THE AYYARS, LED BY SONGHUR BALKHI AND LULU THE SPY, SLIT THE THROATS OF THE PRISON GUARDS AND FREE SA'ID FARRUKH-NIZHAD

The pace of the story slows now. Baba Bakhsha entertains Songhur and Lulu for a while, all the time swapping information with them about Hamza and others. That night Songhur and Farran Ayyar approach the prison where Sa'iid Farrukh-Nizhad is being held. They think that they see an opening when they see the guards drinking. They are, however, soon challenged by four men dressed in black, who, it turns out, are Baba Bakhsha's operatives. Together they survey the prison, but making no inroads that night, they return to report to the Baba. Ever optimistic, Baba Bakhsha promises that once the prince is liberated, his tajiyo will be a safehouse that no one will suspect. Now they resume their plan to poison the guards' wine.

"They came and kept Shaban busy until the prison guards came. Shaban said to Songhur, 'Go bring wine from that special vat for the men of Ahsa World-Travel; who is now the warden of the prison.' Songhur mixed a knock-out drug into the wine and gave it to them. They fell unconscious. The ayyars came to the prison gate and cut the guards' heads off, rescued Sa'iid, and took him to Baba Bakhsha's tajiyo. Baba hid the prince. The companions went to the caravanserai and informed Ihsan-Khair and Jalal. They rejoiced."

The illustration depicts the long-awaited liberation of Farrukh-Nizhad. Although the text indicates that the guards had fallen unconscious and implies a ruthless slaughter, the artist shows a vigorous skirmish between the guards and ayyars. The ayyars have clearly bested their foes, with three guards down and two others put to flight. Five prisoners still wear chains, but Farrukh-Nizhad, the plumpish figure in orange, is clearly the focus of both the composition and the ayyars' efforts. He alone is shown frontally and thoroughly manacled, and he alone is actively being tugged by an ayyar wielding a hammer and tongs.

The designer, Shrawana, uses the architectural setting to establish the frenzied tempo of the scene. As in cat.47, he places the foreground wall of the courtyard flush against the lower edge of the painting, but skewers the standard composition so one wall justs abruptly to the right, a feature that probably inspires – or even requires – the two fleeing guards. Accordingly, the front and rear entrances are aligned on the diagonal; along which, not coincidentally, Farrukh-Nizhad and his liberator appear. And the blackened doorway on the left provides an ideal backdrop for the most dramatic incident of the rescue, the cleaving of two guards.

Shrawana also exercised his prerogative to execute the main figures in the composition. The broad and somewhat bland face of Sa'iid Farrukh-Nizhad, for example, compares very closely to those of the figures at the gateway of cat.47. The two figures immediately above Farrukh-Nizhad have been repainted, but most of the other figures are by Maheesa. Maheesa’s draftsmanship is sometimes weak, as is the lumpish backs and impossibly turned heads of one fleeing guard and the prisoner in yellow above him. When Maheesa applies yellow paint, he thinks it out so much that it approaches a tinted white. Similarly, he is inclined to decorate his figures’ heads with a tiny gold pattern. Perhaps the subtlest trademark is his rendering of eyes, which habitually have a narrow gold rim around the black pupil. (See, for example, the four figures in the lower right.) That none of these features is visible from any distance greater than arm’s length is a sure indication that the paintings were made with the expectation that they would also be scrutinized under much more intimate conditions than the nightly public recitations.
Malik Taysun immediately holds Baba Bashaha responsible for Sai'd Farrukh-Nizhad's rescue and sends his spy Kajdaat to confirm his suspicions. The prince is spotted moving around the tokriya and Malik Taysun attacks it. Eventually Farrukh-Nizhad escapes by means of a secret tunnel, but Taysun discovers his new refuge and launches yet another attack. Kajdaat assures Taysun that he will kidnap Farrukh-Nizhad before the night is out. He does so, and Taysun vows to behead Farrukh-Nizhad the next day before the fortress. His vizier, however, proposes a more nefarious plan, that is, to send Sai'd to the island of Ki'al Man-Eater, who devours anyone who strays into his territory. Kajdaat is sent to accompany him. Once on the island, Ki'al does indeed threaten to eat the prince, but he is saved by Barghal, Ki'al's daughter, who has fallen in love with him. He promises that he will marry her as soon as he sees his parents, and to facilitate this Barghal helps him escape from the island.

Meanwhile Khosh-Khiram, a female ayyar who is the daughter of Princess Malak Mah's nurse, has set out to find Farrukh-Nizhad. By chance she meets the prince and Barghal, and they continue their journey together until Barghal is killed by a panther.

At last Sai'd Farrukh-Nizhad and Khosh-Khiram arrive at a palace, which they enter. Two girls are wrestling on the roof. They turn out to be Malak Mah and Shedia Banu, both confined to the palace by a sorcerer's spell. Malak Mah rejoices when she sees Sai'd Farrukh-Nizhad, and the lovers tell each other their adventures.
When news of Sa'id Farrukh-Nizhad's escape reaches Malik Taysun, he immediately suspects that Baba Bakhsha was involved. He dispatches one of his spies, Kajdast, ("Crooked Hand") by name, to surveil Baba Bakhsha's house. He does this and soon glimpses Songhur Bakhsh moving about the complex with Farrukh-Nizhad. Kajdast reports this to Taysun, who launches a heavily armed assault against that place. Fighting continues for some time, but Baba Bakhsha eventually persuades Farrukh-Nizhad to make use of a secret tunnel that will take him far from danger. Taysun, however, discovers the fortress to which Farrukh-Nizhad has retired, and leads a still larger army there. Again the battle rages. Taysun's own son defects to Sa'id's army.

"However, when Taysun entered the fortress, word came from Kajdast, saying, 'Do not grieve, for tonight I will kidnap Sa'id.' He went into the camp and kidnapped him. However, when he brought Sa'id to Taysun, he said for him to be kept under watch. They sent twenty thousand men against the camp of Islam. When they came the Muslims had gone into the fortress. They pulled back. Malik Taysun said, 'Guard Sa'id, and tomorrow we'll cut his head off in front of the fortress.' His vizier said, 'He should be sent to K'ol Man-Eater's island, for if a stranger appears, they will eat him.' They sent a messenger and also said to Kajdast, 'You go too.' 

At this point, the story is interrupted by one missing folio. When it resumes on the reverse of this painting, Sa'id is at K'ol's island, and is threatened with the prospect of being eaten alive, both figuratively and literally, by K'ol's daughter, Bakhsh, who has amorous designs on him. Khosh-Khiram, the daughter of Malik Mah, heads a small rescue mission. The caption of the painting summarizes the intervening narrative, and indicates that it is Kajdast, the enemy vizier, who has met the ignominious fate of being beheaded outside the fortress walls.

Basavana, the designer of the painting, isolates Khosh-Khiram as she plows across an especially verdant landscape. She brandishes a bloodied knife with one hand, and clutches her grisly trophy with the other. In her wake lies the upended carcass of Kajdast, identified as an enemy agent by his discarded battle-axe and shield. She returns under cover of night to the citadel, where guards slumber blissfully unaware of her heroic but gruesome act of reprise. Basavana constructs the luxuriant landscape around these two figures. He clears a large enough space for Kajdast's death spasms, and makes that space part of a meandering path leading back to the fortress. He elevates Khosh-Khiram within the composition by the outcrop below her, and frames her by a corresponding light rock cluster above. He uses trees to constrict: the view of the citadel's gateway and to block the lower and visually uninteresting sections of its walls.

Basavana executed practically the entire lower portion of the painting. The most telling element is the central figure of Khosh-Khiram, whose softly modeled red robe recalls Zumurrud Shah's jama in cat. 33, and whose eye-differs subtly from that of Basavana's figure of Samaw'ah: Barun in cat. 47. Similarly, Kajdast's orange and blue garments show the pronounced modeling favored by Basavana. Conversely, while the vizier's hair is fine and unruly, his expression is rather more blissful and ill-composed than one would normally expect from Basavana under such circumstances. Elsewhere, Basavana repeats from cat. 33 the luminous and broadly conceived rocks, the animated foliage, and the paint-splashed tufts of grass.

His collaborator in this painting was Mukhil, who rephrases from cat. 58 his bastion occupied by sleeping guards. Once again, something is awry with Mukhil's architecture: small, streaked domes rise from ill-proportioned towers, torqued windows float oddly before the walls they pierce, and tilework patterns become half-hearted gestures to geometric regularity. Basavana salvages this section by supplying the figures. This becomes apparent first from the guards' clothes, which have stronger contours, more painterly folds, and smaller patterns than Mukhil's is capable of executing. Still subtler features, such as the wispier hair and the elaborate configuration of the outer ear, also corroborate Basavana's active involvement in this section.