My relationship with my past is like, Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert
one fleeing for a lifetime without remembering what his crime was, while the other pursues him

COPPICE BLUE

FAAVIDEL

EPISODE 7
CHAPTER ONE: OBLIVION

Coppice Blue

Faavidel

Chapter One
Oblivion

Literature - Persian Fiction - Novel
Coppice Blue
By FAAVIDEL
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A special opportunity

We entertained ourselves with the audiobook as we continued on our way, and I floated in my memories. An hour passed, and we reached a village that had been sent to us on the map. Aban called the real estate agent, and we waited for someone from their side to come and show us the house. We wandered a bit in the village; a mix of old houses that had been clumsily and without identity renovated, and newly built concrete houses with half-finished block facades; most of them were small in size. I hoped the mentioned house wouldn't be one of those poorly designed ones. We walked in silence. "It's a messy village." Aban said.

"Uh-huh."

"All the houses are small and without yards!"

"Maybe what they want to show us is away from these."

"I hope so. We want a pristine place."

"Maybe..."

Her sentence remained unfinished because her phone rang, and the representative from the agency had arrived. We returned to the starting point of the village and realized that the house was one of those concrete block-faced ones we had passed by. A two-story house; each floor about 70 square meters with a yard of 20 or 30 square meters among other houses. It was so far from our expectations that we didn't even enter. The real estate agent said

hopelessly, "What kind of place do you like? Tell me, and I'll find something for you. We have fancier houses than this! Why did they even want me to show you this?"

It seemed we didn't understand each other's language. He probably saw two stylish women in front of him in the picture, searching for a luxurious house in a village with a Tehran license plate on their SUV! Who wanted to explain what the story was? Somehow, we got rid of him and left the village. This time Aban was behind the wheel. We were passing through one of the side roads toward the mountains, going past villages.

"Didn't you explain to Delaram what we were looking for?"

"I did! But I think there was a misunderstanding. I said we could renovate; she thought that would solve our problem."

"In a situation where everyone is building, finding what we want isn't easy. But I think from now on it would be better to see pictures of the houses before coming."

"Yeah, I agree. I say now that we've come this far, let's ask one or two more agencies."

"Okay, but I think we should go higher up. The further we get from civilization, the better."

We had to be careful not to fall into the traps of land dealers. It was enough to seem a little lost and unaware to find ourselves in one of the real estate agents' land sales tours.

That trip had nothing for us except the memory of the road. We saw two other places as well; completely unrelated to what we wanted. Finally, we stopped somewhere by the forest and had what we had brought for lunch as an afternoon snack. Due to COVID, we preferred not to go to restaurants and settled for our bread, cheese, and walnuts. Aban said, "I wish we could stay somewhere at night."

"Aside from the health risk, we didn't bring anything with us. I have nothing but a tent and mat in the back of the car. Plus, we both have work tomorrow."

"Yeah, right. I just through something out. My Tomorrow's class won't be canceled; it's the same one that didn't happen last week. Your husband also will be back by tonight and he'll miss you if you don't go!"

"Well, my husband has only sent one message to check in since he arrived this morning. Your dear husband calls 25 times a day; doesn't he miss you?"

With a playful tone, she said, "Don't bother us! We're beautiful! Let's immortalize the exciting moments of every new life."

"I don't know where you stole that line from, but enjoy it! Maybe next time we'll come better prepared and stay a night."

Most of the way back passed in silence, sleep, and the sound of the audiobook. Silence and sleep were the common chapters of all our journeys back home from this road. If I were behind the wheel, there would be no nausea, but in the passenger seat, I could only maintain my composure until we reached our destination by taking just a quarter of an anti-nausea pill. In my childhood memories, I saw myself and Alborz. Each of us leaned against one side or the other of the back seat, asleep; exhausted and worn out, hopeless about the end of the trip and the beginning of daily routines.

It was past eight o'clock. Aban had gotten out in front of her house, and I was close to mine when I received a message from Sam: "We're not done yet. I canceled tonight's flight and booked a ticket for tomorrow afternoon."

"Wasn't it just a visit? Why did it take so long?"

"Yeah, but we were supposed to meet one of the gentlemen. We couldn't manage it today."

How ridiculous! He had traveled all this way from Tehran for a prior appointment, and the gentlemen didn't have time to meet!

"Where are you staying?"

"They gave me the address of a hotel; I'm going there. Where are you? Did you arrive or are you still on the way?"

"I'm near home."

"Great! Keep an eye on the fortress tonight until I come to take over." I sent another thumbs-up in the air and a red heart, and my reply was several hearts and kisses, and that was it.

That night, I was left with my melancholic thoughts. The next night, when Sam arrived home around seven, he was so tired that he could only take a shower and get to bed. The following morning when he woke up, I was busy writing my rubbish novel in my study. After his breakfast, he came to my room, and we exchanged reports from the previous day. He always discussed the details of his work with me. He handed me his phone to show me pictures of the hotel whose walls they were supposed to hand over to him. Just then, he received a message on WhatsApp. A reminder popped up at the top of the screen; "Look what I got from you! Now change your profile picture!" The message was from an unknown number.

I handed him his phone back; "Someone messaged you."

He took the phone and looked at the screen. He traced his lower lip with his index and middle fingers and said, ". Friends are messing with me."

He opened an image and held it in front of my face; on the hotel lobby sofa, leaning against the backrest, he was peeking at the camera with a relaxed smile. Someone had taken a picture of him. It was a good photo; as always, he looked great. Sam was so charming that I always wished our child would resemble him

more than me. Although he always disagreed and saw my beauty more than his own; "Didn't you take a group photo?" I said.

"No, we forgot. This happened by chance."

My phone on the desk rang, and I went to answer it. It was a call from one of the online cultural magazines. They had a proposal for an Instagram live interview. During the time when the world was grappling with COVID, I had several live programs on Instagram. I had rejected some proposals and accepted others. This one seemed worthwhile to me as well. I set it for Friday night of that week and hung up. Sam was busy watching a clip on his phone; Italian folk music played over the visuals. The same music that was the opening theme of one of our childhood cartoons. How strange! Every moment of my current life connected to the past with a thin thread! I remembered the days when the first sparks of writing began to sprout within me. Again, those two wandering children came alive before me.

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Galoni and Franchi or Enrico and Antonio!

It was summer, and we were supposed to go to Europe for vacation; to visit my aunt in Nice and Alborz's uncle in London. We had been there before. We kids didn't see much difference between north of Iran and London and Nice; we loved them all. We enjoyed all of them because we were together, and our

parents were with us. The differences in these trips were more apparent to the adults, who spent their days in different environments. In my childhood, I don't remember much about those trips except for the colorful atmosphere and our happy moods, the different clothing of the mothers in a place called abroad, the beach of that sea which was different from our own, the beautiful cobblestones of its streets, the air had a different scent, the ice of our English language had been melting, and overall, what was captured in our souvenir photos. That autumn, I was supposed to start first grade of middle school, and Alborz was going to start high school. The day that comes to my mind was a few days before our trip. The souvenirs were arranged on the dining table, and my uncle had taken our suitcases and their own out from the basement, and we were happy. It was a strange day! In the evening, during the children's program broadcast, Uncle Amir had arrived half an hour earlier and was chatting with Aunt and Uncle in the gazebo. When he came, he was upset. He kissed me and Alborz and immediately went to the yard with Uncle and Aunt.

That day, we were watching the last episode of " The School Of Love: The Cuore Story "[1] anime television series. They had aired that series a few years ago, and it was being broadcast for the second time that year. We were still captivated by it. Both times, I cried in many parts with mixed feelings, and Alborz laughed at me. I remember a moment in the final episode when

1. " The School Of Love: The Cuore Story" was a 26-part Japanese animated series created in 1981 based on the novel "Cuore" by the renowned Italian writer Edmondo De Amicis. The opening theme music of the series was originally an Italian folk piece that a street musician played in one scene of the show, and it was heard as the opening music in the Persian-dubbed version.

the family went on a picnic, and the kids were asking each other what they wanted to be in the future. Enrico wanted to be a writer; DeRossi wanted to be a doctor like his father, Galoni and Francis wanted to be engineers, and Antonio wanted to be an artist. When it was decided that Enrico and his family would go to Rome for a few years and wouldn't be at school with his current friends anymore, my tears flowed again, and I became the subject of Alborz's laughter once more. He had grabbed a handful of popcorn from the bowl on the table and was tossing it one by one into his mouth. He had placed his finger between the pages of his book to keep it from closing. He looked at me like it was a comedy film and laughed. He was reading "White Fang," but for the past 15 seconds, instead of reading his book or watching TV, he was focused solely on me so that he wouldn't miss a moment of the ridiculous subject before him. The end credits of the series came up. I watched him with irritation; unlike his classmates, he had no acne on his face. I thought he looked better than his peers. He had grown much taller than me; As he was growing, he was getting taller than my uncle to. His fair skin had darkened under the summer sun, and with his bright hazel almond-shaped eyes, not too big pointed nose, bony jawline, and his messy brown hair, he had transformed into a new being. During the summer, he hadn't been taken to the barber even once; my uncle and aunt disagreed with cutting his hair and only kept it short out of respect for school rules. Alborz's sense of humor had come from my uncle, while his kindness and affection came from my aunt. However, his face resembled my aunt more. According to my uncle, the lightness of his hair and eyes was a genetic leap that resembled neither of them. Alborz mischievously said, "I should fetch the camera. It would be a shame not to capture this scene!"

I narrowed my eyes at him; “Instead of laughing, go practice learning the theme song of this cartoon so you can play it for me.”

He casually replied, “Piece of a cake! I’ll find it in no time.”

I pulled the bowl of popcorn towards me; “Give me those! Go sit behind your instrument and let’s see what you can do!” He closed the book and headed for his instrument; “Okay, I’m going. Just to keep up with the rules of the game, tell me again what you want to be when you grow up?”

I knew what he meant. The last time that cartoon's final episode aired, we had asked each other about our future professions. He wanted to see if my opinion remained the same or not. “I still stand by what I said; either I’ll become an artist like Antonio or a writer like Enrico.” I answered.

"Wow! Let's close the door so Aunt and Uncle don't hear. So who is going to be a doctor here?"

He was teasing me because he knew very well that despite all my parents' insistence, I had no interest in medicine. Although I never dared to tell them. According to them, apart from some engineering and medical fields, other fields of study were useless. "Any fool and illiterate could read them." Their plan was for me to complete a general medical course and then go to France for specialization with Aunt Bita's support. I couldn't see myself in that mold at all.

I connected the Atari console to the television and turned it on. I put the Super Mario game on the device and sat back on the couch facing the TV; "The one who's going to be a doctor isn't me. Until then, I'll prepare myself to finally tell them one day."

"I hope I'm not home that day."

"Ridiculous! So what do you want to be? Still a composer?"

He ran his hand over the piano keys and made a loud sound, frowning slightly. His gaze moved between me and the keys; "I

still love composing and playing, but honestly, I really like building houses. Something like what Dad and Uncle Mehrdad do. Maybe I'll study math. I think I'll be on Galoni and Francis's team."

"What do Aunt and Uncle think?"

"They say the decision is yours. Whatever you want!"

I looked at his drawings on the table; those days they mostly consisted of geometric volumes and urban spaces and astonishing houses with multi-point perspectives. He knew so well what he wanted. Now I understand that the reason was the freedom of action and self-esteem he had as a result of his relationship with his family. I never envied him and always admired him. Uncle and Aunt deeply understood him and were his wings to fly. They lived so close to us, and despite being friendly with my parents, they behaved very differently, and their parenting style was worlds apart from ours. Their presence reassured me. They weren't from another planet; they were a different example from us that kept love and hope alive in me so that I could have the possibility of a different perception of myself. My parents believed that too much freedom wouldn't lead children anywhere; although it was unclear what limit they meant by that. Uncle and Aunt believed that this level of freedom was a right for children; a right without which choices would undoubtedly become more difficult. Up to that point, they were successful. Alborz was playing with the keys. As if reading my thoughts, he lowered his voice, which was no longer childish, slightly deeper, and in a theatrical tone said, "You've chosen a different world! If you want to survive in this new world, you have to be stronger, faster, more adaptable, and smarter than the others."

My gaze fell admiringly on the cover of "White Fang";[1] "Did you steal that from Jack London?"

He became himself again; "Yeah. I fell in love with it. Maybe I'll read it again."

"No way! You've dragged this out for so long! I've been waiting for you to finish it for four days. Put the second round after I've read it."

He said mischievously, "Are you sure you want to read it? Isn't it too early for you?"

I shot him a glare, and he, pleased that he had annoyed me, got back to it. He was teasing me because I had been keeping pace with him in the realm of literature for a long time; sometimes even ahead of him. For a while, he played the notes one by one and in a disorganized manner. Occasionally, he hit a wrong note, and finally... in less than five or six minutes, he found it and played the music. Damn it! With that same delicacy! He had been playing professionally for two or three years now, and there were no more simple, childish melodies. We all loved Alborz's playing. On weekends, sometimes Mom would call Alborz from downstairs to play for us; he never refused. He always played with enthusiasm! Now he was sitting across from me, silently telling me with his gaze at the ceiling, "See? It wasn't hard, and I was able to find it. Look how well I'm doing!" He nodded his head in rhythm with the melody like a metronome and played. The melody was short and repeated continuously. He played it without interruption for maybe twelve rounds. In the middle of it, he became crazy again and started playing another piece. With the pauses and rhythms, their notes seemed similar. A little of this, a little of that; he mixed them together.

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1. "White Fang" by Jack London; John Griffith London, the American socialist writer.

He knew I liked where the calm pieces suddenly went wild. He also loved to play like this; all his mischief came out. In the end, what he played was a constructed combination of the theme music from " The School Of Love: The Cuore Story " and Brahms's Hungarian Dance No. 5.[1] He moved forward slowly and took a breath. Then, in a moment of surprise, he would create excitement and joy with a change in melody and rhythm. I could never get enough of hearing it; my soul danced.

"I'll keep playing until you say stop!"

"I won't say it. It's amazing! Keep playing until your hands flow."

"Now that you're listening to the song, I wish you'd cry a little more!"

I threw a cushion at him, and the music stopped. Within seconds, the pillow was thrown back at me, and the bowl of popcorn fell to the ground. Aunt and Uncle returned from the yard.

"Oh! So where is Uncle Amir?"

Uncle Farhad let out a deep breath; "He left, sweetheart! He had work. He said he would come back again." I looked back and saw Auntie with puffy eyes. My heart sank; "Auntie! What happened?"

"Why are you upset, mom?"

Aunt silently walked towards Alborz. She ran a hand over his head and neck; "Nothing, my dear! One of our old friends has passed away."

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1. Hungarian Dance No. 5 by Johannes Brahms is the most famous piece from the 21-part collection of Hungarian Dances by Brahms. It is an energetic, dynamic, and joyful work written in B-flat major and 2/4 time, which contributes to the rhythmic drive of the piece.

From my childhood until those days, we had heard several times about the deaths of our parents' friends, some of whom were in the same college. Although they tried to hide the details of their deaths from us, we kids knew that most of them were protesters after the revolution and met this fate due to political issues, and we were not allowed to talk about them because it was dangerous; both at home and at school. It had been a while since we had heard news like that, but that day I suspected the news was related to one of those friends. I went to Aunt and wrapped my arms around her waist. I reached up to her chest and still fit in her embrace. She kissed my hair and continued; "That's life! Sometimes it happens like this." She said this and quietly walked towards the room. The shaking of her shoulders could be seen from behind; she was crying again.

"Did we know him too?"

"No, my daughter!" Uncle answered and then turned to Alborz; "What do you think about going to the park together today?"

Alborz replied; "I agree!"

With each of his hands, he pulled both Alborz and me into his embrace and kissed our heads; first Alborz and then me. It was his habit. Whenever he wanted to comfort us, he would kiss both of us like this; "Good job, dear! Just promise you'll stay in your usual spot. Mom and I will come find you in an hour or two."

We picked up the skates. We put the volleyball in my backpack and the water bottle in Alborz's bag, and we set off. When we reached the yard, Alborz turned back to grab his camera. He always had to keep it in his bag so that no memory would slip away from him. He quickly returned with the camera and two ice creams and we headed to the park together. That summer, they had just removed the fence around the park and were reconstructing the area by the street. For the first time that

summer, we were allowed to go to the park together; on the condition that we wouldn’t go to the heart of the park and would stay in our usual meeting place, which was relatively busy. As we headed towards the main path, a young girl and boy who seemed older than us were surrounded by three security officers around the park. One of them said that the boy's shirt sleeve was too short and his ankle boots were inappropriate. The other pointed out the girl's bare feet and her red nail polish. My ice cream was finished, and I nervously bit the stick. Unconsciously, I distanced myself from Alborz, but he grabbed my hand and calmly said; "Come this way!" We went towards a narrow path covered with trees. He said, "Why are you scared? They have nothing to do with us. We are still kids."

I replied, "I don't know."

He continued; "Besides, home is close by. If they take us, we'll quickly call Dad and he'll come get us."

"Yeah. But I'm still scared!"

He laughed. He reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a crumpled, used handkerchief. He held it out to me in his palm. He changed his voice again and said very seriously, "Here, take it! If you always keep this with you, you'll never be afraid again!"

I laughed and swatted his hand away, saying, "You crazy! Keep it with you so you can always stay brave like now!"

An hour later, Aunt and Uncle also arrived. We played volleyball a bit with Uncle, but Auntie Ella didn’t join us that day; she sat on a hill where there was a metal horse sculpture and watched us.

13

Mom, My Best Encourager

A few days later, I injected the first subcutaneous dose into my abdomen; one of those expensive medications in a sealed syringe with a special mechanism! Honestly, the first time I faced it, I was a bit scared. The needle was much thicker than usual, the diameter of a headphone wire, and it forced its way into my belly. I felt like once it exited my abdomen, everything inside me would spill out like in a Tom and Jerry cartoon. Anyway, I did it and went to welcome the last opportunity to become a mother. This was the fifth time I was preparing for the embryo implantation process. The result of the puncture procedure from a year and a half ago had produced four frozen embryos. But all of them had resulted in a negative pregnancy test after going through the implantation stages, which took two and a half months.

That night was the time for my live interview with the magazine. Sam had started painting the restaurant wall the day before; when he found out I had a program at 10 PM, he preferred to stay with his assistants and work a little longer. The conversation, as always, was about books, with readers' questions and my answers to them. At the suggestion of one of

the book bloggers, it was decided that soon one of my books would be read along with his followers. Honestly, I was happy; it was a good event. Instagram seemed to be a superficial visual medium, but sometimes suitable cultural events occurred there. My feeling of happiness didn't last long; because at the end of the conversation, I was surprised by a question I hadn't thought about for a long time: "Ms. Padidar! Do you remember what made you interested in writing?"

A cliché question with my cliché answer; with a forced smile, just like Mom's usual smiles for strangers, I said, "It wasn't anything strange. Like many others, I read books since childhood and that got me thinking. I always had stories to tell, and with good encouragements along the way, I gradually moved in this direction."

Before they could ask who my encourager was, I ended the conversation and took off running. I spun such nonsense; the most ridiculous sentences I could come up with! Yes, I had encouragement. First was Alborz, who taught me how to make writing a part of my life. But what pushed me forward was my own stubbornness and capability; although I couldn't tell the main story. Because Mom was that special terrifying encourager who brought me here. Memories kept coming one after another.

*

In the summers before I started school, after receiving Alborz's results card, we would sometimes go to Enghelab Square with my uncle and aunt, where they would buy us books. During those days, my aunt or Alborz would read my books to me. Mom would also try on weekends, but it felt like she was reading a scientific article to me; it was dry and emotionless. Even when she read a funny story, a sense of dread would come over me. But I really loved my aunt's reading; it was sweet and had her unique expressions. When I grew older, sometimes I

wished Alborz would read his own books to me, and he did. I think this is what made my vocabulary and sentence structure always exceed those of my peers. Before starting school, I could recognize some words by their shapes. After finishing first grade, I began reading some books that Alborz had previously read to me, matching them with what I had in mind about them. I loved discovering imaginary worlds. By the time I reached third grade, my world of books and Alborz's wasn't that different. Aside from our own books, my uncle and aunt's library was a treasure trove of classic books, and we were allowed to read some of them; reading most of them was too early for us.

Part of the fun for Alborz and me was discussing books. We would sit for hours exploring stories and characters together. We had read "Gulliver's Travels," "Great Expectations," "Little Women," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "Les Misérables," "David Copperfield," and many other familiar books. Non-school books were actually our rewards during the summer. During the school year, we would sometimes borrow books from the library, but we didn't have a budget for buying books. My uncle said that those were enough and that buying more was excessive.

For two or three years, alongside my daily notes, I occasionally wrote fictional stories. My skill in writing essays and the flair I added to narratives in performances had made me stand out in school and led to my being entrusted with the school's wall newspaper. I collected materials for it with all my heart. For the science section, I would sometimes borrow several scientific books from the library and write summaries of them in the magazine. I was also good at summarizing. In the book review section, I always had things to attract my schoolmates.

The illustration ideas were also my own. I loved gathering information. The wall magazine for the first year of middle school always garnered the attention and encouragement of teachers. The hallway on the ground floor leading to the principal's office and the teachers was filled with magazines each month, most of which were written by me. By that time, the back of my library books was filled with daily notes and things I had written. Mom was completely unaware of that part of my life. To her, painting and writing were still among the most pointless activities I could engage in. Unfortunately, those two things that I knew better than anything else were the least valuable to my family. But it didn't matter to me, and I studied my lessons in a way that would keep them satisfied.

On a Thursday during the last days of the first year of middle school, I saw the school principal during the last hour; "Hey Padidar! Dr. came to school today! Your mom! Did you see her?"

I froze; "No! Why did she come?"

With a cold smile, he said, "She met with the teachers. We also showed her the magazines."

"Why did you show her?"

He said proudly, "She had to see that the first graders' magazine is unbeatable!"

I didn't hear the rest of his words. He had put all his effort into impressing my mom, proudly praising me. Like my classmates, he saw me as the hero of the imaginary stories on the school's walls, but... but for me! It was my undoing! I knew my mom maintained her appearance with a sweet and calm smile in front of others and pretended to be happy about my achievements. But the reality was different. I didn't want her to know about my actions at school at all. Why did she come unannounced? When I got home in the afternoon, my mom was

busy talking on the phone. From her way of speaking and her delay in responding, I could guess she was talking to Aunt Bita in Nice. Aunt Bita had gone to France years ago to continue her studies and had married a French-Italian classmate, a maxillofacial surgeon, and had become an eye specialist. My mom sometimes consulted her about her patients. I greeted her. She nodded in response, and I went to my room. I didn't know what lay ahead and what her reaction would be to what she had seen at school! I froze at the door! My books were scattered on the bed, and there was no paper or notebooks behind them. I stood there motionless; I felt like a pedestrian passing through an alley whose white shirt had been splattered with mud from a passing car's tire falling into a puddle. I didn't know what the right reaction was; should I confront her or not? Maybe she would come to me and check on me. Finally, I heard her voice from behind; it was dry and humiliating. It felt like a winter freeze!

"I don't spend all this money to put you in a private school so you can sit and write bullshit stories!"

I lowered my head and didn't turn back to her. With sadness, I said, "Well, if I study well, what's wrong with that?"

Her voice rose; "The problem is that you waste your time on useless things, and your life is being wasted."

" Is Alborz's life being wasted now? Then why do you like his piano playing?"

His voice rose; "You're arguing with me again! I don't care about that. Maybe he doesn't want to be anything!"

My eyes widened in astonishment! How easily she insulted and questioned everyone. I wished I could respond like she did, but I didn't have the courage; she still had power over me. Despondently, I said, "What have you done with my papers then?"

She replied softly, "I framed them so we can hang them on the wall! Obviously! I threw them in the trash." She was walking towards the hallway when she continued, "It's better if you don't go looking for them! I soaked all of them so they would fit more easily in the trash can!"

I couldn't believe it. Maybe she was lying; she said that to make me forget about them. Perhaps she had put them somewhere out of my reach. I went to the kitchen and lifted the lid of the trash can, and in disbelief, I saw a bag full of torn and wet papers with my handwriting on them. The ink had spread in the dampness of the paper. I wished I had been beaten up instead of seeing this scene! My legs went weak. Out of anger and helplessness, I sat on the ground cross-legged. Mom was behind me again; she pushed me aside to close the trash can.

"Get up and stop being so spoiled! Just think that a thief came and took them. You'll thank me for this later!"

That day, she hadn't gotten so angry as to raise her hand against me, but I felt as if I had been severely beaten; my soul ached! Tears streamed down my face. How could she speak about my writings as if they were mere trash? They had emerged from within me. My lunch was on the table, but I felt full. I sat motionless behind the table, staring at the plate of rice and beans in front of me. My meal that day was the torn papers and pulp in the trash can. I couldn't catch my breath; my heart longed for freedom! I headed toward the door. Mom shouted from the end of the hall, "Where are you going? Whenever I tell you something, you get upset and go upstairs!"

"I'm not going upstairs. I'm going to the yard!"

I didn't wait for her reply. I went to the yard; the spring rain was pouring heavily. The doors and windows of both houses were open, and the sounds of conversations could be easily heard. Dad and Uncle were standing on the entrance steps with

their glasses of wine and a cigarette in hand, engaged in political discussions. Then they went to our house to play backgammon like they did on all their days together. "It rarely happened that both were home and wasted their time with a short afternoon nap. The stray notes in the air of the house, amidst the sound of the rain, were echoing the piece of Mozart's fantasy[1] from the moments when Mom had come into my room. This meant that Alborz had just arrived home too and, as always, was resting at the piano while waiting for lunch to be prepared. He played in such a way as if he were trying not to hear anything else.

I could no longer fit behind the gazebo; the boxwoods and trees and I had all grown so much that we crowded each other's space. For several years, after fights with Mom, my place had been behind the gazebo. My heart was broken, and everything I had was gone and destroyed; my stories, my diary from when I was eight until that day, and the writings I had collected for future issues of the newspaper. My breaths had become shallow. I cried so hard as if I had lost a dear one; I wept for my departed ones. The sound of the piano had given way to one of Uncle's favorite songs from rainy days, from his romantic moments with Auntie during their college years;

" Listen to the pouring rain
Listen to it pour,
And with every drop of rain
You know I love you more

Let it rain all night long
Let my love for you grow strong,

1. Fantasia No. 3 in D Minor. This piece was published in an incomplete form after Mozart's death, and its manuscript was never found.

As long as we're together
Who cares about the weather?..." [1]

He sang, and I cried for my beloved whose remains my mother had stuffed in the trash. I didn't know how long I had been sitting there mourning my writings. Some time passed, and as always, I heard his footsteps approaching. How did he know I was there? I didn't want him to see me like that. In the gazebo, vulnerable and fragile, I felt exposed. There was nowhere to hide or escape. I didn't even have the patience for myself. He came closer; he paused by the table. He picked up a pastel and a piece of paper from the table and sat down a little further away on the ground. He never asked what was wrong when he found me there; he knew I would tell him soon enough. He always seemed upset to see me like that but tried not to show any reaction. Recently, he seemed a bit wiser, and his behavior had become more mature and introspective. I liked his calmness, which reminded me of my aunt. Those days, there was no trace left of the two carefree children in either of us. His voice had changed from the awkwardness of adolescence, and his figure had taken on a manly shape despite its delicacy. I too noticed many transformations within myself day by day. For a while, it seemed as if no one else was there; he began doodling on the paper, lost in his thoughts. After a moment, without lifting his head, he said with a frown between his eyebrows, "I read somewhere recently that there are 128 species of maple trees in the world. Did you know that?"

I sniffed and exhaled, saying, "No."

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2. Rain, Jose Feliciano,1969

"I'm sure that's not an accurate statistic. Because they must have overlooked at least one very rare species!"

I said through my nose, "Are you talking about the maple tree in our yard?"

A mischievous glint appeared in his eyes; "No, a rare species that every time she gets sad, she splatters our gazebo with its tears and snot!"

He was talking about me and he was still trying to make me laugh. Instead of laughing, I said, " Today, Mom said, Alborz, with this situation, won't get anywhere and will become nothing!"

He let out a loud snicker and continued drawing; "Well, that's not new. Aunt has always thought I wouldn't become anything. Are you crying over this?"

I took a breath; it felt like I was on the verge of another wave of tears. I sobbed and said, "She threw all my notes away. Everything I had; she soaked and destroyed them all." He stopped drawing. He remained still for a moment. Then he muttered something under his breath and threw the pastel in his hand forcefully at an indeterminate spot in front of him. His jaw was clenched, and he was looking at me as if he were angry with me. It was as if someone had thrown away his writings. Then I told him about the things that had happened that day. He listened in silence. After a while, he had calmed down again and resumed drawing; a glassy modern house similar to those seen in foreign architecture magazines. His uncle had brought him those magazines on his last trip to Iran after realizing he was interested in architecture. He finished the house and began his sentence: "My mom says if someone loves something, they make it a part of their life forever. She says what's important is being able to maintain that relationship throughout life and being aware of what pains you're willing to endure to have it." I turned the

drawing toward myself. He continued, "When I was a kid and sometimes got tired of piano practice and heard this from my mom, I didn't understand what she meant. Now I realize that even if I'm never going to achieve anything with playing, despite all the difficulties it brings, at least it's always going to be a part of my life that makes me feel good. Like me for my mom and dad; like you for us. Like us for each other."

Perhaps for the thousandth time, I asked myself why my aunt wasn't my mother? I wished I were their child too. Like Alborz, who spoke so nobly at 15 and knew what he wanted from life. In any case, with what he said, I became certain of what I would do.

From my uncle's house, another piece of music was playing. This piece always brought me peace, and that day it seemed to target the tower of my emotions:

" Tomorrow's rain will wash the stains away
But something in our minds will always stay
Perhaps this final act was meant
To clinch a lifetime's argument
That nothing comes from violence and nothing ever could
For all those born beneath an angry star
Least we forget how fragile we are
On and on the rain will fall
Like tears from a star
Like tears from a star
On and on the rain will say
How fragile we are
How fragile we are"[1]

We stayed in silence for a long time, listening. Then, without thinking, I said, "I won't give up. I want to believe today’s event

1. Fragile, sting 1988

was a nightmare, and there was nothing behind the books in the library for Mom to find. It feels like... I wanted to start today. But this time, I'll put them somewhere she can't reach."

"Bring them and put them in my library! There's enough space for both of us there. I'll clear a shelf for you. But woe to the day when Aunt comes into my room with a search warrant and sees that scene. Oh boy! Her face will be priceless!" He laughed, and his eyes fell on the drawing in front of me, the one I had received from him unfinished moments ago. "Wow! What have you done to it! This is amazing! You're incredible!"

His glass house, now at the center of the picture, was submerged in a forest; covered with cypress trees and perhaps towering maples in a haze of green and blue nature. All of this was displayed in the pupil of an eye, appearing convex and slightly distorted. Alborz said with his crooked smile, "I love that you're loyal to my favorite green!"

I replied, "Blue!"

Mom's voice came from the kitchen window calling my name. She was worried about my unfinished homework!

"Oh no! Hurry up! I'll come out after you so she doesn't see me here."

I knew he was telling Aunt about Mom's latest story, and Aunt would, as always, be upset with Mom. I was her daughter too, but she couldn't change Mom's decisions for me.

From that day, from that incident, words seriously became my refuge; my secret for survival and well-being. Every disappointment that Mom created for me in life, like another loss, another separation, or another bankruptcy, would knock me down, and I would get back up again and again; striving for what I wanted while she did not. I think that event has profoundly influenced who I have become today. Mom not only didn't think

of me, but she also didn't think of herself; of what she truly wanted. She had become a doctor because it was expected of her. She followed her father's path just like Dad did. She had never pursued her interests to enjoy the results and wish for them for others as well. My growth alongside my uncle, aunt, and Alborz reminded me that I could sometimes be another person; someone closer to myself and beyond what my family had chosen for me. It reminded me that I could give life a different meaning. Living with those three, unlike living on the first floor of that same house, was not difficult or painful.

To be continued…

FAAVIDEL, a multidisciplinary artist, has studied graphic design
and has worked in the fields of interior design management, architecture
and furniture and accessory design
Her collection of artworks includes both physical and digital paintings
and illustrations, accompanied by music she has composed
These works are showcased in short videos on digital art platforms
.each telling a brief story
To date, her works have been exhibited and sold in New York
Vancouver, Beijing, Istanbul, and Dubai
Previously, her book "The Lake Monster, Chopin, Barbequed Eggplant" was
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