



"I have set aside ten thousand dollars for Hania's dowry," said her grandfather. "I will give it to you now, Rachid, if you will marry her."

Hania didn't want to get a husband according to the old-world custom. She wanted to

MARRY FOR LOVE

By GLORIA AMOURY

Hania Geha brought an *ergile* to her grandfather's bedside although he was too ill to smoke it. As she watched him sleep, she knew guiltily that a thousand *ergiles* wouldn't make him a bit happier. There was only one thing she could do for him now—the big thing; the practically impossible thing.

The doctor, Rachid Maloof, was sitting beside the bed, holding the old man's frail hand in his powerful one. As Hania put down the *ergile* she brushed against the dark young man and, as always, agonizing shyness brought on by contact with the self-assured Arabic-American reddened her cheeks. She went quickly to the window.

Then the doctor said softly, "He's awake."

She crossed the room and kissed her grandfather, feeling intensely sorry for him because he wasn't in his enormous bed in Damascus, which they'd left two years before, surrounded by the servants of home, the exotic scents of home, the friends of home. Although she'd done all she could to turn this room into Damascus—this room with its Oriental carpeting, its paintings of mid-Eastern street scenes on the walls, neither she nor her grandfather could forget that outside loomed Brooklyn, strange, foreign, terrifying. "I brought you an *ergile*, *gidi*," she said, "for when you feel better."

His eyes were large in his thin face. "I shall not feel better. I am going to die. It is natural to die. But to die in Brooklyn!"

Hania glanced at Atlantic-Avenue-born, Brooklyn-College-educated Rachid and hoped he wasn't offended.

But Rachid's grin was amused. "You'll live to make a dozen trips to the Old Country." However, his eyes grew grave as they met Hania's.

"You kid me, Rachid, as you Americans say," the old man said wisely. "I do not mind dying. To die in Damascus would be pleasant, with old friends to ease me out. At least my friends would protect my grandchild. But to leave a pretty grandchild with a fortune and no

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judgment of people in Brooklyn—that lies heavy on my heart. Over and over I have begged Hania to find a husband before I die. But she hasn't found one."

It was out and in front of Rachid. How, Hania wondered helplessly, did one make love come in Brooklyn? Now that she'd been exposed to the ways of Brooklyn, she only wanted to marry for love. She was sure a self-confident American girl could make love happen; American girls managed everything easily—even traveling in those iron monsters, the subways. But how could she, Hania Geha, raised by a Moslem housekeeper in a warm cocoon in Damascus, go about the humiliating business of finding a husband?

Now, she couldn't help bursting out, "Gidi, you make it sound as if—no one wants me." And she was reasonably sure someone did want her. Farid Asfoor, a young Arabic-American who'd often taken her out. Two nights before, he'd taken her to a movie and on the way home he'd told her she was the loveliest gem Damascus had ever exported; that she was as unspoiled as a Lebanese mountain stream. She was sure that if she'd been experienced with the ways of men she could have wrung a proposal from him. But she hadn't tried. Was it because she hadn't known how to try, she wondered, or because, deep down, she hadn't been sure she'd wanted to try?

"It's a woman's work to find a good man and then make him want her," her grandfather said.

Hania saw that Rachid was considerably fiddling with his bag, his eyes away from her. "Let's not talk about it any more, gidi," she pleaded.

"We will not talk about it, and not talk about it, and then I will be dead and you will be alone in Brooklyn."

She had no more power to stop him than to stop a waterfall.

Rachid's eyes met hers with understanding, as if he felt sorry for her and wanted to end the discussion for her sake. "Don't worry about Hania, Mr. Geha," he said, snapping his bag shut. "Just get stronger so I'll be able to beat you at poker. Now I've got to make more calls."

"Rachid," the old man commanded suddenly, "wait a minute." His tone made Hania apprehensive. "You are a good doctor," the old man told Rachid. "You heal the sick when the sick can be healed. You are kind enough to play poker with an old man. And now you have opened an office on what Americans call shoestrings?"

"I think it's called that," Rachid said. "Surely," her grandfather persisted, "you could use ten thousand dollars."

Rachid laughed shortly. "Who couldn't?"

"I have set aside ten thousand dollars for Hania's dowry. I will give it to you now if you will marry her. I would rather give it to you and have you take care of her than have someone come along when I am gone and fleece her."

Oh, no! Hania thought, horrified. In Damascus such offers were made and accepted between second and third sips of Turkish coffee, but, with Brooklyn outside, the offer sounded horrible.

Why, in the movie she'd seen with Farid Asfoor, gangsters had forbidden the hero to marry his sweetheart. He'd married her anyway, and how bravely he'd taken the riddling with bullets! It had been worth it, he'd gasped, as he'd died in his girl's arms. Flaming feelings like theirs should cause marriage, not offers of money.

"Gidi," she murmured, "Americans don't do things that way."

Rachid was closely watching his patient, as if to see if he were joking. But he was clearly serious. The doctor reddened.

His boyish flush stirred Hania and, to her surprise, evoked startling feelings in her. Rachid had never said a personal word to her, although he had tried to talk her out of her fear of subways. Why was she so serene when he was around and so restless when he wasn't? Why did she listen so eagerly for the bell that heralded his morning calls that somehow had become the champagne moments in her day? Because, she now knew with astounding certainty, she loved this man and wanted to marry him! Love really had come to her in Brooklyn, and now if by some miracle he were to say that of course he wouldn't take money, but since the idea of marrying her had been brought up —

Then he said calmly, "I'll accept the offer."

He accepted the offer! As if the offer were a new operating table. And surely he'd have been more enthusiastic over an operating table.

"Then it's settled." Her grandfather's voice was warm with relief. "Mr. Erbany, my partner, will give you a check. He has my power of attorney."

"That will be fine," Rachid said.

"You won't regret this, Rachid," the old man said. "I have not worked at my linen business since I have been ill, and Erbany is an up-in-the-clouds businessman, but even he could not hurt my fortune. I estimate it at one hundred thousand dollars after U.S. taxes. Different from shoestrings?"

"Quite different," Rachid said.

"As for Hania"—the old man's voice softened—"perhaps you do not like her now. She may seem useless to one who has mingled with capable American girls. But I think you will get used to her."

"I imagine I will," Rachid said, as animatedly as if the old man had described the operating table.

Hania was fighting tears. By Old World standards she should have been happy. Her grandfather had offered her to a man she'd discovered she loved; the man had accepted the offer. But the bullet-riddled man in the movie had died for love, she thought resentfully. And how coldly Rachid had accepted ten thousand dollars to marry her. "I can't marry Rachid," she stated.

Rachid looked at her carefully with his doctor's eyes. She made sure to keep her hurt from showing.

Her grandfather's face grew very old. "Dolly, don't say no. Your parents are dead; you have no one."

"Gidi," she said, "it breaks my heart to hurt you. Although I—I can't marry Rachid, I promise to marry soon." She had no idea how she'd keep the reckless promise, but she vowed she would keep it.

"I can't wait too long," her grandfather said worriedly. He turned to Rachid. "I must take my offer back. Hania doesn't want it. I hope you weren't hurt by her words."

Rachid gave Hania a penetrating look and then said, as coolly as if her refusal had been of candy, "Not at all. I thought the idea a good one. But if Hania doesn't like it —"

"I don't like it," Hania said, her tears close.

Rachid said politely, "Perhaps, after this embarrassment, you'd like another doctor for your grandfather?"

"Yah Allah," the old man muttered; "if another doctor comes into this room I promise to die on the spot. Come tomorrow, Rachid."

"I'll be here at ten as usual," Rachid told Hania, "and we won't mention this business again."

As soon as he'd gone she felt the loss, deep and aching. Just after she'd found out how much he'd meant to her she'd lost him—and in this worst possible way. If she could only think of him with respect—but she couldn't. It was excusable for boys at home to be interested in dowries because they didn't know the other way of life. It was not excusable in a Brooklyn-born ex-G.I. Rachid was water-under-the-bridge and it was a good thing she'd found-out-his-true-colors. Still, she felt like bursting into tears. But she had to make peace with her grandfather first. "Would you like a dish of *leban, gidi*?" The cool yoghurt had been all he'd wanted lately.

But his voice was weak with worry. "What will become of you now, Dolly? All my money is no security for you. You can't take care of yourself; you can't even find your way around Brooklyn alone. You need the security of a good man."

"Gidi," she murmured, her voice blurred by tears, "what security is there for any woman with a man who wants her for his own security?"

He didn't answer because he'd fallen asleep.

She sensibly dried her eyes and reached for her basket of needlepoint from under the night table and she began to work on a camel-in-the-desert scene for her grandfather's favorite chair. And she forced her thoughts to Farid Asfoor.

The flame in his eyes, when his eyes had lingered on her face, had been a bit like the burning desire in the eyes of the bullet-riddled young man. Couldn't she prod her feelings for Farid into love? If she could, and if she could make Farid propose, her grandfather would find peace before he died, and she'd partly repay him for having raised her for nineteen of her twenty-one years of life.

She went to her room and called Farid and asked him to come over for dinner that night. To her relief he accepted.

At six sharp he stood in the doorway, a tall, attractive businessman. Through the open door Hania could see his new car parked outside. She felt flutter about what she hoped to accomplish as she led him to the living-room sofa with its rust-and-gold cushions and antimacassars of fine Damascus lace.

His glance traveled appreciatively from her low-cut green print dress to her toeless shoes. "You look delectable but tired."

She managed a smile. "I've had a hard day."

His eyes were all sympathy. "Your grandfather?"

Impulsively, she decided to tell him what had happened. What more natural way was there to bring up the subject of marriage? It wasn't any bolder than inviting him to dinner had been. "Gidi was frightened at the idea of dying and leaving me." She went on shyly, "He asked—someone—to marry me for a ten-thousand-dollar dowry."

His eyes flickered with amusement. "What an archaic practice."

Encouraged, she said, "That's what—I thought."

"And certainly useless in your case. Practically every guy I know would sell house and lot to raise ten thousand to marry you if money were necessary to get you."

How warming those words were. The maid came in with a silver tray holding liquor and the hors d'oeuvres Hania had worked over for hours. As Hania poured arrack into a glass for Farid and then added water until the drink turned smoky, she wondered how to push the subject of marriage into the right channel.

Fortunately, Farid was still on the subject. "Whom did your grandfather make the offer to?"

"I'd rather not say," Hania said, feeling herself blush.

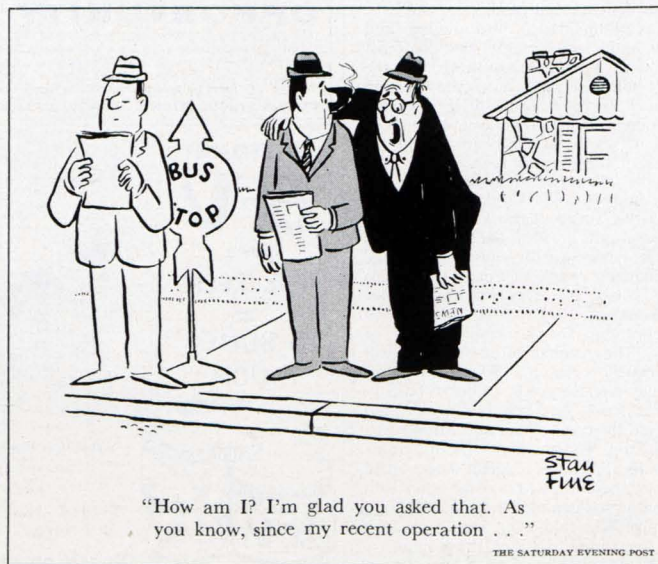
He sipped his arrack. "Of course the fellow told your grandfather he could keep the dowry and disinherit you, too, for all he cared. That you're such a terrific girl it's insulting to offer you and money too. That you don't have to be offered to a guy at all."

The words were so soothing. Even though they weren't being said by precisely the man who should have said them, they were so right. "On the contrary, he accepted the offer," she said.

"He accepted it?" He whistled softly. "Well, I feel sorry for the poor guy. He doesn't know some things are more precious than all the money in the world."

How true. She poured herself some sherry and forced a sip past the lump in her throat.

"As long as we're talking about marriage," Farid said, "why not take me? I know this is as unromantic as the devil, with the tray loaded with food and the maid coming (Continued on Page 82)



"How am I? I'm glad you asked that. As you know, since my recent operation . . ."

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(Continued from Page 80) in and out, but I do love you. For yourself. And if anyone offered me money to take you, I'd knock his block off, not meaning any disrespect to your grandfather."

Just like that. As easy as rolling off a log. Before she could answer, he had her in his arms and he was kissing her as effectively as the movie.

The only trouble was that Hania couldn't respond with quite the ardor of the girl. No matter how she pushed her imagination, Farid's lips were just a man's lips pressed on hers. The room

stayed in place; the eggplant hors d'oeuvre on the tray stayed gray-white and was not sprinkled with stardust. Well, maybe the stardust would come with future kisses. And just then the maid came in to announce dinner.

As the maid gasped, Hania said, "We're going to be married."

The maid wished them happiness while Farid fervently pressed Hania's hand.

"Please delay dinner a moment," Hania said to the maid. "We want to tell my grandfather."

They went to her grandfather's room.

"Gidi," Hania told him, "good news. You'll see me married soon. To Farid."

Her grandfather gazed at her, and then at Farid, and then back at her. Then he said simply, "Although I do not like this young man as well as Rachid, any man is better than no man in Brooklyn."

To Hania's relief, Farid smiled. Apparently he didn't hold the remark against her grandfather. But since the old man was thoughtful, as if about to say more, Hania hustled Farid out of the room.

"Rachid?" Farid said, as they went down the stairs. "Then he must have

made the offer to Rachid Maloof, of course, since Rachid is his doctor."

Hania was sorry he knew. "You mustn't blame Rachid, darling," Farid said generously. "He rented office space over that store, you know, and he had to buy used equipment. I guess he thought the money would go a long way toward furnishing a new office."

Well, he could furnish his office with someone else's dowry, Hania thought bitterly, as the morning's hurt began ranking again. The thought of his marrying someone else was disturbing, and Hania was furious with herself for being disturbed. In movies, she told herself, newly engaged girls were always in the clouds.

At dinner, she forced herself to smile at her fiancé. In the flickering candlelight his face seemed dramatically pale—gaunt—as he told her how he'd suffered during the past weeks, while he'd tried to work up the nerve to ask her to marry him. He told her how he'd begun to love her years before, when he'd lain in the rice paddies of Korea and dreamed of a girl he hadn't met yet because, of course, the gem hadn't been imported from Damascus at that time. When the maid brought the Turkish coffee, Hania was convinced that if Farid had been approached by gangsters, he would have reacted exactly as the movie hero had.

Then the outside bell tinkled and the maid went to the door.

"I wish you'd have that bell disconnected when I'm around," Farid said seriously. "And the phone. I'm morbidly jealous of everyone who comes near you."

"It's only Mr. Erbany," Hania said, laughing. "He comes every night around this time. He'll go up to see *gidi* and then leave without bothering us."

Mr. Erbany's footsteps could be heard following the maid's up the stairs. But in a short time he was down again and, to Hania's surprise, he was ushered into the dining room.

Hania greeted the bald, elderly man. "Please have some coffee with us."

"I can't," Her grandfather's partner sat down, though. He picked up a spoon and fingered it nervously. "I must talk to you, Miss Hania, before I leave."

Farid stood up obligingly, but Hania said: "You may speak in front of Farid. We're engaged to be married."

"To be married?" Mr. Erbany pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. "I am glad. Very glad for a special reason," Erbany said. He paused and then went on, "You know I have been managing our business since your grandfather has been ill."

"I know," Hania said. "And, Miss Hania—" he said with difficulty, "my head for business is not as good as your grandfather's. In short, I have put my trust in a certain firm in Irish linens and a certain firm in Puerto Rican linens—and my trust was misplaced." He lowered his head.

"You want to tell me," Hania gently helped him, "that you've lost some money for my grandfather?"

"I mean," Erbany said, "that I've lost everything for your grandfather. I shall not give you the details now. But everything is gone. And if it consoles you at all, for me as well as for your grandfather."

"Everything?" He'd lost money, perhaps. But he couldn't possibly have lost all this. "But even if you used all the money—why, this house alone — The silver, the furniture, the rugs —"

"When affairs are settled," Erbany said solemnly, "you'll be lucky if you can keep the clothes you have on."

It couldn't be happening. There was a nightmarish quality about the whole

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thing. Finally Hania said, "At least I have my dowry."

"Miss Hania," Erban said, "some weeks ago it seemed to me that we could salvage something by the use of that money. So I used it." He muttered, "That, too, is gone."

"You know," Hania said, "that's funny. Because *gidi* offered it to someone this morning."

"He didn't have it to offer," Erban said. He added: "I can't tell you how sorry I am. Your grandfather always called me a business idiot; said I was only good at convincing the public about the artistry of the cloths. When I got out of the showroom and into the office—I failed."

Hania felt sorry for him. "You are an artist at linens, Mr. Erban," she said quietly. "And most artists are poor business people. Don't worry. As Americans say, it's only money."

"Thank you for taking it this way," Erban said. He stood up. "There is only one thing I can do now. I shall hold off ruin until the old man dies and I shall never let him know he is ruined."

"We'll never tell him," Hania promised. "And so I am glad, Miss Hania, that you are going to be married," Erban said. "Frankly, if you didn't get married, I don't know what you would do. I know you have never worked. I don't have anything left myself, so I can't help you." And he left the room.

Married. Hania had almost forgotten about that in the past few moments. But how consoling the idea was now. There was Farid, his eyes still lowered, no doubt because he pitied her.

But she didn't pity herself. Oh, she'd be sorry to see all this go—the Haviland china and the silver and the brocade drapes and especially the copper Turkish coffeepot her great-grandmother had used. But how many girls started marriage with less?

"Farid," she said, "I do know how to cook. And although I get lost easily, I can learn to find my way around a supermarket. We'll have fun because it'll be such a challenge."

Farid raised his eyes. Why, he didn't feel sorry for her. There was something else in his eyes. It looked like—but it couldn't be—panic. "I don't think we ought to get married too soon," he said slowly.

"Not too soon?" She was puzzled. "But you just said you couldn't wait." "We've got to think of—all the angles," Farid said, his face growing haggard. "I make seventy-five dollars a week. I wiped out my whole bank account paying for that new car. I'm just—not in a position to support a wife on seventy-five a week."

She felt chilled. "Lots of American couples manage on less than that. We could."

"You don't understand." He went on desperately: "Most couples start marriage on two salaries these days. If a guy makes seventy-five a week and a girl makes around sixty, it adds up. And most girls your age have worked long enough to have bank accounts themselves. I don't think you know much about the cost of living in this country."

Hania couldn't believe this man with the tight lips was the same one who'd been whispering to her across the candlelit table. She said levelly, "You said you wouldn't take anything from my grandfather in any case."

"Oh, for pity's sake," he groaned, "I said I wouldn't take money. That it's coarse to accept—money. But the old man's always been so good to you—surely, it wasn't unreasonable to think he might give us a house as a wedding present and ease the burden of rent. Any-

way, you were slated to get everything."

"Get out," she said.

"Now, Hania, don't get sore. I didn't say to call it off. I just think we should go slowly. Marriage is a big step."

"I said get out. Now."

"I just want you to see my point," he went on. "To know that the moonlight-and-flowers routine isn't everything."

She rang for the maid. When the maid came, she said, "Please show Mr. Asfour out."

Hania had a terrible dream that night. She dreamed that Rachid was beating her with a whip made out of her grandfather's *ergile* cord and she'd run away from him, down a mountainous staircase and found Farid at the bottom. She'd turned to him for comfort, but he'd lifted the coffeepot and flung Turkish coffee in her face. Then the dream got all mixed up with Mr. Erban shaking his head, her grandfather slowly eating *leban* and the maid announcing that dinner was served.

She woke up in a sweat. Then she remembered and knew that reality was as bad as the dream. The night-table clock said seven and so she got up quickly. She knew what she had to do.

After she'd checked on her grandfather, she dressed and then had breakfast. Then, for an hour, she studied the Manhattan classified telephone directory and jotted down names and addresses. Finally she opened her desk drawer and searched its depths for a document she'd hidden in hopes that she'd never have to use it. But she found it—and soon she was studying the bewildering and terrifying thing—a map of the New York subway system.

The next morning, when Rachid came to see her grandfather, she led him to the living room and asked him to sit down.

"I asked you in here because I have something to say to you," she told him efficiently, sitting beside him on the sofa. After all that had happened, she knew it would be childish to be embarrassed at facing him and she was past childishness. But she was still hurt because he'd accepted the offer. She told him about Erban's having lost the fortune.

His eyes widened with surprise at the news, but he only said, "I'm sorry to hear that."

"I asked you in here," she went on, "to tell you to go on giving *gidi* the best

medical care, no matter what it costs. After what happened the other day I imagine you're interested in your fee." She saw that that hurt him. They were even, then, because he'd surely hurt her. "Your fee will be paid." She added proudly: "I have conquered the subway system. Yesterday I traveled in the B.M.T., the I.R.T. and the Independent, in what they call the rush hour. I went to lingerie firms to see if I could get a job doing fine sewing, since that's all I'm qualified to do. When all is settled—here, I start work for the Haiks."

His eyes warmed with admiration and amusement. "I want to congratulate you on conquering the subways. For a long time I've hoped you would do it." He paused, as if for some reason he wanted to weigh his next words. Then he said carefully: "I'm proud of you for having gotten the sewing job. But if you don't mind my butting in—I'd rather you didn't take it."

She was astonished. "Why shouldn't I take it?"

He dropped his impersonal mask and his eyes were frankly anxious as they met hers. "Because you look frail to me," he blurted out. "You've never put in an American day's work and you might find it—rugged. I'd rather see you—protected."

She was moved. She'd needed genuine friendship badly since Erban's announcement, but she'd never expected it to come from Rachid. Maybe she'd misjudged him—a little. "It's—good of you to be concerned about me. But since there's no money left there's nothing I can do but work."

"There is something you can do," he said quietly. "You can marry me." His impersonal tone was gone and in his voice was a glimmer of fire that was as astounding as Farid's unsuspected streak of hardness had been. As she stared speechlessly, he went on: "I don't have many—shoe-strings. But I have enough to keep you—protected."

Hania was dazedly watching the stranger before her. The man whose eyes had grown tender and whose voice trembled couldn't possibly be Rachid. It was some time before she brought out tensely, "Rachid, why did you accept *gidi*'s offer?"

He seemed surprised at the question. "Because I love you, of course. For what other reason would I accept such an offer? I've loved you since we met. Every morning, when I came to see your grandfather, the glow from just being near you didn't fade for me for hours. Every night I'd lie awake and wonder how to open the heart of a shy girl—a girl not used to our American way of love."

Rachid couldn't be speaking.

"I was afraid if I approached you in our way I'd offend you and lose you. So when your grandfather made me that offer, it was as if the sun had burst through clouds. He gave me the chance to marry you on the basis you understood—on an Old World basis. I decided to marry you any way I could, and get you to love me later. But you turned me down." He looked away, but not before she'd seen the hurt in his eyes. "I still want to marry you and get you to love me later."

"Oh, Rachid," she cried brokenly, "what makes you think you have to get me to love you?"

"But you said —"

She flung her arms around him and stopped him with a kiss. His arms came around her, tight, and they kissed again. It was a savage, wonderful kiss and the room whirled and was sprinkled with stardust even though it was morning. She cried hard when it was over and she was held close in his arms.

"Why," he murmured, looking down at her with soft eyes, "you've loved me all the time!"

They went to her grandfather. The old man's face was listless.

"*Gidi*," Hania began radiantly.

Her grandfather jerked himself to a sitting position and stared at them shrewdly. "You have had the sense to pick Rachid." "How did you know?" Hania asked, startled.

He winked. "When a young girl has no judgment of people, one must make tricks, as Americans say, to stop fleeing. I would rather prevent fleeing while I am alive than have it happen after I am gone."

"Tricks?" Hania echoed. Then she saw his wise old eyes and she knew. "*Gidi*!" she chided him. "You and Mr. Erban —"

"I am near my grave," the old man said, "but not in it. Even if I were in it I could keep that business idiot from throwing away my money. Now you know what makes Erban so convincing in the showroom."

Convincing was the word, Hania thought, remembering Erban's seemingly guilt-ridden face and sorrowful eyes. What a bad time the old man and Erban had put her through. But love had prompted the trick and the trick had had such glorious results. She felt absurdly happy because she'd be able to keep her great-grandmother's coffeepot.

Rachid was laughing. "You didn't lose your money?"

"In the past day," the old man said solemnly, "I have grown richer. I have seen to that."

One thing puzzled Hania. "*Gidi*, if it was all your idea, why did Mr. Erban say we weren't to tell you —"

"Also my idea," the old man said promptly, "If you thought I knew, you would have asked me what to do. I wanted you to stand on your feet, as the Americans say, while I am alive."

Then Hania knew, for the first time, that she had stood on her feet. "Why, I did," she murmured. "I even conquered the subways."

"*Yah Allah*," her grandfather breathed, lying back contentedly: "You have picked Rachid and you have conquered the subways. Now I can die happily, even in Brooklyn." THE END

