

Parvin Goli Abkenari
Ketabe زندان by Nasser Mohajer

“In celebration of my wedding, everyone was gathered in my brother's house. Suddenly the government's guard poured in like a herd and asked for Vida. We were all in shock. How did the guards know of our presence in my brother's house? Vida looked at us and stood calmly in front of the guards. They didn't have any female guard with them to search a woman; so, they asked my youngest sister to search Vida's body. She did so and in the end shouted: " She does not have anything." Vida asked if she could pick up her mantoo (long jacket). They allowed her to do so. She gently went to a room to pick it up. She then, very quickly reached into her pocket and popped a cyanide pill in her mouth. The guards were busy talking to each other. Vida started to shake. We all noticed the incident : her delicate hands popped the pill in her beautiful mouth and her Adam apple pushed it down the throat. Maman lost her control. Her face turned white as the blood drained from it. Pale face looking at her baby falling down in front of her. Baba quietly held Maman's hand and shoulder forcing her to stand straight and tall. He whispered in her ear: “Do you want to send her into the mouth of these dragons?” Maman was shaking. Quietly she watched her baby falling down. Dad was calm, steady. Like a big red cedar, standing in front of his strong-minded daughter, dying in front of him and he could not help her. Tears were falling from his eyes as the sap from the cut of a branch. The guards noticed the situation but it was too late for them to prevent it. Vida was on the floor. Angrily they shouted at us and started to beat up everyone. They kicked Baba and slapped him hard several times and swearing at Maman. One of them

started to call the main station with his walkie talkie and got the order to pack us all up and send us to Evin.”

It was dinnertime, but I was not hungry and would have rather go for a walk. Around ten o'clock Parvin walked toward the bathroom. She had a plastic bag.

I was upset and angry with myself that I had not talked to her about the death of her husband (Mehran) who was put in front of the death squad. This never bothered her since Mehran cooperated with the jail interrogators. I was mad at myself. I should have spoken to her since her loss today.

I was trying to make up for my today's neglect, so with a smile told her that the water would be shut off at 10:00 pm and that I had filled all the pots and pans that I could find in all the cells with warm water. I added that if she need warm water for washing she should let me know.

While I was walking in the hallway, I noticed that she did not take a shower she came out of the bathroom shortly. She went straight to her cell. I was feeling anxious. Parvin was not herself today and I did not know if she was thinking of Mehran or Roozbeh. She was quiet and in herself.

A couple of hours passed. I heard some loud noises in the hallway. Some people were running in the hall way and screaming. I got out of the cell and asked one who was running toward the Parvin's cell that what have happened. While running, she shouted: "Parvin".

I ran to her cell. Parvin was sitting in the corner of the room. She was sitting in the corner and was vomiting constantly. She was trying to calm everyone down saying: " I am okay. I have

indigestion and every thing will be okay. Please go to sleep." I held her hands. They were cold, icy cold.

"May I sit next to you?" While holding her cold hand, I asked. She did not say anything though. I sat next to her. She seemed innocent, like a child, but pale and quiet. My heart was pounding in my chest and I was shaking. Outside, in the hallway, some were cleaning the carpet and some were mopping the floor. You could see worries in everyone's faces even as they were working. Worrying about what to do and what will happen. I still did not know exactly what had happened. Parvin stated that she was sleepy and would like to go to sleep. Suddenly she covered her mouth with her hands and ran toward the bathroom. Some people followed her. She was running. I was puzzled and confused. "What is going on?" I yelled in the air. "Please let me know." I started to cry. No one was paying attention to me nor wanted to answer me. I ran toward the bathroom too. Parvin squatting in front of the bathroom vomiting. I started to cry. Puzzled, confused, dumbfound looking around for an answerer. Manta's loud voice broke into my thoughts when she asked Parvin: "Why did you do this?" She answered in pain with a soft voice coming from her burning throat: "For the honor of my brother, Roozbeh." She started to vomit more. We all knew that Roozbeh was been tortured to death. Never opened his mouth to betray anyone, never accepted the regime's illegitimacy. He was a symbol of resistance in everyone's mind.

I sat in the corner of the bathroom, quiet as I could be, like a dead body, in shock and horrified by the situation of unknown. I didn't know if I should stop her from dying, help her to live, or let her to go as she wished: dreaming of beautiful world, equality and justice for all, happiness for human kind, away from physical and emotional pain, suffering and torture by the same kind . It was

clear that she had made up her mind. She then went to the shower stall and held firmly on a water pipe. She then pushed on the door so no one could get into the stall. Many people were pushing trying to open the door.

Screaming of the political prisoners from one side and the banging on the door from the other side alerted the jail guards to rush in.

Parvin was throwing up continually: “ My aunt was a tormented person you know.” She said in a broken voice. After a vomit she added: “She was living a hard life, in a village, in northern part of Iran. She was the sole pillar of her family. She worked in a rice field from dawn to dark and nights, she was abused and was being treated like a trash by her husband. She tolerated this for several years but once when every one slept in their bed, she slipped out of the house. Right in front of the door, she poured a gallon of gasoline on herself and set herself on fire. She never moved nor made a single noise. Not a peep, until the end. For killing yourself, one should be strong and determined. I am happy that Vida did the same and was strong.” Parvin also have had made up her mind. She was serious about it.

The jail door opened and a guard showed up in front of the bathroom door. Parvin was still holding firmly onto the pipe strongly. Mehry, with some others, was able to get her out. The jail mates were pale and restless, walking nervously in the hallway. I came out of the bathroom exhausted, confused. Started to cry for my life and all the others, thinking about what had happened to all the intellectuals, mothers, sisters, daughters here. Mahin was standing in a corner watching nervously and fearfully. We were all astonished and mystified.

They took Parvin to the jail clinic. On the way, she attempted unsuccessfully to throw herself down the stairs.

“For the honor of my brother, Roozbeh. You know, they had him handcuffed hanging from the wall by one hand in the basement of the jail, in the torture chamber. In spite of everything, he never betrayed anyone.” Her voice was echoing in my head.

Roozbeh was a holy freedom fighter to Parvin. He was like a tale to her. The interrogator, Masoud, had confessed several times that he had never seen any one like Roozbeh: “Stubborn and insistent, strong minded; Proud to be communist. He was unbreakable.”

Later it was proven that Roozbeh had even accepted other comrades charges.

It was a hard night. Everyone was anxious and nervous. The next day we received the news that Parvin was in unsatisfactory condition. Her throat was burned by the acid of the ingested chemicals. She was not able to breath.

A couple of days later we wanted to find out how she was doing. So a couple of us decided to send her belonging to her. We attempted to deliver them to the guard. Instead, the guard yelled at us: “she is dead. Get lost.”

I lost another good friend. I felt empty inside my heart. I started to cry loud. Seemed that someone stabbed a sharp knife into my heart, but slowly. I found myself in Parvin’s room with several others crying all together. Later a guard came in and asked for Parvin’s belonging. I kept one piece of her clothing as a momento. When he left, we started to cry again.

Parvin’s suicide brought some more attempt later on in jail. Once, at lunch, we were all sitting around. We were a couple of clean spoons short so I volunteered to go to the washroom and wash some since I was close to the door. The hallway was quiet; passing the rooms, I noted that everyone was sitting around the sofreh, table cloth, eating their lunch. I walked in the washroom,

noted trails of blood leading me to Mahin's body. She was half dead lying in the corner of the bathroom. Blood was pouring out of her hands and legs. She had managed to cut all of them. My tongue could not move. It was stuck in its place. No voice was able to travel from my voice box. I was able to move my body out of washroom. In front of the first cell, I pointed to the washroom to some who were looking at my pale face while eating their lunch. Some ran toward the washroom.

I started to cry when someone screamed: "What is going on with us? Can anyone hear us?"