

She and Ibrahim returned from a short business trip in the green north. Her skin was radiant and her eyes shone with something that could only be happiness. Everyone was already aware of Forugh and Ibrahim's affair. But I thought if the word was officially out, then Ibrahim's wife would have to react, do or say something that could sabotage the affair. The day after, I wrote a piece titled "The Hypocrisy of Pseudo-intellectuals of Our Time", signed it with a pen name, and sent it to *Ferdowsi* magazine. I didn't get my hopes up; however it was published in two weeks.

Now that my words were printed, they seemed to become more convincing, more vicious. In the article, I'd referred to Forugh's wishes for women's progress, those mentioned in the piece that contained "Sin" published in *The Intellectual* a few years back. I talked about how her mother was the victim of a concupiscent husband who had maintained another wife or lover next to his first wife for almost all his married life; how Forugh and her siblings were affected by nerve-racking fights and never-ending quarrels caused by their father's insatiable lust for women. I also mentioned the story of Forugh's father pointing his gun at Forugh's mother after she'd ambushed his second wife and beat her up. (The story became a dark joke that made everybody in our neighbourhood smile nervously.)

Now, Forugh herself was having an affair with a married man. As a so-called intellectual and as someone who had firsthand experience of the demeaning effects of such a relationship on a family, she should've refrained from and condemned such relationships more than anyone else. If starting such a relationship could be justified by our flawed nature, by asking who had never given into temptation of one sort or another, what excuse could one have for continuing it for years? An impulsive act of dishonesty could be pardoned, but not a systematic one. At the end of the day, what could it be called but hypocrisy?

Two days after its publication I saw Forugh at the studio. Her gloomy mood was accentuated by her wrinkled clothes, plain face, and dark patches under her eyes.

"You look..." I couldn't find the right word. "Is it because of the article in *Ferdowsi*?"

"You've read it too? What do you think?"

I said nothing. I had nothing to say.

“I’m not upset for myself. I’m used to this,” she said. She felt bad for Shahi who had never seen his wife so down, so miserable. In return, Forugh had never seen Shahi so depressed, so helpless. She fell silent for a while, but I felt the rage that was brewing inside her, as it wrinkled her face and narrowed her eyes, before exploding into words. “I can’t believe those bastards out there! Do they think they know me? Or Shahi? Those newspaper worms with their sad little lives are not even man enough to use their real names!”

She left the studio and didn’t return for the rest of the week. The day she came back to work, during the lunch break, she asked me if I had a minute.

“I’ve made a new poem. Do you want to hear it?”

That was how she talked about writing poetry: “I’ve made a poem.” The poem she read to me that day, “Only Sound Remains”, is my favourite among her works, even though nothing can make me feel more embarrassed than reading or listening to it.

*Why should I stop, why?*

*The birds have gone in search of the blue direction*

*the horizon is vertical,*

*the horizon is vertical and movement: fountain-like...*

*And day is a vastness*

*which doesn’t fit into the limited imagination of*

*newspaper worms.*

*Why should I stop?*

*The path passes through the capillaries of life*

*The cultivating environment of the womb of the moon*

*will kill the corrupt cells*

*and in the chemical atmosphere after sunrise*

*it is only sound,*

*sound that will be absorbed by the particles of time.*

*Why should I stop? ...*

*The unmanly one,*

*has hidden his lack of manliness in darkness,*

*and the cockroach ... ah*

*when the cockroach talks.*

*Why should I stop?*

*Collaboration of lead letters is in vain,*

*Collaboration of lead letters will not save the lowly thought...*

*I'm a descendant of the trees*

*breathing the stale air depresses me*

*a bird which had died advised me to commit flight to memory.*

*The ultimate object of all forces is to be united,*

*to be united with the origin of the bright sun,*

*and to be poured into the light's intelligence.*

*It's natural that windmills rot.*

*Why should I stop?*

*I hold the unripe bunches of wheat under my breasts*

*and breastfeed them...*

Had she noticed that my ears were burning red? That I couldn't raise my head, trying to avoid her eyes? I felt beaten like a boxer trapped in a corner. Was she suspicious of me? There was no way!

*What have I got to do*

*with the lengthy howling of wildness*

*in animals' sexual organs?*

*What have I got to do*

*with the pathetic movement of a worm*

*in a fleshy vacuum?*

*The bleeding ancestry of flowers has committed me to life.*

*Do you know the bleeding ancestry of the flowers?*

“It’s beautiful,” I said with the little breath left in me, and I meant it.

Nothing can justify what I did. However, at times I console myself by thinking that if the “unmanly one” and his “lowly thought” hadn’t provoked her, maybe one of her most beautiful poems would never have been written.