

it was a matter of serious mischief, Khanum Farazmand would strike the student's hand with the sharp edge. The flat side was for lesser "crimes." But this tough disciplinarian, feared by generations of students who had passed through Mariamian Armenian School, just smiled and said, "What can I say? Roozan Khanum is in heaven: her father is coming home."

After several more weeks of waiting, my dad was finally released on November 17, 1954. He came home to face the difficult task of picking up the pieces of our shattered life and continuing where he had left off. Eleven years on, he returned to his family now grown into a bunch of strangers. Paranzem, or Parik as my mom was called, had adjusted to the role of an independent, self-reliant single mother. In addition to her job at the Singer Company, she had mastered the art of creative machine embroidery and she worked hard filling large and small orders, even taking menial jobs to earn money and raise her two daughters. She had managed to kill her feminine ways and desires. She had forgotten how to love a man, had forgotten even the idea or the possibility. She had turned down many suitors, friends of my dad who had approached her over the years to propose a new life and take her out of the misery of a single woman with the heavy responsibilities of managing a family alone. Incredible as it seemed to many, she had never lost hope of my father's return. As for my sister and me, we had built our world without a father figure in it. It was never a perfect world, never adequate, but his absence had become a way of life for us, three women alone in