

# PEOPLE BY MOONLIGHT

BY TOGHAY MUROD

TRANSLATED BY AZAM ABIDOV

1

- Listen, mommy, listen. From somewhere someone's voice is heard:

Our grandfather who was lying down on the hill said these words to our grandmother.

Our grandfather surprisingly opened his mouth. He began to listen to the side where breezes blew.

But breezes did not bring the voices clearly.

So our grandfather put his palm onto his ears. He tried to protect the audible voice from wind. He did not breathe and listened with all his heart.

Even now he could not hear anything. He inhaled fresh air.

Our grandfather glanced at moonlight in detail.

- It seems the voice is from this way: - he said. Are you OK, mommy? How is your health? Are you safe and sound?

1

Matchmakers' visit to a girl's house is a great honor!

Matchmakers came at twilight.

A hostess laid the table. Her husband acted as host.

- Welcome, welcome! - he said.

- Be well, butcher, be well - said matchmakers. - Amen, may big and small weddings be held in this house! Allahu-akbar!

- Allahu-akbar! May your wishes come true!

Watermelon was served after pilaw.

By tradition, matchmakers had a nice chat.

Eson spoke to the butcher and said the purpose of his visit:

- There is a bird of luck on your sister's head, butcher, don't let it fly, he said.
- People tell nothing not knowing the origin, and they do not give their daughter in marriage not knowing the descendants of a son-in-law. Who is he by the way?

2

There is a young boy in the village.

He is wide-shouldered and strong figured. He has deep dimples in his round face.

He has hazel eyes and thin hair.

The young boy makes his figure slender. He stands upright. He puts hands to his chest or waist. He looks at one point. Where does he look? What does he look at?

We do not know, we do not know.

He also does not know about it.

We see the young boy for the first time.

And we say that this boy is either in blank despair or is thinking of something complicated.

We say that from his walk he is arrogant and shows others with his feet. Have you got branches, for what you boast, we say.

He greets with the people he likes. He makes friends with them. He speaks to them with all of his heart. He is very polite with them.

He doesn't like to greet with the people he dislikes.

As a result of this we say that the young boy disregarded us.

As a consequence of this some of us like and some dislike the young boy.

He considers us his friends from the bottom of his heart.

He loves us. He always becomes our supporter and feels hurt for our grief. He wants to be our native brother.

If he sees at least one evil doing we make, he will leave us forever. He will try not to greet with us.

He tells neither others nor us about our tricks.

He frowns. He keeps everything inside.

He keeps aloof.

He stares at far distances. He does not close his eyes.

We look at the direction he stares. The green horizon. It's this! There are no clouds at least.

He lives making us surprised!

When we ask something he replies Yes or No.

We give him water to wash his hands. He stares at water as if he sees it first time.

He nods in his own way.

This hurts us. We ask for his gratitude.

"You too, say something as a human being".

"What do you like me to say?"

"At least wish us goodness."

He embraces his knees. He thoughtfully looks at far distances - the Bobotogh mountains. He stares at the rocks and says:

"True words will be in heart. If words are uttered, they will become falsehood".

He considers only one singer as a singer. He says this singer is Yunus Rajabi.

He dislikes seeing someone chatting or coughing when he listens to Yunus Rajabi's songs.

He annoys seeing someone smiling when Yunus Rajabi sings.

He listens to Yunus Rajabi's songs quietly.

He : sings a song!

He goes to hills to gather fodder. He gathers fodder and looks around. He will be alone there.

Then he makes a pillow from the fodder. He crosses his hands under his head. He looks at far distances - white clouds like a bale of cotton and flying sparrows and sings.

Gradually he moves his lips:

A matchmaker will be from this young boy!

Butcher Eson threw an abrupt rejection:

- Qoplon? No, he does not give the best fit!

- Butcher, rest assured.

- No, I worry because that boy does not even know to greet!

- Butcher, hear with your soul - ears will deceive, see with your mind - eyes will cheat.

- But he does not resemble a man in looks!

This moment matchmakers display their talents. They started to praise the butcher's father one after another:

- His late father was a brilliant person:

- He was so brave:

- He was a good man:

- It's a pity that Esonboy does not resemble his father:

- Don't be ungrateful, Esonboy looks like his father very much:

- Is it true?

- Look, look here. Rome was not built in a day...

Consequently the matchmakers who began to talk about butcher's father united their words with his son.

Finally butcher Eson gave in.

\_ I can not tell the last word, - he said. - There are my friends and my wife, who brought up the girl. Please come again, I have to consult with them.

The youngest girl in the family became an orphan when she was five years old.

Her brother brought her up.

Her sister-in-law reared her wholeheartedly.

The sister-in-law frowned:

Then: then, the orphan did not breathe. Her eyes twinkled. She looked about.

The fearful orphan approached. She held her nephew's cradle with two hands. She rocked the cradle excitedly.

"If I rock the cradle, my sister-in-law will not crown and then she will not scold me:"

The orphan expected this!

The orphan wanted to eat. She sucked her finger. She kept silence.

He sister-in-law laid a tablecloth. She called the orphan to eat.

The orphan moved nearer. The orphan sucked her finger and looked at the tablecloth.

And then she extended her hands to the tablecloth. First she touched the edge of the tablecloth. Then she gradually let her finger crawl till the center of the tablecloth. Then she touched the bread.

The orphan broke a slice of bread.

The orphan looked at the sister-in-law and ate bread and fearfully chewed the bread.

The orphan, pretending a good girl, carried big pails the size of her own.

Indeed, her brother and sister-in-law considered her as their own child.

Nevertheless, the orphan lived in this house feeling a big difference between her nephews and herself.

The orphan was both joyful and sorrowful.

The orphan was well-mannered.

She caught every habit and hint at once. The worst thing was that she took them as referring to herself.

The orphan was keen.

A very young girl had adult's views on life.

The orphan was a sensitive girl.

All she had was orphan's work.

The orphan was such a girl!

She was in good shape.

If we say she has white face, we curtail our rights. If we say she is blackish, we curtail the girl's rights.

She was brownish!

She was Barchin-faced, summer-starred and hairy.

Her waving hairs hastened somewhere to someone.

Otherwise, how could they wave like this?

What if her black mole was on the edge of her thin lips? What if they were in the hole of her cheek?

How it comes that the black hole is at the extreme top of her cheek!

5

Brother made a very good suggestion.

It is reasonable to decide this girl's fate together with friends and relatives.

6

Matchmakers came again.

Two days passed.

Friends and relatives expressed their own opinions.

Some of them felt hurt.

Some of them made others to accept their offer.

Brother kept silence and considered them equally.

The girl had to say the last word.

The sister-in-law went to the kitchen.

7

Oymomo who was feeding her younger nephew felt ashamed. As if she tried to

beautify herself: she covered her Iraqi kerchief that was on her shoulder. She pulled skirts of her dress and covered her knees.

The nephew opened his embrace and strived after his mother.

Mother took her younger child.

She stared at her sister-in-law and smiled.

Then slowly she started to ask questions:

- What will you say?
- What I will say what?
- Do not be confused, say something. Matchmakers came.
- To whom?
- Of course to you, not to me.
- What did I do for you? Go away!

Oymomo took offence. She turned to a pot where food boiled.

She started to dig a fireplace with a stick.

Fire burnt very well.

The younger nephew scratched his mother's collar.

- Mom, mamma! Give me mamma! - he said

His mother gave her breast to her son.

- You feel shy or not, this will happen to all of us, - she said. - We also were ashamed of this. You see the result, look, your nephew is sucking my breast heatedly:

- It is not my wish to marry:

The sister-in-law laughed loudly. Even her breast came out of her child's mouth.

- I thought it was your everlasting dream, - she said. - Look at me, if not today, tomorrow you'll certainly become bride:

The younger nephew extended his small hands. Again he began to suck.

- Give your consent to marry while someone asked your hands. Qoplon is a very strong guy that houses may be built on his two shoulders.

- I do not know such person.

- Now you will know. Take my advice. Find your husband while you are beautiful!  
Oymomo sat staring at fire. Ashes were like Oymomo's face and Oymomo's face was like ashes.

The sister-in-law gave her younger child to Oymomo.

- Well, silence gives consent, - she said.

8

The sister-in-law went to the group. She conveyed Oymomo's silence.

The matchmakers put muffled bread in the centre.

The ceremony of asking qalin (money or some other things asked from bridegroom's family for bride's family).

- Well:

- Please do not go far beyond the limits.

- OK.

- Its' enough, none became rich giving in marriage his daughter.

- Ten sheep: do you agree?

- Amen, Allahu-akbar, may these two young boy and girl be happy and live long together.

The sister-in-law gave her blessing to the new couple.

Bread broke in pieces.

The matchmakers took new waistbands with themselves.

9

Marriage-presents came from bridegroom's party.

In fatiha-marriage there were sheep, linseed-oil, rice, raisin:

The life of a newly married couple began.

The bridegroom passed in front of bride's relatives hanging his head. He did not sit with them face to face.



10

One month passed.

Cotton with quilts and mattresses was brought to bride's family.

It was called nine.

11

Once in the evening the bridegroom heard that the bride's brother went somewhere on a visit.

The bridegroom went to the bride's house with his fellows.

His friends slowly knocked at the window.

The bride-to be looked through the window.

- The bride wants to meet with his wife-to be, - friends said.

The bride-to be did not like it.

- If he wants to meet, ask him to make a wedding, - she replied.

12

The wedding party was held on Sunday evening.

Many people were called for the party.

Girls called people from the bride's party and boys called from the bridegroom's party.

Girls went to the bride's house and boys to the bridegrooms' house.

So many sheep were slaughtered in the bridegroom's house.

So many wine jugs were emptied.

Music and songs blew in the air.

There were a lot of guests in the wedding-house.

Children raised a clamor in the street:

- Plates have come from the bride's house! Plates have come!

Women hanging dastarkhan (food or present muffled in tablecloth) on their heads or shoulders appeared on the threshold. They brought ten plates from the bride's house.

There were pilaw in one plate, fried meat in another, boiled eggs in the third and rice in milk in the fourth:

The plates were put in the circles of the people.

They ate what they liked.

Empty plates were taken out.

Leader among the friends laid a large fabric in the centre and said:

- Bridegroom, please come and see, what kind of gifts will people present!

Guests put their present in the fabric: someone threw atlas, some other silk as a gift.

The kerchief was almost full.

Everyone chanted a blessing:

- May the wedding presents be returned in wedding-parties, Allahu-akbar!

13

Bridegroom's friends went to bride's house.

They entered the room specially prepared for them.

14

The bride sat in the room on the right side of the house.

Young girls peeped into the room through windows and saw the bride.

There were many girls in the room. Some of them looked at the bride with envy, some of them with compassion.

The bride's will was with these girls.

One girl moistened her fingers with her spittle. She twisted the bride's hair. Hair became wavy.

Another girl pressed o'sma (a kind of plant that is put on the eyebrow of girls) on the back of the cup.

The girl put o'sma to the bride's eyebrows.

The bride look at the flowers of the rug.

15

At this moment, five or six people approached the threshold of the room.

The door was opened askew.

Khayrulla-mullah requested a witness from the bride's party and asked:

- You, Oymomo, daughter of Abdiboy, will you grant your brother Esonqul with authority of dedication of yourself to Qoplonboy, son of Qurbonoby?

Silence.

The bride kept silence.

- Do not tell, do not tell, - whispered girls.

The bridegroom's friends standing on the back of the door extended money to the girls.

The girls divided it.

The bride still kept silence.

The bridegroom's friends extended more money.

- Is it enough? Let her say something! - they said.

- Hey, Holbuvi, do not teach her, do not whisper!

- Of course, I whisper. Do you like her to agree at once?

- Do you think to say "Yes!" is easy?

- It is not food in the mouth!

Khayrulla-mullah asked a witness once more.

There was no answer again.

Bridegroom's friends asked:

- Oymomo, shall we sit until morning like this?
- Oymomo, do not listen to your girlfriends, they envy you!
- Hey, Norgul, if you are such a bad girl, none will look at you!
- The bridegroom is waiting for you!

And the girls were too stubborn:

- Let him wait some more time!
- If he waited for her such a long time, he can wait again!
- What if only one morning broke, there are many others!

Khayrulla-mullah asked a witness last time.

There was no answer again.

The mullah went out.

- The bridegroom doesn't like, we will delay the marriage (nikah).

And after that a deep voice came from the back of the white curtain:

- Yes:

Everyone heard this voice.

- If you were late for a moment, you would stay without a husband, - said bridegroom's friends.

Laughter rose.

16

They came to another room where another mullah sat.

Someone went to ask the bride.

The bride her witness to her brother.

The bride's brother sat in front of the mullah.

The bride came in. In honor of his brother-in-law, the bride closed his eyes with a fabric. He sat looking down.

There was a bowl of water and two breads on the tablecloth.

The mullah opened a book on the pillow. He read from Koran expressively. He

preached the word of God and gave advice:

- Praise is to Allah, who created nikah (marriage) between the halal (permitted by Shariah) and haram (not permitted by Shariah). Allah says in Koran: "Marry to women that you like". Prophet Muhammad says: "To build a family is my sunnat. One who rejects it is not from me." The bridegroom is a lover, the bride is a lover, mahr (present given to a bride by a bridegroom) between them is according to their agreement. I say this to you and ask forgiveness from Allah for you and for myself.

Then the mullah asked the bride's brother:

- You, Esonboy, son of Abdiboy, do you give your sister Oymomo, daughter of Abdiboy, as a wife to Qoplony, son of Qurbonboy?

- Yes, I do, - said the brother.

The mullah asked the bridegroom now:

- You, Qoplony, son of Qurbonboy, do you accept Oymomo, daughter of Abdiboy as your wife?

- Yes I do, I accept her as my wife.

The mullah sipped water.

And the bridegroom sipped water.

His friends also sipped water of marriage.

The mullah preached the bridegrooms' obligations:

- Not to leave her during six months, not to beat her bitterly, not to let her walk barefoot, to be faithful: Do you accept these conditions?

- Yes, - said the bridegroom.

- Saying "Yes" is not enough, say "I accept".

- I accept.

- Well done.

17

During the reading of nikah mother put a stripy robe on the bridegroom. She

passed needle and thread from the shoulder of the robe several times.  
This meant that bridegroom and bride will unite and will not divorce.  
She did not tie up the edge of the thread.  
She meant the destiny of this couple will not be tied up.  
She spattered wheat on the bridegroom's head meaning that they will be in abundance and have many children.

18

The bridegroom went to the chimildiq (a corner of the room covered with curtain).  
He had high box-calf boots. He wore stripy robe and had a silken waistband. He had a Kokand skullcap on his head.  
The room with chimildiq was full of women.  
The bridegroom walked amongst them. He stood up in the chimildiq.  
Not to leave him alone one of his friends stood with him.

19

The bride came in stepping the foot sheet.  
She had a white cover in his face. She had a silken kerchief on her head.  
She had a stripy waistcoat and atlas dress.  
She had a leather boots on her feet.  
There was a tillaqosh (like a crown) on her forehead.  
The eyes of tillaqosh glittered in the light.  
She had earrings on her ears. She had zebigardon (embellishment) with eight silver signs on her breast.  
Rubies and unites of zebigardon shined.  
Wedding-house became fragrant with herbal odor.  
Herbs were on girls' ears and dresses.  
Girls supported the bride and boys supported the bridegroom.

- Be careful! - they said.

It is said that the one - bride or bridegroom - who steps on the pair's foot first, will become successful in everyday life.

The bride look at the bridegrooms' feet. She walked to the left. She wanted to step on bridegrooms' foot.

But the bridegroom could take his right foot.

The bride's foot remained under the quilt.

The bridegroom showed his quickness and pressed on the bride's foot.

His friends laughed victoriously:

- The bridegroom stepped on! He is the winner!

20

The bride and bridegroom stand abreast.

Boys made a circle in front of them.

They made fun of girls.

Hearts searched for another hearts, eyes looked for another eyes.

Eyes looked with love and passion.

Eyes danced and shined.

Hearts felt warmth, hearts dreamed.

Some of the hearts fell in love and some of them became beloved.

Ancient grief returned to some hearts.

Suffering started in some of them from that moment!

21

Tillaqoshs shined on the foreheads.

There were almond-like silver whirls and glass earrings on the ears.

There were pendants, adornments, bunches of three raw of beads and four-five raw of corals were put on.

Several kind of kerchiefs like ottuyoq-rumol, sholrumol, balkhirumol, qulmirumol, shotutrumol, simrumol and other were on the heads of the girls.

There were a lot of skullcaps like Iraqi skullcap, chorgul and bakhmaltepa.

People took a rainbow for fabric and they called it atlas.

Look, mothers and sisters put on dresses from atlas.

Atlas has special colors and has names like Sakkiztepkilik, MArghilan khan-atlas, Samarkand twilight, MArghilan torch, Ferghana roads, Leila, Guli, Shirin, Mahliqo, Shotikapak, Shodiqara, Qo'chqorshokhi, Tiri kamon, Golden key:

A year consists of four seasons. The seasons were full of colors: spring - flower garden, summer - sun, autumn - generosity, winter - marble:

Our people moved seasons to fabrics: Always spring, Garden and flowerbed, Basil, Gul-va-Navruz (Blossom and New day), Gulnamozshom, Bargikaram:

Atlas is the history of our nation. Holidays and disasters that our nation encountered are found in the atlas.

Atlas is a song, ancient and endless song of our nation!

22

National traditions in wedding ceremony called "It ghirillatar" (Dog rolls), "Kampir uldi" (An old woman died), "Soch siypatar" (Hair disheveled) and "Qo'l ushlatar" (Touching hands) were held.

23

"Oyna kursatar" (Showing the mirror) was the most interesting!

A woman put a mirror to a newly married couple.

The bride and bridegroom did not look at it.

When the bride looked at it, the bridegroom did not look and when the bridegroom looked at the mirror, the bride did not look!

The woman kept the couple's heads together. She made them look at the mirror.



She made them speak!

The bride spoke to a bridegroom's reflection in a whisper and the bridegroom spoke to the bride's reflection in a whisper:

- Many thanks to our parents.
- Many, many thanks to our brother and sister-in-law.
- May God grant us fidelity till the end of our lives.
- Let us be like this after that, too.
- Our children:
- Let us have many children!

24

The curtain was dropped in the chimildiq.

The new married couple remained alone in it.

Two old women remained outside of the chimildiq.

Having rolled needles the old women talked to each other about their lives, especially about their own marriage.

The old women did not sleep. They guarded the bride and the bridegroom.

The bridegroom sitting in the chimildiq approached to the bride.

The bride, first looked at the chimildiq and then at the bridegroom. This look meant this:

"Do not approach to me, it is shameful, there are old women here".

The bride stared at her with offense. This stare meant this:

"Was it so difficult to say "Yes"? How my friends waited for this word from you."

The bride smiled.

"If we say "yes" at once, they will mock at us that we wished this marriage so long time".

"You are right, but I said "Yes" at once. It was better to sit silently."

"Silence is not for bridegrooms, it is for brides. Actually, we are read to say "yes" from the first asking:"

Grandmothers worried about the silence in the chimildiq. One of them slowly opened the edge of the chimildiq. The other one laid down. She peeped at the chimildiq with one eye.

- Eb-ey, why the distance between you is so far? - she said. - Or are you ashamed of us? Do not be shy, we also were brides long ago:

The grandmothers closed the chimildiq.

And then laughter was heard from the chimildiq:

The grandmothers laughed closing their mouths, they laughed pulling and pushing each other:

- Thanks God, - they said.

Morning broke.

The bridegroom left the chimildiq.

25

Night fell.

It was so dark that people could not recognize each other.

The bridegroom came with his friends.

They sat in the room where chimildiq was.

Friends ate pilaw made in linseed-oil.

The bridegroom was left alone.

The bride entered.

She set curtains straight. She lighted a candle on the shelf and entered the chimildiq with it.

And the bridegroom followed her. He put his head on the pillow. He glanced at the candle.

The bride's kerchief hanged on her breast. She removed it to her shoulder.

And the bride glanced at the candlelight impatiently:

26

"Mountains were grey and hills were grey. Fir-trees were green. Hillocks were humped. Stones were great and great. Nuts were big and big.

A girl with a pot on her shoulder approached the spring. She put the pot down. She washed her face with the spring water.

And then she saw a rider under the water.

The girl covered her face with her kerchief, she was ashamed.

- Do not hide your eyes, Oymomo, - said the rider.

- Get off, please, people may see us talking, - said the girl.

- I came to drink the spring water.

The guy dismounted from the horse. He had a rope in his hand. He drank water with his hands. Then he splashed water on the girl.

The horse flinched and went back.

The girl wiped her face.

- If you drank water, get out now.

- I came to see your eyes.

- There are many other eyes to see.

- No, every God's slave has his own seeing eyes. Your eyes are mine. If you don't like my coming, I'll not come.

- If you don't come to see eyes, come to drink spring water:"

27

The bride and bridegroom hid their thoughts from each other. They wanted to know what the other one was thinking about.

- Speak, - said the bridegroom.

- Speak yourself, - said the bride.

- You, speak.

- Speak yourself first.

- What do you like me speak about?

- Let's talk about our nights and the harvest growing campaign on the hills.
- Let's talk about how we came back from the hills and how we stopped near apricot-trees and how I picked green apricots for you.
- Speak about those moments when your hands were on the branches but eyes were looking at me.
- You, tell me how your kerchief fluttered in the wind and how I caught it.
- You, tell, how you touched my arms strongly and did not leave me even I said I would weep.

Silence, peace and quite.

The bride and bridegroom saw mentally: green apricots fell down. Bats flew high. The bride and bridegroom heard mentally: summer grasshoppers sang. Owls let go a cut sound.

- No, you, tell how you told your sister-in-law that I touched your hands.
- You, tell please, how you escaped from seeing my sister-in-law, despite I cheated you saying that I told her that you have touched my hands.
- Is it true that you did not tell her about that?
- Yes it is.
- I could not come face to face with your sister-in-law, as I was too ashamed.
- If you know, I did not tell her about that.

The bridegroom liked this. He looked at the ceiling and kept silence. This silence troubled the bride. The bridegroom absorbed in thoughts.

- What are thinking about?
- Our nights.
- And Zubaida?

The bride touched the bridegroom from the very point. The bridegroom stopped thinking.

- Do not think like that, - he said. - It is true that I looked after Zubaida. That was the right times to look at girls. Who I looked at, it was because of you. Yes, I looked at Zubaida, but she was not like you. I looked at Bolkhin, she also was not like you. I looked at another girl. That was you:

- Really?

- Yes, I tell you my true.

The bride took delight from these words. She took pleasure of this:

- If so: I'll give you myself!

28

The dawn of bride and bridegroom breaks very fast!

The bride moved from the bridegroom's bosom. She rejected forgetful extended hands of the bridegroom.

- It is enough! - she said. - You became so headless, and did not even know that it was already dawn. He couple poured water on the head to each other on the terrace. They got rid of sins.

The bridegroom tied his belt and went towards the door. He touched the door ring. He stood surprisingly. He looked at the chimildiq through his shoulder.

The bride played the edge of her crushed kerchief. She stared at her fingers.

- Do not come again, it seems you are bad, - the bride said.

The bridegroom felt pleasure in his heart. If the bride asked him "when will you come again", he would take offence at her.

The bridegroom walked along the big street.

The entire world was white for him.

The road he was going was white, white like a fresh linen. Houses, walls, trees were white. Even the birds were white as the linen. The brook flowing along the street was white. Its murmur was white, too, like linen.

It was already daylight.

Stars disappeared, Venus remained alone.

The bridegroom opened his embrace - he took the morning in his arms.

The morning entered into his bosom with its endless sky, snowy mountains, absentminded hills and cypress-like poplars.

The bridegroom opened his arms. The morning trembling in the air rubbed his

hairs.

The bridegroom kissed the dawn repeatedly!

He ran along the brook.

He embraced the body of mulberry-tree. He rubbed and combed hairs of the mulberry-tree.

He ran again.

A man approached to him.

The bridegroom stared at the man as if he was seeing him for the first time.

This man was Ismat hunter, whom the bridegroom detested.

Nevertheless, this moment Ismat hunter laso was a good man for him.

There was not a bad man in the world, everyone was good that moment.

For the first time, the bridegroom greeted Ismat hunter.

As always, Ismat hunter did not wait for the salute, and stopped. Astonished, he also greeted the bridegroom. He looked back again:

- It seems your watermelon has cracked - he said.

One woman was coming.

The bridegroom stayed in his palce. He did not know to go or not to go. Hos face burnt with shame.

A woman was approaching.

Now, how will he appear in front of women?

If he appears, how will he look at their eyes?

The bridegroom turned to another way, different from that woman.

29

Iyd Qurban was held.

Muslims made sacrifice. They cut animals.

Some Muslims who have not animals to cut bought meat from butchers. Muslims wore clothes. One who had new clothes wore them. One who had not new clothes wore clean and washed clothes, though they were old.

Muslims smartened themselves up. They applied fragrant oils on their face. They put usma (special plant to blacken eyebrows) on their eyebrows. They darkened their eyelids with kohl. They put henna on their hands. They tied embellishments to their breasts.

Muslims visited one another.

- Happy Iyd Qurban! - they congratulated each other.

The bridegroom sent presents to his wife, the bride sent presents to her husband. A French kerchief, a pair of rubbers, a golden ring and sweets came from the bridegroom Qoplon's part.

A shirt, a robe, a belt and a handkerchief came from the bride Oymomo's part. The bride herself prepared all of them.

We knew this from the scarlet rose centered in the handkerchief.

The rose was the symbol of heart, that the bride sent not a handkerchief but her heart to her husband.

The bridegroom smelled the handkerchief repeatedly, pressing to his face.

From the handkerchief: he took the air of his wife from the handkerchief.

He rubbed the handkerchief to his eyes and kissed it, he rubbed it to his forehead and kissed it, and he rubbed it to his lips and kissed it.

He kissed it repeatedly and folded it, and then he put it in his bosom.

30

In Iyd day there was a counter near a big pond. Nisholda, beans, holva and pistachio were sold in the counter.

Boys played loyshuvillak and sibziq (hand-made blowing instruments).

Girls sat together under a big mulberry-tree.

A leader girl gave rope to a little boy. The boy was barefoot. He tied the rope to his waist. He climbed up the mulberry-tree.

- To which branch do you like me throw this rope? - he asked.

- To that hunchbacked one! - said the leader girl.

The boy climbed that branch. He threw the rope to that branch. The edge of the rope touched the ground.

The distance between the branch and ground was about twenty meters.

The boy descended from this branch.

The girls looking at this boy with their palms on their forehead were scared.

The leader girl shook her fist at the boy.

- Hah, scoundrel, you nearly killed me!

The boy leapt and giggled.

- Do not beat me, otherwise, I will tell about it to my brother Nurali! - he said.

- Who is that Nurali?

- The boy who always kisses you under the bitter apricot-tree!

- Stop your gap, scoundrel!

Girls roared with laughter.

The leader girl touched the edge of the rope.

A girl sat on the seesaw.

The leader girl swung her from right to left. Then she abruptly set the seesaw free.

According to the seesaw she sometimes sat, at others she stood up.

The girl aired, the girl staggered. The girl increased the speed from time to time.

People sitting and eating halvah on the roof watched the swing.

And then, Oymomo sat on the swing.

She prepared herself and tied up her neck with her "horse-hoof" kerchief.

Lurching she swung repeatedly! She was about to roll!

The swing rose high.

Oymomo sat down.

The swing rose to the right side. It stopped in that place. Then it suddenly descended.

Oymomo stood up.

The swing descended sharply with Oymomo's weight. It ascended from below to up.

The swing went up from left to right.



People watched this keeping their head-dresses.

Nevertheless, there were people whose skullcap fell down and whose kerchief fluttered.

Qoplou was alarmed.

- Oh dear me, oh dear me, he whispered.

Halvah remained in his mouth, it remained in his throat.

The swing slowed down.

Oymomo threw herself down. She ran at top speed. She hugged one of the standing girls.

Only then Qoplou started breathing. He swallowed the halva in his throat, he chewed a piece of halva in his mouth.

31

Bride-game was in the evening, too.

Qoplou did not hide his admiration from the bride.

- Well done, you have a strong heart! - he said. You flew like airplane! Looking at you I felt giddy.

- It was the right time to fly. There will not be this opportunity in 2-3 months:

- Why do you say like this?

Instead of reply, the bride touched the bridegroom's hand and pulled his fingers.

The bridegroom understood at once.

- I see: - he smiled.

He embraced his wife. He treated her with favor. He cherished her:

- How do we call our child?

- Barchinoy.

- You mean:

- Girl is better. She will become my helper.

- No, I want to have a boy. I Even contrived his name: Khushvaqt!

- And then?

- Then we will bring him up. We will wed him and build a house for him. After that we will have our grandchildren. I will become a grandfather and you will become a grandmother.

The bride laughed gaily.

- I will call this man grandfather.

- I will call you grandmother.

- Grandfather!

- Grandmother!

Dreaming about Khushvaqt, the couple opened their eyes in the morning.

32

Round cakes were baked in tandirs, so called national ovens made of firm soil and built on the ground.

Dowry of the bride was loaded on horses.

The moon appeared over the wedding house.

A horse stood near the verandah.

A neighbor from the right-hand side kept the bridle.

Sister-in-law helped the bride to sit on horseback.

The horse started moving.

An innocent boy should go with the bride.

Many boys claimed to this honorary position.

- I will go with my aunt, I will go with my sister! - pretended several kindred boys.

The elder cousin went with the bride on horseback. The other children remained weeping.

Folks went out to the courtyard. They gave blessings to the new couple.

The bride's neighbor living on the right-hand side led the horse.

Near neighbor is dear neighbor, this meant.

The horse stepped the threshold.

The bride was sent to the bridegroom's house.

The bride began weeping:

- Uvvv-uvvv-uvvv:

This weeping meant that the bride was leaving her own family and relatives.

This weeping was for the nephews and nieces staying with tears in their eyes.

The bride wept because her brother and sister-in-law might think that she wanted to marry to get rid of them. Perhaps:

Does the bride weep because she goes to bridegroom's house?

Yes, we can think like this!

The bride embraced by her nephew kept weeping on the way:

- Uvvv-uvvv-uvvv:

The horse moved slowly: tik-tik-tik:

Dogs barked around.

Smell of melon was felt from the garden that was situated at the left side.

Guests looked at the garden. They sated with smell.

33

Shadows appeared on the bridge. Two young boys kept sticks on the bridge.

It was impossible to cross the bridge without taking the sticks.

The young boys demanded from the bride's party:

- Give us: bridegroom!

The bride's party kept silence.

The young boys kept their word.

- If not, we cannot let you pass.

The man leading the horse took handkerchiefs that the bride embroidered and gave them to the young boys one by one.

The sticks were taken away and the way opened.

34

They reached the bridegroom's house.

Children welcomed the bride.

- Long live the bride, she has come! - they cried.

Fire was lit near the gate.

The bride went round the fire thrice.

For whiteness and for living with kind heart, flour was strewed on the bride and mother-in-laws' faces.

Ones who could not keep away from this were covered with white flour.

The horse stopped near the black yurt.

The bridegroom wanted to take the bride from the horse. He opened his arms widely.

The bride pushed bridegroom's hands back. It seemed as if she rejected the bridegroom.

Anyway she descended from the bridegroom's bosom!

Relatives and girlfriends encircled the bride.

Grandmother led the bride inward. The bride hung her head near the threshold.

- Bow to this threshold! - requested the grandmother.

The bride bowed to the threshold.

She bowed once again and rubbed her hands on the threshold and kissed them.

The grandmother made the bride bow repeatedly and led her inwards.

- Bow to our father Adam!

- Bow to our mother Eva!

- Bow down again she was too great!

- Fine girl, well done! Go straight on please!

The bride stood up in the chimildiq.

Eighteen kinds of bride's clothes were hung on the rope of the chimildiq. There were arras, tapestry and other national coverlets on the walls.

The word "Welcome!" was written in the tapestries.

Symbol of rose was in one gobelin and symbol of red apple was in the other.

In one tapestry there was a symbol of flying dove that kept a red flower in its bill.

The letter "O" was sewed under the dove. The letter "Q" was sewed on the side where the dove strived.

"O" meant Oymomo and "Q" meant Qoplon.

All of these were prepared by the bride herself.

35

The grandmother made the bride bow before guests in the wedding house:

Bow to my father-in-law  
That watered a cow in the stream,  
And played his drum  
And wedded his sons!

Bow to my mother-in-law,  
Who is like a star in the sky,  
Whose eyebrow is like a black nutria  
And whose heart is like daylight.

The grandmother continued her verses and the bride her kowtow:

Bow to my sister Gulsun-opa,  
A lid of the pot,  
Who is the most beautiful woman,  
Whose face is like a red apple.

Bow to my aunt Sanam,  
Who wore crumpled kerchief,  
Who looked at the moon  
And combed her hairs.

Bow to brother Bahrom  
Who is a friend of the bridegroom  
And husband of Norguloy.

- Grandma, neighbor Suvon daroz is taking offence that you are not asking the bride to bow to him.

- If so, ask him to listen:

Bow to brother Daroz,  
Who is like like a log of the mill  
And like a garden of Adras-robe.

Shepherd Norboy stood up:

- Hey, grandmamma, why the bride is not bowing to me?

- If you want this, please listen:

Bow to brother shepherd,  
Who is like straw in the sack,  
And who is like a jackal

People burst laughing.

- Eh, grandmamma, I asked this to no purpose!

Coming of bride is good! To arrange a wedding is good!

36

Brides usually get up early in the morning.

Together with other women the bride opened the door and windows.  
Symbolizing devotedness to this family, she put food on the dish of the dog.  
She checked crockery one by one.  
She dripped oil on the fire.  
It was the symbol of being happy.  
She took a baby with the hope of having grandchildren.  
All people ate pilaw.  
Only the bride did not extend her hand.  
People said that she did not eat pilaw.  
The bridegroom's uncle offered satin enough for one dress, so that the bride would eat pilaw. The bridegroom's aunt offered Kokand silk.  
- One who wants to offer, do it now, - said an old woman.  
Other people offered presents as far as possible and they would bring them during bride-calling ceremony.  
The last was said by the father-in-law:  
- This house with all things in it is yours!  
- There you are! - all people said.  
Only then the bride extended her hands to eat pilaw.  
The ceremony of opening her face was held.  
This job maybe done only by innocent children.  
That is why grandmothers called the bridegroom's brother of four-five years old.  
He came running. He pulled back the kerchief of his siter-in-law.  
The bride's face opened.

37

Guests left, hosts remained in the wedding house.  
The bridegroom and bride remained, too.  
Their parents had a new room built for them.

## II

Our grandmother is sitting next to our grandmother.

Tips of her gauze kerchief fluttered in the wind and rubbed our grandfather's face.

Our grandfather was delighted and became irritated.

He plucked his eyebrows and puffed his cheeks and lips.

The gauze kerchief was as white and soft as our grandmother's hair.

Summer morning breeze afforded pleasure.

Wind was cool, it was calm.

The smell of the earth came from the summer breeze.

- This year period of ripeness is good, grandmother. Plenty of fruits:

1

Qoplon's leg ailed.

Something stirred in his bones. His bones burnt, his legs ached.

Lying flat on his back Qoplon turned awry. He turned to his wife.

- It seems the air changes, grandma, - he said.

- How do you happen to know? - his wife asked.

Qoplon did not tell his leg.

- I know, - he said, - if bats do not fly out of their nests, the air worsens. Tonight bats did not fly.

The ache became complicated. The whole of his leg including ankles ailed.

Qoplon went for a walk and came back.

- As I said, grandma, - he said, - the Moon became full. It means it will rain, it will be pouring.

Yes, at midnight rain started. It bated basins that were turned upside-down and rain pattered against the windows.

Qoplon could not sleep. He went out to the terrace and turned on the light.

Rain pouring down from the gutter made puddle. Raindrops sang in the puddle.



A cat's eyes flashed in the corner of the yard. A frog jumped from weed.

Qoplou felt the smell of rain.

Rain stopped the next day afternoon.

The sun shined.

Oymomo took quilts out and hung them on a line in the yard. She opened the windows.

She laid a quilt on the shadow. She laid a table.

Qoplou lay down. He lay away. He moved his cap to his eyebrow. He closed his eyes. He heated himself in the sun.

Oymomo sewed in sunlight.

A hen ate grain in the yard. It walked with vigorous strides, it stepped slowly.

- Qurq-qurq-qurq! - it stepped in harmony with its sound:.

A lot of chickens followed the hen. The chickens were round. They looked like a lemon. They were yellow.

- Chiyov-chiyov-chiyov, - they revolved.

Yes, the chickens turned in a circle. As if they rotated.

- Chiyov-chiyov-chiyov, - they somersaulted.

All of a sudden a shadow appeared in the yard.

Qoplou did not see it as his eyes were closed.

Oymomo looked at it squinting. She did not know what that was.

A bird spread its wings above yard. Suddenly it flew down to the earth. It approached with open wings. It clawed a chicken. And again it flew back to the sky.

Only then Oymomo understood what happened. She sprang abruptly. She showed her fist and scolded:

- Shoo! Shoo! Rascal!

The bird flew higher.

The chicken in its claw chirped.

Having sprung to the sky the hen cackled, it strived to its own chicken.

The hen clucked repeatedly and flew to the roof. It aspired to its chirping chicken.

From the roof the hen flew to haystack. It strived for its chirping and receding chicken.

The hen flew to the pole from the haystack. However, it cannot reach the peak of the pole. The hen few back to the earth.

Extending its neck the hen looked at the sky. The chicken moved off slowly.

Only then the hen understood that it had lost its chicken.

Perplexedly the hen clucked encircling Oymomo, its hostess. They took my child, the hen said. It cackled with wail.

The hen asked help from Oymomo. They took my child, it said again. The hen clucked repeatedly.

Its child moved away. Its voice was hardly heard.

The hen cackled again and again and resigned itself to the destiny.

The hen asked other chickens to follow it. She led them to the hencoop. It was offended. It closed its eyes.

The hen lamented bitterly over its clawed chicken.

Oymomo followed the hen. She looked at the hen-house.

- Child is very sweet, - she said, - otherwise the hen would not lament over one chicken as she has more fifteen:

Qoplon reassuted sadly.

- God did not like the hen to be with this chicken, - he said.

He looked at where the hawk moved off. He prayed in his own way. It was unknown whether he thanked God for food or prayed for the chicken.

- God did not want this, - he said.

He was too sad. He lamented:

- What happened, what ails you? - asked Oymomo.

Qoplon stared at his wife and said with broken voice:

- I don't know, grandma, I don't know. I have something in my heart.

Something is creeping. It is creeping with its keen pawns. Before this happened only now and then. Now it happens day and night. It scratches my heart. I want to take it away but I can't:

Oymomo was sorry that she asked this. She could not breathe for a while. She swallowed.

Qoplon looked at his wife again. This looking meant:

- "What shall we do now, grandma?"

Oymomo looked at the tablecloth. She rubbed patterns of the tablecloth with her fingers.

There was silence harder than stone, more sorrowful than mourning!

The house with children was like a wedding house, the house without children was like a dungeon!

Oymomo looked at Qoplon secretly. She squinted. She looked sideways.

Her looking said like this:

"I do not know, grandpa, I do not know:"

Qoplon took his boots. He took his lash from the hook.

His shoulders raised up and down.

- U-u-uh! - he said.

He lashed his boots with the tip of the scourge.

He stepped slowly. He came downstairs.

A voice came out on the inside:

- U-u-uf!

It was his wife!

3

Qoplon went to work.

He came back home in the evening.

- Your father came and asked you go - his wife said.

Not dismounting from the horse he turned back to his father's house.

He saw his parents and their matchmaker there.

Qoplon heard what he had never heard from his parents.

- Until when you will live like this? Let her go and stop it! - waved his hand his father.

His mother closed her mouth with the edge of her kerchief. As if she was going to weep.