

**THE MOTHER**  
*(A Folktale from Shirak)*

In the autumn, in the empty forests,  
When the moist darkness descends,  
When the cold gale blusters  
In the bare and gloomy fields  
Each time I remember  
The story of this poor old mother.  
And I wonder where now—  
whether nearby or far away—  
the hand of evil is striking  
some poor unfortunate person.

I don't know where or in what village  
A poor old mother lived  
With her son and daughter-in-law  
With deaf ears and blind eyes,  
Unable to move her feet and hands,  
powerless.  
If bread wasn't given, she didn't ask for  
it.  
And all day long  
She murmured prayers for them.

"Oof," the daughter-in-law used to say  
each day,  
"Your mother is a burden upon me  
Leaving my chores, I spend the whole  
day  
Holding her hand.  
Her eyes are greedy, no matter how  
much I give her.  
A curse is always on her lips.  
She is pressing in on the air we breathe.  
Take her away, lose her, so I can be  
free!"

"Oh woman, what evil thing are you  
saying?  
If I treated my mother that way,  
God would be angry at me,  
I would be sinning against God and  
against you."

But every day the merciless  
daughter-in-law  
Gnawed at her husband's heart,  
And harshly demanded  
That he do her evil will.  
And one day she screamed and cried  
And pulled out her hair,  
And hurriedly opened the door  
For him to take his mother out of the  
house.  
If he didn't, she said she would run away  
and tell the whole world  
that her husband didn't pay attention to  
her,  
that she loved someone else.

The poor man tried everything he could,  
But finally he picked up his poor mother  
In front of his wife's cruel eyes.  
He took her bag and put it on his  
shoulder,  
And with his head lowered he set out  
with her,  
His mind sullen and troubled.

Late at night they reached the forest.  
In a deep valley, under a tree,  
He left his powerless mother.  
The autumn wind was sobbing;  
The wolves began to howl.  
The man was about to return home  
When, just then, he heard his mother's  
voice.  
"Goodbye, my son, God be with you.  
May your feet find a gentle path.  
And my son, take the bag with you.  
It might be needed at home."

- *Avedik Issahakian, 1907*