

The Epigraphs of Forgotten Dreams

Love is very problematic in the village. All the problems that love could possibly cause in a lifetime were experienced by Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old during his youth and in the village. Eventually, the experience showed him that he had to follow the advice of a woman along this particular road. A woman, thanks to nature, gets a secret and something to hide in her life earlier than a man. That's why the most reliable rendezvous is the one made by a woman - the place, the time, the hour and the minute. You can be neither as perfidious nor as honourable as a woman can. And a village is such a special place, where everything knows whatever you know. The road knows, the hedgerow knows, a dog knows and a man knows. The only friend and assistant is a match-maker who unites you with a sweetheart. That person is your lifeline. You are always near this person, you will always wait for him or her, for the news they will bring about my life. Santia became the 'sworn sister' of Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old. She was the same age as him and was diligent and eloquent in the role of match-maker.

Santia's family was the first to come down from the mountains and settle in the village where Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old lived. 'It was better to come here instead of breaking our backs lugging loaves of bread,' her father said. Before that Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old's family over-wintered their cows at Santia's parents' place and the families became friends. They also discovered that they were from the same district, that as serfs they had revered the same icon and that they had the same patron saint - White Giorgi. Now, Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old's mother helped them integrate into local life and find jobs. To cut things short, they grew close like a family and Santia and Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old became a 'sworn brother and sister'.

But once, when they went out picking wild roses, they felt exhausted and sat at the edge of the forest and looking over the village. Which of them was the first to experience the stirring of their feelings? Fourteen-fifteen-Year-Old preferred lying down to sitting and

instead of putting his head on the dry grass, he preferred sticking his mouth and nose into Santia's lap. That's how their spiritual friendship merged with bodily bliss and they felt even closer.

'Here you are, your brother-husband has arrived for you my girl!' her Granny used to say, with her eyes full of love. She was always sitting on the veranda and when she caught sight of them, her eyes would begin to sparkle. Later they became even closer companions. Santia's granny knew lots of folk poems and she loved to recite them. Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old appreciated her jokes, eloquence and impressive use of language.

When they went into a dark, shadowy room to be on their own, Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old smelled different, not his own village smell but the particular smell of his family, which would go with him anywhere he went. Under the roof of this small house, the environment and the objects existed in natural relationship to each other. They differed from the village ethnographic museum's similar folk household objects in the same way the living differs from the dead. A big, woven basket for drying cheese was hanging in the shadows of the corridor, full of maturing cheeses. There was a very wide sofa near the wall, where a mattress, blanket and pillows stuffed with wool were arranged on top of each other. There was a strangely beautiful hanging on the wall which had an odd appearance. It showed a red rooster sticking his beak into a grey hen's mouth. If you saw it you might think that the weaver of this hanging had been carried away by dreams about vultures.

Santia and Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old were very close to each other. They were in and out of each other's souls all the time. For Santia, he was both a sweetheart and a sworn brother. They filled each other with femininity and masculinity and they shared it out between them. Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old greatly protected his sworn sister. If he happened to get hold of something suitable for a woman, he would present her with it joyfully. Santia too knitted and embroidered for him all the time. To sum it up, one of them protected her and the other one was loyal to him. They could not do otherwise.

From time immemorial, God had given the girls and boys of this area a special beauty and equipped with such weapons, they were of course attracted to each other. This was especially the case because they faced a long road of hard labour, separation and premature old age because it was so tough and tiring struggling with nature and life for their existence. Love was the only thing that lightened their lives and made it more joyful and more wonderful. The woman's language was eloquent, colourful, expressive and true. 'My darling, I caress your eyes, your arms, come on, put your tongue into my mouth, come on, let me swallow your saliva.' Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old and Santia, like their ancestors of many centuries, practiced the custom of 'tsantsloba'ⁱ, chastely sharing a bed. They never crossed any borders, they were not doing anything that hadn't been done before.

When Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old entered the cool room, he would often lie on the sofa like a very tired man. And Santia would lay down next to him, with her skirt folded between her legs. She would put her head on his outstretched arm and lie still. They kept their legs, chest and breasts apart and they enjoyed and entertained each other by talking. After a while, the woman made him unbutton her dress and welcomed his hands onto her breasts. Then they pressed one cheek against another and when one cheek became aflame, they changed to the other cheek. They chirruped and kissed each other's beautiful faces and then came the turn of their lips as well. At first, Santia sealed his lips with her beautiful teeth, like pearls on a necklace, and kissed, but later, gradually, their lips parted and when they passed saliva to each other's mouths, Santia pressed her tongue on his palate like a whetstone and made him shudder.

It seemed that Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old needed to compare with everything with something else. When he touched Santia's breasts, which were hard as a stone, with his body, for the first time he had the same sensation as when he was eight or ten years old and the chief of the local committee gave him a rifle to hold for a while. He had never experienced such a mixture of happiness and fear. And yet, there was more enjoyment than fear.

Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old chose Santia to act as a go-between when he desired Tsiko, who was white like chalk. First of all, there was no one apart from Santia to whom he could reveal the secrets of his heart. And secondly, nobody could be as loyal to him as Santia. Thirdly, Santia had already befriended Tsiko, who was white like chalk.

But Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old did not know that Santia had immediately realised he had a new love, because it was from her yard that Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old saw the girl from the city. Santia had seen straight-away that she was white as chalk. It seemed Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old had to walk through a lot of chalk colour in order to reach Eve the colour of clay.

A sworn brother-sister relationship is founded on one thing - love. Sworn brothers and sisters are not future husbands and wives, they belong to the same community and they will never be able to marry. They have only the road of love which they will never be able to consummate. Santia had her granny's wisdom and she repeated her words. "There are a lot of men who are quick like the wind but they, like the leaves, will also soon fall."

'How nice is to lie with a woman, with your hands on her breasts, her tiny tits, the size of apples.' It's only in poetry that everything is precise and divine. It's not surprising that Santia had large breasts, the size of bombs. Time will pass, Santia's breasts will shrink and the fondling of her tits will stop. Santia won't marry and eventually she will from time to time host a guest like restless leaf in the the gusts of wind, which still hangs on a bare tree.

But at that time Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old was dreaming of becoming a king. He was a well-educated man and would be a great poet in the future. That's why the city girl Tsiko, who was white as chalk, caught his eye. That's why it seemed to him that her whiteness was spotless.

Santia loved Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old more than a lover would, with her entire being. She had measured his depths with her tongue so many times and she felt that that what was in these depths would make its master wander around the world, and would torture

him. Granny, too, knew from the very beginning that the leaf would not fall on their hearth. And yet she loved Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old. He seemed to remind her of somebody from her youth. And besides, he brought back her memories and revived her past which was of no interest to anyone else. He pulled out the poetry buried in her heart with his great endless curiosity. To be blunt, that wretched boy freed her from many thorny problems of the past. That's why when the young people fell silent in the darkness of the room, Granny would not let anyone in there. She always sat in front of the door anyway and would use her stick to bar the way to those who wanted to enter the house. 'Nobody's in,' she used to say, or, 'They are asleep.'

Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old rushed to Santia like a torrent of muddy water, with love and a dirty conscience. 'Fix me up with Tsiko,' he asked her while caressing and kissing her. Santia hid her tears and thought to herself, 'It's as if I don't wear a dress, they ignore me.'

'Did you have a tsatsali, a sworn brother who loved you, Granny?'

Granny's face lit up with a ray of light from the past, just like the way the sun lights up an old clay jar. Fourteen-Fifteen-Year-Old could hardly stop himself from crying out to her to capture that moment. 'Granny, don't let it go, stay like that!'

'Yup! I most certainly did.'

'Did you lie down together?'

'We did, we most certainly did'

'Why did you lie down together?'

'Hey, child, I loved him and that's why, for that reason, what other reason could there be? The boys and girls of our region fall in love easily, and if you don't give them the opportunity to love, if you don't give them some chances to make love to some extent, they will burst out like mountain springs burst out here and there. Tsatsloba keeps them in their place, this blessed grace allows them to bear the summer heat and the winter

cold, hard work, oh, labour is very hard where we are. Tsalsloba and sworn brotherhood and sisterhood allow them to tolerate each other...

‘So everything is allowed then, Granny.’

‘If everything is allowed, then why didn’t I lie with another man? I lay down with the one I loved.’

‘A husband?’

‘The husband came later. Modern girls get married probably without any dreams! Ha, ha, ha! They are lying, a woman has as many loves before she marries, as many times as she opens her eyes. A woman is cunning, my child, very cunning, but she has desires and that’s what destroys her, poor thing.’

‘Was your tsatsali good?’

‘Why would I like him so much that my heart beat madly under circumstances when I had to work so hard? I had to look after the cattle, milk cows and churn butter, harvest, prepare wood, bring hay from the fields, come on, who cared about men? When you are as small as a finger, you are already harnessed into the cart and you have to pull it. You are an old woman at thirty years of age. If you had enjoyed anything before then, that something is your property and you have to remember it until you die. You can cheer up your life with such memories.’

-Was your tsatsali good?

ⁱ Tsantsloba is an ancient Khevsurian tradition when a male guest is put into bed with a female host family member; they kiss and caress each other, but they are not allowed to have sex, Very often they have a sword laid between their lower parts of the bodies. They are never allowed to marry in future. They often become soul mates.