



THE GREATEST DAY OF MY LIFE BY MANOUCHEHR MOSHTAGH KHORASANI

I got up early in the morning, waking up to the noise being made by sparrows outside my parents' house. I looked at the ceiling, and then turned and grabbed a glass of water, which was on the small table next to the bed.

I felt its coldness in spite of the fact that it was lying there for the whole night. I drank a bit, feeling the refreshing effect of the water in my dry throat. I stretched my legs, feeling the tiredness of the last days. Then, I got up, sitting on the corner of the bed for a while, and I realized that my feet were hitting the ground. I remembered when I was a child, I did the same thing on the corner of the bed, but my legs were dangling in the air...

I stood up and looked around the room, and saw that small oil painting that I had painted for my father when I was a child. It was still hanging there. All those strange combinations of colors and my futile attempt to try to paint a shepherd with his sheep in a green valley were just hanging there. I smiled as I knew how much my father had encouraged me to paint and draw...

I walked into the kitchen and saw my mother making the breakfast and I thought how sweet and considerate she was to get up early in the morning and to prepare everything. She was always happy to make tea for me as she knew how much I enjoyed drinking it, especially the way she made it. Its very smell brought me back to my childhood.

I sat at the table and my mother smiled at me. I did not dare to say that another breakfast was waiting for me in the Military Museum of Tehran, as I did not want to break her heart. So I figured that I needed to eat slowly so that to make sure that I would not get full. I looked at my watch. It was early in the morning, 5:30 a.m. I heard my father approaching us with a big smile. I looked at my parents and said, "You shouldn't have got up so early in the morning. I could have made breakfast myself."

My father smiled and said, "Do not worry, we always get up early." And I knew that he was just trying to be polite. I looked at the strawberry jam, which my mother had made. How strange it felt. It was as if someone had brought me back to my childhood, and I remembered how much I loved her strawberry jam. It was always a feast when my father bought strawberries and took them home so that my mother could make strawberry jam for us. I remembered how happy we were.

Even though I was a child, I realized how my mother tried to hide her exhaustion after a hard day of working as a teacher at school, and made strawberry jam for us. I remembered that my parents spread the strawberries on a big tray, adding some sugar and made sure that the sugar was spread evenly on them. I recalled how much I enjoyed the very sight of the feast of changing color as the white color of sugar turned into red, soaking up the red juice of strawberries.



And I remembered how much I loved tasting them, so I tried to steal some and eat them, pretending that I was only into spreading the sugar on the strawberries. The sweet and tender taste of strawberries mixed with sugar tasted so good and I remembered that I did it until my mother said, "If you keep eating them, there will be nothing left for making strawberry jam!"...

Every corner in my parents' house, every object, every move reminded me of my childhood, where my world consisted of enjoying every little tiny event in my life. The voice of my father brought me back to my adulthood, asking whether I was daydreaming. He was smiling at me, and I felt so comfortable again, looking at my father. And I realized how much he had shaped my life. I had my breakfast, kissed my parents, and hit the road...

When I arrived in Saadabad Complex, it was early in the morning 6:30 a.m. I know that we were supposed to meet at 7:00 a.m. I started to walk uphill towards the Military Museum, looking at the marvelous tall trees in the palace. How beautiful they were. I saw many gardeners who were watering the trees, the bushes, and the grass. I kept watching the gardeners and was astonished by the beauty of the magnificent trees and was wondering how tender the gardeners were treating those trees and plants.

I continued to walk towards the Military Museum, and saw the first guard who greeted me enthusiastically, saying "Welcome back, Sir." I looked at him, smiled and answered "Good morning, how are you? Is the director there?"

He went on, "I am fine, thank you Sir. Yes, he is in his office." I remembered the day before when I started working in the Military Museum and how enthusiastically all those guards and soldiers and the museum specialists from the Iranian Cultural Heritage were working on the project. I went into the museum, and the director greeted me with a warm smile and invited me to a breakfast. We sat down with the specialists of the Iranian Cultural Heritage and museum guards and had breakfast. This time, I did not need to slow down to eat as I was not hungry at all. It was like a natural slow-down. After 15 minutes, we put on our gloves and headed for the museum hall. I assigned the tasks accordingly to the members of the team...

I started to analyze and measure each piece and take notes, and other members had different tasks, such as putting the protective oil on the metal parts and another special cream for leather parts. The female members of the team who worked for the Iranian Cultural Heritage were all very well-educated, with top academic degrees from the Iranian universities. It was really fascinating to work with them and to see how motivated they were to learn about the history of arms and armor of our beloved country, and how dedicated and determined they were to help. At the same time, I was looking at the soldiers who were assigned to this project, and I wondered at how fascinated they were helping me to oil the royal collection of arms and armor of Iranian kings. I observed how they were holding q-tips in their gloved hands, oiling meticulously each tiny corner of each piece. They were drafted soldiers of the Iranian army.

They came from different parts of Iran, from Mazandaran to Khorassan, from Azarbaijan to Kurdistan, from Fars to Tehran, and I was fascinated by the very fact that 8 members of the team who were soldiers all came from different parts of Iran. They were so polite and so well-educated. Any time I asked them to give me a piece of arms and armor, or the oil, they answered "Chashm ." And this reminded me of Sensei Mas Oyama who kept saying, "A samurai is always polite, no matter what, he always remains polite."

How polite and selfless they were. Their well-trained bodies and their politeness reminded me in every aspect of Sensei Oyama. It was close to the dusk when I became witness to the greatest day of a man's life. We had been working with hardly taking any long breaks, beside a short lunch break. I remembered how much we laughed during the short lunch break when the museum director said that they had prepared a special meal only for me! I was astonished, looking with inquisitive looks at him, asking, "What do you mean?" He answered, "We have prepared *khoresht-e fulad polo* (steel stew with rice!) for you, given the fact that you love the steel so much!"

We all burst into laughing, and I knew deep down inside me that I became not only fascinated, but obsessed with the steel, this metal, which was not only considered as a holy element in the Ancient Iran, but even up to the Safavid period. It was getting dark when I witnessed the greatest day of a man's life. We were oiling the last pieces for that day. I remember that I had the *shamshir* attributed to Shah Ismail Safavid in my hand. My heart was beating very fast and I could swear that I could hear and see the battle of Chaldaran in front of my eyes.

My hand was shaking and I was really overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of the steel pattern on the surface of the blade. I realized from the corner of my eyes that one of the soldiers was staring at the *shamshir*. He was fascinated and mesmerized, looking at it. He was wearing his gloves, holding a q-tip in his hand and I realized the protective oil was dropping from the head of the q-tip on the floor.

His eyes were wide open and I recalled that he had told me the day before that he came from Tabriz, so I suddenly realized how dear that *shamshir* must have been to him. I asked "Would you like to oil it?" I could see how pleased he was. He had a big smile on his face. He looked at me and added yes. I handed the *shamshir* to him and he held it in his right hand. I could see how his right hand was shaking. He was staring at the *shamshir*.

I could see he had tears in his eyes. He handed back the *shamshir* to me and said, "Thank you very much Sir. I have been working here as a museum guard for one year and I always wondered at the beauty of these objects behind the glass. My biggest wish was to hold this *shamshir* before I die, just for one second.

Now, thanks to your project, my wish has come true." I was speechless, I looked at that proud son of Iran, and handed back the *shamshir* to him, and asked him to oil it carefully. He thanked me again and added, "This is the greatest day of my life," and I could see some drops of tears started to roll down from his proud and young face.

For more information on Saad Abad palace, visit www.saadabadpalace.org.

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www.legat-verlag.de/e/programm_e.html and www.legat-verlag.de/e/Swords1.html

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