



SOLAR PLEXUS

A BAKU SAGA IN FOUR PARTS

RUSTAM IBRAGIMBEKOV

ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING WRITER OF *BURNT BY THE SUN*

RUSTAM IBRAGIMBEKOV

SOLAR PLEXUS

A BAKU SAGA IN FOUR PARTS

Glagoslav Publications

SOLAR PLEXUS

A Baku Saga In Four Parts

by Rustam Ibragimbekov

Translated from the Russian by Andrew Bromfield

© 1996, Rustam Ibragimbekov

Represented by **SUSANNA LEA ASSOCIATES**
www.susannalea.com

© 2014, Glagoslav Publications, United Kingdom

Glagoslav Publications Ltd
88-90 Hatton Garden
EC1N 8PN London
United Kingdom

www.glagoslav.com

ISBN: 978-1-78267-116-9

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is in copyright. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CONTENTS

ONE	Alik	7
TWO	Marat	55
THREE	The Rector	147
FOUR	The Golden Ratio	229

List of Characters

Alik (Alexander Krokin)

Nata — Alik's wife

Georgy — Alik's son

Alik's sister

Nadir — Alik's brother-in-law

Lucky — Alik's nephew (Alik's sister & Nadir's son)

Eldar

Fariz — Eldar's father
(The Rector)

Khalida — Eldar's mother

Vika — Eldar's wife (formerly
in love with Marat)

Izik — Eldar's younger
brother

Tamila — Izik's wife

Marat

Marat's grandfather (The
Doctor)

Sultan — Marat's father

Marat's mother (the typist)

Gena — a relative of Marat's
mother

Gena's mother

Seidzade (The Writer)

**Other neighbours &
friends:**

Old Khanmana (a neighbour
from the courtyard)

Alexandra Sergeevna

(a neighbour from the
courtyard; friends with
Alik's sister)

Titch — Marat's friend

Rafik — a friend

Frida — Rafik's first wife

Aida — Rafik's second wife

Seimur — Fariz's neighbour

Nuriev — a newspaper
correspondent for

The Baku Worker

Gudiev — an investigator
in a case against the Doctor

**Press House Drama
Group:**

Maya — Alik's love interest

Comrade Emil — the drama
group leader

John Agaeu — a fellow actor

Valya Guryanov — a fellow actor

Institute:

Ramazanov — Provost for
science

Gumbatov — Provost for
academic matters

Gasanov — an institute worker

Gasanova — Gasanov's wife

Sofa Imanova — Gasanov's
mistress

Amanulla — Fariz's driver

The Agabekhanovs

MARAT and his mother (the typist)

after they moved

27 Shemakhinka street

*Chair where
sick Eldar sat*

Alik's sister and her husband Nadir

LUCKY

Fariz Rzaev and Wife

ELDAR

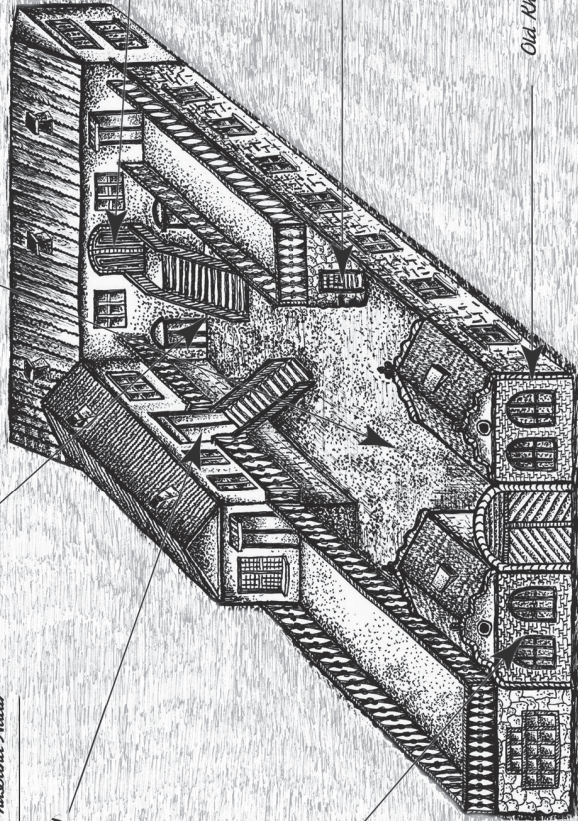
Jelik

*(The Agabekhanovs' old apartment
where The Doctor lived)*

SEIDZADE

ALIK (and his sheep)

Old Khammana



“The solar plexus is an aggregation of nerve ganglions in the human abdominal cavity.

Azerbaijan is a sovereign state. Baku is the capital of Azerbaijan.

A powerful blow to the solar plexus is fatal.”

— *From an unpublished textbook
of the Azerbaijani language*



ONE



Alík





Of course, my sister could have exaggerated some things, or not told me everything, she is a woman after all; but even if she is more at fault than she believes, she has a husband and a brother, and it's up to them to decide how she should be punished, since the necessity has arisen. The man who does not understand such simple things and has allowed himself to raise his hand against a woman must pay for what he did. He must certainly pay, no matter how important a position he may hold...

Alik carried on slicing the water melon rind into the bowl and shoved it with his foot, moving it closer to the lamb that was tied to the bed. The little bell on the slim leather collar jingled quietly, and three nickel-plated spheres on the headboard of the bed began jangling too. There had been a lot of them once (two big ones and eight small ones on each headboard), but they were easy to unscrew and they had all gradually disappeared, a few at a time — Alik and his sister had loved to play with them when they were still children.

The lamb squinted approvingly when Alik threw a few pieces of watermelon flesh into the bowl from his own plate, and forgot about the strips of rind. Alik smiled — as soon as the first white bread had appeared in the shops in forty-five or forty-six (he didn't remember exactly when, it was almost eight years ago already) — long queues formed for it immediately. Only shortly before that people had waited all night for the black bread that

had now become plentiful. But before even a month had passed, people simply couldn't manage without white bread any more.

Alik stroked the lamb and went behind the partition to wash his hands. After filling the washbasin with water from the bucket, he splashed the remainder over his boots — there was clay stuck to them because they were laying a gas pipe into the yard of the house. The gas had to be delivered from somewhere far away, and they had collected money from the residents, but Alik had been excluded from the listings because of the fire safety regulations — either his living space was too small, or there was too much wood in the flat. The wall of the corridor that faced the yard was made entirely of wood, and the partition dividing the washbasin and the kitchen table from the passage into the room was plywood. The floor on both sides of the partition wasn't combustible, though, it was hard asphalt, but the engineer and the fireman with the moustache hadn't taken that into account.

The difficulties over the gas hadn't really bothered Alik: there was no way that he would be left without gas when they were piping it in for everyone else. And indeed, two days ago the gasmen who had begun digging the trench in the yard for the pipe promised to put in a gas stove for him without permission from the engineer and the fireman, on condition that he took down the plywood partition. He agreed, of course, he didn't really need the partition, his mother had put it up when his sister still lived with them, but now it was more of a nuisance than anything else.

After washing his hands, Alik changed his clothes and went out into the yard. The gasmen had littered it with pipes, and there was a work table heaped high with their tools standing in the arbour under the grape vine. That was why all the neighbours were sitting in their flats. Usually on such a windless September evening the yard was full of people, but now he couldn't see anybody, even in the windows. There was only old Khanmana kneading dough, as she always did on Saturdays, under the

first-floor balcony; the *tandoor* stove in the corner of the yard, between the stairs and the arbour, had been smoking when Alik got home from work.

Khanmana had made the *tandoor* two years ago, immediately after she moved into their yard from Bilgyo. And a month later, when the clay was completely dry and rang like metal if you tapped it, how the neighbours had gasped when the old woman lit a fire and then waited for just the right amount of time before slapping the first flat cake of dough on to the red hot wall and then, a few minutes later, the fire-breathing opening of the *tandoor* had yielded up a yellowish-brown *churek* with slightly burned edges. None of them had ever seen how bread was made, all their lives they had simply bought it in the shop.

But Khanmana herself was even more astounded when Alik rolled out some dough and stuck his head into the *tandoor* in order to slap his own flat cake on to the wall. The old woman could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw his cake there beside all of hers. The neighbours were surprised too at first, but then they remembered that he used to study in the bakers' school at the bread factory, in forty-four, after seventh class at school. His sister had a child, her husband, Nadir, was still away at war, they hadn't received their father's "killed in action" notice yet, and Alik had to do something to help the family. One of their father's comrades who, like their father, used to drive a bread van before the war, came back from the front with one leg missing and offered to get him a place in the bakers' school where he'd been working as a mechanic for a year. Food and a grant were provided, and, after graduating, you got half a loaf of black bread in addition to your pay, if you could sneak it out without the guards noticing. Everyone else managed it, but that half-loaf was the reason Alik never became a baker — he couldn't bring himself to steal it, not even for the sake of his little nephew. So he had been forced to graduate from the driving school instead.

Khanmana was kneading her dough on a large copper tray with serrated edges, a home-made sieve lying on the small

bench beside her; the old woman could turn her hand to anything: she mended her own shoes, made trunks and stools and even gradually extended her basement by taking advantage of hollows in the foundations of the building. In two years she had shifted the wall about ten metres and an entire new room had appeared.

Alik walked closer and looked at the dough disapprovingly.

"What don't you like about it?" the old woman asked with a frown.

"Have you put enough salt in it this time?"

Even though Khanmana was fifty years older than Alik, she didn't take offence at his jokes, and she never missed a chance to answer back.

"Teach your wife to make it to your taste, if you ever find one! How's your lamb?"

"Alive and well, thanks to your prayers..."

"Half-starved, no doubt."

"Yes, half-starved, because you never feed him!"

"Why should I feed your sheep?"

"You brought him here, you should feed him."

"I thought you were going to eat him, not make friends with him! Were there many guests at the circumcision feast last night?"

"Yes."

"So why did you go to bed so early?"

"You saw me?"

"I see everything."

"Don't you ever sleep? I need to find you a good husband, one of the watchmen, then you'll sleep like a sixteen-year-old girl."

"Promises, promises..."

"There's one who's been waiting to get married since Tsar Nicholas's reign, but he's too fond of playing his own whistle. He grabs hold of it at the slightest excuse..."

The old woman laughed, and adjusted her hair where she

thought it had come out from under the faded silk headscarf which she tied with its ends in a tight knot so that they stuck up like ears.

At Alik's request, Khanmana had brought him a lamb from Bilgyo in early August, for his nephew's planned circumcision. For years his sister had not been able to bring herself to do what had been done to all the neighbours' boys ages ago, and then everything had come together very conveniently: her husband, Nadir, went away on a work trip, and Alik decided to make yet another attempt to get it done. His sister fluttered her hands in fright, then tried to put off the final decision until her husband came back, but eventually she gave in when Alik explained that after the operation the boy would not be able to go to school for a week or two, and the summer holidays were already nearly over. As for Nadir, he didn't really care whether his son was circumcised or not, so it was a good thing that he wasn't there, he'd be spared unnecessary bother.

They brought the lamb from Bilgyo ready for the feast, but the Lezghin who earned his living from circumcisions and regularly made the rounds of the yards offering his services, had disappeared. While they were waiting for him to reappear, the boy became very attached to the lamb, and Alik had grown used to the animal too. So when the Lezghin finally did put in an appearance, the *shashlik* for the guests invited to the family festival was made from meat that Alik obtained at short notice from a butcher he knew. The meat was fresh, fatty and, to judge from the sheep's ribs, young, but Alik reminded the butcher that he had had a bad experience with meat bought there two months earlier that looked just as good, but had been lacking in fragrance and flavour. The butcher exchanged glances with his puny fourteen-year-old nephew, who was helping to joint a carcass hanging in the doorway, and asked Alik what sort of taste he thought a sheep which lived in a flat with electric light, ate white bread, listened to the radio and watched the television with the rest of the family would have?

Fortunately, the *shashlik* turned out very tasty, Alik's nephew barely even cried when the red-haired Lezghin deftly stretched out the pink flesh and sliced its end off with the narrow, well-honed blade of a cut-throat razor. There were quite a lot of guests, mostly relatives and neighbours, and there were plenty of presents at the head of the bed on which Alik's nephew lay, pale and frightened, but happy at having passed this severe test with dignity.

Alik walked across the yard towards his sister's place. The conversation with Khanmana had annoyed him. Exactly what he had feared had happened: Nadir got back on the day of the circumcision after all and kicked up a big fuss, and his stupid and insulting behaviour towards Alik was apparent to everyone in the yard, otherwise Khanmana would not have asked why he went home so early that evening, when the festivities at his sister's apartment were still in full swing.

Of course, Nadir had good reason not to like him: no doubt it was hard to forget when a sixteen-year-old boy had almost stabbed you with a kitchen knife in the passage to your own courtyard. All the rest of it — the photographs in the arms of various Hungarian, Polish and Czech women, or whoever they were, and the brazen drunken stories told in his sister's presence about the jovial European life, and the buxom lover Tosya, who lived in the post office yard, and the many other things that had almost resulted in Alik's sister being left alone with a child on her hands — all of that, naturally, was forgotten, but the hatred, the humiliation and the fear remained forever. What other explanation could there be for Nadir's attitude to him in all the years since then?

Forced back against the wall between the rubbish bins and the water metre, the erstwhile liberator of Europe had not even contemplated offering any resistance, his military experience told him immediately that there was only one likely outcome, and he gave his word that he would thenceforth remain an exemplary husband and a caring father. Otherwise he would

have been left lying in the dark gateway, all punctured — Alik had no other option, although he had no desire to cause anyone any harm, least of all his sister's husband.

The rubbish bins by the gate had been doused with some dark, stinking liquid that had driven all of the yard's cats back up to the first floor; on the narrow balcony running round the yard two of the women were beating out the stuffing of a mattress that had clumped together during the winter, and he had to wait a moment for them to stop brandishing their long, flexible sticks before he could go up the stairs.

For several days now his nephew had been walking round the flat in a red loincloth, occasionally pulling it away with his left hand, so that it wouldn't touch the wound that hadn't healed yet. Nadir couldn't possibly be in at this time in the afternoon, but when he heard voices in the room, Alik nonetheless pricked up his ears in alarm — he didn't want to run into his sister's husband and his friends. As he walked into the kitchen, where his sister spent most of the day, Alik listened more closely to the conversation in the room and realised that it was his nephew who had visitors.

His sister wasn't in the kitchen, although there was something boiling in a large copper pan on the flame of the noisy primus stove.

"Who's there?" his nephew shouted from the other room.

He and his four best friends, who had passed through the ordeal of circumcision several years earlier, were looking at something in a photo album that suspiciously resembled the one in which Nadir kept photographs of his girlfriends at the front. But once he was seated at the table, Alik relaxed — the album contained cards from sweet packets, most of which he had given to his nephew himself (including two rare ones, with portraits of the famous American movie stars, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks).

At the age of thirteen, his nephew, who Alik's sister claimed

had been born under a lucky star, acquired the firm reputation of being someone very fortunate, and he bore the entirely justified nickname of Lucky. As far as his friends were concerned, his greatest stroke of luck was his uncle, Alik, and they took every opportunity to show their admiration for him. Now, for instance, when they saw him, they all got up off their chairs (apart from his nephew, Lucky, who always had an excuse for everything, this time it was the operation he had so recently endured).

"Sit down, sit down," said Alik, lowering himself on to a chair pulled up by one of his nephew's friends, Eldar, and surveyed the young lads with pleasure. The next generation had turned out worthy successors to their elders, certainly no worse than their parents. Perhaps even better.

Alik knew them well, he had known them since he was as old as they were now, twelve or thirteen, when they had been abandoned to his care by their mothers, who worked all the hours of daylight. Back then a thirteen-year-old boy had to be able to earn his own keep, so while he was telling his nephew and his friends fairytales that he vaguely remembered from his own childhood, he had to crochet women's stockings out of the threads that his mother brought home from the factory. In the afternoon, when he came home from school, the hooks were free and it was a sin not to make use of them.

The lad he liked most of all was Marat, whose mother spent nights on end hammering away on an ancient typewriter. He liked Eldar too — for his loyalty to his own friends. Even today, after everything that had happened between his sister and Eldar's parents, he was still here. Alik wondered if Fariz knew where his son was.

Alik's nephew and his friends were waiting respectfully for him to begin the conversation. He knew this, but he didn't know where to start: there was no point in asking his nephew if he was well, it was obvious from his face that the mild blood-letting had done him no harm. And he didn't want to ask trite questions like "How are things?" or "How's life treating you?" Of course, he

could inquire about what was happening in their drama group at the Press House, but this very question, the only one that really interested him, was hard to ask. Naturally, the lads had no idea about anything, even John Agaev only knew part of what had happened; Maya was hardly likely to have told him all the details, but even so he couldn't bring himself to mention it.

And yet he had to say something.

"Where's your mum?" he asked his nephew.

"With Alexandra Sergeevna."

Whenever she had a free minute, Alik's sister went running to her solitary old neighbour on the ground floor, who worked in the doll factory.

"We're starting work on a production of the play *Snowball*," Eldar announced.

Last winter there had been a lot of talk concerning this play about a little black boy when, yielding to pressure from his nephew and his friends, Alik had attended the drama group at the Press House for several months. Now he knew that those winter months had been the very best of his life. But at the time it had seemed just the opposite. They were rehearsing Sergei Mikhalkov's play *Special Assignment*. There weren't enough actors for the adult roles, and so the leader of the circle, comrade Emil, a short, swarthy-faced Mountain Jew, had agreed that Alik could play Captain Gorkusha. That was the name of one of the officers. The other, called Streltsov, was played by John Agaev, a student at the industrial institute. Alik remembered him from school, before he had left after the seventh class. Even in those early years John had shown great promise, and at the school parties (to which Alik was dragged along by his former classmates), he was always a great success, performing the aria "Life in this World is Impossible Without Women" from the operetta *Silva* on an Italian accordion, a trophy brought back from the war. He was taken very seriously in the drama group. Comrade Emil even allowed John to skip rehearsals because of his heavy work load at the institute and his previous services to

the group. And John proved that he deserved this trust: what took Alik more than three months to learn (the text was the hardest thing for him), John, wearing his dark-blue jacket (it was *Boston wool*, as one of the girls in the circle explained), was able to master in just two rehearsals.

Every time, as Alik strained his taut nerves, desperate to make sure that he wouldn't, God forbid, blurt out the wrong words, he forgot the instructions that comrade Emil had drummed into his head during rehearsals. It was especially difficult in the scene where he had to invite Maya (her name in the part was Vera) to dance — at that point he became so confused that not only was he unable to smile with condescending confidence, as comrade Emil demanded, but he actually blushed, stammered and started dancing with the wrong foot. A vein as thick as a piece of macaroni inflated on comrade Emil's forehead, his usually kind eyes bulged out of his head and his thick eyebrows that looked like Turkish swords knitted together above the bridge of his nose; he began breathing noisily, flaring his nostrils and hammering his right fist into his left palm, with the fingers spread out wide. Afterwards, it's true, he would apologise, but at those moments he was quite unable to control himself and he seemed on the point of having a stroke.

Once John started turning up for rehearsals, everything went more smoothly, more cheerfully. He quickly placated comrade Emil and, leading Alik aside, tried to impress on him that he should on no account feel bad, he had acting ability in abundance, there was nothing for him to worry about. Emil's neurotic outbursts were so unjust that it was simply stupid to take any notice of them. Alik knew perfectly well that John was lying, but even so his words had a calming effect. He felt particularly ashamed that Emil had shouted at him in front of his nephew and his nephew's friends. But in any case Alik would never have left the drama group, if not for that terrible idea of John's. It really had been terrible, there was no other word for it.

Without having mentioned anything about the drama group, that is, about what had been bothering him more than anything else in the world ever since the twentieth of February, Alik got up off his chair, told his nephew to follow him and went out into the corridor.

Before he was even asked, Lucky immediately began telling him what had happened to Alik's sister that morning. She had been shoved hard by Eldar's father, Fariz, so hard that she had fallen against the banisters and scraped her entire side raw. And Fariz just got into his Willis automobile and drove off to Divichi where, to judge from the car and his grey, military-style jacket, he held a position of some considerable importance.

Fariz's younger son, five-year-old Izik, had peed into the yard from the first floor balcony yet again, and Alik's sister slapped him on the bum for it. They had explained more than once to Izik, who was not so little that he couldn't understand, and to his mother as well, that it was not right to go peeing on people's heads, but she had only laughed and hadn't even told her son off. And then the boys, with Eldar's permission, decided to punish Izik themselves — they caught him in the yard and were going to pee all over him from head to foot, to make him realise how unpleasant it was, but at that point Alik's sister intervened to save the boy, and had given him a gentle slap on his rear end. He started bawling, Fariz immediately came dashing out of the house and, without bothering to ask about anything, pushed Alik's sister. No one knew what would happen now: Fariz had gone off to Divichi, Alik's sister had been crying all day long, and Nadir, her husband, had been on duty in the hospital since yesterday and wouldn't be back until late in the evening.

Alik calmed his nephew down and explained that their neighbour had made a mistake — no one had the right to raise his hand to a woman. And people had to take responsibility for their mistakes, no matter what position they might hold. The neighbours' gossip about nobody being able to do anything

to this Fariz was just nonsense, no one could commit injustice with impunity. The boy just had to wait until his father came back from his shift, after all he had been right through the war, in which bigger men than Fariz had been taught the error of their ways.

Lucky was completely satisfied with this explanation and even became quite cheerful. Alik stroked his curly hair and went out into the yard.

Despite the heat, Fariz's door was closed: neither the child who was so fond of watering the heads of people living on the floor below from his own little tap, nor his parents, were anywhere to be seen. There were small particles of wool flying up into the air, glinting in the rays of the setting sun. For a moment the female neighbours stopped brandishing their sticks and gazed at Alik with undisguised curiosity.

Walking down the steep staircase into the dark front entrance and from there out into Shemakhinka Street, he cast a glance to his right: as usual at this time of day, several people had already gathered on the corner there, under the acacia. And so Alik turned to the left and walked up along the steep street. There was no doubt that everybody knew about Fariz's attack on his sister — she wouldn't have been able to avoid talking about it. When he reached the end of the block, Alik turned a corner, and then turned another one and walked in the opposite direction along the parallel street, towards the centre of town.

The big round clock at the New Square showed a quarter to seven when he took up his usual position by the grocery store — it was hard to spot him there, among all the people darting backwards and forwards — and began observing. In about ten minutes, Maya ought to come out of the entrance. At five minutes to seven she appeared on the upper step of the short stairway and looked towards the shop. He might have believed she could see him, if he had not been certain that she couldn't. He involuntarily turned his eyes away and took a step backwards.

Maya walked down on to the pavement and then, swaying her broad shoulders slightly, set off in the direction of the Press House. He waited for a little while and followed her, hanging just far enough back that he wouldn't lose sight of her.

At the water kiosk she drank a glass of water, glanced round in his direction again, or so, at least, it seemed to him, and walked on. One block further on, she stopped for a moment in front of the window of a jewellery shop. What could she be interested in there? He ought to walk up and ask, smiling the way comrade Emil had taught him to do. And why not? He was about five years older than her, after all, which was quite a lot considering that she was only eighteen. And he would find the money somehow. No matter what he had to do.

She walked on more quickly, and he lengthened his stride accordingly. The best thing, of course, would be if the need suddenly arose to protect her from something. Then he wouldn't have to smile and ask questions, it would be clear straight away what kind of man he was and how he felt about her. And then perhaps the bashfulness that prevented him from speaking to her would finally disappear.

He stopped at the last column in the row and watched Maya's sturdy, broad-shouldered figure walk on as far as the revolving glass doors of the Press House. Once again he noticed the way her shoulders swayed. He didn't see anything else, because his gaze never moved down below her back.

Now he was free until nine o'clock. The rehearsals never lasted less than two hours, he knew that from his own experience. The memory of those lovely winter evenings in the cool hall of the Press House, with its smell of floor polish, made his heart ache — how could he have failed to appreciate that first chance in his entire life to sit beside intelligent people? Comrade Emil alone was a real treasure! People went to the Sailors' Club especially to watch the way he galloped along on a donkey in the film *Nasreddin in Bukhara*, with his head wrapped in a turban — his face in close up, filling the entire screen. And

their rehearsals were so interesting! Emil's shouting made him feel ashamed, but it was interesting. And the way he invited Maya to dance the waltz — Alik turned cold inside, as if he was jumping from the top platform of the parachute tower. There would never be anything like it again! Ah, John, John spoiled it all. He spoiled everything. But it was partly Alik's fault too — how could he possibly have agreed? What an idiot. How could he have listened to what John said?

The whole business had only taken John a few days. First he had arranged things with the girls, then with his uncle: since his mother died, he had lived with him and he had a flat by the Chernogorodsky bridge where no one had lived for several years.

At first Alik thought it was all idle talk, he simply couldn't believe that the girls (especially the taciturn tenth-class pupil Valya Guryanova) would agree to go to meet them. But John had absolutely no doubt he would be successful.

When they had bought the wine and snacks and were waiting for the girls by the pharmacy on Telefonnaya Street, John inquired with a businesslike air which of them Alik preferred.

"Choose whichever you like."

"We'll get to that later," Alik had said, trying to break off the conversation.

"Oh no," John had protested. "There mustn't be any confusion. Personally, it's all the same to me — but I'm for clarity. Who do you like most?"

He had been forced to confess.

"Excellent," John said merrily. "The right choice. Maya's a cert!"

Of course, he ought to have made sure just what John meant by the word "cert", but at that moment the two girls, so very unlike each other, had got out of the trolleybus — first the tall, austere Valya, with her long hair, and then the sturdy Maya, with her constant smile and short crop — both of them looking spruce and smart and rather festive.

Solar Plexus is a passionate family saga in four parts, set against the backdrop of Azerbaijan's rapidly-changing capital, Baku, as the country struggles with the transition into a post-Soviet world.

Spanning three generations and stretching from the 1940s to the 1990s, *Solar Plexus* tells the tale of a group of friends who grew up around the same courtyard in Baku. Each section is told from a different perspective, embedded into the canvas of the shifting turmoil of those decades: from the Great Patriotic War and Stalin's Purges, to the industrial institutes and Russification of the '50s and '60s, through to the struggle for independence and violence of the early '90s.

Mixing heart-wrenching romance, surreal humour, complex moral dilemmas and philosophical reflection, *Solar Plexus* is a rich and multi-layered book that tackles big themes within the most engaging of narratives.



Rustam Ibragimbekov was born in Baku, Azerbaijan in 1939. He is an internationally renowned and multi-award winning screenwriter, dramatist and producer. Ibragimbekov holds State awards for contributions to the arts from both Azerbaijan and Russia. His writing credits include more than 40 film and television scripts, plays and prose. *Close to Eden* (1993) won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, a European Film Award for Best Film of the

Year and was nominated for an Academy Award. In 1994 *Burnt by the Sun* was awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes and an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film; in 2009 its stage adaptation was performed at the National Theatre in London.



GLAGOSLAV PUBLICATIONS

ISBN 978-1-78267-116-9

LONDON