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Table of contents

Poetry

Aleksandr Zolotov-Seifullin	8
Andrei Arevich Sviridenko	17
Chikin Mikhail Alexandrovich	20
Ershov Vitalii Ivanovich	24
Fokina Olga Viktorovna.....	30
Gubin Pavel Alexandrovich	32
Irene Yavchunovsky	40
Ivleev Nikolay Alexandrovich	43
Safulin Maksim Sergeevich	47
Tatiana Kalashnikova.....	49

Prose

Antsiferova Galina Konstantinovna.....	54
Dyadchenko Igor Vyacheslavovich.....	64
Efanova Maria Vladimirovna.....	71
Khabarova Yulia.....	75
Lutsenko Andrei Aleksandrovich.....	78
Lyudmila Vladimirovna Johansson.....	82
Oleg Stellman.....	90
Ramiz Abbasli.....	93
Valerii (Val) Shilin	100
Volkov Gleb Dmitrievich.....	105

Ramiz Abbasli



Famous writer, translator of fiction Ramiz Abbasli originally hail from Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He graduated from Baku University. He writes in Azerbaijani and Russian. The short story holds a special place in his work. Continuing the traditions of the classics of world literature, R. Abbasli achieved significant success in this most difficult genre of prose.

Of special note is the structure of these stories; in this respect, the writer seeks to achieve what no one before him has been able to achieve, namely, the ideal form of verbal art. According to Russian critics, R. Abbasli's stories are modern, unique and truly majestic in their attention to detail, depth of feelings and unusual plot. This is a new prose, a new view of the world.

SONG OF THE BLIND MAN

(short novel)

Like many children in Karabakh, I liked to sing in my childhood too. In my opinion, I sang well as I was invited to sing at a concert of an amateur band. I, myself, liked to sing in open air, mostly when I was with my peers grazing sheep and cows in the river valley or on foothill pastures. At the sunset we were returning



from the pastures. In the lower reaches of the valley, not far from the river, there was a kyariz – a source of clean water, which is the same as a spring. Cows and sheep began to drink water from the river. And we drank water from the kyariz, washed our faces, then followed the herd, which was already heading towards the village. The cows were walking at the front of our group, proudly displaying their long horns, behind them were goats and sheep. After crossing the river, the whole procession came on a straight road. That's when the boys and girls asked me to sing. And I wanted to sing too; everything was so beautiful and romantic that I just can't help but sing. But I could not start at once, as I didn't know what to sign. And my comrades' patience was wearing thin, they began to ask more insistently: "Please, please! You can do that. Come on ..." I started singing and felt that I was singing well, much better than I did at a concert in a club.

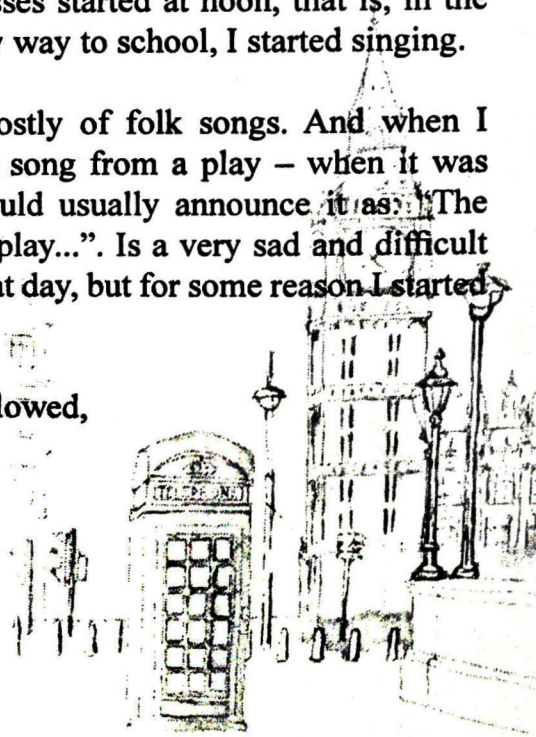
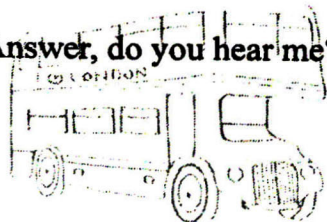
Once I started singing when I was going to school. It was a rare occasion; I never sang on the way to school. At that time, I was in the sixth grade and our classes started at noon, that is, in the second shift. So at noon, on my way to school, I started singing.

My repertoire consisted mostly of folk songs. And when I was going to school, I sang a song from a play – when it was announced, the announcer would usually announce it as: "The song of a blind man from the play...". Is a very sad and difficult song. I wasn't in a sad mood that day, but for some reason I started singing this particular song:

The cup of patience is overflowed,

Where are you – justice?

Answer, do you hear me?...





Singing, I continued on my way. I passed a house. This house belonged to the poorest man in our village. The people there lived very poorly: they had no cows, no sheep, no goats. I don't think they even had chickens. And they certainly didn't keep dogs. Their land — the land plot surrounding their home — was never plowed, there was no vegetable garden and no trees grew there. A single mulberry tree, looking old and stunted like its owner, grew in the front of beggar's drab house. Everywhere you looked, there was a terrible poverty. As I passed this house, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that the second son of a poor man, a young man, who was about twenty years old, was standing near the gate of an empty yard and listening to my song.

I have already reached another house — poor man neighbor's one. Meanwhile, the song was almost finished; this part of it — the ending — was very difficult to perform. But I successfully coped with this task. Having finished my song, I breathed a sigh of relief and wanted to speed up my step so as not to be late for the first lesson. Suddenly I heard a sound from behind. When I turned around, I saw that this young man had come out into the street and was looking in my direction. As soon as I turned around, he immediately said: "Gurban olum, gardash! Sing this song again. Please, please, I beg you!"

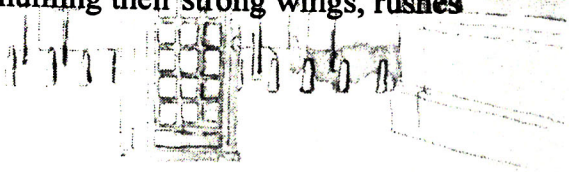
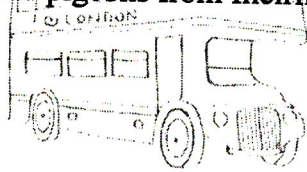
I didn't think twice, I began to sing, repeating exactly the same song. I did it better the second time around. When I finished my performance, I turned and looked back. At a distance of about a hundred meters, with his head lowered, the young man stood as if he was not a living person, but a statue. I quickly turned away and hurried to school.

I didn't think much of it at the time. There was something special about young man's request. Yes, sometimes I was asked to



sing, but they didn't ask like this. Besides, it was usually people, who knew me, who asked. I didn't know the man. We lived in different, remote places: I was from the upper right part of the village – in Chaikent, and he lived in the lower left part. He was older than me and I never talked to him. I just knew whose son he was and what his name was. And I don't think he even knew my name and suddenly he asked me.

Later, decades later, when the memory of this event resurfaced, I tried to find out something for myself. At that time, there was no TV in remote villages. Radio was already available, but few people had that luxury. Of course, this poor family didn't have a radio either. And some song people could hear either at wedding celebrations or on the radio. “The song of a blind man” is sad and unrhythmic, such songs won't be sung at weddings. So it turns out that the son of a poor man heard this song for the first time from me. This song is the voice of the soul of a person offended by fate: a blind man. But does a very poor person do better than a blind man? He hasn't a rag to his back, he is as lonely and as miserable as a blind man. No person needs a poor man as neighbor, a poor relative is a stranger in a family, all relatives avoid him like the plague. But it's the world, it treats such people very cruelly. That what blind man's song is about: a blind, abandoned, lonely, unhappy person rejects this cruel world, considers it unfair. And that's the song that I was singing. And poor man's son heard this song and he recognized the voice of his soul in this song! Oh, that's it, it turns out that there is a song, in which someone sings about his feelings and thoughts! The young man was shocked. He jumped and ran to the gate; he wanted to know, who was singing. And here he is, some boy is singing on his way to school. I wonder, who it is? Who cares, who he is? The main thing is that he sings well. Well done! His clear voice flies over the village like a flock of wild pigeons from Incirlik, shuffling their strong wings, rushes





to the clouds, even further — to the stars... My God, how he sings and how accurately he conveys what poor young man's heart has been ached for all his life:

The cup of patience is overflowed,

Where are you – justice?

Answer, do you hear me?...

When the occupation began, not all the residents of our village had time to leave their homes. Mostly elderly people remained. They could not believe in this horror, many people said, and often with obvious irony, asking: "How is that? What for? Where do I go, if I can barely walk? No, no, thank you! I won't be able to survive even for half a day in another place, especially in some carriages or tents. I'll stay here. Killed? What's for? I did nothing wrong to anyone..." Artillery shells flew over their heads and next to them, accurately hitting the target, destroying the most prominent buildings: the school, the mosque, the administrative center of a former collective farm, two-story houses of wealthy people... The situation was heating up. And naive people – among them was the son of a poor man, who was no longer young – they all stalled, delaying their departure. And suddenly... There was nowhere to run, there was no way to escape. The village was occupied. Everything that could be destroyed was destroyed, everything that could be burned was burned. People... Nothing is known about the people, who remained there, they are considered missing.

But a person is not a needle, how they can all be "missing"? When the village was occupied there were people there. They were either killed or captured. However, there is another theory: they were not killed, they were not taken prisoner either; they were



not touched for the simple reason that they would not live long in that devastation and would soon starve to death themselves. That's what probably happened.

The poor man's son also remained in the occupied village. But unlike other hostages, he was used to hardships and difficulties from childhood. Generally, his lifestyle did not change. He had yet another advantage – his house was still intact. You can understand the logic of occupiers: why destroy a beggar's hut? Why burn a plot of land, if nothing grows there? – So the poor man's entire estate, which he inherited from his father, remained intact. And he continued to live as usual. Probably will live a long time. I can even imagine what he does: from morning till night he stands on the street – the one that led to the school – near the gate, where I last saw him, with his head down, listening to his favorite song – “The song of the blind man”. The school itself is no longer there: it was leveled to the ground. But the road remains even if it is so overgrown with grass that it is hard to believe that this long strip was once a road. A boy, who liked to sing, went to school using this road. He sang “The song of the blind man” especially well. The boy is no longer there: he grew up and left the village long ago, even long before the occupation. But the song that he sang only twice remained. His clear rising and falling voice sounds relentlessly and ceaselessly, circling over the ruins of the village like a flock of wild pigeons in disconsolate search for the destroyed nest.

The whole village is destroyed. The cemetery and mosque were also destroyed. Once a flourishing and beautiful village was turned into a huge cemetery. Demons and devils have settled in the river valley. It's haunted at night. The deathly silence descended and covered the whole valley. But sometimes you can hear a hideous sound – demons and devils talking about something. This sound

