ENGLISH ON SUNDAY



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RED FLOWER OF THE TIANSHAN MOUNTAIN

(天山上的红花)

(The Tienshan Livestock Brigade is going to elect their brigade head today. Commune members are picking flowers to be used as ballots. A joyous atmosphere prevails.)

VOICE: Aikuli.

VOICE: Aikuli.

VOICE: Hurry it up and pick your flowers. The voting is starting.

VOICE: Hurry it up and pick your flowers. The voting is starting straight away.

AISHAM: Hey, don't you like my flowers?

VOICE: The ones I picked are much better.

Hey, I'm voting for Sadyk.

MRS. OUMAR: I wouldn't vote for Sadyk. He is good for an accountant, but not for a brigade head. I'm going to vote for Aikuli, I am.

KAMAL: Yes.

(Hasmu comes over to Ashal.)

HASMU: Ashal! Hello, Ashal! I wonder who you'll be voting for, eh? Oh, you'll be voting for Aikuli, of course.

ASHAL: What, me? Vote for her? Huh! I'll never do that. I'll never let her be brigade head. She knows that.

VOICE: The voting's started. Come and vote. Come and vote.

MAN: I'm for Aikuli.

WOMAN: I'm for Aikuli, too.

MAN: Let's go and vote.

VOICE: Let's.

MOTLIF: Good heavens! How can a woman be brigade head?

MOHATAL: That's right. We can't go far with a woman at the head. Even Allah doesn't think much of women.

SACK: I don't care whether it's a man or a woman. I'll vote for whoever will serve us.

VOICE: Now the candidates vote.

ALL: Aikuli. Aikuli.

SAWULI: Aikuli. Aikuli. Aikuli. Come on.

KAICHA: Aikuli.

VOICE: Hurrah.

VOICE: Now Comrade Oumar will announce the result.

OUMAR: I'll announce the result of our Tienshan Livestock Brigade elections. Brigade head, Aikuli. Deputy head, Sulam!

YOUNGSTERS: Aikuli.

OUMAR: Now let's ask our commune chairman and the Party secretary to speak.

PARTY SECRETARY: Comrades, like all of you, I'm very happy. What was the position of the women on our Kazakh grassland in the past?

OUMAR: They were only good for having babies and making tea.

PARTY SECRETARY: That's right. They were often beaten by their husbands and were not allowed to raise their heads. Today, a woman's a brigade head.

HASMU: Hello, Ashal. So your wife's our brigade head now. That's really something, isn't it?¹ A brigade head is as important as a feudal chief used to be.²

PARTY SECRETARY: I'm happy for our grassland, I'm proud of our Kazakh people. HASMU: It's true you do lose something by being a cadre. It's a great honour, isn't it?

ASHAL: Honour! You can't eat honour. Doesn't mean anything to me.

(At Hasmu's home.)

HASMU: Humph, so that wretched slave's our brigade head now. A lass from our stocks has climbed on top of our heads.

MRS. HASMU: Remember? That Aikuli used to look after our sheep for us. There is not much about our family that she doesn't know. You'd better be careful, now she's the brigade head.

HASMU: Don't worry. I'm not a fool. I'm not going to dash my head against the stone wall. I know, I'm going to destroy you all from within. Humph, you won't let me use this whip on you myself now, will you? Well, I'm going to make you use it on yourself, ain't I! Quick! Get the tea ready and the meat and the best wine. We're going to have company.

MRS: HASMU: Yes.

(Night falls. Ashal is alone at home, still angry with Aikuli. He tries to milk the cow, only ends by beating the animal to give vent to his anger.)

HASMU: Say, Ashal. Why be so angry with the poor cow? That's women's work, isn't it? I say, I don't suppose you've had any supper yet. Why don't you come over to my place and have something to eat?

ASHAL: No, thanks just the same. 5

HASMU: Why not? We'd be glad to have you. What do you have to worry about? Your wife is at the brigade meeting and who knows when she'll be back. If you ask me, once you become a cadre, it's hard to find any time to look after your own home. Come on. Come on and have supper at my place. Come on.

(The cadres of the brigade, headed by Aikuli, are having a meeting, with the Party Secretary and the Chairman of the commune attending.)

AIKULI: Our brigade hasn't been doing too well. But I'm sure we can change things for the better. After all we're all encouraged by the Great Leap Forward and we're going to work hard.

PARTY SECRETARY: We think your plan to improve fodder and stockbreeding is a very good one.

CHAIRMAN HALI: Well, I tell you what. The commune will give you four moving machines and 20 spare pedigreed sheep 7 for your stockbreeding program.

PARTY SECRETARY: I'll go with you to fetch the sheep and when we pass by the army farm we'll pick up the wheat seed they promised us.

AIKULI: Very good.

PARTY SECRETARY: Anything else we can do to help?

AIKULI: You know one of the most important things in large scale livestock breeding is artificial insemination. We haven't done a good job with this. We must have a good technician. We need one to direct the work. Can you send us anyone?

PARTY SECRETART: All right. Have you anyone in mind?

AIKULI: How about Comrade Safal?

PARTY SECRETARY: Ah ha! What a shrewd brigade head you are. You pick a model worker.

OUMAR: Ah, is our new brigade head a smart one or isn't she?

PARTY SECRETARY: All right. Well, we'd better do as they say and send Comrade Safal to help them. How about it?

HALI: Fine. It's agreed.

(Ashal is invited to have supper at Hasmu's home.)

HASMU: Please. Cheers!8

ASHAL: Eh!

HASMU: Say, what's the trouble? Your family is not doing too badly. You are one of the best workers on the grassland and Aikuli is a capable woman, too. Between the two of you, surely there's nothing to stop you from having a happy and prosperous home.

ASHAL: Eh, you don't understand. Her heart belongs to the commune now. She

cares nothing for our home these days.

HASMU: Ah, what do you mean by that? I don't follow you.9

MRS. HASMU: He means that now she's the brigade head, she doesn't care for anything except for the grassland.

HASMU: Ah. Is that your trouble? Why don't you just pull her back, if her heart isn't in your home anymore?

(Aikuli is having a talk with the Party Secretary.)

PARTY SECRETARY: What made you think of voting for yourself?

AIKULI: I thought that if everyone else had faith in me, I should have faith in myself.

After all, I'm a Party member. The reins of the grassland must be held by the Party.

PARTY SECRETARY: You are right. You can become a winged horse of the grassland.

AIKULI: Secretary, I want to become a winged horse. Only I've never been a leader before. I'm really quite nervous.

PARTY SECRETARY: Why be nervous? The wings of the eagle grow strong through flying. Remember, the most important thing is to know where you're going. Once you know that, you can fly on bravely. The Party and the masses are with you. I believe your wings are strong enough to carry you through any storm. But you must remember that you have very difficult path to travel and a very heavy load to carry. You're a woman comrade. So it will be harder than ever. Anyway, whatever your difficulty is come to us. 10

AIKULI: Yes.

PARTY SECRETARY: It's late. I'm going now.

AIKULI: Good-bye!

PARTY SECRETARY: Good-bye!

(Ashal is still having supper at Hasmu's home. Hasmu tries to sow discord between Aikuli and Ashal.)

HASMU: Between you and me, if a woman can't see things the same way as her husband does, they're bound to have a wretched time. You see, the way I see it is like this. Well, perhaps I'd better not say any more. After all, your wife is the brigade head and I'm working under her as a veterinary surgeon. If she were to hear what I've just been saying, she'll just say my wretched class origin 11 isn't any good, again.

ASHAL: Ah, you're too touchy, my friend. You've been running all over the grassland curing our sick cattle, haven't you? Many of us think you're not so bad.

MRS. HASMU: If Aikuli had just cared about her home, you wouldn't have so many model worker's awards on the walls, would you?¹²

ASHAL: Model worker's awards! I'd like to take them all down and burn them up. HASMU: Excuse me. Why can't you mind your own business? Keep your mouth shut, you silly bitch! You're itching for a threshing everyday, you are! Get out of here!

(Hasmu raises a whip, pretending to strike his wife. But, in fact, he is showing the whip to Ashal on purpose.)

Ah, women. Pretty heads with nothing in them. If you don't give them a good whip everyday or so, they never have any idea how to behave themselves. Oh, that whip's one of the things that was left to me by my father. Those are real jewels in it.

ASHAL: It's a fine whip.

HASMU: Look, if you like it just keep it for a souvenir. You can have it. If you don't accept it, I'll really be most offended. Really I will.

ASHAL: Thank you. Thanks.

HASMU: That's all right.

ASHAL: I must be going now.

HASMU: Stay awhile. ASHAL: No, thanks.

HASMU: Look, I'll just see you home. 13

ASHAL: Don't bother. I can get home by myself. Good-bye.

HASMU: Good-bye.

(Two girls are waiting Aikuli at her home. Ashal comes back first.)

SAWULI: Ashal, is Aikuli back yet?

KAICHA: Here she comes.

SAWULI: Oh, you're back. The meeting is over?

AIKULI: Yes, it's over. Well, good-bye.

SAWULI AND KAICHA: Good-bye.

AIKULI: Ashal! Ashal! Ashal! ... You haven't had any supper yet, have you? I'll fix you something right away. The brigade committee just held its first meeting. There was lots to discuss. I came back as soon as it was over.

ASHAL: Why bother? Go ahead and be a winged horse! I want a wife, a wife, do you hear? Not a winged horse!

AIKULI: Well, they all elected me, I couldn't do anything else.

ASHAL: You're just like a camel in a flock of sheep. You just want to show off. 14 The first woman Brigade Head on the grassland. Well, well, well. How stuck-up 15 you are!

AIKULI: Ashal, how can you think that?

ASHAL: What did I tell you yesterday? I told you not to be a brigade head. You even went and voted for yourself!

AIKULI: I couldn't let the reins of the grassland be in unreliable hands. Ashal, we shouldn't just keep our eyes on our own little tent. We should think of the whole grassland as being our home. My dear, listen to me. I've just been elected brigade head. There are so many things I don't know how to deal with. I need your help badly. But ... but you won't.

ASHAL: You brought all the troubles on yourself, didn't you? You want to be a winged horse. Serves you right! So don't expect any help from me.

(Aikuli is sitting in meditation. Ashal looks at her from her back. Then, in his mind's eye, he sees the Aikuli when she was a bride, beautiful and lovely. Ashal becomes very excited.)

ASHAL: Aikuli, my dear wife. Don't you remember, eight years ago, the night we were married. We sat here just like this, with your hand on my heart. And we said that our hearts would forever be close and that we would live a happy and prosperous life. We've lived simply and thriftily in these past few years. And now we have more than a hundred sheep. But your heart has leapt out of our tent and you think nothing of our home now.

AIKULI: That's because I know if there is no meat in the pot, you can't scoop any out of it. Ashal, try to think: without liberation, without the collective, without the communes, without any of these things...

ASHAL: But when there is meat in the pot, you always let the others scoop it out first.

AIKULI: And what's wrong with letting others eat first?

ASHAL: Nothing. But when they've eaten their fill and they've eaten every last scrap of meat in the pot, then we'll have nothing left but the gravy. You might as well give the tent away.

AIKULI: I wouldn't mind, if it would help.

ASHAL: Well, I mind.

AIKULI: You'd better go to sleep now. Sometimes it takes a while to understand things. We'll talk about it later. Come.

ASHAL: No, let's talk about it now. Look, give up your job as a brigade head. You do more and you get less. Nobody appreciates you. It's a thankless job. And if you don't do it well the criticism will drive you crazy. From now on let's live happily together. I can do any kind of work. I can do three men's work. And you're capable, too. We'll work hard in the brigade and we'll raise our livestock, little by little. Look at Hasmu. He's got everything he wants. And I want rugs on my wall and jew-

els in my trunk, too.

AIKULI: No! Ashal.

ASHAL: Why not? Listen, dear wife. We'll have a son and as soon as he's old enough to walk, we'll get him a shiny pair of new boots and he'll be just like the son of a rich family. Aikuli, I want to see you all dressed up, too.

AIKULI: Ashal, you shouldn't envy Hasmu. You've only been here since liberation, so you don't know much about them. Everything in Hasmu's house was squeezed out of the flesh of us poor people by his father.

ASHAL: Why, I don't need to exploit anyone. I can work with these two hands and have all I want.

AIKULI: I don't believe it.

ASHAL: Don't believe it? Let's try it and see.

AIKULI: Human beings aren't wolves that can think only of themselves. We should think more about the others; of how to help our brothers on the grassland live a better and happier life. Ashal, don't you understand? It's for the sake of everyone that I've become brigade leader.

ASHAL: Everyone, everyone. That's all you can talk about. By the time everyone is well off and happy, we'll have long since been dead! 16

AIKULI: Maybe! But look at all the people who shed their blood and gave up their lives to save us from the lash and to let us live like human beings. Look at the Han comrades, why should they leave their homes and loved ones and come to the frontier to share our hardships? I want to be like them and think of everyone and....

ASHAL: Everyone! There you go again! Since you think so much of everyone, you don't have to live with me. Go ahead and live with everyone!

(Commune members are cutting grass in the fields.)

SONG TEXT:

On the rich and wide grassland,

Cattle fat and strong.

The red flag of the General Line flapping over the tent.

Red blossoms smiling in the grassland of the people's commune.

The valiant Tienshan mountain,

The song of new Kazakh are heard everywhere,

The fountain of the happiness is the Communist Party.

The fountain of the happiness is the Communist Party.

AHPAN: Comrades, let's have a rest. The milk's come. Let's have a drink.

VOICE: The milk's come. Come and have a drink of milk. Come and have some milk.

KAICHA: Grandpa, here is the first bowl of milk. You have it!

OUMAR: Thank you! Let's give the first bowl to the one who's cut the most grass.

What do you say, everyone?

ALL: Good!

(Oumar hands the first bowl of milk to Ashal.)

ASHAL: Thank you.

AIKULI: Comrades, today we've really done a good job! Thank you. If we keep on working like this we'll have plenty of fodder. Tomorrow, I'll go and get the pedigreed sheep. With the fodder and the new sheep our brigade is sure to have bigger and better herds.

(Sadyk is counting money behind a horsecart and is seen by Hasmu.)

HASMU: Hey, that's a lot of money you've got there, isn't it? Where did you get that from?

SADYK: Well, it's not mine. It belongs to old Klimobar who wants me to buy something with it.

HASMU: I see. Well, what's the deal? You can trust an old friend like me, ch?

SADYK: Quite, quite! In fact I was just coming to you for advice. He wants me to find someone to cut two cart-loads of grass for him. But I don't know who to ask. All grass is common property now and Aikuli is very strict about that sort of thing.

HASMU: Well, there's Ashal.

SADYK: Eh, don't you think that would just be looking for trouble?

HASMU: You're a blockhead. Ashal is Aikuli's husband. Don't you see?

SADYK: Ah, I see. You are a smart one, you are. But do you think Ashal will want to do it?

HASMU: Well, that all depends on you, doesn't it? People say you can get around 17 anyone. Look, you needn't bother about little bits of money like that in future. If you're short of cash, you just have to let me know. Here, take it.

SADYK: Thank you, thank you. The brigade didn't plant the grass, so what's wrong with it? Besides you cut the grass yourself. What's wrong with selling it, anyhow?

(Sadyk and Nulhali are inciting Ashal to cut and sell grass with them for their own profit.)

NULHALI: That's right. It's not easy for Sadyk to get us such a fat piece of meat. And you refuse it, even when it's put on your plate.

SADYK: If you really don't feel like doing it, you don't need to. After all, I won't get anything out of it. If the brigade head should hear about it, I'll be blamed again.

NULHALI: Why should you be afraid of her? She is not at home now.

ASHAL: What? Me, a man afraid of her? I don't care she does know.

(Aikuli is visiting a neighbourhood brigade to learn their experience.)

PARTY SECRETARY: This was a wilderness then, not a tree in sight. Certainly no shelter belts 18 or wind-breaks. 19 Director Chao was a company commander then and I was the political instructor. 20 We started work at this very spot.

DIRECTOR CHAO: Ha, now if you would take all the trees that the army planted in those days, line them up five abreast,²¹ with a meter between each file, they'd stretch all the way from here to Peking.

PARTY SECRETARY: The farmyard trees were planted at the time the farm was first set up. Those trees were all planted by the two of us. Let's go and look!

DIRECTOR CHAO: Our fields are watered by the Tienshan snows and these trees protect them from the sand and the wind. We've had a good harvest every year we've been here. And this year's wheat is coming along fine, too.²² Let's go to the cotton field, shall we? Hey, girls! Come here! Visitors! This is the first Kazakh woman brigade leader, Comrade Aikuli, from the Tienshan Livestock Brigade.

GIRLS: Welcome, welcome.

PARTY SECRETARY: This is our commune model technician, Comrade Safal.

GIRLS: Welcome, welcome.

DIRECTOR CHAO: These girls have come from all over the country to help build up our border region. This one's from Peking. This one's from Canton, Honan and that little one over there is from Shanghai. That's a Sibo girl. This is one of your Kazakh girls. And this one's a Uighur.

(Nulhali and Ashal are piling the grass they are going to sell onto a horse cart.)

NULHALI: Eh. Ashal, have you finished?

ASHAL: Just about in a minute.

(They are seen by old man Oumar.)

OUMAR: Ashal, Ashal, what are the two of you up to 23 here?

ASHAL: Nothing. We sold some grass.

OUMAR: Sold some grass? How could the two of you do a thing like that?

ASHAL: We cut it with our own two hands. What's wrong with selling it?

OUMAR: The grass belongs to the collective, the two of you know that very well.

NULHALI: Yes, yes, we're wrong, Grandpa, we've only done it this once. Please help us out.²⁴ Please overlook it this time.

OUMAR: I'm not going to overlook it. I'm not going to help a rat. When Aikuli comes back, I'll see what you'll say to her.

(Aikuli comes back from the visit, together with the new technician, Safal.)

AIKULI: Oh, hello, hello! Let's just put those in the office. Let's go!

HASMU: Ah, you're back.

AIKULI: Yes, this is Comrade Safal. Our vet, Hasmu.

HASMU: Hay, hello. How are you? I didn't think we'd be having a model worker coming to help us. That's fine! You must come and eat with us this evening.

AIKULI: No, not this evening. He's going to have dinner with us.

HASMU: Oh, then you must come some other time.

SAFAL: Thank you!

HASMU: You're welcome.

AIKULI: Go ahead. How's the brigade doing with the grass cutting?

HASMU: Oh, very well. Everybody's been working very hard. Only I heard something just a little bit worrying this morning.

AIKULI: What's that?

HASMU: Well, it was like this. I didn't want to believe it, but they said Ashal had cut two cart-loads of grass and had sold them.

AIKULI: Sold grass?

HASMU: Yes.
AIKULI: Ashal?

HASMU: Well, that's what they said.

(Commune members are cutting grass in the fields.)

MOSABIK: Why can't they come down hard on them?²⁵

AHPAN: Yes, he's got no principles. That's the trouble.

MOSABIK: Vice Brigade Head, I must criticize you. You're not firm enough.

AHPAN: You don't take things seriously.

KALIM: You don't stick to principles.

SULAM: Eh, what's all this fuss about? This isn't anything serious. Don't be so hard on people.

OUMAR: Vice Brigade Head. Remember the proverb: A hunter who closes his eyes on the grassland is a criminal.

KAISHA: Hey! Aikuli's coming. Look! Aikuli!

MOSABIK: Come on, let's talk to her.

SULAM: Eh, what's the matter with you? You've got no tact with people. He's her husband, remember? She won't want to accuse him in front of everybody. It'll be hard enough for her as it is. Don't you see?

AHPAN: Ah, you're back.

AIKULI: I'm back.

GIRL: Aikuli!

VOICE: You're back.

AIKULI: Yes, I'm back! What were you talking about just now?

SULAM: Well, it's nothing. It was nothing important. All right, let's get on with the work.

OUMAR: Yes, come on. Let's get on with the work. We'll talk about this later on. Go along. Go on.

AIKULI: Please wait! Ashal, did you sell some grass?

ASHAL: What if I did? You can mark me absent from work today and I'll give up all my work points. 26

AIKULI: Ashal, it's not a question of work points.

ASHAL: You are making a mountain out of a molehill.

AIKULI: Ashal, you're wrong. It's not just a small matter. It concerns the whole collective.

MOSABIK: That's right, these two did not come to work, because they were cutting grass to sell privately. Suppose everyone did that.

AHPAN: They are on the road to capitalism.

KAICHA: Ashal....

You're wrong. Why can't you admit it?

SULAM: All right. All right.

SULAM: Look, there's plenty of grass left for us to cut, isn't there? We're all in the same brigade, aren't we? Anyway, Ashal is a good worker. He hasn't done anything like this before. Surely it's all right if he says he wouldn't do it again. Come on everybody, let's get back to work.

AIKULI: Come back!... We can't just let it go like this!... Ashal, give me the money! MOSABIK: Nulhali, hand over the money!

ALL: Hand over the money! Quick.

SADYK: Better hand it over.

Nulhali, hand over the money!

ALL: Hand over the money, quick, hand it over!

NULHALI: Only if he hands his.

ALL: Hand over the money, Ashal.

AIKULI: Ashal, don't be stubborn, now. Hand it over.

ASHAL: I won't. What can you do?

AIKULI: You won't? We'll deduct it from your share.

YOUNGSTERS: Right! We agree.

Hand over the money!

ALL: Nulhali, right. That's right.

MOTLIF: You've done right, Nulhali! How about you, Ashal?

ALL: Hand over the money! Ashal! Ashal! Ashal!

WOMEN: Why don't you hand over yours? Hand over your money, Ashal.

ALL: Hand over your money!

MEN: Hand over the money.

WOMEN: Why don't you hand over yours?

MAN: Why are you so stubborn?

(Mrs. Hasmu is washing clothes by a steam. Ashal happens to pass by.)

MRS. HASMU: Ashal, are you only just coming home, now?

ASHAL: What?

MRS. HASMU: Don't you know? Your wife's got a visitor?

ASHAL: A visitor? Who is it?

MRS. HASMU: It's Safal, the new technician. Come off it! I don't believe you really don't know. Your wife is so pleased to see him. She knew him years ago. You'd better go home and see your visitor.

(Aikuli is inviting the new technician, Safal, to dinner at her home.)

AIKULI: Sorry we have nothing special. Help yourself,

SAFAL: I've had enough. Thank you.

(Ashal comes back with a gloomy expression on his face.)

AIKULI: Where've you been? Why are you so late? This is Comrade Safal.

ASHAL: How do you do?

SAFAL: How do you do?

ASHAL: Sit down, please. Please, please.

AIKULI: Comrade Safal is the commune's model technician. Now that he's here, we're sure to have an increase in our production.

SAFAL: No, no, don't say that. The only thing that can guarantee production is the collective efforts of all people in the commune. But some people don't see this point clearly.... They want to get rich themselves by watching out for themselves and

following the capitalist road.

AIKULI: That's right. They forget that you can't have meat in the spoon if there's none in the pot.

SAFAL: I'd better go.

AIKULI: Won't you have some more?

SAFAL: No, I've had enough. Thank you. Thank you.

ASHAL: Good-bye!

AIKULI: You'd better eat.

ASHAL: Why should I eat? I've had enough already!

AIKULI: What's wrong with you?

ASHAL: Don't pretend you don't know. I sold the grass for the sake of our home. You disgraced me in front of others. And you even made me hand over the money.

AIKULI: The grass belongs to the brigade. You can't expect me to ignore the matter.

ASHAL: The brigade, the brigade! That's all you can talk about, the brigade. Do you have any place in you heart for me and this home?

AIKULI: I don't want you to do anything wrong. It's for your own good and for the sake of our home that I asked you to hand over the money.

ASHAL: For my own good! For my own good! You disgraced me in front of all those other people. And then you and your guest ridiculed me. I suppose that's for my own good.

ASHAL: You listen to me. If you intend to go on living with me, then you'd go and resign at once! Are you going or not? Umh?

(Ashal is about to whip Aikuli, who suddenly recognizes the whip which Hasmu gave to Ashal.)

AIKULI: Ashal, did Hasmu give you that whip?

ASHAL: Umh. What if he did?

AIKULI: Why should he give it to you? Don't you know his father used that whip to strike me and other poor people, too? You should know.

ASHAL: I know. Never mind that. Just tell me whether you're going to resign.

AIKULI: Ashal, Listen to me.

ASHAL: No, you listen to me. Are you going to resign or not?

AIKULI: No, I'll never let unreliable people lead our brigade.

ASHAL: You! You! All right, if our goals are different, you go your way and I'll go mine!

AIKULI: Ashal, I won't let you go!

ASHAL: My dear wife! You've changed your mind! I knew you'd change your mind. How can we ever be separated? Look, tomorrow we'll go down to the commune