

[ERN: 00359756-00359757]



Part VII

Marriage Proposal

My mother was so happy that she burst out crying when she saw me come back home alive. I noticed she was much thinner than before. Over the past months, she had been very worried as she had neither received any information from me nor known whether I was alive or not. My mother told me about the events that had taken place at the base since I had left.

She added that, as soon as I had left, *Angkar* started to gather, arrest and detain people at the security centers, and many of them were killed. Each day, she saw *Angkar* continuously arrest and tie people up, put them on horse carts and take them away through the village both day and night. She begged me to stay calm and not pursue revenge for my father, uncles, aunts and etc. She said there was nothing we could do against *Angkar*. In the past, many rebellious people had been arrested and killed by *Angkar*.

To appease her and allay her concerns about my safety, I promised her I would take good care of myself, so she would not have to worry. However, my hatred and desire for revenge against those so-called black-minded people was still boiling. I remained determined, if there were any resistance group against authoritarian *Angkar*, one day, I would quickly voluntarily join them to struggle against it.

My mother reminded me about my former fiancée. She asked me to propose again to *Angkar*, Chief of Platoon, to allow me to marry her [my former fiancée]. She focused on this as she did not want me to be a single youth any longer. She hoped I would marry soon because she did not want me be far away from her again. She said that, in the near future, *Angkar* would arrange marriages for many couples. Regarding my marriage, I did not reject it, but I reminded her that I was like ... My mother was aware of my intention, so she interrupted me and said she would take care of that matter.

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Both of us travelled secretly through the outskirts of the village toward the edge of Ta Lâm (តាឡាម) Stream, located west of the village. There were no big trees growing on the edge of that stream except some Thlaem Andaek (ថ្លែមអណ្តើក), wild cotton and Anhchanh (អញ្ចាញ) plants and few palm trees growing widely separated. Near the stream, in the forested areas, I was cutting small plants while my wife was collecting and binding them into bundles to be carried home on our shoulders and heads. While I was cutting these small plants, I heard a strange sound in the sky from a distance. When I looked up, I saw a plane flying very far above me and heading from east to west.

A moment after the plane had flown away, I saw white objects hovering throughout the sky. My wife and I were looking with curiosity at them. They scattered and were floating throughout the sky and were falling down on us. In fact, they were white pieces of paper, hundreds of thousands of them, hovering and scattering widely and falling down on the stream, rice fields and village areas. As we were curious, both of us went quickly to collect the papers falling down next to us. After we had collected [some of] them, we sat under a palm tree near the edge of the stream and read one of them together.

“Oh! ... is a leaflet ... There is an appeal ...,” my wife exclaimed. “Look! There is a printed photo as well.”

I read it quietly and whispered for only both of us to hear “ ... An appeal ... the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea Day: Date: Month: October ... Year: 1978. Our names are HENG Samrin (ហេង សំរិន) and PRUM Dīn (ព្រុំ ឌិន) ..., Chief of Division: [We] would like to call on younger and older brothers, the former members of Division Number: and all other

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compatriots living in the East Zone to discard your beliefs and resist against the reactionaries, POL Pot (ប៉ុល ពត), IENG Sary (ឃៀង សារី) and KHIEU Samphan (ខៀវ សំផន) They are authoritarian fascist people (committing genocide) [They] are Beijing's lackeys of China They have arrested and killed many resisting and innocent people. In particular, they cheated me ... arrested me, tied me up and took me away to be executed at Bos Chek (បុស្រែក), Bos Khnor (បុស្រ្ន័រ), in Ou Reang Ov (អូរាំងឌី) District, Kampong Cham (កំពង់ចាម) Province. Luckily, we managed to escape the ties to join the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea, located in”

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.....Almost all the trees along the roads were big ones. *Angkar* stated in the announcement that: “*Angkar* no longer mistreats the people affiliated with such organizations as the CIA or KGB. We, as Cambodian people, have to collaborate to protect and develop the country.” The people in the Commune were frequently gathered by *Angkar* to join meetings at which *Angkar*'s line was presented.

Three days after I had come back to the village, the Unit Chiefs assigned me to plow rice fields and transplant rice seedlings in [one of] the village's Mobile Units at a work site in Prey Anteak (ប្រៃអន្ទាក់), located around three kilometers east of the village. As I was not physically strong enough to tolerate such difficult living conditions, at the time, and due to the swift change in the eating situation, I had such a serious stomach pain and diarrhea that I had to rest somewhere. Because my younger sister, in the Mobile Unit with me, had begged the Unit Chief, *Angkar* sent me back to the village. I came to stay in the tile-roofed house of a 'base person', *Yeay Neou* (យ៉ៃ),

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the younger sister of my grandfather on my mother's side. She was very old at the time.