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Ali and Nino

By Christopher Hampton

But we did it yesterday.
He said he loved it.
I'm so glad he clapped,
because if not it, would be...
Father, I want to get married.
You want me to find you a beautiful wife?
I want to marry Nino Kipiani.
Her hips are too slim, like all Georgians.
Father!
A woman's hips are more important
than her education, my son.
Remember that.
When do you want to marry?
Soon.
I should like my grandson to be born in May.
It is a lucky month.
Why did you choose her?
I love her, Father.
Generally speaking,
loving a woman is not a good idea.
Father.
Ali Khan, congratulations on graduating.
It's a very well-deserved
celebration for you.
Will you be going on to study in Moscow?
I haven't decided.
May I ask you for this dance?
Father?
Certainly.
How much for the land, sir?
How big is your domain?
Well, sometimes I'm quite shy, but...
No, no.
May I?
- Yes, of course.
- Thank you.
- I'm Malik Nakhararyan.
- Oh. Nino Kipiani.
- Pleasure to meet you.
- Lovely to meet you.
I'm a very good friend of your father.
- Oh.
- We are in business together.
Thank you.

But we have to do that.

After all, it's the supply,
we have to control.

Well, at least we try to.

Prince Ali Khan, you are most welcome.

I am so sorry, but my train was late.

Not at all. Come and join us.

- Welcome here.

- Thank you.

I have just learned of your
ennoblement, Your Highness.

My sincere congratulations.

You are most kind. Thank you.

Thank you.

God is in our wine.

It can do you no harm.

Father, Ali Khan does not take alcohol.

It's against his religion.

On this occasion, I will make
an exception so I can toast Prince Kipiani.

Thank you, young man.

Prince Kipiani.

Prince Kipiani.

You must go and look at our gardens
after dinner, Ali Khan.

We have the most beautiful ancient trees.

Thank you, Your Highness,
but I came to visit you, not your trees.

What, you have something against trees?

Ali Khan is afraid of trees, Mr. Nakhararyan.

Not exactly, but what others feel
for trees, I feel for the desert.

The desert?

It's just scrub and sand.

That's what I love about it:

Its simplicity.

Maybe that's the difference
between East and West.

The desert asks for nothing,
promises nothing,
but the woods are full of questions.

- Well...

- Ali Khan.

Eagles come from the mountains

and tigers from the forest,
but nothing... nothing comes from the desert.
Lions and warriors come from the desert.
Lions and warriors.
And not to forget,
the source of our wealth, our oil.
Ali Khan.
I'm so happy you came.
I'm sorry I was late.
I was getting worried.
Who was that man sitting next to you?
Malik?
He's from a very important Armenian family.
Your father's a prince now.
Does that make you a princess?
It does.
I think I love you, Ali Khan.
Even though I'm a princess.
Maybe you won't be one for very long.
What do you mean?
Don't you lose the title
when you get married?
Is that supposed to be a proposal?
Yes.
Will you always love me, Ali Khan?
Yes.
And will you stay with me, whatever
happens, and take no other wives?
Yes.
Won't your father demand I become a Muslim?
No.
I've always wanted to go to Paris,
more than anywhere in the world.
I promise I will take you
to Paris for our honeymoon.
Now...
will you marry me?
I will.
I will, Ali.
Khan.
Khan.
A telegram for you.
My dear son, the czar has seen fit
to declare war on various European monarchs.

Return at once to Baku
and be ready to do your duty.
Who's this war against?
The German kaiser, the Austrian emperor,
the king of Bavaria, the king
of Prussia, the king of Hungary,
the sultan of the Ottoman Empire...
And who are Russia's allies?
The king of England, the king of Serbia,
the king of the Belgians,
the president of the French Republic,
and the emperor of Japan.
I know, when our family ruled this country,
how many of them fought
and died on the battlefield.
Your father, your grandfather.
And I feel part of that.
But why should I fight for one
Christian monarch against another?
Why should I fight for Russia's
cause, whatever it may be?
We've grown used to thinking
of ourselves as part of Russia.
We are not.
They invaded us a hundred years ago
and took away our family's power.
We are an occupied country.
Believe me, Father, I shall be proud
to die in battle when the time comes.
But this is not our fight.
You're crazy.
You mean you're going to pass up
this wonderful opportunity?
Ilyas, we're here,
and the front line will be around here...
2,000 miles away in Belgium.
If we get to fight at all, it will
most probably be against the Turks,
our cousins... why should I want to do that?
For the glory.
Listen, do you care who wins this war?
No, not in the least.
- You just want to fight.
- Yes, I want to be a soldier.

I've always wanted to be.
I'm sorry, I don't understand.
You'll be jealous when you see me
in my officer's uniform, Ali.
I'm sure you'll both
be brave officers, but why?
It will be an adventure.
That's the important thing.
What do you think, Seyid?
I'm with you.
I don't think this war
is any of our business.
At least I won't have to go back to school.
Beautiful.
When will you go and see him?
My father?
Soon.
Your Excellency can assure the czar
there will be no interruption in
the oil supply in the coming months.
There is even scope for an increase.
Prince Ali Khan.
I'm afraid it has to be admitted
that, regrettably,
war is extremely good for business.
As you may know, our family were rulers
in this region for nearly 700 years.
Yes.
We have retained enough property in
the city to make us financially secure.
I don't doubt it.
So...
Yes?
I have the honor to ask Your Highness'
permission to marry Princess Nino.
This is genuinely an honor, Ali Khan,
not only for Nino but for our entire family.
However...
I can't help feeling she's still
rather young to marry,
to say nothing of the differences
in background
and in, uh, religion.
I'm...

Sure this is also of concern to your father.

No.

I've discussed it with him.

Well, anyway, main thing is,

the world has embarked

on a terrible and unpredictable war.

I think we should wait to see its outcome.

Don't you agree?

Ali Khan.

Are you all right?

What's the matter?

How dare he?

A hundred years ago, a Kipiani would have

kissed my feet for such an opportunity.

My father will laugh at me.

- He didn't actually say no.

- The end of the war.

This war could go on for 20 years.

- What will you do?

- We'll run away together.

You mean kidnap her?

Well, I'm not against the idea.

It's the traditional way

to settle problems of this kind,

but it should be

the last resort, shouldn't it?

I think...

someone should explain to Prince Kipiani

what a wonderful marriage this would be

for all kinds of political

and cultural reasons.

Who is going to do that?

I can. Leave it to me.

Thank you.

Why did you say the end of the war?

I don't think there is

any need to rush into it.

Everyone says it will be over by Christmas.

But how do you know?

Nobody knows how long it's going to last.

I thought it would be good for you

to have some thinking time.

Why do I need thinking time?

You'd rather just join

his harem without thinking?
But he said he's not gonna
take any other wives.
Nino, don't be so naive.
Once they get what they want,
men don't always remember their promises.
A Georgian, an Azerbaijani,
and an Armenian...
three great Caucasian people.
Oh, thank you. Thank you so much.
My wife will tell it to you every minute.
- Gregor, you're bad.
- Tell him. Recite one now.
Recite one of your poems now.
We have the same face.
Really? Oh, I don't think so.
What's happening in the war?
The Germans have occupied Poland.
Russians are advancing on Baghdad.
It's all the same to us.
Well, better than school, anyway.
We have horses. We have guns.
Can't you volunteer for the front?
They won't take Muslim officers at the front
in case we refuse to fire on other Muslims.
And they're right.
I don't want to kill my Turkish brothers.
Courtesy of the officers.
Pork chops for the boys.
You see the kind of thing
we have to deal with?
You were so right not to join up.
Hello!
- I'm gonna go.
- Okay.
Bye.
Salaam alaikum.
Is Malik making any progress?
He's certainly trying hard enough.
But my mother still calls you a wild Muslim.
I don't think anyone's ever
called me wild before.
I quite like that.
I don't think she meant it as a compliment.

I know your friends
are serving in the army, Ali.
But between you and me,
I'm sorry the Russians are doing so well.
- Does it matter to us?
- It does.
Because unless the Russians are defeated,
we have no chance to achieve
what our country most needs.
And what is that?
Our independence.
My father thinks we have
no chance of independence.
I think he is wrong.
Left, left, one, two, three!
Ali, it's me.
Any news?
Malik's here.
He's telling them that in this region,
he thinks mixed marriages
are the only way forward.
- Is that so?
- Yes.
And I think, after the war,
maybe, even more...
All right. Maybe we can see each other later.
More...
complicated, yeah.
So I'll see you after the opera.
I think it's time for us to go.
- See you later.
- Nino? Are you coming?
Bye.
If Russia takes Turkey and Persia,
the czar has said he will close
our mosques and schools
and abolish our languages.
And yet the czar asks us for money.
Why should we collaborate
in the destruction of our own culture?
All we can be sure of is that after the war,
everything will be quite different.
All the great powers
will be weak and exhausted,

but we will still have our strength,
our money, and our oil.
Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could become
the first democratic Muslim nation?
I don't like the way
he's trying to portray the czar.
I agree with Fatali Khan.
We should liberate ourselves.
And I don't mean go back a hundred years ago
to the way it was before the Russians came.
I mean we should create a modern
progressive country and run it ourselves.
Thank you so much for agreeing
to accompany me, Mr. Nakhararyan.
I wouldn't have missed it for the world.
It's my pleasure.
As-salaam alaikum.
Amir, you have to talk to the young people.
They listen to you.
It was a wonderful evening.
Thank you.
Wait. Wait.
I like you.
I really like you.
Wha... what are you doing?
We can leave the country together.
- We will get married in Moscow.
- No.
Yeah. And then we'll go to London.
No, no, no. Malik. What are you doing?
Let me out. Stop the car! Malik!
Let me out!
Let me go! Let me go!
Stop the car, Malik!
Good to have your support.
Thank you for inviting me, sir.
Thank you, Fatali Khan.
You conducted yourself very well, my son.
Ali!
Ali.
Nakhararyan has kidnapped Nino.
No, they were just going to the opera.
No. He was trying to kiss her.
Then he drove off with her.

- What do you think you're doing?

- Let me go!

You're gonna stay with me. Do you understand?

- Let me go! You can't do this!

- No! You can't go. You're mine now.

I'm not gonna say it again.

They were heading for the coast road.

Maybe it's for the best.

What are you doing?

No, Ali.

Ali.

What happened?

I thought...

You thought what?

I mean,

did he...

Did he what?

No, he didn't.

He's dead.

I have 40 men guarding the house.

- You have to leave tonight.

- Why?

The Nakhararyans, they have

put a price on your head.

They are going to come looking for you.

I am going to send you

to our people in the mountains.

How long do I have to stay away?

A very long time.

- Good evening.

- Good evening.

Would you like to sit?

In the circumstances, Khan...

I'm convinced...

the only honorable solution

is for them to marry.

- It cannot be done, Prince.

- Yes.

It could be done tonight.

Where is he?

I believe he's gone to his uncle's in Persia.

They have to marry.

I'm sure you'll be able

to find her some suitable husband.

We both know that no one will marry her now.

Thank you for coming.

- What's this?

- Hashish.

It's good for the pain.

And for the conscience.

Ali.

Kasi Mullah?

This is Ali Khan Shirvanshir.

He needs your protection.

Follow me, Your Honor.

Ali Khan. Ali Khan.

I'm afraid he's very ill.

No one is ill for long in Dagestan.

I'm sorry.

Really, I don't understand
what you're saying.

Prince Kipiani,

out of respect for the Nakhararyan family,

our community feels obliged

to ask that your daughter

refrain from attending Mass

for the foreseeable future.

I don't know what else I can do.

Well, you'd better think of something.

Look at her.

Look at you.

We can't go on like this.

I don't want to go to Moscow.

I'm afraid, on this occasion,

we are not asking your opinion.

- I refuse...

- The arrangements have already been made.

- Father, please.

- No!

It's quite obvious

there's no future for you here.

There is no future for me in Moscow.

There is a chance not everyone there

will have heard what happened.

My parents are sending me to Moscow tomorrow.

Then it's your duty to obey them.

Is it not?

If you won't take me, I'll go on my own.

Nino?

Yeah.

Nino.

How did you get here?

Seyid Mustafa brought me.

I've missed you so much.

Seyid.

Go fetch the mullah and tell him

I need to get married immediately.

We don't need a mullah.

I know how to conduct a marriage.

I just need to prepare the papers.

Good. In an hour's time, then.

You really want to do this?

Do you?

Are you prepared to marry a fallen woman?

Are you prepared to stay here?

This hut? Won't you be bored?

No.

What is your name?

Ali Khan Shirvanshir. Son of Safar Khan.

Your religion?

Shia Muslim.

What's your wish?

To take this woman as my wife.

What is your name?

Princess Nino Kipiani.

Your religion?

Georgian Orthodox.

What is your wish?

To be this man's wife.

Do you wish to retain your religion?

Yes, I do.

Please, sign here.

What... what name should I sign?

Your new name.

My dear parents, please don't worry about me.

Ali and I are married, and everything
has turned out for the best.

Life is simple in the mountains.

We raise chickens,

and we grow our own vegetables.

We work all day and play

a full part in the life of the village.

We have none of the comforts of the city.
But I can honestly say
I have never been so happy in my life.
With all my love, Nino.
I need something warm.
Something warm. Something warm.
My father suggests we make our way to Sweden.
Neutral country.
Does he suggest how we might
get there in the middle of a war?
They pay no attention.
When you write back,
tell them we are living the way
most people live in our country.
And it makes sense.
It belonged to Ali's mother.
Thank you so much, Safar Khan.
Thank you.
Do you fetch the water from the well
every morning, my child?
And do you do all the cooking?
Yes, I do.
Thank you.
I approve of your wife, Ali Khan.
But...
she is a very bad cook.
Safar Khan, can I tempt you to some more?
No, thank you. Delicious.
I couldn't.
How's life in Baku?
All is much the same, except...
the streets are rather chaotic
because our Russian governor has run away.
Why would that be?
The czar abdicated.
What?
Yes.
So the Russians have all left the city.
And our soldiers are back from the front,
released from their oath to the czar.
But what about the Nakhararyans?
The entire Nakhararyan family
has fled to Moscow.
And my family?

I believe they have
very sensibly gone to Tbilisi.
Does that mean we can go back?
I see no objection.
We've been happy here. Do we have to leave?
This is the best chance we'll ever have
to take our independence.
Was it like this when you left?
No.
The revolution in Russia
has caused chaos everywhere!
The Russians may have gone,
but we are still in danger.
Brothers, come closer, please.
I want to make the situation clear to you.
Our town is surrounded by deserters
from the czar's armies.
They're going village to village
killing everyone in their path.
They've set fire to the oil fields
and are almost upon us,
desperate and resolved to loot and
destroy our houses, rape our women.
They outnumber us!
And we have fewer weapons.
I ask you to join us to defend our homes
and keep the enemy from our door!
You're back just when we need you most.
Ali Khan.
What happened to your eye?
Piece of Russian shrapnel.
So one day fighting for the Russians,
the next day fighting against them.
At least they trained us.
Come.
We need to start preparing.
The deserters will be here
in a matter of hours.
Please, take these instruments
inside and sterilize them.
Our job is to protect the old town.
Nobody gets past us and nobody
fires until they get the order.
Get ready. To your positions.

Hey. Skkrsh.
Now!
Mehmed.
Mehmed.
What happened?
Mehmed. Mehmed.
We have to go.
I have to fetch Nino.
We have to leave.
What? What about all the wounded?
The city's about to be destroyed.
We have to leave.
You all right?
I'm staying here with Ilyas.
You have to go with my father to Persia.
- No, I want to stay with you.
- No, you can't.
This fight isn't over yet.
I'll call the baby Ali.
This is Yahya Guli.
He will show you to your quarters.
Welcome to Persia, my lady.
I am your eunuch. Please.
Follow me, Princess.
Please.
I would think it must be very tiring
to be the only wife of a young husband.
But of course, all you have to
do when he gets too much for you
is to send him off to the dancing boys.
Has he ever given you a disease?
No.
You are very lucky with him.
Wear this.
Wear, wear.
It will protect you against any rival.
Thank you.
Any news?
What are all these?
I told you I don't want to wear a veil.
I am sorry, Princess.
I can't allow you to leave
the harem without one.
What do you mean?

I'm just going to the bazaar.

You have to wear a veil.

It is the law of the land.

I can't let you be arrested.

Arrested?

Then I'll stay in.

I'll stay in.

Please go.

Thank you.

Go. Get out.

It's been weeks

since I've heard from you, Ali.

I'm so lonely here.

Please come for me.

I'm afraid my state of mind

can't be good for the baby.

Promise you'll come as soon as you can.

- Fatali Khan.

- Ali.

- When did you get here?

- This afternoon.

The National Council

have given me a job to do.

What?

Well, it's an announcement of a new country.

Fatali Khan is here

to proclaim our independence.

This is extraordinary.

Yes!

I declare the creation

of a new sovereign nation.

It will guarantee civil and political rights

to all its citizens,

regardless of ethnic origin,

religion, class, or gender.

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

Let us pledge allegiance here and say

aloud our promise to our new country.

- Our flag is raised.

- Our flag is raised.

- And it will never fall.

- And it will never fall.

I thought I'd lost you, Ali.

I thought I'd be here

for the rest of my life.

- When can we go home?

- Not yet.

But when the baby's born,
you'll be able to leave.

I can't wait that long. I can't.

I feel like a prisoner.

I can't go out with you.

I can't receive guests.

I can't go out to Tehran because

I'm not allowed to mix with unbelievers.

Do you wonder I can't bear it here?

And I can't stand that eunuch another day.

He keeps wanting to paint my nails
and shave all the hair off my body.

I don't want to see him ever again.

And I don't want to see you either.

So please...

Please.

What's more important to you?

Your wife and child or your country?

Ali Khan.

It's a girl.

It's a girl, Father.

Next time, it will be a boy.

Hey.

She's so beautiful.

I love you.

I love you too.

Will you come and join us soon?

No. I have decided to stay here.

But what will you find to do in Tehran?

I don't know.

I will probably marry again.

You should come back

when everything falls apart in Baku.

What do you mean?

I think you know what I mean.

The war may be over,

but our troubles are only just beginning.

Have a safe journey, my son.

Good-bye, Father.

Good-bye, my son.

Make sure the rooms are allocated

as I explained to you.

Prime Minister.

We're like some blind,
helpless newborn creature
trying to swim through shark-infested waters.

Still, at least our neighbors
are respecting our independence.

What worries me, Prime Minister,
is that we are a small country,
and up there are 160 million Russians
very thirsty for oil.

You worry too much, Ali Khan.

I thought I'd make you
deputy foreign minister.

What do you think?

Thank you, Prime Minister.

I will do whatever you wish.

Good. Then that's settled.

We need to find a place to entertain
our diplomatic guests,
and I am told you're redecorating.

Yes, the palace should be ready in two weeks.

Any chance you could make that a week?

I was surprised to find
you have an opera house here.

Yes. Quite a lot of us
can read and write as well.

Sorry for interrupting.

Ali, when you talked to the high
commissioner, what did he say?

He said the Treaty of Versailles
is about to grant us full nationhood
and guarantee diplomatic recognition.

- Hmm.

- Thank you, darling.

- To independence.

- To independence.

They were not exaggerating
when they said 30,000 men.

No.

And I don't believe
they're here for their health.

They can't do anything.

The Treaty of Versailles says that...

By the look of them, I'd say not too many of them have read the Treaty of Versailles.

No.

The Russians aren't going to march here just like that.

Besides, they've just signed a friendship treaty with us.

- Then why are they massing on the border?

- Maneuvers, they say.

Why have they chosen the closest possible point to Baku for their maneuvers?

They can be here in three hours.

It's a bargaining ploy to get us to lower the oil price.

I think they want it for free.

I'm happy. I'm happy.

I have a wonderful girl.

She is a good girl.

She is a good girl.

Now I'll live forever, yes?

- You'll give me one wish?

- Tell me.

- If I ask, you'll say yes?

- Depends.

I want you to come home to Tbilisi with us.

- No.

- But you have to.

I want you to tell your husband to leave this place.

It's not safe.

This man Lenin said the revolution will not survive without Baku oil.

They'll be coming for it.

Do you like it?

Come here. Oh.

- Ali Khan?

- Yes, Ilyas.

The Bolsheviks have crossed the border.

They've commandeered trains.

They're on their way to Baku.

- It's time to leave.

- All right.

We have to go.

Prime Minister.

I've just been informed
that the Bolsheviks are gaining on us.
We'll make sure you escape across the border.
We'll do whatever it takes to hold them off.
Sir.

Ilyas, I have known you for a very long time,
and you have proved your great courage.

I salute you.

May Allah be with you.

There's something I need to say to Ilyas.

Ilyas.

Nino, I'm going to stay with Ilyas
for a couple of days.

To help him.

No. No.

- No, no, no, no, no.

- I have to.

Ali...

don't we mean anything to you?

You mean everything.

Look what happened last time
we were separated.

It's not the same.

You're not traveling to a strange country.

You're going to your parents.

I have to do this, Nino.

It will be our baby's country
when she grows up.

It has to be defended.

I'll be with you on Friday.

Yeah.

On Friday.

And we'll go to Paris.

For that honeymoon.

And we'll have a house with a garden.

Yes.

And our next child will be a boy.

Good-bye.

Get down!