

TINA MARTELLI

**WITHOUT AN ANAESTHETICS
APPLICATION**

*A Bulgarian woman tells her life story about her way of
life at the time of the Communist regime in Bulgaria*

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The key to immortality is to live your way of life so that to remember your life!

PROLOGUE

I have hardly remembered much about my grandmother since my childhood . She died when I was 7 years old , but I did not feel very mournful . I rarely met her, even though we shared a courtyard. .

I do not remember her touching me for good or bad , as the saying goes. She has never given me even a single candy. To eat at her house could be out of the question . I never saw what they ate with my grandfather, who was also a freak. He did communicate with almost nobody and spoke with an accent , which was not familiar to me. I have never heard anyone speak like him. Some of the words he uttered were shorter than they really were, or vice versa. Perhaps therefore he spoke little. He was tall and slender. He always washed outside every morning naked to the waist and he always wore clean clothes. .

Unlike my grandmother, he kept himself always busy. He was that kind of man who could do many things. From a shoe-mold that he kept in the shed , he could make shoes ;he riveted a leaky copper bowl ; he could make a lot of items out of wood. He engrafted trees ,he had knowledge of many things. He was interested in innovations ,he read a lot of newspapers and magazines,for which he was subscribed . I stood near him – without intruding or getting in his way - and I watched him .

He told me that no matter what you do, things should be done properly, to be good, regardless of how long it will take you . And I have always tried to observe this rule .

My grandfather was interested in politics. He was admitted in the Communist party, but I do not know if he really shared their ideas.

He said he was born in the” Shopluka “the territory of the Shops around the capital of Bulgaria - Sofia, in ways of speaking , dressing, behaviour - he did not look like a peasant..

He was undoubtedly a foreigner, as my father would say. Or coming as a stranger, he has unobtrusively enrolled himself in the Communist party. There was a kind of a secret enshrouding him ! He was not stupid at all. I was too young to know this, but it was obvious that he had lived in an environment much better than ours at this time. He had built a bathroom and a toilet - not with squatting, but one on which you could sit under the pretext that his legs ached.

He argued only when a friend visited him - let’s call it so - who was stricken with polio. He moved slowly, and his pronunciation was unclear and the constant movement of his head hindered it. Hardly could a disabled one argue about politics. Most likely grandfather used him for a listener. He had no friends and both of them he and my grandmother when she was alive lived secludedly.

Our house was surrounded by a wall in front - two meters high and there was a kind of safety - so it could not be noticed from the street what was going on in the yard.

In summer we could walk around the yard in bathing suits to get some sun. It was difficult for me to get tanned because my complexion is pale and I would either burn or stay pale . Grandpa had painted a big solid barrel in black paint , which stood on a high stand made especially to hold it. He had attached a shower and so during the day we could have solar water pouring . He also bathed with sunlight water.

The plot of land which my grandparents had purchased was large. There was enough space to build two houses with courtyards.

The house was built on the side of the street . Next to the the front door there was a jasmine-tree growing, whose tiny white petals in blossom gave off a fascinating scent and on the other side a hornbeam-flower shrub grew with yellow -orange knots . There were flower-beds along the wall of the house with different types of flowers. Each season various flowers bloomed . Their scent drifted into our rooms ! I used to love them so much that when they demolished our house to build apartment blocks I could not get used to the idea that we will not have a garden for a long time ! The yard continued onwards fenced by an orchard.

From time to time I heard my grandfather crying and singing a strange song! Now I realize what it is like to be a foreigner ! He never talked about his family ! Only on Christmas Eve he used to say a prayer before we had meals and explained us how to celebrate it. The tradition was to go to church and burn incense at home , etc. Under the Communism regime one could not go to church. Or the one who dared to , there would be a negative impact on him or her. The holidays were celebrated in the Russian church style.

Grandfather once made polenta or hominy as some call it , because people should have lean on Christmas Eve , saying that they used to eat that very dish during the war, when they had no bread. We really are not accustomed to having maize flour meals . Maybe some people had it but we did not cook it at home. They gave it to the animals , to the pigs to feed them. Maybe it was due to the fact that either the Bulgarian granary was large or a lot of beans and potatoes were grown. That's why we waged just eight wars with Romania. As for the rest, they are out of the question.

The house we occupied had been made by grandfather alone . I heard the adults talking that he had come from the Sofia , close to the border- with Serbia. But I've never heard him mention anything about his parents or where he was born.

I watched the other children what kind of relationship they had with their grandparents . They were very close, joked , touched one another , it was obvious that they loved each other . Their grandparents would Caress them , get them seated in their lap and always gave them something delicious. And our grandparents did not care about us! I once heard my grandmother saying, "Whoever has children is to raise and educate them."

When I was a child I was a nice girl. I always kept myself busy , I was quite naughty and mischievous- a real troublemaker. I was sure to break a vase while placing flowers in it or a dish while doing the washing-up, spilt water or food on the table. My mother beat me , but I did not give up trying to do things that I had never done or experienced before .

I always wanted to help my mum . I made some salad washed the vegetables , cut them and I often cut my fingers , but I was very pleased with what I was doing . It was quite rewarding for me just to watch how my mother stomached it with gusto, just like me. Daddy and my sister were not much interested in the meal that I prepared.

I do not remember exactly how old I was - 7-8 years old. It was our Christmas holiday . My mother told me the evening before to cook a dish on the next day: dry beans and everything I would need to put in the pot would be ready on the table.

In the morning when I woke up , I saw the beans soaked in a bowl full of water on the table, as well as an onion , two carrots, a dry red pepper and in another bowl there were dried

prunes in water. My mother gave me from time to time to eat prunes to make my intestines active for a bowel movement .

I had 2-3 dried prunes, then I put everything in the pot , I thought of the prunes that I had not seen my mum put them in the dry beans dish, but if she had put them on the table I had to put them in the dish . So said the note ! Later on I realized that my sister was the one who had written the note. Back then we cooked on an wood stove. I lit the fire and put the pot on the stove. I had learned how to arrange the wood and the sticks and to make a fire .

The food was being cooked. I took care of it- not to burn and not be left without water. The prunes floated over the water , it smelt wonderfully! Of course, I tried to see if it was salty enough. I found it very delicious and odd, but I was glad that I had cooked!

Gradually I began to keep house as a servant. My mother got so used to it that she forgot who I was and what a my duties and responsibilities as a student were and certainly as a child! .I used to clean the stoves, carried firewood, swept the yard and the floor at home, I did the washing up I did anything she wanted me to.

Once I dropped empty the ashes from the stove-tray onto the carpet, it was not deliberate, I had not intended it. So my mother beat me so cruelly lashing me with the poker, which was made of thick iron and was heavy enough for me that I stayed away from school for four days! In her anger she told me:” You are my slave and I will do with you whatever I wish !”

And she really behaved like that!

There was snow outside . It had buried the ground. At noon my parents came back home from work . My mother went to see what a meal I’ve cooked meal heading to the kitchen the

minute she entered. When she saw the plums floating on top she started shouting that I had wasted the beans and we had no other food. My father laughed. He protected me and said that this way I would come up with new recipes for meals. By the way, the beans were very good – well-boiled and very well cooked. I must try-perhaps it is really nice prepared that way. It was an achievement for me because it was the first meal I cooked . Then I started to cook other meals : to grill peppers, which were much liked by my mother – it was a time consuming, intensive labour - because first I kindled the charcoal in the fireplace and then the peppers were arranged to be roasted over the burning coals . It was so tedious !

My mother was able to eat a day one kilogram of processed grilled peppers . Generally she liked to eat! She made very nice cakes, kinds of sweets, cookies, biscuits, cakes Easter breads for Easter, ritual bread for some holidays, pies - sweet and savoury , pumpkin pie , different types of cakes and pickles - with marinade or sweet marmelade , salsa and sauces, stewed fruit . She tried every recipe she was given, generally. Or she took such recipes from women whose product or meal she had already tasted and liked!

In all these preparations and delicious dish-cooking I participated actively . I could not escape. I was a first-aid - one despite my desire sometimes. In that way I learned to do many things and I am constantly interested in new recipes .The Bulgarian girl knows and learns since young how to cook a lot of tasty snacks and food , the one who wants to, of course.

The pickled cabbage for the winter was made every autumn . We put it in a barrel or a keg , previously cleaned from its top 's leaves. Then we made two cuts with a knife, crosswards . Two cobs of corn were added, salt and water well dosed and

measured and it was stirred ,racked up nearly every day for nearly a month. The juice that was souring - cabbage soup - was drunk as a beverage with chopped leeks on top and sprinkled with red pepper and a little vegetable oil. This was had , of course, with steaks, pan- fried with onions and spices or with a fresh home –made pork-and –veal sausage . If there was no meat potato stew was cooked and the pickled fresh cabbage was served as a siding. Cut into pieces , sprinkled with vegetable oil on top and paprika . Generally we used quite a lot paprika and red peeper in our cuisine.

This sort of cabbage does not grow in Italy and pickled cabbage could not be made of other sorts. Only when I go to Bulgaria a friend of mine opens a sealed jar with pickled cabbage leaves for me to have some.

I went to buy loaves of bread from the private bakery that every 45 minutes pulled out of the furnace warm bread that smelled so nice and had a toasted crust at its edges, that I could not resist not break off a piece ! Quite often I would break off a bigger piece and when I came back home mum scolded me , saying that the bread would get pasty .The warm bread should not be eaten while hot ! We were not allowed! It was about 1950-1952

We lived in a house consisting of a kitchen, two bedrooms and a lounge. The yard was very large. Grandpa's house was still ahead detached to ours. In front was the house in which we lived , with beds of snowdrops , hyacinths , tulips , a lot of roses, one of which was the Kazanlak Rose, from which the rose oil is made.

Almost in the middle of the yard there was a large plum-tree, which occupied a large space . In the summer large , round , reddish -orange sweet plums ripened with small stones , which

were easily separated . The wasps were always around them. As big as a walnut, the plums often fell to the ground and burst on the cobbled yard made by my grandparents . Then they had to be picked off the land as they would litter it.

My grandmother collected the fine ones , pressed them on top and they split. She used to arrange them in long trays and let them dry in the sun , along with other fruits. She would make dried fruit - dry cherries , pears , apples, apricots, plums, yellow plums and other fruits .

When they were dry enough , she would put them in a bag of calico – sheeting material. Then they got musted when they boiled the must – the thick grape juice. They were immersed for one minute in hot , thick liquid . The fruits became shiny and sweeter. Then they were left to cool. And what a tasty pumpkin jam was made !

Behind the house we had a yard for yet another house to be built which was planted with many sorts of trees. We did not need to buy fruit. My grandfather selected the sorts and many of them were rare. Onions , black beans , garlic, and others were planted under the trees. My grandfather had three plots of land sown with cherries and vines of grapes in the locality called “Ramanusha”.

In the autumn when the vintage or the vine harvest took place , all of us gathered. Wine was made by crushing the grapes in a machine or a wooden trencher or rather a bath tub , which used to be once a washable laundry tub , put the bunches of grapes and crushed and mashed them with legs - bare footed . Once I gave it a try and I squished the grapes with my feet . That bare feet activity made me afraid of being stung by a wasp or a bee. I felt the clusters and the grains which exploded bursting under my feet.

My grandfather was an expert at wine-making ! Everyone who had tried it said it was very tasty.

We had an orchard on a hill called “ Hammam hill “ with trees apricots and vines. These lots were taken later by the government for military purposes.

But spring always been the best season for me! I have always been looking forward to it!

In the spring our orchard was absolutely wonderful ! The almond trees were the first to blossom, next were the plum-trees , then the peach-trees , the apple trees and the cherry trees came next , back then I could just stand for hours in the garden and enjoy the colours and the smell of the blooming petals and flowers!

One could see how the busy hurried from blossom to blossom, went inside it and took their nectar . My father kept three bee hives under the trees.

Then when the cherries got ripe, I sometimes took a single- slice of bread , sprinkled a little salt and paprika on it . I put some vegetable oil on top of it and spread it with a finger all over the bread, then I went to rip cherries from the trees and to eat them with the so made bread. It was so delicious that I did it a few times!

Our city is surrounded by the Balkan mountains Northwards. The local terrain and the forests are very beautiful! They are well-known as the “Blue Stones “ and there are blue stones which really have a bluish -green color and look alpine . Overgrown with moss and thyme, which, with their pale pink blossoms and flowers complemented the beauty of the scenery! Below them there used to be a uranium mine , in which the employees took rocks out which then were transported elsewhere for processing.

I've gone inside the mine by an elevator, although outsiders were banned to descend. They said that it was poor in uranium, but it worked for many years, and it was said that the ore was sent to Russia to be enriched.

My sister and I used to hike all around the peaks "Kutelka", "Daulite", "Aglikina Poliana", "Dragieva Cheshma" accompanied by our parents since young. Our father took us hiking-on foot, of course. We all had knapsack-bags of tentage or sailcloth with leather straps for the hands. We had them made by my father. Each of us brought things to play and something inside which we kept our lunch.

Our mother and father carried heavy luggage. We usually left early on Sunday morning, before the sun comes up to get to the place we had planned the hiking tour to when it was still cool. This meant that our father did not go hunting on that day or even that the hunting was banned. We took daddy's hunting dog too. It was brown and white spotted, long-lop-eared. It was very cute! Daddy raised it for bird hunting. When the dog got tired we made a chariot for it binding the opposite ends of a large scarf. Something like a bundle. We placed it inside and only his head was to be seen from the outside. We took turns to carry it. My father had yet another dog to hunt rabbits and deer, but it usually stayed home.

Once we decided to go up to the mountains as early as Saturday and to sleep in the travel hut lodge. My father took an extra woollen blanket, just in case we would need it.

We had been walking for more than 2 hours before we reached the top. We had lunch and walked around the area. It was very hot! The sun was scorching and right after lunch we went to look for vacancies in the tourist hut lodge – where we had to stay the night. There were not any hotels yet back then,

later each company built a holiday house or rather a holiday block of flats. It turned out that there were no vacancies in the hut lodge. My father decided for us to sleep outdoors. He expressed the view that it would not rain that night. The sky was dotted with stars-star stricken. Our mother opposed as she was afraid we could catch a cold.

We went to pick ferns that we spread below, under the blanket. We had chosen a bare spot which viewed the whole city! We made a fire and surrounded it. I hoped my friends to notice it from below! Our faces got hot and I was sleepy. As I was lying, I could see the sky with the stars and my mother explained us the constellations that could be seen up. One could hear the guitar being played and female and male voices to chimed in, accompanying the melody. They sang the song “Dragieva cheshma”.

At one time I woke up and saw my dad putting more wood to maintain the fire. The blanket was well-use! He had not got any sleep all night long.

My father was right when he said that we would remember that very night for a lifetime! Thus he reassured my mother and calmed her down.

We kept visiting the mineral spa baths with yet another family where the river Tundzha flows. We the children swam and sprayed in the river to our hearts' content! We had meals picnic-like, just on the land on the carpeted table cloth cover and sunbathed to obtain a tan.

We were pleased by the minute, by petty little things! I do not remember our whole family to have gone on holiday to a resort.

A girl who lived next door told me her story. She had finished “Europa” school and was already fluent in foreign

languages. Then she went to study at the University – at an Institute teaching English and French. She came back into our town and got a job as a secretary in a large factory. At first she had to make love with the Executive director to remain on the job and retain her employment. Then she had to do the same with the Communist party secretary to aid her get oriented correctly and then it happened so that she had to do everything which they wanted her to. When she opposed or rather refused, they found an excuse and fired her. She remained humiliated, unappreciated and without money.

She got a new employment but the same followed.

Then I heard she went to Germany as a companion woman for rich men of different nationalities and came back a few years later quite wealthy. She was well-insured, well-provided for a life time. She had bought a car, an flat and was well to do. Everyone has the right to resolve their problems the way he/she decides! As long as one is satisfied with what he or she does! The Communists' proclamations of brotherhood and equality were desecrated, those who believed and were imprisoned were betrayed and killed. A mediocre minority remained - people with counterfeit ideals and promises.

My aunt, who was a fighter against fascism and was always on the tribune-grandstand when the parade was taken on the 9th September and May 1, said she did not know the people around her. There were only two of them who had shared the hard times. We lived as it were, all the same. They wanted us to be similar, even identical.

You have, let's say, a house inherited from your grandfather or father, which must be not larger than 4 rooms, or two flats. You then have just an year to sell your property-or else they will will seize it, confiscate it.

It was against the rules to own more than one dwelling. There were people with large houses built before September 9 ,so the government confiscated them. When I was young I used to wonder how they could build them and by what means, as I saw how we lived and considered both ours and most people's way of life. Well, how was that –was the previous social order better than ours or not?

The ones who had a good job , could buy a Trabant car , Skoda or Lada . These people were so scarce.

The TV sets were very expensive and not everyone could afford to buy one. We had no TV set. We had the radio “Telefunken “, so we used to listen to radio programmes for children , to the news and my father ,from time to time, listened to “Radio Free Europe.” The broadcasts were so jammed , the transmission was so intercepted that I understood next to nothing. I was still young. My father , however , knew the news. He was interested in novelties.He went to the Marketing Fair in Plovdiv, where all the new inventions were exposed. Once he brought us plastic combs and pleated nylon for a fan -a harmonica - about 30 cm long buttoned at both ends with metal holes , the attached laces were to be placed on the head and it was worn that way to keep you dry from the rain . There were not even nylon raincoats yet . For the first time in our lives we saw nylon – a water-proof material . My father said then that in the future this material would be used for bags - wrapping paper and many other items would be made of nylon.

The progress in our country did not move forward. Not that there were people who made up and did various things. On the contrary! They were stopped, hindered!

For example, you had invented something, tried it, calculated that it wouldl bring income, but to make your

rationalization or any labour saving device work you should list as a co-inventor your boss, a certain engineer and a few other people who have nothing to do with your creation and finally you would not get anything like payment. It is very offensive .

I experienced this when I went on an audition or rather a competition for the best anesthesiology nurse in the state. The military hospitals had organized a contest for speed, intelligence and abilities , accuracy and rationalization. .

I coped well with the first tours in the hospital . I was happy because I was confident , I loved my profession and did my best to save the one who needed my efforts . I tried not to get angry , because just outside the resuscitation and anesthesia ward one could see an inscription on a poster which read : **TO GET ANGRY MEANS TO BE PUNISHED FOR THE OTHERS' MISTAKES! ARISTOTLE.**

The last round for appointing the best anesthesiology nurse was in the town of Plovdiv – the Military Hospital . I knew I had to represent a model of my project as well. The head of the military department, and the doctor who were responsible for ,refused to cooperate with me by no means, or to aid me design such they had quite good workshops where I could have it made. They told me to submit my rationalization in drawing . It was a table for anesthesia, with everything you need for submission of narcosis developed by me and coordinated with the physicians with whom I worked . The competition included: speed, agility, reaction , intelligence , if a narcosis should be given. Of course, the rationalization was of great importance!

I came out second second for that reason. A month later the in the newspaper of the healthcare worker doctor ... a rationalization ... i.e. my one ...had improved the nurse's quality of labour... money paid....etc.I was frustrated, furious!

I felt humiliated , misunderstood , unappreciated. At the same time I realized – once again - I was a bit cleverer my head than some people !

I cannot say that I was not appreciated as an anaesthesiology nurse by the doctors I work with. I had never had a patient dying on the operating table! Maybe it was a coincidence or rather not, but many doctors preferred to work with me in a team. When I was working , I concentrated so well in my work that I forgot about everything outside the operating theatre and the hospital. I indulged my attention and ability to the patient and the doctor I worked with !

Of great importance was the way we had been taught certain knowledge and knack of diagnosis by our chief trainer, as early as when just accepting any patient in emergency. He kept asking us what symptoms we saw and what symptoms we should have seen at the patient’s presence. In that way I remembered everything I needed so well that as a result of such a training I finally had been ready with the diagnosis before the outcome of the testing was announced.

Once the doctor – in- chief called me into his office and told me he had chosen me on a specific task, taking into consideration my skill and preparation. His rank was colonel and had two majors –a therapist and an anesthesiologist.

I had to check the suitability of all medicines and ampoules in 4 large chests .

If one looked at it from the outer side he or she could never tell that this was a pharmacy warehouse arranged so as to secure the bullets into the bullet belt –well- lined - without being able to fall, no matter what the position the chest would be set in.

Once I checked them , he made me prepare everything necessary for a possible intubation (anesthesia) in an ambulance specially allotted for the purpose, which I was to check every day and to re-check the ampoules.

I did not know where I had to go and what we had to do. I had the rank of Captain in the preparation for a possible war with the appropriate military clothes that I kept at home but was not aware that a similar thing was concerned.

Incidentally I had attended such an exhibition of garments from the fashion house “Albena” in our town. I liked a coat very much;it was a woollen material - boucle - long coat, tailored. It fitted me and matched quite well but the colour and the price were not acceptable. Green in colour as the green meadows in the movies. A colour which hardly would be worn by anyone around me at that time. I liked it so much that I dreamt I had it on! When I woke up, I decided to accomplish at least once a dream! I took a loan from the mutual aid fund cash and bought it.

In about 20 days the doctor-in-chief told me to get ready for an outing – a special one. To wear civilian clothes , Sunday best and to be at the hospital at 7 am and it was not clear when we would be back. I asked him if we would go to a reception? He said it was something like that we would attend then laughed and told me not to forget what to do-my functional duties .And I was in love with my job .

In the morning I put on my new coat. It was so chic! And if I had to be introduced somewhere – I ‘d better be smartly dressed. Anyway, I realized that it was a kind of camouflage, and I was not wrong. The ambulance, which was equipped had a civilian number. My boss was in civilian clothes. Very elegant! So was the ambulance driver. He told me that our task was to

provide first aid if needed to a convoy of buses with members of the Warsaw Pact.

We left and went to take the people from the hotel. They were of various nationalities. The chuffeur was driving after 3 buses. Behind us there were 3 armored cars - high - I had only seen such in movies.

In 3 hours drive we turned left from the main road and drove off road into a forest of shrubs and deciduous trees. The direction was roughly Sredna Gora.

The bus stopped and the people began to descend. Some of them were visibly drunk or had not sobered up yet. They were of various nationalities.

I saw our Gypsies, including our famous Armando who sang, with his band, all of them dressed as hunters. I was surprised, but not really, because I knew that during the elections below in the hamlet - ghetto - during the election all

the gypsies were given all 5 BGN to vote for the already chosen representative of the government - the National Party .

(By the way at a voting session that I had missed, someone was signed by my name that I had voted. I asked the Commission: Whose that signature was ? They looked around uneasily but no one opened his or her mouth to speak!)

They opened one of the armored cars there was a first class bar inside it ! A bar lined inside with red velvet and chairs , a stable one , most probably with a variety of drinks riveted to the floor. We just looked in that direction.

The second armored car was full of guns and other weapons. So we were going hunting. I was the only woman in the whole convoy! Nobody could have guessed my mission. We went into the woods and suddenly a very large lawn appeared

in front of us. I would rather define it as overwhelming enourmose. They told us to stay under a tree, quite large.

The clappers, by the means of which they were chasing rabbits on one side could be heard. One could hear gun-shots and dull shouting. At once rabbits came running opposite us and if I had a gun I was sure I was going to hit at least 2-3. But at that moment I prayed nobody to shoot another one “by mistake” and to make us perform our duties.

In the morning I had had a cup of coffee and it was almost noon. I felt I had to go to the toilet - I asked my boss where the toilet was and he told me to go near the car, in the open . I set off is there - and just as I was on my way to squat my coat behind was cut ,so I intended to hide my buttocks – I saw two men with guns pointing directly at me. They were at a distance of 5-6 feet apart from each other. I stood up and saw still other men in a circle around us. I squatted again and those ones were targeting. I stood up and made a sign with my hand against them, to make them guess what I intended to do. One of them understood me and put his gun to his feet, but the other stood ready to shoot. But I had urinated and thought to myself how inconvenient it would be if I had to relieve my bowels?

After that hunting we went to a villa where there was a table laid outside with cold , all sorts of foodstuff from posh restaurants.

We stayed away from everything. Suddenly , I smelt the aroma of grilled meatballs and meat croquettes.I felt quite hungry and despite the fact that my boss did not move from his seat I approached timidly . All of a sudden, I saw from afar a familiar face of a man . He was our colleague’s husband -a militiaman , also in civilian clothes . I went up to him and asked him if anyone would asked us to lunch. He replied to me that

no one would ask us and if we were to wait a little bit longer the lunch time would be over and we would have to go elsewhere. Then I approached and started eating . I even took a bottle of white wine for later. I had some instant coffee . There were no more meat croquettes left . There were only sandwiches.

We went to a lake where there were many wild ducks . Some of the people who we were health- servicing were quite drunk . All ended well. I had made just a few bandages of light abrasions and cuts . We came back home at about 09.30 p.m.

CHILDHOOD

I have a sister seven years elder than me . I do not remember her helping me with my lessons, showing me something or explaining me anything I did not understand.

I was about 8 years old when she learned by heart poems and later theorems , and our mother examined her saying them out loud , she paused in places , and I would add what at that moment she could not remember. She repeated them so many times in the process of learning them that I remember them playing around , sometimes never understanding their meaning . This made her angry , and when I made trouble or a prank she instantly told me off to my mother and therefore she beat me . It happened often as I used to help a lot in the household.

I started going shopping at the age of 4 or 5. My mother sent me to make purchases from the grocery store. She gave me the money to be kept in my hand to hold them tightly and not lose them! I bought salt, sugar, rice - which were still unpacked. I used to buy peppers and tomatoes from the green grocer's. I used to watch how the seller cut plum jam with apples , which was in the shape of a mould for a single- brick or rosehip jam that was in tubs and she took it out with a large spoon.

It was the best ! So fragrant, sweet , and when you eat it feels prickly on your tongue because it is made of hip- briars. I have ever loved eating food ! When I would enter the grocery store , I looked at all the food –stuff around: sausages, various in size and content. The quality of the food back then was much more better ! I do not see that nowadays.

Olives were supplied from time – time ,so people arranged to buy some in queues- waiting . They gave only a pound so that there would be enough for more people . There were types of candies too that lured me to such an extent that I felt breathless.

Coated bean-like sweets, with a syrup filling -oval -shaped inside with aniseed some of them were in different colors - yellow, green, pink , white, let alone those with the sugar-shells or chocolate . These items are not available at the market now! Therefore when I had some the small coins left- the yellow ones – I asked my parents to keep those coins, and when I collected more of them I went to buy something delicious like those sweets. My sister was very jealous . Maybe because she did not have enough food and was small . She did not have a sweet tooth.

She was born at the age of 7 months and was revived by a miracle. At that time there were no incubators for premature babies. My mother was 18 years old and had no experience, and my grandmother did not care much. We used to live in another house and an old lady came to bathe the new -born baby. My father told me that once he had seen the old woman take the baby out of the the tub, hooking her two fingers - index and middle in the baby's mouth and in such a movement to take the poor baby out of the water. He immediately expelled her or rather made her leave.

And later, when my mother got pregnant for the second time my father said that after the baby is born, they would leave the window open for the baby to get sick and die. He did not want a second child. But I was born weighing 4 kg, I ate well and all envied my mother the nice baby.

I did not believe much seeing his attitude towards me, but my mother said it was true. He kissed me, caressed me. After lunch we went to bed on the couch wrapped in a blanket. I did not want to sleep. We talked about various things.

I had been taught to work since young. I loved to find new ways in what I was doing. My family were used to entrusting me to run more and more errands .

I was 12-13 years old when my father taught me to shoot with a rifle . At first shooting with balls . He put the gun on the frame of the open window . Across the street was lined with timber- wood to be cut on which he put painted glass of various colour and shape . So when I grew up to be a high school student I went to races now with a real gun . I really accurate at the shooting . I kept my first target for a long time . I had onley one -7, one impaired 8 and everything else was 9 and 10 . I've heard it said that to shoot accurately, to have the proper eye is inherited from the previous generation. There is something true, I agree.

I went on a hunting trip with my father, who was telling me how to get myself well navigated using the trees for appointing the directions, but I did not like killing animals. I was used to playing with my daddy's two dogs and their young. I could not eat the lamb butchered at home. I took pity for it! I had just a little pork ,only at Christmas from the pig we had raised. I did not pity it! Especially when I had it in sausage!

Much later I remembered what food was made and how the tables were laid! I felt like eating but there was neither lamb nor my father nor the time !

I was enrolled in a kindergarten in a primary school, which was far away for me. I walked up there not down the main street, but along another one behind it, where there were less cars moving. There were no buses around the town yet and even that street was not a main one. It was crossed by the river with a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.

When the wind began blowing - it was blowing very strongly – I was afraid of it not to drive me away in the river, especially in winter, when it was snowy and icy and the temperature dropped below the zero to -16, -17 degrees Celcius for a week or two. It was a long trip for my age. I walked almost

always alone. A classmate of mine sometimes accompanied me when her parents did not see her off to the school. Only my mother occasionally met me.

I hated when there was no snow in winter. Sometimes it was so cold that in the room we shared with my sister one morning we found the water in the cup frozen.

There we lit up the fire in the stove with wood and coal, but the time for the room to get warm was so little and the wood and coal were difficult to get well burning . So we slept in the cold.

When it was snowing and it was calm and quiet , which happened very rarely, I was always in the yard to make a snowman or to skate or to roll with a sled. I went home when my hands became blue with the cold and then in the warm room they ached like hell . I used to play games with the children from the other houses around our home !In the summer we played mostly in our yard because it was large and we could get better organized there. My mother helped us with it, especially when we did muppet theater shows. She used to buttoned two covers or rather quilts with tongs on the line stretched to spread the laundry , gave advice on the decor , made up us before our show . The audience usually we consisted of somebody's mother or of the children who did not take part at present . We played , acting the roles of teachers and pupils teaching the younger ones how to write in a letter or how to recognize the letters . We made our own " restaurant" as we used the sharpest firewood that had a various shape for the construction of tables and chairs. We made "lemonade" beverage to drink - water with citric acid and sugar if we could get them out of our houses without being noticed. This very rarely happened.

In winter, the door handle stuck in my hand with the cold! I very often lay down sick with purulent tonsillitis and only then

my parents bought lemonade for me - yellow - which I began to hate! They gave it to me when I had to take my medication.

I loved the fizzy cider- alcohol-free - red and sweet, but they never bought it because it was more expensive.

We were growing up and so were our costs. My mother started looking for a job, but she had no profession.

I still keep one of her photos, her hairstyle was cut short hair, parted on the right side without bangs - even then they were banned - with a beret on her head that says the girls high school and the name of the High School is read. On the left sleeve the number of her class was sewn. It could be noticed from far away . Well, it was not like with the Jews with the star, but it had the same meaning. You had nowhere to flee! The uniform was compulsory!

She went about asking here and there for employment all day long, but she could not find any job. She used to sing and draw proficiently and dressed very well .

She loved the theatre and organized short shows for certain occasions when there was a celebration together with other women from the women's association .She was very proactive in the neighborhood. They often argued with daddy as he was jealous and did not want her to work with artists . He finally arranged a job for her in the garrison bakery. She did not like the job but there she caught an eczema – her hands were tetter-stricken and she was sick with the sinusitis and she could not get rid of them for many years. Then she was employed in the textile factory. She used to sew laces, tapes, galloons and various edgingson a machine. She worked on shifts and therefore we had hard time. One day I heard my parents arguing in a loud voice:

“You should either let me be employed there, or else I will get a divorce “- she said. She wanted to work with the amateurs

from the National Army House as an accompanist and to participate in the satirical theatre. There was no other way! She occupied exactly that position and remained at that job until retirement.

They put many performances on stage and she was very happy as an actress. She knew many artists, actors, actresses from the district theatre . She went on tours.

She had her own party. She did not like to talk about diseases and disliked dealing with gossip. She led a way of life that differed a lot from mine. A calm one!

She wanted me to become an actress. She prepared me for that. I also loved the shows, the performances , the thrill before you go on stage and the applause of the audience, the smell of makeup backstage, the dressing, makeup rooms. I memorized the lines by heart. I sometimes took part in the high school performances when we made the show but it was not the same. I found it quite difficult when my mother was away because of a tour or a performance: I had to prepare a meal, first cook it , then served it, do the washing up do the dishes, etc...

I wanted to become a pediatrician. I had taken that decision when I was in fourth grade.

The teacher told us to think about what we wanted to be as we would write an essay on “What I want to be” the next day.

When I wrote the essay, I imagined and took it so seriously that I described incidents and events that could happen.

I lived with the idea to treat the young children, to pet on the head, to give them life. I felt so that in any way I would feel very happy. That was my dream! I wrote the essay. In two days, the teacher came into the classroom with our notebooks and began to announce who deserves the best grades. She did not mention me along with the high-grders. But she said the best and the most exciting essay was mine and I wanted me to go in front of the class and read it to everyone. I was ashamed and

refused to do so. Then she read it, and finally, when looked up there were tears in her eyes .

I moved towards that profession or rather around it – even though slowly, but finally I achieved my goal.i.e. I approached it or rather I got quite near it I finished the college for nurses which later was accredited for University after I passed the exams . But I overcame many obstacles before graduating from the Nursing University.

I married a classmate of my sister's. He was introduced several times to me, maybe we did not like each other as much! I was always with my sister, so that to be allowed to go out. He had impressed me as a quiet and normal youth. Most of which I got acquainted were freer, they wanted to get closer to kiss me, he was calm. I thought it should be so, in my mother's advice. Later I realized what the reason was .

This was the first man in my life. I was not very fascinated. On the contrary, I began to understand how things were but very slowly. At first I believed it was natural. I had never had a boyfriend before. I had no experience. There was no one to teach me! To advise me . There were no books from which to understand how it were.

I lost a lot of time. I was quite disappointed. I could not imagine that there were creatures who did not feel, could not think and did not want to think or to be in the other party's boots. I did not know the man!

I did and still do my best. My charity as a wife is more than my compassion as a nurse.

When I came back home from work I kept thinking what had happened to the patient. When I was employed in the ER(reanimation ward) I tried hard, did my best as I did not want the patient to die . I did everything possible , I always kept an eye on the patients. I struggled with the death every day. I used to

go back home tired but pleased with myself when my patient survived. Another case saved from death! And when a young man died I mourned, I kept his for a long time in my memory. In many cases they die at dawn. Maybe the body struggles, protects and comes to a standstill when it is tired and exhausted.

I remember once, after coming back from a sentry-it means guard , i.e. duty-post supervising a certain diseased while he or she gets out of the anesthesia or a sick one switched on artificial lung apparatus in a crisis-situation when the patient can not breathe on his own. I worked in a military hospital. It was nearly 5.30 a.m. The diseased I had taken care of was deceased. He was only 20 years old.

I walked slowly and watched how in the peoples' rooms one after the other the lamps were lit, and my patient was dead. I could see nothing sadder than that. I came back home tired and exhausted, and my husband said to me:" Could you not wait to be at least 6:30 a.m.to wake me up as early for work ?"

I was dumb-found! There are no words to describe it! I felt hard because of his attitude, and it was far more severe to survive the loss of this young man!

And I get more and more convinced that one should marry anotherone with a similar profession to be able to understand the other, to share things. But this may be disputed. I began to think that way not only on the grounds of a single fact and a single man that "the man is not like a human." I do not remember who had said it, but it's really true. Shirley MacLaine had defined it quite true - men and women are totally different creatures, and in the same situation, they think in a different way. They live in different worlds and inhabit different planets.

I'm not a man-hater. On the contrary, I've had enough ones in my life. I have always hoped to be approached with understanding, love, support, kindness, honesty, care. I found

sex without love, love almost without sex, disappointments, vague white promises, intolerance, vulgarity, lack of personality respect, selfishness, no nobility, false chivalry and as a conclusion - aid. To lean onto someone.

Is happened so then - after a while , the man leans on you to such an extent that you help him with everything but he does not. He lies down , waiting and watching how you finish all the work going to establishments , caring for the children , and he takes care of them just as long as you have a shower to prevent any trouble if you make a mistake or fail to do something , for he who works makes mistakes , sometimes fails , he just begins to criticize and give you advice and recommendations on how it should be done. But he never does it ! And in the bed it is all the same thing ! In most cases, the woman is always the one to ignite and burn the fire with the fire , to keep it from going off, to blow it, to take it into action and what more a series of many other things: to keep fit , neither to get fat nor too slim ,to be beautiful because otherwise she will be replaced it with another more beautiful one ! In most cases - with a sex giving one , arrogant , or just because you fed up with each other . People say, it is natural with the man , but they do not care about the woman ! A woman right now is the one who cannot compromise any more and the situation has changed. The woman in the family was very busy . Besides, she had to work because money could buy fewer and fewer things ! When have we had enough money , may I ask ?

AN ESCAPE TO THE URBAN GARDEN

My sister is seven years elder than me. She was not very independent. She could not even pick out a fabric for dress-making , without my mother ; unlike her I had an opinion - what people wear , what suits and matches me , what is the fashion , what is trendy, etc. As I grew up and reached my sister's height, my mother sewed the same dresses for us both , so as not to upset my sister. Later I learned to sew dresses or skirts after having them cut out by a seamstress. So in my view our parents wanted us to be always together , to go out together. We did not get well much because I used to do a lot of things at home and sometimes broke something . My sister told me off to my mother and she beat me . Accordingly, when our mother went to work , and I slapped her because she had given me up or rather betrayed me as it was.

I had already finished the fifth grade, my sister was in the high school, when one day she told my mother that that evening, a boy from their class would celebrate his birthday and he lived in a rented house on the street below ours. My mother knew the landlord. My sister wanted to go. Mummy told her to take me along. I did not feel like going much but I was curious to know what they would have as a treat for at home ,someone's birthday party turned into a tasting of sweets and other delicacies. So I agreed. We got dressed and left.

We went into a room full of boys and two or three girls. They began to be introduced. They addressed me like that:, “Her sister with the pioneer kerchief , the pioneer” we used to wear a kerchid tied around our neck, which symbolized the killed outlaw's blood shed in the battle, who were called the slain guerrillas during the war.

It was at the end of June. The lime trees were blooming. There was a smell of lime and it was warm. I was introduced to one of their classmates. He was not very handsome but he was very neat. He was dressed in ocher-beige. The other boys were in dark navy blue trousers and wore a shirt - either white or blue. The name-day boy was from a village - and not to travel every night – his parents had rented a room for him.

I remember that he had a bush of a hair: beautiful and dark, as for his eyes I could not see well, they were not blue like mine - brown or black. I was shy and dared not watch much.

We stayed until dark. The days were long. Darkness fell late. We left at about 10:00 p.m. .

We opened the gate of our house and our father met us with a stick in hands and our mother, who shouted a lot! We tried to explain that nothing wrong had happened. My sister kept silent. I broke her free from my father. Our mother wanted daddy to hit us. I ran as hard as I could and held my sister's hand. We ran into the urban garden and hid in the bushes around a fountain. It was quite dark.

I think we did not deserve that thrashing which our parents had arranged! My sister mumbled how to get home, and so on. I decided not to go home till morning. We stayed on hid in the garden. In those days there was no such crime-rate. There were many militaimen who gurded.

In the morning we collected pennies and I went to buy my milina-pie for breakfast. We came back home. Our parents had decided that we had gone back to the birthday boy's. We were embarrassed to do it actually. We did not think it was decent.

I found our parents' actions and behaviour wrong. I did not wish to be in their boots.

I started to feel grown up and was a kind of offended by the whole incident. Sometimes parents do not suggest how

important it is for their children to trust them. In their effort to prevent and beware their children of unpleasant incidents it happens so that they themselves drive them towards making mistakes or doing wrong. I was sad.

TELEPATHY ?

I was in high school – in the 9th grade . The winter was freezing cold . Much snow had fallen , a rare thing for my city. Very strong wind was blowing. We were on holidays. I was alone and I was bored at home. I thought how good it would be if my friend were there. But she lived far away from my home. .

I started repeating that thought and calling her in my mind. My desire was great ! I imagined the path that she had to walk along and what way she would take so that she had to walk against the wind- for the wind not to blow that much at her . He was an athlete . I threw a discus and played volleyball in the team “Education and Culture “ . That is how I had met her and got acquainted.

I stood and watched our gate out of the window. At one point I saw her opening the gate . The wind blew her long braid and it was flying in the breeze . She was without a hat . I went to meet her quite surprised. She was frozen to death ! I asked her why she had gone out in such a cold nasty weather. She answer me that I had called her as I needed her! I said nothing . It was true , but I could not explain her, although she had lateral thinking, i.e. she could comprehend it and accept this fact as true. Only, I was not sure yet of what had happened. Did I have any contribution to her coming home or it had accidentally happened? Although I was sure there were no coincidences! Anyway - we spent the day together. She suffered a terrible headache, probably the cold weather had caused it. I gave her an aspirin.

From that day on I began to ask myself whether I really had any telepathic abilities. My grandmother used to set cards and interpret the fortunetelling; what she usually had foretold

happened and she cured with herbs. She had died, but people yet went on coming to see her. I was at the age of 10 when a woman came to ask for granny. She said that she had an appointment with granny 10 years ago. Her son had got lost and for more than 40 days he did not turn up. She came to my grandmother's and she showed her the fortunetelling cards which said that her son was alive and well, but very sick- diseased. He was taken care of and that he would come back safe and sound. So it happened. The boy had gone to cut wood in the forest. There is a tree fell on him. Some people found it, but he could not say who he was and where he came from. The woman came on another occasion and she grieved when I told her that my grandmother had died. I knew from my mother and that very woman assured me that my grandmother did not take money from people and was never paid for what she used to do. She used telling that she was endowed with this power by God and therefore she had to help people. Then it seemed to me like a fairy tale.

I knew my mother was fortune-telling with my grandmother's cards. I've seen the cards. They were nothing special. Ordinary playing cards, 52 in number, but not all of them were to be lined and they were lined and rowed in a way that I have not seen at any fortuneteller's yet. I visited such a one later-on. Each card had a certain importance and meaning. Of course, I did not believe, really. The way we were taught in school and out, had nothing to do with this explanation. For example, the dreams were explained to be the consequence of circumstances experienced during the day and as a whole in life. Later I realized that it is not quite true.

At the institute – that is the medical college for nurses, which I graduated from, I did a subject called child psychology it taught us that the child is born “tabula rasa” i.e. a clean slate, a clean board and certain habits, character, etc. can be engrained. This theory got out of fashion when the genetics was promoted.

Many things can be introduced and remembered but the genetics is very important! You may have one thing, or you may not have it!

Back then I thought that maybe I was blessed with some kind of ability, I was given the skill to foretell. I had to check to make sure.

It happened so then - with the same girlfriend of mine again. At the end of the term we were to take part in the Olympics in athletics and we did not feel like studying and attending school. I threw a disc and my girlfriend hurdles.

The next day my girlfriend was being examined during the geography class. As she got up and passed by me she told me that she knew nothing and asked me to prompt. The problem was that I did not know the new lesson as well. I opened the textbook. I was sitting at the second desk on the middle row. My friend was in front of the blackboard, staring at me. I quickly read the question that the teacher had asked her to answer. I raised my head. At that time, the teacher approached me and said:

“Close all the textbooks, please!” - She knew that I would try to prompt. I raised my head and silently urged my friend to start talking, imagining it. She looked at me straight in the eye. I started saying what I had read in my mind.

The teacher was standing next to me and was watching me. For prompting we were given the poorest 1 grades. But I did not open my mouth. My girlfriend began repeating what I told her transmitting her my thoughts. She was asked a question concerning an old lesson. I had already known its answer and I did not have to open my textbook. The teacher was standing beside me. I started to tell in my mind what she was asked. She looked at me straight into my eyes, without moving. When the examination was over and she went back to her desk to take her seat she buried her head. She stayed there that way until the end

of the class . I went to her and asked her how she felt like. She stood up and said she had a terrible headache . She asked what had happened with her examination or test rather. I told her that the teacher had given her a Good 4. Then she looked at me and said :

“ You must have done it, I am sure, I do not remember anything”

This case made me watch myself. Various strange things happened to me things that I did not pay attention to before. I noticed that there were certain happenings during the day and I had already known about them in advance. I just kept wondering whether I have I dreamed them yet or not. But I still did not believe that I had any special gifts or inclinations.

I went to my mother's to tell me what a definite card meant and I put it down. I had one of my many problems and I wanted her to tell my fortune by laying my cards. What she told me, I did not do , but the result was the same as she had foreseen.

Once I went to my mother's , she had some guests - her colleagues from the theatre. They were having Turkish coffee. And one of them wanted my mother to tell her fortune. She said: “ My daughter is better at watching coffee and foretelling than me”.

I did not felt very pleased, but I decided to meet the challenge. I wanted to try ... I knew the woman only as a colleague of my mother's. What I told her shocked her. I immediately apologized for being bad at fortune-telling.

The next week she told my mother that everything I had foretold her was true. I started to think that I had a special gift given by God.

MY FIRST DREAM WHEN SAINT VIRGIN MARY APPEARED TO ME

I was about 30 years old. I dreamed myself as a child at the age of 6-7 . I was going to call a friend of mine, a year younger than me to play around. She lived in next door. Their door was big. Sometimes they came out with his convertible. Her father was a vet. They kept horses in the stable.

Their house was built so that their ground floor was by half buried in the ground and they had one more floor on top. Below, on the right, they had a kitchen with two windows – one facing the streets ,and the other viewing their yard.

I opened the gate and called Katya’s name. Nobody answered. The gate opened. I saw an arm at first- a naked arm that I was handed by a woman dressed in a black cloak.She was very tall. I watched her from the bottom up and I saw her face . I knew St. Mary! She smiled slightly and told me not to be scared.

“Come with me” – she told me. - I want to show you a thing you must see. Give me your hand” – and she showed me that I had to go downstairs into the basement.

But in front of me there was a hole dug as a grave with a small staircase. The soil was yellowish with stones - as it was at the cemetery. I was shaking with fear. I thought she wanted to put me in the grave. I pulled back a little, and she said : “ I will protect you, go after me. So I followed herI ,reasoning in my sleep. I considered that the saint could not lie to me.

We went down the stairs and found ourselves in a room - the one used for the kitchen, but it was not a real kitchen.

“ This is the church!” - she said. –” Here” - and showed to the right, burning candles on a stand of brass wheel, on which there were sockets made for the candles to be held.

I had entered only once in a church when my grandmother died- my mother's mother. She wanted there to be a burial service for her , a harping in the church. "Here candles are lit for the living ones and at the bottom on the left candles are lit for the deceased. Can you see this candle?" – St. Mary continued ? It is Stephen's. He will be the first to die . And this is Tsonka's. She will die after him."

Then she listed 10 names, of which I remembered only 5 later. I began trembling with fear, but asked which my candle was. She showed it to me. It had already half burn down.

"A lot of bad things will happen to you and you will overcome a lot of obstacles but you should not be scared! I will stand by your side!" – she told me.

As she spoke, I raised on tiptoe and looked out the window and I saw heartseases. That kind of flowers that are usually planted in the cemeteries. For a moment I thought I had died and this was my grave. I got scared , started and woke up.

When people from our block began to die , I read the obituaries in the order that I was told by the Virgin Mary. At first I thought it was some sort of coincidence, but it was not possible to be so! She appeared to me several times in my life and showed me and warned me about events that would happen.

It was a strange and amazing for me, but when I looked at me in the dresser mirror – a large and oval one - I used to see the shadow of a starnege woman behind me. I I got scared and that's why I did not like to look at myself in a mirror. I felt as if somebody was watching me. Someone who, guided me, even when I was wrong!

I've read a lot about the inner bell that I should take into consideration. I took my decisions in my dreams or I came up with an idea that I had to accomplish, even seemingly incredible,

I felt like I could accomplish it. However I realized that later.

Such a dream I had never dreamed and I had not attended church services since my grandmother's funeral of my grandmother when I was 7 years old, and I was not allowed to enter a church. The Communist regime did not permit a wedding in church, they kept watching and followed the people who went to church maliciously. There were bad consequences for those who attended the church services

I was not sure whether what I dreamed is to be believed or not. I dared not tell about it as people would think me a freak. And really such events happened to me that cannot be explained rationally. In the most critical moments of my life when I thought that nothing could be done or I feel like dying - and did have such moments - I regained my life again and that was the best!

I'd dreamed Virgin Mary still a couple of times. I was not pious .

THE SECOND DREAM

I dreamed I was at the seaside on a beach. I was walking on the wet sand, and suddenly felt a sharp pain on the right foot between the toes. As if something cut me. I sat down to see and possibly pull out what I was cut by. The wound was bleeding. I washed it with sea water. I was sitting down on the ground and looking for something.

“It hurts, doesn’t it ?” - I heard a woman’s voice and looked up to see what woman has come to the beach at dawn , just like me. It was her! Virgin Mary in the cloak. Barefooted.

“ You will experience much more pain and it will hurt, but I will be besides you”

I got scared and woke up.

Hardly had two months elapsed since then and I noticed that I had no menstruation. I underwent a gynecological examination at the Military Hospital, where I was employed. The doctor examined me and told me that I suffered from endometriosis and parameterisation and will need to be treated. I felt my belly swollen and it hurt . The doctor gave me medication and told me to see the doctor for a re-check -up in a few days . I thought I was pregnant, although I rarely made love with my husband. She dismissed that possibility.

A few days later I went back for the next medical check-up. She told me that there was no pregnancy. But I did not feel well. I could not walk and I worked in the intensive care ward, where sometimes nurses had to run. She gave me three days off sick leave.

I went home and went to bed , but the pains did not alleviate ! I had to catch a taxi and to go to see back the same doctor .She immediately admitted me for treatment in the hospital , but sincethere was no –women’s ward in the military hospital then I was given a bed in our nurses’ room .

They immediately put ice on my abdomen, which calmed me down a bit. The ice-packs had to be changed frequently . I felt that I had run a temperature. I remained in such a status for 3 days.

My mother came to visit me to the hospital.I felt like sleeping and kept having a nap most of the day and night. I saw her and looked at my hands,they were almost blue. I asked my mother if she really saw them that way. After she confirmed it I realized what was happening to me. I asked her to call our nurse and call our boss. I said I had to undergo an operation, but to call a specialist from the Regional Hospital - gynecologist. My mother had taken care of everything. I had lost consciousness.

I woke up with an acute abdominal pain. I was on the operating table. The top lamp caused me great pain. I had been on a system. Above me the head of the Gynecology ward of the Regional Hospital was leaning . That very doctor who had operated on to aid my baby's birth.

“ We'll have to operate on her immediately! “- he told our doctor and he recognized me.

But we cannot operate on her in this condition! Her hemoglobin rate is very low. I required blood transfusion ! Her breathing is difficult! She will not be able to accept a full general anesthetic ! The risk is great!”

“ You called me for help! Moreover, she is a medical nurse and she wanted it. This blood that is being transfused enters her stomach , not her veins ! There is ectopic pregnancy -graviditas extra uterine or tubaris! Risk losing, risk wins. I will operate on her here.”

I said my mother “goodbye “. I did not dare say anything. My eyes were full of tears! I clenched my teeth with the terrible ache!

In most operating thetre the top lamp on the ceiling was lit bright over my abdomen and it hurt like hell!

A colleague of mine who I had trained would give me the anesthetics. She was older than me, but was just recently employed in our ward. I could only say:

“Colleague, you have not forgotten what I had taught you, haven’t you?” –so I smiled at her. –”Be brave !”

“ I am really scared! It is so complicated but I will do my best , I will take care ! I will do it!

“ I really like you !Be yourself!” – I answered her. “The rest does not depend on you.”

I awoke with great pain! I was overcoming the anaesthetic influence. My colleagues were kissing me and each of them held a blood bank in her hands to make it warm. I was told that my overflowing consisted of 12 unit - banks of blood! I had miraculously survived !

I felt overjoyed after the serious disease suffered when I could get out of bed and saw out the green grass, the blooming flowers and the trees! Especially in the morning - to watch how the sun rises, a great and beautiful ball of a globe that gives us warmth and a new day is born, new hope!

Taking a shower in the morning to feel the water on your body washing you, flowing down and how it refreshes you - preparing you for the day! Just as the water soaks the ground. A good or a bad day might anticipate, it is ahead of you, you feel alive, toned, brushed up! You feel how the blood moves in your veins, as people often say!

The colours red and white are the main colors of the same nature of the energy of the creation between our two principles: the white colour is for women and the red one is for men in the spiral spiritual ladder and vice versa - the red colour stands for the woman and the white one for the man on the physical scale !

We the Bulgarians have many pagan and non-pagan holidays that have remained from the time when we were tribes. For

example, the celebration of Baba Marta! On 1 March martenitsi- a red and white tassel are tied around the hands or are attached as a brochure to the lapel for health and the new spring! They are made of white and red wool. First the two yarn-threads are twisted into a rope and then small threads are made – symbolising the man and the woman in white and red yarn - at both ends, or made in the shape of tassels, or they resemble animals , mushrooms , cherries and so on. All men and women wear these white-red mattenitsi on their lapel or women wear them as a necklace around the neck .

The oncoming holiday of Baba Marta is celebrated in the kindergartens, and she gives each child a martenitsa for health . They are still sold nowadays in all kiosks ,in the bookseller ‘s and houses of art . They are worn by old and young till 31 March. They are taken off and hung on a blooming fruit tree . In towns where there are few fruit trees in the streets at the end of March one can see a single fruit tree beautifully cluttered or rather adorned with martenici !

I also make them and give them as a gift . Nobody had managed to take this holiday away from us , regardless of the different invasions into our motherland and the change of parties and governments and the Turkish yoke , which lasted for 5 centuries.

One could not possibly think clearly and soundly in the time when I grew up - the years , the regime in which we lived . You could not get out of this rut because you would impress as a person different from the others. They chased you out, at school , at work, even at home. At the time when I was young, all of us had to be the same, to think the same way !

On the question of thinking the majority of men share the view that it is better for them to a woman for a wife who is not very intelligent and smart. They fear other types of women and are wrong! They think that the stupid one will easier cope with

the problems , but do not know that all the potential follies come from right there! The limited thinking!

One had to reach the school 15 minutes earlier because a morning gymnastics took place. The participation was mandatory! Every morning we were aligned in front of the building at a distance of one arm from each other's shoulder and we performed the exercises the physical education teacher showed. In the cold and the boiling heat we did the physical exercises.

I remember that the first and second graders were to wear their blue tie – it was mandatory .

In third grade, after we learned a text by heart we were examined by a Commission. We went to a monument to those guerrillas who had died for our freedom we were tied a red tie, symbolic personally steeped in their blood.

And woe to those ones who have not learned the text by heart! We were bound to wear this tie fastened around our necks at school every day . If it were not around your neck you had to go back home to pick it up.

In the seventh grade, after a running procedure and behaviour assessment, one could - if decided by the Teacher-Staff Council become a comsomolets , one of the activists of the further leading force .

In high school in the eighth grade, one must necessarily wear a black gown with a round white collar . If you do not have a white collar and a round one as well you are not to be admitted in the school, they checked it at the gate , along with the grades-book. You are made to go back home to get them . I lived away from the main high school building , so it took me a lot of time to go back home to get them -I missed classes. Sometimes I did it deliberately, especially when we had maths as a first class on the schedule . In that way I had so many unexcused absences from school. The Economic, The Textile- Fabric or the

Mechanic Professional Technical High Schools had their uniforms worn by the students. So that people could know – what kind of school any student attended and belonged to .

It was already 8 p.m.. The class form teacher and a parent committee member visited the students' houses , taking rounds to check if the student was at home or was out. If were not at home without a sound reason, thy took actions.

Or, if they meet in the street after 8 p.m. they notified your parents and they eventually expelled you.

Once I was invited to listen to music in the house of my classmate's.

It was winter, in the afternoon, around 4.30 p.m.. We had to stay at home till 4.00 p.m. to keep the daily routine, do the lessons, etc.. I knew someone would bring a gramophone-record-player. We would listen to modern music.

I entered a room with chairs arranged in a semicircle. There were no beds or sofa. A roller tape recorder “Grundig” was placed in the middle of a little table. We listened to the Beatles, Chubby Checker and other singers from the “decaying capitalism” - as they said and as we were taught at school. I did not know many of the tunes and melodies as they were not played on the radio. I liked them and I listened to them with great interest, but I had to leave. It was getting dark outside.

I left about 6.00 p.m.. I lived far away from the place . On the next day they announced that the high school pupils who had been caught listening to music the evening before would be expelled. .

They had checked. Of course, someone had told us off about the meeting . I was wondering how one could think that way. There was no drinking, no smoking , just listening to music! The requirements were not acceptable and strict. I was desperate , I

did not see any future possibilities and a perspective. It seemed to me that I'm ugly, I had no friends, actually I had only one – much more different than me- she came up with views different from mine. I saw her off or she did it two or three times, walking down the main street after schools. She lived in the opposite direction of mine - at a distance of nearly 2 kilometers away. So we could not meet any time we decided to.

Who your parents were was of great importance to the student's evaluation and grading at school! He or she might not perform well but there were certain famous people whose children should have been allowed to get away with and were given the highest grades. Especially if their parents were prominent party activists! These could not be talked to! The teachers treated them with special care. I had to repeat the form, I was enrolled in the same grade for a second time. I was punished with behavior reduction due to absences from school and low grades in mathematics, which I neither understood nor coped with. I had dropped behind with the maths as early as when attending the junior high school. At that time the arguments even the quarrel between my mother and my father became unbearable. They both were unfaithful, most obviously and cheated each other. They did not get divorced, but I could not stand their constant arguments and it was the worst influence on my performance at school. According to them it was not important. But for me it was of great importance! Since then, I thought that one day, after getting married and having children, I should do my best so that my children not to feel the way I felt back then.

I was enrolled in the Evening High - school. Where it was required to submit a certificate that you are employed. I do not remember how I had obtained it. It was much more different there because there were people at various ages. Most of them

were employed and they attended school in the evening - from 7 till 9 p.m.. There were no sissies, spoiled well-to-do children with hot-shot parents I felt freer. We studied all the subjects on the curriculum, all the basics, save for Physical Education and Polytechnics. We were not taken to the factories, we did not go on brigades to work in the agriculture, picking cotton, corn, beets and apples. There was no such envy.

I finished the high school with an average grade from the state final exam and as total grades. My mother, as always, began to speak, that I will not be admitted at any University, and I “will feed ducks” as people here use to say.

I had always wanted to be a doctor, but I was not sure, firstly – if I would pass the entry examinations and be enrolled at the University and secondly who would support me for the 6 years of University studies and training, I had no allowance.

It seemed to me a very long period of time. And to tell you the truth, I loved animals more than people. I grew up with two dogs - one for birds, the other for hunting game. My father was a good hunter. I witnessed a lot more humane approach and actions in animals than in humans.

I decided to submit my documents in the veterinary Institute. When I went to file my documents one of the clerks in charge of filing asked me if my parents knew that I would apply for the Veterinary Institute. “Such a nice girl to waste her time away here” – the secretaries started talking to each other.

At that time one was employed as a vet at the cooperative farms: to aid cows giving birth to calves, lambs and to treat and cure the agricultural livestock. This profession was not practiced in the city. A dog or a horse were rare to be taken to the vet's. They either died of a disease or of old age, as our old dog died. In his last moments he wanted to walk out into the street. He died besides our gate. Perhaps because it was brought

from else-where. He had not been born in our house. I could not understand..

Then I hesitated too . Where would I work, where would my employment be? Only in a cooperative farm to aid animals give birth to their baby-animals.

I took my documents submitted at the Vet's and sent them to the Medical College for Nursing in the town of Burgas. There was our area. At that time I met my future husband there.

THE ELOPING

He was a classmate of my sister's . We had already gone out, walked down the main street several times. We went to the village where my future brother-in-law came from . It was in the mountains . So he attended my sister's wedding ceremony.

According to the custom of the village they came to take my sister's luggage by a truck, four or five people - men and women – took what they liked from our house. The best things for the new family! They had even taken my dress away which I had hung in the bedroom. My mother had prepared her “dowry” , i.e. a quilt, a rug for the floor, sheets, pillowcases, table-cloths with typically Bulgarian embroidery and lots of glassware.

My sister had graduated from Medical College from the 9th grade in Plovdiv and worked in the ear ward of the Regional Hospital in our city. She loved doing embroidery. She used to sit down and did not care much about how it was all around her –whether it is tidy or untidy-unlike me. I loved it to be clean, tidy, whipped clean well-arranged, neat all around me, and I even prepared meals, etc. I loved to read many books.

When we went into the village , I saw what the people in the family just kept a straight face, never smiled , they were very quiet. I had the idea of our villages around the city how they celebrated a wedding . They had a lot of fun, were merry while celebrating, as people say . I felt very sorry for my sister , as I could see that she was not supposed to expect a good way of life . I cried for hours confined in a of the penthouse . Her mother-in-law came to take care of me and ask me to join them . Then they gave me wine to calm down. In the evening they took me and my sister's classmat to stay with some relatives of theirs . For the first time in my life I slept with a man. I will

never forget that night ! I was fascinated by nothing. It was my first time ! Then I realized that he had submitted his handkerchief, which he had given me to clean myself to his mother to see that I was a virgin.

Once he invited me to go on his father's motor-cycle - DKV - to the town nearby to see an old friend , a classmate from the Textile Professional Technical High School with who they had finished school together. He was employed there as a shift leader .

We travelled by motorcycle. It was very romantic. I remember I was humming a song . We met his friend . This happened at about 6 p.m. . We had boza – a fermented millet beverage , famous for that time. It is made from millet . On our way back the engine of the moto-cycle stopped near a village and would not start again. We pushed it to an inn along the road. There were men drinking beer. One of them said he knew how to repair motorcycles. He was a tractor-driver . They started repairing the motorcycle.

It was at about 9p.m.. They tried the motor cycle out several times. The engine started , worked on a bit and then stopped again. We went back. I was worried, then as my sister was at home and she was the only one who knew where I was. She had come to the city in connection with her work as a nurse in the village where they lived. I could not be late, especially if accompanied by a boy.

The tractor-driver drank another beer and decided to take us home. My guy was had to go to work a first shift and had to get up at 4a.m. We got on the tractor. There was not enough space for the three of us. I sat on one hip. From time to time the tractor went to the oncoming traffic lane or in the gutter, I was cold. It was windy, it was around midnight. I was thinking

about my furious parents and my sister who had come to visit us and stay with us, about the bother I caused them.

“Maybe your wife is sleepy” - the tractor driver said. My boyfriend looked at me and then told me that we would be driven to his house. I was already trembling with fear. My father - I knew it- was ready to beat me. I was afraid. It would be better for me to be “thrashed , beaten” than to “elope” but – people say – “blind Sunday comes uninvited” which means that if you are doomed to marry someone ,nothing can prevent you from doing so.

He drove us to my boyfriend’s home. His mother and father woke up, I tried to run away. His father caught me up on his bike and took me back.” Kiss my hand and here we go!” - his father said. His mother’s opinion was to take me home in the morning but it was not accepted. So I eloped, got married without my parents’ consent.

FAMILY LIFE

In the morning at 4 am , he went to work. He worked as a section foreman in a textile factory . It was very great. Many of the workers came from the villages , were given lodgings or home and they settled in the city . So our city got full of people from the villages without great claims. Many of them were taken as members in the Communist Party, because they were not taught much, were poorly educated and were willing you fulfill orders , not considering much. At the meetings they raised their hand in agreement with a decision already taken by the management. We had such similar ones in the hospital.

Alone at my new home, only with my father- in- law I did not know what to do, how to behave.

When we went to my parents' the arguing , the quarrels about the wedding began , i.e. the ceremony of signing up, the gifts, the money for the reception , the music, the wedding dress ,the wreath, the veil and other things concerning the organization . Each one had a different opinion . They argued without asking me about my point of view .

Finally we signed our marriage in the Towns council – with no wedding reception! Back then the wedding ceremonies in the church were banned .

I wore my ball dress, the one I had on my graduation day, it was of white taffeta, sewn by me, with whorls of fake flowers, brought in at the last moment by my mother's in law godmother . I was not veiled ! I was a virgin ! He was my first husband. I felt humiliated , ugly . I wore my shoes I had worn on the graduation ball. My husband was in a white suit of tropical wool . It was Saturday , early in the morning. I felt like I were a widow . I wish it were true!

All these savings - according to my husband - are controlled and carried out because he had begun studying Economics at the University and we needed money, we had to cut the expenses. I was also enrolled to study. I knew it was wrong to marry, it was my fault, but I wanted to move out of our house as quickly as possible as I thought that my life would become more beautiful, interesting, but I did not realize that I would take a decision in a hurry without much consideration that could have bad consequences.

I was not in love so much to the extent of wishing this man so much neither was afraid of letting him go. I was wrong to myself. I lied to myself. I thought he was my best friend. Then I thought it more important.

We settled in Varna, the city where the University he was accepted in and enrolled in was. I was enrolled in the town of Burgas but after the first few months I moved to Varna.

We lived in the attic of a building. We had a room. We shared the toilet with other 3 families. Can you imagine what happened in the morning?

It was nice that the Institute was quite near our lodgings - it facilitated our going to the canteen. As far as the food was concerned - I was not used to such food. Perhaps they give such food in the army. The chickens had sometimes feathers, fat or grease was floating on top. I chose to have a bite. Then we bought 3 tier-pots these 3 on each other. They pour us a little more so we could choose from the meal to eat more than what we were due to.

I tried to look for a job for the summer. There were different advertisements: cashiers were wanted, house-keepers in the hotels for administrators in the large hotels - all of them situated in the posh resort "Golden Sands" where foreigners stayed on holidays.

I wanted to provide a job for the summer season. We had

no money. I went to the first contest for cashier markers. It was like imagining a competition to apply at the National Academy of artist for an actress. A hall and there were 8 people in front of you - only one woman in the committee - and they interrogate you , carrying out a a survey on all that interests them. They did not employ me because I had no experience in doing this work. I had no previous practice.

In a week, I sat for an interview for a housekeeper in a hotel. I was not approve too, because I was very young and beautiful . I did not ask what exactly I had to do. But I asked if there was any job for me and my tears began to drip . This was my last chance . I had had to have done a course in foeign languages to occupy the position of a receptionist but I had not done such a course .

A man from the Examination Board Committee stood up and approached me and asked me what language I had studied in high school. I said – “German”. Then he asked me to get ready, to brush up and then in a month to a call him in a definite hotel on the resrort “ Golden Sands “ in the administrative building of the hotels . It turned out that he was the director of all the hotels.

The first time I called him he was out. The second time I waited for him to come back from somewhere for two hours. I had well counted my pennies to get a ticket! We were strapped tight! We were quite short of money! I had to be employed anyhow. Then it had not occurred to me why my husband did not move his ass and find a job, no matter what, as most students did? After all he was the head of the family, wasn't he? I went to the “Golden Sands” rsort and found the Head department of the resort- complex.

The guy met me and told me that language competitions were over and waht remained was to sell cards in a certain hotel

when the season opened. I made up my mind that his was not enough for me , ‘because I would get just a few pennies a day. I explained that my husband and I were University students that we needed money. I assumed that all that would get complicated , but I on the alert. I had to get a job . There were a lot of job opportunities, there were vacancies but without a residence in the city they could not hire me ! The law required so!

Then he told me to go to the hotel “ Chuchuliga”(which means Lark) and get acquainted with the hotel manager . During this time, he would explain to the manager about my case on the phone.

I went to the hotel. It was well furnished. The floor was covered with a red fitted carpet. I had not set foot on fitted carpet.. A man in a hurry descended the stairs at a rapid pace and hugged me around the waist and told me to leave my address and that he would call me when it would be possible for me to be employed and start.

I got sad and went back to the manager. He asked me what exactly I disliked.

“The manager’s attitude” -I said.

“Ah , well” - he laughed – “I now know where to send you !” He sent me to another hotel , where the manager was younger , but looked a decent man who promised to give me the position of an administrator when the season started . This man helped me a lot without asking me for any favours . These are rare !

I went back and told the director how it were.He suggested me to buy an occupational license where my job history would be recorded - the first and only one in my life. I had no pence to pay for it ! I was too ashamed , but I him told the truth. Then he gave me one . It was the only one for my life. Then he told me that he had to return the favour to a fellow citizen of mine.

When his son was a soldier, once he was let on an- out- of the- garrison leave. Once he went to the station found out that

his money had gone. He had lost it. He asked a man from the city to lend him some money to go back to the town of Varna and promised to repay his loan when he got home. He had put down the man's address. The man had answered him that he had been a soldier as well and that he would not bother about the loan. He said he would imagine that the money had paid him a drink in the pub.

When his son repaid the money and then went to his home accompanied by his father unexpectedly a friendship was set up between them! The families started visiting each other, the ones from our town began sending the ones from Varna nice tasty peaches and cherries, etc.

I started working in the hotel "Siniger" (which means Tit) that accepts foreigners from Western Germany. I wondered how I was employed without an inquiry or a trial. Later I knew that without passing them it one could not be employed. They had already done so. But that did not mean that they would not continue doing it.

At night at 1-2 a.m. the director went on his round to greet us and to ask how we were. We took the night shifts in couples when the planes from Hamburg landed. There was a lot of work in the processing the tourists' documents and their accommodation, processing their visas, explanations, storing money and so on.

Checks, prosecutions, inquiries and intelligence by the both sides were carried out. There were police in the very hotel, but nothing would hint that someone was a militiaman.

Letters were opened, people were followed. I should have known when I was asked about some of the strangers what time he had gone out, what he was dressed in, and his distinctive features. So I started to be very careful.

We, the administrators, were always demanded to have a nice hairstyle or a haircut, to be dressed in a black skirt and

white blouse, to be polite and good speakers. The Germans thought I was German.

I thought that everything would be all right between my husband and me.

We took shifts for 24 hours straight, without interruption or a rest. Then we had 2 days off resting. Cases of investigation sometimes happened. We were always available if they called us.

I lost weight. My mother did not send us money. Once I was exhausted and felt miserable. I began to feel sick. I told my husband, who met my assumption of pregnancy with a disapproval.

We went to see a gynecologist at the students- polyclinic. After the examination the doctor's opinion expressed was that I was not pregnant and that I might never get pregnant. The position of my organs in my abdomen were not as it was supposed to be. To have no children – this was quite a shock for me ! I started crying and went looking for other doctors to see.

Once, walking down the street of this city, which I did not know, I saw a notice -board advertising a doctor gynecologist that had remained up there since before September 9th. 1944. I went in for a medical examination.. At that time, the private examinations were banned. I was welcomed by an elderly woman who I explained my problem. She treated me with the utmost care, and did not want any payment.

I explained to the doctor what they had told me and asked her to examine me and state her diagnosis. She agreed on condition that I kept it a secret and it should remain between us.

She told me that just then I was not pregnant, but it was not true that I could not have any children. My uterus position was not vertical and forward, but – when there was a fetus in the womb – it stood straight up and after the birth – giving of the child got back- returned to its previous position. It calmed me

down. I wanted to have children. Maybe , just then it was not the proper time. It was important for me to know that I could have children.

She gave me medication and told me to see her again if I did not feel well. I started to vomit 2, 3 times a day in two weeks' time. I saw the same doctor again to undergo a medical examination and she told me that I was pregnant and the fetus is at about 1 month old! It was a great joy for me!

I went back home to tell my husband the great jolly news!

When I told him that I was pregnant he would nearly beat me. He shouted like a moron, saying that it was impossible and we could not right now take care of a child! He said that I should have an abortion! We could not have him or her, I should not give birth to the baby! I was shocked! My tears fell down from my eyes! I could not speak. I could not believe that what he had said concerned our child – both of us were involved! Our love? Did it not exist? Or maybe he got scared of the fact, however, he had taken pleasure in playing with me! I thought he would stop it. But it did not happen as I wished.

He did not attend the lectures for 3 days and for 3 nights he constantly kept telling me and exhorted me to have an abortion. I stood bent in a crouch, vomited, kept silent and my brain did not want to accept this rant or rather tirade!

I understood that it would be difficult with a child that he was still a student at the University , an undergraduate- then why had he made the baby? I was heart-broken. I felt guilty, but then I began to find him repelling, a nasty villain. I had long hair which I kept in a special hairstyle called a Greek twist and it looked well on me - I had my hair cut. He liked twisting my hair around both of his hands and pulled them both and that is how he liked making love and having sex. He used to pull my hair. But it was only a deaf protest, nothing else.

He went to see our landlady's daughter. She was a surgeon. He wanted to help me have an abortion - a criminal one, of course at that time abortions were banned by a decree! Only by medical indication, a committee, a board of doctors decided it. I succumbed myself to the destiny as people say to the fate. They made an appointment for me. We went to a hospital for the appointment. I learned that this gynecologist had delivered and performed the obstetrician services for our Queen in the past!

The doctor could not believe that I was married. It was really unbelievable to have an abortion in the first pregnancy. He did not give me any anesthetics, he wanted me to feel it better – what exactly to feel better I did not see. There were people outside waiting for their appointment to undergo an examination. My examination began., he began palping with his hands and my genitals. I protested, but he knew well that I was cornered and was even paid for the job.

The pain was unbearable, I clenched my fists, he stopped twice. I must have passed out because I felt that he sprayed some water on me. How long had this torture, this inquisition taken - I do not know. When he told me to get up, my ears were muffled, I felt dizzy. Moreover I was not able to sit down again and I had to leave.

When I left this idiot - my husband – was pretending that he did not know me, so that not to attract attention and to avoid being punished. I was dying of pain, as it is said. I could not walk, I felt that I would fall down. He did not catch me by the arm, he went ahead as a Turk, and I followed him barely, hardly. It occurred to me that this man was unfortunately not my match, not for me, he took no pity. I would not have done like that in any case. I felt insulted, sad, with great resentment on my part we went back home.

He did not even take a taxi so that to avoid paying the bill and being interrogated by the police then called militia ?

The pains were really strong but they are forgotten, but because of what I had done from that day on I was on the alert. Bad thoughts haunted me. It would not let me alone.

Both of us were undergraduate students. The condoms were expensive and they were not of good quality. Who knows what junk they really were! But I had decided that if I got pregnant I would not undergo an abortion, in no case! So I did.

After I had given birth to my daughter, a year before we were divorced, I was pregnant. When I told him, he said that we would have to talk about it one night. It seemed that we had to discuss or negotiate the problem at a meeting of a party.

He remembered a couple of weeks later to ask me what had happened. I told him that the matter was solved and there was nothing to worry about. I had had an abortion, because the fetus had grown up to 2 months and then I would not be allowed to undergo it. Since then I decided to have no sexual intercourse with him so that to avoid being unpleasantly surprised.

My dreams burnt out! What I had seen in a movie – not a Bulgarian one - my belly to be touched with love with the baby in it. I realized that most of the events in the movies were never to happen in reality, but I did not exclude for them to be actually real.

Why men are so fearful and non-poetical? Or had it happened to me only ! I've read books by Shirley Mac - Lane , which says that the man comes , as if from another planet. He thinks differently and reacts differently from the woman on equal terms . Then I thought I have not met the right person , and I did believe that there was one existing! I kept looking for him all my life. Now I understand that I was very wrong . In my effort to be good to show what I could do - I did everything. Cleaning , tidying up , cooking, doing the laundry ,the ironing,

taking care of the child-my child was very fastidious at meals – she was a very fussy eater - I worked like crazy at work. I was respected as a paragon , a benchmark in my profession ! That is why I was appreciated , I can not deny it. But at home I was more than a servant. At night my poor feet ached too much. I went to bed exhausted with fatigue. I did not feel like making love . I just wanted silence. The faintest noise woke me up . I started taking tranquilizers -sleeping pills.

So , day after day, I improved my skills and speed and let my husband do nothing . It so happened that there was nothing for him to do. He started coming late home from work. A family started visiting us for dinner - the woman was a colleague of my husband's.They had no children. She was very free .They both were University graduates. Many times they woke us up at 2.00 a.m. to see us. She was always drunk and her man did as she wished , pampering her.I found them unpleasant but my husband said that it was unfortunate that they had no children and that she was unhappy . She had had many abortions during her University studies. I thought of mine. We went with them to the mountains. I saw my husband kissing his colleague . They had far surpassed the boundaries of friendship.Once her husband offered me to do just like as they did . I definitely refused him. We decided not to meet them any longer. This was not the only case.

Once I went to his office. I was supposed to meet my husband there and to join him to the shops to buy a pair of shoes for him.. I got the higher salary than him. I worked a lot of overtime hours in the intensive care and anesthesia wards. I opened the door, greeted his colleagues but they seemed to be preoccupied with responsible business.

They were laughing with his colleagues tested seals – stamping them on paper. What a job! And I was giving

anesthetics working in the intensive care ward ,did my best to save my patient! He did not even offer me to take a seat . He was superior – a boss . I Kept standing upright at the door as an intruder!! How much humiliation !

When I was available for being called on duty on emergency cases they came to take me in the ambulance and I knew that I would be away from home for 2 or 3 hours, depending on what had to be done. He knew it too. My daughter answered the phone. Her father was gone. It often happened. I worked on shifts called duty shifts . This happened again.. Once I took the risk and went back home in the ambulance to 10 pm. The child was alone. We occupied my mother's-in-law house. We had a separate entrance . The father was not in.

My mother-in-law was never interested in my child. She has not taken care of her even for a single day! She had no heart, as my father would say! She was as cold as a stone!

I gave birth to my baby via Cesarean section because I suffered from anemia and high blood pressure rate .. Nephropathy.

They put me feronastsin and glucose intravenously. The last but one day I asked the midwife not to apply the prescribed ampules as I did not feel well afterwards. She scolded me and told me that I was still young to give advice. I was in the eighth month. 15 minutes after I left , I felt sick, I felt I was running temperature. I went back to hospital, where I was admitted to be treated . They had given me 3 days off to go home for the holidays - September 9th. On September . 10 th at 10 pm I had run the temperature of 40 degrees Celcius and the child's heart-beats were going deaf . They had quickly to operate on me .They did not wait for the the local anesthetic to act. It is painful she will withstand – there was no novokain left ! What luck! I, who gave anesthetics , was operated almost without anesthesia! I felt everything! It is a great thing on live ! Where I had shaken

my legs their bones were swollen .They considered it was thrombophlebitis .They had cut me alive! I was operated on by the head of the ward t . Who would have thought of such a surgery! They sew my abdomen with staples.

In 6 days I had 2-3 of my staples removed . Pus was pooring out of the wound. I had all of them removed. A big wound opened, a large and deep one. Can you imagine what a ripped stomach I had for a woman after childbirth giving. I started doing blood poisoning, I was sensitive to antibiotics and continued to run temperature.I kept sweating very often but I had neither my nightgown nor my sheets changed , on the contrary I was kept lying in the wet ones.

The staff entry from the other wards was forbidden .The civilians were also banned to enter ! I was given my little child at a 3 hours period to breastfeed her. I was with cracks on the both breasts.She cried I also cried! She got sick too. She was alive by miracle, as she had then descended down into my abdomen to be born and just then they had made the cesure, cut me , trying to take her out with fists from the upper part of my abdomen . They gave her to me on the third day, as during the morning rounds the pediatrician told me that it is not certain whether my child would live on or not.

I was not able to eat. The women who shared my room were discharge from the hospital on the fifth day and I stayed on. I lost weight and became skinny and thin. The only communication with relatives was to talk to them through the window.I could not get up.

My wound was full of gauze and pus. I thought I would die. One night I could not even talk. I had a high fever.I had run high temeperature. A consult of doctors gathered - an internal diseases doctor, a surgeon, a cardiologist. I was dragged on to the X-ray. They held me upright . I fainted. I had not got up for

35 days. It turned out that I had an overflowing effusion in the lungs. They wanted to make a puncture in my chest to drain the contents. I refused.

In the meantime, a woman came to me, a pregnant one with who we were in adjacent beds in the gynecology ward. She came from the women's prison in our town. The other women began talking, went to hide their purses. They treated her definitely with disdain. I did not share their attitude and concerns. I shared with her dividing what I was given by my relatives. There were visits twice a week. My husband was still a student in another city. I gave her money to a phone call. She wanted to knit, I ordered yarn. She knitted and crocheted. She told about her conviction and entry in prison she had sums in deficiency and she was sentenced to one year and five months and she had already been pregnant.

The woman had heard about my condition getting worse and asked if she could be in the maternity ward. There were no beds in the gynecology ward what more she did not expect anyone to come and visit her. She fed me and changed my clothes., if he found any dry and laundered nightgown. So she raised me up in bed and treated me with great caution and care, saying that she had encountered my humane attitude. One day we heard my husband's signal. She left the room and the ward, meet my husband down the stairs and told him how I was. They saw her and discharged her immediately from the hospital. She was put back in prison, but she had told the truth about me.

It was forbidden for the civilians to enter the maternity ward no matter who they were! Medical staff from the wards were also banned for admittance! It was like a prison! As a contagious disease ward! The babies were to be seen by relatives after they

They were discharged from the ward!

But the next day my mother had come , some fellow doctors I worked with, but none had been given my file ,my folder , let alone me! The next day the head of the ward treated me very politely.The bottles he received began to matter.

I was stricken with a bronchopneumonia with fever as malaria - a consequence of hypersensitivity to a drug. At about 2.00p.m. I was always sweaty and there was no one to change my clothes. At 3p.m. they gave us the children to breastfeed. I had big crackings on my breasts. I was crying and my baby was crying ! She was hungry ! I asked the nurse on duty to feed her on a bit more ,to nourish the baby but not all of them did it .Then they started giving the baby to the mothers who had a lot of milk retained in their breasts and their children could not suck a lot. I lost a lot of weight . I could not get up . I was so desperate and tortured ! I had lain in hospital for more than a month and a half.I was a kind of thrown away, abandoned, forsaken.I did not let them a puncture to withdraw what was in my lungs . I had decided to do away with this nightmare, the sooner, the better!

I wanted to die at home. So I signed the declaration. I could nether get up nor sit down.They came to put my socks on and to dress me.With two women attendants accompanying me holding me firmly under the elbows I began stepping forward to the door.

My child was being brought behind me.

At the gate I saw just in front of me the stretcher with the woman from jail. I kisse her and I wished her good and successful birth-giving. I just wanted to go back home – to die in a clean, warm place and nice environment. I breathed quite with difficulty. My parents met me. My mother-in-law was there too but she said that I'd better go to my mother's , because she was still employed and could not help me . My mother was not retired . I went to my parents' . My mother said : "Till now the

doctors cared , from now on I will take care !”

She started giving me broth , salad with a sip of brandy, steaks, meatballs, grilled onions, baked potatoes in the oven ,sweets, cookies and everything that I loved in just little dos-ages – she did not let me take any medicines .

My wound was opened and pus came out and I had to go to the dressing every day. At first I went with my father and the child. Then the strings started getting out of the wound. I had to take them out one by one.

In five months I went to the X-ray examination with the same doctor, who had examined me in the hospital. He remembered my case. He told me that he saw my lungs the way he sees the sun. He found nothing to bother . But my wound began to close at the ninth month of the birth of my daughter. I washed my body in parts. My child was suffering, but I continued to breastfeed. As the old people say “the mother had a child and the child had a mother”. I was grateful to fate!

My husband was still a full time student. He came back seldom and left on the third day of his stay with the reason and the pretext that he could not sleep. I had never been aided by him , he never lent me a hand!

When I started going out of the house, I went to the prison and told how that woman had helped me. She got an amnesty five months before the expiration of her sentence period. She came to thank me home.

I have not been interested in exactly what and who has convicted her.

She treated me humanely, she helped me! One can be imperisoned even for staeling a loaf of bread ! And if you do not have anyone to stand up for you with money or power, they register you as a criminal. I know this from my friend who was a judge.

If one has embezzled state assets, property or if you have unpaid fees you do not go to prison, because the authorities advocate you, who command, or if you have money. But woe to you if you don't have any money !

I remember once a notorious case in my town. A young man kills his wife's lover with his father's gun - at that time the executive director of a factory. A case was formed and the father's and the youth's defending lawyer and protector was a prominent party leader – an activist. He participated in the Pioneer admittance to the organization –in the ceremony of obtaining their red kerchiefs - red was a sign of the communists-heros ' blood-soaked kerchiefs.

He advocated to justify the father for the possession of the gun. A woman comes up standing up in the hall who knows that this Party member is the traitor of a prominent communist hero in our town, whose monument is still erected in the town.

The case was heard then behind closed doors - a term of Jurists. The myth of this man and the governing power which he had collapsed. But this case is not a single one! What happened to this woman later I have never learned. She used to be also a member of the Communist organization .

My aunt was also in the organization of the Revolutionary Youth Union-RYU. She had a red book. A prominent Communist recognized and appreciated after 9.IX.1944 . My mother used to tell me how both of them walked together to bring food and notifications hidden in cookies , bread and other items to people in prison. Since my mum used to be prettier she began talking to the guards or persuaded them to help them. She and my aunt carried out dangerous tasks or assignments set to them by RYU or the female Association as well. But when it was a matter of receiving benefits ,my mother refused . My aunt , however , got a antional pension , went to a resort every year at the fee of

1-2 leva-BGN(Bulgarian currency)-a symbolic price.

It was not possible to enter and see inside these stations, residences with all the amenities and comfort , facilities which we could not imagine and dream for ! Much later, when it was already possible, I went to visit some of these stations and see what a luxury they relaxed in.

Never, not even once, did my aunt at least ask or try to take my mother, who had a greater contribution than hers!

Under the party headquarters of the Towns Council, there were stores, shops, show rooms for the chosen ones from the city authorities with special prices. And when the rationing was initiated , which I witnessed , meat ,sausages and all the groceries or food without coupons was sold out by these shops only for the privileged.

I had learned about it because my aunt's son needed good, rich food. He suffered from stomach cancer. I still think he got it due to the big stress he experienced.

The story was such: he was a year younger than me. He had a sister 14 years elder than who my aunt married for a Communist, head of the Physical Education Department .

My cousin grew up always dressed very well spent money on various things , money which his parents gave him .

Every summer for a month my aunt and her daughter on the basis of the same privileges went to mineral baths, procedures, and other treatments, leaving my cousin and his father on their own. From time to time I went to clean for them or to cook meals for them or to make a dessert. My aunt and her son, my cousin did not get along very well.

One morning I went to their place , I cleaned for them and made a dessert for them. My cousin came home with a friend, talking in whispers. I went out into the yard and saw a woman from the house across the street looking our way and toatch and muttering something. I left.

Two days later my aunt came back . She was actually called back. My cousin was arrested. His friend brought a girlfriend, The inquisitive neighbour had seen both her and me. She thought that various girls come and go . She had called the police- the militia and he was sued for pimping. Things could be settled up , because his friend’s father was also an influential save for my aunt who testified against her son .

“Convict him , Comrade Judge , sentence him !

I’m a fighter, I am a Communist , my son reaches to beat me convict him! “

He was 16 years old. They sentenced to a corrective school house -1 year and two months.

My aunt was pleased that at last she had managed to cope with her son. Everyone at home was very upset! We had not witnessed any bad behaviour of his he had not performed that bad. He was lazy in his studies and didn’t feel like learning. But he was not alone. My mother said that a mother could not be allowed to speak like that to the court, but what happened had happened.

Things were as they were. Several months elapsed. My aunt was not going to visit him .

One day in the summer my mother was on a tour of the dancing group at Thetre of the National Army .The bus-tyre had a puncture somewhere in a backwater village, to the northeast of the town of Silistra, on a dirty country road and my mum pulled out of her bag some food and sat down on the ground to have meals. She saw among the bushes a young man skin -headed who looked like my cousin .

“Are you..?”

“It’s me auntie. I’m hungry, I am starving ...”

He was as skinny as a skeleton. He was 190 cm tall . he told her that they worked in the field. Convicted prisoners

commanded the newly sentenced offenders . Complete anarchy. He told me he had not slept a wink a single night since he was there. Drunken deviances . Women and men together. They gave them only bread and water not enough to be fed. He told their chiefs that had knives , ropes and did with them as they pleased. When my mother came back she went straight to her sister's and talked to her for a long time and persuaded her whatnot. They were not born of a mother . My grandmother was my aunt's stepmother. The case was reviewed at the Supreme Court .They saved my cousin a month or two.

He returned, but he was not the same . He found a job . My aunt made a party member out of him. He married . His wife gave birth to their baby son .

The arguments , the quarrels between mother and son were not relieved. They found some lodgings, but my aunt made them go back to share her house.

One day my cousin started to load and ride sand with the cart and a bulge appeared on one side of his belly.

He was operated for hernia, but it was cancer. On the seventh day my aunt took him into an ambulance and took him to Sofia , although it is not right, it was against the rules .She had power . There he was operated on by a relative of ours. His operation lasted for 7 hours. He had a lot of cancer spread-metastases . Then he recovered slightly . But when an year passed after the operation, they sacrificed an animal and treated with it the guests, he confided in me that did not feel well and ran temperature.

He died at the age of 27 at great pains . My aunt did not allow to be applied any injections of morphine or lydol not to become an addict ! At this point and having in mind his condition, he needed these drugs badly. At least not feel for some time the acute pain! While he was still strong enough , he threw

pillows at her and whatever he had at hand. He was unwilling to be taken care of by his mother, he did not let her enter his room. He wanted only his wife to care for him telling her that there was just a little more time, a little to endure.

They called **me to include a system to** continue his life. On the second day I refused. I could not watch him suffer. And he would not. The only salvation for him was the Death! He begged me to do it! He was a very young and good-natured man. I took pity of him.

My aunt died in a nursing home at the age of 95 . My cousin , her daughter lived in Sofia and would not take care for her mother at home. She was obsessed with cleanliness and did not allow her mother to be around , to lie on the couch or in bed at day time. And my aunt was a very neat and clean woman and she was not diseased.

I went to visit her in the nursing care-home one year before she died, when I came to Bulgaria . She had retained her memory , but she was very thin, very weak. They gave them very little food . They had never even tasted yogurt there ! I saw myself what they brought at lunch . In an iron- bowl , where we once poured the soup for the children in the creche or the kindergarten , they brought bean soup , a piece of bread and that was all . Without any dessert or anything like that. She told me that they did the dishes with cold water. I went and bought everything she needed what she felt like having as a meal and the medicines she needed but crying I reminded her that her son died at the age of 27 , for which I am very sorry , but she has already reached the age of 94 ...

She told me about my grandfather and grandmother . Their story .

MY FAMILY LIFE was not going well. The living conditions were difficult.

At first we lived with my parents-in-law in their own house in the downtown of the city. We had meals together with my brother-in-law . Later we had meals in shifts ,as a separate family already because not everybody could allow having meals together.

My father in law had his own workshop in the yard. He knitted networks. He had a blacksmith's shop, where the market had once gone on, but the new government after 9.IX.1944 on, confiscated it. He said he had a "red book" too, that he was admitted into the party of the Communists, but he got disappointed when he witnessed that what we had fought for and imagined has not happened , he went to the party premises and slammed his red party book . He was a freak . He took pleasure in suing his neighbours for a planted tree , which prevents from entering , and stands on the way, for an almond – tree in his neighbour's vineyard which was his , etc.

Finally we decided to give us a room , under the kitchen half buried in the ground and near the cellar. There I cooked and we had meals . To take my child to bed , I had to go round throughout the house.

I had a washing machine that just spun the clothes with the soap . To rinse or wash the clothes of the soap I had to be take them to the yard to be rinsed there, walking with the load up the stairs from the basement ; the rising was done in a cement trough full of cold ice water to prevent pouring water into the pit of the house - instructions given to me by my mother-in – law . In winter it was like hell ! Temperatures sometimes reched below zero: -15 , -16 degrees Celsius. There were no dungereens for the children yet . I put on thick , heavy clothes but nevertheless my hands got blue with the cold , benumbed, as people say.

When I stretched out the clothes on the line , they froze in my hands before I buttoned them with the tongs. The toilet was outside in the yard. To wash intima I had to carry a bowl of warm water downstairs to pour the water out. My husband changed his shirts every day. Every Thursday, as a law of God, I changed the linen ,the sheets, the pillow cases and it was compulsory to go to the Public Baths House. It was not that far away, but in freezing temperatures and wind gusts, which is our city is renowned with ,its implementation was equal to insanity.

Once it happened so that I went to the Public Baths House with the child in a stroller-pram with 2 wheels. The winter wind had broken the shop-window and there were some uprooted trees . With the child wrapped in a blanket we arrived at the entrance of the Public Baths House. The cashier was astonished at how I could come without coming into trouble ! They watched us as if we were insane. And maybe they were right . We were the only visitors to the Public Baths House. My husband was adamant ,unyielding once he took his decision! He was obsessed in a special order he had made up , which had to be respected by all . We led the way of life as in the army,in the barracks. But where I was then, I can not explain it ?

Two years later we moved to a rented home rent in suburban neighbourhoods of the city. There, the water frequently stopped. For 2 or 3 days we had no running water as they did a lot of building works in that area.

It was summer. The undone dishes were in the sink, the water for the toilet a reserve - was over. There was no drinking water too. Water in the shops was unavailable for sale yet. I asked the ambulance driver from the hospital to fill 2 buckets of water for me and to drive and bring them to me. He promised to bring four of them home to me . I went shopping by bus to buy something groceries and imagined how I would finally do the

washing up as the plates, dishes, cutlery , crockery , vessels were beginning to stink.

When I came back I found my husband had just showered. He had used all the water, he considered the water had started running again in the taps. He had not come to think about the dirty dishes ! The water had stopped again!

My daughter was a fussy eater. He beat her to eat. Once he shoved her in the trough with cold water upside down in order to frighten her. He scared me too! I thought I she would drown . I did not think he was sane, he had gone nuts. Taking into consideration the fact that he was a University graduate , a clever one, where his mind was - I do not know.

Once we came back from the cinema and we found our daughter had cut her hair in front of the forehead almost to the bottom. She was in the second grade and we had left her home alone to watch TV. She had chopped her hair to be resemble the main character from a famous film “The Goat Horn.” Her father was furious ! I told him to stop - my daughter would see that she had made a mistake after she met her friends . But he had caught her and kept kicking her from one wall to the other! I could barely catch her head . Nasty beatings! He repeated furious :

“I have not allowed you to shear! Who gave you permission to do this ?”

We lived as in military barracks! My daughter was required since young to clean her father’s shoes, to wash them below , to dry them and keep them painted. What happened was that she she had no time left to play like the other children did. Once I heard her addressed the shoes! She was playing with them!

My husband became a chief and a party member. He began to come back home drunk, with bruises from bites on his neck and chest. They could not have been done by men !

In this period my grandfather 's house was to be demolished and belonged to the authorities as well as the grounds around it. The yard was so large that there was space enough for 3 houses to be built . We were not paid as we deserved for that large plot of land. My mother was given the right to have two flats. They built 2 towers –blocks of flats consisting of 12 floors ugly and poorly constructed because they were built up by soldiers , most of them were not experienced as bricklayers . We the owners moved to our flats and the other flats were distributed to military officers and sergeants .

Mother gave me as a heritage a small part of the house with the right of a flat. Arguments and quarrels began concerning this fact and on various occasions at home. Finally my husband “spat” and told me the truth that he would never be able to take the money selling it .

He had told me that he was at the age of 12 , when his mother took him to a fortuneteller who foresaw he would be married twice.

Once I had caught a cold – I kept coughing for a long time. Since I knew I had to watch my lungs, I decided to go over to the hospital opposite our home and to have my chest X-rayed and to see a doctor. I knew the Head of the tuberculosis hospital. I was afraid not have consequences of the bronchopneumonia, which I suffered at the time when I was operated on by the Cesarean section. I went back home with the X-ray image and explained that I had not a disease. In a few days my husband came back home with the mail in his hand,slam-bang, called me and took me with his two fingers on my sleeve, saying:

“Take your rags and go to your mother’s! There is no room for TB –s (tuberculosis-stricken) like you! To embarrass me in front of the inhabitants of the whole block all of them to read your name!”

The envelope was really great, but inside it said that I was invited to see a doctor for a medical examination. Nothing more. We have just moved into our new home. For the umpteenth time I had to put up with the humiliations that came my way! So he needed me only if I was healthy! If I were sick nobody would take care of me ! I began to realize the truth , to repine! In 3 days, he received the same letter. Was I supposed to take for granted that he was stricken with tuberculosis ?

Then something rose up in me and I really decided my daughter toto inherit our new flat in the future ! I saw that the way of my life with my husband was not good and would lead to nothing better. We were short of money but he did not want to go to work on some site with the private builders not to incur his image. His colleagues did it. He did not want us to talk about getting out of the state.

Once after my morning shift, they came to take me in an ambulance urgently , because this nurse who had to be taken was not at home. I asked the driver if a patient from outside needed any aid or if there was a patient to undergo an operation in the hospital . He answer me that there was no outside patient.

Since he started,he drove at high speed , telling me that he had lost a lot of time. It had been only a month since I underwent the operation of non pregnant uterine. On a bend the ambulance driver wanted to overtake a tractor -trailer. At that time the tractor - driver turned and I saw and felt it , how the ambulance was between the tractor and trailer. A few strong crash impacts followed on my side .I caught with both hands on the so made lever or handle over the door. But the blows could not be withheld and my head was pounding from behind on a fire extinguisher and in the windshield in front . The blows were stronger because of the tractor-driver still drove on.. As if I was half asleep I felt that I was removed off a stretcher. The rest I do not remember.

I found myself in the ER ward where I was after my operation in the surgery, the one I worked in. I had lost consciousness, but for how long - I did not know. I had a terrific headache! The banks and systems again came my way and they started being applied to me. The doctors said I had a concussion. After I was cured they sent me to the mineral baths of Narechen resort but I was not paid my sick-leave as an accident at work!

I was still in shock. I had forgotten some of my relatives' names, I also did not remember what happened to some of them. When I came back home I found it difficult to remember where I had kept the even the forks and spoons. My headache continued. It began from my teeth and covered my whole head and the medicines failed to cure it, it still ached. I was afraid to practise my job - to give anesthetics, not to make someone die by mistake. I did not mention even a word to my husband because he would in no case understand me or take pity of me! I tortured myself and tried to concentrate on what I was doing, no matter what it was. I could not recover for a very long time.

One Sunday we decided the three of us to go to the rope lift and climb up the mountain above the town. I did not feel ready for it yet, what I thought I would fall, even when I had to get up from the road onto the kerb of the pavement. I knew I had to overcome this fear alone, but did not know how to achieve it. My husband went with my daughter and onto a cart for two and went on. I was left alone, and I took one of the two seats on the cart, the other one was unoccupied, but I kept clenching the big iron cart-handle. I was sweating with the tension, but I stayed and tried to look forwards as there were pretty deep places in my view. Something seemed to tell me: "Jump!"

At this point my husband said to my daughter: "Watch how your mother has gripped the iron handle! She is trying to break it!" - and he laughed out loudly.

When I heard it I started crying and clutching the iron handle still tighter. When I descended the rope lift up in the mountains was wet all over with perspiration, though the weather was pretty cold.

For the umpteenth time I realized that this man is not humane.

Time and again one remains on his or her own in life but that's why one chooses a mate. To exchange thoughts, to help each other in need, to entertain or comfort! I was always alone!

I thought of getting a divorce and found a lawyer that if I wanted to be divorced I would need evidence by witnesses. I had no opportunity to pursue him, because my work was so

Demanding that I scarcely had any spare time to do it. I did a lot of urgent duty and night shifts to increase my salary. I was paid double more than my husband was. There was only one more thing - the reason for the divorce to be me.

One afternoon, a little before my husband would come back from work, I invited home a young man who I knew liked me and longed for me. I treated him with a drink and to made him at ease as much as to think about the possibility of having some sex with me.

My husband found us seminaked. A scandal, shouting and cries followed, etc.

I applied for a divorce. Finally I decided to solve this problem and put an end to it.

One evening with the mail he received the notification for a divorce. He went out furious! He came back in the dark and threw a pillow at the top of my face and began to beat me. I could hardly get out of my bed. My daughter slept in the children's room a corridor away.

I broke vases and what came my way I threw at him, but he had shifted my jaw and it terribly ached. I started to cry. My daughter woke up and he stopped for a minute. I managed to run

down the stairs to my mother's flat. I could see through the peephole that he was awaiting for me with a knife in his hand. Gypsy work !

We called the police, then called militia. They said that they could not interfere into family quarrels. I called my colleague at the hospital whose husband was a militiaman.

Another patrol car arrived but my husband pretended to be very peaceful, because otherwise he would sleep in the police, where they were very strict , no kidding!

The other day my colleague told me to go to the police because my husband had registered my daughter as a gold-thief. I did not believe it, but I went to one of his former colleagues employed then as a Head of a department in the Ministry of Home Affairs. His father in law was a prominent fighter against fascism. He checked and it was indeed so. He knew us. Our family and his had rented adjacent flats in the a block.

He told me that once a name was registered for theft, it was done away with this person , his goose was cooked. The police began to interfere and we knew that it was not a joke. Crime was minimized. We were quick to take measures, we had to act quickly.

A patrol car with two melitiamen inside it watched the streets, they checked the passports and looked for a seal which appointed your employment. If you had none , then they found you one , even if you were a naked gypsy ! For hooliganism or actions similar to , if someone pushed and turned a rubbish-bin or behaved indecently, they sent him knocking rubble for 30 days. They were strict. There were no drugs in the streets. There was no money. There were not as many criminals. There was only an authority – militia!

By the way, it was considered that if at a meeting or at a society place one began to speak against the government or if

you expressed an opinion that you were dissatisfied with the authorities , you might not go home on the next day.

I had a friend whom I had not seen a long time. When I met him, I asked him if he had been sick. He answered me he had been arrested by the militia on his way to work. He had attended a meeting at the factory the previous day . He was a responsible employee and occupied a demanding position . He was a University graduate . He had been hastily accused of being a man against the regime and taken to strenuous physical activity jail . This man was very fond of his child. That day hadn't been able to see his child! To say goodbye. He was released 6 months later .

I do not know if nowadays there are such punishments if one addresses against the authorities in a democratic society or country? One could not speak out loud thoughts different from the official ones. Yes! The regime was strict. There were many eavesdroppers who finked and peached everything they heard as long as it was different from the norm, which had been appointed by the superiors in the government.

My family life continued to exist, despite the burden I felt especially the selfishness and the misunderstanding. Even when we discussed a film , we had different opinions. Various events. One night they called me on an emergency ambulance. An artificial lung had to be attached to a soldier crushed by the rear tyre of a big car, the first time they had not seen him, they turned back and he was overrun.

Apparently his head was not affected. He could not open his eyes and kept saying and asking, "What time is it and when it will be dawn?". We attached to him the apparatus artificial lung. At 4 .30 a.m. he died. At 5:00 I left to walk home ,not to be driven by the ambulance. I felt very desperate and felt guilty. The lights in the houses were being lit . People woke up to go to work!

A new day has begun, a young man was dead .He even had not reached the age of 20.

I came home and my husband said:

“ Why didn’t you wait to be 6:00 a.m.to wake me up, why should I get up an hour earlier ?”

I did not answer. My tears flowed silently down! Inherently selfish , my husband respected and regard noone! My throat had shrunk! What could I tell an individual without human understanding?

Another case - the head of the military pharmacy - had cancer. His wife was a midwife - pregnant - had remained with him. When he saw me, he smiled and was very pleased that I will be the nurse on duty at the night shift.

“ I don’t trust the others. I feel very tired , but as you will be on duty you will not forget to change my bank!”

I started fulfillin my functional duties and I went twice to see how he was. The bank was about half full, half empty . I sat down to read a book . At 2:00 a.m. I went to see him. His wife was asleep. He slept in agony, with foam at the mouth.

The next day we had guests at home and my husband laughed saying :” Do you see my wife still grieves for his patient!”!

I felt embarrassed , guilty. My female compassion was more than the compassion of a nurse . After this happening I never told anything about my work at home. It was useless to tell whatever . My husband would never understand me ! There was nothing in his heart.

My father was sick in bed. My mother took care of him for 6 years. I rarely visited them. My husband did not allow me to go often. I still feel sad that I could not help my mother and take care of my father a little better! I had no time to pay and I was due to take care of my infant ! To play with her!

I also prepared some winter supplies. There were no fresh vegetables at the shops. I made pickled vegetables, stewed fruit,

marmalades, preserved tomatoes. Homemade they tasted were very delicious! My husband never helped me with their preparation as far as I remember. He might have incidentally sealed a jar but that happened occasionally and no more. I usually made about 200 jars.

I was young , pretty! I need some tenderness! I needed help.Love. My heart enjoyed the crumbs that he threw at it from time to time !

Life- standard rose up . Earlier on they announced on the radio there would be discounts of the goods on celebration days like May Day or the Ninth of September . Cheese , milk and yogurt .I was used to queuing for yoghurt since the age of 6 . It was delivered in large casseroles with a thick butterfat cream on top. If there was cream on top of the pot , I would go ahead if there was no I pulled aside to wait on . Then I was eating it with a large spoon. What yogurt we had! Now they mix it with other stuff.

The yellow cheese of my childhood had gone. Tasteless products they do sell now ! Who had not tasted it in days of old he would not know how it used to taste! I really don't not know why these recipes are not used any more? I learned that now they made cheese of powdered milk.

In the need to furnish our home we withdrew a loan . We were repaying yet another loan for the flat . All the money we raised were in my husband's account. My salary was higher than his. I used to buy most of my clothes from the children's ware shops. I was slim and the clothe fitted me. They were cheaper.. I did not want to weigh on the family budget.

After the divorce, I had to repay a lot of money to my ex-husband because the prices of the estates had increased . He could not use only that part of the estate that my mother had administered for me as a donation.

To share your life with your husband for 15 years and not be able to part with dignity! We had a child. He did not think about her, he did not care for our daughter. He was a University graduate. He occupied an important position , but his understanding about life, his human relations, his attitude to the people and what he should be like a man , were issues he found not quite clear and could dimly comprehend .He had limited views.He was bad by nature ! No gentlemanlike attitude ! Nobility could never be his feature of character! I hated , even detested him ! My hatred grew more intense with every other day. I could not stand the smell of his body . He was clean, but I felt his smell the way a dog would smell it. Every person emits a kind of smell , but his I could not stand . Traces of his body remained as printed on the sheets in summer time .

My daughter and I experienced many other trials during the divorce and after it .

During the divorce her father emptied all the rooms. When we were not in he took his time . He had left only the bed in the children's bedroom . I realized after at the lawyer's that by law we were still a family and I had to collect evidence concerning the missing things , to prove where they were and with witnesses to prove that they had been actually ours! A long and almost impossible job! I understood that we won't be able to part as reasonable people , despite our meetings to agree on lists for other property left ! This individual with the selfish purposes had not left any room for the few good memories between us. One could never speak of humanity as far as he was concerned.

He offered me to take the refrigerator, which was made up many years ago but was still functioning, and he would take the stove, which was still new! As though he carried on a kind of sale! Thus that guy fell down for ever and I felt sorry for the thousandth time that I had married such a inferior creature!

I re-paid him the flute we had bought to our daughter , to keep it because we went to another city with her to take flute lessons as we intended for her to study at a music school. It cost me a lot, but her teacher said she was talented. He taught eight students only three of them were talented. My daughter was one of them . I submitted an application to the Principal of the music school where the teacher taught .But the city it was situated in was not our area.

Her father met her and told her that he would allow the principal of the school to apply because he did not like it.

He had Personally seen and talked to him. What a wretch!

His malice was great! He had never cared for our child! He cared just for himself! My money could buy just a few things! He kept my money in his account during our marriage although I got a higher salary than his. I took no money from his account , my money!

I made a request to the building manager stating that I wanted to heat only one room. I could not afford to pay the entire heating bill. My salary was not enough for everything. It was very difficult for me to cope with a salary ! A single mother, alone is not able to support a child unless there are side income or if she works overtime.

One evening we were having dinner in the kitchen and I heard someone entering. At this time back then we did not lock our doors. The house manager – a colonel stood just in front of me with hands in his pockets. The military ones had rented flats in the block which had been built . They had no stable residence, but they they occupied some flats that were joined by studios and that way were made larger.I had applied , I had filed for suspension of the heating in both of the rooms because I was short of money.

In a judge-like voice he announced me in an arrogant way that I could not give up the heating . What would happen if

every body started to give up . Then I said that if he could not solve the issue , I would address the general and asked him to turn away and go from where he had come ! He had entered my own my home without ringing the bell , well my home was not a barn ! I did not even stand up or leave the table. I was so indignant . I could hardly suppose how ill-behaved and rude that commanding officer was!

His eyes widened and later he gossiped what a bad person I was and that was the reason for my husband to leave me. The General let me have only one room heated and paid for. I had submitted my salary and the heating costs.

After the divorce case felt liberated. I could do or not to do certain things right away that could wait or be postponed.

There was no one with whom to argue, as if losing your time in vain. What he decided was the law! I thought I would finally sleep calmly at night!

But a divorced woman's life with a child at that time was not easy. Not to mention a girl who had given birth to a child without being married. The child was given up for adoption at the Mother and Child's care home.

Once there was a shortage of nurses in such a care home and a colleague of mine from a nursery and I were sent to work there for a 15 days period there. We also gave night shifts.

I always brought something for the older children – at nursery age . The children got used to it and met by a swarm . They stretched their hands and took the box of candy or the bag of cookies. The more active children did their best to come again first. They took the candy and then handed them to the other children. Sometimes they took the treat more often than not from a blond boy and a girl – dark skinned, with black eyes. The girl took me by the hand and sang me songs. Once she asked me when I would take her home . And when I would bring her the clothes that I would lead her away in !

I replied that this could be done later. What could I explain her? I tried to play that way, not knowing that she expected me really to take her away -to be adopted. She was older than the others. Then I learned that her mother had left her for being bred . She had not given her consent for adoption.

One night during my night duty shift I heard from a distance the girl and the boy talking. They were fighting among themselves, arguing who of them I would take home.

I was in an awkward position, felt embarrassed. I asked a colleague, a one occupying a regular position in the care house - why the children had had that impression . She told me that when people came to choose a child, the child chosen by the new parents for adoption was given a treat to give to the other children. To get used to them. Then they carry his or her new clothes to change, etc. Poor children! I wept a lot and caressed them as kittens they really were!

The next day I got a permission from the principal to take the elderly children out for a walk, outside the main building. What a joy it was ! They were dressed almost on their own and hurried up lest someone to tell them to return. It was obvious that they were very rarely taken out. They looked around in awe. They stumbled. We walked slowly to be able to see everything around. Most of them had a heart disease, and therefore were not taken up for adoption.

I walked them through the village streets . We approached a bakery where bread was made out, taken out from the furnace and sold up warm . They began to cry out that they were hungry. I went and bought them a warm loaf of bread and gave it to them. Everyone was happy! I remembered about the warm bread that I had bought in my childhood.

Many times the girls wanted to raise the child, but their parents shouting and threatening to abandon their daughter

managed to talk her into leaving the child. The girls, however, before giving birth, signed a contract that after giving the birth - would give their child to the care house. I witnessed an argument , a quarrel between parents and a daughter. They called her names , shouting a whore a bitch , a slut, etc. She was crying and would not let her child go! She wanted herself to raise him! The single mothers were rejected , out-thrown by the society! They were whipped and the people's attitude to them was bad both at home in the family and at work, they were evil-treated! As if it was not enough for them to be deceived!

Women who were married and had lovers were not so backbitten or gossiped. Men thought that there would be a chance for them too, and the women were sure that they would not have their husband taken away.

Life was very difficult for me. I made some winter supplies to save a few BGN-lev. There were a lot of vegetables sold at the market but they seemed to me not so delicious. Now you can not talk about the items that had been on sale before to the factories and the cooperative agricultural farms were destroyed ! They were much better! Not because they are just a memory from my childhood. They were really good of good quality. Real! There was no such forgery in their production-process ! Now people are forced to eat junk food ! The young do not know . As my grandson , when he comes back to Bulgaria for the holidays, he thinks that our songs are in the CHALGA style. Because everywhere it goes further. He once asked his mother if we were gypsies. Our flat was in a poor, wretched condition and has long stood the way we had left it in. The bathroom tiles were old and had retained limestone on top. He used to enter the bathroom in his socks ,not get dirty ! He was young - 4 years old when he arrived in Italy.

The quince jam, apples and pears marmalade in a mold, the hip jam in small kegs when you ate it, it kept stinging even your

tongue! There it had an enchanting fragrance! Good things cannot be easily forgotten! Cherries, sour morllo cherries ,strawberries jam - all the fruit inside whole, with a syrup almost the same as is was made at home. The yellow cheese disappeared, the pickled brine cheese - sheep and cow. Now the yellow cheese is like a rubber band, the cheese makes flakes out of the salt!

Not to mention the types of sausages and salami ! hey cannot be compared to the old ones! Now they are a kind of dark, almost the same taste. What happened to the old methods and recipes? I heard that they the yellow cheese was made of powder-milk imported from Germany. It does not taste like cheese at all the one they sell now! We were famous for our former yellow cheese in days of old! Even this one made by the Karakachan who were great yellow cheese producers, now cannot be distinguished from the other manufacturers' product.

In frozen chicken they injected water to weigh more! We were admitted into the Europe Union, but in someone's effort to accumulate money and capital quickly – he or she lies to people! There is no control on the goods! The last time came to Bulgaria I bought fresh meat from the market in the town - while I was bringing it home the bag got full of water- nearly a glassful of water had flowed from it! The crooks and the corrupted are in power, they govern!

So then I started to make liutenitsa: a pepper, eggplant and tomato hash, for which aim I had to roast only 40 kg. of peppers and to grind them with the meat-mil- grinder, I do not grind the eggplant and the tomato paste. Since I am from the Peach Valley, I made stewed fruit of peaches, cherries, plums, apricots. Homemade cherry jam, which is made by an old recipe just in our region with a geranium leaf or vanilla, it is unsurpassed in terms of taste!

I renovated the flat with new wallpaper. I painted the ceilings on my own, not to give money, or to have problems with a certain man. All I did on my own. My daughter has been always busy !

When I painted the wood of all the windows, my daughter bought me some pearl clip earrings and told me that I did very well. I was shocked. She had not helped me at least once. She brought me some magazine clippings. She attached a poster with the child's rights on the back of her bedroom door.

I could not even talk with her about my rights! I had only obligations, the right to work! I could not be wrong! I could not demand! I could not plead! There was no one to hear me, or give it to me!

Later, when I let our flat and we moved to live in another city, she did not come back one evening till 7 p.m. I went to work the night shift. During my whole night duty I kept thinking if something bad had not happened to her.

She did not call me on the phone. I spent an incredibly heavy night.

In the morning, when I got home, I found her at home. I asked her why she hadn't called me. She answered me that she was old enough to do as she pleased. I could not stand it and then I slapped her.

After several similar incidents she told me she was going to live with her father's . She really went to live with him. He sued me for my daughter and the flat.

He was already married, he had a newborn baby and he was the step- father of a boy from his wife's previous marriage. They became a large family with many children.

During the case at the court my daughter testified against me. They wanted to take my flat with the part I had inherited from my mother's house before it had been demolished in my

name. I had already paid his share. I had borrowed money from colleagues and from the auxiliary friends' fund. I had to repay them the money. The flat 95 squares living space. One day she would be left no estate as a heritage! She could not understand it. She dwelt on with them. During the case I was found non-guilty and it was unsuccessful for them. I was obliged to pay monthly allowance payments.

She finished high school and she did not call me. I had a phone home. Her dad always found an excuse not to let her come in the last minute when she would start. It was quite hard for me to bear it. He was tricking me. He had no human relations! He had never had!

I could not see my daughter before the high school graduation ball! There is nothing worse than having that sentence, that conviction! We met in the park in front of the stadium. I cried with joy and insult! I had not seen her for 2 years! This harassment that I had had suffered for the umpteenth time by her father! I do not know how he lives with his new, second wife.

After the ball my ex husband's wife called me to tell me that my daughter was impossible and she could not bear her. She made an appointment with me in the same garden - to go and get her. My daughter wanted to go back home. I went and brought her home.

I even wanted to sing songs banned under the communism "Lili Marlene" or "Shumi Maritsa" - the anthem of the King. Anyway, I knew the words well. Not because my parents were for or against the king. I was born long after that but just because I was happy!

When I got divorced, as if I had given an advertisement in the newspaper: I looked for just any man. In the morning when I went to work around 6:40 a colonel was waiting for me, showed

me some of the keys to a flat and demanded to meet me there. I did not know him. He said he lived in the opposite block. I had never seen him before.

Doctors with whom I worked for years, began to act in a very different way than I had expected. Some of them told me that they wanted to get into my flat just for 10 minutes. Therefore I responded as arrogantly as they did that I was not a woman for 10 minutes!

My life was getting more difficult a few months after the divorce, when I felt that I needed a man – I needed sex. My sexual life was interrupted for more than two years. I was young and beautiful! I needed love, someone to caress me! Sex!

My husband and I did not have much sex- not a very good one. I remember the first year I did not feel any orgasm. I had not had sexual intercourses before. So I did not know who knew what. Then I realized that my husband had had a problem with a girl. He could not do till the end what he had begun. He went to see a doctor and had some injections applied. With me, he had no such problems. What to tell about myself? I was uneducated on the subject.

There was no literature or magazines to see and learn something. All that stuff was banned any novels, movies like “Rambo” were imported from the west. And - to learn - you must practise. How could that happen as I had such strict parents. At that time most of the people were not educated in this regard. There were such ones of course who had started having sex as early as when we went on brigades . These later, already knew and they could. Many of them had successful marriages and did not divorce because they had were fluent at something more interesting and knew how to entertain.

I was 35 years old and I began to feel ashamed of the fact that a possible man would expect me to act as a woman who

knew how to make love. The more they hear - divorced – the more they considered me a woman for all and practiced mostly!

I came a long way as a divorcee. I was humiliated! Our ex friend- families, our friends stayed away from me. The women thought that I would possibly take their husband. And their husbands wanted to become my lovers. More precisely they wanted occasionally to have sex with me. Being somebody's lover to have someone who cares about you. I do not think at that time they understood this issue at this level. Under communism, the woman had to work, let's say even on a tractor or I do not know on how many weaving looms but she was still a dependant woman .

This dependent woman had almost have to have sex with all the principals, heads, directors of whom she depended. I do not believe anything has changed. On the contrary. I was neither aggressive nor rude. I was beautiful, pretty well dressed. I bought an expensive fabric-material and sewed what I liked to . I learned from my mother. I was elegant. I loved humour. I laughed when I was joking, but this rarely happened. I was polite and correct. But that meant nothing in a men's world !

I was looking for a man with whom to talk, to live, to laugh, to be able to rely on to help me in difficult minutes to have sex without shame, to want him.

I found a fake love with sex, fake sex with love, infidelity, instability, volatile in characters, irresponsibility. I tried, I was trying to figure out what actually man was like? Everything started well at the beginning and gradually I realized that I was wrong. The man stretched out like a cat leaning on me, and I, because I knew how to do everything, was doing it. I kept waiting to remember many things, but alas!

So he wanted to be commanded, to be given orders. He needed to be told what to do, but not a tone when you are on the verge of breaking your nerves. Men do not think in most cases

for many things. I did not look for a scientist, but just for a man! Actually, it's like raising a child. To teach the child, to be a mother, maid , to keep the fire in bed ,to cook well, to dress well, so that not to get replaced with the other one. A very hard task !

I did not have the luck to meet a man who met at least some of my requirements. I came across all sorts of guys. Maybe I was not looking for the good one well enough. They always found me. This is very important.

At the age of 22 I was operated on with a Caesarean incision.

At the age of 33 I was with one ovary - outside uterine pregnancy.

At the age of 46 doctors found that one of my kidneys did not work .

At the age of 48 erosive gastritis - with haemorrhage, as a result of skipping meals and medications.

At the age of 62 high blood pressure rate.

ABOUT THE TURKISH

In our country many Turkish had reproduced. It is not possible to be left still since the Turkish yoke. We have remained under the Ottoman yoke for five centuries! But I do not believe the Turks have arrived with their wives!

Now children are taught that there used to be only Turkish presence in our country. Maybe not to exacerbate the situation with Turkey, or not to get riots in the state. Where does history remain? Always in support of the policy?

The Turkish population mainly grew tobacco. They were able to build decent houses. They built their houses.

At the schools and institutes they had reserved seats for admission to the University as a minority. They lived near the areas where mostly tobacco was grown. So around these areas the population was mainly Turkish. The Bulgarian people remained for a little while there. They were pressed in the shops to ask for bread in Turkish, especially if the seller was a Turk. So their claims were increasing as well as their number.

They wanted mosques, to be taught at the schools in Turkish, even their language to be considered official. They began to seek assistance from Turkish citizens who lived in Turkey by radio stations .

I had a colleague who was a Turk with who we were employed together in the polyclinic. Her brother was under investigation. He was caught talking to Turks in Turkey to seek help from them. In turn they asked them to Turkey to live there because they told them that they were their Turks. They began to raise various riots!

It turned out they had contaminated the milk with bacteria and consequently outbreaks burst one after the other.

A midwife was caught sterilizing newborn male children so that the Bulgarians to have no generation. Generally, they did a lot of mischief. They wanted an autonomy! They wanted new mosques - their churches! In certain villages, which were mainly inhabited by Turks they wanted to speak only in Turkish.

Then the government began to take actions. A decree was issued : he or she who felt Turkish and wanted to live in Turkey might go but the ones who would remain would have to change their names. Trucks loaded with luggage could be seen. Persian carpets, household items and belongings, chairs and other items. In 24 hours they had to move out.

Those who remained, changed their names from Turkish into Bulgarian - Hussein became Christo Mehmed - Murad, etc.

The change of their names reflected for the worse to them, because if Hussein had a medical history that it suffered from a certain disease he was gone. I do not know what they did to retire? Many had sold their houses before they left. When they arrived in Turkey, they were sent to the Anatolia and told them that they were recognized as Turks.

They slept on the lawns, laid the Persian carpets - without a roof. There were such ones who had managed to return – just a few of them. Some of the women already carried a Turk in their womb . They suffered tragically their renaming them!

Before this colleague I was working with –a Turkish, to the question why they did these evils, said: “It was Turkish land here and Turkish land it will remain until I wash my trousers in Bulgarian blood I will not stop helping our own fellows!”

When I heard these words all of us surrounded her in a circle, but we did her nothing bad, we were at work. But you can not talk and think that way !

I do not believe that when the Turks came to our lands to capture and invade them to have taken their wives along .

Moreover we know that the Turks had taken male children 5 year old Bulgarians , to make them Janissaries- Turkish blood-thirsty soldiers – their army that they used against the Bulgarians. They entered every gate. When they came out , they scratched two transverse lines in the red paint on the door as a token that they had passed by.

And up to now that day of the year is well remebered. This bloody tax had left scars in our folk songs , novels, films .

Another event in my time , which is not forgotten , the consequences of which are still felt and well remembered.

CHERNOBYL

It was in spring. One morning there was a strange mist outside. As if the air was compressed by a very gentle yellow pollen.

In our city mists just did not fall, as there has always been a breeze. It seemed very strange and because I lived on the high floors it was visible that the fog was just not typical for May.

I turned on the TV to see if something had happened. They did not announce anything special on the news. So nothing had happened.

A neighbor came to tell me not to go out . Her husband was a colonel in a military chemical plant . She was quite worried and told me that there was radiation above permitted limit . She worried about her granddaughter at the age of 3 that she could not take her out for a walk. On her husband's recommendation we closed the windows well. We did not know yet where it came from and what it was like . As due to my father's experience we were used to listening to radio " Free Europe " in our house before it was demolished , I turned on the radio at a low tune. All around my flat were military . We the owners were just a few. I heard them talking about listening, evesdropping and taping what we talked and listened to in our flats. As always there was an apparatusbring , jamming machines deafening the radio announcer. I racked my ears to hear better and I dimly recognized the words the announcer pronounced. We understood that the Chernobyl nuclear power station had exploded on April 26 at 11p.m. Various people from different countries commented. I immediately turned on the TV - no such news ! I continued to listen to the radio . They went on talking . A Bulgarian on air was explaining that sch things happen and we must be patient,understanding . A man from the USA replied him that such things happen , but I have to warn the countries,

the states and the peoples of the situation , to protect themselves, and said - “I don’t wish when my daughter plays outside with the sand , the hot particles to fall from above on her “ And he was right . What was done was done. They did not want to panic , they did not care of their people ! For months and years people suffered from this negligence, of this indifference , of this inhumanity to the rest.

Nobody had the courage to tell the truth on time . We ate the fresh lettuce and radishes, the green plums without suspecting anything! I’m sure that in the USSR they did not discuss anything on time too. I listened to it as a thunder , as it is said . What could be done? Nothing was announced neither on the T.V. nor on our radio. .

I realized in 3 days that an order had been given for the soldiers not to be given any bone broth. I lived in a block of flats with military unit ones. .

So for about 2 weeks or more no safety precaution were taken! Then they began to explain that they had taken all the actions! They explained how to wash the lettuce and that was all . People had already swallowed the harmful elements!

There were villages situated at a lower ground level and it hit them indeed. Disabled children were born - headless or without arms or with some organ missing. People’s teeth were falling , etc.

A few weeks ago here in Italy, a young Russian girl at the age of nearly 20 told on the SKY that during the outbreak they came and drove them to remote parts of Chernobyl. There was nothing like this! I’ve talked to Russians with whom I worked together in Italy. They told me that the government did not allow the residents of the areas around Chernobyl to leave the area because of the high radiation they emitted - not to infect the others! In short they had to remain where they were to die !

Some of them wanted to go to their relatives ,to go out of this vicious circle and they were not permitted ! Just communist-like! I knew they had been irradiated 5 times more than permissible.

The latter was confirmed by a child at the age of 12 ,who was invited to spend the summer in Italy. She came from Chernobyl - 28 years after!

I had wanted to get out of this knot-work to work in another country as a nurse for a long time. This was the only solution , because I understood that I should rely only on myself , on my labour.

Unfortunately I could not achieve it yet. I found an agency that employed nurses to work in Germany. Nothing happened , I did not get the employment.

At that time my cousin's son was ambassador there. He refused to help me on the grounds that I have not studied German. I studied German in high school . My mother had learned German well in high school. She was proficient in Latin. Language are learnt. That was not the problem ! They would not like to help me! They would not like to have problems with me. They did not want the truth to be known!

But this was not the only problem . I could not interfere in the world of diplomacy. What I wanted was just to be employed . We were starving , so to say . But family ties- the relatives did not help me.

My aunt - my mother's sister - had been to Serbia. Probably her father had given her his relatives' address . She had visited Belgrade , Nis and Vranje and found all the relatives. The reason for her to go maybe is related to an investigation entrusted to her by the authorities in Bulgaria to the lineage of our family . When my aunt came back from her trip , she said to my mother :

“ Sister, our father had lied to us till now! He is not a Bulgarian! He is a pure Serbian! They showed me his native house in Vranje..

She was very excited by the rich way of life that our relatives led there and by their good reception. They had given her many gifts. .

Not long after her visit she received a letter from Belgrade that the son of my grandfather’s sister would visit us.

All of us were in a rush to prepare the home for the guest and we did not know how we would know him at the station. My mother had prepared many meals. We went to the train station. The train stopped and we started looking at the passengers one after another. The biggest surprise was , when we noticed person who was a the spitting image of my grandfather getting off the train. A woman was walking next to him, presumably his wife. They both were very elegantly dressed.

Since I was the younger and very curious to hear how they spoke and how my grandfather was talking to them, I heard, but I scarcely understood separate words. My grandfather’s nephew told him:

“ Come back to us! No one’s looking for you! You can not live this miserable life here.

My grandfather shook his head in negation, looking forward thoughtfully. Then we left them and went back to our house.

Many years later, when I went to visit my aunt in the nursing home , she told me about my grandfather’s life and history when he used to be very young.

My grandfather’s friend fell in love with a very nice girl from a wealthy family. When he realized that the girl’s father was against their marriage, they decided to escape on horse-back and my grandfather to accompany them. But her father , who was very bossy and possessive , found out about the escape

and caught up with them on horseback accompanied by people who worked on his farm as apprentices. Once the boy sees that that they would not be able to escape, he shoots the girl and himself.

My grandfather, seeing the situation and assessing that he was an accomplice in the escape, left his native home forever and went to Romania. There he found a friend, who he tells that he had his personal documents stolen. His friend testified before the judiciary authorities, that he had known him since his childhood with the data and the name which my grandfather gave. These data were not true, so that not to be found. Both of them worked as bricklayers for a farmer.

In order to receive more money he came to Bulgaria to work in a coal mine. He got ill with a hernia and went to be operated on in Sofia. Once on the operating table the doctor recognized his friend from the fatal accident. My grandfather was surprised that his friend was alive. The girl his friend was very much in love with had died, and he had sworn that he would never marry again because he loved her so much. He was committed to the medical profession.

I got obliged to my colleagues who became my guarantor for my loan and to a friend who gave me one thousand BGN-lev without a receipt, whatsoever. With the oral provision that I would return her the sum when I could. This is very rare! I am grateful to her for trusting me ! I had to return money to my ex husband for the flat I retained, because it then had increased its price and was worth more than the price at which we had bought it before. It was reassessed during the divorce . He was found non guilty and won this divorce! What followed for me , my only exit was to go to work in another country.

Then came the rationing system. They gave us coupons for sugar, flour and others. There was such a crowd in front of the supermarkets that the elderly people could not enter the store.

I had to go and get my stuff personally, lest someone would make evil-use of them! With great trouble and efforts I managed to take my mother's products .

What should I say about the Inflation,. One item was sold at 5 BGN and its price increased to 50 BGN overnight. Not to mention the money in the banks. Who had it, of course. I remember that I bought a leather bag that cost 5 BGN-lev. The next day I went to the store deliberately to see the prices. These bags cost 50 BGN.

Then in Italy when the Euro currency was introduced ,almost such a thing happened too. From 5 mileliri Italian Nomination it became 5 euros, but the wages remained the same.

By the way, my cousin's son is still employed in the consular department of the Bulgarian Embassy in Germany. My cousin-his mother refused to help me. I'm sure she had told him to refuse me to avoid having any problems . Several years ago, my cousin wished to come to Italy and I to look for a new husband for her as her husband had died . He was a prominent communist who went to establish a soccer team in Tanzania. He stayed there for more than 10 years .He was paid in dollars. Once it happened so that I had the opportunity of having legalized my diploma in Sofia me, to have it translated and legalized immediately they wanted to be paid extra money for the fast service-more money than I had with me was urgently necessary. I was already in Italy , but the work illegally . I called on the phone to my cousin , to lend me some money . I explained her that I had money left home and I would return it to her on the next day. She refused me on the pretext that she was retired and had not enough money. She knew I was already well off . I broke my relations with them.

I was filing documents for Cape Town. It was unsuccessful.

At that time, they made lists of nurses to work in Syria at the hospital. I signed up too.

They knew how I worked , especially in the ER and the operational theatre . I believed in my intelligence and training. I had come off as the best occupying this position and job. I had won the contest but the patient , whoever he was my attitude towards him was warm and fairly , regardless of his or her rank and status ,that was the most important prerogative for me during my nursing practice. Rich or poor - to me everyone has a right to live . I had struggled with death and I was extremely happy when rescue people.

For a ninth of May I was awarded a medal “30th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany” - 1975. That is all I have kept , all that is left for me. I had been on the list. The divorced ones could not take part. I think the married women have more lovers than the rest, because they feel sure that they had been chosen by a certain husband and are calm to the society.

It was time to be introduced to the military research.

They told me that they knew everything about me – they personally knew my father and my mother. We all had a file which contained all the family events and actions. Everything was prepared. I also wanted to take my daughter. They gave me a ticket to get her in 6 months.

I went home, I told my daughter. My mother did not know yet. We decided to tell her at the last minute. -I needed her help to take care of my daughter. She was 16 years old and could do everything on her own, but she was still a child!

I remember with sadness, I had long hair and I went to trim it because it was very hot in Syria. I bought a new leather suitcase, green and enormous! I thought that when going back to fill it well.

I put only the most necessary belongings. We packed the little furniture that was left in one room after my ex-husband's plundering. I went to tell my mother. She began shouting aloud that she could not take such a responsibility and told me not to leave. For me this chance was not to be missed. With the employment and the money, which were appointed in the contract, I could support both of them, to repay the money I had to give back. At that time my mother took care for 2 children of military officers in our block from time to time and thus she was paid for it. Maybe it bothered her that you would not be able to cope with it.

My daughter promised to be obedient and insisted on my departure.

The next day I would leave. I was called by the General, who pointed out to my training and accuracy. He gave me letters to deliver.

I went through the passport control at the airport and boarded the plane. I felt very sorry to part with my daughter, my mother and my native fatherland. My heart was beating so fast that I was choking. At this point the military doctor entered who was responsible for the departure. He said they somebody called for me not to leave. He was all sweaty and red in the face. He said that I could take a flight in 3 days - we had to find out who exactly wouldn't let me go.

I immediately thought of my ex-husband. I was caught up by such an anger that if he were in front of me I had a feeling that I would kill him! After so much waiting to go and the hope I could finally fix things up! But, alas! I had had no chance. I got off the plane even far more excited.

I returned home to my mother's flat. My daughter looked at me scared. I was furious! I was wandering! I took a tranquilizer and went into the other bedroom. I could not fall asleep. I was shivering. Half asleep I heard the flat door being open and heard:

“ Did she come back?”- the counter-intelligence officer’s wife asked - they lived in the block and were my mother’s friends. She nursed their child.

“ Yes, she did ,everything is okay” - my mother said.

I could not believe it and half-awake, I told myself that it could not be. They left their child with my mother’s when it was necessary - of course and they paid for it. Just then, I thought they were just interested, no more.

The next day I was called by the Army hospital doctor, the head of the hospital, a man of the military intelligence, the ER boss, where I worked and they all had one question:

“Why didn’t you go? Who stopped you?”

“ Who you stopped me? “- I asked myself.

They replied that they were not. They convinced me that all the documentation were in order and the general, with whom I spoke before I left wanted to know if I intended to go, they had entrusted me .

At first I did not believe it. When I came back home after work , I started crying uncontrollably. My nerves could not bear it. My mother never told me anything. I did not have the courage to repeat the journey. I gave it up. I did not want her explanations.

Five years later, when it came to leave for Italy, I asked my mother :

“ Why did you stop me? At least you know about how short of meoney I was!”

“ Did you know ? “- she asked me.

She stopped as she said I might never come back . She was thinking about herself. There was nothing I could do ! There is a saying in Bulgaria “ God protect me from my nearest and dearest, I will protect myself from the foreign ones on my own ! “ And it’s a very true saying !

A long and painful agony had begun. Sometimes I wanted to commit a suicide ! Only the thought of my daughter made

me stop and I explained all her whims and behaviour with my bad financial situation.

But I met women in a worse condition than mine and the children helped their mother and to say it that way took care of her. In my case it was just the opposite.

I sometimes made dinner and called her to have dinner together. She would not come. I had no dinner because I wouldn't like it to sit at the table all by myself. At night in the dark she had meals alone without turning the lights on !

Or when I had to change the wallpaper in the bedrooms and the living room she refused to help me , she never even moved to help me, despite my insistence. When I prepared cherry jam or stewed cherries, she would not help me on the pretext that she would not eat them. Thus my Destiny began to weigh more and more.

I started thinking how to earn some money using this big flat I had. I let the childre's bedroom to a young colleague of mine. The only one that could be let, because the living room leads to the bedroom. The kitchen is too small to be used as a room. I took the money for the rented room, but it was not enough to pay the installments to the flat to my colleagues who gave me money as a loan.

I started thinking how I could let the flat. I wanted to leave the town for a while. We could not move, because to go to work in another city and to find a permanent job, you had to be a permanent resident of the city. It was a very difficult problem. I could not solve it, because I had no relations with important persons or relatives occupying influential positions, or in the militia.

At that time, my daughter had a friend, an absolutely excellent grader at school, who had met a young man who worked as a policeman in Varna.

I do not know who raised our question, but the boy came home with the girl, returning from the high school, which she and my daughter attended. He listened to me and asked for my passport. He asked me, if he could keep hold of it for 3 days and he would bring it back then.

In 3 days he came and brought my passport back with a stamp it saying I was a resident of the nearest to Varna first settlement . As for my job he said a man would meet me at the station and he described the man to me that would take me to choose a job. As for my daughter – she would move to study in the city and we could move to live there. My daughter wanted to have her own room.

I was speechless with astonishment. Everything went as it was designed, but. I was met at the station by a man with the descriptions given to me.

The man asked me where I would wish to be employed - in a military hospital or in the regional hospital. I said the regional one and we went there.

He went in to the matron's- chief nurse's office and came out in a little while to ask me where I wanted to work –in the surgery, orthopedics or internal diseases ward. I chose orthopedics.

The next day I started work. The lodgings – a flat was chosen. It needed a good cleaning. I had disassembled some bookcases and wardrobes we used in our flat before as furniture and I had numerated them by writing on the inner backboard labelling them beforehand to be ready for assembling . I knew how to do a lot of things-whatnot, so as not to spend money, or to call a man to assemble them and then I some problems to arise concerning him. I could not get used to this.

And events began to happen as in a fairy tale. That is how the people who had opportunities and power lived.

For me, however, not everything developed well. I knew there would be some compensation. They would demand for me to do them a favour !

I started working and worked without problems. In fact the problem was I myself. They wanted me to become their mistress and to be at their disposal as they wished and whenever they wished. To do everything I was told , to keep silent and to fulfill all their orders.

But the way of my upbringing and my character did not let me succumb, despite the material needs and difficulties and the need for love.

On similar occasions I forgot that I was a woman. I felt myself a soldier for whom the war would never be over. I always repelled. I clenched my teeth and prayed to the Providence!

Although we were well accommodated in the lodgings , the owners told me that they needed me to leave the lodgings in 20 days . I had cleaned, washed and tidied everything. I started looking for new lodgings . By the way , the man who had met me at the station, often visited our home to ask “ how we were”. But I treated him formally. .

I found another accommodation, I rented a flat. They found me there as well. In that way in a short time we changed the 7 lodgings. I brought my cat with us. She did not bear it . The last time she was looking at the luggage collected in a bunch on the floor and meowed plaintively . It was pouring with rain. We were crying too. The cat ran away. It was quite hard for us! I decided that we could not go on like that . I called the guy who connected me with the people of power. I told him what we had suffered , and that in the future I would like them to leave us alone , with the risk to go back from where I had come.

We had let our flat to be rented by a family. We were paid for it. I could not come back whenever I wanted to.

I found accommodation in the surrounding area, which was recorded in my passport as. A classmate , from my native city helped me. She occupied the position of a sales-assistant and barmaid at the only cafeteria in the village. She was also divorced. She shared a flat with her daughter. Her son stayed with his father.

She told me that a cousin of hers had aided her in finding her job, who was a policeman. I asked her no more questions. It was unnecessary. Later she changed her job. She moved to work at the airport. Later she bought a flat in Aksakovo and married a retired pilot. This is what happens when you are obedient! She wanted to aid me, but I refused.

My daughter and I had to catch two buses to reach the city and back :we got on one bus after another .

That meant we had to get up early to arrive on time . That is how we really did. I gave night shifts as well . And sometimes if my daughter was a second shift at school, I could not meet her. The mobile phones were not invented yet.

Once we had an argument with her and she decided to live with her father's. I remained alone tormented , insulted and distrusted . I felt like a piece of litter discarded on the street. Why had I settled in that strange city , for whose sake? I could exchange my flat for a smaller one and to avoid being so distressed ! But I wanted to keep it, to be able to give something special to my daughter as a heritage in the future!

I cried a lot ! Many nights I did not sleep ! I felt as crucified ! Getting up early I met the sunrise either on the bus or outside I felt better. I did not like working in the afternoon. Moreover my evenings and dinners on my own, alone were repelling for me, nasty .

I fell so miserable that I decided to consult a psychiatrist. The ward I was employed in did pretty many consult with

psychiatrists . The patients in the orthopedics ward sometimes lay for months in special trays , when they had broken their spine or pelvis , and they often fell into a state beyond control.

I surveyed the doctors psychiatrists . They were really weird . One of them was bearded and spoke in rapture. The other was very thin, he spoke very quickly one could barely understand what he was saying . There was a woman -doctor who was smiling all the time. They did not inspire confidence , and I even did not have the courage to ask them to examine me.

Once a middle-aged doctor came into the ward, who seemed to me natural, even fine in appearance and manners . I asked him to examine me . I even did not know what to do. We went to the doctor's office, he sat opposite me with his head bowed and told me to tell him what bothered me.

I just could not differentiate what exactly bothered me most. It was my daughter's departure to live with her father's . I started with that. Then he asked me various questions and I answered them . He listened to what I said , all the time he kept sitting with his head bent without looking at me. Finally he said:

“ You should begin solving your problems one by one. Start communicating and find your environment and so slowly, you will manage. Now you are in distress.”

He prescribed me a medicine which said – “for a good mood”

But when I came back into the cold lodgings - dark, damp - and I did not feel like going to bed or lying down.. I took a chair and sat down at the table, wrapped in a rug that I had brought. It was very cold. I was shaking with nervous anger, perhaps.

I put the electric stove on the table to warm myself . I had heard that the cognac made you warm . I had a variety of drinks that the diseased had given me as a gift when they were discharged. But I was a non -drinker . I opened the bottle and

took a sip . I did not like it . I began crying ! I could see where my way had led me to. I thought about everything that had happened and I could not see a way out ! I was really desperate ! The damp cold intensified my sadness . I thought about the spring that I loved so much ! I was impatiently looking forward to it because it updated and renewed everything! I was trying to hope that if it were spring I would feel better. I gradually began to see the the idea of committing a suicide as a salvation. I do not know how long I had stood there in this posture . I had fallen asleep on the chair , crying and yelling, calling my dead father to take me with him . He loved my daughter so much and took care of her when she was still at the age of 8 months , and I had to finish my studies . He had just retired . My mother then was still employed . In my dream my father appeared and said :

“For what you had decided there’s always time. Don’t do it! I will help you!” - and he winked with one eye.

“How will you help me, Dad?” - I asked him through tears. I meant he was deceased, gone. I started and woke up.

It was already 5:00 a.m. and I had to get ready for work. I had become like a robot. To work to repay the flat and to leave it to my daughter as a heritage ,that was my task , my very priority then. Once I achieved it I would decide what to do with myself.

I had a friend in the ward where I worked, who was single. She suggested me to visit somebody. We were invited into a sea captain’s house who used to be our patient.

I refused because as I did not feel like visiting people, it was not up to me, and I had burned my hair whn oxidating it and I had almost total hair-loss . My hair was 2-3 inches long. As our remarkable pop singer of the time Lili Ivanova.

I had no self-esteem, no confidence! I was crushed by my daughter’s fight. I did not feel like living on! I did not want to

see anyone! My colleague insisted very much. She told me that she would be introduced to a man, and asked me for the sake of our friendship, to accompany her. She wished to have a rich lover. She had helped in the start-up of my work in the ward. Finally I gave in, but I said I would stay a little because I had to take two buses to go back home.

That day I stayed the night in her home. She occupied a room on the ceiling of a block of flats. At 4.30 p.m. we went to the sea captain's flat. His wife was a flight attendant on the airbuses. She was not in. He had laid the table: whiskey , pistachio, Coke, cola, chocolate, biscuits and more. He called someone on the phone and talked.

In about 20 minutes a man at my age arrived, his hair as black as the night, tar-black and he was dark skinned. He introduced himself. He was a sea captain too. I noticed that he carried the brand of cognac that I had had the previous night, imported foreign cigarettes and chocolate.

In the course of our conversation he mentioned Dunov's teaching about the white fraternity , about his uncle in France - Mihail Ivanov, Dunov's follower and disciple, about foretelling on cards and coffee. The man with the brandy-cognac began to explain about how his uncle had fled to France and founded the "White Brotherhood", but he did not trust this and wanted someone to foretell for him on coffee and cards. My colleague immediately told him that I foretold on coffee and cards. I had no cards with me. I should not use anyone's else cards to foretell. I guessed by my colleague's behaviour that she did not like this man.

He was interested. They made some Turkish coffee. I started foretelling for him watching his coffee, but I was tense because my time elapsed and I had to take the bus. My colleague asked

him how he had come and asked him if he could take me to the village of Aksakovo-we were in the downtown of the city.

He laughed and said he was on a bike , but he could take a taxi . I was against the idea because the distance was large and he had to pay a lot. Then he attracted my attention to see his eyes because he had white lace around the iris. They resemble the flower squill . Whether it was intentional or not, but I looked into his eyes. They were dark blue with lace at the edges . He was attractive ! He was wearing a nice sweater from fine wool - bordeaux frayed sleeves - worn out in a dark blue shirt and black trousers . I found out by my friend's facial expressions that she did not like him . She was looking for a rich man . So I continued to foretell on his coffee. I foresaw a lot of things . I told him he was married and he was on the verge of a divorce , aboutr his work that he currently did not travel on the ships , that he had some liver problems or aches , some things about his son and his parents . He was stunned by what I had told him.

He really saw me off to the bus and then told the driver - “ Drive to Aksakovo.” Thus a friendship, a love which I needed badly began.

He came by bus or on his bike frost-bitten. He work at the Port. He was really a sea captain. He was well- mannered. He often came in a torn shirt, or with a button missing. I sewed them up. This went on for about 2 months.

One day I was coming back home on the bus and I noticed a car “Lada”, dark blue, a new one with the head- lights on outside the gate of the house. My landlady was also divorced. I thought she had some guests.

He had never told me about a car or money. He sometimes shared my humble dinner or breakfast.

I went into my lodgings and my landlady came to the door told me that a man was visiting me. When she went away, I noticed him but totally changed. In an expensive suit made from

an expensive fabric and sewn to fit well. With gold buttons on the cuffs , a gold watch, etc. The car was his.

“I’m sorry I did not tell you before all that stuff about me, but I have a right to be loved not because of my money. Get dressed, we’re going to introduce you to my mother. The trial is over.

I found what I was looking for!”

I could not believe what I had heard! We went to his mother’s. His father was in France with his brother’s.

She hugged me at the threshold and said:

“If you love my child I will love you too!”

Her hair was black and shiny too. They were of Greek-Macedonian origin.

They kept many books written by his uncle in their flat. They gave me to read them. I accepted and shared many of these ideas in the books as the power of thought, the meditation and silence, the way of breathing, about the chakras and the aura.

My beloved visited me at the hospital where I worked. He brought some coffee, biscuits and other gifts to those who I worked with from the Duty Free Shop. I noticed that he drank alcohol.

Whether it was intended by my father or was it programmed in my fate - I do not know. He was very well mannered. He was careful and gentle to me. As a lover in the bed he was incredible! I had not had anyone like him in my life. At last I had found my man! I thought so. I was pleased and happy but the thought of my daughter gnawed me from the inside, never let me rest.

He noticed my sadness, and one day he said we would go to see her at her father’s. I took my leave- a few days off and we left.

He spoke with her father ,they arranged for us to go and take her from her father's on the next day. We went there but he did not let her go and join us.

I was very angry. Then he went to his office alone and what they had talked about , I do not know, but the next day he let her come to my place. I was very happy! I felt the change with all my sensed both physical and spiritually. For the first time I felt myself being loved as a woman !

Three days later we went back to Varna. The next day my man told me in a very very low voice that I had to be attentive as I was being followed, chased. He entrusted me the fact that his wife's father was a prominent communist, working in the Ministry of Hime Affairs. And he had promised that he would do so to arrest me in the police-Militia. I did not understand what they would pick me up for, but I knew that once you get inside you might never come out alive.

And really there was always a certain handsome man who would speak to me on the bus I caught. Wherever I moved there was always someone behind me or in front of me, although I always caught buses and walked nowhere.

They found me at work as well. As we had an emergency surgery ward and we were available for 24 hours as the first aid for the district. They wanted various services related to my work, but not permitted ones. Did they think I was so stupid? What happened was that I did not do any favours even to my colleagues.

My beloved got a divorce with great efforts and torment. As his wife had been studying to become a doctor for 10 years I wrote a letter to the university, I mentioned the latter person's name and dates of birth , asking them how many years more were necessary for a doctor finish her studies and graduate and could she really heal people, or would she send them to the

cemetery. I sent my address to be answered. In a month they answered me that the latter person was not at the University.

I knew the exams that she took were paid for in gold, her mother in law told me that she had never dared to practise medicine .

A hidden war started. I felt like a foreign intelligence in my own native motherland. There were various surprises every day. They wanted him to return back to his wife and son. He suffered from the fact that he never saw his son. Who knows what threats they sent him ? He thought of his allowance , support and future , and so on .He began to drink more heavily than he had to . Some guys crossed his way . He came with bruises . I knew they would not leave us alone . They had told him as well. It was something impossible . I had none . He was in such a hard, tense situation that there is a saying that goes like that : “ He was between the hammer and the anvil” .

I had get rid of a trouble , but now I got into another one. I started to feel sorry for what had happened. I worked , but I had decided to go back to my flat . I warned my tenants.

loved him very much, but I knew they would not leave us alone, we would have no peace. I was not the first case I would not be the last one.

The Militia was very powerful and numerous. Once you started dealing with them you will never get rid of it.

In the meantime, after our acquaintance and during our life together I read many books about the “ White Brotherhood “ and I started to meet people who sympathized with them and performed their rituals . I started to feel more secure, more alive. I indulged in reading books , walking in the mountains around my town that I love so much, which is really beautiful. Especially in the spring ! This season is the my favourite! All holiday places around the city have many types of cherries

planted, which grow without problems and when they are in blossom they are especially beautiful! One can smell of the petals fragrance all around them ! The almonds and peach-trees too! I love my native land !

I had come back. I started work . My daughter came home. I still had a little money to repay . As though I was buying this flat again!

I was sorry about this development of the events. Our relationship was at a distance of 200 kilometres. And as they say “out of sight, out of mind”!

The Power of the authority and the power of money is a big deal! There is such an English song. I felt its rhyme in my life. The ideals we were taught to “fraternity and equality”, “man to man is a brother” do not exist. This is the very truth. It would be nice, but it is impossible! We have not reached and will hardly ever reach these lofty ideas! Maybe when humanity begins again? Or, when other individuals inhabit our planet the Earth?

My daughter finished the Institute of nursing. I am sorry she could not become a flutist, “thanks to” his father, who hindered her. I do not know why some men create generations, if they cannot withstand the hardships of raising a child.

A few years later she married a nice boy from our town and they had a boy. The most joyous day for me was that one! My grandson was a stimulus for life for me! But I wanted him to live well.

But the economic crisis deepened. They destroyed the agricultural farms. Arabs came, and our farmers sold a lot of sheep. There was no wool there. The plant, which processed the wool stopped working. People were unemployed. The same thing happened to the vegetable producers. The factory for manufacturing fruits and vegetables ceased working, so did the textile factory.

We carefully calculated how long would the baby's diapers last and when they would be over as well as the dry milk because my daughter had not enough milk to breastfeed him. We lived together. Although we were employed the money was not enough to buy the most necessary items. The thought to go somewhere abroad kept torturing me. I started looking for contacts and newspapers containing acquaintance-columns. I had to go to work outside the country. My salary could not repay the money taken out as a loan and make a living.

Once we were walking with my mother along the main street and we saw the fine figure of a woman dressed in white with a child about 2 years old, only in a vest, sweaty. Suddenly, the woman made towards us and started kissing my mother. She was her colleague from the theatre. And I could not recognize her. That one I knew had a thick neck and a shapeless figure. She walked around clumsily as a bear. Now she was elegant. She told us that she had gone to study in Sofia, where she met a Finnish man. Later she married him. Her life and she herself were transformed!

“Lucky you !” – my mother said looking at her.

She said :

“Lucky me, the luck is mine but if you don't take care of your luck you will never succeed!”

She was honest enough to say that.

I began to study Italian and English on my own. I had studied German and Russian before. I badly knew Greek and Serbian ,as we say in Bulgaria “so fluent in these languages as to earn a beating”. It was very strange when I dreamed! What I had studied at daytime, for example in Italian, the phrases or the sentences came to my mind in English. I thought I was getting confused. But I did not give up.

One of my colleagues gave me a newspaper that contained a lot of ads of men and women from different countries for dating .

I started corresponding with a Dane , an Italian and an American. Of course, taking into consideration the fact that they wrote in handwriting I could not understand everything. I asked a pharmacist to help me with the Italian and an English teacher with the English who was younger than me but single who kept telling me that she was fed up with being her friends' husnads' mistress.. Then she married a Dane too. I gave her the address of the agency .

So I started receiving letters from all over the world . Among them there were an African living in Switzerland – a dentist.

Of course, I could not trust them thoroughly. I sent my picture and thus got theirs. But when it came to a visit, nobody wanted to send me a visa.

But one day , however the American called me on the phone and told me that he was located in Sofia and wanted to come to visit my place. I went to pick him up from the “Sheraton” Hotel. I had never enetered it before. You are never admitted to enter. You can only accompany one of the foreigners to the restaurant or the cafeteria under the watchful control of the police in plain clothes.

The atmosphere was very luxurious! It was like in the fairy tales for me!

I took him home. My son in law spoke English well . I spoke just a little bit. By the way, he told me that I would get fluent in English for less than an year and as far as my profession was concerned not to bother at all. He said I cooked sowell and made such salads that I need not worry at all. He appeared to be an intelligent man.

He was a retired engineer. High, well-built with normal weight, blue eyed, wearing an American hat in his suit colour - green. I was also wearing a coat and a skirt in green velvet. He noticed that. We went to “Karandila” in my son’s-in-law car. He liked it and asked if there were any bears in the woods. He loved hunting.

Then we took him to Nessebar. He was four years younger than my mother but looked much more younger. He had been married 4 times and said he was afraid to make the move-to wed again. He gave us all a dollar for luck, a rare coin to be owned. He explained me and put down on paper the man’s names who I had to get in touch with and give him the dollars he left for a visa.

It was not the first time he visited Bulgaria. He knew a lot about us. But I never went because I would have been questioned how I knew him, where I had met him and the case would be over. Or it might have incurred bad consequences. The government wanted no one to migrate from our country. The game should be played on till it was over, after all!

My Italian pen friend by correspondence wrote me that he would meet me when I arrived. He did not know that we were not in Schengen, and no one could leave the country so easily. It did not work with him.

I wrote to an Italian dating agency who replied me in 3 months that I would be introduced to a person aiming at a possible marriage.

I received a letter with a picture of a thin man who lived in Milan and had 5 living children and one deceased – a widower. My daughter said, just then when she saw his picture, that I would not be able to live with this man together, to share anything with him. My goal was not only just this. I saw how we were trying to live and then after the changing of the

authorities in our country I wanted to try abroad. I thought I might be accustomed , I would get used to him and accept eventually that person.

My mother advised me,saying:

“We survived the war , we will survive this”.

But it was not war. I knew it would last for years. And therefore I had to sacrifice myself, to make a way, to blaze a trail. This way I could see it easier and shorter to get to the USA. I emphasized on studying Italian language.

I had nothing to lose. I was reaching the age of 50 . After five years I would retire in 5 years if they did not change the laws. My mother, on the other hand, kept telling me I was lame, disabled ,I could not give birth to other children, and no one wouldl matty me ? To stay single. I swallow everything. But I did not give the idea to try at least. I wanted to go abroad and work. Man dies but once! My boss said that up there were no borders, she meant the Heaven , of course.

People starved. Some who had money, started trading. They were unemployed or they found a job 200 or 300 kilometers away from the town they lived in. They could not leave their family. They committed a suicide. Shops were opened. They started lying to the citizens. Those who came from the villages began to return. Government after government changed and successively took the power. Many Communists’ sons took factories, shops, because they were aware of all that was happening and had seized the most important sites, estates in their hands.

Turks and Gypsies were admitted into the Parliament. A Reform after reform came one after the other and the situation grew worse. The obituaries became more numerous. As they had said, “that one who is doomed to survive will survive !”

I became a member of a society that studied meditation, transmission of thoughts and dreams unveiling. Nobody,

however, had my abilities and resources, but at least I could communicate with people and not think only about the daily bread. That thought kills you! They say that hunger is more powerful than the current , the electricity. And it's true! I constantly kept thinking about food. I felt that my thoughts were directed there. On the verge of starvation, what decisions could I take? I was starving to repay the money I had borrowed. Adding also the accounts that should be paid forthere was almost nothing left .

There are people who had never suffered any moral or physical pain, they say that moral sufferings were far more painful than the physical ones. A Romantic theory! They know how it feels to have no appetite, but they did not realize what it means to be hungry to fainting and devour with eyes the smoldering simple warm food and to dream it, to lack money enough to buy it , to be unable to allow it!

I took the decisions while sleeping in my dream or I foresaw what exactly would happen the next day or I solved other problems. For instance , when I was about to leave for Italy for the first time , two nights before I had a strange dream. I was burdened with the trip, I did not know what kind of people I would meet and get involved . They kept frightening us with the “decaying capitalism“ with the greedy people with inhuman relationships and attitude, drugs, theft, stealing people, murderers and thieves all around . They instilled fear in our souls. Somebody was almost waiting for us to get out of our country to kill us ! I did not have an idea about the ways of life of the people in the other countries.

We imagined the West roughly like a madhouse-a lunatic asylum . Otherwise, we lived in a madhouse from which you could not get out. We did not enter the Schengen , but the one who has decided to run away and has got nothing to lose - runs ! At least to try, to make sure that you can not live away from

your home , your motherland . Of course, I knew I had to work , even much more . I took the risk because I could no longer be terrorized at every turn. They wanted to be one of them, with them , to listen to them and obey all their orders they had given you and shut up, to keep silent! It was very important to shut up! It is wise to remain silent and to know where and when to open your mouth to speak, but not always.

AMAZING , BUT TRUE

It was June. I was walking down the main street of my town with a colleague of my mother's from the theatre . She was also divorced. We intended to enter the church in the centre of the town . Just in front of it , a man was selling newspapers on a small table. While passing by him , my eye fell on an ad – “YOUR HAPPINESS IS IN YOUR HANDS - a clover with four leaves – an acquaintance with an Italian etc. I bought the newspaper. The one next to me said that all the agencies are the same -they did nothing in serious and that nothing will happen . As Bulgarian people say I” caught the straw like a drowning “- I decided to take the last opportunity . Hope is a big deal ! The hunger of the scarcity or lack of money was great!

I was already divorced , but could not solve all the obstacles that came my way and overcome them . I kept savings from almost everything , but with a salary only I could not cope with all the taxes that I had to pay .

But internally I felt that something would happen , however . Enthusiasm as a salvation. I did not even listen at all. I was so desperate . I felt again lost for the umpteenth time and suddenly I thought of the salvation.

From that moment on something inside me prompted me to write a letter , to send a picture and to wait.

I took my mother with me, on the next day, we took a taxi , I went to a photographer's who knew from the nursery in which I was employed as a nurse.

My mother and I had our pictures taken one by one at the photographer's. When I took my picture after it was ready , I was surprised by my image ! I was dressed in a silk blouse , tailored by me. On a black background with shapes such as

flowers , not very large - purple , crimson and red – or they were rather petals of flowers. When I bought the material , I liked the contrasts . I sewed it myself, not to spend money on a seamstress. The fabric was too expensive . I bought some for a skirt as well .The blouse was long-sleeved , smooth, narrow at the wrists , with a round smooth décolletage gathered at the waist ,a little wrinkled from the inside with elastic and attached pieces pointed in the front , which were around my hips . So I could wear both the skirt and the blouse separately . It can be worn separately, skirt and blouse. I always cared to combine the practical with the elegant.

On this occasion I was in black, smooth skirt below the knee, sitting on a chair that was not visible. My face was as white as milk. The contrast was great in that blouse I wore. I did not like it. But I did not look like a real Bulgarian woman. I looked rather like a German, Swedish but not Bulgarian. It crossed my mind to have another photo taken, but I did not. I was as I am, I had only put a little mascara on my eyelashes and a little pencil around my eyes, that could hardly be even noticed.

I wrote the letter observinbg the regulations as noted - to put down my height,age , eye color, etc. , as well as my phone number and my occupation : a nurse. I was waiting for an answer, “as a letter from a dead one” – that is our Bulgarian saying and comparison .

Two months passed. I did not tell anyone. The disappointment would be only mind , after all !

One afternoon in early September , at about 6 p.m. a female voice called me saying she was calling from Italy in relation too the letter which I had sent . She asked me if I would agree to care for a baby and so I would find a husband easier. She told me she was a Bulgarian from Sofia, married an Italian and lived in Milan. I answered “yes.” I did not have time to jump with joy

! She told me they would send me an invitation to visit , which I had to take to the Italian Embassy- the consulate to be issued a visa.

I got the inviting call and went to Sofia on the night train to be there in the morning. I knew from experience that you would succeed in doing anything in the establishments only in the morning.

There was a notice board hung on Consulate gate saying that the documents for the visas were submitted for processing only on Mondays from 9:00 to 12 noon. This day was not a Monday. I went back.

On the following Monday I was at the consulate at 7 am. I had travelled on the same night train. There was a long queue and the people on it said they had been waiting since 5 a.m.

I had had a cup of coffee at the station and I had to go to the bathroom. I asked where the toilet was and they replied me that there was not one. I had to find a snackbar. I was directed a bit and explained roughly how to get there.

When I came back they gave me the opportunity to take my place in the queue. Some people protested and said that noone left the queue.

I waited by one side for the Consulate to open. They opened at 9.30 a.m.. There was a mess. Everyone was pushing and jostling with elbows to get inside. I had no chance to go in! I went back by the 4 p.m. train . That is how I lost one more day . I had taken a day off –unpaid leave .

I traveled all night long. When I went to the Consulate there were people queuing since the night waiting. This time I had not had any coffee and I had not eaten anything so that not to need going to the toilet.

It was tiring to stand upright in the queue and you not to be able even to turn around. It was fine that it was not raining! It was only cold.

This time I could not get in as well, they cried out loud that they had made a list of the waiting ones the previous evening . This time was again unsuccessful for me: I could not enter !

Some people in the queue told me that there was an agency nearby that provided your entry without queuing at the cost of 200 US dollars. The people from the agency who serviced you went to the Consulate . Since I hardly had the possibility to go in and I had the money with me, I wanted to try. I had the dollars, even when I would go to Cape Town. I had all the vaccines injected. Nothing happened. I kept the money in case I went somewhere abroad! I was afraid, however, to risk.

On the following Monday I went to Sofia leaving the day before- on Sunday. I visited my classmate from the high school. Her brother accompanied me to that agency. I filled out the documents required for the visa and left the money to pay. But I could not get rid of the bother for the money I had paid. In 2 hours I went back to demand the sum but the thought that I might never be repaid burned me. My classmate's brother who accompanied me had such a facial expression and carried his briefcase, which was in vogue then, that inspired respect.

The important thing for me was that I got my money back!

For more than a month every Monday I was outside the Embassy at the Consulate. As I have only one kidney the cold, the dehydration caused by the obstinance of drinking water and the standing upright made me sick. I had only one Monday until the deadline of the inviting call I had been sent.

I went there , experiencing grief I saw a policeman with a list in hand. I signed up too. I was the seventeenth. I had already

learnt from experience that no more than 15 people would go in, but I stayed on , occupying my place in the queue and waited for a miracle to happen! Occasionally I felt the wave of the people jostling on the left and on the right.

Time elapsed . It was already 11.30 a.m. . They had opened at 10 a.m.. I was close to the policeman when he called out:

“ Maria Petrova !” !

The first time no one came. He repeated the name and muttered why didn't that Maria not call . When he called a third time I said “ It's me” :

He looked around and scolded me , why I had not called out when he had shouted my name . If he had ask for my Identity documents at this point he would understand why I had not called , but he did not ask for them ! Finally went in! There was another queue inside and I prayed for the queue to be served faster for I was afraid that the policeman would call me back if that certain Maria appeared. So “ Maria “ helped me.

They took my papers and told me to go in 20 days

Once I got the visa, I went to buy a plane ticket. I had problems with the purchase of the ticket. Most probably they wanted me to give them a tip. I had pledged my TV at a pawn broker 's, to be able to buy a ticket for one month with a fixed date. I had no money to buy a ticket for three months, which could undergo change of the return date.

I discussed my departure with her godmother. She was an engineer and she had travelled all around the world, as it is said, to conclude contracts. She spoke 4 languages . She advised me to get a ticket for 1 month and when I go there - to judge, to assess the situation. They offered me a job so that they would pay me for it. If I stayed longer, I had to get back on the train.

I was not sure how long I was going to stay in Italy! I started aconsidering what kind of people I would meet? Where

would I go? I was alone! What would happen if it was true, what they had told us about the capitalists? What were the people in the “other world” like?

My godmother advised me to decide on the spot . If it was bad, I would be back using my return ticket, if I could bear it ,they would pay me for nursing the baby - I could stay longerl and get back on the train. I took my annual leave and two months unpaid leave.

At night I could not fall asleep my thoughts intruded. I went to sleep very late.

A black-eyed , bespectacled man appeared in my dream, with glasses, at the age of about 45-50 . A voice told me that he was the baby’s father, the one who I would nurse.

All around me was in a blur , in a mist. And a street to the left with a pavement and a street lamp post with a cone-shaped shade with the wide side down. The light fell down and lit a big wooden door. There was a large granite stone just before it, in the shape of a cuboid. All around it was in a fog. It was getting dark. This is where the father’s house he lives in it – the voice siad.

One could see there was a two-storey house - dug into the ground.

I woke up and I immediately thought to myself : one can dream anything when he or she is worried and anxious!

When I was already at the airport of Sofia,they announced that the plane to Milan Malpensa could not take off, because of the fog all around. The plane took off in 2 hours. And it takes 2 hours to reach the destination, in the best case it would take at least 4 hours . I asked myself who wouldl be waiting for me?

Anyway, the aircraft landed on Malpensa airport. There was almost no one. I stayed a little and started looking around the people in a discreet way. I felt like a little cub, released free. Suddenly I saw the man who had been in my dream, without

the glasses. I made towards him. I stood in front of him, but I did not know whether to introduce myself. They had told me in the guidance on the phone that a Bulgarian lady would meet me at the airport. He called the girl's name. She came trotting. She asked me how we had met, how had I recognized the man.

I said that I had already seen him in my dream and asked if he wore any glasses.

“Yes, he does” - she said – “I went to fetch the pair of glasses out of his car. He had left it there.”

We drove on in his car. I looked around on all sides. He drove along the highway to Milan.

It was a long journey. The guy asked me how I my flight was. The girl translated. We entered Milan. I looked around. There was fog. We were quite long at junction with traffic lights.

Suddenly I saw the lamp post from my dream just in front of me . It was probably left over from the old days , as it was curled and its light was shining downwards. There was a large cone around the lamp to shine and show that the pavement was in the shape of an island. The house was on the corner , but the granite piece of the staircase which I had dreamed was missing . I asked if this was the house we were going to. She told me that it was his old house which was his office at present and that we would go into his new flat where his wife and the baby 3 months aged were , I was going to nurse the baby. I told her to ask him if in front of that house there used to be a great granite step once. She refused me to explaining that she had worked for him for 5 years and had never seen such. Then he asked what we were talking about and she could refuse telling him.

“Yes, there used to be a large granite step just in front when I bought the house 7 years ago, but then they made the pavement and removed it , they destroyed, why?”

“ Because I dreamed this step .” - I told him.

He looked at me , his glance was testing and we headed for his flat.

Then I learned that he had bought the house from an elderly woman who was successful at fortune telling on cards.

This fact and several others from Bulgaria showed me that someone was sending me guidance. Even from the past? How come so many of kilometers away from my home without knowing the people and their language, I realized that it had happened many years ago ? I could not explain it to myself.

The Bulgarian realized that I fortold people’s fortune on cards and when I met her I had always tell her fortune. Nevertheless she did not help me stay on or settle in Italy.

I was employed in this family for 3 months. I had taken my annual leave and a month’s leave unpaid . I dared not stay longer not lose my job position at home in my native country! As my daughter said, we had only a button and we wanted to stitch the whole coat on it! I had to stay on there, to settle still then!

I insisted to be paid my salary in dollars. In that way I could thoroughly repay my flat down to the last penny !I had finally secured the roof above my daughter’s head! I had to come back and finally get rid of the thought of this embattled much suffered flat! I felt my strength decreased and wanted to relax, to stop.

I did not think to stay, despite the good atmosphere, the fine manners, and the beauty everywhere I looked and touched. It was as in the films. It could be compared to nothing in our poor country! The family were very nice to me! The child’s father when saying goodbye, told me:

“ You were very accurate! We had stopped thinking that there were such people like you! We did not have to talk a lot

to you, you know. I understood what you were up to by telepathy. I chose your picture among the many , among the one hundred ones sent to me from various countries.

Then he showed me some pictures of his wife and him. It was hardly believeable , almost unbelievable. I was just wondered how the evnts happened!

When I came back – and why did I come back , why? - I went to a psychic who had become very popular with his performances and asked him how he would explain it, and he told me:

“ You are far away ahead of me in improving.”

I cannot even comment on it. I knew already that I could fortune tell successfully that I was able to “see into the past and into the future”

Later, I was convinced that I might trigger events, repeating them in my mind I caused them – i.e., imagining it as in a photo I could make an event happen in reality. I can “see” as on the X-ray certain human diseases. I went to measure the electricity I produce in quantities necessary for my hands to treat. It is unbelievable, but it is true.

I repaid the flat, but that did not mean that the intention of going abroad was not in my mind . I had seen how the people in Italy lived! I went shopping with the family into large supermarkets! There everything was spoilt for choice. All the goods were neatly and well aranged , it was quite clean. I was taken to the market where goods are sold by the manufacturers! There was a variety of fresh vegetables, fruits, types of olives and more. That was before Christmas. It was expensive,of course, especially for us, but it was available in various sorts, kinds and quality ! I could taste a lot of things I had never dreamt of!

We went to Gardaland - the biggest amusement park ! Here I cried shedding tears! I was so excited that I could not

realize exactly what I saw! You only have to see it to believe it. I called my daughter and tried to explain her what it looked like! A variety of games for children and adults, including for the parents. I thought about my nearest and dearest if they could see and experience what I felt?

We went to the hospital to have the baby vaccinated . I am speechless! It was just like in the movies! The equipment, the way of the servicing is quite different from ours!

Nothing could be compared to the miserable life of most of us in our country! My intimate wash took place in the bathroom, using a plastic bottle or a mug! Few people have now even the usual facilities – a bidet! It’s a luxury for us! People were unable to feed themselves, let alone buying it.

One is quick to get used to the good facilities. The doctors and the nurses got fine salaries, were well-paid! What to say about the dentists – we will not mention them! Things cannot be compared!

But I had already decided to go back and some of the money I spent on buying a train ticket.

I would leave Milan at 17.30 on the train to Venice. There we changed trains with sleeping cars to Belgrade.

We arrived in Belgrade at 4 a.m. The train “Orient express” was due to arrive at 8.00 a.m.

There were many people at the station from apparently different nationalities .I had 4 bags. It was not possible for me to walk around or to get inside to see the waiting lounge of the station. I did not think currently of going to the toilet . They were looking at me with these bags, as if in the next moment they would take them. I stood and waited.

They announced something over the central microphone but it was not well comprehended. With sadness I reached the information desk outside and asked when the train arrived. I

knew poorly Serbian. I saw that the train had delayed for 2 hours.

The thermometer at the station showed 4 degrees. I was cold because I was in a boucle coat and felt how the wind came through it: - it was at the end of February .

I went near the luggage carts or trolleys to pick up one when there was one available. Two trains were passing by, but the one I was waiting for was not in sight.

A man in a raincoat , probably lined approached me . He was middle-aged, blonde and asked me if I spoke German. I answered “Yes, I do,” but no speech followed. He began to explain to me with his hands in gestures to keep his luggage for him - a large suitcase to go to the toilet.

Watching him, I could not guess his nationality. I made some room on the top of the trolley for his suitcase and I put my bags on top.

The man went into the waiting room. He came back again with signs and miming he showed me I should go too. I took the opportunity. Then he showed me a bench, emptied free as if by a miracle for us to go and sit. I could hardly feel my face . It was like frozen.

Just then the train arrived and everyone rushed to it. It was impossible for me to get in! I waited till all the passengers were crammed and crowded inside and then I threw all the bags and then I jumped on the train. There were people in front of the door and could not be turn on either sides. I suddenly saw a hand moving over the people’s heads.

The man in the raincoat was approaching me. Without speaking, he took two of the bags and began moving slowly towards the inside. He had reserved a seat for me in one of the compartments! It was incredible!

In the cabin there were two boys - students, Turkish - who worked in Italy and we had travelled together from Venice. There was a Serb and two Serbian women with baskets who were on their way to the market to sell goods and a woman in Muslim female trousers. She must have been Turkish.

We gradually warmed up and started a conversation in 4 languages . I saw the boys exchanged words with the “ man” and asked them to ask him where he was from , what nationality he was. They told me he was from Syria and had visited his son in Germany , where he studied at the University.

Lunch time had already passed a long time ago, I felt I needed to have a bite. I had a jar of cherry jam and a few slices of rusk . I spread some jam on on a few slices of bread rusk and gave everyone a jammed slice. All were hungry, most probably. There was one left for me too. They asked me where I was from and where I travelled to . The boys translated for the “man “ in Turkish , saying that this was not his mothertongue, but he understood. Then he asked me not to go to Bulgaria and to go to his country and to be his wife . He had two wives , and each had her own house . The two Turkish young men translated into Italian . It was a lot of fun with the different languages!

I burst out laughing! The woman in the Muslim trousers”shalvari” spoke to him in Turkish and the young men translated for me that she was offering him to be his wife. He, however, told her that he had been watching her for an hour or so how she ate bread secretly and that she ate a piece by piece without offering us,while” this woman “- he said, pointing at me – had just a little food and shared it with us.

“ You’re not a good woman, I want this one!”

They began exchanging “pleasantries” concerning whether hewould be able to cope with three women and what followed was laughter and gestures .

By the way the Serb told me that they expected a fight, a battle, to get rid of the Turks, and how it would end he wondered! We went to have coffee in the restaurant wagon with him. He made our way among the people down the narrow path and said he was used to it because every morning he commuted on the train to go to work.

We had gradually reached Simeonovo and they started checking the documents and the luggage. I gazed at my long bag that was very light and told me to take it down. I had sewed it from nylon, just in case if I had to carry something on my way back. I pulled it slightly back slightly and it fell to the ground. The customs officers jumped off. They considered I had probably hidden a gun inside it. They did not meet my expectations. The man was made to get down the train, it was 10.30pm. I arrived home at about 6 a.m. in the morning I felt as tired as I was beaten.

I had already repaid my loan for the flat, but my situation was almost always the same. I began to regret why I had come back! I promised myself if I went out abroad, never to return again! The only way for me was to be introduced to an Italian man! I had already learned how to speak Italian elementary or pre-intermediate. I decided to endure everything, but to accomplish what I had decided! I wanted to make a way, to blaze a trail for my grandson. It was my desire! But it was quite hard to achieve it, to accomplish it because the migration from our country, especially if a child was concerned was absolutely difficult, it was just a dream!

This could be achieved only through an agency. I started looking for one and found it. I wrote a letter and sent another picture. Again, letters and waiting!

An intrusive thought kept coming into my mind to go and work, even if only for a few months to earn some money. I heard that some people worked in Cyprus in greenhouses, in

Greece to pick olives or take care of old people. But they did not issue visas to us the Bulgarian to stay in Greece. It could very rarely happen. Only the Karakachans had the advantage who the Greeks considered to be their own.

I had a friend a female Karakachan , we had grown up around together. Her mother had died and her father had married a Bulgarian woman . Something that rarely occurs . They respected their ethnos or nationality a lot. They never marries out of the ethnos, never tolerated mixed marriages.

My girlfriend took care of her half- brother and both of us took him for a walk together. Their mother worked in a factories in shifts. There was no one else to take care of him . When he grew up a little they enrolled him in the nursery's and sometimes I accompanied her to pick him up. She was very good as a person and helped a lot in the household . She could not meet a male Karakachanin to fall in love with.

One morning she came home and began to tell me quite excited what had happened the day before.

A young female Karakachanin came to their flat to have a look at her and play matchmaker for his brother. As she saw him she liked him very much and she would not wish to meet his brother. She said that she agreed to marry him. They talked with her father - she was preparing for her wedding. The man was from the town of Kazanlak.

Some time passed, the period for the wedding preparations negotiated with her father elapsed but the groom did not turn up. Then she went to look for him in Kazanlak in his father's house, they told her that she had not been in for a few days. She went out to look for him at the State Automobile Transport, but they told her that he had just finished changing his shift and left. Some of her colleagues told her that he had been in love with a Bulgarian girl but his father had forbidden

them to wed. He had said that if he marry her, he would be disinherit.

She found the place where the girl lived and went to her home. There she found him. There she talked with the girl who was crying and entrusted to her how much she loved this guy and that they had had a relation , a friendship of four years , but he took his father's advice and she did not know how this love affair would end !

My friend signed a marriage with this guy. Her family life was not going well. They moved to Kazanlak. I rarely met when she came to visit her father. They had no children. Then I gave her some of my grandmother's herbs and we went to various monasteries to pray to God!

I called her one day and asked her to go to the Greek Consulate in the town of Plovdiv for a visa. She told me she had accompanied a Bulgarian woman the previous week , but they refused to give visas to Bulgarian . And more . She was not issued one either.

I asked her to drive me there in her car and assured her that my visa was there waiting for me ! She accompanied me and they really issued me a visa for fifteen days or so. I was well dressed - without accessories . When the Consul saw my passport that it contained the seal of the hospital where I was employed, she asked me how many days I intended to stay in Greece. I said fifteen days as I would get back to work.

Both of us drove for Greece in her car and enjoyed the beautiful view nature offered us. It was a long way. When we finally reached Athens we started going around in circles along the streets. I reminded my friend that maybe we were in the Centre because the city was one of the so constructed cities.

I wanted to see the Acropolis, but I asked a woman where the Necropolis was and she showed me the way -thedirection .

I was wrong because it meant searching the cemetery. Anyway - we found the Acropolis, which is a remarkable landmark.

Then we went to a hotel whose owner was Bulgarian. Years ago she had married a Greek husband. We unpacked and asked her where to go to ask for a job. She said that it would be hard for me to find a job via an office and it was best to go to a cafeteria where only Bulgarian people gathered. She also told us that every Sunday in front of a certain hotel the Bulgarians met. Always on Sunday a long market nearly one kilometer long took place. There were Bulgarians to sell merchandise and other goods.

Went to see this cafeteria. Indeed there were many Bulgarians and we met them. Some of them were going home to Bulgaria and they offered to others their job. I asked who intended to go back home. A young woman named Maria told me that she worked as a maid for a rich Albanian woman, with a Greek husband. My friend wanted to go to work where they knew her, but I remained to work in the greenhouses. I preferred picking olives.

I reached an agreement with Mary in a week to come, before she went away, to notify me.

We went to pick and collect the olives from the trees with a rake. They fell on paved for that aim canvas. For a full rate everyone of us had to make ten bags and carry them over. Men predominated, mostly men were employed. The first day I could not make ten sacks. On the second day I made them and carried them.

“You work like a man!” – the Greek told me.

However, my hands ached so much in the evening that I could not relax. I took an aspirin, which alleviated my pain. That continued for a week. The conditions in the garden were not acceptable, neither was the food that the employer fed us on.

On Sunday I had a shower and I told my girlfriend that I would not go on working on the olives-orchard. I would wait for Maria to come.

“Well , do you believe that Mary will come to the hotel to give you her job? Do you know how many people that Mary knows ? She has been here for two years “- my friend siad .

“Well , I know she will come, I can tell you !” I answered firmly.”

So Maria really came to me and gave me her job. That is how we stayed in Greece for a whole month.

When we were about to leave I was afraid that I would be sealed a black print stamp and I could no longer be admitted to Greece. I told my friend to pass the customs on her own - alone, and I thought I could hide in a lorry. So I did. I do not know how I had stepped on the foot of the big truck! It was really amazing to jump up there in such a way without being supported. I hid under a blanket. The driver of the truck did not notice me but to warn him I turned up to be noticed.

“ Are are you crazy to cause me such a trouble. Get out, or I'll call the police !”

The descent was very difficult for me. It was so high that my feet did not reach the ground.

I went and told at the customs that I was sick and therefore I had stayed longer than the permitted- that's how the visa date had expired. I wore a headscarf on my head. They demanded a bribe of a hundred drachmas to let me pass. I had given my friend my money to keep it and store it.

“ See that woman's pretty hair ! It does not seem such a fine woman to lie to us! - one of the officers expressed his opinion.

I pretended that I did not speak Greek at all. But the other policeman replied him :

“All those who come here are employed and work! She has to pay!

As if they called the police they would not be able to take my money, ‘because it is illegal. They left me to wait for several hours. Then they let me pass the border . I brought money home. I bought my son-in-law a pair of shoes and the child a coat and some small things. The rest of the money I left for food and dry milk. I brought an alarm clock personally my belonging , which I always carried with me and when I retired I returned it to my flat.

It was only a temporary relief. I realized that in my native country one could not receive the money that pays the bills more or less.

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I started corresponding with the one who the agency had sent me. One could see a very thin man on the photo. As in a cachexia. I knew that sometimes one could not be photogenic- you might not look well on the picture and the picture had nothing to do with the reality. He was a Sicilian , a resident of Milan. He wished to be acquainted with a woman aiming at marriage.

He sent me an invitation to go for a month and to take a decision - friendship or marriage.

I received the letters but I could not understand everything. The man’s handwriting was unclear and awry . It was obvious that he had not been an excellent student and had not studied much. I asked again an assistant pharmacist to translate it for me. It was translated very slowly because she and I had various jobs and different working places and sometimes worked in different shifts and it was not convenient for me to bother her much. She would not let me pay for the service . The last time she was sent an invitation to visit Sicily with her

husband and stay with friends , they did not issue her a visa from the Italian Consulate.

I had overcome a lot of obstacles so far that I was not scared of that adventure so much! It was important for me to go again abroad ! I was quite advanced in the language already. I had my diploma in nursing diploma and my hairdressing translated and authenticated that I had taken with me to the Italian Consulate and the Foreign Office.

I already knew the procedure. While I was waiting at the Consulate, I saw that they were taking the red star down the Parliament building.

Outside the Consulate, there were not so many people. There were Italians and a much younger woman next to them. A boy was ardently telling a girl what to do. They were next to a couple. They spoke in Bulgarian and the Italian did not speak Bulgarian. If he knew, he would have realized that the boy was not the girl's brother but her friend who was about to be transferred abroad later too. People's destinies of ones who are determined to make a big step. Bravery and adventure , tolerance ?

They made me apply a few times, they always found an excuse to refuse me a visa. I showed them the letters, they pointed to the reason of my journey to Italy. The Italian gentleman had bought a ticket for me- a return ticket . It was deposited on my behalf at the airport , my name was filled out in the ticket. They gave me a visa !

The airplane arrived at airport Linate. I recognized the man by the picture. And I was about to roar with laughter! I started laughing and I could not stop it. That was the kind of laughter you are able to experience heartily only if you are young! I had already reached the age of 50. I laughed and tried to avoid looking at the man ! One could hardly bear the view !

He was so skinny and thin! He was not that old but why he was so thin ,I did not know .I was still quite pretty. People always told me that I looked at least 10 years younger. And more I used to say that I could make one man only out of five! I knew even then that this one would not be my last husband ! One was ready to do many things if one wished to lead a good way of life!

Unfortunately we cannot lead our way of life as we wish to but we follow what comes, what life offers you !

He introduced me to his 5 children. He resided in a flat of 95 square metres , almost in the downtown of Milan. One of his sons accompanied him to meet me at the airport.

He was shy but one could easily guess that his character was firm . His daughters kept repeating that their father was a very good man.This failed to convince me much,as if one was spoken about as very good that meant –be careful, he is not such as he appears to be and as introduced by the others.Especially if everyoned introduced him as such. I know that even the best one has his weak points and more if he were an honest man he was sure to have enemies too.But in this case I witnessed certain happenings and I myself reached the conclusion.

I was taken to the police station to be arranged a legal stay as a tourist for a month.

The Italian man's flat was too large for two.When I asked him why he lived in such a large flat when he came from Sicily with his family a long time ago, the Towns Council had given him that very flat at a very low rent . They had many children- a large family!

The month passed in visiting friends and guests' reception at home . We went to the cemetery to visit his wife's grave , who had died of a heart disease and his son's – the best one ,who had died of a drug-addiction and adies . Such neat and tidy

cemeteries, with so many monuments around well arranged , and with so many flowers ! But they were graves! The drug-addiction has taken and still takes so many young victims . You can see them even in the streets ,poor ones ! They were walking around as if asleep . With almost bent legs, red-faced .

I found out that all were very pleased with me, but in the conditions by which I had been issued a visa I should go back to Bulgaria !

Both of us went back to my country , which one could not easily leave and settle abroad!

Documents necessary for contracting a marriage should be issued, certified by the Italian Consulate . Again, waiting only outside another door. Where the Italian citizens entered. We were given sheets notifying what documents had to be submitted. My man constantly kept waiting to be called up and was shy to talk. Later on I realized that the Sicilian dialect had nothing to do with the Italian language. This was even more disturbing for him. He might not have comprehended everything he had been told. I found out that those from Northern Italy, did not like the people from Southern Italy.

He was angry that they required his criminal record certificate , issued from Sicily and he had to go there to take it . He often talked on the phone with his son . We had wasted two months going to the Consulate and back .

He had to go back home to fix his documents .He decided to go back straight to Sicily without going to Milan.

After the documents had been issued they revealed my second marriage to a young man thirteen years younger than me , who I had fallen in love with and planned to share my life with him . But our marriage lasted for only two months ! He came from Sofia from a well-known family of people in the government. He went back to Sofia to see his parents for three days but in the evening he returned in his underwear pants stained

with blood ! It would not be repeated. A scandal after which I wanted the case to be sued in the court of Sofia. I could not go on compromising any more! Anyway, the ones all around did not leave me alone !

I took all the blame and I paid the expenses on my own and that was all ! I had no more time to lose! The events repeated again. I had no luck! I could not forgive that kind of surprise.

I had to wait only. .

From time to time I spoke with the Italian on the phone. I realized that the documents there were not issued as quickly as in our country. A bad thought crossed my mind- that he might not come back, but I could do nothing but wait.

In about 20 days he announced that he would arrive in a few days to go and meet him at the airport.

Meanwhile , he knew about my second marriage . I had nothing to lose! The thing would happen or would not happen ! I started vieing life differently. When you're not in love your thoughts, your intentions and your goals are focused on you. I realized that too late, but it could be even later!

I met him again and we began to go to the italian Consulate again- on the same passenger train that I had before – that travelled at night. Now I was not alone . We lost hours in waiting , but at least we enter the lounge , we did not queue out in the cold. It was getting cold outside . New Year was approaching , and as it was obvious we had to see it in in my flat. I went to work and left him at home with my daughter, who was on a maternity leave . How they understood each other, I do not know . As the Christmas holidays were coming near he was getting sadder and sadder and wanted to celebrate with his nearest and dearest . But it did not happen so.

We were allowed to get married and we decided to contract and sign the marriage in my city. One of his sons would come from Italy for the occasion.

We signed our marriage in the Towns Council and then we had a lunch reception at a restaurant with just a few people.

I was sad because I was determined to make a way, to blaze a trail, at least for the young, for my grandson. I knew it would hardly get on well with this guy, but I had to pretend to be a happy, pleased woman.

At the beginning of February I arrived in Milan, already married. The azaleas and camellias were already blooming in great colours and big blossoms! The whole trees laden with blossom. I have never seen such a beauty! Everything was green! Winter was still raging furious and cold in country at that time!

My husband used to leave for work at 7.30 a.m. in the morning. He and his eldest son traded with car repairing and had a workshop for repairing cars and changing tyres. It was a large one with all the necessary machines, built inside a very large supermarket with a lot of shops in a neighborhood where rich families lived.

He came back at 9.30 p.m. as he closed the workshop.

I stayed home alone all day long and often cried and talked with my daughter on the phone. I knew they needed money. But my husband did not want me to work. I missed my grandson very much, especially him! I wanted to see him, to take care of him, to be a real grandmother!

The greatest joy in my life was his birth. And I could not enjoy his presence! I'd rather desired greatly for them to join me as soon as possible!

My son-in-law could be employed at my husband's son's, but one of his daughters told me that position, that job would be for her husband! She was so decisive and arrogant, and since she was her father's cutest, nicest kid she would have it! They had already employed a maid to take care of their father's! I overcame being locked in the flat and I started going out. I was choking at home. I felt like a beast in a closed cage.

By going to the nearest park , I slowly began to get to know the neighborhood. I bought a map of Milan with all the bus map routes, the subways, the underground , the landmarks and the surrounding area. It was enough for me to get directed and I quickly applied my knowledge into action.

I went to see the church where one could see Leonardo da Vinci 's “The Secret Supper” painted . Then I went to see the “ Duomo “ , then the castle “ Sforzesco “ . I met some women from the neighborhood !

All in the family approved of me and said that their father had been lucky in choosing a wife. But t only that they kept silent on the topic of the arrival of my nearest and dearest. I wanted very much, but I gave a lot , although not everything pleased me.

He did not let me work . I wanted to clean houses , but they told me that only the honky women did it.

I could not support my children with money and resources . When I had some delicious things to eat or fruits not in season , they got stuck down my throat when I swallowed, with uneasiness ! I knew that my nearest and dearest could not afford it in Bulgaria! I decided to back home for the New Year's Eve , my mther told me on the phone that she had already fallen 2 times and she was not very well. Then my sister called to tell me that she had taken mummy to be cared for in my sister's house.

Before leaving , I had got in touch with the baby's family, the one I had nursed 8 years before . The woman was not Italian, but from Central America and she did not live well. She wanted me to take care of their child again if I could as she wanted to in the night club that they owned. She complained to me that the child's father had not married her. I told her my story. I thought - if I could work – I would be able to help my children.

My husband rejected the idea and did not allow me to be employed.

While I was leaving for Bulgaria , it was very cold. The airplane was covered with ice and it was shining in the sun . I thought we would never land . I had a bad foreboding .

But fortunately we arrived ! I could not stop enjoying the sight of my grandson ! But my mother was not well . I went to see her in the village in which my sister lived and I knew that she would not go out of there alive . I called my husband . He did not want to come. He had given me money that I left my daughter and my son in law. .

Three days later I received a call that my mother had died . We buried her in the graveyard near the village. They could not dig the pit through the soil. The ground was frozen all over. It was the fifth of January. On the 6th of January I was to fly back to Italy.

Some thoughts came into my mind. I had always to be on my own, alone to solve my problems ! I could not wait any longer! I received this death very sadly, as an opportunity to take an important decision for me .

I came back without saying anything . I slept the night , but in the morning when my husband went to work , I called the child's mother who I had nursed the first time when I was in Italy and asked her if she could let me stay in her home. I waited for her just to say “yes” and I started to pack my luggage in black plastic garbage bags . Then I called a taxi and went to her home.

I never heard from him and I never saw him again !

Then they took me to the child who was studying in a settlement far away from Milan. There they had built a large villa on two floors with an elevator. Inside it was full of mirrors all over.

The villa was furnished by the latest fashion. Outside there was a swimming pool with beds, deckchairs, tables and chairs for the beach . The premises separate from the house , had facilities as a sauna and a lounge with all the necessary equipment for exercising muscles and fitness . A large gym , a table of solid glass , an ice machine with a large fridge , most probably for the guests to refresh.

It was very nice! The place was beautiful. On one side was a river which acted as a barrier to protect the villa. On one side there was a large guard-premises with a portal barrier. A lot of money had been spent on its building !

Here I remained hidden for more than 6 months. I was about to be presented to the police to extend my visa . I worked and was paid , but I was not listed as a regular employee . They would not like me to be enrolled in the list , not to pay money for my pension .

Then I was very lucky when I was issued the second document for residing. I was issued one for a four years' stay , not a year's one. Maybe because I was already old enough and they did not presume me to change my civil status.

I submitted documents for Italian citizenship before them to realize to write me off, to delete my filing from where I was filed . I had photocopied my husband's passport and I went to the Ministry, accompanied by the child's mother who I took care of . I was well- prepared as a whole .

I remembered an American gangster film , which said the preparation was the most important . And they showed five fingers - the perfect preparation prevents failure of the crime !

I had not been or become a criminal, but I learned to be prepared for surprises! Furthermore , I could never hear my name aloud , because they told me that they found it difficult to

pronounce it. Since then , as guerrilla member I have a new name and so I remained to be called so.

I started to earning some money . I sent some of it to my daughter too.

The child I took care of grew up and began to refuse taking my advice and would not listen to me . He locked from the inside , and would not let me in . His parents rarely came . Just to go shopping and bring the purchases for the month. I took care of everything! I even planted flowers. They had an patch for a vegetable garden and a small house made of wood, consisting of 3 rooms with a washing machine and it was furnished. The child's father wanted me to find some Bulgarians employees - a man and woman to look after his property and live in the house . I could not find such ones ! The ones who wished to be employed wanted to be well paid ! They did not know how to start with little!

One could see that the couple were about to part to split up. He started drinking a lot, and she did not come home. The child began to break the more beautiful and valuable things in the house.

One day, crying, he begged me to take him with me. I told him that I had no house where to take him.

I asked them to find another job for me. I could not stand these arguments. I thought in that way they would take care of the child. But they did not. They parted, and since the mother was unemployed and the father drank and appeared to be stricken with a disease as the documents pointed out but he was not, the child was adopted by a wealthy family who had no children. I was no longer there, but from time to time I heard from his father and he told me that the child had finished high school and was admitted at the University. He asked me about his mother, but I did not know where she was- she had got lost. She viewed life like that :she had a way of life different from her

child's and each one of them should live as he and she pleased, on one's own.

I met an Italian family who had no children. They lived in a settlement, a suburb of Milan. They encouraged me that I would find a job. They let me live with them until I made my way.

Every day I went out and walked for miles until I found the address of people looking for a childminder or an old woman caretaker. People went out to be employed and take job position as early as the morning newspaper with the advertisements was released. It was very important to drive a car around. Without a car, you can reach nowhere. You lose quite some time and time is money! I had my new driving license issued and translated. but I had not a secure job.

They kept me asking everywhere if I owned a car. And I wondered asking myself which had come first - the chicken or the egg. It was good that I took the driver's courses in Bulgaria. Immediately after my divorce I took the exams, because I wanted to drive a car so much! My ex-husband told me that he did not own a car and neither would I! How selfish he was !

I was directed to go to an agency where many foreigners went. There I submitted my diploma in nursing. They told me that they would send me to care for an old woman, I had to stay the night and sleep in her house.

As for my food, electricity, water, etc. her relatives would settle the bills. I had the right to go out for two hours every day. My day off was from Saturday noon till Sunday evening. .

I told my friends about the job in the evening.

When I went to the address I was met by a woman at the age of 60-70 and she said I would have to share the same bed with her mother -an old woman at the age of 95.She was an

upright woman, not a stooped one, thin and clean. She did not look like our 95 year olds in Bulgaria.

I had to accept the employment because I had no other job! So I started taking care of the old woman, accompanying her in walking around the yard, etc. This agency found a job for me for nearly 2 years. Many of my patients wanted to sleep during the day and at night they made me crazy to service them so they deprived me of my sleep. I slept only on Saturday night at my friend's. Her husband's snoring in the next room made me wake up several times per night. I suffered from insomnia, but I was preferred by the head of the agency. I did not steal, I observed the rules and the guiding lines, I never protested.

So I managed to gather money enough that I needed, probably to take my relatives to Italy.

One night I dreamt that I had received a letter and that I was reading its contents in neat capital letters but in a particular font - Italian citizenship. I was told that more than 3 years should pass for me to receive an answer.

I had an entry number of the documents filed. I bought a new phone card and called in Rome, where the documents were sent. They put me through and I told them my number. Then they asked me when I had my documents submitted and filed. I answered the question but the woman from the Ministry said it was too early. I asked her very politely to check it into the computer, and I would be waiting. In 2 minutes, she told me that they had voted for me, but it would take a month to be notified! I was happy and my dream had come true!

When I got the letter, I saw the same special font-grasetto I had dreamed!

I pledged allegiance and swore for an Italian citizenship in the Village Council of a village situated in the north, near Switzerland, where I had been employed to care for a woman -

with referenced and friends' relations. My salary was like that of a nurse, but I was not paid the pension insurance.

Now I could make arrangements for my diploma. I wanted to work in my profession!

I went to the Headquarter department with all the documents, but I was not given me much hope.

At that time I wrote a letter to the man from Switzerland. We met in Milan. He was black . He told me that he lived in Lugano and worked in a hospital , but he was not practising his specialization. His son joined him and settled there but his son's documents were not regular. He asked me to help him register his son in Italy. I , on the other hand, on my turn , asked him to send an invitation for my daughter and my grandson to stay . He agreed . We had to be very careful because the Swiss authorities were very strict. He aided me to be issued a 6 months' visa in Switzerland. I thought I could work as a nurse - their salaries were twice more than those in Italy. And now they are just the same. This country is incredibly well organized. Laws are respected. Everywhere it is very clean. You are fined you if you throw a wrap-piece onto the ground. There are also toilets for dogs.

My son in law was the first to arrive in Italy by train from Austria. He was employed in night-disco -club along with Bulgarians. I lived where I worked, but once I pledged to legalize the boy's stay I had to rent a large flat . There was a certain square meters area, required for any foreigner to be issued a permission to reside.

When my daughter received an invitation to visit Switzerland, his son came to in the empty , unoccupied flat. Then I bought a second-hand furniture from Switzerland and we legitimized his son. The father had been employed and worked

for more than 10 years and had money saved. We achieved it in a typically Bulgarian fashion if money failed to pay it, it was achieved by a better payment. I paid a lot of money too, but I was not sorry, because otherwise my grandson could not go abroad in any case! We were still outside Schengen. My daughter called me and said she had been issued a visa. For sure he came to my town we moved to Switzerland by plane.

I went to Italy to take care of the old woman where my employment was. When the time came for the visa to elapse we transferred them to Italy with great fear.

All the pieces of the puzzle came into the required place!

I had my name listed in The Ministry of Health and in the State Gazette Newspaper. I was given the permission to work as a nurse!

I had to watch for an interview or a contest.

I was happy to walk my grandson around. He was 4 years old. I slept with him on the big bed and every night he asked me 10 words what they meant - from Italian into Bulgarian and vice versa.

I met a young woman with two young children in the park where I took him out for a walk, who had a double dislocation of her both legs. She told me that there would be a competition for recruitment of Medical nurses in the largest hospital for adults.

As a nurse I was very well-trained, but I did not know the language at a level enough to take my written exam. Moreover all the names of diseases and the whole anatomy was in Italian! Latin was not used! They had studied it in the past!

I had no more than one month! I thought about giving up, but then I decided to sit for the exam. I knew that I would pass the exam if I was given it i.e. it is up to the examiners to decide.

I sat for it!

I knew orally better than in writing. One of the examiners asked me how our prayers began, “Lord have mercy” - I answered. There were inquiries about my surname.

He was a former priest - a Catholic one who gave up the job of a priest and defrocked and had married already 2 times. He was the director of the largest Institute of Northern Italy for adult patients. I passed the exam.

I was employed and started working in this Institute. I went to work by bus that I changed in the county town where I worked. I would get up at 5 am to catch the first bus, and to be sure I would catch the other on time. It's much colder than our climate because it is very humid. I had very few second shifts. I worked from 7am to 12 am and from 4.00p.m. to 7.00 pm. Fragmented work-time, which did not give me the opportunity to go home for lunch. We lived 18 kilometres away from where I worked.

I was freezing cold at the bus stops! So I spent the first month. Then I bought an old Volkswagen second-hand. He stopped in the middle of the street when it was raining outside it was raining inside too.

I asked my son-in-law what kind of car to buy, I asked him to recommend me one. He gave me almost no response. Alone, as always, for everything I do!

I had to have a car because my grandson started school and somebody had to drive him there and pick him up.

To buy a car with a loan, you must have a regular job to pay it. And I was employed still with a temporary contract for 6 months. They wanted guarantors to sign the loan on a new car.

I went to the office of Fiat and there they began to beat around the bush. My colleagues whose boss I was refused to be

my guarantors. Everything was agreed, I was approved by an order to occupy a permanent position but I quit! I told them that I did not like Fiat!

I sincerely liked the little Volkswagen, but it cost much and I thought I could finally buy it! I was wrong because I had not so much time to work and I had nobody to give my money to!

My days passed very quickly. I worked those full-time mostly fragmented shifts. My daughter worked at first in Milan. She took care of an old woman who was very bad and she had bitten my daughter twice. She came back home only on Saturday afternoon and Sunday. She had left the child with me because she intended to earn a lot of money quickly. I ought to aid her in issuing documents for legal residence and so to apply for recognition of her diploma in nursing . She did not take my advise into consideration! I was happy to take care of my grandson! But it was not good for her!

Time passed. The child went to school. I went to work in the morning, at lunch I took my grandson from school , we had lunch together, I checked his homework or what they had to do and at 03:30 pm I started back to work up to 7.00pm. I passed 72 kilometres a day only to get to work and back. I crossed the county town in the middle and passed 8 traffic –lights. I already drove a car in this city in the heavy traffic at noon and in the evening during the rush hours, my new employment, all that rush and the child , cooking meals, etc. I miraculously managed to cope with it all. I had no time for myself but I never had an accident on the road.

My new car was left outside in the cold – it was frozen all over by the humidity in winter and in summer its tyres were burning in the great heat , but my son’s in law broken car was

kept in the garage. When I asked them to settle the problem with the cars , I was told that they were a large family and they had to keep the garage! The flat was bought in my name , but one could see that the envy was something great! Moreover one could see the pear and had a tail that means that children always take after one of the parents! My daughter was the spitting image of her father and took after him ! They ignored their son . They did not enroll him for sports . I never saw his father to play with him or to kick a ball with him! They were always tired! Since I was closer to the child, I led him to participate in the matches , I went to the seaside with him on my holidays. Water is as clear as tea in the Adriatic sea ! The water was so warm that my grandson happily swashed with other children. The beach was deliberately made for children with shallow water, but I was always on the lookout as a lifeguard , standing or sitting watching supervising them, to protect them from accidents .

The next year planned my annual leave and holidays one week in June and one in July, so we could have more time with the infant. I had booked the hotel, the food and the tickets for going and return . My daughter would not let my grandson join me! I was very sad and I had hard times! I went for a week and I spent the whole week crying, walking around the places where we had visited with my grandson! I could not understand her behavior . I noticed on the face child's face traces of manicured nails. She had beaten him cruelly!

One day I started a quiet conversation with her . A row , a quarrel started out of nothing ! Finally she told me that I had to leave the room which I shared with the child , as he grew up! I asked her about that large living room, why not turn it into a room ? She answered me that it was meant for watching TV and I would have to look for another place to live in!

I was standing upright straight and my legs buckled . I could not believe my ears! I gave them almost all my salary ! I left some money just to spend on petrol and petty cash in my pocket and now I had to go out to reside elsewhere as if I had committed a crime! I was doomed myself to them! I had not been looking for a husband ! I did not understand !

At that time my son in law came back and I asked him:

“Do I have to leave and live elsewhere?”

“ Yes, you do, but not now!”

I was so insulted that I found it hard to speak. On the next day I started looking around what to take and what to leave! Almost all the things – the furniture and the kitchen were mine! Where to go? Where to look for accommodation-lodgings? How could I live without seeing my grandson! I felt as if I was going mad with resentment and grief!

At first I lived at one of my subordinate colleague’s in the town. She was divorced and her mother had died. Her colleagues spoke about her that she loved female company but she had always behaved very usually to me .

I kept my luggage in the boxes, plastic bags and bags in a room. I wore almost the same clothes, as I did not know where to look for what and soon I could not see to get better. The one I shared her flat with introduced me to her brother. He lived in a house built of stone - renewed. Inside the house it was as cold as in a cave. He said that he was not cold. He switched on the heating when it was extremely cold.

It was already winter . The shops were decorated for Christmas everywhere. and my heart was sinking with pain and resentment. And why did I have to suffer , to live through it all! I tried to use this option and to reside with him , but it did not work.

I already had a regular job and I did not want to walk far away from it. I had bought a new car ,a Volkswagen . On installment payment , of course . I decided on that brand as I did not like the Italian cars . I do not understand why a state of the art cannot create a better car . And this logo in front FIAT , I found it very ugly . Moreover that brand were also expensive and not so comfortable and solid. I announced that I was looking for accommodation to all my acquaintances and at the gate.

I was finally told in the hospital that a man had come and said that he let a flat. He would like to have a tenant with a secure job. I had told the concierge that I was looking for lodgings. It was close to where I worked. It was on the same street. I liked it and I moved into it. It was expensive, but I did not have to drive to work.

I was very sad! I felt rejected,spurned by my nearest and dearest ! I did not want to think about myself. A long period of time passed , but my desire to see her grandchild was very great. I went and asked my daughter to allow him to stay the night with me one Saturday. The arrival of my grandson was a great joy! I watched him and my tears were dripping down . I cried with joy ! He liked the little flat which I had it furnished very much. It consisted of a large kitchen , a bedroom with two beds, a small living room almost circular with a round table and a chairs- well preserved. There I put a sofa – a large bed in red , which I bought on bargain. The house was old but well - maintained . It was on a main street.

I slowly began to reconsider what had happened to me . My colleagues started to give me names of real acquaintance agencies . One of them wanted my bank code to pay. I refused. Another started offering me to introduce me to various men. Some of them would only demand friendship , others sought

fools to take them , in common words I did not dare to embark because I did not like anyone. I met them at a cafeteria for a cup of coffee and that was all . They introduced me to a doctor much older than me . I thought that might be something would come out , I would fall in love or bind up , but nothing came out.

In my agency they scolded me that I did not let the new acquaintance enough time to know me. What a time to give them as I did liked nothing about them? I went to the agency and directly stated that I was not a prostitute to answer the everyone's invitations ,all who had my phone given them by the agency. I could not lie to myself, as people say. What love could be there at this age?

One day I got a call from the agency that they would introduce me to two men. I wanted to meet them both on the same day. I had a day off. They both called me.

I made an appointed for them to meet me in the same bar at different time. It was Saturday. Once we had drunk the coffee – here they have coffee for no more than two minutes - I asked the man if he wanted to accompany me to the market to buy tomatoes. It was winter and that day it was very cold. He agreed. We talked for a little while and left.

Two hours later, I met the other man who I only made a remark why I was not in a black coat as we had arranged. I was wearing my fur fox coat because it was very cold. He asked me what zodiac sign I said – I said Balance; The Scales – he said he was A Lio- the Lion, and he was very hungry and we had to go somewhere to dine. I told him to pull up and I got out of his car -a Jeep Rolls-Royce. It seemed he had a lot of money, but I was not interested in the money. Anyway, I would not have them! I had heard about the reverse , the rear side of the medal!

Maybe I was wrong, but the way of the invitation and the arrogance and the fact that I am a foreigner and that some consider us always hungry and ready for anything – we are from the forest, aren't we - the forest! In fact, we come from the East, but it's all the same.

So I chose the one who accompanied me to the market. I know that men do not like going shopping! We went out, despite the degrees below the zero. We talked about everything. He invited me to see where he lived. He had made a potato salad with raw mushrooms, which I liked very much. I thought that maybe this one could become my partner. I invited him too. To my astonishment, I became a wine-drinker. Until then, do not pay much attention to it. I had never liked it. Although wine was produced in our house. So we went on for a long time.

One night much snow had fallen and I told him that he might stay home taking into consideration the weather. He also dwelt on the other side of the center and could have walked home but I did not want to be alone. So it got started. Then I moved to his home, to reside with him, but I did not release the flat for more than a year. I paid my rent. I met his daughter and his son – residing in Milan. He was born in Milan. He lived in his relative's flat in Varese, after his divorce. His parents had died. His flat needed an overall repair and renovation. For renewal the floor with tiles, for plastering and painting the walls and some other things - money was necessary. It was 120 square meters. The restoration cost pretty expensive. The tax for the block that had to be paid was • 200 every month without the extreme things. They had their own street. We decided to sell it and to buy a smaller new one. We started to looking for it hard. By the way, my grandson often visited us and liked it a

lot as we kept taking him all around the city for a walk, to the cinema and the surroundings , which are very beautiful.

My daughter had moved to another area in which there was a junior high school. My grandson was a smart child, but somebody had to insist on his efforts. His mother had beaten him a lot to teach him our alphabet for 2 months and to learn how to read. He still remembers it with pain and grief! I do not know why the beating for us is something simple and common? I do not use this approach.

I visited their home when I was at work on the first shift before his parents came back from work so as not to meet me. The child begged me to stay a little longer ,crying out:

“I’m always alone!“ - which hurt me a lot. I thought that he would gradually forget his classmates’ poor relations at school. He did not take part in the fights. We taught him how to defend himself because he was much maltreated . He just wanted to have friends. If you do not know how to defend yourself, you are lost in this world!

We had been searching for a home to buy for nearly a year, appropriate to the price we had to pay and around the place where I worked. We did not find our match. We had already signed a contract with an agency to sell our flat and there were ones who would like to buy it. We had to move out, but we had not yet found a suitable new one. One day we saw in a magazine a block of 4 flats in the settlement where my daughter lived.

With the entry still- there was a large living room with a portal-gate leading to a large terrace with a Γ shaped kitchen , two bedrooms and a bathroom. It was on the first floor. There was also a plot of land for the garden. Exactly what we were looking for!

But I had to quit my job and look elsewhere around. They told me that there were many hospitals and elderly people carehomes. Here people live for quite a lot of years. They are not labour-worn like us. They do not care much about money and food because they work, they are employed and earn money. And by nature they are calm and peaceful.

I submitted my request to resign and leave because I could not drive more than 60 km. daily only in one direction to work . There was a private clinic for adults two kilometres away, where I was employed . Coming from a specialized and the largest hospital in the North – well organized ,we used computers, I took the medicines from a pharmacy - computer , each with an associated code respectively and all the medication , measured in days and weight , so you cannot take more than allowed. All the nurses had taken a computer course at the expense of the hospital.It was on a high level of teaching and education. The work in the hospitals was not so well organized yet . I was sorry that I had to resign , my salary there was high too.

There is such a spoken phrase here – you know what you leave but you do not know what you will find - that’s how it really is.

I started working in a three floored building. Owned by one person. There was not a lamp in the middle of the treatment room . There was a lamp on the wall with a shade , a wall light - for the night. In the morning it was difficult for me to see what drugs I prepared. I wanted them to improve the lighting – but they did not do it. The orderlies were below the necessary level of performance. In the basement of the building, there were 30 psychiatric patients that I was not told about. I feared them.

There were several prisoner for treatment that caused not only resentment but confusion and fear as well. They tried to beat the staff. Then I learned that the owner had been in prison. The doctor, who was the head in charge had been the prison doctor, the receptionist - 25 a year old one who was in charge of the accounts had an affair with the owner's son , was the senior nurse, the matron, who in this case could not command was female. The diseased patients smelled of urine. The requirements and the stated rules were not observed . There was no order in anything they were disorganized. Arguments could not be fixed.

At one time there were not enough nurses employed. Four Polish nurses were employed. One of them immediately called from somewhere and said she would leave for Genoa. I stayed on and trained the three ones who stayed in Russian and Italian, all the three of them were trained by me how to work. I gave them my clothes, a radio, I invited them home. They stayed the night and slept in the building where we worked. One of them, very well trained came to me one day and told me that she would leave. Some of the doctors had put his hands on her bottom and hips.

The owner promoted me - in rank and salary, but I had decided to resign before it had become too late. By some chance I met right there two doctors-a male and a female – they were free professionals. They took on a duty or two and resigned. They did not want to be employed in such a work-place.

They hired me without probationme at my second employment. I thought immediately that there would be something repulsing which made the nurses flee from.

The building was a 3 floored, relatively new. There was no senior or head nurse. My question - Why? Was answered :

“ We do not need one “ by a medical female nurse, a foreigner like me, from Central America. As he had resigned after a row with the head nurse, then came back and agreed to be paid a certain salary and his shifts.

He worked only first shifts . He made up the shift-schedule . He and I were employed without a probation period , occupied regular positions , the other nurses – male and female were free professionals who came from various distances and to deliver the shift I had to wait for them for hours. This female nurse had so organized the whole process that most of the drugs that were to be taken by the diseased patients were prescribed to be taken in the evening after they had been fed at dinner. There were patients who took 9 medicines every evening. In that way he had to deliver less medicines at 8 am and 12 noon. I had to work all the afternoon shifts, the holidays and the Sundays which I was not paid extra for as it should be.

The pharmacy , which was a real mess came in the afternoon too. Each patient had his or her medication in a box, some of which they bought and paid for on their own. There were 75 patients. So in the beginning I had a manager who supervised me to see how I was doing . I managed it well, but at the peak time 7.30 pm my heart would burst,” fly out “ . I got into rhythm quickly, but I had to remembre another 75 new patients’ names and their faces. In my previous employment , there were 105 patients, so rememebering them cannot be immediately on the spot . There was not a system – there were neither marking their names nor plates on the very tables . They had meals in a large hall. I resigned in 4 months , gaining myself already a high blood pressure rate.

As for my last job - it was 25 km. away from home in one direction. After a 3 months trial of a probation hiring period I was employed to a permanent job position. There were 70 patients. So for a year I changed my job 3 times and 250 names passed through my mind and memory.

I was broken and tormented. Thousands of times I regretted that I had resigned from my first job. My salary was reduced by the UNEBA. contract.

There I heard it said for the first time by the chief physician at a staff meeting where they discussed important matters in connection with the improvement of the work.

“Shut up , shut your mouths up and work , because there is no employment , no jobs !” - Why did they have that meeting then without discussing matters , without reprimanding or rewarding those who deserved it. As with the Communism. I once received a letter from a doctor who changed her employment. The letter was opened by someone before me. Coming from the “ other Pole “ I had already an eye for such details. Her letter contained images shot with a camcorder of her grandmother’s silver ring , I wanted to have it made in Bulgaria at the silversmith’s and a a card with a kitten – and she thanked me for the nice work hours we had spent together. Nothing more!

There are some other things too, but I will leave them so because I am here for a while , and I’m retired . My pension from Italy is 400 euros , and from my beloved homeland for 29 years of service - 50 euros. I pay a tax to the European community of EUR 50 per month and for the fact that I they transferred 12 years from my Bulgarian work experience into Italy. I retired in Italy. The authorities in

Bulgaria wanted me to transfer the years of my work experience in Italy into Bulgaria and to doom me to misfortune! For this labor, sleepless nights, nerves involved and compassion I was paid as a beggar! I can not sleep at night knowing how I work with a desire with all my heart! I saved a lot of people and my pay is to be unable to share it with anyone? On the contrary! If you see that you are underpaid you Bulgarian one run, go abroad until it is not too late to avoid crying like me! I am sorry that I ran away so late! With the Italian salary I earned I would have a better pension now. Now I do not know what to do! With that money here it is impossible for me to make my living. Only the bread and milk costs so. My husband takes a small pension, as he had not have deposited his pension contribution taxes regularly. He used to work in a private company for orthopedic footwear.

After my retirement I started working as a freelance nurse. Tax receipts to be paid began to arrive by the Nurses Association in Rome, by those who allow me to work in Rome, my providing in case I make a fault while performing my functional duties by the man who keeps my accounts.

And by the Tax Revenue office, taxes on the money I was paid. I will have to pay certain sums next year too. The crisis I fled from took place here too. Well, it is not the same but it is similar. Now which way to take?

It was much talked about the changing of mileliri with euros. A product that cost 5 mileliri first became 5 euros, but the wages remained the same as before. I remember that before the introduction of the Euro, the vegetables at we bought at the price of 10 mileliri would last for a week and then after the change only the peppers I like so much would not fall below the cost of • 2.60 a kilo. I buy them just to smell of peppers –

to add just a little taste. Nobody paid particularly attention to that. Prodi was on the television. One of the Parliament members who said:

“Do not buy! This way the prices will decrease!”

Where was the financial control? I started recognizing that I bought fewer things that cost more than before.

The people here are very patient! They pay higher taxes and keep shut up! Here and there somebody speaks his or her point of view and that is how it is. Everyone says “It is not only up to me.” As it said, dogs bark, but the caravan goes moving on! I still have reservations in mind. They are not that hungry like us.

I’ve always longed to live in Florence - Tuscany, where is the cradle of art in Italy. The climate there is still milder. People are witty and friendly. But I did not move to settle there in the past when the baby’s mother (the one I nursed for the first time) had found a job for me there. I expected to help my relatives move here so I never did it. Only from time to time I go to see – Siena, the old palaces in which are still occupied by people residing there and the beautiful panorama of hills, sea pine trees and big Sevliia trees which are especially beautiful!

Italy is really beautiful! The climate makes it possible for various kinds of trees and flowers which we do not have at home to grow . This peoples’ culture is ancient . In the past we were taught that there was no other country more beautiful than ours, so to love it . But hardly there is anyone who does not love his or her native place! Bulgaria has suffered much and will suffer more! I do not know how long this torture of our martyr people would last; the people had lost faith? We are displaced and driven out of our mother land into other countries for a better life does not mean that we do not love our country!

As a mother loves and kisses her crippled child, with the hope
of seeing him healed!

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