

Scratches

The men helped Dimitar to carefully lower Valkuda and to dismount himself. Rada bended over her with Vantche, while the little Tantche stood before the khala to pet it. The golden beast bended, put its heavy hot head on the woman's shoulder and she scratched it behind its ears. The golden eyes half closed. "Good girl!" said the petite blondie and continued scratching. 'What did he do to her?'

'A blow on the back of the head, but not to kill, then a ride to the beach in his trunk, very carefully as she had to drown. Took care to make it real!'

'Nothing broken? Nothing worse?'

'No, it would have given him away,' the voice was almost purring. Then bad flames erupted in the golden eyes, 'He damaged my necklace though!'

'No worries, Dimitar is good, he will repair it. Shall I take it now or you will stay around?'

'Take it, I have to go, too many people could have seen me today. When it is ready, you can tell the home snake and she will let me know!'

'You know he cannot start today, but tomorrow we will have the new fire and he will work then.'

'You will take care that he takes care, right! It is too good a necklace to mangle! We the girls know that, the men don't understand usually, especially the men smitten in passion, like this one.'

Tantche laughed and the khala seemed to laugh with her. Few more flowers wilted.

'Did he finally confess it?'

'No need, I saw what he imagined when I asked for directions. Beats Tinto Brass, you know!'

'That was not a private channel!' Dimitar came towards the unlikely pair, 'I am immensely grateful for what you did for us, but everyone heard that!'

'So what, they knew anyway, you were the last one to grasp it! You better have more faith in me next time!'

Dimitar knew when not to argue with a girl and that was the case exactly. Tantche took off the necklace and handed it to him. It was hot and the green stones had a life of their own.

'How did you get it?' he looked at the khala. The dragon lady smiled enigmatically and said, 'It is a long story, another time! Wash your hands of the strawberry syrup before you touch my necklace, right?!' It started getting smaller and smaller until it reached the size of a sparrow, and flew away. If not for a giant scratch on the gray stone where a steel nail had touched at landing, there was no trace that it had ever been in the yard. Dimitar looked at the necklace and grinned. He knew a perfect addition to the missing corner.

Konstantin and Georgi had deposited Valkuda at the coolest place, the kitchen, and left her with the three doctors. The sun was still high in the sky and the garden was a safe choice before the afternoon furnace. The remaining group sat around the outdoor table and Dimitar told them about what had happened after the khala had left with him. Tantche joined them when Konstantin was filling Dimitar in about how they had got rid of Tanas.

'Where did you learn that trick? You had him nice and ready before I blinked!' exclaimed Georgi.

'That is because you blink slowly. Jokes aside, I do work at a mental hospital. Sometimes one's life depends on a quick reaction, so I trained.'

'You want to tell me that all the doctors in your hospital can do the same?'

'I did not even imply that - only the good ones can, and I am one of the top, modesty and all!'

'You sure were on top! Now the guards will not release him until they meet a doctor.'

'And the doctor will not release him for at least another week, trust me, it looks like a clear case of alcohol delirium. His guys will all confirm he was seeing things, was aggressive and had a drinking problem, if one look at his face will not be enough for a diagnose. You will need a new rope for the well. I doubt you will be seeing that one again.'

'Kosta, what did you do with that bowl of strawberries?' Dimitar asked.

'Strawberries? If you need something to sustain you, we still have the lunch almost intact, I can bring you whatever you want.'

'No, I don't want to eat them, but it seems that I cannot get the ring off and I remembered your way!'

Mitzi looked up into the sky and placed the pink squishy mass in front of the sculptor. He dipped his right hand and squeezed, then took the ring off. Father Ivan gave him a handkerchief. Dimitar wiped the ring clean and offered it to Konstantin.

'May be you should keep it when you face your father?' Konstantin hesitated.

'Thank you, but no, thank you! First, dad is dead, or so the khala said. Second, even if he is not, this ring has a life of its own with me. There was a point when I thought it is right for me and I got scared that I may like it too much. It was until it hit me - I have a khala of my own to face and she is the right one for me. Tantche, do you think I can go visit her now?'

Tantche sighed, 'But of course, Rada and Vantche should be having hard time getting her to get still, if I know something about patients. Go!'

'Yeah, one khala is more than enough, I think,' Konstantin smiled and put the ring back on his finger. A life of its own - he had to talk to Dimitar about it, he had never experienced any such feeling for the few days that he had worn it.

The room was still spinning a little, but her head did not hurt that bad with the cold compress. Rada and a woman she did not know had wakened her up and made sure that there were no other injuries. Valkuda had no idea how she had made the transition from Varna to Brashlyan, but her two doctors insisted that she needed a rest first. The last thing she remembered was a blow on the head from Tanas Jr.'s father and according to her wristwatch it had been an hour and a half ago. Well, it may not have been the same day though; otherwise there was no logical explanation. On a chair next to the sofa her black suit was discarded, as well as her green blouse, her handbag was neatly put on the side. Had she driven here with Tanas Jr.? No, he had departed from Sofia in the early morning to extract Dimitar's signature. Gosh, she had to warn Dimitar - or was it too late? He should not negotiate no matter what! Nobody negotiated with dishonest people for real! She lifted herself on an elbow and tried to stand up; she needed to find a way to talk to him. 'No, if you are into a jumping mode, it will take more time! I know you are an iron head, but even iron heads need time to repair!' Rada was coming with a new compress.

'But I need to talk to Dimitar now! His brother and his father...'

'Well, we took care of his brother for now and as far as I got his father took care of himself, so it should not be that urgent. You lay, OK?'

'What do you mean his father took care of himself? He would never back willingly.'

Rada and Vantche were laughing.

'No, not backing willingly, no, but he did back. Listen, if you promise that you will stay horizontal, I will let you speak to Dimitar. If not...'

'Come on, Rada, I am really interested how you will keep me away!' the screen door swung open and Dimitar slid in.

'Hmmm, two people seeing dragons from the same village will not hold water, so I will have to think of something else. Vantche, let us go and join the council outside, may be someone will have fresh ideas, but Dimitar, you promise to keep her in bed,' the two women were already leaving.

'Nothing will please me more!' he yelled at their backs before the door banged. The next moment he was hugging their patient for dear life. She did not mind, if she was in his arms the world could take care of its spin itself.

'So you say you saw a dragon in the yard; that is correct?' the doctor was infinitely polite and seemed to be genuinely interested in Tanas' words. However, he had not released his hands.

'Doctor, I know it sounds insane, but believe me, it is real. There is a magic ring that can summon forces beyond imagination. My brother has it at the moment and he used it to fly to Varna and back with his mistress. Nothing can fly to Varna and back from that damned village in twenty minutes, nothing normal! But he got a dragon to carry him. You can ask the crowd that he had there, they will confirm it. Now let me go, I have to contact Dad, may be he had seen the dragon also and you can talk to him.'

The young doctor nodded. 'I understand, Mr. Tanassov, I would love to let you go, but the hospital rules require we to wait for your blood test, few more minutes,' the doctor pressed on a hidden button and two heavy built men in green hospital uniforms entered the room.

'I need to go get the patient's results, gentleman, please make our guest a company!'

The guards stood up at once at the doctor's arrival.

'Does he drink often?' he inquired more out of politeness, as Tanas' alcohol abuse was evident both on his face and on his liver.

'Well...'

'You don't need to be shy, I am a doctor. He does, I know. But by some reason he had stopped at around yesterday morning, right?'

'Yes, doctor!'

'And you said he had been aggressive?'

'He is not exactly nice tempered when he is OK, but when we went to meet his brother, he went into the house alone and they said he threatened them.'

'So his brother was in the village. Was your boss expressing any aggression before he met his brother?'

The guards looked among themselves - it had been a natural state of Tanas to express aggression, drunk or sober.

'Yes?'

'Umm, yes, he said he knew how to make his brother do whatever he wanted, and that he would get him by the balls that time, and stuff...'

'I understand. Unfortunately, I will agree with the colleague who initially evaluated him - it is a delirium and a bad one. He may be a danger to himself. So I would suggest that until he calms down, we will keep him medicated, after that we will reevaluate and see. Do you know who his family doctor is? Please call and give him my name, we shall discuss it with him also. You shall also notify his wife.'

'He is not married.'

'Then his parents or whoever is next of kin. We will need to release him to someone; we cannot just let him go around. Until then I can communicate information about his condition only to his relatives, I presume you understand.'

'I have been trying to call his father, but the phone does not answer. Well, then we will go, we are going back to Varna and his dad will call from there as soon as we reach him, we will call the office also.'

'That is right, you cannot help here. I appreciate you brought him so fast, it should make a difference.'

The doctor turned back and entered his cabinet. A nurse came to let the guards out. One of them thought that the unsmiling woman could twist iron bars like pretzels with hands like hers, but it was a fleeting image.

Then the fear of Tanas father's wrath occupied his entire mind.

The guards were sitting in the car at the hospital's parking lot. One of them had to call the office and ask to speak with the elder boss. Stalling was not an option. The man sitting next to the driver sucked a deep breath, took out his cell phone and said, 'As I am sitting at the suicide seat anyway!'

He dialed the private cell phone number first, but got that the subscriber was not available at the moment and decided not to leave a message. He called the private land line at the office and nobody answered; that meant the boss was not in his office. The third he tried was the home number in Varna, but there was also an answering machine. He sighed again and dialed the office. The noise level was deafening and he yelled at the receptionist to get the volume of her blasted radio down or tell the idiots around her to stop shouting. She yelled to hold on, she would transfer the call. One of the dispatchers took the receiver on the other end. He was crisp and to the point: the order was to return to the base immediately. Then he dropped the call.

'Guys, they pulled the boss out of the sea half an hour ago. He had drowned in a landslide!'

The others gaped - their colleague was making the sign of the cross still clutching his cell phone.

Dimitar looked at the necklace in front of him. It was early morning and everyone slept in the fresh coolness. He was sitting in the yard and had borrowed some instruments and plaster from Rada and some wax from Father Ivan. He wished he had some other conveniences, but an old ceramic mortar that Tantche had given him grudgingly and a rusty blowtorch should do. The necklace had a repetitive pattern and the corner that his father's bullet had blown away could be copied from an intact link. It was not much of a damage, as the base that held the stone was spared, only a corner was ripped open like a can of beans. The sculptor carefully softened some wax, greased a corner of the same pattern and molded the wax on it. He put a cold wet cloth on it to harden and then pulled it up carefully. The tricky part was to oil it and mold the softened wax while keeping his "negative" as cold as possible. He had done it hundreds times with Stoyan restoring old pieces, but it was like new again, the thrill, the anticipation of the happiness from the work well done. He looked at the small corner that came out and measured it at the missing link, then started patiently to shave it off to the right dimensions. The necklace was almost an inch thick, but the frame around the stones was no more that a quarter of an inch. The design was of flowers and leaves and he did alter the pattern a little to accommodate his idea. Hopefully the khala would appreciate it. When he was satisfied with his wax version of the missing corner, he put a minute spruing system of wax branches around it and place it in a

form made of Pepsi can. He mixed his plaster to a soft pancake consistency and poured it so that only the tops of the wax branches were visible. The plaster set in minutes and while waiting, Dimitar took out a pack from its pocket. He opened it and looked at his grandfather and grandmother's wedding bands and Margarita's engagement ring. The opal threw a fiery dance of sparkles, much like the necklace emeralds. The young man felt sad. Even the marriages made in heavens sometimes crashed on earthy problems. A few minutes earlier because of student's illness, a few seconds later because of running tap, how little it took in time to smash a world as one knew it. His grandfather had wasted his life first trying to catch the improbable then trying to repair the irreparable. Frustration, pain, anguish, solitude, that was what these rings held now. The vows to love and cherish had turned into wasted life over someone else crime. The flower had been crashed by a selfishness, the eternity of happiness that the band should have represented had turned into the chain that had held his grandfather dangling for three and a half decades, neither married for real, nor free for real, the hope dying in him with every unsuccessful treatment. Had he continued to crave power like before? How would he have used it, if reached? The young man left the plaster in a sunny spot and went to see his sleeping khala.

They have shared his spacious bed and he had held her in his arms for most of the night, as if he was afraid that she may slip somehow and disappear. The three doctors unanimously had insisted that she needed only sleep and will wake up pretty much fine. While he was holding her head on his shoulder, Dimitar had relived again and again the moment when his brother had looked at his wristwatch and said: 'Fifteen minutes and not a second more!' The utmost regret that had washed upon him was that he had not told her how much he needed her, that his stupid jealousy towards his grandfather or any other man she may have been involved with did make him say stupid things that hurt, that he had no right to ask personal questions and make personal demands while not ready for a personal commitment. Well, he had been good and ready, if not for the shoes that he wore and he was prepared to wear off his iron shoes if needed to get to her.

The doctors have said "sleep" and she did, so Dimitar did not dare to wake her up and talk. He sat down on the old wooden chair next to the bed and looked at her. Her face had regained a little of its color and the

young sculptor thought that she was too pale, too worked out, too fragile. If he had pulled his part, she would not have slipped into exhaustion and the error to go out alone. Instead he had preferred to sulk, to hide away, to hurl insults. He desperately wanted her to wake and feared it to the same degree that she might be fed up with him, that it was too little too late what he had to offer her. Yes, he was rich, but she was not after his money, he was reasonably talented, but she was not after his talent. What would entice her to look at him twice? She possessed knowledge and wisdom beyond her years, may be that was it, if he could offer her more knowledge, a life of exploration, she would accept? It was a new idea - she may be interested in the proposal even if she saw him as a ballast material! He pulled out of his wallet the package with the green pearl that he had found. It was the perfect size, how did he miss it before! He silently left the room and went downstairs.

'Rada will shoot you for what you are doing with her scalpel; you know that, don't you?' Vantche was sitting at the table and looking at what he was doing.

'No, it should be fine, it is only wax,' Dimitar sighed contentedly. He added two sprues to be on the safe side, although for such a small amount of metal it should not matter. He started mixing a new batch of plaster paste.

'Any chance you have finished your drink? I just can't guzzle another one!' he pointed at the form that was dry. Vantche handed his her empty can.

'What are you making?'

'Something that will make my knee hurt...' Dimitar was concentrating on ripping the top rim of the can.

'Did not get that one, honest!'

'An engagement ring. But I have a bad feeling that the love of my life will let me stand on my bended knee for three days and three nights. Not that I don't deserve it, but it will hurt anyway...'

'If you introduce me to her beforehand, I will do my best to convince her not to do that...' Valkuda was standing at the kitchen door dressed in a long white shirt reaching well below her knees. Such a garment had undoubtedly come from one of Elka's chests. Coupled with the woman's bare feet and long plate it made for a surreal combination.

Teasing her was irresistible, and despite his better judgment, Dimitar drooled, 'No need, you know her!'

'I do?'

'Sure, get back, first door on the right, but knock before you enter!'

'That is the bathroom! Who should be in there?'

'Not who, but what. That is the closest mirror that I can think of! Now, no need to grab that broom, careful, I have work done here! Val, this one is for you, but it is not ready yet, wait! Get down from this table, there are sharp things there, come down, I will let you slap me once, OK, but not with the broom, Val, stop that, the flowers suffered enough...'

'Keep going, kids, keep going until I get the others; now that is a marriage proposal to remember!' Vantche was zigzagging out of their way towards the kitchen door from where Mitzi was wiping her eyes with the back of her hands.

By midday Dimitar had finished the repair and the necklace was ready for its owner. He went and bend over the home white snake drinking from a shallow dish full of fresh water, 'Will you please tell the khala that she may pick up her jewelry! Thank you!' Twenty-four hours before he would have laughed at the idea. Now he was absolutely confident in his messenger. The little reptile stared at him with its red eyes and looked as if it smiled, then slipped behind the fireplace.

Valkuda was sitting in the middle of the ladies' part of the company and enjoying her engagement ring. It was a solid gold snake with bright diamond eyes holding in its four fangs a green pearl with a cute dimple that made it resemble an apple. Dimitar had bended on his knee and she had gracefully accepted, of course. He had insisted that the ring fitted her, the apple from the Tree of Knowledge being offered by the Snake. Poor man, she would have worn for the rest of her life a rusty nut if he had given it to her! Why men need something dramatic to put their minds in a proper mode?! Valkuda was the only one who had not seen the khala, though, and was somewhat nervous. She wished her grandfather was next to her to meet the magnificent beast that he had spent a life protecting. She looked at a small golden speckle in the sky, which grew a little when it descended and landed in the middle of the yard. The speckle developed to its full size and Valkuda stood up, spellbound. May be grandpa had seen her, otherwise how he would have been able

to describe it so precisely? She approached the khala and guessed the laughter in the golden eyes. 'He was a fine man, Vale, and you will get yourself a fine man also! Congratulations!'

Before Valkuda could express her thanks, Dimitar approached. He was holding the necklace for the khala to inspect it and they all saw the satisfaction in the beast's expression. Then she blinked rapidly, 'You put me a flower? You indeed added me a flower that glows? This is so nice of you! Let me see! An opal flower - a tear of the Raindrop Serpent! Oh, now I can track him and he will talk to me finally! He had said he would marry the one who brings him a tear without scorching it, but no one had managed to do that until now, the tears always dry away and lose their fire. Quick, put it on! Listen, if something comes out of it, I promise one of our children to be linked to that serpent ring! Wish me luck!'

Dimitar adjusted the necklace on the khala's neck and she started shrinking. When it was the size of a sparrow again, it made a quick circle around Dimitar's head and he felt two slight tinges on both his cheeks, then it flew into the sky.

'She kissed you! Oh, my God, she actually kissed you!' Valkuda's voice was full of laughter.

'Jealous?' Dimitar taunted her.

'No, you are going to marry me anyway, even if I don't fly. Now how about getting back to work, my cell phone is bursting. There are at least seven frantic messages from your father's office and three from ours, a call from Tsarev and...'

'That is it, my honeymoon finished before it started! I should have kidnapped you to a place where no phones exist!'

For a change, Dimitar did all the calling. He patiently listened to the news of his father's demise again and again, expressed his surprise and sorrow, arranged for the funeral, arranged for a team of narcologists and psychiatrists to be dispatched for his brother if required, and confirmed that he would be in Varna by the end of the day. He reassured everyone that Valkuda was with him and announced their engagement. He called Andon Tsarev last.

The lawyer was not surprised. His colleagues in Varna had called the moment the news about Tanassov's son had hit the police grapevine. He was also aware of Tanas' whereabouts and cautiously asked for the doctors to be conservative before letting him out to manage a security agency. His other concern was the absence of Mrs. Tanassova, nobody could trace the blondie; the only thing that was confirmed was that she had not left the country under her real name. The trust that had been established in favor of her deceased husband was not devolving to her, but to the institution where Margarita had spent her last days, not that there would be much money left after paying the debts. However, the wife was entitled to the private possessions of her husband and his estate needed to be settled. Luckily Dimitar was able to quell all his worries - his last step-mom was still at Mitzi's house under the care of Lilli and his guards would transport her for the funeral in Varna. Would Mr. Tsarev be present at it as well? He would not miss it for the world, the lawyer said and to some extent Dimitar was relieved, as Vilena's brother would be able to witness his sister's killer gone.

Dimitar and Valkuda left and the other inhabitants of the big house started getting ready for the next day. It was the celebration of Saint Elijah and the electricity was in the air.

The elderly villagers were grateful to Mother Superior for the feast that she was preparing at the monastery's dining room as the weather was fit for Saint Elijah's day. The fat gray clouds were gathering both over the sea and over the land and the storm was imminent. The nuns were confident that they could shelter the villagers in case of need and after the long morning service by both Mother Ephrosinia and Father Ivan they were going to sit for a rich meal. Konstantin had delivered a case of excellent wine. The few elder men were telling their ancient spouses that they would not be working during the day and were entitled to some more than the daily half a glass.

The house across the square was bustling with activity as well. The sitting room was bathed in the blue light of the sterilizer. Rada was checking the blood in the fridge for a third time since the morning. Vantche was rereading the proportions of the anesthetics and testing the makeshift operating table. It was low for her but perfect for Rada and Tantche. The big table at the wall was arranged with the supplies that they had brought

with them. The psychologist had whistled that they should be fine opening a small field hospital. She was practicing small knots on a sizeable slab of stuffed veal to make sure she has the required speed, she had insisted, while not wasting the skills but more to drive Mitzi's bow-tight attention with something. At eleven she put the biggest pot she found to boil on the stove and checked the emergency lights. By quarter to twelve Mitzi was a bag of nerves which was so uncharacteristically different from the always composed lady they knew that Tantche decided on diversion tactics.

'Mitzi, you said lossif told you he was found on the church steps, may be he would be delivered there, like a kind of post box, you know. The stairs are swept clean but do you think we can go and scrub a little, you know, just in case...'

'Of course, I did not think about it. Kosta, will you come with me, I may not be able to carry him myself. What do I need, bucket, chlorine, a brush, let's hurry up! We will see if something happens here!'

Mitzi was scrubbing the massive stone slabs that were the church steps. Probably they were laid there thousands years ago as an entrance of an ancient place of worship and the church was built on its ruins she thought. Yes, the gods came and went, just like people did; only the scale was different. Sometimes it was a violent clash and sometimes it was a seamless flow but the basic stuff remained. The stones laid for one were reused for another. It was like the flow of time, somewhere faster, somewhere slower, somewhere swirling around. The old woman felt the gusts of wind and saw that the clouds had turned from gray to black and were getting lower and lower. She could hardly see the church's cross and the house was a blur. Wind was howling painfully in her ears like a choir of ancient mourners crying over a loved one. The clouds were taking strange forms or may be it was her imagination that was drawing them for her. Distant thunder announced the upcoming storm. Konstantin tugged at the church doors in case they need to take shelter. All of a sudden the clouds parted as if sliced through and from the piercing blue summer sky a giant bird descended or better said dropped like a stone. The mighty talons were clutching a horrifying load – a small child in blooded white shirt and dark trousers. The two adults were frozen in the whirlwind but Mitzi managed to stretch out her hands with enormous effort and accept the offering. The bird shot back through the opening in the clouds that instantly started closing behind. Mitzi run to the house cradling the

unconscious boy in her arms, Konstantin opening doors in front of her. The three young doctors were in the sitting room standing around the table and started the evaluation immediately.

Konstantin tried to get Mitzi out the room but she refused.

'I want to hear what it is and then I will go, I promise!' she patted his hand. 'You go now, see that the kitchen is fine, I will come there.'

'It is better than we thought; he is darn lucky, nothing major that I can see. That had been one hell of a knife, my scalpels cannot cut like that. There are few abdominal muscles that need to be patched and some on the chest, ligaments and stuff. He probably had sucked his breath at the time of the slice and over his tummy it is not so deep. Mitzi, go, we will start patching now and you may warm a unit of blood. I would like not to use it if not extremely necessary, but better be prepared, up to thirty-five degrees and slowly, as we discussed.'

Vantche had started the anesthetics' flow and Tantche was covering the boy's skin with iodine carefully and as closely to the wound as she dared. Rada was right, the cut was a surgical grade but what sort of a monster would slice through his nephew like that was baffling even her mind that specialized on fathoming monstrosity. Mitzi had been adamant that Iossif's clothes had to be preserved as much as possible so she waited for few seconds the painkillers to start working before tugging the white shirt soaked in blood. It was a homemade one, the cloth finer than expected, with intricate embroidery, small, even stitches, beautiful design with some horses. The child's mother had spent days on it, the young woman thought, and that was probably the only thing that he would have left from her. She was trying to remember where she had seen that embroidery, she was pretty sure that it was not the first time, but may be she was mixing it with some publication or museum sample, she would think later about it. Now was time to stitch and she joined Rada who had started putting the sutures on the sliced muscles. Tantche began the minute stitches to hold the top end of the wound in place trying to think only about the next stitch, then the next stitch, then the following one. Even small knots. Microsurgery to close the half cut artery, she was getting close to Rada's field of work, went to another end of the cross, started closing there, changed places with Rada, an odd dance around the table while Vantche was looking at the vital signs. The blood pressure was low but the heartbeat was stable. The child was sleeping under the gentle dose that the anesthesiologist had administered yet they better be fast. More knots. Rada had finished with the muscles and was repairing

some blood vessels close to the surface. Tantche was getting dizzy of the repetitive stitches but it was not time to get dizzy, she shook her curls under the surgical cap. Rada wiped her brow and threw the bandage she had used in the bin next to the table. She started closing the part on her side and slowly coming to the center. Their work had been precise; the four corners of the grisly cut were meeting accurately without a millimeter of difference. While Rada was putting the final stitches, Tantche looked over the boy for other injuries. Mitzi had not mentioned any but it did not mean that there were not. The bones were fine; Vantche had checked for head trauma before and was on the way of getting him off anesthetics. Tantche took off the child's trousers and used several warm wet cloths to bathe the blood and dust from him. Vantche's field test had confirmed the AB blood group, but Rada had decided against the transfusion at the moment. No matter how ugly the cut was, it was not fatal. Should it have been in his village in his time, may be lossif would have been killed by blood loss compounded with infection or malnutrition and the scar would be ugly and slow to heal. Rada was more concerned about the shock. lossif was going to wake up in a strange house with strange people, he would remember that his mom had been killed and it could prove too much on top of the pain shock. Yet they could not drug him during his entire stay, the sooner the rehabilitation started the better and he needed to be conscious.