said. "I wish I was Nare. I am telling the truth. My name is Mary. My legs are tired of dancing. Let's leave the club now!"

Suddenly she became jealous of Nare, whom she had never seen but the thoughts of the dimensions, separating her from John made her even more unhappy. She knew even the best scientists can never measure the distance between Earth and Heaven. Her sudden love for John was so unexpected.

"What if she is telling the truth! Is it possible that she is not Nare? No, no it is like a nightmare! Even her voice is Nare's," John was wondering silently.

John's thoughts were shaking his brain. He had never used any drugs in his life, but his brain seemed to be soaked in the grey thick clouds. It was the very situation in which most drug addicts found themselves.

Mary broke that short silence. "John, dear, let me say goodbye to you! I would rather go by myself," she said. "Please, don't accompany me! Thank you for the wonderful time which we spent together."

John didn't know what to say for a moment, but he spoke at last.

"No matter who you are. I don't care," he said. "I want to be with you. I agree, this club is very crowded. Let's go somewhere else where we can be by ourselves."

Mary made an attempt to escape, but John managed to stop her. He embraced her strongly and began to kiss her lips. His tears were washing Mary's face while his lips were boiling her body.

"Don't say goodbye to me, my beautiful angel!" he said.

"Angel! Yes, yes angel! I am an angel in Heaven, Yes. I am. Ah, John! Let me fly back," said Mary.

"You have a good sense of humour. My adorable earthly angel," John whispered. "Now we can leave this club to look for a quiet place."

Soon they both were in the street.

"Where shall we go?" Mary said to John.

"Would you like to see my photos?" John said. "You know that I am a photographer. What I have been doing for years is a real art. Why not? I am an artist. Oh,oh I am over forty, whereas you are still in your twenties, but your presence turns me into a young guy, who is in love in craze."

"Your photos! Super!" Mary interrupted him like an impatient child.

"I am going to Paris next week," said John. "There will be an exhibition of photography. My works will be shown there. I will be the happiest man if you agree to go to Paris with me."

Mary hesitated for a moment then she found some words to say. "That's a great idea, John," she said. "However I don't think I will be able to... I am an..."

She wanted to say that she was an angel in Heaven as struggled to hide her tears.

"If you don't want to, my darling, I will be back to New York as soon as the exhibition is over and we will be together again," said John.

He put his hand on her shoulder and patted it gently.

"And where are your photos, John? Where are you going to take me?" Mary whispered.

"Most of my photos are in my office. However I have plenty of photos in my apartment, too. I am a single man, and I live there all alone. I hope you don't mind being my guest," John replied.

"It's already dark. It's 8.45 pm," Mary said looking at her watch which was chiming on her slim wrist.

"Time flies quickly. We have been together since my lunch time but I think it has just been a minute. I wish I could stop time. No problem, my darling, you can stay in my apartment day and night," John said and smiled.

"I am an innocent heavenly angel. You don't believe, do you? Your kisses and hugs make me feel this earthly passion. I fell in love with you, but I must not be in your bed," Mary whispered in a melodic voice.

Mary thought she couldn't dare to confess about her death to John. She told him that she was an angel, but John didn't understand what she really meant.

"My innocent angel! Don't worry! I am a gentleman," said John. "You don't have to share my bed. I have a spare bedroom for guests in my apartment."

They both walked into John's apartment, which was a little messy. There were empty beer tins and an ashtray with cigarette remains on the small table. The photos of different sizes were lying on the same table. However Mary's eyes caught the sight of the framed photos, hanging on all over the walls. Nare's photo was looking at Mary through the glass which was wrapped in the bronze frames.

"It's impossible!" Mary cried.

She was not only puzzled but shocked as well. She first struggled to understand why she was sent to the earthly life as a ghost, after she had died many years before. Mary stopped to look at Nare's photos again and again.

"Whose ghost am I, mine or this lady's?" she said to herself.

She was lost in her thoughts. She hardly remembered what she looked like when she was alive. She wanted to know why her ghost was so similar to the Armenian lady, Nare.

"Smile, smile!" John said to her. "I will photograph you right now." He raised his camera and pressed the button.

To his great surprise the camera failed to take a picture.

"What's wrong?" he said, becoming a bit nervous.

He knew his cameras were fixed and he always took a good care of them because they were the main tools for his work. Mary noticed John's unhappiness and took the camera out from his hands.

"Let me photograph you, John. I am not as brilliant at photographing as you are, but I will try to take a good picture of you," she said.

"My darling, the camera doesn't seem to be working," said John. "It might be out of order. It was all right this morning. I even took different pictures in the park. I can't understand what has happened to it. Okay, if you want to take a picture of me....but ...you will fail, too. O... I can give you another camera."

"Give me the same one! It might work," Mary said and smiled.

She managed to photograph John. "Look, John, what a clear photo of you!" she said, proudly.

"Now your beautiful face will not flee from my camera any more," said John, taking the camera from Mary. "Wow, blank screen again!" he cried, as if he had just woken up from a nightmare.

He rushed to bring another camera to solve that mystery. When the next camera failed to take her picture, John's hands lost their strength. He dropped one of the cameras. It fell on the floor and broke down. John thought something bad was happening to his brain. He was sure if he had a good sleep, he would feel better the following day. He showed Mary the way to the guest room and went to his bedroom to rest his head. He was still sure Nare was taking revenge on him by calling herself Mary. He was sure that it was Nare, but he was unable to understand why none of his cameras took even a single photo of her. Mary opened the door to walk in. The room was dark as the light was off. Mary was about to turn it on when she noticed a very strange light coming through the closed window. In the white light she saw her favourite angel. It was the very angel who had guided her to Heaven. On the way to Heaven she still heard her grandmother and parents weeping.

"Hello, Mary," the angel greeted her.

"Hello, Gabriel!" Mary exclaimed.

"Mary, you can spend this night here. I will come in the morning for you. I will take you to Heaven again as soon as the sun rises," the angel said to her.

"Gabriel, are my parents and my granny alive?" Mary said to the angel.

"Yes, they are. Only God knows when they can meet you again," the angel said.

"Wait, wait Gabriel!" Mary exclaimed, and she was about to cry.

"Why was I sent here to meet this gentleman and why do I look like his beloved lady? Please, tell me if she is dead or alive."

The bright white light became pale, and the same darkness returned to the room. Mary realized that he had gone. She turned on the light, and the bulb was lit at once. The room was beautifully furnished. An oval mirror on the front wall was shining in the electric light. Everything was earthly and there was nothing around which could remind Mary of Heaven. Mary took off her

dress, turned the light off and threw herself to the bed. She couldn't stop thinking of John. It seemed to Mary that John was reborn by finding his lost love even in a ghost. His passion was burning him, but he had behaved so gentlemanly.

"O... o... I am a ghost. I will disappear as soon as the sun rises! What will happen to John? He doesn't know I am not Nare. I was buried long ago and my name is carved on my grave stone. My name is Mary not Nare. He will bury his hopes. O... it's so unfair. John doesn't deserve to suffer so much. I have known him for only one day, but I am in love with him. I will go back to my Lord's Kingdom very soon. I will beg God to protect John," Mary said to herself and began to cry.

She touched her tears with her thin fingers and got amazed because the tears were real.

"Such tears can belong to a living human but never to a ghost," Mary whispered to herself.

Mary wanted to know why God let her live as a human in the earthly life for one day and one night. It was difficult for Mary to find out why she had been sent to Earth to meet John, whom she had never known before. She thought why she had failed to meet her parents and grandmother or anyone else in New York except John. She never had a boyfriend during her earthly life. She died from brain cancer at the age of nineteen. Neither the doctors' efforts nor her parents' prayers were able to save her life. John was the only man who kissed her innocent eyes, which hadn't seen the vivid rainbow over the lovers' dreams. John was a man of over forty. He was a handsome man, a real gentleman, who looked much younger than he was. Only a few thin wrinkles were under his blue eyes, which gave even more charm to his face, when he smiled. The young lady on the other side of the oceans fell in love with him though she was only in her twenties. John loved her with all his passion.

"What happened to them?" Mary said to herself before she fell asleep.

"Why was I sent to remind him of Nare?"

Mary hadn't had a beloved man. She was probably sent to earth to get a missing page of the book of her short life. Her life was very short, but her joy was even much shorter. The Angel would come to take her back. She would forget every earthly moment and even John, who filled her eyes with joy. The sun showed its golden hair to the dusk. Mary was still feeling her arms, turning into soft feather wings. She was smiling with pleasure in the faint light of the bedroom. As soon as she got her wings back, Gabriel would come for her. She was getting ready to welcome Gabriel.

John woke up earlier than usual. He thought his beloved Nare was still sleeping.

"Ah, I will make morning coffee for both of us," John whispered to himself.

His heart was full of joy as he would put two cups on the table instead of one. For many years he had shared his coffee with his only friend whose name was nothing else but Loneliness.

"The sun has risen, I will invite my Nare to have coffee with me," he said to himself.

He walked to her bedroom with slow steps and knocked on her door. The silence made John a bit worried.

"What has happened, she must have already been awake?" he said to himself, and banged the door, which was hard to open, at first. Once inside the bedroom, he saw there was nobody there.

"She might have not forgiven me," he said to himself. "O...o... she left in the middle of the night while I was asleep."

The sun couldn't stop John's tears from becoming icy. He ran out of his apartment to look for his Nare in huge New York.

"I should go to the airport. She might be there. She doesn't know anyone here except me," he thought.

The airport was crowded. It seemed an immense ocean of people. John was rushing from one departure gate to another.

"Huhha, here you are Nare," he shouted out to the woman, whose dark hair looked like a waterfall flowing down her shoulders like Nare's. The woman turned to John and looked at him in a great surprise.

"Bongiorno," she greeted in Italian and continued in English.

"I don't think I know you."

John was disappointed as the woman's face didn't remind him of Nare.

"Excuse me, Seneorita. I have taken you for another person by mistake," John apologized to her as politely as he could.

He rubbed his lips as if he tried to touch the sweet honey, which he gained by kissing Nare's lips. He was still patting the silk of Nare's skin, not with his fingers but with his salty tears. He knew his lips were unable to reach Nare's marble neck and shoulders, which gave the taste of the sweetest eastern fruit to his lips and tongue.

"The sun is dead! My tears are turning into icy crystals to be unnoticed by the crowds, rushing to their destinations," John whispered to himself.

"The sun is dead. That's why I am so cold in this summer day," he thought.

Although he was used to living alone, and his loneliness was his only room mate, he was tired of sharing his bed with that lifeless solitude. The more he felt Nare's tender touch on his chest the more he hated the silence of his room mate. For the first time he thought that his bed was like a wooden coffin, keeping his spine on it for the night. He hated his bed and even his table, where he put one cup of coffee and had to save another cup for his only friend, whose name was Loneliness, which had neither a pulse nor lips.

"We danced together yesterday. We kissed passionately. I still taste the sweetness of the honey dripping from her lips. Nare, my darling Nare I wonder why you left me," he said sadly to the silence of his room.

John kept on speaking as if she were listening to him. John wouldn't ever find out that it was the ghost of someone, whom he had never met in his life. It was Mary's ghost who had died long

before John first met her. It was a real heavenly angel come down from Heaven with Nare's face and body. Nobody would find out why she was sent to see John, and why she was in Nare's shape. Nare never stopped praying to meet John again. The angels probably sent Mary to heat John's passion for Nare again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NARE'S JOB

Nare walked into the toy shop which was not far from the building where she used to live with her parents and younger brother. She moved to her uncle's home after she had said goodbye to her family on their way to Heaven. Her family and home had become memories since then, and they were floating in her mind. She had often looked at the toys on the shop windows and remembered the toys that her parents bought for her little brother. Nare's heart burst out crying, but she didn't allow the tears to appear in her eyes. She was an orphan. Her home had gone. The small toy shop looked the same as it used to be many years ago. Only the toys were a bit different.

"Who lives in our apartment?" Nare said to herself. "I wonder if they know that I used to jump on the window sill to watch the street. My brother kept on pulling my leg to make me get off the window sill to play with him."

Nare whispered and tried to sketch the pictures of her past. Nare thought and thought being lost in her silent words. The building in which she was happy, the street where she walked and even the city she was born and grew up in made her cry with the tears that she struggled to hide.

"Ah, I will earn money if I am given a job in this toy shop. I will save the money for a plane ticket but...but...where to go, where? Hey, girl, the map seems to be turning into a maze," Nare kept on speaking to herself.

Nare was diving into her thoughts and emotions, when a woman's voice interrupted her. She was the owner of the toy shop.

"Good morning, Nare," she said. "Wow, you have grown into a beautiful lady. I have known you since you were a girl. I recognized you at once. Don't you remember me? At present I own this toy shop."

Nare hesitated for a moment then she smiled. The stylish, well-dressed, middle-aged woman was the very under weight and pale-skinned young shop-assistant who used to sell toys in that toy shop so many years ago. She had been at the same age as Nare was now.

"Good morning, Aunt Gohar," Nare greeted her warmly.

She struggled not to cry as the memories of her sweet childhood started to chase through her mind and heart as if she were the happiest child, the very one she used to be in the past. She remembered her brother pointing out a toy elephant on the shop window with his index finger.

"My mom bought it without a bit of hesitation. It became my cute baby brother's favourite toy. Isn't that toy elephant with him in Heaven now?" Nare spoke to herself silently.

Her thoughts were interrupted by Gohar again.

"Although you are my employee now keep on calling me Aunt Gohar," she said. "I contacted your parents as they lived in the same neighbourhood where I worked. I first met them when you

were a baby. They often bought different small toys for you. The shop owner was a man. He knew your parents very well. I think you perhaps remember him as he ran this shop when you were a schoolgirl. Later he fell into debt and sold the shop to me. I had saved some money by working hard and bought it. Nare, your parents were very good people. Your brother was a lovely child. May their souls rest in peace!"

"Amen, Amen!" Nare whispered and wiped the tears off her pale cheeks.

Nare was under weight because of lack of food and depression. Her uncle could hardly make ends meet, and he had more care for his family than for Nare. Gohar looked very relaxed, but Nare noticed a bit of nervousness in her facial expression. Nare's memories led her back to both Gohar's shabby clothes and her unforgettable kind smile when she was a young lady. Now Gohar's clothes were new and elegant, but her smile hadn't changed since the time of her poverty. Her smile was sweet but a little sad. A middle aged lady with a little boy entered the shop.

"Good morning dear ladies!" the lady said.

"Good morning!" Gohar and Nare replied.

"What can we do for you?" Gohar asked.

The lady was looking around when the boy rushed to the shop window and pointed out to the toy airplane.

"No, no Azat! Please, choose another toy. It is so expensive. I cannot afford to buy it," she said.

The lady turned to the boy, looking at the price of the toy. The boy was about to cry.

"Madam, I am his nurse. I work in the orphanage where Azat lives. He is an orphan," she said to Gohar.

Nare opened her shabby handbag and her fingers started to run inside the bag.

"His name is Azat which means free," Nare said to herself. "What is he free from? Is he free from love and care? Is he free from lovely toys? Is he free from fairy tales that most children hear from their parents' lips. Ah, I have only a few coins in my bag."

Nare thought in sadness. Nare pushed away her miserable bag in the way as if she hated it with all her heart and raised her eyes to look at Gohar. She saw Gohar putting the plane into a box.

"Young man, I will give you this nice plane as a present if you tell me why you have chosen a toy plane instead of a toy car or something else," Gohar said to the boy, trying to cheer him up.

"My mother and father are flying in the sky with their own wings. I don't have wings," said the little boy. "Maybe my wings have not grown yet. I will have wings when I grow older. I dream of becoming a pilot. All pilots have big and strong wings."

Azat's sweet smile shone in his naive eyes. Gohar put the box into the boy's arms.

"Thank you very much, auntie," the little boy said to Gohar.

"That is very kind of you, Madam! Thank you very much," said the nurse.

"My pleasure, do come again," Gohar said and smiled to them.

Azat and his nurse left the toy shop with happy smiles. "Nare, tell me about your life, please. I would love to help you. I see you have so many problems," said Gohar to Nare. "Working in my toy shop you will not be short of money. My business is going well, but I suffer from loneliness. Every time I leave the shop for home I feel something strange as if I were talking to my shadow. Nare, do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes, I do, Aunt Gohar but I cannot find him in the internet," said Nare. "It seems to me I have lost him in this gigantic world. He has disappeared. O, no, I do not think he has blocked me. After I had seen him off at the airport, I came back to my room at my uncle's home and turned my laptop on to know if John had already arrived home, but I failed to find him. I have his home address. This comforts me."

Nare didn't know that John had moved to another apartment. Nare took out a small piece of paper from her handbag as if it were the most valuable gem among all her poor possessions.

"Nare, you could have gone to the post office and sent a letter or a postcard to him," Gohar said.

She seemed so surprised.

"I have sent him so many letters and postcards but no reply," Nare answered sadly.

"Nare, dear, maybe he has forgotten you. He no longer loves you and avoids contacting you. You are pretty, clever and young so you will have another chance... o....I don't want to hurt you," Gohar said.

Nare felt that Gohar regretted what she had told her.

Nare began patting her finger which was bound to a gold ring.

"Auntie Gohar, John gave me this ring. It's a destiny ring. It will guide me to him," Nare whispered.

The tiny diamond was shining on her finger like the drop of Nare's tears on her cheek.

"Nare, are you crying? I hope my words didn't hurt you. What a beautiful ring," said Gohar, trying to comfort Nare. "Jump up higher than even your own self. I have done this," she added, proudly.

Nare understood that Gohar was proud of herself. "I will not jump up...oh...oh...I will fly up," Nare said a bit cheerfully.

"Nare, you will be my helper here," said Gohar. "Step by step you will learn more and more about the work and get used to selling toys. We will work together. When you are good at your job I will visit the shop only once a week. I live alone. My home seems boring to me...oh, oh...I will speak to my own shadow, but I think I should write stories about my life."

"Do you know how to write stories? Are you a writer? I used to write poems when I was a schoolgirl. My parents praised me and kept on saying that my poems were beautiful," Nare said and smiled to Gohar.

"I wish I had a family," said Gohar. "When I was a baby my mother gave me to the orphanage. I have never heard from my parents. I have never met them. If I were a mother I would take care of my children."

There was some sadness and nostalgia in Gohar's words.

"Nare, you have sweet memories of your childhood. Your family members appear in your night dreams and talk to you. They watch you through the remote stars. You must be grateful to the memories which used to be real. That is a canvas that you see when you look back," she said, to comfort Nare.

Nare suddenly heard a child's voice, "Nare, Nare come on quickly! Let us play hide and seek!"

It was her little brother's voice. Nare didn't cry. The voice disappeared.

"Aunt Gohar is right. I have not lost my family. They have not lost the connection with me. When I get my first salary I will buy the best toy for my little brother and some gifts for my parents. I will put the gifts on the window sill and I will light a candle next to the gifts. O...o... I am sure my family will look at them through the sky's mirror," Nare whispered to herself silently.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GOHAR'S SON

Nare went to work every day except weekends. She loved working days, as she shared the friendship with Gohar, who was not only her employer but her best friend as well. The beautiful toys all over the shop windows reminded Nare of her happy childhood, fairy tales and cartoons that used to be in her life. She looked at the shop windows with her wide eyes full of amazement like a child. Gohar noticed that Nare's eyes never left the toy planes. She even touched the toy planes with her thin fingers.

"Nare, I see you wish you played with these toy planes," said Gohar. "You look like a child. Did you play with toy planes in your childhood?"

"O no, I used to play with my lovely dolls," Nare replied, smiling.

"Maybe your brother ..." Gohar kept silence at once.

She regretted reminding Nare about her dead brother, as Nare had been very cheerful in the toy shop.

"No, I must be careful not to make Nare cry again," Gohar said to herself.

No sooner had Gohar found a proper subject of conversation to cheer Nare up than a man with two boys walked into the shop. The boys were very alike.

"Daddy, please, buy us big cars," the boys shouted at the same time.

"Good ladies, please, choose the best cars for my twin sons," the man said to Gohar and Nare.

Both Gohar and Nare rushed to show all the models to the boys.

"Here is a car with a remote control," Gohar said to the man.

"Let my sons choose their own toy cars themselves," the man said and smiled.

The boys made their final decision at last. The man paid for the toy cars which his sons had requested him to buy. The toy cars were the most expensive ones in the toy shop. The man was happy because his sons were joyful and very pleased with their new toys. They left the shop carrying the large boxes of the toys, which they had purchased. Gohar suddenly recalled the orphan boy, who had visited the shop a few months before.

"How different destinies can be!" Gohar whispered to herself.

Gohar turned around and caught Nare's sight. Nare's eyes were exploring the toy planes all over the shop windows. Gohar thought she could cheer Nare up.

"Nare, you are old enough to be interested in toys. Wow...you are a grown-up. Toys are for children. After work let us go for a drive. You haven't driven a car, have you? I will teach you to drive. I have been driving my car for years. When I bought it I was not good at driving, but I learned. I am a good driver now. I have not had any accidents in my life," Gohar said and smiled.

Nare's face became even paler. She struggled not to allow her tears wash her face. Gohar seemed to have forgotten that Nare's family had been killed in a car accident.

"No, I have not driven a car, Auntie Gohar. My daddy had one. He was a good driver. No, I am not interested in cars...no...no...thank you," Nare said but she failed to say more words.

"How silly I am...oh...oh...I made a stupid mistake. I was told that Nare's family had been killed in a car accident. How did I fail to remember about that tragedy?" Gohar thought and blamed herself for her carelessness.

She noticed Nare looking at a silver toy plane with a remote control. Gohar suddenly found out how to make Nare smile.

"Nare, I know you like planes," said Gohar. "You work hard in my toy shop. It's my pleasure to reward you with a gift. This toy plane is yours now."

Gohar was a kind hearted woman. She was generous too. She had been poor and unhappy before she became successful. She loved people. Any suffering person reminded Gohar of her own self. Any supporting person reminded Gohar of those who helped her, when she was helpless and hopeless.

"Nare, this plane is just a toy," said Gohar. "Let it be a symbol of your flight!"

"My flight?" Nare exclaimed.

She suddenly recalled Pierre.

"I am not sure if I have met Pierre at the airport cafe. I might have seen him in my dream while I was sleeping. He told me his life's story. O...I flew to Paris in my dream. It was just a dream. Oh, oh... it might have been a mirage from my own imagination," Nare said in her mind. "Fly up over yourself, fly high from your life's bottom to the top. Pierre came to my dream for a reason. Oh...oh...now I understand why my brain invented my flight to Paris. Ah, I flew as a crew member."

Nare's lips moved being loaded with her silent words. A woman walked into the shop. Gohar and Nare recognized her at once. She was the very woman, who came with an orphan boy months ago. This time she was by herself. She looked serious and there was a sad expression on her face. No sooner had she greeted her than Gohar asked her impatiently.

"Where is your sweet little boy? Why hasn't he come with you to choose another toy?" Gohar said to her.

Gohar and Nare remembered all their recent customers. The toy shop was small, and they didn't have many customers. However the business was not bad. The toys were selling, sometimes more and sometimes fewer.

"Azat was in hospital. He had been in coma because of the dangerous virus. The doctors had fought for his life. God saved him. He was able to recover. He is back to the orphanage now. He is still weak. He cannot stop weeping," the woman said in a trembling voice.

"Why is he weeping?" Nare interrupted the woman.

"While he was in hospital some other children broke his toy airplane by accident," the woman replied.

No sooner had the woman finished talking than Gohar rushed to the shop window.

"We have plenty of toy planes here. I am familiar with most children's tastes," Gohar exclaimed.

Gohar took out the most expensive toy plane from the shop window.

"We have many different toy planes but this model is the latest one. Wow... look at it. Doesn't it look like an airbus? Dear sister, let me come with you and give Azat this wonderful plane as a gift," she said. "I will drive you. Let us go now, dear sister."

"I am very grateful to you for your kindness," said the woman. "Let us go together. I would never manage to purchase such an expensive toy for Azat. You are so kind and generous."

The woman began wondering why Gohar had so much care for the orphan boy, but she did not ask her anything.

They both left the shop. Nare was by herself. There were not any customers for a while. She was thinking about John.

"What is he doing?" she said to herself. "I wonder if he remembers me? Does he know that I miss him? Maybe something bad has happened to him. I haven't heard from him since he left for his home. Oh, my Lord protect him."

The car stopped at the gates of the orphanage. Gohar and the woman entered the building, carrying the large box of the toy plane. Azat was sitting on his bed and looking at the closed window. He was trying to catch the view of the sky.

"Mom... mom... my sweet mom... someone broke my lovely plane. Please...please ... o... send me another one. I am not a noisy boy...I am a good boy," he spoke to himself.

The bubbled clouds in the sky burst out, and it started raining heavily. The rain was washing the window that was in front of Azat's bed.

"No, mom...don't cry," he murmured. "I see your tears, dripping all over the window. Don't cry ...o...sorry, I regret telling you to buy a toy plane for me. You are a long distance away from all the toy shops. Don't cry my sweet mother."

Gohar heard the boy speaking to his dead mother. His voice was weak and quiet like soft whispers.

"Azat!" Gohar called his name. She ran to the boy and hugged him kissing his wet eyes and cheeks. Gohar noticed how thin he was. His pale skin was bound to his bones. Gohar realized that his illness had been very serious.

"Mom...mom...you have come! I know you love me. I know you missed me. Mom, I love you. I am happy as you have come back to me. I didn't cry when the nurses injected me...but I cried because I needed you, " the boy said with tears in his eyes.

Gohar had been standing at the door of Azat's room. She had overheard Azat's words. Azat didn't notice her as he was looking at the window without turning back.

"My little boy, you asked me for another plane. Here it is. I hope you like it," Gohar said.

The boy jumped up in joy and ran to open the box. While Azat was admiring the toy, Gohar turned to the woman.

"Dear sister, I need to talk to the head of this orphanage. I am going to adopt him," she said to the woman in a quiet voice so that Azat couldn't hear her.

The woman who was Azat's nurse stayed with Azat in the room, but Gohar rushed to the manager's office. The rain had already stopped and the sun was shining. The room was filled with the rays of the sun. Azat was playing with the toy plane happily. He smiled to his nurse who was watching him.

"Where is my mom? Has she gone again?" Azat screamed and he was about to cry.

"Your mom is here. She has come to take you home," his nurse said.

Some time later Gohar appeared.

"We are going home my sweet son," she said. "First we will visit the toy shop. I will tell Nare to run the business by herself. Forgive me for sending you to the orphanage to run my business."

Gohar blamed herself for telling a lie, but she did not have another choice. That white lie let Azat smile.

"Who is Nare? Mom, my friends keep on saying that you got a shelter in the sky. There are girls and boys here, whose parents live in the sky as well. They say that the rains are their parents' tears. They cry as they miss their children," said Azat.

"Azat, Nare is my helper in the toy shop where you have been," said Gohar. "Forgive me, my son...forgive, please."

It was easy to cheat the naive child. Gohar made him believe that she was his mother. Gohar had to tell a lie as Azat still needed care and encouragement for a complete recovery.

"My Lord, forgive me for telling a lie. His mother is with you. I love you, I love humans and I love life. Azat thought I was his mother. I saw him crying. I was unable to tell him the truth. The poor boy thought that his mother had come back," Gohar spoke to God.

There was nobody in the shop except Nare. She was thinking about John in silence. The door opened. Nare saw Gohar and the orphan boy enter the toy shop. Nare had met him before. He first came with his nurse for a toy plane.

"Hey, Nare I have great news! My son will not go to the orphanage again. He will live with his mother," Gohar said cheerfully.

Nare was confused for a moment. She knew that Gohar had never had any children. Nare noticed that the boy had suffered from illness. His face was as pale as if it was bloodless.

"Hi, little pilot! What if I call you Pierre," Nare exclaimed.

Nare suddenly remembered the French pilot who never existed, but he seemed so real to her.

"Why Pierre," Gohar asked Nare in a great surprise.

"He was a pilot. He flew an airplane. He had a very hard childhood, but he managed to be successful. He flew me to Paris in my dream as a crew member. Wow, it seems I am familiar with all the functions of the machine. First I must check the fuel," Nare whispered and smiled.

"Nare, I think Pierre is your inner voice. There is something symbolic and this is what you cannot forget. You dreamed something that you wanted to be. Maybe you had seen yourself in a man, who could make the plane fly," Gohar said to Nare.

"I cannot fly but he could. Maybe I will be able to fly a plane one day," Nare said.

She looked as if she was joking.

"My dear Nare, flight...flight...some people do their best to climb up, but they fall down. Some others struggle and manage not to lose their wings," said Gohar. "You are a strong lady, aren't you?"

"Strong?" Nare gave a question to herself.

Nare got lost in her thoughts for a while. Her thoughts went back to her snoring bear that was her inner voice as well. Her meeting Pierre and the flight to Paris reflected her own desire to escape. She had not even been able to fly in the same plane with her beloved man as a passenger. She was a helpless living angel who could only invent scenes.

"If Pierre is me I would not be a passenger but a pilot," Nare thought.

"Nare, what are you thinking about?" Gohar broke the silence.

"Wow, Auntie Gohar, look at Azat. He is playing with his toy plane joyfully," Nare whispered.

While Nare and Gohar were talking Azat was flying his toy plane by touching the remote control with his small fingers. He didn't seem to pay any attention to the adults' conversation. He was giggling when the toy plane was flying up and spinning below the ceiling. He stopped playing and screamed.

"Mom...mom ...I feel bad. It's dark in my eyes. My head is spinning," he cried.

Gohar rushed to the boy so quickly that she could hardly struggle not to slip and fall down.

"Nare, be quick, get a glass of water. Azat is going to faint," Gohar screamed.

Nare brought a glass of water and spread some honey and butter on a piece of bread.

"Drink water and eat this nice honey sandwich, little pilot!" Nare said.

"How are you, my sweet son? I will call your doctor now. I saved his telephone number in my mobile phone," Gohar said.

"Mom I am better. My head is not spinning any longer," Azat said in a weak voice.

"Azat, my good son, let us go home now. You can play with your plane at home. I will make an appointment with your doctor," Gohar said to Azat.

"Yes, mom let us go," he said.

"Nare, please run the toy shop by yourself for some time. Get in touch with me on the phone. I have to stay with Azat at home. I have to look after him. I am sure you will manage with your job very well. You have learned how to please children," Gohar said to Nare.

"I will do my best Auntie Gohar. Do not worry! Take care of both the little boy and yourself," Nare said.

"See you soon, Nare," Gohar and Azat said bye to Nare.

Nare put the toy plane on her knees. Gohar had given the plane to Nare as a gift.

"Hey, my little winged machine! Will you take me to John? Will you be able to fly over high mountains and large seas?" Nare whispered to the toy. She sounded like a little girl. Her tears and smiles trembled in her puzzled eyes. Before leaving the toy shop for her uncle's home she phoned Gohar to know how Azat was.

She made a call and asked Gohar, "Auntie Gohar, how is Azat? "

Gohar answered, "Nare, he is not well. I have just phoned his doctor. I took the doctor's number from the orphanage. I told him that the boy lived with me and gave my address to him. He will come soon. He managed to save Azat's life when he was in hospital. Nare, please pray for my son. God has given me a son...o...no...He will not take him out of me."

The phone call ended. Nare took her necklace from her marble neck and began to kiss her silver cross.

"My Lord, please ...please...You are the best healer. Heal...heal Azat...please...please. My little brother is with you. Let this little boy be with us," Nare cried.

Nare didn't want to leave her toy plane in the shop. She decided to put it on her pillow. Nare thought her toy plane would fly in her night dream. Nare rang the door bell. Her uncle's wife opened the door.

"Nare, you have been crying, haven't you? You haven't lost your job, have you? I see you have arrived earlier. I guess you no longer work. Come in and tell me what has happened. Why don't you understand we cannot share our food with you all the time? We are not rich. We hardly make ends meet," she said to Nare.

Nare usually stayed in the shop after work. Both Nare and Gohar had stayed there to talk. After work Gohar locked the door and Nare made coffee for both of them.

" Aunt Anna, I haven't lost my job. I will go to work tomorrow and every day, even at weekends," Nare replied.

She didn't want to believe in her own ears that her uncle's family would send her to wander in the streets if she ran out of money.

Arpi rushed to join her mother-in-law's conversation.

"Nare, I see you are early today," Arpi said to Nare.

"What is there inside this nice box?" Arpi asked Nare curiously.

"Nare will show us if there is something nice inside the box," Anna said by interrupting her daughter-in-law.

Arpi was even more curious. Nare opened the box carefully.

"Nare, who are you going to present this toy?" Arpi asked Nare cheerfully.

"This airplane is mine," Nare replied proudly.

"You are too old for toys," Arpi said to Nare.

"What...what are you going to do? Are you going to play with toys?"

her uncle's wife whispered in surprise. "Nare, if I were you I would hide or sell the ring to start a new life. You are pretty. This ring shows that you are engaged. No man might dare to date you. If I were you I would find another man. You can do this as you are young and pretty. When you get married you will leave our home."

Her uncle's wife pretended as if she cared for Nare and wished her a better life.

"No...no... o...no ...granny...Nare must stay with us forever. I don't want her to move to another place. I will miss her," Arpi's little daughter said and cried.

"Don't cry, Sona!" Nare said and kissed Sona's cheeks.

Sona was a silly and funny child. Everyone in her family called her a spoilt kid, but Nare treated her with understanding. She didn't like to see anyone to scold little Sona. Nare didn't guess that Sona had blocked John. Sona knew that Nare had gone to the airport to see John off and had forgotten to log out, so she managed to block John on Nare's Facebook. Sona did it because she didn't want Nare to go away with John. Sona was a silly little one and she didn't understand that Nare and John would suffer. She was a selfish child. She enjoyed listening to Nare's fairy tales before falling asleep every night. John had found a new shelter. He was going to give Nare his new address through the messenger, but he got shocked. He thought that Nare had blocked him. Nare kept on sending post cards and letters to John's old address without knowing that he had moved to another place. Arpi looked at Sona carefully. She saw her daughter crying.

"Stop crying my little girl! Don't you see that Nare has forgotten that she is no longer a child. Look how she has embraced her toy plane as if she found something magical," Arpi said to Sona.

"Arpi, this little plane will fly one day," Nare said and smiled.

Her wet eyes were free from clouds but full of air roads.

CHAPTER NINE

JOHN

John turned the key to the door and entered his empty home. There were a few bottles left on the table. Some of them were empty. He opened the full bottle and poured some beer into the glass. The bitter foamy drops of beer were leading him to his memories.

"What a sweet taste! No...no...not the beer...Nare's lips...full of honey...wet...full of the nectar of the eastern juicy fruit," John whispered to himself. "I am still shocked. Nare kissed me in tears at the departure gate. She told me that she would be waiting for me. As soon as I arrived home I tried to message her, but I failed as she had blocked me. Why...why...she knew I loved her more than anyone or anything else. She came...yes...yes ...she came to tease me. Hmmmm...Mary! It was my Nare, who was teasing me. She said that her name was Mary. No, it was not funny. I first thought she was joking. No...no...it was not a joke. Nare played an odd trick on me, which was not funny but cruel. She...she...she escaped without saying a word to me." John touched the glass of beer with his lips.

John was silent for a few minutes then he continued his monologue.

"O...o...o I understand," he muttered. "Nare's visa application was probably refused because she didn't have a bank account or any property. She didn't own an apartment or a house. Maybe the world's injustice and cruelty made my Nare cruel. No, she can't be...she...she ... my beautiful beloved is such a kind lady. Yes, the world's injustice... how painful! Are human rights for everyone? Do the poor have any rights?"

John poured more beer into the glass but didn't drink. John liked beer but he hated to be intoxicated. John was an organized person with good manners. Now he wished not to be sober, but his headache didn't allow him to drink more.

"Human rights? What about lost souls? Who saves their souls? A homeless person and a dog can be good friends. They have much in common in their lifestyle. Everyone has a life's journey...from birth to death. There is a road...shorter or longer...wider or narrower...between birth and death," he said, lost in his thoughts.

"Greetings to you, Nare. I know you don't want to hear me, but I have to say that I still love you. Nare, I would never bury our love. Who or what could have done it? Nare, you are a lost soul, aren't you? Who or what stole you from me? O...o...the world's injustice? Yes...yes...injustice...hell...destiny...what...what?" John's memories suddenly started to slide in his mind.

"How sweet Nare's kisses are! I am stamping my heart beat on her bubbled lips. I am blowing my deep breath into her mouth. O...o...our wet tongues are meeting each other to dance. Nare's breast smells the best perfume...her soft skin smells like acacias. O...o...I am burning in the fire of passion. Nare, I am thirsty and need the juice from your lips. The acacias from your skin still smell in my passion's garden," he said to himself, as if he were talking to Nare. "I am burning in the fire of my passion, but I will not let our love become ashes. How to find you? You had refused me to give your uncle's address not to annoy your uncle's family, but why did you block me? I have dialled your phone number many times but in vain. Hmmmmmmmmmmmm you do not want me to contact you."

John didn't know that Sona took Nare's mobile phone to school without asking Nare for permission. Sona not only blocked John on Nare's computer but she lost Nare's phone as well. When she saw Nare weeping, she requested her father to buy a new phone for Nare. Nare's cousin bought one, but the phone number was different. He apologized to Nare for her naughty daughter and told Nare to contact her beloved on Facebook. Nare explained that she was shocked that she failed to find John on Facebook. Her cousin told Nare that John had decided to escape. However Nare didn't believe in her cousin's words. She thought of something mystic, something mysterious, but she couldn't figure out what it was. John took a deep breath to keep on talking to his memories.

"The lake...that beautiful lake in the foreign country...in Nare's country! What a sweet memory," he said to himself. "I tried to persuade Nare to swim in the lake but... in vain. I desired to press my lips upon all her body under the the calm waves of the blanket. I thought of her... a mermaid with magical charms, but she got scared and screamed."

She told John that she had always been afraid of water. A few minutes later she smiled and said that she was a coward and even afraid of crossing a small puddle. They both gave big and warm hugs to each other and laughed loudly. John spoke to himself again.

"Could I meet her again?" John said. "Has the full page of my life ended to let the empty pages flow in my days? Nare arrived here. How did she manage to arrive? She...she...she did not have money...my beloved was a lost soul without home and money. How did she arrive here and why did she call herself Mary?"

John wondered and wondered, but he failed to get an answer. John's headache got stronger. He understood that he needed fresh air. It was raining. The rain was beating his windows. He didn't want to wait until the rain stopped. He put on his coat and hat and took his black umbrella. He was about to leave when his phone messenger rang.

"Hello John! It's Mary. I have come again. I am outside your home now," the message said.

John's heart started to beat fast. He got so excited that forgot to take his umbrella. He ran out as quickly as a bird from an open cage.

"Wow...wow...my Nare! She is here again! This time I will never let her go," John whispered to himself.

A blonde young lady was standing in the rain without an umbrella opposite John's building. There was dried mud on her clothes. John looked around. He looked and looked again.

"O.....Nare seems to have hidden herself to play a trick on me again. Why does she call herself Mary? Where is she now?" John whispered.

He looked around once more and approached the blonde lady.

"Excuse me, Miss. Have you seen a dark-haired lady nearby? You might have noticed her," he asked her.

"Hello John," she said. "No, I haven't seen the lady, whom you described. I sent a phone message to you. Hope you have come out to meet me."

John got such a shock. He couldn't believe neither in his eyes nor ears. It was like a bucket of cold water that was poured on his head. He studied the lady's face carefully and thought that some coincidence had occurred.

"Sorry Miss. You may have taken me for someone else. Okay, but you know my name and phone number. It is so strange. I don't think we have ever met," John whispered, trying to hide his shock.

"I am Mary. I first met you in the park. I was surprised that you called me in another name. I have forgotten what name it was," she said.

Mary paused for a moment then she kept on speaking, "I even stayed at your home for the night."

John got shocked and shocked. He thought she was either intoxicated or mad. He looked at her again and again. John got angry because he was sure that she was telling a lie.

"Miss. I am sorry I don't recognize you. We have never met," John said and he was about to go.

"Wait a minute, John. Don't go! Have you forgotten me?" she said.

"It's the first time I have seen you. Have you fallen into a mud puddle? Your clothes smell of soil. O...o...you seem to have crept out of the grave," John exclaimed.

John couldn't hide his disappointment. John tensed his memory. However he failed to remember her. He used to have girlfriends in his life. Those relationships had been in his youth long before he fell in love with Nare. Mary's face was not familiar to him. He felt unhappy because of all those unexpected and unexplained mysteries which had happened to him.

"Grave! Yes, grave! I used to be there. I am a heavenly angel. I don't know how I have arrived here again. I have missed you, John," she whispered.

Mary's eyes were filled with tears. John got even more shocked and tried to figure out what was going on.

"Miss. I am John Parker. I think your John is another guy. Does he look like me? Where did you fall down? Did you hurt yourself? Your clothes are covered with mud. I think you should go home and change your clothes," John said to her.

"I...I...I don't remember. It was a dark place then I left for the light one that was full of grace. I have only these clothes that I am wearing now," Mary replied.

John was still in a shock. He didn't understand what she meant. His thoughts were still with Nare, but he felt sorry for the lady, whom he had not seen before. He took his wallet out of his pocket.

"Miss. Take this money and buy some inexpensive but new clothes. Your clothes are not only muddy but torn out as well," John said.

Mary refused to take the money, and John put it back into his wallet. The weather was bad. The clouds were curly and bubbled. Suddenly the thunder storm exploded the clouds and painted the sky dark grey. The crazy rain started making floods.

"Miss. Come quickly," said John. "You can stay at my home until the thunderstorm stops."

Mary agreed to go with John. She felt cold. She wanted to stay in a warm place.

John turned the key to unlock the front door. The smell of tobacco was coming through the corridor.

"Come in!" John said to Mary.

Mary looked around. She remembered everything at once.

"I have been here before. Every corner is familiar with me. The old clock on the wall chimes sweetly. Each photograph on the wall has its own unique story. Nothing has changed," Mary talked to herself quietly.

John rushed to turn on the heating unit.

"Miss, sit close to the heating unit. So will I. The rain has washed our clothes. They need drying. Are you cold? The weather doesn't seem to change for the better," John said to Mary and smiled.

Mary wished John to hug her as he used to do when he first met her. She wanted to feel his lips on her skin and his fingers all over her body, but John behaved gentlemanly and even a bit coldly.

"I will make tea. It was cold outside. Some boiled tea will do us good," John said and rushed to the kitchen.

Mary was left by herself. The room was getting warmer and warmer though the rain was even heavier and the air was even colder. The windows were firmly closed, and the walls of the room were stealing the warmth from the heating unit. Mary got up and began wandering in the room. She noticed the mirror in which she first didn't recognize her face and got shocked. Mary hesitated for a moment but in the end she decided to walk to the mirror.

"O...o...o...it's my own face. Now I absolutely recognize myself. What about John? O...o...John had kissed the lady in the photo...her portrait had glued to my face...no, it was not me... his beloved lady might have settled in me to appear before his beloved man's eyes," Mary thought and she was about to cry. She looked at the photo in the frame that was hanging on the wall. She was still looking at the photo, when John entered the room.

"Our tea is ready. Sorry, I never keep any candies at home. I have lost the sweetness that I used to have," John said in a sad voice.

John put the cups of tea on the table.

"Do not worry John. I have flown here twice. You cannot see my feather wings because you are alive. This lady will fly to you with her own wings. Her wings will be made of metal. Her metallic wings will be large, " Mary said suddenly.

Mary was speaking and studying Nare's picture, whose dark eyes looked melancholic behind the glass.

"John, don't worry about candies. I don't mind drinking tea without a candy. I am getting hungry. Could I have something to eat?" Mary whispered quietly, trying to send John to the kitchen again.

"That's a great idea. I also need something to eat. I will fry eggs. You like fried eggs, don't you?" John said cheerfully.

"Yes, I do. Thank you very much," Mary replied.

John left the sitting room for the kitchen at once. He opened the door of the fridge. John was so confused that he dropped the eggs and broke them. He had to wipe the floor. He did his best to hold the remaining eggs more carefully so he would not drop them. His hands were trembling while cooking. He was thinking of Mary's words.

"She must be mad. Something must be wrong with her brain. If the weather had been good I would not have invited her to my place. I wish it would stop raining soon. I could not have left the lady to stay outside in the thunderstorm. What did she say...feather wings...metallic wings...? How to understand this nonsense?" he thought.

He finished cooking at last. He put the fried eggs and some bread on the tray and rushed to the sitting room. The room was empty. The closed window was open now. The curtain was bathing in the rain. The rain was washing the window sill. John looked around with his searching eyes.

"Miss. Mary!" he exclaimed.

The silence met John's ears. There was nobody in the room. John started searching everywhere then he checked the front door. The door was locked, and the key was in the keyhole.

"How did she creep out of the window?" he wondered out loud.

John looked out of the window anxiously. His apartment was on the fifth floor. John saw nothing but the rain and a few people under their umbrellas. There was no sign of any accident in the street. There was neither ambulance nor police cars opposite his window. John took a deep breath and felt a sense of relief.

"She crept out of my window safely and escaped," he muttered to himself. "She could have killed herself by jumping down. How did she do it? How did she manage to escape through the open window? She was not a bird. It is still raining, even a bird would not dare to fly out in this bad weather."

John was tired of searching for solutions to so many mysteries.

"Why did she risk her life to escape? I don't think I have hurt her. I am a gentleman. I behaved gentlemanly. I treated her well. I had respect for her. Did I offend her? No, I did not do anything

wrong. She looked like a homeless woman, poor and unhappy. Hmm...her clothes! They were covered with dried mud. I felt so sorry for her. O...what made her creep out of my window?" said John, quietly, as he kept on wondering if he had said something wrong to her by accident.

John had been lost in his thoughts so much that he still heard the rain though it had already stopped. Suddenly John noticed his mobile phone that was lying on the table.

"She sent me a message, so her phone number must be in my phone," he thought. "I have to phone her now to know what made her escape while I was cooking in the kitchen. I will apologize if my words hurt her...but I treated her with respect."

John did not waste a minute to phone her.

"Hi Mary!... O...I beg your pardon! Isn't it Mary's phone," said John.

John got confused hearing unfamiliar voice.

"Who is speaking? Sir. Mary passed away years ago. Didn't you know that?" John heard a female's voice.

"This is her telephone. I am her grandmother. Ah...ah...her phone is with me but she is with God," the elderly woman said weeping.

John was shocked. He ended the call at once. He put the phone on the table and walked to the front wall. He stood before Nare's photo that was looking at him from the wall.

"Hey, Nare! What is your life like? Mine is not good," he said. "My solitude invites even a ghost to talk to me. Maybe loneliness is a ghost itself. What is life after life like? The ghost didn't tell me. Wow, Nare, the ghost who visited me was a young lady. Her name was Mary. You arrived here to tease me. You told me you were not Nare but Mary. I am still thinking why you were so unkind to me. It was you, your dark and sad eyes, your small nose, your juicy mouth and your long thick dark hair. I patted your tender fingers. O...I have just remembered that you were not wearing your ring. I gave it to you to make you my bride. You may have thrown it away. No, I am sure, you might have sold it to buy bread. I forgive you. You sold the ring as you were in need. I am sure of it. Don't worry, I will buy another ring for you, my darling. Come again!"

John paused for a moment, as if he expected the photograph to speak.

"Nare, my sweet darling I see you don't believe that I have met a ghost," he went on. "Nare, tell me the truth, if Mary had settled in you. She was a ghost. No, it was not a nightmare. I was awake. I wish it were a nightmare. The ghost got her angelic wings back, when she opened my window to fly away. Now I clearly remember her saying something that shocked me... the feather wings, which I could not see because I was alive. Nare, you escaped in the same way as she did. Nare, my darling...o...are you alive?"

John turned back and walked to the mirror.

He looked at himself into the mirror. His face was extremely pale. He noticed the fried eggs on the table getting cooler.

"I will have to eat all of it myself. There is nobody to share. I have nobody, who I can share with," he said.

John sat at the table but he could not bite even a small piece of it. He took the tray with the food back to the kitchen.

"It is impossible. I need more facts. I will phone again," he said. "Yes, I will, but if the same elderly lady answers I will not tell her the truth. It might kill her. Hmmm...I have invented a story. "

John dialled the same number.

"Hello,. sorry for bothering again. Could you please spare some time to talk with me?" he said.

"Hello, mister, sure. I am listening to you," the elderly woman answered, being a bit puzzled. "I am John Parker," said John. "I am a photographer. Years ago I took some photos of Mary. I gave her my phone number so that she could make an appointment with me to have her photos back. She phoned me and we met. I handed the photos to her, and she thanked me. We haven't met since then, but her phone number still remains in my phone. I decided to publish an album of my early photos, so I phoned her to ask if she would not mind having her photos published. I didn't know about her death. I would have loved to publish her photos if you don't have any objection."

John felt unhappy and ashamed for telling a lie. He knew he had never photographed her.

"Mr. Parker, that will be fine," said the old woman. "Thank you very much. My pretty granddaughter is no longer with me, but all her photos, clothes, books and exercise-books and even her phone are with me in the hospice. I miss her very much. I look at her possessions and cry on them. This nostalgia is a fire which burns my old bones. Sir, let my pretty girl's photos be published with your other photos. Mary would have been happy, if she had been alive."

John heard her weeping.

"Could I visit you now?" John said to her.

"Yes, you can. Please, write down the address of my hospice," she replied.

John thanked her and took the pen out of his pocket. He suddenly understood that he would not be able to drive. He could not figure out what was happening. He found it difficult to believe that he had been talking to the ghost. He wanted to see her photos to be sure if it was the same lady who had visited him. John left home immediately and took a taxi.

"Hello," he said to the taxi driver and handed the piece of paper with the hospice address to him.

The driver was a man with a smiling face. He looked cheerful and alert. He looked at John with a puzzled expression on his face.

"What's wrong, sir? You look like as if you have just seen a ghost," the taxi driver said to John.

"Yes, I have," John replied, seriously, but the driver thought he was joking. When the taxi stopped at the gates of the hospice, John got out, paid the driver and thanked him. John knocked on the door of the elderly lady's room.

"May I come in?" John said, politely.

"Yes, come in. I have been waiting for you, sir," the elderly lady said. It was the same voice, which he had heard on the phone. John entered the room. The elderly lady was sitting in her wheelchair. Her legs were covered with a blanket. An open album was lying on her knees. John understood that she was disabled.

"Look, how pretty and sweet my girl was," she said to him. "What a terrible injustice! It is unjust I am alive but she is not."

John had a close look at the photos, which had never been taken by him. John was speechless for some time because he had recognized her face. John did not have any doubt that it was the same lady and not anyone else, whom he had met. He even got frightened, but he didn't want to show his fright to Mary's grandmother. He was pleased with himself for inventing this fake story not to make her suffer. John was sure if he confessed to the disabled lady that Mary was in his sitting room just hours ago, she would die. The truth would kill her.

"Mary is in a better place than we are," John said to comfort Mary's grandmother.

"It was my turn to leave...not hers," she said to John showing more photos of her granddaughter.

"Nobody can decide instead of God. I will take photos from her album. I don't need to borrow her photos from you," John whispered.

John took out his digital camera out from his pocket. After having taken a few photos of the beautiful young lady, whose eyes were full of hope and expectations, he turned to the elderly lady and spoke in a sad voice, "Sorry, I have to go now. I am in a hurry. Take care!"

John walked out of the hospice, talking silently to himself.

"Why did Mary choose me?" John said. "She had never met me in her earthly life. She could have chosen someone else. Why me? Why me? Why me? Why did Mary's ghost visit me?"

John kept giving these questions to himself many times. He was so depressed that he did not want to go straight home.

"I will take a taxi to Manhattan to take more sea photos for my new album that I expect to publish in the near future, " he said.

He took his digital camera out of his pocket to have a look at the pictures that he had saved. His eyes found Mary's photos that he had just taken. John looked at the young lady's face through his camera for a moment.

"I promised Mary's grandmother to publish her dead granddaughter's photos in my album. I will," he said to himself, quietly. "Written pages, paintings, videos and photographs save earthly life's episodes. People stay alive in them forever. O...o...I see this smiling face and think she is still here though she is in Heaven."

John got lost in his thoughts looking at the screen of his camera. His eyes captured a few of photos of his youth.

"How quickly all these years have flown," he murmured. "It seems to me it was just yesterday. Hey, Jim! You took this photo of me outside our college. You are in Heaven now. Boy, I took your photo too. Let me search! O... here you are."

John smiled at the photo of his classmate that was taken so many years ago, when they were students. John began to remember his college years. He thought how fast they had flown. He was tired of being single. The lady whom he loved was away.

"I wonder if I will get old in my solitude," he wondered out loud. "Time runs quickly. Time stops only in photographs."

John seemed to be talking to his destiny for some time. When the taxi arrived, John got into the car. Some time later the taxi stopped and John got out of it. The Statue of Liberty caught his eyes immediately. John heard from his parents that their ancestors came to New York from England at the beginning of the twentieth century.

"Hey, Immortal Queen!" John greeted the Statue of Liberty. "You opened your door to my great grand parents. You are very kind and hospitable. I believe you will let Nare come and stay with me on your beautiful coast. My Nare is a good girl. She is an orphan. She has only me in her life. Hmmm, even if we fail to be together in the world, we will rejoin in Heaven. We are engaged."

John took a deep breath and paused. He understood that the Statue of Liberty agreed, but he did not hear the statue's voice as the noises of seagulls were loud, and the ocean waves were talking to the flocks with even louder voices.

CHAPTER TEN

GOHAR AND ARSEN

Azat's bedroom was cozy and light. The rays of the sun were floating through the half open window. Azat's eyes were shut, but his lips were moving as if he was saying something, but his voice was not heard. Gohar was sitting beside his bed with the Bible in her hands. Her eyes were wet. She patted the little boy's forehead and said,

"Sweetheart, say something to me. I promise to buy you all your favourite toys. I promise to make all your dreams come true. O...please, wake up."

Azat moved his head, but he didn't open his eyes.

"My sweetheart, your doctor will come soon," Gohar whispered and held Azat's small hand.

"Mom, mom ...hasn't dad come back from the star yet?" Azat said in a very weak voice.

Gohar heard Azat's voice at last.

"He will," she said. "We must be patient. My precious little son, some day you will understand that life exists beyond our planet, but we don't know what it is like as long as we live in this world. We are both in the world now. Do promise not to leave me."

Gohar kissed his cheeks.

She was full of hope now as Azat's cheeks were not deadly pale and cold any more. The moment Azat opened his eyes the doorbell rang. Gohar rushed to open the door. A tall slim man was standing on the doorstep.

"Hello Madam Gohar! I am Doctor Arsen," he said.

"Hello doctor!" Gohar greeted him with a polite soft smile. Gohar guided the doctor to Azat's bedroom.

Azat raised his head from the pillow and looked at his doctor with a joyful smile. Azat recognized him at once. Doctor Arsen had taken care of him with love while he was in hospital.

"Hello, my little patient! What is wrong this time?" Arsen said to the boy.

"I am well. I want to get up and play," Azat shouted.

Gohar felt that Azat gained energy.

"You should stay in bed, my dear boy. I am going to examine you now. Promise to obey me and your mother for your speedy recovery," Arsen told the boy while patting his head.

After having examined Azat he turned to Gohar and said, "No...no... emergency. Azat has survived the virus, he is free from it now. His weakness is because of depression and anemia. I will prescribe some medicine. Anyway you should take Azat to the hospital for some medical tests tomorrow."

"What time shall we come?" Gohar asked the doctor.

"Half past nine in the morning. Get the medicine today. Something more... Madam Gohar, the boy needs much more love and positivity than medicine. He had been in the orphanage when he got ill and was taken to hospital. The boy's current condition is connected with his emotionally stressful situation and depression. It's none of my business but I dare to ask why he used to live in the orphanage," Arsen said to Gohar quietly.

Gohar got shocked. She was unable to tell the doctor that she adopted the orphan boy as Azat was listening to their conversation. Gohar knew that the truth would make Azat's poor health even poorer, so she invented a lie.

"O...oh...I was stupid. I was selfish. I thought of nothing but my business. I made my son suffer," Gohar said and trembled.

Her words shivered on her lips. She was ashamed of herself for telling a lie. She had never been dishonest and never told even a white lie. Arsen was studying her charming face in silence while Gohar was rubbing her nose in a nervous way. She did not know how to hide her confusion.

"Didn't you know that your only son had been in hospital? I used to get some phone calls from the orphanage, inquiring about the boy's condition, but where...where had you been, Madam?" Arsen could not help himself not to blame Gohar.

"My mom came to see me when I was in hospital," Azat screamed suddenly.

Both Gohar and Arsen turned to the boy in surprise.

"My mom opened the door slowly and came in. She was dressed in white. She sat beside my bed. She patted my head and kissed my cheeks. Do you want me to tell you what she said. I remember all her words now," Azat tried to continue, but he paused.

Gohar thought the boy was cheating or he had just seen a dream while he had been in hospital.

"What did she say and did she cry?" Arsen said to the boy.

Gohar didn't expect such a question from the doctor.

"My child might have seen a dream. I did not visit him. I did not know that he was ill," Gohar whispered.

"I heard a woman weeping. When I rushed to see who was over there, I saw nobody. It was so strange. I told the nurses that I heard a woman, weeping in the Intensive Care Unit, but the nurses got astonished, and they said they had not heard or seen anybody there," said Arsen, then paused for a moment.

"Yes, I remember my mom's words," he said, at last.

Azat cried and looked at Gohar. "Didn't you say this, mom...?" he cried. "Here are the words that you said to me beside my hospital bed. O...mom...I remember. I can repeat. My darling little son! I am here not to allow you to come to my permanent home. You must grow up. I know how difficult it is for you without me. No, my boy...don't give up! You should learn to live without me."

These were not Gohar's words but Azat's dead mother's, which slid through her son's small lips. Gohar did not find a word to reply. She first met the boy in her toy shop, after the boy had recovered and left the hospital.

"I cried and begged you to take me with you. I told you how much I missed you and dad. I said that I had missed your lullabies and fairy tales. I begged you not to leave me, but you waved to me. For a moment your hand looked so transparent. I heard you weeping, but I did not see your long loose white dress any more," continued Azat, about to cry.

"Don't cry my priceless son! You must be happy and healthy," Gohar said and hugged Azat.

However she was still curious and wanted to know if the boy remembered something else besides the white dress and the transparent hand.

"Did you see my face, my little prince?" she asked.

"Yes, I did. You looked the same as you are now," Azat said and laughed.

The laughter made his face look healthier. Gohar got confused for a moment. Then she thought it could be the boy's imagination. Arsen was listening to them silently. He was as motionless as if he were not a human but a tall stone.

"I heard the same words and cries, coming from the Intensive Care Unit. My little patient's words prove that it was as it had seemed to me. Wow... a woman had visited Azat...an invisible woman," thought Arsen, without moving his lips or blinking his eyes.

He decided not to say a word to Gohar and Azat. He faced such a mystery that he could not explain.

"Madam Gohar, get the medicine today. I have to go now," Arsen said calmly, trying not to show his unusual mental condition.

"I will make a call to Nare now. She is my helper in my toy shop. She is a wonderful young lady. She will go to the pharmacy for the medicine that you have prescribed. I don't want to leave my little prince alone. I am sure Nare will agree. Thank you very much Doctor Arsen. See you in the hospital tomorrow. I don't think my son's tests will cause me to worry," said Gohar in a calm voice that was full of hope.

"Neither do I. Your little prince is getting better. See you tomorrow," said Arsen.

His ears seemed to be listening to the invisible woman's words and cries that he had heard before.

After Arsen had left, Gohar took her mobile phone out of her bag to make a call. No sooner had Gohar put on her glasses to see the numbers than the phone rang. It was Nare. Gohar requested Nare to close the shop and come to her place. She wanted Nare to write down her address. She told Nare that Azat's doctor had examined him and he had found nothing serious to take the boy to hospital again. He prescribed some medicine and recommended to get it as soon as possible. Gohar requested Nare to take the prescription to the pharmacy and buy the medicine. Gohar kept on saying that she would give Nare the money for the medicine. Gohar said that she had to stay

with Azat. Nare agreed without hesitating. About half an hour later the doorbell rang. Nare and Gohar hugged at the doorstep then Gohar invited her in. Nare rushed to Azat. She kissed the boy and sat beside him. Azat looked at Nare and said, "Hello!"

"Where is your airplane, little pilot?" Nare said to Azat.

She wanted to cheer Azat up.

"Mom...mom...bring my airplane! I want to fly it," Azat said to Gohar in a cheerful voice.

"No, my darling, your doctor advised you to stay in bed today. Nare will tell you a fairy tale before she leaves for the pharmacy," Gohar said, trying to persuade the boy to remain in bed.

"No, ma...I want to hear you sing. I remember your sweet voice. You have not sung for a long time. I have missed your sweet voice. Ma...ma...sing, please," Azat requested in a quiet voice.

Gohar got embarrassed. She never thought her voice was good enough to sing. She wondered if the boy still heard his dead mother sing from above. He didn't remember her face. Gohar kept on wondering how he remembered her voice. He was nearly three years old when her mother left for Heaven. Gohar was thinking about that mystery.

Nare turned to her and said, "Aunt Gohar. I will go to the pharmacy now. Here is my phone. I have some cartoons and children's songs in it. Azat can enjoy watching the cartoons and listening to the songs. I will be back in half an hour as the pharmacy is not far from here." Although Nare was a grown-up she still loved cartoons, children's stories and songs. The best part of her life was her childhood, so she probably did not want to be parted with it. Azat took Nare's phone with a happy expression on his face.

"My prince, be careful with Nare's phone not to break it, please," Gohar said to the little boy, and felt at ease that Azat would not request her to sing, as he was busy listening to some children's songs on Nare's phone.

Gohar was sure that Azat had been listening to the songs and fairy tales from Heaven. Nare came back soon and handed the medicine to Gohar. While Nare was out, Gohar finished cooking and invited Nare and Azat to dinner. She thought that Nare and little Azat had much in common. They were both given pain by their destinies. Gohar's destiny was about the same, too.

"Are we a triangle now with our unfriendly destinies," Gohar whispered to herself silently. A bit later she thought of God. She believed in God's love for His sons and daughters. She realized that God let Azat find a mother and God let her find a son.

"Nare, I am so pleased with your presence. I wish that you visit me and my little prince as often as possible," Gohar said and smiled.

"I will, auntie. I enjoy being with you and little Azat. It's also my pleasure to help you," Nare said cheerfully.

They had already had dinner, and they were talking in the sitting room for a few hours so delightfully, that they could hardly notice the sunset approach. Nare looked at the window suddenly. The dim light was coming through the half drawn curtains. Nare stood up and thanked

Gohar for giving her such a warm welcome. Gohar also thanked Nare. Before going out she hugged both Gohar and Azat. Nare's uncle heard the doorbell and opened the door. Nare came in. Her uncle was alone at home. He said that everyone went to the park. They took little Sona to the park for fresh air. Her uncle asked Nare why she came back from work so late. He said that they had been waiting for her to have dinner together. Nare replied that she had visited her employer and had dinner with her. Nare and her uncle were talking when everybody came in by unlocking the front door with a key. Nare opened her handbag and took out two large bars of chocolate from it.

"Hey, my sweet Sona. I have bought chocolate for you. I know you adore chocolate bars," said Nare, and handed the chocolate bars to Sona, and hugged her warmly.

Sona thanked Nare and rushed to sit on her knees to eat the chocolate. Some time later Nare remembered about her toy airplane that Gohar had given to her as a gift. She got shocked as she could not find it anywhere. She decided to ask everyone if they had seen her airplane. Sona started to cry. Arpi looked annoyed. She looked at Nare's eyes and said coldly, "Nare, you are not a child. You have just made my little daughter cry. Sona took your toy to the park to play. She might have dropped it somewhere. We all looked for your toy plane, but we were not able to find it. It's nothing else but a toy, forget it!"

"Arpi, tell me which park you visited. I will go to look for my missing airplane," Nare asked Arpi in tears.

Arpi told Nare which park they had been. Nare tried to run to the door, but Arpi held her wrist.

"Where are you going at this late hour?" he shouted. "Go to bed. You are working tomorrow so you have to get up early. You can go to the park after your work if that toy is so important to you."

A few minutes later Nare noticed her uncle's wife come and join them. She had probably overheard their conversation from the next room, where she was trying to persuade Sona to sleep, but Sona was crying for losing Nare's toy airplane.

"Arpi, go to your daughter's bedroom. Sona is so nervous. I failed to make her sleep. Now listen to me carefully, Nare. Don't be so silly! Sona is a child but you are not. Nothing bad has happened. The child just lost a toy in the park. If you are a sensible person you will not go to the park to look for your missing toy. It has gone forever," Anna said.

Nare paused for a moment, wiped her eyes and replied, "O I love my sweet Sona and I am not angry with her, but I will look for my airplane till I find it."

Her uncle's wife did not say anything. She left without saying "Good Night" to Nare. The next day Nare went to the park after work. She began wandering through the whole park. She looked not only under the benches but also behind the thick bushes. The birds were flying from one tree to another. Some sparrows seemed to be telling Nare something from the branches of the trees, but Nare did not understand their language. Nare sometimes stopped to take a deep breath then continued to search. The park was almost empty as it was not a weekend. That's why she did not find it difficult to kneel before each bench. She noticed some people looking at her in a strange

way. A young man in blue jeans and a red T-shirt stopped Nare. He wanted to know what she was looking for. Nare said she had come to the park to look for her missing airplane.

"Do you want to say that you have dropped your airplane ticket, and you are looking for it?" the man said to Nare.

"No, it is a toy airplane. I still hope to find it," Nare replied without looking at the man.

Her eyes were struggling to capture the sight of her lost toy. The man laughed loudly and said, "Wow... what a girl you are! Looking at you I guess you are too old for toys. Let us go to a restaurant. I will drink wine from your lips."

The man tried to put his hand on Nare's shoulder.

Nare stepped back and shouted in anger, "Get out of here or I will call the police."

Nare got a bit frightened and looked around to see if anyone was near in case she needed to call for help. A bit later a few people appeared. Seeing those people made Nare feel calm. The man shouted some rude words and ran away. It was obvious he was not sober. Nare wanted to have a rest. She saw an old woman about eighty or even older, sitting on a bench. Nare asked the woman if she could sit next to her. There were some empty benches around, but Nare did not want to be by herself. The old woman agreed. She moved her walking stick aside to let Nare sit comfortably. The old woman looked at Nare with her gloomy eyes and said, "Please, when he comes, find another seat. There are many empty benches around."

Nare wanted to ask the old woman if she was waiting for someone. The woman smiled but her smile was sad and nostalgic. A dim beam of light appeared in her weary eyes.

She whispered to Nare, "I am eighty-two years old. I first met my darling lover in this park sixty years ago. The park has changed a lot, and the benches have been replaced since then. I still remember this old tree. This new bench is still beside the same old tree. I have been coming here for sixty years to look for my missing happiness."

She opened her handbag and took out a sheet of paper and handed it to Nare. Nare took the faded paper carefully not to tear it. She saw a pretty young lady's portrait that was sketched in pencil on the old paper. No sooner had Nare looked at the portrait than the old woman took it from Nare's hands and said, "My lover, my darling artist sketched my face in pencil in this place we are sitting now, sixty years ago."

Nare looked at the old lady's wrinkled face and thought that time was always cruel to beauty. Nare's eyes were still keeping the beautiful and happy face that was sketched in pencil. They both kept silence for a few minutes. The old woman turned to Nare and said, "We first met in this park and he asked me for permission to sketch my portrait. I agreed. He sat next to me. We started talking. We were young and cheerful. Our romance began under this old tree and lasted for a year. We visited many other places together. We were the happiest couple in the world. He took me everywhere except to the lake, as I could not swim at all. He told me that he was able to swim as far as he could without a fear. One summer day he went to the lake for a swim by himself, but he failed to come out of the water. The rescue team found him dead the next day.

O... no, I did not believe. I am sure we will meet again in the same park we first met. I live near this park, and I come here every day. I have been coming here for sixty years."

The old woman was telling Nare her touching life story, when Nare's phone rang. It was Arpi. She wanted Nare to help Sona with her homework and asked Nare when she would be back. Arpi requested Nare not to be late as she was getting ready to go out with her husband for a nice dinner tonight. Nare's cousin worked hard, but he could hardly make ends meet. Arpi spent most of her time at home. She did all the housework with her mother-in-law. Nare was happy for Arpi as she would have a nice time with her husband tonight. Nare agreed to come back quickly. The old woman had probably noticed Nare looking for something, but she did not ask her anything. Nare did not tell her that she was looking for her missing airplane as she felt the old woman's grief. Nare waved her hand to the old woman and said that she would come to the park again.

Gohar woke Azat up in the morning. Azat rubbed his eyes and whispered that he wanted to sleep longer. Gohar told him that they would go to the hospital. Azat pouted his lips as if he was going to cry.

"No, mom, no...I am not coming," he said, yawning. "They will give me an injection again."

"I thought you would be glad to see Doctor Arsen," said Gohar, smiling. "He has always been nice to you."

Azat's eyes began shining. He really loved his doctor, who had saved his life. He jumped out of his bed and stood on the floor being barefooted and a little sleepy.

"Mom, let us go to see Doctor Arsen!" he said.

Gohar rushed to persuade Azat to put on his slippers. Gohar took Azat to the bathroom. He cleaned his pearl-white teeth and washed his face and hands. Gohar had woken up much earlier and had prepared breakfast. Azat sat next to Gohar at the kitchen table. Gohar spread some butter and honey on a piece of bread and gave it to Azat.

"Eat, my sweetheart," she said. "My little prince is as sweet as this honey."

She also poured some porridge with apple jam into Azat's bowl. After they had finished breakfast, Gohar helped Azat to wear his new clothes and boots. Gohar looked at him and exclaimed in joy, "My son looks like a prince."

Soon they left home for the hospital. Arsen was waiting for them in his office. Azat ran to him, and they hugged each other. Gohar sat in an armchair comfortably to wait for Azat to have his medical tests. Arsen took Azat to the diagnostic department. The doctors and nurses did their best to examine the little boy by cheering him up with jokes and funny stories. It was a children's hospital, so the doctors and nurses knew how to encourage and even amuse their little patients. Some time later Arsen and Azat entered the office, where Gohar was waiting so worriedly as if she was sitting on pins.

"Madam Gohar, there is no point in worrying about your son's health. However his nervous system is still weak. He must avoid any stress. I will inform you about his blood tests via e-mail. Azat does not need me to visit him any more," Arsen said to Gohar in a calm voice.

"No, no, I will miss you. I want to see you every day," Azat cried loudly.

He even screamed. Arsen took him into his arms. Gohar trembled, but she found the way out.

"Don't cry, please. Doctor Arsen is a busy man, but he will probably agree to visit us as often as he can. Promise him that you will take the pills and will never cry," Gohar said to Azat.

"Of course I will visit you very often. I wish I had a son like you. Your mom is fortunate to have such a cute son. I don't have a family. I live alone. What I have is my job. Thank you very much Madam Gohar for inviting me to your place," Arsen said and smiled.

He was a single man, who devoted all his life to health care and did his work selflessly.

The next day Arsen visited little Azat and Gohar. He brought a chocolate cake, some bananas and a bottle of apple juice.

Arsen said to Gohar, "Here are the results of Azat's blood tests. Thank goodness, his tests are alright."

Gohar smiled happily and invited Arsen and Azat to dinner.

"Mom, I will first eat a piece of this yummy cake," Azat exclaimed.

"We all will have the cake after dinner. You promised Doctor Arsen to listen to me," Gohar said to Azat.

Gohar patted Azat's head. Some time later they were having dinner and talking friendly. Arsen and Gohar began contacting each other informally.

"Gohar, I see you are an excellent cook," Arsen praised Gohar.

"Thank you, Arsen. I am glad you like the meal I have made. I will be happy to cook for you," Gohar said to Arsen.

He noticed a shy expression on her face. Arsen always appreciated modest and kind women, but he used to have a real witch in his life.

"What kind of flowers do you like, Gohar?" Arsen asked.

Arsen's question was so unexpected that Gohar got confused for a moment, but she tried to reply in a funny way. "I love all kinds of flowers, even weeds," she said.

Arsen smiled at Gohar's reply, but there was some mystery in his smile.

"I agree, all flowers are like women. They are as beautiful and tender as women are. Gohar, I still find it difficult to understand if life could change a nice woman for a witch," Arsen said suddenly.

Gohar didn't know what Arsen meant. Gohar looked at Azat who was rubbing his eyes with his tiny fingers, and it was obvious that he wanted to sleep.

Gohar turned to Arsen and said, "O...o...my son is sleepy. I will take him to the next room to sleep in his cozy bed with his favourite toys then we will continue our conversation about witches."

Gohar's words sounded so humorous that Arsen smiled for a moment, but a bit later his smile changed for a gloomy expression on his face. Arsen waited until Gohar came back from the next room. Gohar and Arsen were sitting at the table by themselves silently for a few minutes. Arsen broke the silence with his life's story. Arsen told Gohar that he met a nice woman years ago. He first met her at his co-worker's birthday party. Her slim candle-like fingers were dancing on the strings of the guitar, and her voice was ringing like many bells altogether. She looked not only pretty but kind and modest as well. Her name was Stella. She had run away from her husband as he had never been sober. Vodka and easy girls had made his life a real hell. He had treated Stella badly. Stella was unable to bear abuse any more, so she escaped. She rented a shabby room on the basement of an old building and lived in poverty. She earned her food by singing in different parties if she was lucky enough to be invited. She spent her hungry days in silence, trying to hide her poor situation and painful emotional condition from other people's eyes as she had never parted with her pride and dignity. Arsen didn't feel sorry for Stella as she pretended to look like a successful lady who was very polite, calm and moreover even self-determined. Stella always managed to spread her charms around. Arsen fell in love with Stella after they had communicated with each other for a few months. He supported her and rented a nice apartment for his beloved woman, but their love and unity didn't last long. Gohar wanted to know why their relationship collapsed. Arsen kept on telling Gohar that one day Stella hugged him and said that she was pregnant. He cried from happiness and began to stamp his lips tenderly all over her body. He told Stella that he would buy a small house and a wedding ring for her so that they would live together in happiness and love. Stella had never told Arsen that she had lived such different lives. She had spent her nights both in the best hotels and in the poor corners of the streets, sleeping in the open air. Some people had invited her to the luxurious hotels to sing. She had been so naive and generous that she had been cheated even by those whom she had trusted more. Some time later she had lost her shelter, money and the elite's interest in her performances. The man who had woken her up while she had been sleeping on the street bench became her husband. Her destiny had gifted her with the man who had poured vodka into her glass and persuaded her to drink. Stella had become an alcohol addict. They had been living together both in passion and pain. They had had more dark days than the light ones. Stella did her best to hide many painful episodes of her life from Arsen. She was thirty-seven but she looked even much younger. However she sometimes looked even much older. She had been up and down. She had been both rich and poor. Arsen bought her many beautiful fresh flowers every day and looked after her with love and care. One day Stella disappeared. Arsen didn't know what to do. He was deeply shocked. He was about to go the police station to tell the police to find his beloved woman, but he found a note with Stella's handwriting.

The note said, "Ah, Arsen! Don't look for me! Don't forgive me but don't curse me as well! I am already cursed. You are too good for me. I had had home, but my home had gone. I am leaving my country forever. I am going to refuge with my ex-husband as we both deserve each other. Thank you for all the flowers you bought for me. I have hated flowers since I saw them fading. I used to be kind once upon a time. Now I am a witch. Yes, I am a real witch."

Later Arsen heard from someone that Stella had given her two-month-old son to the orphanage and went abroad. Never did Arsen find his son though he looked for him for a long time with hopeful expectations. However his hopes burned and changed for disappointments. His hopes turned into ashes, and he began to think that his son might have been adopted by a good married couple. Arsen wanted to believe that his son could be one of those happy children who kept on calling him Doctor Arsen or Uncle Arsen. Gohar listened to Arsen without interrupting him. Gohar thought that every life story is a saga that started from its first page of birth and continued to flow to the last page of the saga. She was about to tell Arsen that she was not Azat's mother, but she changed her mind. On hearing that Arsen's son had been sent to the orphanage Gohar didn't dare to tell the truth about Azat. She was afraid to lose him. She thought that God had given her a son and she didn't want anyone to take him from her.

"What if Arsen is Azat's father?" Gohar trembled with such thoughts.

Arsen knew that Gohar was Azat's mother who had sent Azat to the orphanage, but she had brought him back home. Arsen didn't know anything else. It was getting late, so Arsen thanked Gohar for the hospitality and left.

Arsen began to visit Gohar and Azat very often. They became close to him. Arsen had lost his love but not ability to love. Gohar waited for Arsen impatiently. She even heard her own pulse when she opened the door to invite Arsen in. Arsen couldn't understand what was going on with him. He needed to see Gohar more and more often.

"Am I in love with her?" Arsen kept asking himself.

Gohar felt guilty not telling Arsen the truth about Azat. She thought she would not be able to continue hiding it from Arsen, who had told her everything about his past so honestly and sincerely. She could not decide.

"Arsen has been waiting for a miracle for years. He has not lost his hope to find his son. What if Azat happens to be his son? What if Arsen takes Azat from me? O...no...I am Azat's mother now. What should I do? Arsen looks sad even if he tries to smile. O...I need to see Nare right now. I need someone to open my heart. I do not have a better friend than Nare," Gohar spoke to herself, trying to hide her tears from Azat, whose attention was focused on the cartoon characters.

"Come on, my boy. We are going to the toy shop soon. You need a new toy, don't you?" Gohar said to Azat.

Nare did not expect to see them. Gohar had not phoned her to say about her visit as she usually did. There were a few people in the shop and Nare was busy taking different kinds of toys out from the shop windows and boxes. Seeing this Gohar was even more proud of Nare for her efforts to make the business even more profitable. Nare seemed to have a magical power to attract more and more people to buy toys from Gohar's toy shop. As soon as the customers had left the toy shop Gohar began her conversation about Arsen and his missing son. She was talking to Nare in English so that Azat could not understand. Nare did not know what to advise, but she suddenly thought about the elderly lady in the park, who had been waiting for her beloved man since she was a young lady. Nare knew that nobody was able to return from Heaven, but the chances to meet those who are still alive could be possible one day. She also hoped to meet John

some time later. She wished she were a bird with large wings and was able to fly all over the world to look for the man who she loved deeply. Nare felt sorry for Arsen, who was a complete stranger to her while Gohar was her best friend. Nare understood that it would not be just to punish a stranger for helping a friend in case the truth, yes, even the bitter truth is with that stranger.

"Auntie Gohar, my dear Auntie Gohar, you have never built your happiness on someone's unhappiness," whispered Nare. "Phone Arsen and tell him that you adopted Azat as he had been left in the orphanage as a parentless child. I am sure if the genetic test proves that Azat is his son Arsen will not take him away. He will probably understand that you love Azat and Azat loves you."

"Nare, what if Arsen takes my child out from me. No, no I will die. I am my little boy's mother now. Nare, tell me what to do. I cannot decide," Gohar said in a tired voice.

Nare did not answer. A few minutes later she whispered again, "I am sure he will never stop waiting for his son."

Gohar took her mobile phone out of her handbag and began making a call to Arsen. She made an appointment with Arsen to meet him for an urgent matter. Gohar asked Nare to look after Azat until she came back. Arsen met Gohar with a bunch of roses. He first asked Gohar how Azat was. Gohar replied that Azat was healthy and happy. Gohar said that she had left him in the toy shop with Nare. Arsen was impatient to find out what Gohar would tell him.

"Street is not a proper place for talking. I would like to invite you to a cafe, Gohar. I hope you do not mind," Arsen said and smiled.

Again Gohar noticed the same sadness in his mild smile. They both walked into a small cafe which seemed quiet to them. There were few people in the cafe so they sat at the table by themselves in the corner. The waiter rushed to them quickly. No sooner had the waiter brought two cups of strong coffee and two bars of dark chocolate then Gohar broke the silence. "Ah, I decided to tell you the truth, after I had talked to Nare," she said. "As you know Nare is my employee, no...no...not only my employee but my best friend as well. She keeps on waiting for her beloved man without even knowing if he is alive or not. She has not heard from him since she saw him off at the airport. She has not allowed her hopes to die since then. Arsen, I cannot hide the truth from you any more. If I did I would be even a worse witch than the woman whom you trusted and had love and passion for."

"What do you mean?" asked Arsen.

Arsen was so puzzled that he failed to ask another question.

Gohar was still fighting against her own self in her silent thoughts. She became Azat's mother. It was a generous gift given by her destiny. Gohar could not imagine her life without her little boy, but she could not kill Arsen's hope to see his missing son one day as well. She knew Arsen kept on cherishing his hopes to find his son, who had been left in the orphanage.

"Arsen, my dear friend Arsen, yes, I am Azat's mother," she said. "I love him very much. He is the most precious one in my life. My life has become meaningful and happy since I signed the

document to adopt Azat. I did not know anything about his parents. I was just told that he had neither a mother nor a father. You told what had happened to your son. You have been looking for him since he was left in the orphanage. Maybe Azat is your son, o...no. I wish he was not. I should have kept silence, but Nare, yes...Nare told me not to kill another person's hopes, who pays a great price seeing his missing son in any little boy."

Gohar paused but Arsen continued to hear Gohar's silent plea.

Arsen read Gohar's worries in her eyes. He put Gohar's hand on his chest and said with a shy smile, "Do you feel how fast my heart is beating now? You do not have to worry. I am not such a selfish man to take Azat away. Don't tell him anything yet. I look forward to taking a genetic test as soon as possible. You and Nare have just returned me to life. You have just let me to be reborn."

Arsen kissed Gohar's hand. Gohar felt as strong a passion as an electrical current when Arsen's lips touched the skin of her hand. She thought that she was in love with Arsen, but she was afraid to confess. She had always struggled to be away from romance. She had completely devoted herself to work. On the way to success she had even buried her womanhood and romantic emotions. She had earned enough money but not a happy life. Azat came to her life like the sun with warm light. Now Gohar was trying to understand if she meant anything to Arsen. Gohar expected Arsen to give her a big hug, but he looked into her eyes with an expression of gratitude and said, "Gohar, let us leave for the toy shop right now. I would love to thank Nare and hug my precious boy. I have an inner sense that Azat could be my son. Yes, tomorrow as I cannot wait any longer, the sooner the better we will take genetic tests."

They left the cafe and walked quickly. They arrived at the toy shop very soon as the cafe was a short distance from Gohar's toy shop. Azat ran to them with a small toy bear in his hand.

"Mom, look! Nare has given this cute bear to me. She says the bear sometimes snores in his sleep. Nare says it is the bear's conversation with his dreams and wishes that have not come true yet," Azat exclaimed.

Gohar and Arsen smiled to him. Arsen thanked Nare not only with words of thankfulness, but there was something special in his eyes as well. Nare managed to read the words that were in his eyes but not on his tongue. Nare was happy that she had persuaded Gohar to tell the truth about Azat.

"I owe you dear young lady, tell me the price," Arsen said to Nare before leaving the toy shop with Gohar and Azat.

He said that he did not have a family, but his son would be the meaning of his life. Dad and son would be together as a small but happy family. Gohar thoughts went back to her worries again. For a moment she regretted taking Nare's advice. Gohar's heart got frozen. She did not say a word. She started blaming not only Nare but herself as well. Gohar thought that it was too late to change anything as Arsen insisted on the genetic test the next day. Arsen broke her silent thoughts. He told her that he would love to have a wife like her. Arsen looked into Gohar's eyes and said with a quiet voice, "I have not dared to tell you about my feelings, Gohar. I am in love with you. Your friendship healed my broken heart. I wish you were more than a friend."

Gohar was so puzzled than she could hardly believe in her own ears. She thought she was in her night dream.

"Be my wife, Gohar. I cannot say much but my heart speaks instead of my tongue," said Arsen.

"I will," Gohar replied.

Gohar's worries changed for happy emotions at once.

Nare continued to go to the park after her work every day even at weekends. Her uncle's family thought that she was beginning to go mad. Although Nare and the old woman belonged to different generations they shared the same pain of searching and waiting. Nare saw the old woman sitting on the same bench. Her wrinkled hands opened and closed her worn out handbag time by time. She kept a few old photographs there. The photographs were the tongue and eyes of her past. She smiled to them time by time or cried and put them back into her bag. She would prefer to be by herself so Nare tried to avoid bothering her but one day she cried out as soon as she saw Nare passing by her bench.

"Hey, Mari sit here next to me," the old woman exclaimed.

Nare turned to her and smiled.

"I am not Mari. I am Nare," Nare replied.

She remembered saying her name to the old woman, but she knew most old people could have memory loss. Nare sat by the old woman on the bench that was wet by the rain which had just stopped. The old woman kept silent for a few minutes then she spoke.

"I have just asked a passerby if he had seen my beloved who was still travelling, and he might have lost his way to me," she said. "I told the same passerby if he had noticed a man with dark hair and green eyes who was wearing a white shirt and black trousers. The kind passerby turned out to be blind, so I asked his dog, but the dog barked at me."

Nare looked at the old woman's snow-white hair and understood that the dark-haired man was her lover from her past. It could be the last image of her beloved man that remained in her brain. She still waited for him every day, and in her description he looked like the same as he was about sixty years ago. The old woman continued to speak.

"Mane ... no ... Nare, I met the blind passerby with his dog again, "she said. "This time he said that he had seen the man I had described, and his dog did not barked at me as the dog might have seen my lover as well."

Nare got puzzled but she rushed to say that a blind man could not see at all. The old woman looked a bit annoyed, but she did not show Nare her emotions. A bit later the old woman said more to Nare.

"I have asked many people but nobody have seen my lover except the blind passerby," she said. "He probably saw my beloved man with his blind eyes. It is a long distance from Heaven to the place I am waiting for him."

Nare's heart filled with sorrows, but she did not cry. Her thoughts were with her toy airplane that Sona lost in the park. Nare did not want to believe that her beautiful silver toy airplane could have flown without her. Nare went to the park to look for her toy airplane without giving up. The presence of the old woman encouraged her. She thought that the old woman's unshiny eyes still kept the hopes to meet her beloved again, whom she had lost long before. Nare went to the park for her toy plane again and again, but one autumn day she got shocked. The bench was empty. The old woman was not there. A cold wind was blowing through the branches of the trees, and the yellow leaves were falling on the empty bench. Nare thought why the old woman had forgotten her bench. It seemed to her that the old woman might have lost her way to the park, but she would find it soon. Nare went to the park tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, but the old woman was no longer there. Nare understood that the old woman had probably gone travelling through the night stars to find her beloved man in Heaven. The woman lived a long life, but her lover went to God so early. Nare was sure that they found each other there and flew together with their angelic wings. The old woman's absence filled Nare's heart with sadness. Time by time she found the bench empty given to the crying rain, but sometimes she saw some other people especially happy couples, sitting on it and kissing each other in sunny days. Nare kept on looking for the missing toy airplane given to her by Gohar. Though she knew that her missing airplane was just a toy that she always imagined its flight in the cloudless sky. The wings of her toy airplane grew larger and longer, and its engine continued to sound in her ears. Nare had not seen Gohar for about a month as she had had a hectic time in the toy shop because of the increasing number of customers. Nare noticed nobody sitting on the bench and went to sit there. She dialled Gohar's phone number. Gohar's voice seemed a bit tired to Nare. She told Nare that Arsen had just nearly recovered from a heart attack. The genetic test was negative which made Arsen ill. He had been expecting Azat to be his son. The genetic test might have been his last expectation. Gohar told Nare as soon as Arsen had completely recovered they would have a wedding party. The news about their marriage made Nare so happy that she asked Gohar if she could visit her the next day. Gohar's voice became cheerful.

"Come, Nare! You will meet my cute son and Arsen," she said.

She said again, "Though we are not married yet Arsen lives with me. We are a family now. We will be very happy to see you any time."

The next day Nare went to the park as usual. She came near the bench that was almost covered with the fallen leaves. Nobody was sitting there as it was still wet after the rain. She wanted to walk ahead but she stopped. She noticed a piece of paper that was stuck in a pile of dead leaves. She hesitated to take the letter, but she found her name on it so decided to read.

"Dear Nare. I am Ani, the old woman whose presence encouraged you to keep your hopes alive," the letter said. "Though you are reading my letter in my absence you probably feel my presence. Do you want to know what happened to me? I fell asleep at night, but I failed to wake up the next morning. I climbed the countless steps up through the sky and reached a graceful light. I saw an angel waiting for me. The angel was my lover whom I had lost in my earthly life."

We are both angels now and we will be together forever. The tree over the bench had sent messages about me to him. Never do get disappointed with the bench and your patience! Never do get disappointed with time! Time never treats everybody in the same way. My big hugs to you from Heaven.

Kind regards,

Ani."

Nare raised her eyes to the tree. The winter was nearly on its way. She thought that the tree would cover its nude shoulders with a cold white embroidered lace soon. She noticed that the tree had already stopped sending any messages to the old woman's beloved man. She rushed to put the letter into her handbag, but the letter disappeared, and she looked at her empty palm with her puzzled eyes. She did not hesitate to stay in the park any longer. She walked out of the park and took a bus to visit Gohar. On her way she could not stop thinking of how the letter disappeared, after she had read it. She had been holding it firmly. She was sure that the letter was something mystic as the old woman had written it not before but after her death. Some ironical smile moved Nare's lips slightly. The bus stopped and Nare got off. It took her a few minutes to walk to the building where Gohar's apartment was. Nare rang the doorbell, and Gohar opened the door with a warm smile on her face. They hugged each other. Nare entered the sitting room where she met Arsen and little Azat. Azat was playing with his toys. Arsen was sitting in the armchair and reading a newspaper. When he saw Nare he stood up and shook hands with her. Arsen's face was a little pale, but he was in a good mood. Gohar invited all of them to the tea table. Azat refused to have tea as all of his head was focused on his toys. Arsen requested Gohar to bring tea a bit later as he wanted to relax in the armchair. Nare and Gohar began having tea with some honey. The colour of the honey reminded Nare of the moon that had fallen into the bowl. Suddenly Nare stopped drinking her tea. She screamed in such a strange way that Gohar and Arsen looked at her with their puzzled eyes.

"My airplane has been found at last," Nare exclaimed.

She could not help speaking loudly so everybody heard her words.

"Monsieur Pierre, I remember being in the cockpit of your airplane and learned to fly," she said. "Monsieur Pierre, you were my first flight instructor, weren't you?"

Gohar shivered as if she was being poured with cold water.

"Who are you talking to, dear?" Gohar said to Nare quietly, but there was a fear in her voice.

As a doctor Arsen began to worry about Nare's mental health. Arsen asked her if she had really been in the cockpit. Nare did not say anything as she had never travelled by air and rushed to join little Azat, who was busy playing without any interest to the adults' conversation. Nare told Azat that the toy airplane he was playing with was not hers. Her airplane had disappeared and she did not know when it would fly back to her. The child noticed a few tears in Nare's eyes and gave his toy to her.

"No, do not cry! This airplane is yours now," he said. "I do not want to be a pilot any more. I will be a doctor like my dad when I grow up."

Azat jumped up and sat on Arsen's knees.

"Dad?" Arsen questioned himself.

Azat had always called him "Doctor Arsen." The genetic test was negative, but the child chose Arsen to be his father. Arsen was speechless. He thought of the miracle that had just happened. He was sure that the genetic test was less important than the child's choice. Even Gohar could not believe in her own ears. She just smiled and the sunshine appeared in her eyes. "My little prince wants to become a doctor like his dad," she said.

Nare liked the way Gohar called her son, Azat. Nare loved *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Nare recalled Antoine de Saint-Exupery, who was not only a writer, but he was an aviator as well. Nare also realized that Pierre, the French pilot was just her unwritten novel. Nare saw Arsen kissing both of Azat's cheeks and patting his head. She was happy for Azat, who used to be an orphan, but God found such caring parents for him. He would be present at their wedding party soon. Nare would also take part in Gohar and Arsen's wedding. Nare's eyes sketched her own wedding. She was dancing with John. She was in a beautiful white dress. John was wearing a black suit and a white shirt. They both looked so elegant. Nare thought if she really existed there. She was dancing with John though John was far away. She was smiling blissfully when Gohar's question brought her back to her reality.

"What are you thinking about, Nare?" asked Gohar.

Nare knew that John was a travelling photographer. He had nearly been at most airports all over the world. He kept on going to different countries to take photographs for his exhibitions in every corner of the world. Nare was sure she could meet John at one of the airports beneath the sky.

"Nare, what are you thinking about?" Gohar repeated her question.

"My airplane...my metallic bird!" Nare whispered.

"How long I have been waiting for it!" Nare whispered again.

The tears like the drips of dawn dew shone in her dark eyes. Arsen looked so touched. He wanted to know if Nare wanted to be a pilot.

"Nare, I did not use to have a family, but I am Azat's father now," he said. "I will be Gohar's husband soon. I cannot ever forget your moral support. I owe you, young lady. I am going to pay you back. I have enough money to send you abroad to study at the Flight Academy."

Nare got so surprised that she became speechless for a moment. It seemed a miracle to her. She thought as if she fell into her imaginative world again.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NARE'S FLIGHT

Nare did not notice how fast time had flown. She was already forty-three years old. Only her mirror showed that her youth had gone though she had not changed much. Her face just looked a bit different. Her skin was not as fresh as it used to be. Her hair was much shorter. Only her early photographs taken by John continued to keep the waves of the cascade of her long hair. She was an experienced pilot and flew the airplane with her crew. She no longer romanticized her flights. She just thought that she did her ordinary job. She sometimes recalled her days at the Flight Academy. Her memories took her back to her classmates, who were in love with the sky as much as she was, and her teachers, who made efforts to teach their students the language of airplanes. Nare practised the main steps during her studies. She remembered repeating all the instructions in her mind. She also remembered saying to herself, "Turn on the battery. Her instructors used to say to her, "Miss Nare, turn on the fuel pumps." Nare smiled. The same familiar voice sounded again. "Miss Nare, remember this airplane is not a bird. It is just a machine. Do not speak to it. The machine does not have a soul. Turn on the Hydraulics. Here is Flight Information System:

Enter your position (Gate; Airport) and your destination.

Enter which runway you will take off from and land on.

Enter your weights (fuel; passengers; cargo) from this you will calculate the speeds for takeoff (V1, V2, Rotate); This also includes the thrust and flaps.

Enter basic route data: (Altitude; Flight Number; co route); press the button legs to enter your data for your flight legs.

Turn on the APU.

Turn on position lights.

Already prepare the autopilot with height, heading, and climbing speed.

Contact the airport tower.

Turn on the fuel pumps behind the throttle.

Activate the engine start.

Turn APU und auto.

Set flaps to 15.

Turn on taxi lights on the upper light panel.

Turn the wheels to the left to check if all rudders work, right, left, up, down.

Turn off taxi light.

Turn on takeoff lights.

Turn off Taxi light.

Turn on takeoff lights.

In Case of stormy weather, also turn on the storm lights.

Push the throttle forwards and takeoff; when in the air push the gear switch up to take in the gear.

Turn off the takeoff lights and all gear lights.

Turn on the programmed autopilot.

Turn off the wing/ engine lights.

Contact approach; the airport tower.

Turn your autopilot on the height giving by the tower, and initiate the sinking.

Turn you heading towards the airport.

10-20 miles, when the airport is in sight, you turn off the autopilot.

Set flaps down 2 stages at a time to slow down the plane.

Gear down when you are 4000 feet above the ground.

Turn on the landing lights at the light panel above the window.

Full flaps when you are at 3000 feet above the ground.

Have a speed of about 150 km/h.

As you touch down activate reverse thrust and spoilers (located behind the throttle and to the left of the throttle).

As you roll from the runway, deactivate the spoilers again and put flaps to 0.

Turn off the landing lights.

Contact ground control for instructions for taxi to gate.

As you pulled into the gate, turn off the engines first by pulling back the switches behind the throttle.

Turn off the Fuel pumps at the upper panels and deactivate the hydraulics.

Lastly, turn off the battery. Now the plane is shut down."

Those steps were the very words from the language of Nare's metallic bird. She learned to fly quickly because she had met Antoine de Saint-Exupery, Pierre, and her small toy airplane before. It was obvious that her toy plane had not gone forever. It had flown somewhere to turn into a real airplane. Nare had already been in most of the airports in the world. She had been looking for John at both arrival and departure gates. Nare's hopes faded, and she got tired of searching. She got used to being single. She was learning to live with her present only though her past continued to visit her time by time through her memories. Nare lived alone in a two-room apartment which

she had bought. She thought it was not home. The airplane cockpit was her main home. The crew was her family. Time had taken Nare's uncle away. Nare missed her uncle, who was no longer alive. Nare sometimes went to see her uncle's sick widow, and other members of the family, who she had lived with before. Even Arpi was happy to see Nare, the pilot, and Anna gave Nare a big hug, which she never did before.

"Nare, visit us as often as you can," said Arpi to Nare.

Everybody was present except her uncle, who was absent. Sona was already a university student. When Nare mentioned what a disobedient child Sona was, Sona burst out laughing. Sona had changed a lot. She seemed to be in love with somebody but she did not like to say something about her romantic feelings even to her family members. Arpi usually got angry with Sona as she came home back late very often. She was worried about her daughter. Most of the time Sona looked happy, but her mood changed time by time and she isolated herself in her room for hours. Nare knew that love could cause both happy smiles and heartfelt tears, but love was the meaning of life, on which the human's existence was based within the challenges of destinies. Nare also visited Gohar's family. Arsen no longer worked in the hospital. He had retired and ran the toy shop with his wife, Gohar. Azat was an art student at university. He grew up and decided to become neither a pilot nor a doctor. He had a gift for painting. Nare found Azat's canvas, "My Parents" so remarkable. The canvas reflected a woman and a man, who slid with the moon in a dark sky, slightly lit by the shiny stars. There was a young man below with a palette in his hand. The nostalgia kept on dripping from the married couple's eyes into the young man's palette. The painting looked so natural and heartfelt that Azat's art teachers found it amazing. Whenever Nare wanted to know why Azat had painted such a canvas of his parents, as Gohar and Arsen are with him, he hesitated to answer. He knew that his paintbrush moved his hand, but the colours did not appear from his palette. Azat smiled with a strange expression on his face and said that he did not paint the canvas, which he called "My Parents." In Azat's opinion, an invisible artist might have created that real masterpiece.

"Who was that invisible artist? Who could have settled in Azat to paint a canvas for him?" Nare kept on asking herself.

Nare did not know any answers to that mystery. She found it easy to fly her airplane but she could not understand how Azat's dead parents appeared in his painting to watch their son, who had been brought up by other people and he did not know that he had parents in Heaven. Gohar and Arsen always hid that truth from him. Nare was already an International Airways pilot, which took her a long time and effort. However she smiled to herself recalling the first flight with her instructor that was long ago. She had difficulty to overcome her fears and started to talk to the airplane. The instructor got puzzled and said that no airplane had a soul as it was a machine. Nare was ready to give her own soul to it, but its engine ignored her emotions. Nare could not stop hearing her first instructor's words when her memories went back to her studies.

He used to say to Nare: "Now for some details, I will explain. Imagine the plane is holding short of the runway. First few procedures can be done, like engine start and flight computer setup, obtaining permission to take off. As soon as it is received and acknowledged the pilot will turn on the take-off lights and runway turn around lights.

"The pilot would check the flaps, 2 or 3 position before taxiing and the pitch trim. The pilot would review the other system like MCDU and TCAS mode. After lining up with the runway, take off power, either "FLX" (usually) or "TO/GA" (rarely), will be set with the throttle." The instructor kept on explaining, sitting in the same cockpit next to Nare. She recalled the instructions and smiled to herself again as it was her usual job that she did in her every flight. She continued to hear her first instructor's voice coming from her past. The pilot was not Pierre from her unwritten novel. He was not Antoine de Saint-Exupéry either. He was the person who taught Nare the language of the metallic bird which did not need the pilot's soul but his or her experience. Nare still heard her instructors' words through her early years at the Flight Academy that the plane would take off when the pilot kept the plane aligned with the center line as it sped down the runway and the co-pilot would call out 100 knots upon reaching that speed, then "V1" when take off speed was reached and immediately, her first instructor's voice sounded in her ears again.

"The Captain will acknowledge, be saying rotate, and pitching the nose up to take off," the voice said. "If the plane climbs properly, the co-pilot will say positive rate, the Captain will retract the landing gear, gear up, they will put the thrust levers to climb power. When the plane speeds up, near 150 knots flaps position one is set and the pilot calls out flaps up, then near 200 knots flaps position 0 is set calling out slats up. They contact the ATC for headings and then switch on the autopilot."

Nare always remembered taking off in the plane for the first time with a sweet smile in her eyes. It was the beginning of her career as a pilot. It was a new page in her life's saga. She was proud of herself that she managed to fly up as she used to be down. She sometimes thought what had changed on her way from down to up. Her crazy desire of flying had turned into an ordinary job. Now she had home and money, but her skin had lost its natural freshness. Nare was a woman of forty three and she still looked pretty in her short haircut and make-up. Her past was sliding to a foggy veil slowly, and it was becoming transparent when she was trying to feel John's presence. Her good friend and co-pilot was a single man. He had been in love with Nare for many years. They flew together in the same cockpit of the airplane. He wanted Nare to be his wife, but Nare smiled to him and said that her heart was a faded rose, a silent nightingale. Nare did not intend to change her private life. She did not have time for even thinking about it. Her ways were running to the airports all over the world. Sometimes she felt that her airplane had a human's soul. She talked to her airplane more than anybody else. Whenever her co-pilot wanted to know what her favourite flower was, she answered that it was Forget-Me-Not. She thought if John had forgotten her. So many years had passed, so many things had changed. Nare's past seemed a movie she had already watched, and her present was the way of her existence. She flew to different cities, which was her present. She could neither guess nor imagine her future, the scene that would be filmed some time later. Nare usually recalled those museums and exhibitions that she had visited. She turned off the takeoff lights and all gear lights then turned on the programmed autopilot and turned off the wing/ engine lights for rising. Her silver bird was in the sky again. Her plane was flying to London. Some time later the flight attendant announced that the airplane would land at Heathrow in a few minutes' time. The crew rolled from the runway, deactivated the spoilers, and put flaps to 0, and turned off the landing lights by contacting ground control for instructions for taxi to gate. The crew pulled into the gate, turned off the engines by pulling back the switches behind the throttle, turned off the fuel pumps at the upper panels and

deactivated the hydraulics, then turned off the battery and the airplane was completely shut down. The passengers and the crew left the airplane.

"Nare, I have a good idea. We must be hungry after a long flight. Would you mind having dinner with me?" Nare's co-pilot said to her. She thanked him and replied that she would prefer to walk alone by the Thames. Nare always liked wandering alone after her flights. She thought that it could be refreshing. She usually overcame her tiredness by walking in fresh air and visiting exhibitions. She did not need anyone's company. After a short walk she took a taxi and requested the driver to drive her to a recent exhibition as she had been in London many times and visited most of the exhibitions. The taxi driver offered her a very popular and unique photography exhibition. Nare was not much interested in visiting photography exhibitions as she preferred oil paintings, but she agreed. She walked into the exhibition building. There were many people who were walking up and down and looking at so many different photographs inside their beautiful frames. Nare first stopped at the photo of dolphins.

"This is such joy to look at," Nare said to herself.

She moved forward and her eyes caught a young lady's photo. The lady's long hair looked like a waterfall reaching her shoulders. The lady's onyx eyes were looking at Nare through the glass and the golden frame. Nare stopped opposite the photograph of a lady. Nare was motionless like a statue for a few minutes. She stepped towards the photo nearer and nearer, then she covered her face with her hands and started crying loudly without paying attention to the people in the exhibition.

"Do you know this lady?" Nare heard a man's voice.

Nare turned back to see who was standing behind her. The man was wearing shady glasses. There was a blue cap on his head and a long yellow scarf on his neck. Both his beard and hair looked like snow.

"It's me...it's me...it's me!" Nare replied, swallowing her tears.

She found the man's voice very familiar. She looked at him again and again. She could not expect the man to be John as her memories kept another image of him. Nare recalled John as a man of over forty with blonde hair just beginning to go grey. Nare did not remember that John had ever had a beard. She wiped her wet eyes and cheeks with her thin fingers and looked straight into the man's blue eyes, which were behind the shades of his glasses.

"This is my photo. It was taken many years ago by my beloved man," Nare exclaimed and turned her face to the photograph once more.

The man was ready to scream, but he didn't. "Seeing your uniform I realize you are a pilot, Miss," he said, quietly. "It cannot be your photo. This is my photography exhibition. I took all these photographs in different periods of my life and exhibited them in most of the cities all over the world. This photograph belongs to the lady of my heart."

Some people overheard the man and began to applaud.

A few minutes later she heard the same familiar voice say: "I still love the lady in this photo."

Nare recognized John's voice, but she could not believe her ears. She had always waited for John without knowing when and where she would meet him. Nare was sure that she was not dreaming.

She exclaimed in a trembling voice, "John, we met at last! Don't you recognize me?"

He looked at her uniform and smiled. There was some irony in his smile. He said that his beloved lady had never been courageous enough to become a pilot. He looked at Nare's uniform with his astonished eyes again and exclaimed, "What a surprise! I see you know my name. O... I look silly by asking such a question. You might have read my name on the exhibits."

Nare told him that her emotions prevented her from reading anything at the bottom of the exhibits, but her own photo had made her speechless for awhile. Nare was confused, but her trembling voice attracted even other people's attention.

"John, do look at my face carefully! Don't you recognize me?" she said. "I am Nare. Look at my ring that you put on my finger, please."

Nare showed her finger with a diamond ring to him.

"Don't you recognize my ring?" Nare repeated.

The tiny gem shone, which had always been a sad star. Now it was shining brightly. Nare had not sold it though she had lived in need before she got a job in Gohar's toy shop. She had not taken her uncle's advice and refused to sell her ring. Her uncle was no longer alive, but his words came into Nare's ears, "Nare, sell your ring. You could spend the money on food and other necessary things."

Nare heard her uncle's voice from her past. She looked at her ring again. The tiny diamond, that used to be a sad star, caught John's eyes with the light of his memories.

He stared at Nare and said, "Ghost...ghost...ghost... again!"

His voice sounded like mad laughter. Nare got scared. She told John that she was not a ghost. She could not understand why John thought her to be a ghost. She began to put John's mental health in doubt, and a few drips of dew covered her eyelashes. John still failed to believe in his own eyes and ears, as he met a ghost many years ago. He had always felt Nare's presence in his solitude. He had begged his destiny to give him a chance to get rid of Nare's ghostly presence, which never stopped chasing him, and he had been unable to love anyone else to be happy. John thought that Nare had always buried his happiness by both her absence and ghostly presence.

Suddenly John said to Nare, "What is true, existence or nonexistence, or both are true?"

Nare stepped even much closer to John and took his shady glasses out of his eyes.

"John, I love the blue sky of your eyes," she said. "I spend most of my time in the sky. I see countless people, so many airports and cities. O...God...we met again at last. Where have you been? We are together in this earthly life, so we both exist."

Nare's voice was so clear that people who stood nearby in the exhibition could hear it. John took Nare into his arms. Nare felt the touch of John's fingers on her neck. A bit later their sweet

kisses warmed their lips. The people standing next to them began applauding. Some of them were so touched that they were even close to crying.

