

# Rojda & Xebat

The Path of Light

A romantic scene between a man and a woman in a mountainous landscape at sunset. The woman is on the left, wearing a mustard-colored dress, and the man is on the right, wearing a blue button-down shirt. They are looking at each other and holding hands. The background features a river flowing through a valley with mountains in the distance under a warm, golden sky.

**ALAN LEZAN**  
Novella

## Prolog

On that night, when the wind brushed over the hills like a hand that could not decide whether to comfort or to warn, Rojda awoke with the sense that something in the world had shifted. No noise had roused her, no dream had pursued her. It was more a tugging, deep within her chest, as if someone had thought her name—not spoken it, merely thought it—and she had heard.

She sat up, listening into the darkness, but the house remained still. Only the breath of the sleepers, the creaking of wood contracting in the cold. And yet, there was that other sound, scarcely more than an echo: footsteps she knew, though she had not heard them for years.

2

Xebat.

His name was a shadow that had never quite vanished. A promise never fulfilled. A loss that had never ceased to burn.

Rojda stood up, barefoot, and went to the window. Outside, the landscape lay like a swallowed breath—moonless, heavy. And somewhere out there, between the hills, he had to be. Not because it was logical. Not because it was possible. But because she felt it—with that incorruptible certainty known only to those whose lives were once anchored in one another.

Perhaps it was only memory. Perhaps it was only longing.

Or perhaps it was the beginning of something that should have started long ago.

## 1 – The Awakening of Light

Morning over Dersim was no ordinary morning.

It was a breath of the mountains, a silent, golden promise draped over the slopes of Düzgün Baba. The sun rose slowly, as if wishing not to wake the world, but to caress it. Its light fell upon the rocks, standing like ancient witnesses of time, and upon the Munzur, which glinted in the valley below like a living mirror of truth.

Xebat walked the narrow path down to the school.

His steps were light, though his rucksack was heavy. He was used to these paths—to the stones, the roots, the scent of earth and resin. Dersim was not just his home; it was his teacher. Every tree, every crag, every breath of wind seemed to have something to tell him.

3

When he reached the schoolyard, the shadow of the buildings was still cool. Groups of students stood together, laughing, talking, staring at their phones. Xebat remained at the edge, as he always did. He was not shy, but he was an observer. He liked to see the world before entering it.

And then he saw her.

Rojda stood at the other end of the yard, her face turned toward the sun.

Her hair fell over her shoulders like a dark river, and the light seemed to catch within it. She laughed at something her

friend had said—a bright, warm laugh that broke through the morning like a spark.

Xebat felt his heart skip a beat.

“Who is that?” he murmured.

A classmate beside him grinned.

“New here. The bank director’s daughter. Rojda.”

Rojda.

The sun.

The name suited her like light suits the day.

Xebat could not pull his gaze away.

And in that moment, as one might later say, something began that was greater than them both.

Something that was stretched between them like a silent thread of light.

4

## 2 – Two Paths Crossing

The first break came sooner than Xebat had expected.

He had barely registered the lesson. Again and again, his gaze had drifted toward the window behind which Rojda sat. She seemed to listen attentively, but sometimes she turned her head slightly, as if sensing that someone was watching her.

As the students streamed into the yard, Xebat went to the water fountain.

He wanted to calm himself, to wash away the heat in his face.

But as he leaned forward, he heard a voice behind him.

“You’re Xebat, right?”

He turned around.

Rojda was standing directly in front of him.

“Yes,” he managed. “And you are...”

“Rojda.”

She smiled.

“I heard your name in class.”

He nodded, unsure of what to say.

“I heard you know a lot about history,” she said. “Is that true?”

“I... read a lot. And my grandfather tells me much about the Way.”

“The Way?”

“Raa Heq.”

Her eyes grew wider.

“I’ve heard of it. But never really understood.”

Xebat looked at her, surprised by her interest.

“It isn’t a faith one explains. It is a path one walks.”

“Can you tell me about it?” she asked softly.

He hesitated. Not because he didn’t want to—but because he didn’t know why she was asking him, of all people.

“If you want,” he finally said.

She nodded.

“I do.”

In that moment, the bell rang for the next period.  
But as they parted, Rojda turned back once more.

“After school? By the river?”

Xebat felt his heart quicken again.

“Yes. By the Munzur.”

She smiled.

And that smile remained within him like a light that would never go out.

### 3 – The River That Listens

The Munzur flowed calmly as Xebat descended the path that afternoon. The sunlight lay upon the water like a golden veil. The air smelled of damp earth, resin, and the herbs growing between the stones. It was a place where words became lighter and thoughts clearer.

6

Rojda was already waiting at the bank. She stood barefoot in the shallow water, as if testing whether the river welcomed her. When she saw Xebat, she raised her hand and smiled.

“You came.”

“Of course I came.”

“I thought... maybe you’d change your mind.”

“Why would I?”

“Because we hardly know each other.”

“Sometimes you know someone before you know them.”

She laughed softly.

“That sounds like something an old sage would say.”

“Perhaps I am one.”

“You’re sixteen.”

“Even sages were sixteen once.”

She sat upon a large stone by the bank, and Xebat took his place beside her. The river murmured, as if it were listening.

“Tell me about Raa Heq,” she said.

“What do you wish to know?”

“Everything.”

“That is a great deal.”

“Then start somewhere.”

Xebat looked out at the water.

“Raa Heq is the path of truth. But truth is not something you possess. It is something you seek. And sometimes, something you lose.”

“And light? You said it is about light.”

“Yes. *Nûr. Ronahî*. The light within a human being. Everyone carries it inside. But many do not see it.”

“Why not?”

“Because they look outward. Not inward.”

Rojda fell silent for a moment.

“And you? Do you look inward?”

“I try.”

“And what do you see?”

“Sometimes... darkness. Sometimes light. Like everyone.”

She watched him for a long while.

“When I talk to you, it feels as if something inside me is growing brighter.”

Xebat felt a warmth rise within him.

“Perhaps that is your own light.”

“Perhaps,” she said. “Or perhaps you are the reason.”

The wind brushed over the water. A bird called from the trees.

For a moment, Dersim seemed to stand still.

“May I ask you something?” she said.

“Ask.”

“Why are you so calm?”

“Am I?”

“Yes. As if nothing could shake you.”

“Many things shake me. I simply do not show it.”

“Why not?”

“Because my grandfather says that a person walking their path must not follow every storm.”

“That sounds beautiful.”

“It is difficult.”

She nodded.

“I think I would like to learn to be that way.”

“You are already that way.”

“No,” she said softly. “I am often uncertain.”

“Uncertainty is not a flaw.”

“What is it then?”

“A beginning.”

She looked at him, and in her eyes lay a radiance that did not come from the sunlight alone.

“Xebat... I am glad we met.”

“I am too.”

The river flowed on.

And somewhere between the stones, the light, and the words, something began that neither of them could name.

## 4 – The House of the Sun

9

Rojda's home lay on a ridge above the city. A modern house, bright and vast, with wide windows that opened to the mountains. The garden was manicured, the paths clean, the furniture expensive. Everything seemed ordered, controlled, planned.

When Rojda returned home, her mother was sitting in the living room reading files. Her father was on the telephone in the study. The air smelled of coffee and perfume, not of earth and fire like at Xebat's.

“You're late,” her mother said without looking up.

“I was at the river.”

“Alone?”

“No.”

Her mother set the files aside.

“With whom?”

“A classmate.”

“What is his name?”

“Xebat.”

Her mother knit her brow.

“I know no Xebat. Who are his parents?”

“His father is a shepherd.”

“A shepherd?”

“Yes.”

“And his mother?”

“She weaves cloth.”

The mother was silent for a moment.

Then she said:

“Rojda, you must be careful with whom you spend your time.”

“Why?”

“Because people from different worlds rarely walk the same paths.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“You know exactly what I mean.”

“No,” Rojda said. “Say it.”

“He is a good boy, perhaps. But not for you.”

Rojda felt something tighten within her.

“You don’t know him.”

“I know his background.”

“And that is enough for you?”

“It must be enough.”

“Why?”

“Because you have a future, Rojda. A great one. And you must not jeopardize it.”

“He isn’t jeopardizing anything.”

“He is,” her mother said calmly. “He jeopardizes what we have built for you.”

At that moment, her father entered the room.

“What’s going on?”

The mother answered:

“Our daughter is spending her time with a boy who does not fit with us.”

The father looked at Rojda sternly.

“Is that true?”

“I am spending time with a human being, not a category.”

“Rojda,” her father said, “you are sixteen. You do not yet understand how the world works.”

“Perhaps I understand it better than you do.”

“Watch how you speak to us.”

“I am only speaking the truth.”

“Sometimes the truth is not helpful.”

“Then it isn't truth.”

The father took a deep breath.

“We will talk more later.”

Rojda went to her room and closed the door.

She sat on the bed, rested her forehead in her hands, and breathed heavily.

She thought of Xebat.

Of the river.

Of the light in his eyes.

And she knew:

Her parents would not understand what was beginning between them.

Perhaps they did not want to understand.

But something inside her said that this path—this *Raa Heq* Xebat spoke of—had already touched her.

And that she could not leave it so easily.

12

## 5 – The House of Fire

Xebat’s home lay at the edge of a small village, where the houses were low and the paths smelled of earth. The interior of the house was warm, filled with the scent of the *Ocak*, the hearth fire that burned almost constantly. For his family, it was not merely a fireplace, but a heart. A place where light and life came together.

When Xebat entered, he saw his mother kneeling over the *Ocak*. She was turning the bread lying on the hot plate. His father sat on a low stool, mending an old tool.

“You are late, Xebat,” his mother said, without looking up.

“I was at the river.”

His father raised his head.

“With whom?”

“With a classmate.”

His mother smiled.

“Is she kind?”

“Yes.”

His father set his tool aside.

“What is her name?”

“Rojda.”

“Rojda...” his father repeated. “I do not know the family.”

“They are new here.”

“What do her parents do?”

“Her father is a bank director. Her mother is a lawyer.”

His father remained silent for a moment.

Then he said quietly:

“That is another world, my son.”

“I know.”

“Do you truly know it?”

“I... believe so.”

His father looked at him for a long while.

“People walk paths that are given to them from birth. Some paths cross, some run side by side, and some drift apart again.”

“And what does that mean?”

“Be careful.”

“Of what?”

“Of pain.”

Xebat lowered his gaze.

“I don't want to hurt anyone.”

“Sometimes we cause pain without intending to,” his father said. “And sometimes we are wounded without anyone ever wishing it so.”

His mother placed a hand on his shoulder.

“If she is good for you, then walk the path. But walk it with your eyes open.”

Xebat nodded.

He did not know if he understood.

But he knew he wanted to see Rojda again.

And that he could not stay away.

14

## 6 – The First Shadows

The next day, Xebat and Rojda met again by the Munzur.

The sky was clear, the water cool, and the sun reflected on the surface like a wandering fire.

“You look sad,” Xebat said.

“My parents...”

She sat on a stone and pulled her knees to her chest.

“They don't want me to see you.”

“Why?”

“Because you are...”

She faltered.

“Because you are not rich.”

Xebat looked at the water.

“I thought as much.”

“I’m sorry.”

“You don't have to apologize.”

“I do,” she said. “Because it’s wrong.”

“It is their perspective.”

“And what is yours?”

“That wealth has nothing to do with truth.”

“That’s what I told them.”

“And?”

“They smiled. That... adult smile that says, ‘You don't understand.’”

“Perhaps they are the ones who truly do not understand.”

“Or they don't want to understand.”

Xebat fell silent.

The river rushed by, as if it were carrying the words away.

“What should we do?” Rojda asked.

“We keep going.”

“Where to?”

“As long as we can.”

She looked at him.

“I’m afraid.”

“Of what?”

“That they will separate us.”

“They cannot separate us.”

“Yes,” she said softly. “They can.”

Xebat placed his hand on hers.

“Rojda... the path of truth is hard. But it is our path.”

“And if it ends?”

“Then it ends. But not today.”

She took a deep breath.

“I don't want it to end.”

“Neither do I.”

16

A gust of wind swept through the trees.

The sun broke through the branches and fell upon their hands, touching one another.

“Xebat...,” she said. “I think I like you more than I should.”

“I like you more than I should, too.”

“And what do we do now?”

“We don't stop.”

She smiled weakly.

“That sounds brave.”

“It sounds like truth.”

“And truth is...?”

“Light.”

She rested her head on his shoulder.

And for a moment, the world seemed to stand still.

But above them, in the mountains, the first shadows were gathering.

Quiet, unnoticed, but inevitable.

## 7 – The Parents' Decision

The days grew longer, and summer drew nearer. But in Rojda's home, the air became heavier. Her parents watched her more closely, asked more questions, listened more intently when she spoke on the phone or stepped out the door. It was not an open conflict, but a quiet, steady tugging at invisible threads.

17

One evening, her father called her into the living room.

He sat upright in his armchair, hands folded, brow stern. Her mother stood by the window, arms crossed as if she had to hold herself together.

“Rojda, sit down.”

She sat slowly.

“What's wrong?”

Her father cleared his throat.

“We have spoken. About your future.”

“My future?”

“Yes. We want you to go to a boarding school in the city after the summer.”

Rojda blinked.

“A boarding school?”

“It’s a good school,” her mother said. “Better opportunities. Better preparation.”

“And why now?”

“Because it’s the right time.”

“Or because you don’t want me to see Xebat?”

Her mother turned around.

“Rojda...”

“Just say it.”

Her father took a deep breath.

“This boy... I’m sure he is a good person. But he does not fit our life.”

18

“Your life,” Rojda said. “Not mine.”

“You are sixteen,” her father said. “You don’t know what you want yet.”

“I do,” she said. “I know that I like him.”

“Liking is not enough,” her mother said. “Not for the life we want to make possible for you.”

“Perhaps I don’t want your life.”

“Watch what you say.”

“I’m only telling the truth.”

Her father stood up.

“Sometimes the truth is dangerous.”

“Only for those who refuse to hear it.”

Her mother took a step toward her.

“Rojda... we aren't doing this to punish you. We are doing it to protect you.”

“From whom? From Xebat?”

“From a path that will make you small.”

“He doesn't make me small.”

“He does,” her father said. “Because he has nothing to offer you.”

Rojda stood up.

“He offers me light.”

Her mother closed her eyes as if she had felt a physical sting.

“You will go. The decision is final.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Then you will go regardless.”

Rojda felt her heart grow heavy.

She said nothing more.

She went to her room, closed the door, and sank to the floor.

She knew her parents were resolute.

And she knew this summer would be her last with Xebat.

## 8 – The Last Summer Begins

The next day was warm, and the sky over Dersim was clear. But in Xebat's chest lay a shadow he could not name. When he met Rojda by the Munzur, he knew instantly that something was wrong.

“What happened?” he asked.

“They’re sending me away.”

“Where?”

“To the city. A boarding school.”

“When?”

“After the summer.”

Xebat looked out at the water.

“I feared as much.”

“I didn’t,” she said softly. “I thought... I thought eventually they would accept it.”

“They are afraid.”

“Of what?”

“Of me. Of where I come from. Of everything I don’t have.”

“It’s unfair.”

“It is their truth.”

“But not mine.”

“Nor mine.”

She sat on the stone where they had sat so many times before.

“What do we do now?”

“We use the time.”

“And after?”

“After...”

He faltered.

“After, it will be hard.”

“Don’t say hard.”

“It will be hard.”

“Say something else.”

“It will be painful.”

“Xebat... please.”

He sat down beside her.

“Rojda... I cannot promise you that we will stay together. I cannot promise you that we will see each other again. But I can promise you that I will walk through this summer with you. Every single step.”

She rested her forehead against his shoulder.

“I don’t want to go.”

“I know.”

“I don’t want it to end.”

“Neither do I.”

“Why is this happening?”

“Because sometimes paths diverge.”

“And what about our path?”

“It is here. Now. Today.”

She raised her head.

“I’m afraid, Xebat.”

“I am too.”

“What if I forget you?”

“You won’t forget me.”

“What if you forget me?”

“I won’t forget you.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

She looked at him for a long time.

“Then let us live this summer. Every day.”

“Every day,” he said.

The river rushed by, as if to carry their words.

The sun mirrored itself in the water, warm and bright.

And above them, in the mountains, the summer began—a summer full of light, love, and inevitable sadness.

## 9 – A Summer of Light

22

Summer spread over Dersim like a golden cloth. The days grew hot, the evenings mild, and the nights smelled of herbs, water, and warm stone. For Xebat and Rojda, every day became a silent promise, every moment a fragment of eternity they wanted to hold onto, even though they knew it was slipping away.

They met almost daily by the Munzur.

Sometimes they sat in silence side by side, sometimes they talked for hours.

Sometimes they laughed, sometimes they cried.

And always, there was this feeling that time was running faster than usual.

On a particularly warm afternoon, they lay in the grass, their heads close together. The sun was high, and the light fell through the leaves like liquid gold.

“I wish the summer would never end,” Rojda said.

“It always ends.”

“Don’t say that.”

“It’s the truth.”

“Then lie to me.”

“I cannot lie.”

“Then say it differently.”

“The summer ends... but the light remains.”

She turned her head toward him.

“You always talk like someone older than you are.”

“Perhaps I am.”

“No,” she said. “You are simply... you.”

He smiled.

“And you are the sun.”

“I’m not the sun.”

“You are. You bring light.”

“And you?”

“I try to hold it.”

She closed her eyes.

“I’m afraid of the autumn.”

“It is still far away.”

“Not far enough.”

“We have time.”

“How much?”

“Enough for today.”

She opened her eyes again.

“Sometimes I feel like I’ve known you my whole life.”

“Perhaps we have known each other longer than we think.”

“Do you believe in that?”

“In what?”

“That paths cross even before birth.”

“I believe that light finds light.”

“And us?”

“We found each other.”

She placed her hand on his.

“Then let’s not lose one another.”

“I won’t lose you.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

The wind swept across the meadow.

The sun burned warm upon their faces.

And for a moment, it seemed as if the summer could truly last forever.

Yet deep within, they both knew it could not.

## 10 – Farewell at the Munzur

The day of departure arrived swifter than they had hoped.

The summer was still warm, but the evenings were drawing in, and the shadows of the mountains fell earlier across the valley. Rojda's suitcases already stood in the hallway of her house. Her parents had organized everything: the journey, the boarding school, the new life in the city.

She had only one wish left:

To see Xebat one last time.

When she arrived at the Munzur, he was already waiting.

He stood by the bank, hands in his pockets, his gaze fixed upon the water.

When he heard her, he turned.

“You are here.”

“Of course I am here.”

“I thought... perhaps they wouldn't let you.”

“They cannot stop me.”

“Not today.”

“Not today,” she repeated.

She sat upon the familiar stone, and he sat beside her.

The river rushed by as if to carry their words.

“When do you leave?” he asked.

“Tomorrow morning.”

“So early?”

“Yes.”

“Did they leave you any time?”

“No.”

“I thought as much.”

She looked out at the water.

“I didn’t want it to end like this.”

“It isn’t ending.”

“It is.”

“No,” he said quietly. “It is changing.”

“That is the same thing.”

“No. Endings are dark. Changes are light.”

“You and your light.”

“It is the only thing I have.”

“You have more.”

“What, then?”

“Me.”

He looked at her, and in his eyes lay a pain deeper than words.

“Rojda... I don’t know what happens in the city. I don’t know if you will meet someone. If you will change. If you will forget me.”

“I will not forget you.”

“Perhaps you will.”

“No.”

“Perhaps... and that is not a terrible thing.”

“It is,” she said. “To me, it is terrible.”

“Rojda... you must live. You must grow. You must walk your own path.”

“And you?”

“I will walk mine.”

“Separately?”

“Perhaps.”

“I don't want that.”

“Neither do I.”

She rested her forehead against his.

“Tell me something to make it easier.”

“I cannot make it easier.”

“Tell me something true.”

“The truth is that I love you.”

She closed her eyes.

“I love you too.”

“And the truth is also that love does not always mean staying together.”

“Don't say that.”

“It is so.”

“Say something else.”

“I will carry you within me.”

“And I, you.”

She wept softly, and he held her hand.

The river rushed, the sun sank slowly behind the mountains, and the light grew soft and golden.

“Xebat...”

“Yes?”

“When I go... what remains?”

“What we were.”

“And what were we?”

“Light.”

She kissed him.

It was a quiet, warm, desperate kiss.

A kiss that did not begin and did not end, but simply was.

When they pulled apart, the sun had almost vanished.

“I have to go,” she whispered.

“I know.”

“Will you be here when I come back?”

“I will be here.”

“Promise.”

“I promise.”

She stood up slowly, as if every muscle in her body were refusing.

He remained seated, for he knew that otherwise, he could not let go.

“Farewell, Xebat.”

“Live in the light, Rojda.”

She walked up the path without turning back.

He watched her until she disappeared among the trees.  
Then he looked at the river.  
And he knew that a part of him had gone with her.

## 11 – Years of Shadow

The years following Rojda's departure did not pass quickly.

They passed like heavy winters that settle over the mountains of Dersim and refuse to lift. For Xebat, every day became a step upon a path he had not chosen, but had to walk.

He stayed in the village.

He helped his father with the sheep, helped his mother at the *Ocak*, visited the *Ziyarets*, and lit candles for *Xizir* when the nights were especially dark. He spoke little, laughed rarely, but he worked hard. The people in the village said he had become a good lad. A quiet, reliable young man.

Yet in his eyes, there was something that did not fade.

A remnant of light that no longer burned, but glowed.

Sometimes, as he walked along the Munzur, he would stop and look at the water.

He remembered her voice, her laughter, the way she captured the light.

He remembered the last kiss, the promise they had given one another.

"I will not forget you," she had said.

"I will be here," he had answered.

And he had stayed.

Rojda, meanwhile, lived in the city.

She learned quickly, adapted, became one of the top students of her year. Her parents were proud. They said she had a brilliant future. They said she was strong, clever, ambitious.

But no one saw how she lay awake at night.

How she would sometimes stare out the window during class and suddenly lose track of what the teacher had said.

How in autumn she would breathe in the scent of damp leaves and think: *This is how it smells at the Munzur.*

How in summer she would close her eyes and feel the warmth of the sun on her skin and think: *This is how it felt to lie beside him.*

30

She wrote him letters.

Long letters, short letters, desperate letters.

Yet, she did not send a single one. She was afraid. Afraid that he would not answer. Afraid that he would. Afraid that she would reopen something she lacked the strength to hold.

And so the years drifted by. Each on their own path. Each with a light that grew dim.

Until one day, a letter arrived. Not from her, but from her father. He wrote that she would remain abroad after her studies. That she had secured a position. That she was beginning a new life.

Xebat read the letter twice. Then he laid it on the table and walked out. He went to the Munzur. He sat on the stone where they had always sat. He looked at the water.

And he said softly:

"Live in the light, Rojda."

The river did not answer. But the light upon the water flickered, as if it had heard him.

## 12 – The Kiss That Changed Everything

**"Farewell, Xebat."**

**"Live in the light, Rojda."**

31

As they spoke these words, they stood so close that the world around them seemed to dissolve. Months of longing, doubt, and unspoken emotion broke open in a single instant. They pulled each other into their arms, seeking anchor, warmth, certainty. What happened between them was no accident, no error, but the belated fulfillment of a promise their hearts had long recognized. As the dawn broke, both knew their lives had irrevocably changed.

Rojda returned to her parents and, shortly thereafter, traveled onward to Dersim Centrum, the pulsing heart of the region, home to over a hundred thousand souls. There, she began her teaching traineeship at the Dersim Gymnasium, determined to walk her own path.

Xebat remained on his land. He had studied agricultural sciences and now managed a large estate with sprawling

fields, orchards, and modern stables. His enterprise flourished, guided by a blend of knowledge, patience, and that deep connection to the earth inherited from his ancestors.

Five weeks passed before a letter arrived from Dersim Centrum. When Xebat opened the envelope, he recognized Rojda's handwriting instantly. Her words made him freeze, then catch his breath: she was pregnant.

She asked to meet him—urgently, without hesitation.

Xebat set out at once. When they stood before each other again, no uncertainty remained. They chose the child without wavering, without calculation. Rojda knew her parents would be furious. And they were. They demanded she not have the child, but Rojda stood firm. She chose her own life, her own future—and Xebat.

32

She moved to the farm with him, and there their shared life began. Rojda worked as a teacher at the Dersim Gymnasium, located not far from Xebat's farm. Every morning, she watched the mountains glow in the light, and every evening, she returned to the place where their love had taken root.

### 13 – Under the Weight of Decisions

Rojda had never believed a single choice could so profoundly shake the foundations of her life. Since moving in with Xebat, she felt caught between two worlds: the familiar order of her upbringing and the new, untamed freedom she had found with him. Days on the farm began early, long before the sun touched the hills of Dersim. The scent of damp earth,

the lowing of the animals, the creak of the old wooden gates—all became part of her new rhythm.

Xebat worked with a stillness that never ceased to amaze her. He moved across the fields as if speaking to them. The plants seemed to listen; the earth seemed to trust him. His university knowledge merged with his family's ancestral experience, and the farm flourished like a living thing. Rojda often watched him from a distance, his hands brushing over the stalks as if they were children he was soothing. In those moments, she knew her choice was right.

Yet the silence of the landscape could not silence her parents' words echoing within her. They had not disowned her, but their disappointment was a shadow cast over every thought. Her mother had wept; her father had retreated into silence. "You don't know what you are doing," he had said. "You are throwing your life away." But Rojda knew better. She hadn't fallen—she had taken flight. And she would not return. 33

The first weeks were demanding. Her body was changing, and with it, her perception of the world. She felt the child within her like a soft, warm light growing stronger each day. Sometimes she rested her hands on her womb and imagined what the child would look like. Whether it would have Xebat's eyes or hers. Whether it would love the mountains as she did. Whether it would understand the silence that exists between two people who know each other without words.

Xebat was attentive without being intrusive. He did not ask much, but he saw everything. When she was tired, he took up her chores. When she was quiet, he sat beside her and waited until she was ready to speak. He did not push; he did not

cling—he was simply there. And that was more than she had ever expected.

One evening, as the sky over Dersim Centrum was bathed in deep crimson, they sat before the house watching the shadows of the mountains lengthen. The air was cool, a light breeze stirring the trees. Rojda leaned against him, and he put his arm around her as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Are you afraid?" he asked softly.

She thought for a moment. "Yes," she said. "But I also have hope."

"That is enough," he replied. "That is all one needs."

In the distance, they heard a dog bark and the rush of the river through the valley. The world was vast, yet in that moment, it felt small and safe. Rojda knew the road ahead would not be easy. The expectations of society, the glances of others, the questions left unspoken—all of it would follow them. But she also knew she was not alone.

34

The next morning, her new life truly took hold. She officially registered at the Dersim Gymnasium to continue working after the birth. The school administration welcomed her kindly, and though some colleagues looked on with curiosity, she felt accepted. The thought of standing before a class again gave her strength. Education was her anchor, her compass, her promise to herself.

When she returned to the farm, Xebat was already waiting. He had baked fresh bread, the aroma filling the house. She smiled, and he returned it without a word. In that smile lay everything: gratitude, trust, a silent vow.

Days turned into weeks, weeks into months. The farm became her home, the mountains her witnesses. And as her belly grew, so did the certainty that she carried not just a new life, but a new chapter—one greater than anything she had ever imagined.

## 14 – Between Tradition and Change

Dersim Centrum was more than just a city. It was a crossroads of history, wounds, hopes, and voices that never quite fell silent. Walking through the streets, one felt the tension between past and present like an invisible current. Old men sat outside teahouses, debating politics as if the fate of the world hung on their words. Young people hurried toward classes with books tucked under their arms...

35

University, determined to shape the future differently than the generations that had come before. And somewhere in between moved Rojda, a woman who had suddenly become part of a societal conflict she had never sought.

Since word had spread that she was pregnant out of wedlock and had moved to the countryside to be with a man, she was met in the city with glances that spoke louder than words. Some were full of compassion, some heavy with judgment. Society was in flux, yet the old norms held on with a stubborn grip. Women, in particular, felt them like invisible shackles. Rojda knew this, but she had never expected to be drawn so deeply into it herself.

At the Dersim Gymnasium, where she would soon begin teaching, the atmosphere was mixed. Some colleagues

greeted her warmly, while others scrutinized her with a blend of curiosity and skepticism. "A teacher must be a role model," she overheard once in the hallway, two voices believing her to be out of earshot. "How can that work when she herself lives against tradition?" Rojda paused, took a deep breath, and walked on. She knew she wasn't living against tradition—she simply wasn't living blindly within it.

On the farm, the world was different. There, rumors did not matter, nor did expectations or social codes. What mattered was what one created with their own hands. Xebat tended to the fields as if they were a political manifesto: proof that with knowledge and patience, something new could be built without forsaking one's roots. His farm was modern, efficient—a blueprint for what 21st-century agriculture could look like. And yet, it was deeply interwoven with the history of his family, who had tilled this land for generations.

36

One evening, as Rojda returned from the school, she found Xebat in conversation with two men from the village. They spoke of water rights, new state regulations, and subsidies granted only to farms that met specific criteria. The men were agitated, their voices loud, their hands restless. Xebat remained calm, explaining, negotiating, searching for solutions. Rojda watched him from a distance and realized just how much he stood between worlds: between tradition and modernity, between village and city, between ancient structures and new possibilities.

Later, after the men had left, she sat beside him on the steps in front of the house. "It isn't getting any easier, is it?" she asked.

"No," he said. "But it is getting clearer."

"What do you mean?"

"The world is changing. Some refuse to see it, others want it to happen too fast. We stand in the middle. And we must find our own way."

Rojda nodded. She knew he was right. Society was in upheaval. Women were demanding more rights, young people wanted education over dogma, and politics attempted to control and modernize both simultaneously. In Dersim, this conflict was especially palpable. The region had a long history of resistance, but also a profound longing for peace and stability.

In the weeks that followed, Rojda became increasingly an observer of these societal tensions. She saw parents urging their children toward certain professions because "that's how it's always been." She heard colleagues debating the role of women—some quietly, some loudly. And she felt the gaze of young girls looking at her with a mixture of admiration and uncertainty—as if they wanted to know if one could truly live differently without losing everything. 37

One day, a student approached her after an information session. "Ms. Rojda... is it true that you decided all on your own to have your child?"

Rojda looked into the girl's wide, questioning eyes. "Yes," she said calmly. "I decided that my life belongs to me."

The girl nodded slowly, as if she had heard something she had long been seeking.

On her way home, Rojda reflected on that conversation. She knew her choice had become political without her ever intending it to be. In a society where any deviation from the norm was seen as a provocation, her life was suddenly a statement. Not because she was loud, but because she lived as she believed was right.

When she reached the farm, Xebat was standing by the fence waiting for her. The sun was setting behind the mountains, and the light draped over the fields like a golden veil. Rojda stopped and looked at him. In that moment, she knew she wasn't just fighting against social expectations, but for something greater: for the freedom to author her own life.

And she knew she wasn't fighting this battle alone.

38

## 15 – The Tremor at the Heart of the Family

The news of Rojda's decision spread faster than she could have ever imagined. In Dersim Centrum, nothing was truly a secret, especially when it concerned a family that had been held in high regard for generations. Her parents had hoped that time would soften their anger, but instead, a mixture of worry, loss of pride, and wounded tradition grew within them, raging like a storm through their house.

Her mother hardly spoke a word for days. She moved through the rooms like a shadow that didn't know where it belonged. Her father, however, did not remain silent. He spoke with neighbors, with relatives, with anyone who would listen—and with every word, his disappointment grew heavier. "She could have had everything," he said over and over.

"Everything. And now she throws it away for a life on a farm, far from the city, far from us."

Yet deep down, he knew it wasn't the farm that wounded him. It was the thought that his daughter had chosen a path he could not control. A path that did not fit into his vision. A path that withdrew her from him.

As Rojda's pregnancy became visible, she hardly ventured into the city. Not out of shame, but because every look reminded her of how much society judged women by rules they had never written themselves. Some greeted her kindly, others acted as if they didn't see her. And still others whispered the moment she passed. But Rojda kept her head high. She knew her life no longer fit into the narrow templates others tried to force upon her.

39

One day, as the autumn wind carried the first leaves across the yard, her mother appeared unexpectedly. She stood before the door, hands tightly clasped, her face strained. Rojda opened it, surprised and uncertain. For a moment, they only looked at each other—two women who loved one another yet didn't know how to find their way back.

"May I come in?" her mother asked softly.

Rojda nodded and led her into the house. Xebat was out in the fields, and the silence between the two women was as heavy as a stone. Finally, her mother sat at the table and placed her hands upon it, as if she needed to steady herself.

"I am afraid for you," she said at last. "Not because of the child. Not because of Xebat. But because you are so far away. Because I am losing you."

Rojda sat opposite her. "You aren't losing me," she said calmly. "I am just no longer the girl you imagined."

Her mother looked at her for a long time, and in her eyes lay a pain older than this conflict. "I only ever wanted you to be safe," she whispered. "To have a good life."

"I have a good life," Rojda replied. "Perhaps not the one you planned for me. But it is mine."

Tears welled in her mother's eyes, and she looked away. "Your father... he doesn't understand. He feels... dishonored."

Rojda felt something tighten within her. "I am not a possession to be honored or dishonored," she said. "I am his daughter."

40

"He knows that," her mother said. "But he doesn't know how to handle it."

In that moment, the door opened, and Xebat entered. He stopped, surprised to see the two women. Rojda's mother rose immediately, as if afraid of being caught. But Xebat only smiled politely and gave a slight bow.

"Welcome to our home," he said quietly.

Her mother nodded, but her eyes went immediately to his face, as if searching there for an answer to all her fears. She saw a man who was not loud, not intrusive, not proud in any exaggerated sense. She saw someone who carried responsibility without boasting of it. And perhaps, just perhaps, she also saw why her daughter had chosen him.

"I should go," she said finally. "I only wanted... to see how you were."

Rojda walked her to the door. As her mother stepped out, she paused briefly and placed a hand on Rojda's arm. "Take care of yourself," she said. "And... of the child."

It was not a blessing, but it was a beginning.

When she had gone, Xebat stepped beside Rojda. "It will take time," he said softly.

"I know," she replied. "But perhaps... perhaps time heals more than we think."

She placed a hand on her belly, and Xebat laid his over hers. In that moment, they both felt that the family they were founding was built not only of love, but of courage. The courage to live against expectations. The courage to build bridges that others had torn down. The courage to create a future greater than the past. 41

## 16 – In the Stillness Between Two Hearts

The nights on the farm had changed since Rojda's belly had rounded and the child within grew into a palpable presence. Darkness was no longer merely darkness; it was a space where thoughts grew louder, memories drifted up, and fears emerged that found no room during the day. Often Rojda lay awake, listening to the wind brushing through the fields, feeling the movements of the small life inside her like quiet messages from a future she could not yet grasp.

Xebat noticed her restlessness, even when she tried to hide it. He knew the way she breathed when she was deep in thought. He knew the silence that enveloped her when something weighed on her mind. And he knew the look in her eyes when she tried to be strong, though she felt vulnerable.

One evening, as rain drummed gently against the windows, he sat beside her on the bed. She was sitting up, knees drawn in, hands protectively cradled over her stomach. Her face was barely visible in the half-light, but he felt the tension in her shoulders.

"You hardly sleep anymore," he said softly.

She did not answer immediately. Then she raised her head and looked at him. "I'm afraid," she whispered. "Not of the child. Not of our life. But that I am not enough."

42

Xebat moved closer, but he did not touch her. He knew that closeness sometimes required space. "Not enough for whom?" he asked.

"For everything," she said. "For people's expectations. For my parents. For the children I will one day teach. For this child. For you."

He took a deep breath, as if to pull the right words from the air. "Rojda... you are not here to fulfill expectations. Not mine, not your parents', not the world's. You are here because you chose to be. And that alone makes you strong."

She shook her head. "Sometimes I don't feel strong."

"Strength is not the opposite of fear," he said. "Strength is going on, even though you are afraid."

She looked at him for a long time, and in her gaze lay something he rarely saw: a deep, almost childlike vulnerability. He reached out his hand, slowly, as if to give her time to withdraw. But she did not. Her fingers found his, and in that touch lay more truth than in all the words they could ever have spoken.

"I don't know if I will be a good mother," she said.

"You will be a mother who loves," he replied. "And that is enough."

She closed her eyes, and a single tear broke free, gliding over her cheek. Xebat did not wipe it away. He let it fall, for he knew that some tears are not meant to be dried, but to be carried.

43

After a while, she rested her head on his shoulder. He drew her gently to him, and she felt his heartbeat, calm and steady, like a promise. The world outside was full of voices, full of expectations, full of judgments. But here, in this small room, there were only two people trying to shape a life together, without knowing if they were doing everything right.

"Sometimes," she said quietly, "I feel I don't deserve you."

Xebat closed his eyes. "And sometimes I feel I don't deserve you," he answered. "Perhaps that is the reason we found each other."

She smiled weakly. "Because we both doubt?"

"Because we both hope," he said.

The rain grew heavier, filling the room like a gentle song. Rojda placed his hand on her belly, and he felt the movement of the child. A small, barely perceptible nudge—and yet a sign greater than anything they had experienced before.

"It is alive," she whispered.

"It is alive," he repeated. "And it is loved."

They sat like that for a long time, without speaking. The silence between them was not empty but warm, filled with everything they did not need to voice. That night, they needed no grand words, no promises, no explanations. They only needed each other—and the knowledge that together, they were stronger than their doubts.

## 17 – Shadows of the Past

The news that Rojda had moved in with Xebat and was expecting a child did not remain unnoticed for long. In Dersim, everything was shared, but in the countryside, in the villages nestled around the mountains, news traveled even faster—carried by voices that never quite fell silent. Xebat's family found out as well, and their reactions were anything but uniform.

His mother, a woman with a face etched by sun and labor but eyes that saw everything without saying much, was the first to come. She appeared one morning, unannounced, suddenly standing in the yard with her hands tightly interlaced. Rojda was busy sorting herbs when she heard the footsteps. When she turned, she saw the older woman studying her—not with hostility, but not with warmth either.

"So you are Rojda," she said finally.

Rojda nodded. "Yes."

The mother looked at her stomach, then back at her face.  
"You carry his child."

It was not a question. It was a statement, heavy as a verdict.

"Yes," Rojda answered calmly.

The mother was silent for a long time. Then she said,  
"Come."

She led Rojda into the kitchen, sat down, and placed her hands on the table. Her movements were slow but deliberate. "I have heard what people say," she began. "That you are from the city. That your family does not agree. That you are here without a wedding."

45

Rojda felt her heart beat faster. "I know it is unusual," she said. "But I love your son. And I stand by this child."

The mother looked at her for a long time, as if to test whether these words were true or merely a shield. Finally, she gave a slight nod. "Love is good," she said. "But love alone does not carry a farm."

Rojda went to reply, but at that moment the door opened and Xebat walked in. When he saw his mother, he stopped.

"Mother? Why are you here?"

"Because I wanted to know if you know what you are doing," she said.

Xebat sat across from her. "I know."

"You bring a woman into this house who is not of our world," the mother said. "A woman who knows the rules of the city,

but not those of the land. A woman who does not know how hard this life can be."

Rojda lowered her gaze, but Xebat laid his hand on hers. "She is learning," he said. "And she is staying."

The mother saw their interlaced hands, and something in her expression shifted—a fine crack in her sternness. "I have nothing against her," she said quietly. "But I am afraid for you. You are my son."

"And I am becoming a father," he replied. "I need your support, not your doubt."

The mother was silent. Then she stood, went to Rojda, and placed a hand on her shoulder. "I will not disown you," she said. "But you must know: the others will talk. The family, the neighbors, the elders in the village. They will ask why there was no wedding. Why everything happened so fast. Why you came from the city and were immediately with child." 46

Rojda raised her head. "Let them talk," she said. "I have nothing to hide."

The mother looked at her—differently this time, with a hint of respect. "You have courage," she said. "Perhaps more than I thought."

But not everyone in Xebat's family was so open.

Two days later, his older brother, Baran, arrived. He was taller than Xebat, broader in the shoulder, with a gaze that always seemed edged with suspicion. He entered the yard

without a word of greeting and walked straight toward his brother.

"What are you doing, Xebat?" he asked sharply. "You are bringing shame upon us."

Rojda stood in the doorway, hearing every word.

"There is no shame," Xebat said calmly.

"No shame?" Baran spat. "An unmarried woman, pregnant, from the city? People are already talking. You know how this village is."

"I know how the village is," Xebat said. "But I also know what is right."

Baran snorted. "Right? You think with your heart, not your head."

"And you think only of the wagging tongues of others," Xebat countered.

The tension between the brothers was palpable, like a storm gathering over the fields. Rojda took a step forward, even though her knees were trembling.

"I am not here to destroy your family," she said. "I am here because I love Xebat. And because we are expecting a child."

Baran looked at her, and in his eyes lay something she could not decipher—anger, yes, but also uncertainty. Perhaps even fear. "You don't know what this life is like," he said. "You don't know what it means to be part of this family."

"Then I will learn," she said.

Baran moved to retort, but Xebat stepped between them.

"Enough," he said. "She stays. And whoever cannot accept that need not come."

It was a sentence that cut through the air like a blade.

Baran stared at him, stunned. Then he turned and walked away without another word.

When he had vanished, Rojda sank onto a chair. Her hands were shaking. "I didn't want a fight," she whispered.

Xebat knelt before her. "You didn't cause a fight," he said. "You only lived."

She looked at him, and in his eyes lay something that steadied her—a quiet, unshakable protection.

Yet deep within, she knew: this was only the beginning.

## 18 – The Night It All Began

48

Winter came early that year. The mountains around Dersim were already blanketed in white, and the air smelled of snow long before the first flakes fell. Rojda felt the cold more keenly than usual, perhaps because her body was preparing for something greater than any season. Her belly had grown heavy, and every step reminded her that the birth was not far off.

Xebat was especially attentive in those days. He worked less in the fields, stayed more often in the house, listening for every sound, every shift in her breath. The tensions with his brother had settled, not because Baran had changed his mind, but because time had forced him into silence. Even he knew that a child was weightier than a quarrel.

One evening, as the wind hammered violently against the windows, Rojda grew restless. She could not sit, nor lie, nor stand. Something within her pressed forward, like a wave that

could no longer be held back. Xebat saw it instantly. He stepped to her, placed a hand on her back, and felt the strain.

"It's time," she said, her voice brittle.

He nodded, though his eyes betrayed the fear he refused to voice. "I'll get the midwife."

The hours that followed blurred into a single, long moment. The midwife came, an experienced woman from the neighboring village whose hands were as steady as water. She spoke little, working with a quiet focus, giving instructions that Xebat followed without hesitation. Rojda fought, breathed, held on. The pain came in waves, but between them, she felt something else: a strength she had never known before.

When the night was at its darkest, a first cry broke the silence. A clear, bright sound that filled the room like light. Rojda sank back, exhausted, tears streaming down her face, yet she smiled. The midwife placed the child in her arms—a girl, small, warm, alive.

Xebat knelt beside her, his hands trembling as he touched the tiny being. "Our daughter," he whispered.

Rojda looked at him, and in that gaze lay everything: the fear they had overcome, the love that had carried them, and the future that now lay before them.

Outside, the first snow began to fall.

## 19 – A New Place in the World

The birth of their daughter changed everything. Not only for Rojda and Xebat, but for the people around them. The little girl, whom they named Berfin, became a silent center around which the tensions, fears, and hopes of the families realigned. Where there had been doubt and mistrust, a space now opened in which even the hardest hearts grew soft.

As news of Berfin's birth reached the village, the first visitors arrived. Hesitant, cautious, as if they did not know whether they were welcome. But Xebat opened the door to everyone, and Rojda served tea as best she could, though she was still weary. The people saw the child, saw the warmth in the house, saw the peace that had settled over the farm—and something in them began to shift. 50

Xebat's mother came again, too. This time without reproach, without questions. She sat beside Rojda, took the baby in her arms, and rocked her as if she had never done anything else. Her eyes grew soft, and a faint smile appeared on her face. "She has your brow," she said. "And his eyes."

Rojda nodded, and for a moment, she no longer felt like a stranger. The mother looked at her and placed a hand on her arm. "You are strong," she said. "Stronger than I thought. Perhaps stronger than I ever was."

It was not a complete peace, but it was a beginning.

It was more difficult with Rojda's father. Weeks passed without a word from him. Her mother wrote secret letters,

telling her that he had grown silent, that he stood outside the house late into the evening, staring into the distance. "He doesn't know how to come to you," she wrote. "His pride is great, but his love is greater."

One day, when the snow had melted and the first buds appeared on the trees, Rojda saw a figure coming up the path to the farm. Slow, heavy, as if every step bore a burden. She recognized him instantly.

Her father stopped at the gate. He did not look angry, nor hard—only tired. Rojda stepped out, the baby in her arms. She stopped a few paces away, unsure if she should move closer.

He looked at her for a long time. Then his eyes drifted to Berfin. Something in his face broke—quietly, barely visible, but irrevocably. He raised a hand as if to touch the child, then let it sink again. 51

"I have made mistakes," he finally said. His voice was hoarse, as if he had not spoken in a long while. "I wanted to protect you. And in doing so, I hurt you."

Rojda felt her throat tighten. "Bavo..."

He shook his head. "No. Let me finish." He took a deep breath. "I thought you were throwing your life away. But now I see... you have created a new one."

He saw Xebat standing in the background, quiet and respectful. "And you... you did not take my daughter. You gave her a home."

Xebat stepped forward and gave a slight bow. "She belongs to us both."

The father nodded. Then he turned back to Rojda. "May I hold her?"

Rojda handed him Berfin. His hands trembled as he took the little girl. He looked at her as if he had never seen a child before. His eyes filled with tears that he could no longer hold back.

"Welcome to the family," he whispered.

In that moment, something that had long stood between them finally dissolved. Not everything was healed, not everything forgotten—but the path back had been opened.

As the sun sank behind the mountains, they all sat together before the house. The air was mild, and the fields shimmered in the evening light. Rojda looked at her family—the old and the new—and felt that she had finally arrived.

52

Not in the city.

Not in the village.

But in a life she had chosen for herself.

## Epilogue – When the Years Grow Quiet

The years passed without anyone noticing when days became weeks and weeks became seasons. The farm, which once had carried only Xebat's responsibility, was now a vibrant place full of voices, footsteps, and laughter. Berfin grew up, and soon her siblings followed—two girls and a boy, each with their own spirit, but all with the same warmth in their eyes inherited from their parents.

Rojda taught at the Dersim Gymnasium, and with every passing year, she became a teacher who imparted not just knowledge, but courage. Many of her female students saw in her an example that a life did not have to be molded by the expectations of others. She rarely spoke of her own story, yet her presence, her stillness, and her clarity told enough.

Xebat managed the farm with the same patience as before, but now he was no longer alone. His children ran between the fields, helping with the planting, the harvest, and the feeding of the animals. They came to know the earth as one gets to know an old friend—slowly, respectfully, with open hands.

The families who had once hesitated found their place in this new tapestry. Rojda's father became a frequent guest, quieter than before, but softer. He carried his grandchildren on his shoulders as if trying to reclaim lost time with every step. Xebat's mother became a steady pillar in the house, and even Baran, the brother who had once spoken so harshly, eventually returned—at first in silence, then cautiously, and finally with a smile he had long kept hidden.

53

The world around them continued to change. The city grew, the villages shrank, politics shifted its colors, and people sought new ways to weave tradition and modernity together. Yet on the farm, something endured that was greater than any change: a sense of belonging that had arisen not from rules, but from decisions.

One evening, many years later, Rojda and Xebat sat before the house, just as they had done when everything was still new and uncertain. The children were playing somewhere in the yard, their voices mingling with the chirping of the

crickets. The sun sank slowly behind the mountains, and the light draped itself like gold across the fields.

"Do you remember," Rojda said softly, "how it all began?"

Xebat nodded. "I remember every step."

"Have you ever regretted that we walked this path?"

He looked at her for a long while, with a gaze that said more than words. "No," he answered. "For every step has led us here."

Rojda smiled. She placed her hand in his, and in that moment, the world was still. Not because it had stopped turning, but because it was exactly where it was meant to be.

Night descended over Dersim, and the stars appeared, one by one, like memories shining in the heavens. And somewhere between past and future, between earth and light, Rojda and Xebat found their peace. 54

A life that was not planned.

A life that was not easy.

A life that was true.

And that was enough.