

Esma'il: Not any more. I'll go to my own house tonight!

He gets up and slowly moves toward the door. Abbas's sister, annoyed and dejected, picks up the bowl in order to take it to the room. Esma'il stops and turns his head.

Esma'il: By the way ---- I told my sister about it.

Abbas's sister: About what?

Esma'il smiles.

Esma'il: Everything. Now, wait until everything calms down, then ----

120: Outside. The courtyard. Daytime.

Eslam enters Mashd Hasan's yard. Mashdi's wife is standing on the porch. She seems to be waiting for something. Eslam approaches the porch. Mashdi's wife leans out of an open window and gives a bowl of mushy rice and vegetables and something wrapped up in a cloth to him. Eslam heads for the stable. He pauses at the door and, pushing the door open with his shoulder, enters slowly.

121: Inside. The stable. Daytime.

Eslam looks around. Mashd Hasan, squatting in a corner and holding his legs in his arms, is not paying any attention to anything. Very slowly, Eslam approaches the stable platform and opens up the bundle. There is a lot of bread inside. He shuffles the pieces of bread around; a chunk of cheese appears. Then he places the bowl in the middle of the spread cloth. Mashd Hasan is not paying any attention to him. Eslam approaches hesitantly. Mashd Hasan is wearing such a look that Eslam prefers not to say anything. Slowly, he turns and leaves the stable with a grim face.

122: Outside. Out of the village. Nighttime.

It is midnight. Three Purusis, on tiptoe, are moving forward beside a wall; they enter the village and pause for a second. They are all heavy-set men.

First Purusi: Which way shall we turn?
Second Purusi: Right!
Third Purusi: You know the way?
Second Purusi: I found out today. Someone from Khatunabad told me!
First Purusi: They say he is a tough guy. He dan't miss with his spade.
Third Purusi: He loves his cow more than the pupils of his own eyes.
Second Purusi: Let's go!

The Purusis, with ropes tied to their waists and daggers drawn, creep very slowly along the wall.

123: Outside. The roof of Eslam's hut. Nighttime.

Papakh starts barking, as if he has seen something.

124: Outside. The alley. Nighttime.

The three Purusis disappear in the dark alley opposite.

125: Outside. Eslam's hut. Nighttime.

Eslam opens the window of his hut and, half naked, stares out of the window.

126: Outside. Another alley. Nighttime.

The Purusis, hunched over and daggers in hand, pass by the wall of a ruin. Hasani and Mashd Rayhan emerge from behind the wall and watch in terror as the Purusis move away. Mashd Rayhan is clinging to Hasani.

Mashd Rayhan: Who were they?

Hasani: The Purusis!

Mashd Rayhan, terrified.

Mashd Rayhan: The Purusis?

She opens her mouth to shout, but Hasani puts his hand over it. They both disappear.

127: Inside. Mashd Rayhan's room. Nighttime.

Mashd Rayhan enters the room frightened. A lantern is half-lighted. Mashd Jabbar, sleeping by the woodpile, is snoring loudly. Mashd Rayhan moves forward in great trepidation and shakes him.

Mashd Rayhan: Hey Mashd Jabbar! Hey! The Purusis!
 The Purusis!

Mashd Jabbar is not awake. Mashd Rayhan shouts louder.

Mashd Rayhan: Hey, the Purusis, the Purusis!

Mashd Jabbar is startled out of his sleep, as if he's had a nightmare.

Mashd Jabbar: My sheep! My sheep!

The voices of several men and women saying "Purusis, Purusis" are heard from outside.

128: Outside. The alley. Nighttime.

Eslam, carrying a stick, Mashd Safar's son, a pick, Mashd Abbas, a spade, are hurrying along the alley. Some others join them at the bend. Each is carrying an implement.

129: Outside. Another alley. Nighttime.

The crowd moves forward on tiptoe, taking care not to make any noise.

130: Outside. Mashd Hasan's alley. Nighttime.

The three Purusi are standing in front of the door of Mashd Hasan's hut, looking all around. The first Purusi pushes the door; it is open. They stretch their necks inside the yard; everywhere is dark. The first Purusi beckons; all three enter.

131: Outside. Mashd Hasan's courtyard. Nighttime.

The Purusi stop in front of the stable door and listen. The panting of a cow is heard.

First Purusi: It's here!
Second Purusi: Very well then. You two go inside;
 I'll watch here!

The first and third Purusi enter the stable. The second Purusi is looking all around.

132: Inside. The stable. Nighttime.

A large black object is lying on the straw in the corner of the stable. The first Purusi unties his rope. The third Purusi prepares the rope he has brought along with him. The first Purusi speaks softly.

First Purusi: Get hold of its mouth so it doesn't
 make a lot of noise.

Slowly the Purusi approach Mashd Hasan. The first Purusi, making a noose with the rope, leads the way. Suddenly they rush forward and pounce. In the dark the first Purusi pulls Mashd Hasan's head toward himself, the third Purusi raises the noose to bring it down. They are terrified as they see Mashd Hasan and slowly begin to draw back. The awakened Mashd Hasan, with his face wounded and covered with blood, and with wide protruding

eyes, stares at them. He is wearing a smile. The Purusis are startled and rush out of the stable.

133: Outside. At the stable door. Nighttime.

The Purusis rush out in a hurry. The second Purusi stops them.

Second Purusi: What happened? Hey? What happened?
First Purusi: It wasn't the cow! It was him!

They all turn in a hurry, but are frozen in their places.

134: Outside. Mashd Hasan's courtyard. Nighttime.

All the village people, armed with spades and picks, are standing in front of the yard door, on the walls, and on rooftops, watching them in silence. The Purusis leap toward the mound of earth, and as quick as a flash, jump onto the stable roof. The crowd surges forward, shouting loudly. Mashd Jabbar is shouting louder than the others. Eslam, shouting loudly.

Eslam: Don't let them get away!

Mashd Safar's son, looking wild, his hair entangled, jumps onto the rooftop, holding a pick with a sharp point.

Mashd Safar's son: I'll kill you bastards!
Mashd Jabbar: My sheep! My sheep!

They all attack.

135: Outside. The alley. Nighttime.

The three Purusis leap down into the alley fast and start running. They bump into the few who have come out of their huts and are obstructing their way. They are brandishing daggers, shouting at the top of their voices. The people scream in terror and hide themselves inside their huts hurriedly. The armed crowd follows the Purusis, shouting.

136: Outside. Out of the village. Nighttime.

The Purusis dart out of the village, zigzag their way, and disappear down the valley. The villagers follow them and see them disappear in the darkness.

137: Outside. By the pool. Nighttime.

Kadkhoda, terrified and with lantern in hand, is standing by the pool; he repeatedly stops the people running away to get information.

Kadkhoda: What's happened? What IS it?

Mashd Safar's son brandishing his pick.

Mashd Safar's son: The Purusis came to take Mashd Hasan away!

138: Outside. Mashd Hasan's courtyard. Daytime.

It is early morning, the sun has just come up. Mashd Hasan's wife descends the steps carefully and heads for the stable. When she gets to the small opening, she stretches her neck to see Mashd Hasan. The tablecloth is still spread. The pieces of bread and the bowl of rice and vegetables have not been touched. She stretches her neck again, when the yard door is opened suddenly, showing Eslam, Naneh Khanom, Naneh Fatemeh, Kadkhoda, and Mashd Abbas standing in front of it. Eslam is holding a jug of water, Naneh Khanom and Naneh Fatemeh, two small banners. Nobody enters. Eslam, by moving his head, asks her about Mashdi's health. Mashdi's wife, shaking her head, indicates that she does not know anything. Eslam turns and makes his followers understand that they should wait for him there. Putting the jug down, he approaches the stable alone and opens the door cautiously.

139: Inside. The stable. Daytime.

Eslam looks inside the stable and enters. He looks in every direction, but cannot find Mashd Hasan. Then,

suddenly, he realizes that Mashd Hasan is sitting in a hole, caused by the earth subsiding, facing the wall. Eslam is worried. He approaches and stands near him and watches. Then he gets hold of Mashd Hasan's shoulder and pulls him back. Mashd Hasan is contemplating. He is dejected, obedient, and sheepish. Eslam holds onto his arm, picks him up, and seats him in the middle of the stable.

140: Inside. The stable. Daytime.

Naneh Khanom, Naneh Fatemeh, Kadkhoda and Abbas, leading the village people, enter the stable and sit all around, watching Mashd Hasan in amazement. Mashdi's wife shakes her head and moans.

Mashd Hasan's wife: Stranger of Strangers! O, Imam of the Age!

All murmur invocations and shake their heads. The old women come closer. Naneh Fatemeh holds a bowl of holy water. Rapidly, they murmur invocations and blow over the water. Naneh Khanom brings out a small, tight leather bag, containing a written prayer, and wets it. The bag swings in Naneh Khanom's hand. Naneh Fatemeh comes closer and pours a few drops of the water on Mashd Hasan's head. Then she wets her fingers and rubs them on Mashdi's forehead and eyelashes. Naneh Khanom hangs the bag containing the prayer round Mashd Hasan's neck and turns toward the sky.

Naneh Khanom: Praise be to God, the Lord of the two worlds, a thousand thanks, thanks, thanks! O, 'Ali! O, Mohammad! O, 'Abbas!

Naneh Fatemeh: O God, the bountiful, O God the merciful, O, the Transformer of hearts and eyes. O, the Savior of the deer, O, Holy Reza, the Patient. O, God, O, help, O, Hasan.

Naneh Khanom: The Prayer of alqamet turns away the evil! O, possessor of the age! O, Lord, merciful, and kind! Blessings upon Him!

All of a sudden Mashd Hasan gets up. The crowd step aside; the surrounding circle widens. They are all fascinated and terrified. Mashd Hasan moves around, then sits down in an empty corner, with his back toward the others.

141: Outside. The alley. Daytime.

Musorkheh is sitting in a corner, tying the rope on his leg to the vegetable-oil can. He gets up and starts walking. The can makes a noise. He laughs, he moves faster, making more noise. The can hits the stones on the way and bounces, at times in front of him. He laughs and runs faster; then he is frightened and starts running away. Some children emerge from the huts, some jump down the walls, they all chase Musorkheh. Musorkheh runs through several alleys until he gets to the alley with a slope. He hurries down the alley, the children follow screaming, laughing, throwing stones, some carrying sticks. They all get to the pool side.

142: Outside. Mashd Baba's house. Daytime.

Mashdi Baba, as seen through a small window frame, has been asleep but is awakened by the children's noise. He stretches his neck to see what's going on. He notices Musorkheh and the children. Not interested, he goes back to sleep.

143: Outside. The pool-side area. Daytime.

Musorkheh is running along the edge of the pool followed by the children, who want to take the can away from him. Musorkheh circles the pool. He runs up the alley next to Mashd Hasan's hut, chased by the children. At last, they enter the alley where Mashd Hasan's hut is. The screaming reaches its climax. Suddenly Mashd Jabbar and Mashd Abbas, walking very fast, pop up in front of Musorkheh and the children. The noise dies down. Musorkheh, caught between the two sides, is frightened. He climbs and jumps over a low wall into a small yard. The barking of a dog is heard.

144: Outside. The alley in front of Mashd Hasan's hut.
Daytime.

The children disperse. Mashd Jabbar and Mashd Abbas turn and head toward Mashd Hasan's hut, the door of which is open. A group of people are standing in front of the door.

145: Inside. The stable. Daytime.

Mashd Hasan, very much disturbed, is emitting terrible cries and running around the stable. Whenever he hits the open door of the stable, the door swings back and forth. Eslam and a few others have stretched their necks through the half-open door and seem helpless. Some others are watching through the small opening. As he is running, suddenly Mashd Hasan strikes the wall hard with his head. The wall collapses over him. The people are holding their breath.

146: Outside. The village grave. Daytime.

An old woman is lying on a grave, moaning. Some people have come to another grave. They are mostly women who, in isolation or together with others, have squatted beside the graves, saying prayers. It is cloudy and humid. The wind, rushing up the women's veils, makes a rushing sound. A few, with arms stretched over a grave, weep loudly. Together, Naneh Khanom and Naneh Fatemeh walk from one grave to another. At the edge of the graveyard Kadkhoda, Mashd Jabbar, Abbas, and Esma'il are squatting around, smoking their pipes. Eslam approaches and sits down beside them. Mashd Jabbar offers him a pipe. Eslam, inhaling the smoke, turns toward the others.

Eslam: Last night he ate up all the rubbish in the stable. His food is just straw and hay.

Abbas: How come his guts don't hurt? It's strange, Mashd Eslam!

Eslam: By God, I don't know! I am puzzled!

Kadkhoda: I, for one, am dumbfounded!

Eslam: One does not know what's going to happen to him in the end. One day he is one way, another day he's the other. One day he is quiet, one day he wants to pull the door and the walls down. There are wounds all over his body.

Eslam turns his head and watches a woman nearby. She is lying over a grave, weeping. They all look at him.

Kadkhoda: Mashd Eslam, God be praised, after all you know more than all of us put together. You must find a remedy somehow.

Eslam: I suggest we take him into town.

Kadkhoda: Take him into town for what?

Eslam: We'll take him to a hospital, maybe they can find a remedy.

Abbas: You mean, there they can make him see that he's not a cow?

Eslam: I don't know about that, but they must be able to do something after all.

Mashd Jabbar: I'm afraid that if we take him to town, the hospital might not take him in.

Eslam: Why not?

Abbas: He's right, what if they say no?

Kadkhoda: Eslam must know what he's talking about, after all.

Mashd Jabbar: Now, who's going to take him?

Eslam: Me, you, and Abbas.

Abbas: But I can't leave my sister alone!

Kadkhoda: Since you don't want to leave your sister alone, I'll have to go. Agreed?

Naneh Khanom and Naneh Fatemeh approach the men. Eslam gets up as he sees them.

Eslam: It's time for prayers, come one, let's make a move.

147: Outside. The pool-side area. Early morning.

Eslam's cart is ready. The donkey is harnessed to the cart, Abbas is holding the ropes and waiting. All around, a group of women and children are silently watching the cart from the front of the huts and the rooftops.

148: Outside. Mashd Hasan's courtyard. At dawn.

The sun is not up yet. Kadkhoda, Mashd Jabbar, and Eslam gather behind the door of Mashd Hasan's hut. Each is holding a length of rope, with a small bundle under the arm. It is grim and cloudy; a strong wind is blowing. The wind's howling is heard everywhere. Everywhere is wet and damp because of the rain during the night. Eslam turns to Mashd Jabbar.

Eslam: Did you tell his wife?
Mashd Jabbar: Yes, she's going to our house so that my sister won't be alone.
Kadkhoda: A good thing too, one should not leave a young girl on her own.
Eslam: Let's go in now.

And he opens the door into the yard.

149: Outside. Mashd Hasan's courtyard. At dawn.

Eslam, Kadkhoda, and Mashd Jabbar enter the yard. Mashd Hasan's wife, dressed all in black, is standing on the porch by herself. A half-lighted lantern is hanging in the porch. The three men approach the stable door. Mashd Hasan's wife comes closer, holding the lantern. In the middle of the yard, there are rain puddles.

Kadkhoda: We're taking Mashdi.
Mashd Hasan's wife: You mean he may get well?
Kadkhoda: God himself must help!

Eslam pushes the stable door open. Mashd Jabbar takes the lantern from Mashd Hasan's wife. The three enter.

150: Inside. The stable. At dawn.

Mashd Hasan is awake with his head in the pen, chewing. Mashd Jabbar holds the lantern up, Eslam unties the rope, makes a noose, and moves forward cautiously. Mashd Hasan turns his head away from the pen and watches Eslam like an indifferent cow. Eslam strokes Mashd Hasan's back, shoulder and head, as if he is petting a cow. Mashd Hasan rolls on the ground in quick motions. Slowly, Eslam raises Mashd Hasan's head so that the noose can be placed round his neck. Suddenly Mashd Hasan struggles, bumping into the walls and the door. Eslam and Mashd Jabbar try to calm him down. They are not successful. Mashd Hasan takes refuge in a corner, raises a plank of wood next to him, and charges forward. The men duck. The plank hits the hayloft. An avalanche of clods of earth, straw, and rubbish falls onto Mashd Hasan's head. The men rush forward and, with a lot of shouting, tie Mashd Hasan's arms and legs very tightly.

151: Outside. The pool-side area. Early morning.

A few children approach the pool from an alley chanting "They're bringing him, they're bringing him." Eslam, Mashd Jabbar, and Kadkhoda pull Mashd Hasan toward the pool with difficulty. Everywhere it's damp and muddy, with puddles of rain water here and there. Men, women, and more children are watching from behind the walls, the rooftops, and through doors and windows. A rope is tied to Mashd Hasan's right leg and held by Mashd Jabbar. Mashd Hasan is holding onto it with both hands and is struggling. Eslam weighs up the situation carefully and turns toward Mashd Abbas.

Eslam: Abbas, we can't take him in the cart.
It's been agony bringing him this far.

152: Outside. By the pool. Early morning.

The crowd steps aside and watches. Mashdi Baba is leaning out of the window, watching. The howling of the wind is still heard, and there is the noise of splashing footsteps in the alleys. Papakh is lying on the roof,

resting his head on his front paws and looking on, uninterested. Eslam pulls the rope, dragging Mashd Hasan forward.

153: Outside. Outside the village. Early morning.

Eslam, Kadkhoda, and Mashd Jabbar have reached the outer limits of the village and are descending into the valley. Kadkhoda is carrying a switch. A group of people who have come out of the village are watching Eslam and the others as they fade away in the distance. Musorkheh starts following Mashd Hasan and the others when Mashd Safar's son steps on the rope still tied to his leg. Musorkheh stumbles headlong and falls into a puddle.

154: Outside. The valley. Daytime.

At the bottom of a quiet valley, Eslam, Kadkhoda and Mashd Jabbar are pulling Mashd Hasan forward. The noise of their panting and struggling is lost in the wind's howling.

155: Outside. The brow of a hill. Daytime.

Eslam is pulling Mashd Hasan up a hill. Mashd Hasan walks very heavily. Mashd Jabbar is uttering "Gee-up, gee-up." Kadkhoda, sweating and panting, is bringing up the rear with difficulty; he pauses. Suddenly his eyes catch the top of the hill opposite; he gazes at it, terrified.

156: Outside. At the hill-top. Daytime.

The three Purusis are standing on the top of the hill motionless, and are watching Eslam and the others, three dark shadows against the gray and overcast sky.

157: Outside. On the brow of the hill. Daytime.

Kadkhoda runs toward the others, panting. He whispers something. They all turn to look at the Purusis.

158: Outside. On another hilltop. Daytime.

The silhouettes of Eslam, Mashd Jabbar, and Kadkhoda can be seen, pulling Mashd Hasan forward.

159: Outside. The valley. Daytime.

Eslam is struggling, pulling the rope. He is sweating, murmuring something. Mashd Hasan shows obstinancy, resists, and does not move. His eyes wide open, the pupils moving around. Eslam, Mashd Jabbar, and Kadkhoda are all exhausted. The rain is coming down in a drizzle.

Eslam: Gee-up, gee-up, come!
Kadkhoda: It's no use; he doesn't want to budge!

Mashd Jabbar and Kadkhoda push Mashd Hasan from behind. Mashd Hasan has dug his feet in the ground and does not budge.

Eslam: Mashd Jabbar, you come and hold onto this.

Mashd Jabbar gives his rope to Kadkhoda, moves forward, and takes hold of Eslam's rope.

Eslam: Come on, pull!

Eslam takes the switch from Kadkhoda and starts beating Mashd Hasan. He is extremely angry. Rain is pouring down his face.

Eslam: Gee-up, gee-up, come on, move you
beast! Come on, move you beast!
Mashd Jabbar: Gee-up, gee-up, come on now!

Eslam beats Mashd Hasan harder and harder. Raindrops are pouring down everyone's face. Eslam is angry. Kadkhoda is pushing from behind, Mashd Jabbar is pulling in front. Then, they all push Mashd Hasan forward. Suddenly, Mashd Hasan gives a loud cry and turns round himself. The ropes snap out of Kadkhoda's and Mashd Jabbar's hands, both weak and tired by now. Mashd Hasan, snorting and crying loudly revolves, as if wanting to attack. Eslam, Kadkhoda, and Mashd Jabbar, terrified, keep their distance. Like a wild animal, Mashd Hasan climbs the hill fast.

Eslam: Hay, don't let him get away! Don't
let him get away!

All three put down their saddlebags and the bundles containing bread and run after Mashd Hasan.

Mashd Jabbar: Hey, don't go, don't go, wait!
Kadkhoda: Where're you going? Wait! Wait,
Mashd Hasan, Hey!

The distance between Mashd Hasan and them increases. Mashd Hasan is on the hilltop before Eslam, Kadkhoda, and Mashd Jabbar are half-way up. All of a sudden, Mashd Hasan disappears.

160: Outside. On the hilltop. Daytime.

Eslam and Mashd Jabbar, having reached the top, look down at the bottom of the valley, in horror. A few seconds later, Kadkhoda joins them, panting.

161: Outside. On the hilltop. Daytime.

At the bottom of the valley, Mashd Hasan has rolled into a muddy ditch. The rain water is streaming toward his dead body from all directions, the ropes still tied to his legs and arms.

162: Outside. On the hilltop. Daytime.

Eslam, Kadkhoda and Mashd Jabbar, helpless, look at one another. They do not know what to do. Kadkhoda is murmuring invocations. Suddenly, they all notice the hill opposite.

163: Outside. On the opposite hilltop. Daytime.

The three Purusis, like three shadows, are standing there watching them. In an instant, and with their usual calm, they start descending, and disappear.

164: Outside. At the bottom of the valley. Daytime.

Mashd Hasan's corpse is lying in the ditch, motionless, covered by muddy water.

165: Outside. The courtyard of Abbas's hut. Daytime.

The rain has stopped. It is bright and humid. Abbas's sister is squatting on the porch. Three or four women are squatting round her and, in complete silence, are making up her face. They put mascara on her eyelashes. One of the women, putting her finger into the red rouge container, rubs some of the contents onto the girl's lips and cheeks, hard and unskillfully. The crowd of men, women, and children are sitting on the rooftops watching them, in silence and amazement. Mashd Safar's son and Musorkheh are sitting on a wall, laughing. The faint noise of a tambourine is heard in the distance.

169: Outside. In front of Eslam's hut. Daytime.

Eslam is harnessing the donkey to the cart. The sound of a tambourine is heard in the distance. The cart is ready. Placing a bundle and a lighted lantern inside the cart, Eslam climbs up. The cart starts moving. Papakh, sitting on the roof, is watching Eslam. Eslam heads toward the outer limits of the valley.

170: Outside. The alley. Daytime.

Eslam's cart moves along the alley. Eslam turns his head and looks at Mashd Hasan's hut.

171: Outside. The stable rooftop. Daytime.

Mashd Hasan's wife is squatting on the roof wrapped in a black veil. She is looking at Abbas's hut, listening to the sound of the tambourine.

172: Outside. The alley. Daytime.

Eslam's cart passes Abbas's house. The sound of the tambourine gets louder.

173: Outside. Out of the village. Daytime.

Eslam's cart is disappearing in a narrow path among the hills. There is silence everywhere. Only the sound of the tambourine gets louder and louder, like an angry fist beating against a large drum, repeatedly and aimlessly.

166: Outside. An alley. Daytime.

Four women, in black, are slowly approaching Abbas's house in the muddy alley. One of them is playing the tambourine, indifferently. Moving in unison, they are coming forward.

167: Outside. The courtyard of Abbas's hut. Daytime.

The women enter the yard. Naneh Khanom and Naneh Fatemeh, burning wild rue, emerge from the room and join the women. They all surround Abbas's sister. Naneh Khanom burns some wild rue over the girl's head. Mashd Safar's son and Musorkheh are laughing. The crowd is still watching, curious and motionless.

168: Outside. The pool-side area. Daytime.

Eslam, dejected and tired, is walking down an alley toward the pool. He is completely wet and covered with mud. Mashdi Baba's head stretches out of the window frame.

Mashdi Baba: Hey, Mashd Eslam, didn't you go with Kadkhoda and Mashd Jabbar?

Eslam pauses.

Eslam: Yes.

Mashdi Baba: Why are you back then?

Eslam: I've come to fetch my cart.

Mashdi Baba: What did you do to Mashdi Hasan?

Eslam: Mashd Hasan?--- I'm going to bring him back.

Mashdi Baba: You're not taking him into town, then?

Eslam: No, we're not.

Eslam starts moving toward his hut. Mashdi Baba watches Eslam for a few seconds and then assumes his usual indifferent look. He starts lighting his pipe.