

SALOMAT VAFO

MOUNT BOUTAN

TRANSLATED BY AAZAM ABIDOV

From Uzbek lullaby.

Once people awoke, a mountain appeared at far aside of the village. They called it "Mount Boutan", which meant "The migrated mountain". I was like this mountain came from the other land. Though I have been here two-three times, I remained a stranger. Still, this land was like a real miraculous place of sleepy dreams for a person living in the noisy city. When we met first, He told me the history of this mountain. He further told that it has been in the earth for hundred years and as if enormous stone united people together.

Camels reigned here - in the land of age-old winds. A flock of grazing camels set cold arrogant eyes on wayfarers and travelers' cars. When I saw them fist, I thought they were the last generation of dinosaurs, which were able to survive on the earth.

In general, the last view of disappearing world, which dragged itself along kept going in this country of winds. A human being would come here face to face with himself. There was great silence in this land. Wind of wilderness would play with sand and burrs all night long, bury the ruins of the citadel that were around all night, but all the same, it could not destroy the great silence. As if nature wished the man to get together his past and to think of himself. There was also a voice of moaning man, which could be heard from a distance. This place was too high from the earth surface and that was probably why human being had to dream of great hopes.

Mount Boutan in all its majesty looked like a birthplace of kind deeds. I felt strangely when I first stayed in yurt: upper side of this grand bowl that was put upside-down was open, there was a starlit sky in this hole and your heart would stop

beating looking at it. There were uncommon forces that excite and trouble human in the sky.

Noise of Sariqqamish Lake and howl of jackals was heard from afar and feelings of weakness and dread covered me then. Perhaps such horror appears only for preservation from the dearth or for the save of one's soul. That's why I always dreamt of thinking of a lightsome life and I made my mind easy at once. Oh my God, how a feeble and cheat was created the man. Though human being is a leader of all worlds, he is forceless before the nature, his mother. I found that he is just a bit in front of secular and endless nature. In brief, my travel to the land of eternal winds was unsuccessful. All my will was given to a lad called Priest. The Priest was a head of the empire. Every day he ascended a mountain and prayed for the God-Sun. But what was the reason of it? God also sees him in the land as well. At last, God of Gods is in the earth, in hearts: All the calamities began that day when he started to show his empire. According to the Priest, the angels such as Gabriel, Michael, Israfael and Archangel brought here Mount Boutan from Mecca easily. They again will take it back before Israfael plays his flute in Doomsday. I wondered every day when we ascended the mountain before the sunrise together with the Priest. These lands were too uncolored and abandoned. Especially, coldness also overstated the devastation as well. It was really cold at nights and hot at daytimes. After ascending the mountain I always looked at far distances. Uncountable burrs, ruins of the fortress and zigzag-ways blackened from a distance, but the camels - dinosaurs of dry land did not appear, it seemed they had a rest somewhere in the shadow. Then I followed the Priest as a creator who was separated from his own will. We carried on pilgrimage in different tombs. His sweet and young voice rang in the empty rooms, secular silences troubled somehow, it seemed that the great people in the graves shook and stand up. Understanding of these things was beyond my power, I did not think so deep but I only shed tears. As regards the Priest: He paddled as a snake being enjoyed with its own sorcery and as if he was a blind, deaf-and-dumb. O dear me, I said to myself, he looked like my son. My son was so calm after sucking and was all of a sweat. His

face glistened as the monument built in honor of Indian Gods. Power of praying and entreaty was also in the Priest's face and he rubbed his forehead to a stone repeatedly and apologized. A strange young power controlled his body and it seemed that he would go out of the place of pilgrimage and will fly leaving the mountain. Yes, the Priest was so beautiful that the angel of all worlds' charming ladies would wonder of his beauty. Perhaps, the word "beautiful" is not used for the men, but it was true that he really was beautiful. Gracious me, wonderful brave existed in his face. Some of women came to this ruinous land and place of eternal winds to see him and to hear his praying. Looking at his whitish face, sharp-nose and slender lips I recognized as if I lived here just because of this man. What a fate it is? After all great difficulties, I was just about finding my way: but what: what happened? Why did I come here, why did I meet this damned Priest? When coming from afar to see only this Priest, I felt that I had a feeling of carnality to a male. So as I was a sensitive woman, I became slave to the man who actually was beautiful inside and outside. Probably I saw an ideal and perfect man in his oblique. Yes, in my heart I created a source of great power - attractive dream. Sometimes I began to understand that the Priest also was not indifferent with me because he did not look straight at me and lost his praying. When passing through the graves of saints, he turned to me and said: - This is Father Jabron - great revivification in doomsday will start from this holy man. I envied to him; my Priest said me that right after Israfil plays his flute, all the saints in the world will start to get up from their place. I proceeded then: "Probably they will yawn saying that they slept more:" Yes, his belief also came to me as well. Oh, again after getting light the wind in the land of eternal winds started to blow stronger, Bactrian camels and again drift of burrs and endless wilderness appeared in the skyline. I felt that caprice appeared in the Priest's face and I was worried as if because the sun shined. Then silly wind took the voice of praying with anger, pulled my clothes and kerchief and suddenly I thought: "For whom does this Priest pray in this solitude?"

Sometimes I was tired of these great ruins, perpetual praying and grief in the Priest's face (fine girl, how could she bear it, she who got used to live in bustling town) and I went to the mountain. It was possible to see the ruins of the fortress very clearly from here, pits were dug around the city circled with double-row wall, a sort of riverflowed behind the pit - now only its near-shore side remained. No doubt, it is a fortress of virgin girls. Its high walls and guard minarets curved and lots of ceramic pieces spread everywhere. Once I wished to gather them all. Then I counted them without idleness. There were twenty-five minarets. On the second floor of the reception room, the queen proudly received the people sitting at the crown. Forty charming rider-girls walked out with her. Dogs barked in the doghouses. The rider-girls went to battle and brought the foes' heads. And the fortress ruined with the aggression of cannibal devil. The devil married with all the forty angels.

I felt smoke: is it really true that the angels are going to have breakfast? And I heard Priest's voice: "You should not stay here alone". I turned back and saw the Priest all of a sweat. He worried and ran after me. He asked me not to repeat this act. I obeyed him and smiled. Farewell to virgin girls! Goodbye to the girls went out to the eternity. Bye-bye my dapper dreams: My weak health could not forbear from this life as a potted flower. I got cold. But it was not the main reason: perhaps, hopelessness let me fall. Change passed over the Priest for some time past: he dealt with pilgrims, prayed all day long, did not descend the mountain and even, in case if he did, he did not come into the yurt. And I only follow on his beautiful figure and white clothes and listen to his voice from the hollow of the house. And also a young girl appeared here those days. She always followed the Priest as his shadow and continuously asked him something. Then I understood my fault: right from the time of arrival here, I had to learn the Priest's credo, to be interested in his savour, at least, had to flirt. A slave will become clever afternoon. Either he wanted to show his mercifulness or wished to brush aside, he did not take me to the mountain and I only got up hearing his voice from the mountain. Being ill in bed I thought of my future life despairingly. I was very green in my

childhood and was beaten every time and children did not play with me. I always looked for a Hercules and I believed that one-day he would come in flying horse and would take me. I have several times met with gallants and scoundrels, shorts and highs in my life. But my dream was not found. Then I married, but anyway - not found again.

Who I looked for - I did not know. I found a height similar to mine but unfortunately I could not find heart like mine. I left all my wealth, my life that people envied, my favorite profession and became a sand under the empire of eternal winds, but he brushed me away. If I come they will kill me, if not - I will die myself. I look at the black mountain like a lying camel at nights. In the lightsome dawns I call to mind our pilgrimage with the Priest, his whitish face and how I wept my fill. Is it really true that all of them came to finish now? Can it be true that they will only live in my memory? He told me that he studied in a remote city of Russia ; he had been in hospital for ten years and was treated in the place of pilgrimage only. I felt reliance in my thoughts that he became a real man. Anyhow, we concur in some points and it seemed that we could understand each other and be happy.

The emperor of the empire of eternal winds was like that. The young girl did his errands, they read lecture to pilgrims and sometimes I saw them learning one book together. The Priest made a pretense in those cases. Gradually an idea "my son" came to my mind and I began to be anxious of my alone son being worried that I may die here. Eventually, I understood that my fate was connected with the Priest that what he would tell at long last. Furthermore, everyday sheep were killed in the place of pilgrimage and seeing their blood and foul bowels all day long I was disgusted and did not eat meat.

Once a knotted sheep escaped behind me. They ran after it and only caught by the time of sunset. After killing they found it with lamb. The light in the Priest's room was never turned off and as I always had an eye on

him, I saw how he lighted the stone-lamps at the tombs. He observed the lamps with special kindness and gazed to the beams. He told me once that it was ordered to light the stone-lamps. But I did not ask him who and when ordered it. During the daytime being longed for his indifference, I lazed near the ruins because I did not want to sit in the dark room. I dug and collected the pieces of ceramics in the fortress. Even one day I found a golden coin with a woman image. The pilgrims told that there were white wolves in the ruins but I have never seen them there. I was afraid of wolf but actually, I did not see the wolves at all and I felt not fear inside. Above all I like the minarets and I ascended the highest one and oversaw the empire of eternal winds. I also saw the amusing jurts, smoke and pilgrims ascending the mountain from afar as well. I sometimes saw the Priest at the rock or hill that how he protected from the sun with his hand and looked on. Every time when I counted the olden minarets, I had a rest at the twenty-fifth minaret and thought about that what I would write or paint if I were a writer or a painter. Then well-flourished fortress, women riders coming in and out of its gates came to my mind and I heard snorts of the horses, voice of blacksmiths, clamor and laughter. Once I raise my head and saw a big camel bellowing and running straight upon me. I ran as quickly as I could in order to save myself (Is it correct that the meaning of the life is to save oneself?). The pieces of the ceramics fell down. The camel ran after me as death. They say that even if you see the camel in your dream, it is a sign of death. But: I suddenly saw the Priest in the distance screaming and running with a stick in hand. He overtook the camel and stopped it. I flew to his arms. And I felt his tremble, palpitation and fatigue.

- Are you OK? - he asked. - Don't worry! Never fear! I am with you. The camels usually want women in the spring. It followed you from afar. This is a land of camels. They hibernate here. Look at me:

I could not look at him.

- Where did you come from? Why? - he asked despairingly. - I spent fifteen years of my life for nothing in order to withdraw all things. But I again came across

with a woman. I lost my mind in this way. If you have mercy me, please leave: Get out: If I change my routine I will die. I also have a heart: But your way is different.

You do not belong to this ground:

So I left this land. All the camels, virgin girls, ruin of the fortress and burrs left behind. I forwarded thinking that the meaning of life of the human being consists of separations and losses only. I walked along the path, thought of sacred moments that wholly turned my life, and I suffered for the black recollections. How will I live from now on and how will my fate be?

When I was leaving this foreign land, I murmured these words: "Oh my spiritual supporter sheykh San'on, I - a woman knocking about the two worlds, became Mount Boutan."