

PANTHEON  BOOKS

THE COMPLETE  
PERSEPOLIS



MARJANE SATRAPI



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*To my parents*

THE COMPLETE

# PERSEPOLIS

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PANTHEON

# INTRODUCTION

In the second millennium B.C., while the Elam nation was developing a civilization alongside Babylon, Indo-European invaders gave their name to the immense Iranian plateau where they settled. The word "Iran" was derived from "Ayryana Vaejo," which means "the origin of the Aryans." These people were semi-nomads whose descendants were the Medes and the Persians. The Medes founded the first Iranian nation in the seventh century B.C.; it was later destroyed by Cyrus the Great. He established what became one of the largest empires of the ancient world, the Persian Empire, in the sixth century B.C. Iran was referred to as Persia — its Greek name — until 1935 when Reza Shah, the father of the last Shah of Iran, asked everyone to call the country Iran.

Iran was rich. Because of its wealth and its geographic location, it invited attacks: From Alexander the Great, from its Arab neighbors to the west, from Turkish and Mongolian conquerors, Iran was often subject to foreign domination. Yet the Persian language and culture withstood these invasions. The invaders assimilated into this strong culture, and in some ways they became Iranians themselves.

In the twentieth century, Iran entered a new phase. Reza Shah decided to modernize and westernize the country, but meanwhile a fresh source of wealth was discovered: oil. And with the oil came another invasion. The West, particularly Great Britain, wielded a strong influence on the Iranian economy. During the Second World War, the British, Soviets, and Americans asked Reza Shah to ally himself with them against Germany. But Reza Shah, who sympathized with the Germans, declared Iran a neutral zone. So the Allies invaded and occupied Iran. Reza Shah was sent into exile and was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was known simply as the Shah.

In 1951, Mohammed Mossadeq, then prime minister of Iran, nationalized the oil industry. In retaliation, Great Britain organized an embargo on all exports of oil from Iran. In 1953, the CIA, with the help of British intelligence, organized a coup against him. Mossadeq was overthrown and the Shah, who had earlier escaped from the country, returned to power. The Shah stayed on the throne until 1979, when he fled Iran to escape the Islamic revolution.

Since then, this old and great civilization has been discussed mostly in connection with fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism. As an Iranian who has lived more than half of my life in Iran, I know that this image is far from the truth. This is why writing *Persepolis* was so important to me. I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists. I also don't want those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under various

repressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and flee their homeland to be forgotten.

One can forgive but one should never forget.

Marjane Satrapi

Paris, September 2002



# THE VEIL

THIS IS ME WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD. THIS WAS IN 1980.

AND THIS IS A CLASS PHOTO. I'M SITTING ON THE FAR LEFT SO YOU DON'T SEE ME. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GOLNAZ, MAHSHID, MARINE, MINNA.

IN 1979 A REVOLUTION TOOK PLACE. IT WAS LATER CALLED "THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION".

THEN CAME 1980: THE YEAR IT BECAME OBLIGATORY TO WEAR THE VEIL AT SCHOOL.

WE DIDN'T REALLY LIKE TO WEAR THE VEIL, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAD TO.

AND ALSO BECAUSE THE YEAR BEFORE, IN 1979, WE WERE IN A FRENCH NON-RELIGIOUS SCHOOL.



WHERE BOYS AND GIRLS WERE TOGETHER.



AND THEN SUDDENLY IN 1980...

ALL BILINGUAL SCHOOLS MUST BE CLOSED DOWN.



THEY ARE SYMBOLS OF CAPITALISM.



WE FOUND OURSELVES VEILED AND SEPARATED FROM OUR FRIENDS.



EVERYWHERE IN THE STREETS THERE WERE DEMONSTRATIONS FOR AND AGAINST THE VEIL.



AT ONE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS, A GERMAN JOURNALIST TOOK A PHOTO OF MY MOTHER.



I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HER. HER PHOTO WAS PUBLISHED IN ALL THE EUROPEAN NEWSPAPERS.



AND EVEN IN ONE MAGAZINE IN IRAN, MY MOTHER WAS REALLY SCARED.



SHE DYED HER HAIR,



AND WORE DARK GLASSES FOR A LONG TIME.



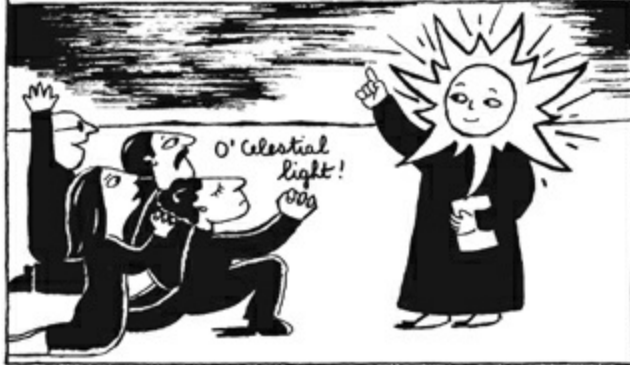
I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE VEIL. DEEP DOWN I WAS VERY RELIGIOUS BUT AS A FAMILY WE WERE VERY MODERN AND AVANT-GARDE.



I WAS BORN WITH RELIGION.



AT THE AGE OF SIX I WAS ALREADY SURE I WAS THE LAST PROPHET. THIS WAS A FEW YEARS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.



BEFORE ME THERE HAD BEEN A FEW OTHERS.



I WANTED TO BE A PROPHET...

BECAUSE OUR MAID DID NOT EAT WITH US.



BECAUSE MY FATHER HAD A CADILLAC.



AND, ABOVE ALL, BECAUSE MY GRANDMOTHER'S KNEES ALWAYS ACHED.





LIKE ALL MY PREDECESSORS I HAD MY HOLY BOOK.



THE FIRST THREE RULES CAME FROM ZARATHUSTRA. HE WAS THE FIRST PROPHET IN MY COUNTRY BEFORE THE ARAB INVASION.



I ALSO WANTED US TO CELEBRATE THE TRADITIONAL ZARATHUSTRIAN HOLIDAYS. LIKE THE FIRE CEREMONY,



BEFORE THE PERSIAN NEW YEAR, NOROUZ, ON MARCH 21<sup>ST</sup>, THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.



ONLY MY GRANDMOTHER KNEW ABOUT MY BOOK.

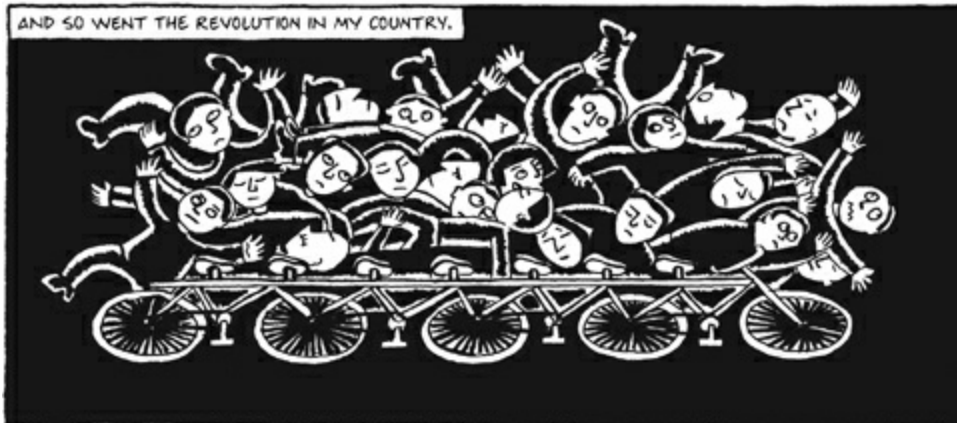








# THE BICYCLE



"AFTER A LONG SLEEP OF 2500 YEARS, THE REVOLUTION HAS FINALLY AWAKENED THE PEOPLE."



"2500 YEARS OF TYRANNY AND SUBMISSION" AS MY FATHER SAID.

FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.



THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.



FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.



AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.













THE FIREMEN DIDN'T ARRIVE UNTIL FORTY MINUTES LATER.



THE BBC SAID THERE WERE 400 VICTIMS. THE SHAH SAID THAT A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS PERPETRATED THE MASSACRE. BUT THE PEOPLE KNEW THAT IT WAS THE SHAH'S FAULT!!!







# THE WATER CELL





AT THE TIME THE REPUBLICAN IDEAL WAS POPULAR IN THE REGION BUT EVERYBODY INTERPRETED IT IN HIS OWN WAY.

GANDHI IN INDIA



THE HINDUS AND THE MUSLIMS MUST MAKE PEACE TO OVERTHROW THE BRITISH.

ATATURK IN TURKEY



WE, THE TURKS, ARE SECULAR WESTERNERS. FOR PROOF, LOOK AT MY GREEN EYES.

SO THE FATHER OF THE SHAH WANTED TO DO THE SAME.



BUT HE WASN'T EDUCATED LIKE GANDHI, WHO WAS A LAWYER..



...NOR WAS HE A LEADER OF MEN LIKE ATATURK, WHO WAS A GENERAL.



HE WAS AN ILLITERATE LOW-RANKING OFFICER.



A BLESSING FOR THE VERY INFLUENTIAL BRITISH WHO SOON LEARNED OF HIS PROJECTS.



THE COUNTRY IS RICH!

AND THE BOLSHEVIKS ARE NEAR.

WHAT'S THAT SOLDIER'S NAME AGAIN?

REZA! WE SHOULD GO MEET HIM.

IMMEDIATELY! PERSIA IS FULL OF OIL!

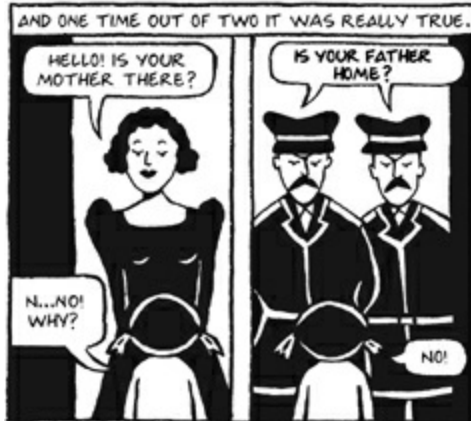














# PERSEPOLIS





TO SURVIVE I TOOK IN SEWING AND WITH LEFTOVER MATERIAL, I MADE CLOTHES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY.

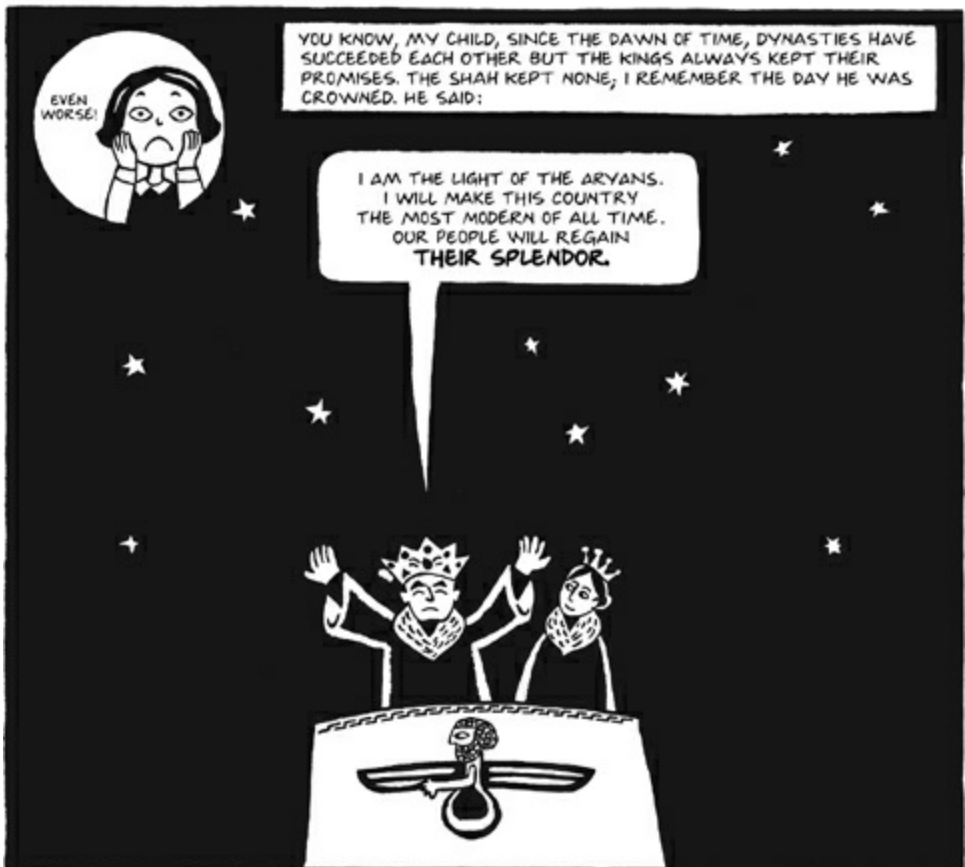


LOOK HOW WELL DRESSED WE ALL ARE IN THIS PHOTO.



WHY ISN'T GRANDPA THERE? WAS HE IN PRISON?

YES, THE FATHER OF THE SHAH WAS VERY TOUGH BUT HIS SON WAS TEN TIMES WORSE.



EVEN WORSE!

YOU KNOW, MY CHILD, SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME, DYNASTIES HAVE SUCCEEDED EACH OTHER BUT THE KINGS ALWAYS KEPT THEIR PROMISES. THE SHAH KEPT NONE, I REMEMBER THE DAY HE WAS CROWNED. HE SAID:

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE ARYANS.  
I WILL MAKE THIS COUNTRY  
THE MOST MODERN OF ALL TIME.  
OUR PEOPLE WILL REGAIN  
**THEIR SPLENDOR.**



HE EVEN WENT TO THE GRAVE OF CYRUS THE GREAT, WHO RULED OVER THE ANCIENT WORLD.

CYRUS, REST IN PEACE, WE ARE LOOKING AFTER PERSIA.



ALL THE COUNTRY'S MONEY WENT INTO RIDICULOUS CELEBRATIONS OF THE 2500 YEARS OF DYNASTY AND OTHER FRIVOLITIES... ALL OF THIS TO IMPRESS HEADS OF STATE; THE POPULATION COULDN'T HAVE CARED LESS.



I AM SO HAPPY THAT THERE IS FINALLY A REVOLUTION BECAUSE THE SHAH...

I'M HUNGRY!



I BOUGHT YOU SOME BOOKS. YOU WILL SEE WHY THE PEOPLE ARE REVOLTING.

SHE WON'T TELL ME ABOUT GRANDPA.





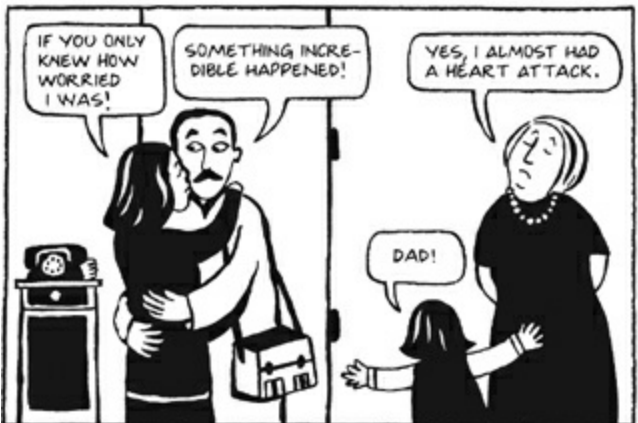
HE TOOK PHOTOS EVERY DAY. IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. HE HAD EVEN BEEN ARRESTED ONCE BUT ESCAPED AT THE LAST MINUTE.



WE WAITED FOR HIM FOR HOURS. THERE WAS THE SAME SILENCE AS BEFORE A STORM.



I THOUGHT THAT MY FATHER WAS DEAD, THAT THEY HAD SHOT HIM.





TODAY I WENT TO REY HOSPITAL WITH MY CAMERA.



PEOPLE CAME OUT CARRYING THE BODY OF A YOUNG MAN KILLED BY THE ARMY. HE WAS HONORED LIKE A MARTYR. A CROWD GATHERED TO TAKE HIM TO THE BAHESHTE ZAHRA CEMETERY.



THEN THERE WAS ANOTHER CADAVER, AN OLD MAN CARRIED OUT ON A STRETCHER. THOSE WHO DIDN'T FOLLOW THE FIRST ONE WENT OVER TO THE OLD MAN, SHOUTING REVOLUTIONARY SLOGANS AND CALLING HIM A HERO.



WELL, I WAS TAKING MY PHOTOS WHEN I NOTICED AN OLD WOMAN NEXT TO ME. I UNDERSTOOD THAT SHE WAS THE WIDOW OF THE VICTIM. I HAD SEEN HER LEAVE THE HOSPITAL WITH THE BODY.



WHAT? WHAT IS IT?

STOP IT!

WHO ARE YOU?

HIS WIDOW!



ARE YOU A ROYALIST?

NO, BUT MY HUSBAND DIED OF CANCER...







# THE LETTER

I'D NEVER READ AS MUCH AS I DID DURING THAT PERIOD.

MY FAVORITE AUTHOR WAS ALI ASHRAF DARVISHIAN, A KIND OF LOCAL CHARLES DICKENS. I WENT TO HIS CLANDESTINE BOOK-SIGNING WITH MY MOTHER.

FER ME FRIEND KOUROSH.

WHY DOES HE SPEAK LIKE THAT?

IT'S JUST HIS KURDISH ACCENT.

HE TOLD SAD BUT TRUE STORIES: REZA BECAME A PORTER AT THE AGE OF TEN.

LEILA WOVE CARPETS AT AGE FIVE.

HASSAN, THREE YEARS OLD, CLEANED CAR WINDOWS.

GET DOWN FROM THERE, STUPID!

I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHY I FELT ASHAMED TO SIT IN MY FATHER'S CADILLAC.

THE REASON FOR MY SHAME AND FOR THE REVOLUTION IS THE SAME: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOCIAL CLASSES.

BUT NOW THAT I THINK OF IT... WE HAVE A MAID AT HOME !!!



AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION, IN 1978, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NEIGHBOR'S SON. SHE WAS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD.



CAN YOU HELP ME LACE MY SHOES?

EVERY NIGHT THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER FROM THE WINDOW OF MY ROOM.



UNTIL THE DAY HE SLIPPED HER A LETTER.



LIKE MOST PEASANTS, SHE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO READ AND WRITE ...



CAN YOU READ ME MY LETTER?

WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME IN EXCHANGE?

MY MOTHER HAD TRIED TO TEACH HER BUT APPARENTLY SHE WAS NOT VERY TALENTED.



SO LET'S REPEAT. M AS IN...

CARROT!

SO I WROTE THE LETTERS FOR HER. ONE EACH WEEK FOR SIX MONTHS.



MY DEAR HOSSEIN, I MISS YOU A LOT. IT HAS BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE I SAW YOU AT THE WINDOW. I OFTEN TALK ABOUT YOU TO MY SISTER.

WHICH SISTER?

YOU!

THE LETTER FROM THE BOY

I WAS VERY DEVOTED.

MEHRI HAD A REAL SISTER, ONE YEAR YOUNGER, WHO WORKED AT MY UNCLE'S HOUSE.

YOU KNOW, I HAVE A FIANCE.

OH REALLY, WHO?



AFTER A FEW VISITS, SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM TOO.



HER JEALOUSY WAS MORE THAN SHE COULD BEAR AND SHE TOLD MEHRI'S STORY TO MY UNCLE, WHO TOLD IT TO MY GRANDMA, WHO TOLD IT TO MY MOM. THAT IS HOW THE STORY REACHED MY FATHER...



...WHO DECIDED TO CLARIFY THE SITUATION.

WHO'S THERE?

I AM YOUR NEIGHBOR. I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FEW WORDS WITH YOUR SON.













WE HAD DEMONSTRATED ON THE VERY DAY WE SHOULDN'T HAVE: ON "BLACK FRIDAY." THAT DAY THERE WERE SO MANY KILLED IN ONE OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS THAT A RUMOR SPREAD THAT ISRAELI SOLDIERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SLAUGHTER.



BUT IN FACT IT WAS REALLY OUR OWN WHO HAD ATTACKED US.



# THE PARTY

AFTER BLACK FRIDAY, THERE WAS ONE MASSACRE AFTER ANOTHER. MANY PEOPLE WERE KILLED.

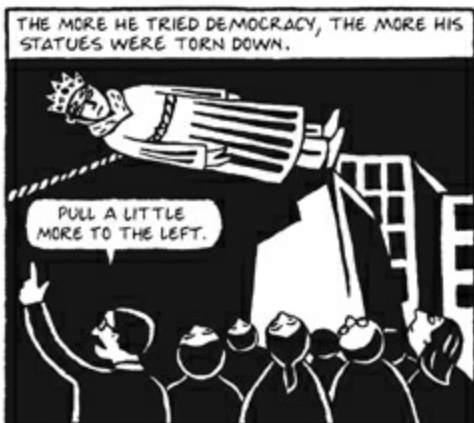
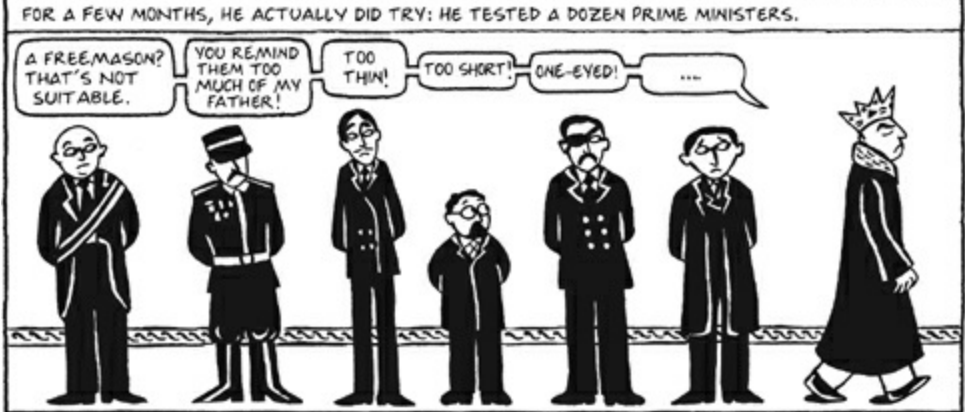


THE END OF THE SHAH'S REIGN WAS NEAR.



ONE DAY HE MADE A DECLARATION ON TV.





THE DAY HE LEFT, THE COUNTRY HAD THE BIGGEST CELEBRATION OF ITS ENTIRE HISTORY.





AFTER ALL THIS JOY, A MAJOR MISFORTUNE TOOK PLACE: THE SCHOOLS, CLOSED DURING THIS PERIOD, REOPENED AND...



CHILDREN, TEAR OUT ALL THE PHOTOS OF THE SHAH FROM YOUR BOOKS.

BUT SHE WAS THE ONE WHO TOLD US THAT THE SHAH WAS CHOSEN BY GOD!



TEACHER! SHE SAYS THAT THE SHAH WAS CHOSEN BY GOD!!!



SATRAPI! YOU SHOULDN'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT. STAND IN THE CORNER!

THESE STRANGE PHENOMENA WERE EVERYWHERE.



HELLO DEAR NEIGHBORS.

HELLO.

HELLO! ALL THOSE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE REALLY TIRING BUT WE FINALLY SUCCEEDED.

LOOK! A BULLET ALMOST HIT MY WIFE'S CHEEK. LIBERTY IS PRICELESS.



OH!



WHAT NERVE! SHE ALWAYS HAD THAT NASTY SPOT. IF WE WEREN'T NEIGHBORS, HE WOULD HAVE SAID SHE'S A MARTYR RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

IT IS NOT IMPORTANT.



THE BATTLE WAS OVER FOR OUR PARENTS BUT NOT FOR US.

MY FATHER SAYS RAMIN'S FATHER WAS IN THE SAVAK\*. HE KILLED A MILLION PEOPLE.

A MILLION?

\* SECRET POLICE OF THE SHAH'S REGIME.











# THE HEROES

THE POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE LIBERATED A FEW DAYS LATER. THERE WERE 3000 OF THEM.



WE KNEW TWO OF THEM.



SIAMAK JARI  
 BORN  
 FEBRUARY 20, 1945  
 IN LURISTAN  
 PROFESSION:  
 JOURNALIST  
 CRIME: WROTE  
 SUBVERSIVE ARTICLES  
 IN THE KEYHAN  
 DATE OF IMPRISONMENT:  
 JULY 1973  
 RELEASED: MARCH 1979  
 POLITICAL CONVICTION:  
 COMMUNIST



MOHSEN SHAKIBA  
 BORN  
 NOVEMBER 22, 1947  
 IN RACHT  
 PROFESSION:  
 REVOLUTIONARY  
 CRIME:  
 REVOLUTIONARY  
 DATE OF IMPRISONMENT:  
 APRIL 1971  
 RELEASED: MARCH 1979  
 POLITICAL CONVICTION:  
 COMMUNIST









THEY WHIPPED ME WITH THICK ELECTRIC CABLES SO MUCH THAT THIS LOOKS LIKE ANYTHING BUT A FOOT.



NOT TO MENTION PUTTING OUT THEIR CIGARETTES ON OUR BACKS AND THIGHS.



MY PARENTS WERE SO SHOCKED... THAT THEY FORGOT TO SPARE ME THIS EXPERIENCE...



ANY NEWS OF AHMADI?

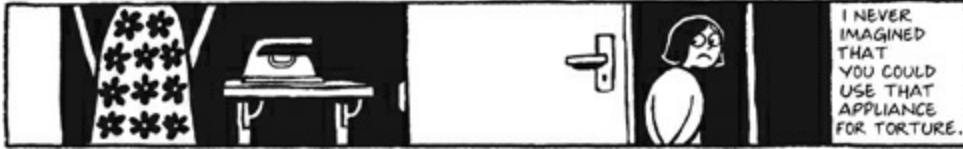
AHMADI... AHMADI WAS ASSASSINATED. AS A MEMBER OF THE GUERRILLAS, HE SUFFERED HELL. HE ALWAYS HAD CYANIDE ON HIM IN CASE HE WAS ARRESTED, BUT HE WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND UNFORTUNATELY HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO USE IT... SO HE SUFFERED THE WORST TORTURE...



HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS?

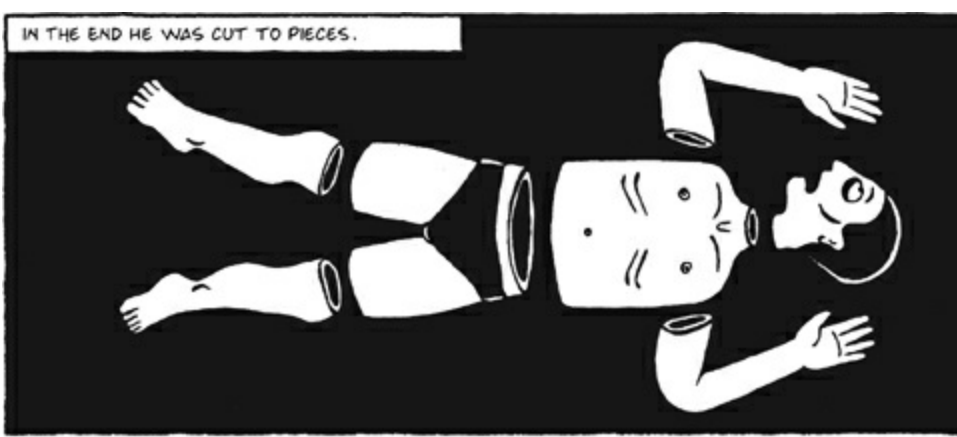
CONFESS! WHERE ARE THE OTHERS!

THEY BURNED HIM WITH AN IRON.



I NEVER IMAGINED THAT YOU COULD USE THAT APPLIANCE FOR TORTURE.

IN THE END HE WAS CUT TO PIECES.







# MOSCOW







I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING... BUT THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO...THEY ARRESTED HIM AND I RAN AWAY.



WHAT A STORY!

FOR DAYS AND DAYS I WALKED THROUGH THE FALLING SNOW. I CROSSED THE ALBORZ MOUNTAINS TO FIND REFUGE AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE IN ASTARA.



I WAS HUNGRY, I WAS COLD, BUT I CONTINUED.



I WAS NEARLY DEAD WHEN I ARRIVED.



BANG!  
BANG!  
BANG!



MY GOD!  
ANDOSH!!!



WHAT'S GOING ON?  
WHO'S BOTHERING US  
AT THIS HOUR?

COME  
QUICKLY!  
IT'S OUR  
SON ANDOSH!  
HE HAS  
FAINTED!



WHAT IS HE  
DOING HERE?  
WHY DIDN'T HE  
STAY WITH HIS  
NICE UNCLE?







AFTER THE SEPARATION, I FELT VERY LONELY. I MISSED MY COUNTRY, MY PARENTS, MY BROTHERS. I DREAMT ABOUT THEM OFTEN.



I DECIDED TO GO HOME. I GOT A FALSE PASSPORT AND DISGUISED MYSELF.



I GUESS I WASN'T VERY CONVINCING. THEY SOON RECOGNIZED ME.



THEY PUT ME IN PRISON FOR NINE YEARS.



THEY SAY YOU WERE TORTURED TERRIBLY, LIKE SIAMAK, LALY'S FATHER.



NO, HE TOLD IT TO MOM AND I HEARD HIM.



I TELL YOU ALL THIS BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW. OUR FAMILY MEMORY MUST NOT BE LOST. EVEN IF IT'S NOT EASY FOR YOU, EVEN IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT ALL.







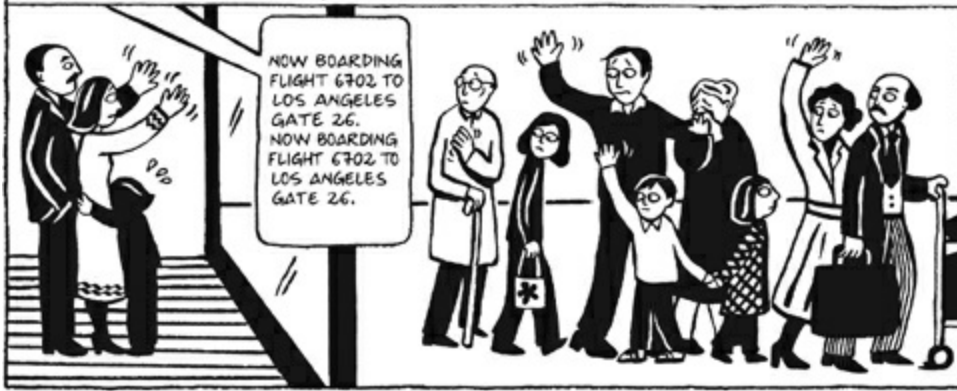
# THE SHEEP







AFTER MY FRIEND'S DEPARTURE, A GOOD PART OF MY FAMILY ALSO LEFT THE COUNTRY.







AND THAT IS HOW ALL THE FORMER REVOLUTIONARIES BECAME THE SWORN ENEMIES OF THE REPUBLIC.

WASN'T ANOOSH GOING TO PICK ME UP?

WHAT? WASN'T HE SUPPOSED TO COME?

WELL...

YES?

HE WENT BACK TO MOSCOW.

OH NO! THAT OLD TALE ABOUT BEING ON A TRIP HAD COME BACK...

HE HAD TO LEAVE QUICKLY... HIS WIFE CALLED HIM. HE ASKED ME TO TELL YOU GOODBYE...

HE DOESN'T EVEN TALK TO HIS WIFE.

DARLING! DID YOU HAVE A GOOD DAY AT SCHOOL?

YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.

WHERE IS ANOOSH?

DON'T YOU WANT TO EAT A LITTLE?

I'M NOT HUNGRY.

WHY DIDN'T HE STAY TO SAY GOODBYE TO ME?

HE WAS IN A HURRY, A BIG HURRY.









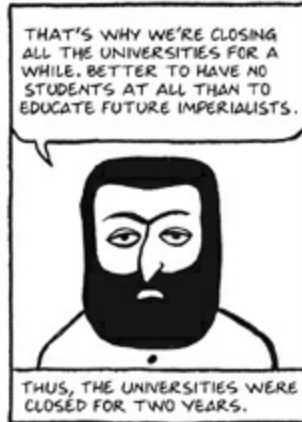
AND SO I WAS LOST, WITHOUT ANY BEARINGS... WHAT COULD BE WORSE THAN THAT?

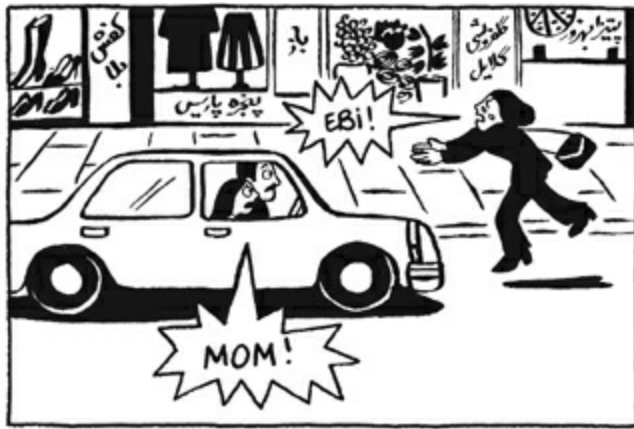


IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.

# THE TRIP







IN NO TIME, THE WAY PEOPLE DRESSED BECAME AN IDEOLOGICAL SIGN THERE WERE TWO KINDS OF WOMEN.

THE FUNDAMENTALIST WOMAN



THE MODERN WOMAN



YOU SHOWED YOUR OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME BY LETTING A FEW STRANDS OF HAIR SHOW.

THERE WERE ALSO TWO SORTS OF MEN.

THE FUNDAMENTALIST MAN



THE PROGRESSIVE MAN



ISLAM IS MORE OR LESS AGAINST SHAVING.

BUT LET'S BE FAIR. IF WOMEN FACED PRISON WHEN THEY REFUSED TO WEAR THE VEIL, IT WAS ALSO FORBIDDEN FOR MEN TO WEAR NECKTIES (THAT DREADED SYMBOL OF THE WEST). AND IF WOMEN'S HAIR GOT MEN EXCITED, THE SAME THING COULD BE SAID OF MEN'S BARE ARMS. AND SO, WEARING SHORT-SLEEVED SHIRTS WAS ALSO FORBIDDEN.



THERE WAS A KIND OF JUSTICE, AFTER ALL.

IT WASN'T ONLY THE GOVERNMENT THAT CHANGED. ORDINARY PEOPLE CHANGED TOO.



LOOK AT HER! LAST YEAR SHE WAS WEARING A MINISKIRT, SHOWING OFF HER BEEFY THIGHS TO THE WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD. AND NOW MADAME IS WEARING A CHADOR. IT SUITS HER BETTER, I GUESS.

AS FOR HER FUNDAMENTALIST HUSBAND WHO DRANK HIMSELF INTO A STUPOR EVERY NIGHT, NOW HE USES MOUTHWASH EVERY TIME HE UTTERS THE WORD "ALCOHOL."



AND THEIR SON SAYS HE PRAYS EVERY DAY!

IF ANYONE EVER ASKS YOU WHAT YOU DO DURING THE DAY, SAY YOU PRAY, YOU UNDERSTAND??



OK...

AT FIRST, IT WAS A LITTLE HARD, BUT I LEARNED TO LIE QUICKLY.



I PRAY FIVE TIMES A DAY.

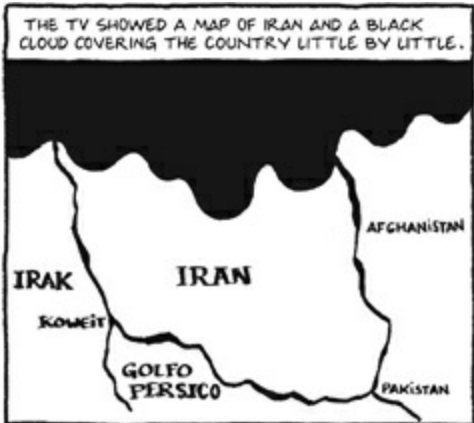
ME? TEN OR ELEVEN TIMES... SOMETIMES TWELVE.



THINGS GOT WORSE FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT. IN SEPTEMBER 1980, MY PARENTS ABRUPTLY PLANNED A VACATION. I THINK THEY REALIZED THAT SOON SUCH THINGS WOULD NO LONGER BE POSSIBLE. AS IT HAPPENED, THEY WERE RIGHT. AND SO WE WENT TO ITALY AND SPAIN FOR THREE WEEKS...



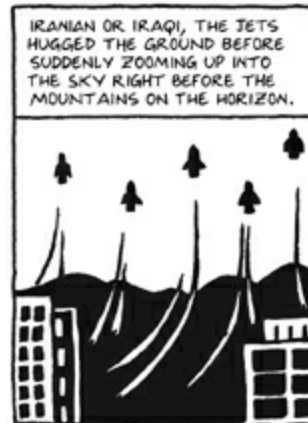
...IT WAS WONDERFUL.







# THE F-14s

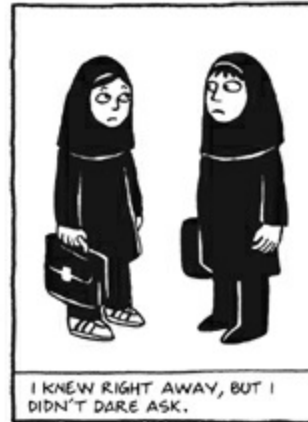














I WROTE FOUR PAGES ON THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT ENTITLED "THE ARAB CONQUEST AND OUR WAR."



I WAS VERY PROUD OF MYSELF.



...THIS WAR IS THE SAME AS THE ONE 1400 YEARS AGO...

BUT THE TEACHER DIDN'T SEEM TOO IMPRESSED.



THAT'S PRETTY GOOD. NOW, PARDISSE, COME TO THE BLACKBOARD.



...PARDISSE'S REPORT WAS BY FAR THE BEST. IT WAS A LETTER TO HER FATHER IN WHICH SHE PROMISED TO TAKE CARE OF HER MOTHER AND LITTLE BROTHER.



REST IN PEACE, DAD.



AT RECESS, I TRIED TO CONSOLE HER...

YOUR FATHER ACTED LIKE A GENUINE HERO, YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF HIM!



I WISH HE WERE ALIVE AND IN JAIL RATHER THAN DEAD AND A HERO.

THOSE WERE HER EXACT WORDS TO ME.



# THE JEWELS

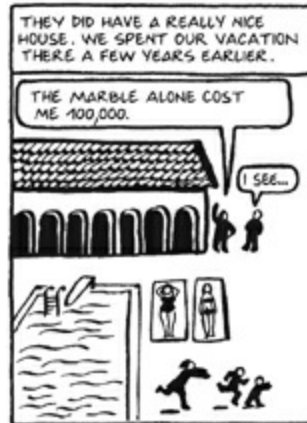






AFTER ABADAN, EVERY BORDER TOWN WAS TARGETED BY BOMBERS. MOST OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THOSE AREAS HAD TO FLEE NORTHWARD, FAR FROM THE IRAQI MISSILES.

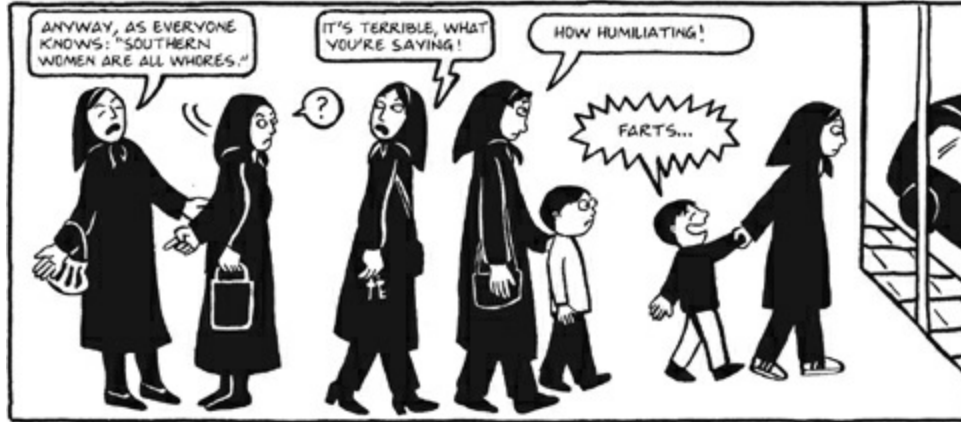






MALI AND HER FAMILY SPENT A WEEK WITH US. THAT'S HOW LONG IT TOOK TO SELL THE JEWELRY AND START OVER AGAIN. MALI'S MOTHER WAS BITTER AND HARD TO DEAL WITH (AND DEAF). BUT THEY WERE HAPPY AT OUR PLACE. THEN, ONE DAY, WE WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.







# THE KEY

THE IRAQI ARMY HAD CONQUERED THE CITY OF KHORRAMSHAHR. THEIR ARMS WERE MODERN, BUT WHERE IRAQ HAD QUALITY, WE HAD QUANTITY. COMPARED TO IRAQ, IRAN HAD A HUGE RESERVOIR OF POTENTIAL SOLDIERS. THE NUMBER OF WAR MARTYRS EMPHASIZED THAT DIFFERENCE.



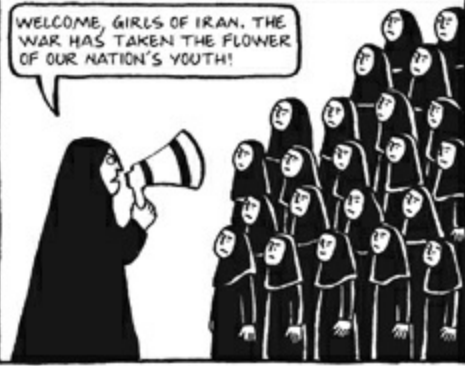


I AGREED WITH MY MOTHER. I TOO TRIED TO THINK ONLY OF LIFE. HOWEVER, IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY: AT SCHOOL, THEY LINED US UP TWICE A DAY TO MOURN THE WAR DEAD. THEY PUT ON FUNERAL MARCHES, AND WE HAD TO BEAT OUR BREASTS.



I REMEMBER MY INITIATION. IT WAS THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS AFTER SUMMER VACATION.

WELCOME, GIRLS OF IRAN. THE WAR HAS TAKEN THE FLOWER OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH!



THEN THE LOUDSPEAKERS STARTED TO SING.

BABABABABAJ  
HEY TROOPS OF...  
BE READY,  
BE READY



LET'S GO CHILDREN, ON THE HEART!

WHACK!  
WHACK!



AND ALL TOGETHER, WE BEGAN THE SESSION.



IT WASN'T AS BAD AS ONE MIGHT THINK. WE'D SEEN IT BEFORE.

HITTING YOURSELF IS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S RITUALS. DURING CERTAIN RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, SOME PEOPLE FLAGELLATED THEMSELVES BRUTALLY.



SOMETIMES EVEN WITH CHAINS.



IT COULD GO VERY FAR.



SOMETIMES IT WAS CONSIDERED A MACHO THING.

AFTER A LITTLE WHILE, NO ONE TOOK THE TORTURE SESSIONS SERIOUSLY ANYMORE. AS FOR ME, I IMMEDIATELY STARTED MAKING FUN OF THEM.



EVERY SITUATION OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LAUGHS: LIKE WHEN WE HAD TO KNIT WINTER HOODS FOR THE SOLDIERS...



...OR WHEN WE HAD TO DECORATE THE CLASSROOM FOR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION...



I THINK THAT THE REASON WE WERE SO REBELLIOUS WAS THAT OUR GENERATION HAD KNOWN SECULAR SCHOOLS. OBVIOUSLY, THEY CALLED OUR PARENTS IN.



GIRLS HAD TO MAKE WINTER HOODS FOR THE SOLDIERS, BUT BOYS HAD TO PREPARE TO BECOME SOLDIERS.



HI MRS. NASRINE. YOU DON'T LOOK WELL.

MRS. NASRINE WAS OUR MAID.

SO, TELL ME, WHAT'S WRONG?



YOU OK?

NO, MY CHILD. I'M NOT OK.



YOU SEE THIS?

IT'S A PLASTIC KEY PAINTED GOLD.



THEY GAVE THIS TO MY SON AT SCHOOL. THEY TOLD THE BOYS THAT IF THEY WENT TO WAR AND WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO DIE, THIS KEY WOULD GET THEM INTO HEAVEN.



MY GOD!

IT'S OK, CRY, LET YOURSELF GO.

I'LL MAKE SOME TEA.



I'VE SUFFERED SO MUCH. I RAISED MY FIVE KIDS WITH THE WATER OF MY TEARS, NOW THEY WANT TO TRADE THIS KEY FOR MY OLDEST SON...



ALL MY LIFE, I'VE BEEN FAITHFUL TO THE RELIGION. IF IT'S COME TO THIS... WELL, I CAN'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING ANYMORE...

AND THE CHILD, WHAT DOES HE SAY?







THE KEY TO PARADISE WAS FOR POOR PEOPLE. THOUSANDS OF YOUNG KIDS, PROMISED A BETTER LIFE, EXPLODED ON THE MINEFIELDS WITH THEIR KEYS AROUND THEIR NECKS.



MRS. NASRINE'S SON MANAGED TO AVOID THAT FATE, BUT LOTS OF OTHER KIDS FROM HIS NEIGHBORHOOD DIDN'T.

MEANWHILE, I GOT TO GO TO MY FIRST PARTY. NOT ONLY DID MY MOM LET ME GO, SHE ALSO KNITTED ME A SWEATER FULL OF HOLES AND MADE ME A NECKLACE WITH CHAINS AND NAILS. PUNK ROCK WAS IN.



I WAS LOOKING SHARP.





# THE WINE

AFTER THE BORDER TOWNS, TEHRAN BECAME THE BOMBERS' MAIN TARGET. TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE IN OUR BUILDING, WE TURNED THE BASEMENT INTO A SHELTER. EVERY TIME THE SIREN RANG OUT, EVERYONE WOULD RUN DOWNSTAIRS...



PUT YOUR CIGARETTE OUT. THEY SAY THAT THE GLOW OF A CIGARETTE IS THE EASIEST THING TO SEE FROM THE SKY.

BUT WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT HERE!





IT WASN'T JUST THE BASEMENTS. THE INTERIORS OF HOMES ALSO CHANGED. BUT IT WASN'T ONLY BECAUSE OF THE IRAQI PLANES.

MOM, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

THE MASKING TAPE IS TO PROTECT AGAINST FLYING GLASS DURING A BOMBING AND THE BLACK CURTAINS ARE TO PROTECT US FROM OUR NEIGHBORS.

WHAT NEIGHBORS?



ACROSS THE STREET, THEY'RE TOTALLY DEVOTED TO THE NEW REGIME. A GLIMPSE OF WHAT GOES ON IN OUR HOUSE WOULD BE ENOUGH FOR THEM TO DENOUNCE US!



YOU KNOW TIMOOSH'S DAD?

TIMOOSH, YEAH. WHAT ABOUT HIM?



THE OTHER NIGHT, TWO GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION PATROLS PAID THEM A VISIT.



SOMEONE TOLD US YOU WERE PLANNING A PARTY, YOU KNOW THAT IT'S STRICTLY FORBIDDEN!



...THEY FOUND RECORDS AND VIDEO-CASSETTES AT THEIR PLACE. A DECK OF CARDS, A CHESS SET. IN OTHER WORDS, EVERYTHING THAT'S BANNED.



GET YOUR ASS IN THE CAR. MOVE!

EXCUSE ME, SIR.

SHUT UP, SLUT!

...IT EARNED HIM SEVENTY-FIVE LASHES.



HIS WIFE CRIED SO MUCH THAT THEY FINALLY LET HER OFF WITH A HEFTY FINE. BUT HE CAN'T WALK ANYMORE...NOW YOU SEE WHY I'M PUTTING UP THE CURTAINS. WITH THE PARTIES WE HAVE ON THURSDAYS AND THE CARD GAMES ON MONDAYS, WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.



IN SPITE OF ALL THE DANGERS, THE PARTIES WENT ON. "WITHOUT THEM IT WOULDN'T BE PSYCHOLOGICALLY BEARABLE," SOME SAID. "WITHOUT PARTIES, WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST BURY OURSELVES NOW," ADDED THE OTHERS. MY UNCLE INVITED US TO HIS HOUSE TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF MY COUSIN. EVERYONE WAS THERE. EVEN GRANDMA WAS DANCING.



**DAMN!  
POWER OUTAGE!!**

**BE CAREFUL  
WHERE YOU  
STEP!!!**



AWWWW! NO MORE MUSIC!  
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!  
I'LL GO GET THE ZARB.



A ZARB IS A KIND OF DRUM. MY FATHER  
PLAYED IT VERY WELL LIKE A PRO.



WE HAD EVERYTHING. WELL,  
EVERYTHING THAT WAS FORBIDDEN.  
EVEN ALCOHOL, GALLONS OF IT.



MY UNCLE WAS THE VINTNER.  
HE HAD BUILT A GENUINE WINE-  
MAKING LAB IN HIS BASEMENT.



MRS. NASRINE, WHO WAS ALSO  
HIS CLEANING LADY, CRUSHED  
THE GRAPES.

GOD  
FORGIVE ME!  
GOD  
FORGIVE ME!

SUDDENLY, SIRENS STARTED TO WAIL...



...AND MY AUNT DID TOO.



HER MOTHER HAD ALREADY ABANDONED HER.



SINCE THAT DAY, I'VE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT THE SO-CALLED "MATERNAL INSTINCT."











# THE CIGARETTE

THE WAR HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR TWO YEARS. WE WERE USED TO IT. I WAS GROWING UP AND I EVEN HAD FRIENDS OLDER THAN ME.

YESTERDAY ON THE NEWS THEY SAID WE DESTROYED 13 IRAQI PLANES. RIGHT AFTER ON THE BBC, I HEARD THAT IN FACT THE IRAQIS HAD SHOT DOWN TWO OF OURS.

IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR. EVERY DAY THEY TELL US THAT WE'VE DESTROYED TEN PLANES AND FIVE TANKS. IF YOU START FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR, THAT MAKES SIX THOUSAND PLANES AND THREE THOUSAND TANKS DESTROYED. EVEN THE AMERICANS DON'T HAVE AN ARMY THIS BIG.

I GET IT. I'M GOING TO TELL MY DAD THAT ONE.

BRINGGGG...

HEY, THERE'S THE BELL. DON'T YOU HAVE CLASS?

NO, WE'VE GOT PHYSICAL EDUCATION BUT WE'RE NOT GOING. WE'RE GOING FOR BURGERS.

BURGERS?

THEY ALSO HAVE HOT DOGS.

ALL YOU NEEDED WAS SOME MONEY.

YEAH! AT KANSAS ON JORDAN AVENUE.

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. WE'LL CLIMB THE WALL.

THE WALL??!!

HA HA HA HA! !!  
HA HA HA!

IF I WANTED TO BE FRIENDS WITH 14-YEAR-OLDS, I HAD TO DO IT.

I WASN'T CHICKEN, SO I FOLLOWED THEM.

I HAD ALREADY BROKEN THE RULES ONCE BY GOING TO THE DEMONSTRATION IN '79. THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME.

JORDAN AVENUE WAS WHERE THE TEENAGERS FROM NORTH TEHRAN (THE NICE NEIGHBORHOODS) HUNG OUT. KANSAS WAS ITS TEMPLE.



IF SOME PUBLIC PLACES HAD SURVIVED THE REGIME'S REPRESSION, EITHER IT WAS TO LEAVE US A LITTLE FREE SPACE, OR ELSE IT WAS OUT OF IGNORANCE. PERSONALLY, THE LATTER THEORY SOUNDED MORE LIKELY: THEY PROBABLY HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT "KANSAS" WAS.



...IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, KIDS WERE TRYING TO LOOK HIP, EVEN UNDER RISK OF ARREST.

MY FRIENDS WEREN'T ACTUALLY THAT INTERESTED IN THE HAMBURGERS...



WE LET THE BOYS KNOW THAT THEY COULD FOLLOW US BY A FEW SIGNS.

FOLLOW THE OTHERS, I MEAN. I WAS TOO YOUNG TO INTEREST THEM.



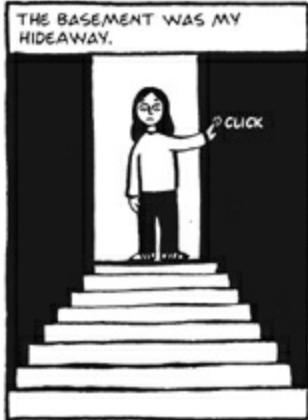
...THE SIRENS WENT OFF.



WE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT IF WE WERE IN THE STREET DURING A BOMBING, WE SHOULD LIE DOWN IN THE GUTTER FOR SAFETY.









\* A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ



SO WE  
PLUNGED  
DEEPER  
INTO  
WAR...



THE WALLS WERE SUDDENLY COVERED WITH BELLIGERENT SLOGANS.



THE ONE THAT STRUCK ME MOST BY ITS GORY IMAGERY WAS: "TO DIE A MARTYR IS TO INJECT BLOOD INTO THE VEINS OF SOCIETY."

THEY EVENTUALLY ADMITTED THAT THE SURVIVAL OF THE REGIME DEPENDED ON THE WAR.



WHEN I THINK WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED IT ALL... IT JUST MAKES ME SICK. A MILLION PEOPLE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.







# THE PASSPORT

JULY 1982. WE WERE AT MY AUNT'S PLACE. THE INTERNAL WAR HAD BECOME A BIGGER ISSUE THAN THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ. ANYONE SHOWING THE SLIGHTEST RESISTANCE TO THE REGIME WAS PERSECUTED.



THERE MUST BE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE OPPOSITION IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. WE HEAR GUNSHOTS EVERY DAY.

TAHER, STOP SMOKING!



THE STRESS I GET FROM EVERY GUNSHOT I HEAR IS MUCH WORSE FOR ME THAN THE CIGARETTES.

SINCE HE HAD SENT HIS OLDEST SON TO HOLLAND, UNCLE TAHER HAD HAD TWO HEART ATTACKS. HE WAS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN TO SMOKE.



THE BUTCHER TOLD ME HE'S SEEN KIDS EXECUTED IN THE STREET WITHOUT EVEN HAVING BEEN JUDGED. THE SHAME OF IT.



WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, I'M GLAD THAT MY SON IS SAFELY ABROAD. BUT WITH THE BORDERS CLOSED, HOW AM I EVER GOING TO SEE HIM AGAIN?

THE BORDERS WERE CLOSED FOR THREE YEARS BETWEEN 1980 AND 1983.



HOW MANY TIMES DID I SAY TO MY WIFE, "COME ON, LET'S JOIN HIM." SHE DIDN'T WANT TO. SHE INVOKED HER COUNTRY, HER FAMILY, ETC, ETC.



ANYWAY, I'M ALREADY 59. BUT THOSE POOR 20-YEAR-OLDS WHO GET SLAUGHTERED. THEY KILL ME... THEY KILL ME!

MY UNCLE TAHER WAS SO SAD THAT IT HURT TO LOOK AT HIM. NO ONE DARED SAY A WORD.





UNCLE TAHER HAD JUST SUFFERED HIS THIRD HEART ATTACK. WE WERE OFF TO THE HOSPITAL.



RED CRESCENT TRUCKS WERE PULLED UP IN FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL, CALLING FOR PEOPLE TO GIVE BLOOD FOR THE WAR WOUNDED. THERE WERE SO MANY OF THEM.



I FELT BOTH ANGRY AND EMBARRASSED...

ONCE INSIDE THE HOSPITAL I FELT EVEN WORSE.





AFTER THE DIRECTOR, WE WENT TO SEE THE CHIEF OF STAFF, DR. FATHI.

MA'AM, WE WILL DO WHAT WE CAN. WE ARE TERRIBLY STRAPPED AT THE MOMENT.



LOOK IN THIS ROOM. THEY'RE ALL VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS!



THE GERMANS SELL CHEMICAL WEAPONS TO IRAN AND IRAQ. THE WOUNDED ARE THEN SENT TO GERMANY TO BE TREATED. VERITABLE HUMAN GUINEA PIGS.



WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS? I COULDN'T CARE LESS. I WANT MY HUSBAND TO GET WELL!

CALM DOWN



CALM DOWN, DEAR. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT. DON'T WORRY.



WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK!



WE WENT TO SEE AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MY FATHER'S, KHOSRO. HIS BROTHER AND MY UNCLE ANDOOSH WERE IN PRISON TOGETHER DURING THE REIGN OF THE SHAH.



EBI, THE BROTHER OF ANDOOSH? COME IN! COME IN!

SINCE THEY SHUT DOWN MY PUBLISHING COMPANY, I'VE BEEN PRINTING FAKE PASSPORTS. BIG SELLERS. YOU WANT ONE?



NOT ME, MY BROTHER-IN-LAW.

WHEN THEY LET HIM OUT, MY BROTHER STARTED GOING TO COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY DEMONSTRATIONS. HE TOLD ME THAT THE CHIEF OF THE NEW EXECUTIONERS WAS HIS TORTURER IN THE SHAH'S PRISON. HE SAID "KHOSRO, I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE." I MADE HIM A FAKE PASSPORT AND HE SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM IN SWEDEN.



LOOK, EBI, A WHOLE MONTH'S WORK, JUST FOR THE STAMP.



HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE TO MAKE A PASSPORT?

A WEEK.



CRR...



YOU CAN COME IN. THEY'RE FRIENDS.

THIS IS NILOUFAR. HER BROTHER WAS MY MESSENGER BOY. THEY ARE LOOKING ALL OVER FOR HER BECAUSE SHE'S A COMMUNIST. I LET HER STAY IN MY BASEMENT.



SHE'S EIGHTEEN, THE SAME AGE AS MY DAUGHTER, MANDANA.



KHOSRO'S DAUGHTER HAD LEFT WITH HER MOTHER RIGHT AFTER THE REVOLUTION.

THEY'VE BEEN SEARCHING THE HOUSES OF EVERYONE IN HER FAMILY. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE SHE'S SAFE.

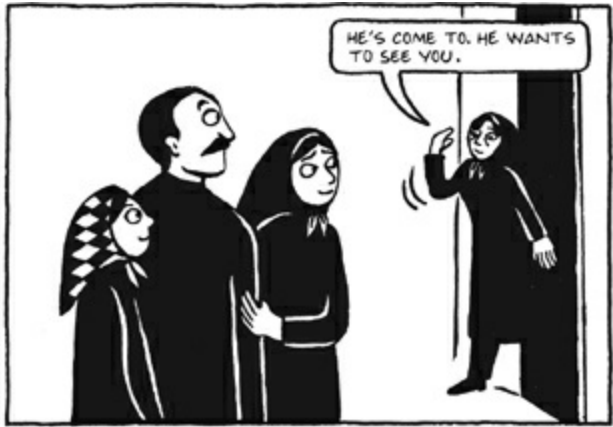


AFTER NEGOTIATING A PRICE, THE EQUIVALENT OF ABOUT \$200, KHOSRO AGREED TO MAKE A PASSPORT IN FIVE DAYS. WE WENT BACK TO THE HOSPITAL FEELING A LITTLE BETTER.



I SAW KHOSRO. HE CAN MAKE A PASSPORT FOR TAHER BY WEDNESDAY.

SO?



HE'S COME TO. HE WANTS TO SEE YOU.



SEE, IT'S NOT THE CIGARETTES THAT DID IT! IT WAS THAT DAMN GRENADE...

DON'T UPSET YOURSELF, TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.



LOOK AT HOW LITTLE MARJI IS GROWING UP. ONE DAY SHE'LL LEAVE AND YOU'LL SEE HOW HARD IT IS TO LOSE YOUR KIDS.



I HAVE ONLY ONE WISH, AND THAT'S TO SEE MY SON AGAIN, ONE LAST TIME.

TWO DAYS LATER, NILOUFAR, THE EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD COMMUNIST, WAS SPOTTED.



ARRESTED...



AND EXECUTED.



KHOSRO FOUND HIS HOUSE RANSACKED...



FLED ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS TO TURKEY...



AND SOUGHT ASYLUM WITH HIS BROTHER IN SWEDEN.



HE NEVER GOT TO MAKE THE PASSPORT.

THREE WEEKS AFTER THESE EVENTS, UNCLE TAHER WAS BURIED. HIS REAL PASSPORT ARRIVED THE SAME DAY...



...HE NEVER GOT TO SEE HIS SON...

# KIM WILDE





FIRST THING AFTER THEY GOT TO ISTANBUL, THEY WENT TO BUY THE POSTERS.











FOR A YEAR NOW, THE FOOD SHORTAGE HAD BEEN RESOLVED BY THE GROWTH OF THE BLACK MARKET. HOWEVER, FINDING TAPES WAS A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED. ON GANDHI AVENUE YOU COULD FIND THEM SOMETIMES.





AT THE COMMITTEE, THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO INFORM MY PARENTS. THEY COULD DETAIN ME FOR HOURS, OR FOR DAYS. I COULD BE WHIPPED. IN SHORT, ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN TO ME. IT WAS TIME FOR ACTION.

I'M SORRY MA'AM! I'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN...

GET IN THE CAR!



MA'AM, MY MOTHER'S DEAD. MY STEPMOTHER IS REALLY CRUEL AND IF I DON'T GO HOME RIGHT AWAY, SHE'LL KILL ME...



SHE'LL BURN ME WITH THE CLOTHES IRON!



SHE'LL MAKE MY FATHER PUT ME IN AN ORPHANAGE



MAYBE SHE BELIEVED ME, MAYBE SHE JUST PRETENDED TO. BUT, MIRACULOUSLY, SHE LET ME GO.

BACK HOME...

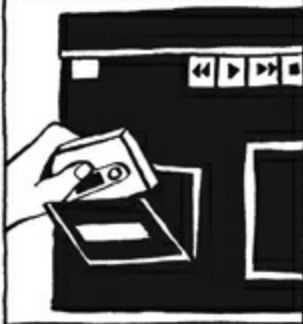
MARJI! WHAT HAPPENED? HAVE YOU BEEN CRYING?

NO MOM, I'M JUST TIRED. I'M GOING TO MY ROOM.



THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD TELL THE TRUTH. SHE NEVER WOULD HAVE LET ME GO OUT ALONE AGAIN.

I GOT OFF PRETTY EASY, CONSIDERING. THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION DIDN'T FIND MY TAPES.



♪ WE'RE THE KIDS IN AMERICA WHOAO ♪



TO EACH HIS OWN WAY OF CALMING DOWN.



 THE SHABBAT



MOM'S PESSIMISM SOON WON OUT OVER DAD'S OPTIMISM. IT TURNED OUT THAT THE IRAQIS DID HAVE MISSILES. THEY WERE CALLED "SCUDS" AND TEHRAN BECAME THEIR TARGET.



WHEN THE SIRENS WENT ON, IT MEANT WE HAD THREE MINUTES TO KNOW IF THE END HAD COME.



CONSIDERING THE DAMAGE THEY DO, WHETHER WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT OR ON THE ROOF, IT'S THE SAME THING.



THE THREE MINUTES SEEMED LIKE THREE DAYS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, I REALIZED JUST HOW MUCH DANGER WE WERE IN.



I DON'T WANT TO DIE!

YOU WON'T DEAR. I PROMISE YOU!



NOW THAT TEHRAN WAS UNDER ATTACK, MANY FLED. THE CITY WAS DESERTED. AS FOR US, WE STAYED. NOT JUST OUT OF FATALISM. IF THERE WAS TO BE A FUTURE, IN MY PARENTS' EYES, THAT FUTURE WAS LINKED TO MY FRENCH EDUCATION. AND TEHRAN WAS THE ONLY PLACE I COULD GET IT.



SOME PEOPLE, MORE CIRCUMSPECT, TOOK SHELTER IN THE BASEMENTS OF BIG HOTELS, WELL-KNOWN FOR THEIR SAFETY. APPARENTLY, THEIR REINFORCED CONCRETE STRUCTURES WERE BOMBPROOF.



ONE EXAMPLE WAS OUR NEIGHBORS, THE BABA-LEVYS. THEY WERE AMONG THE FEW JEWISH FAMILIES THAT HAD STAYED AFTER THE REVOLUTION. MR. BABA-LEVY SAID THEIR ANCESTORS HAD COME THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO, AND IRAN WAS THEIR HOME.



...THEIR DAUGHTER NEDA WAS A QUIET GIRL WHO DIDN'T PLAY MUCH, BUT WE WOULD TALK ABOUT ROMANCE FROM TIME TO TIME.

...ONE DAY A BLOND PRINCE WITH BLUE EYES WILL COME AND TAKE ME TO HIS CASTLE...

OH YEAH!  
ME TOO!



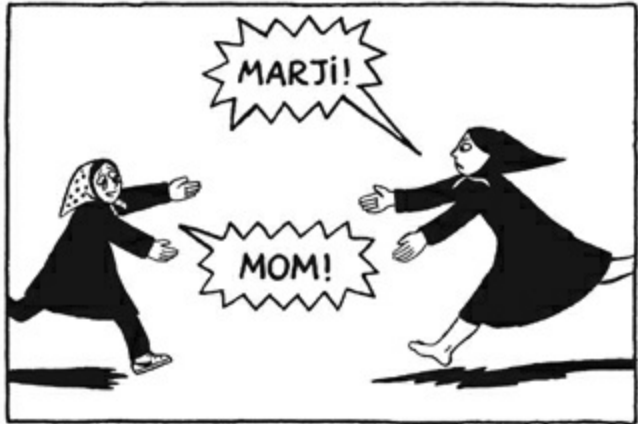
SO LIFE WENT ON...

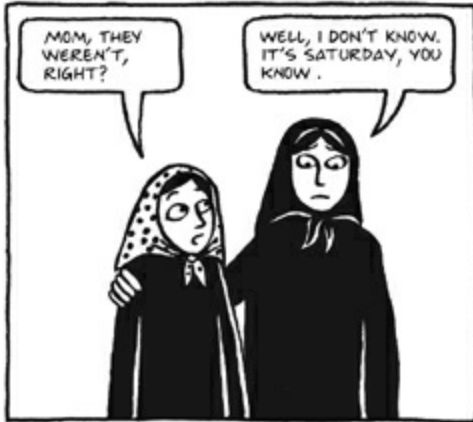




I DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK UP. I LOOKED AT MY TREMBLING LEGS. I COULDN'T GO FORWARD, LIKE IN A NIGHTMARE.

LET THEM BE ALIVE. LET THEM BE ALIVE. LET THEM...





WHEN WE WALKED PAST THE BABA-LEVY'S HOUSE, WHICH WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED, I COULD FEEL THAT SHE WAS DISCREETLY PULLING ME AWAY. SOMETHING TOLD ME THAT THE BABA-LEVYS HAD BEEN AT HOME. SOMETHING CAUGHT MY ATTENTION.



I SAW A TURQUOISE BRACELET. IT WAS NEDA'S. HER AUNT HAD GIVEN IT TO HER FOR HER FOURTEENTH BIRTHDAY...

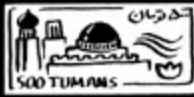


THE BRACELET WAS STILL ATTACHED TO... I DON'T KNOW WHAT...

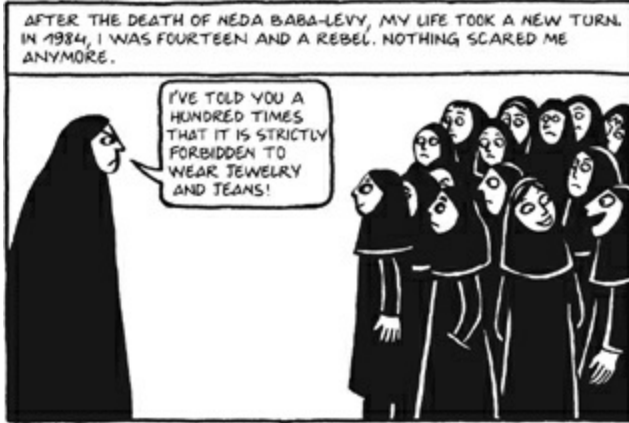


NO SCREAM IN THE WORLD COULD HAVE RELIEVED MY SUFFERING AND MY ANGER.





# THE DOWRY



AFTER I WAS EXPELLED, IT WAS A REAL STRUGGLE TO FIND ANOTHER SCHOOL THAT WOULD ACCEPT ME. HITTING THE PRINCIPAL WAS A VERITABLE CRIME. BUT THANKS TO MY AUNT, WHO KNEW SOME BUREAUCRATS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, THEY MANAGED TO PLACE ME IN ANOTHER SCHOOL. AND THERE...







BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT FOR SURE? MAYBE THEY JUST EXECUTED HER!



NO, YOUR MOTHER'S RIGHT. TRADITIONALLY, WHEN A GIRL GETS MARRIED, THE HUSBAND IS SUPPOSED TO PAY HER A DOWRY.



IF THE GIRL DIES, THE HUSBAND HAS TO GIVE THE DOWRY TO HER FAMILY.



THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WITH NILOUFAR. AFTER SHE WAS EXECUTED, TO MAKE SURE HER AWFUL FATE WAS UNDERSTOOD, THEY SENT 500 TUMANS\* TO HER PARENTS.

500 TUMANS FOR THE LIFE AND VIRGINITY OF AN INNOCENT GIRL.



I HAD NO IDEA.

\*EQUIVALENT TO \$5.00



ALL NIGHT LONG, I THOUGHT OF THAT PHRASE: "TO DIE A MARTYR IS TO INJECT BLOOD INTO THE VEINS OF SOCIETY." NILOUFAR WAS A REAL MARTYR, AND HER BLOOD CERTAINLY DID NOT FEED OUR SOCIETY'S VEINS.



ONE WEEK LATER ...

MARZI, CAN YOU COME HERE FOR A FEW MINUTES? WE WANT TO TALK TO YOU.



I WENT TO SEE THE PRINCIPAL TODAY. SHE ASSURED ME THAT SHE HAD NOT SENT A REPORT THIS TIME. BUT CONSIDERING THE PERSON YOU ARE AND THE EDUCATION YOU'VE RECEIVED, WE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU LEFT IRAN.

WHAT?



YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED TO SEND YOU TO AUSTRIA.

WHY AUSTRIA?



FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE IT'S EASIER TO GET AN AUSTRIAN VISA, AND SECOND BECAUSE MY BEST FRIEND LIVES IN VIENNA. DO YOU REMEMBER HER? ZOZO? SHERINE'S MOM?

YEAH, YEAH, BUT I DON'T SPEAK GERMAN!



THERE'S A FRENCH SCHOOL IN VIENNA. ONE OF THE BEST IN EUROPE!

AND WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO THERE?



YOU'RE GOING ON AHEAD OF US. WE HAVE SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF. WE'LL JOIN YOU A FEW MONTHS FROM NOW!



BUT I'M ONLY FOURTEEN! YOU TRUST ME?

YOU'RE FOURTEEN AND I KNOW HOW I BROUGHT YOU UP. ABOVE ALL, I TRUST YOUR EDUCATION.



I REPEATED WHAT THEY HAD TOLD ME OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD. I WAS PRETTY SURE THEY WEREN'T COMING TO VIENNA.



I STAYED UP ALL NIGHT AND WONDERED IF THE MOON SHONE AS BRIGHTLY IN VIENNA.



THE NEXT DAY I FILLED A JAR WITH SOIL FROM OUR GARDEN. IRANIAN SOIL.



I TOOK DOWN ALL OF MY POSTERS.



I INVITED MY GIRLFRIENDS OVER TO SAY GOODBYE.



HERE. I'M GIVING YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS THINGS, SO THAT YOU WON'T FORGET ME.



I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH THEY LOVED ME.



AND I UNDERSTOOD HOW IMPORTANT THEY WERE TO ME.

ON THE EVE OF MY DEPARTURE, MY GRANDMOTHER CAME TO SPEND THE NIGHT AT OUR HOUSE.

CAN I SLEEP WITH YOU? THAT'S WHY I'M HERE!



I WATCHED MY GRANDMA UNDRESS. EACH MORNING, SHE PICKED JASMINE FLOWERS TO PUT IN HER BRA SO THAT SHE WOULD SMELL NICE. WHEN SHE UNDRESSED, YOU COULD SEE THE FLOWERS FALL FROM HER BREASTS.



IT WAS SOMETHING TO SEE

GRANDMA, HOW DO YOU HAVE SUCH ROUND BREASTS AT YOUR AGE?

EVERY MORNING AND NIGHT, I SOAK THEM IN A BOWL OF ICE WATER FOR TEN MINUTES.



SHE ACTUALLY DID, AND I KNEW IT. I JUST WANTED TO HEAR HER SAY IT.

I'LL MISS YOU.

OH, I'LL COME SEE YOU.



SHE TOO WAS LYING TO ME.

LISTEN, I DON'T WANT TO PREACH, BUT LET ME GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE THAT WILL ALWAYS HELP YOU.



IN LIFE YOU'LL MEET A LOT OF JERKS. IF THEY HURT YOU, TELL YOURSELF THAT IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE STUPID. THAT WILL HELP KEEP YOU FROM REACTING TO THEIR CRUELTY. BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING WORSE THAN BITTERNESS AND VENGEANCE... ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DIGNITY AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.



I SMELLED MY GRANDMA'S BOSOM. IT SMELLED GOOD. I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT SMELL.







I COULDN'T BEAR LOOKING AT THEM THERE BEHIND THE GLASS.  
NOTHING'S WORSE THAN SAYING GOODBYE. IT'S A LITTLE LIKE DYING.



I COULDN'T JUST GO.



I TURNED AROUND TO SEE THEM  
ONE LAST TIME.



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO JUST GO.



# THE SOUP

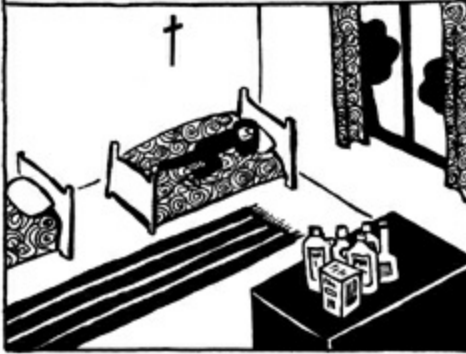
NOVEMBER 1984. I AM IN AUSTRIA. I HAD COME HERE WITH THE IDEA OF LEAVING A RELIGIOUS IRAN FOR AN OPEN AND SECULAR EUROPE AND THAT ZOZO, MY MOTHER'S BEST FRIEND, WOULD LOVE ME LIKE HER OWN DAUGHTER.



ONLY HERE I AM! SHE LEFT ME AT A BOARDING HOUSE RUN BY NUNS.



MY ROOM WAS SMALL, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I HAD TO SHARE MY SPACE WITH ANOTHER PERSON.



I HADN'T MET HER YET. I ONLY KNEW THAT HER NAME WAS LUCIA.



I WONDERED WHAT SHE WOULD LOOK LIKE.



EUROPE, THE ALPS, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA... FROM THIS I DEDUCED THAT SHE WOULD BE LIKE HEIDI.



THIS WAS OKAY WITH ME. I REALLY LIKED HEIDI.

I HAD BEEN IN VIENNA ELEVEN DAYS. ZOZO AND HER DAUGHTER SHIRIN, WHOM I HAD KNOWN DURING MY CHILDHOOD, HAD COME TO GET ME AT THE AIRPORT.



SHIRIN WAS AS I REMEMBERED HER. HOWEVER, I DETECTED SOMETHING UNKIND IN THE LOOK HER MOTHER GAVE ME.



YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH. WELL, YES! NOW YOU HAVE LONG HAIR!!

YOU HAVEN'T EITHER. YOU'RE THE SAME.



IT'S GOING TO BE COOL TO GO TO SCHOOL WITHOUT A VEIL, TO NOT HAVE TO BEAT ONESELF EVERY DAY FOR THE WAR MARTYRS...



HAVE YOU SEEN THESE? THEY'RE REALLY FASHIONABLE. THEY'RE TO PROTECT YOUR EARS FROM THE COLD. DO YOU WANT TO TRY THEM ON?

NO THANKS!



THIS IS MY RASPBERRY-SCENTED PEN, BUT I HAVE STRAWBERRY AND BLACKBERRY ONES, TOO.



DO YOU WANT TO PUT ON SOME LIPSTICK? I LOVE PEARLY PINK. IT'S VERY IN!!!

HMPHH...



WHAT A TRAITOR! WHILE PEOPLE WERE DYING IN OUR COUNTRY, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME ABOUT TRIVIAL THINGS.



... I LIVED WITH THEM FOR TEN DAYS. THERE WERE FIGHTS DAILY.

HI SWEETHEART! HERE, THESE ARE FOR YOU!



YOU INCOMPETENT IDIOT! I WORK MYSELF TO THE BONE SO THAT YOU CAN THROW MONEY AWAY ON FLOWERS!

BUT ZOZO, IT'S OUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.



YOU CAN GIVE ME WHAT-EVER YOU WANT THE DAY YOU'VE EARNED SOME MONEY. I'VE HAD ENOUGH!!



IN TEHRAN, ZOZO WAS HER HUSBAND HOUSHANG'S SECRETARY,



IN VIENNA, SHE BECAME A HAIRDRESSER.

IT WAS SHE, BY THE WAY, WHO CUT OFF MY LONG HAIR.



AS FOR HOUSHANG, ZOZO'S HUSBAND, HE WAS A CEO IN IRAN,



BUT IN AUSTRIA, HE WAS NOTHING.



THANKS TO A DOZEN BAD INVESTMENTS, HOUSHANG HAD LOST ALL HIS CAPITAL. "YOU GAMBLER IT AWAY!" I HEARD THAT IN THE COURSE OF ONE OF THEIR HABITUAL QUARRELS.

I SAW YOU AT THE CAFÉ WITH THOSE TWO BASTARDS! THEY'D HAVE TO STEAL THE CLOTHES OFF YOUR BACK FOR YOU TO RECOGNIZE THEIR INGRATITUDE!



I WAS ASHAMED. I'D NEVER HEARD MY PARENTS BICKER OVER MONEY.

PROBABLY BECAUSE MY FATHER WASN'T INCOMPETENT . . .

AND AFTER THESE TEN DAYS...



MARJANE, I SPOKE TO YOUR MOTHER.

OUR APARTMENT, AS YOU'VE NO DOUBT NOTICED, IS TOO SMALL. I FOUND YOU A BOARDING HOUSE IN A BEAUTIFUL PART OF VIENNA, NEAR RATHAUS.



IT'S RUN BY NUNS. THE MOTHER SUPERIOR AND SEVERAL OF THE SISTERS SPEAK FLUENT FRENCH.



WHEN DO WE GO? RIGHT AWAY. GO PACK YOUR BAG.



NUNS. I WAS ACQUAINTED WITH THEM. I WAS AT THE ÉCOLE JEANNE D'ARC\* IN TEHRAN. THE NUNS I ENCOUNTERED THERE WERE FEROCIOUS.



YOU'LL COME SEE US ON WEEKENDS. WE'LL GO ICE-SKATING.

YEAH, YEAH.

DESPITE EVERYTHING, I WAS HAPPY TO LEAVE THEIR HOUSE. IN THIS WAY, I'D BE RID OF ZOZO THE MEAN AND SHIRIN THE INANE.

\* JOAN OF ARC SCHOOL

THE ONLY ONE I WAS GOING TO MISS WAS HOUSHANG. I SAW IN HIM A PROTECTOR.



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

YES, UNCLE HOUSHANG.

HE SAW IN ME AN ALLY.



OKAY! THAT'S ENOUGH. LET'S GO!



AND WE LEFT...



\*ALDI IS A SUPERMARKET AND LINKS MEANS LEFT IN GERMAN.



IT HAD BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I'D SEEN SUCH A WELL-STOCKED STORE.



THE FIRST AISLE I HEADED FOR WAS THE ONE WITH SCENTED DETERGENTS.



WE COULDN'T FIND THEM IN IRAN ANYMORE.



I FILLED THE CART WITH ALL KINDS OF PRODUCTS.



EVEN TODAY, AFTER ALL THIS TIME, YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND AT LEAST A DOZEN BOXES OF GOOD-SMELLING LAUNDRY POWDER IN MY HOUSE.

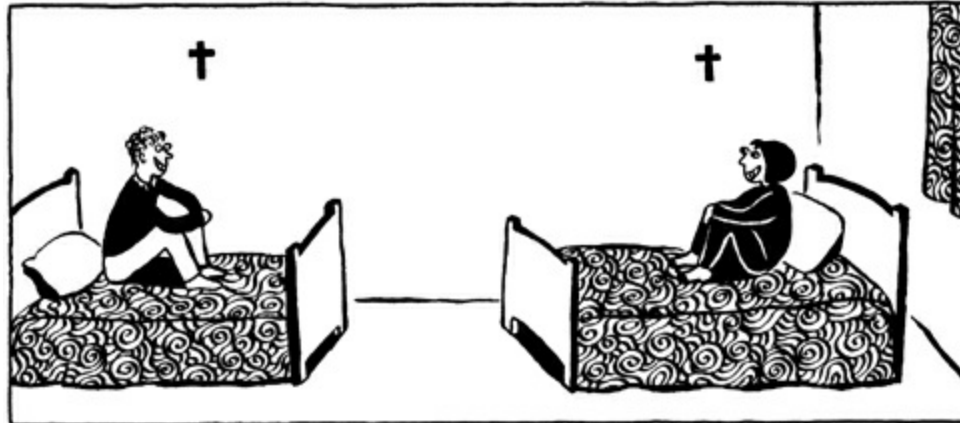
GIVEN MY RESTRICTED BUDGET, I TOOK TWO BOXES OF PASTA.



I DIDN'T KNOW YET THAT THIS WOULD BE MY ONLY FOOD DURING THE FOUR YEARS TO COME.

I HANDED OVER A 100 SHILLING BILL. LUCKILY, IT WAS ENOUGH, OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE BEEN ASHAMED.





I OFFERED HER SOME OF THE PISTACHIOS I'D BROUGHT WITH ME, A PRESENT FROM MY UNCLE. THEY ARE A SPECIALTY OF IRAN THAT IS OFTEN GIVEN WHEN SOMEONE IS GOING ABROAD. WE CONSIDER OUR PISTACHIOS TO BE THE WORLD'S BEST...



LUCIA MADE ME A KNORR SOUP, "CREAM OF MUSHROOM."



I DIDN'T LIKE IT MUCH.



MAGST DU FERNSEHEN? FERNSEHEN?



\* WINDOW IN FRENCH.

FERNSEHEN?



DAS IST EIN FERNSEHEN.



TV! FERNSEHEN! YA! YA! FERNSEHEN!



SO WE WENT TO THE TV ROOM, WHICH WAS ON THE GROUND FLOOR.



EVERYONE WAS WATCHING A MOVIE. THEY SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. EXCEPT ME! I WAS HEARING "ACHS" AND "OCHS," "ICHS" AND "MICHS," BUT NOTHING THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND.



I DECIDED TO LEAVE DISCREETLY.



# TYROL

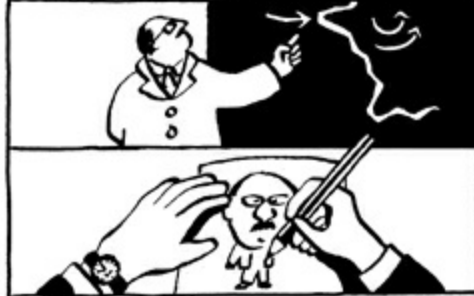


AND THEN THERE WAS THE FIRST MATH TEST. I DISTINGUISHED MYSELF BY MY HIGH LEVEL.



THIS GRADE WON ME A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ATTENTION. I WAS VERY POPULAR WHEN IT CAME TO MATH HOMEWORK.

THEN I BEGAN TO DRAW CARICATURES OF THE TEACHERS. I HAD GOTTEN INTO THIS HABIT WITH MY TEACHERS IN IRAN.



THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THEY WERE ALL VEILED, THEREFORE MUCH EASIER TO DRAW.

THESE PORTRAITS ALSO BROUGHT ME SOME GOODWILL.



BESIDES, MY MISTAKES IN FRENCH MADE ME SOMEONE OF INTEREST. IT HAD BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE I'D PRACTICED MY FRENCH, AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS BY THE ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT.



\* I MEANT A TRIANGLE.



WELL, AT LEAST I EXISTED.

THINGS EVOLVED. AFTER SOME TIME, JULIE, THE SULLEN GIRL IN THE SECOND ROW, TOOK AN INTEREST IN ME. SHE WAS AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD FRENCH GIRL, IN A CLASS WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE WAS FOURTEEN.



I UNDERSTOOD LATER THAT HER RESERVE CAME FROM THE FACT THAT SHE CONSIDERED THE OTHERS TO BE SPOILED CHILDREN. BUT I WAS DIFFERENT. I HAD KNOWN WAR.

SHE INTRODUCED ME TO MOMO. HE WAS TWO YEARS OLDER.



THIS IS MARJANE. SHE'S IRANIAN. SHE'S KNOWN WAR.

WAR?

DELIGHTED!

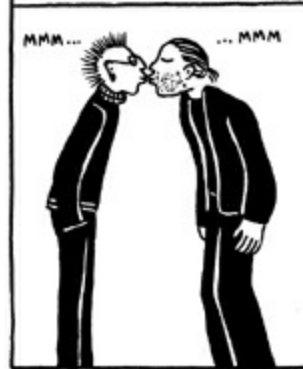


YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN LOTS OF DEAD PEOPLE?

UM... A FEW.

COOL!

MOMO GREETED PEOPLE IN HIS OWN WAY.



MMM...

... MMM

SO IT WAS HE WHO KISSED ME ON THE MOUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME.



... THROUGH MOMO, I GOT TO KNOW THIERRY AND OLIVIER, TWO SWISS ORPHANS WHO WERE LIVING IN AUSTRIA WITH THEIR UNCLE, A DIPLOMAT.



I'M ALSO A BIT OF AN ORPHAN.

YOUR PARENTS ARE DEAD?

NO, THEY'RE IN IRAN.

THE FACT THAT I WAS LIVING WITHOUT MY PARENTS ALSO SUITED JULIE.

AN ECCENTRIC, A PUNK, TWO ORPHANS AND A THIRD-WORLDER, WE MADE QUITE A GROUP OF FRIENDS. THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY STORY. ESPECIALLY MOMO! HE WAS FASCINATED BY DEATH.





CHRISTMAS VACATION WAS APPROACHING. EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT THEIR PLANS.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1984. THE STREETS WERE PACKED. THE HOLIDAY FRENZY HAD INFECTED EVERYONE. I THOUGHT OF THIERRY WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT IT BEING "GOOD FOR BUSINESS."



MY STREET, THOUGH, WAS DESERTED. THERE WEREN'T ANY STORES.



WHEN I GOT BACK, I FOUND LUCIA. STILL FAITHFUL TO HER POST.





LUCIA'S PARENTS WERE INCREDIBLE. THEY WERE UNLIKE ANYONE I'D EVER MET. HER TYROLEAN AUSTRIAN FATHER WORE PANTS MADE OF LEATHER. HER TYROLEAN ITALIAN MOTHER HAD A MUSTACHE. ONLY HER SISTER REMINDED ME OF HEIDI.



AFTER DINNER, WE WERE GOING TO CHURCH.

JA!



THEIR GERMAN WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

AND INDEED WE WENT TO CHURCH FOR MIDNIGHT MASS.



IT ENDED AT THREE IN THE MORNING!



\* DEAR



# PASTA



SO THEY WENT OFF SKIING AND I SET MYSELF TO READING. I STARTED WITH BAKUNIN. I LEARNED THAT HE WAS RUSSIAN, THAT HE HAD BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL\* AND THAT HE REJECTED ALL AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE STATE.



ASIDE FROM THAT, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, AS SURELY MOMO DIDN'T EITHER.

\* FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST COOPERATORS.

THEN, I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE.



I CONCLUDED THAT THE FRENCH RIGHT OF THIS EPOCH WERE WORTHY OF MY COUNTRY'S FUNDAMENTALISTS.

THEN, I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO SARTRE, MY COMRADES' FAVORITE AUTHOR.

"THE NOTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS COMES FROM MAN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE."



I FOUND HIM A LITTLE ANNOYING...

WHEN I'D HAD ENOUGH OF READING, I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.



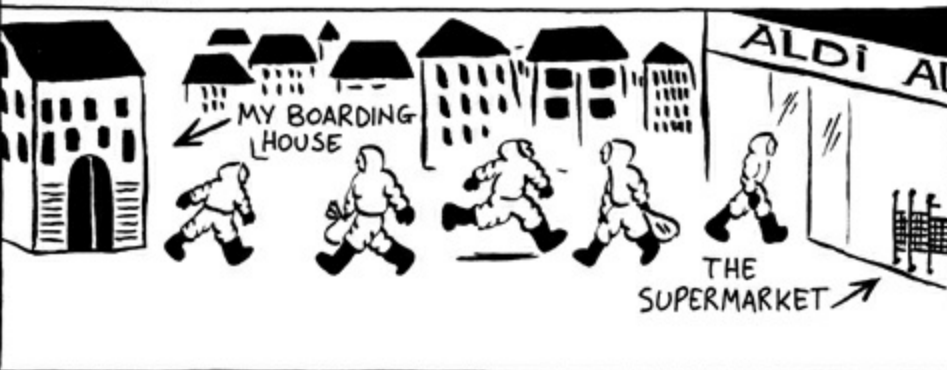
IT WAS SO COLD THAT I HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA OF WEARING MY SKI SUIT, BROUGHT FROM TEHRAN, TO GO OUT.



DECKED OUT LIKE THIS IN VIENNA, I FELT LIKE I WAS ON THE SLOPES OF INNSBRUCK, CLOSE TO MY FRIENDS.



I WAS SO BORED THAT TO BUY FOUR DIFFERENT PRODUCTS, I WOULD GO TO THE SUPERMARKET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES.



IF I'D HAD ANYTHING FUN TO DO, I DON'T THINK I WOULD EVER HAVE READ AS MUCH AS I DID.



TO EDUCATE MYSELF, I HAD TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. STARTING WITH MYSELF, ME, MARJI, THE WOMAN. SO I THREW MYSELF INTO READING MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE BOOK.



I READ "THE SECOND SEX." SIMONE EXPLAINED THAT IF WOMEN PEED STANDING UP, THEIR PERCEPTION OF LIFE WOULD CHANGE.



SO I TRIED. IT RAN LIGHTLY DOWN MY LEFT LEG. IT WAS A LITTLE DISGUSTING.

SEATED, IT WAS MUCH SIMPLER. AND, AS AN IRANIAN WOMAN, BEFORE LEARNING TO URINATE LIKE A MAN, I NEEDED TO LEARN TO BECOME A LIBERATED AND EMANCIPATED WOMAN.





AND THEN CAME THE DAY, THE FAMOUS DAY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WHEN I WAS PREPARING MY ETERNAL SPAGHETTI.



I WAS VERY HUNGRY, SO HUNGRY THAT ONE PLATE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH.



I WENT DOWNSTAIRS WITH MY POT TO WATCH TV IN THE REFECTORY.



I LOVED THAT. AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE, IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. "INSPECTOR DERRICK" WAS ON. THE NUNS LIKED IT A LOT.



WHEN SUDDENLY THE MOTHER SUPERIOR BLOCKED MY LINE OF VISION.



THE MOTHER SUPERIOR NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE ME, SO I WAS CALLED BEFORE HER ASSISTANT.



I DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE END OF THE MONTH. A FEW DAYS LATER, I CALLED JULIE.



THEY THREW ME OUT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.



HOLD ON A MINUTE. I'M GOING TO ASK MY MOTHER IF YOU CAN COME LIVE HERE.



SHE SAYS THAT SHE IS THRILLED TO HAVE YOU!  
OH JULIE! THANKS!!



I REPACKED MY BAG.



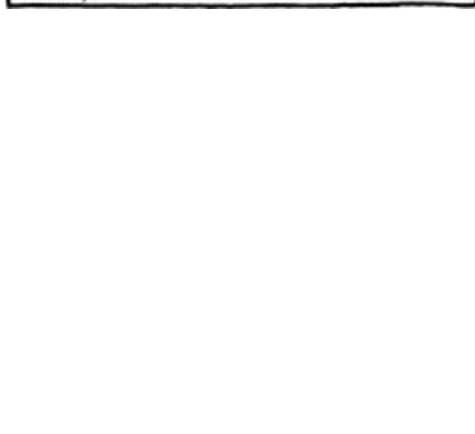
I SAID GOODBYE TO LUCIA, WHOM I NEVER SAW AGAIN.



THE SISTERS SENT A LETTER TO MY PARENTS.



EXPLAINING TO THEM THAT, HUMILIATED TO HAVE BEEN CAUGHT RED-HANDED STEALING A FRUIT YOGURT, I HAD DECIDED TO LEAVE THE BOARDING HOUSE OF MY OWN VOLITION.

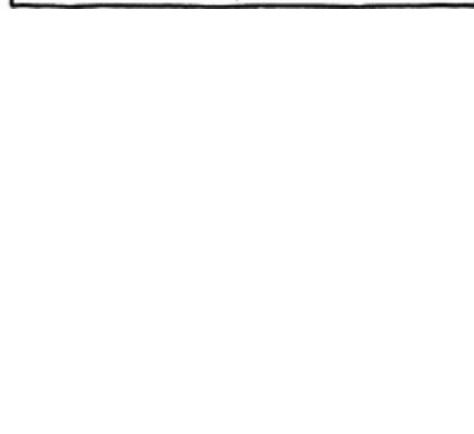


BUT WHAT IN THE WORLD CAN THIS MEAN? SHE HATES FRUIT YOGURT.

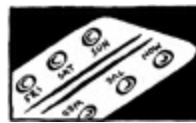
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

HAPPILY, MY PARENTS KNEW MY TASTES.

OH, THOSE LIARS! ... THEY COULD HAVE AT LEAST FOUND A BETTER EXCUSE.



READING WASN'T ENOUGH. TO FIT IN, I STILL HAD A LONG WAY TO GO.



# THE PILL



I REALLY LIKED ARMELLE. SHE WAS GENTLE AND DISCREET. IN FACT, A LITTLE TOO MUCH SO. COMPARED TO MY MOTHER, SHE LACKED AUTHORITY.



DON'T PUT TOO MUCH IN. WHEN THE TEA IS STRONG, IT LOSES ITS FLAVOR.

I KNOW, AT HOME WE DRINK TEA ALL DAY LONG.



OF COURSE... HOW SILLY OF ME! TEA, INDIA, PERSIA, RUSSIA, SAMOVARS...



ARMELLE WAS VERY CULTURED EVEN IF SHE DIDN'T KNOW BAKUNIN. LACAN WAS HER THING. SHE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIM.

YOU KNOW, HE OPENED UP THE FIELD OF PSYCHOANALYSIS WITH STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS.



HE MANAGED TO ISOLATE THE REGISTERS OF THE SYMBOLIC IMAGINATION AND REALITY.



HE IS ONE OF THE FIRST TO HAVE UNDERTAKEN GROUP THERAPY!



A WOMAN AND A MAN DON'T THINK ALIKE, DON'T FUNCTION ALIKE, DON'T WRITE ALIKE. WOMEN'S LITERATURE BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, MEN'S LITERATURE, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH...



I LISTENED OUT OF POLITENESS.

... AND ALSO BECAUSE SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW IRAN. SHE UNDERSTOOD MY NOSTALGIA FOR THE CASPIAN SEA. SHE WAS ALSO THE ONLY ONE TO HAVE SEEN A SAMOVAR.



AND THEN, SHE WAS THE ONE WHO HAD CALLED MY PARENTS TO REASSURE THEM.





ARMELLE HAD A GOOD JOB AT THE UNITED NATIONS. SHE TRAVELED FREQUENTLY.

I STOCKED THE REFRIGERATOR. STUDY HARD! JULIE, DON'T CUT CLASS!

OKAY.



WHEN I GET BACK I WANT THE HOUSE TO BE CLEAN AND TIDY.

YES, MA'AM.



HOW LONG WILL YOU BE GONE?

SIX DAYS. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, CALL MARTIN.



MARTIN AND ARMELLE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER IN VIENNA. THEY WORKED TOGETHER, WERE BOTH DIVORCED AND CARRIED ON A PLATONIC RELATIONSHIP.



IT WAS JULIE WHO HAD EXPLAINED IT TO ME.

I DON'T THINK THEY'RE SLEEPING TOGETHER. IF THEY WERE, I WOULD KNOW.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?



YOU'VE SEEN HOW ANNOYING SHE IS... IT'S FOR SURE! SHE'S NOT FUCKING.

I DIDN'T YET HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE THAT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED ME TO MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ARMELLE'S CHARACTER AND HER SEX LIFE.



HAVE A GOOD TRIP!



NO SOONER WAS HER MOTHER GONE...

... THAN JULIE ORGANIZED A PARTY FOR THE DAY AFTER WITH HER FRIENDS FROM THE CAFE SCHELTER.





AND THE PARTY WAS NOT WHAT I IMAGINED. IN IRAN, AT PARTIES, EVERYONE WOULD DANCE AND EAT. IN VIENNA, PEOPLE PREFERRED TO LIE AROUND AND SMOKE.



AND THEN, I WAS TURNED OFF BY ALL THESE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT, I CAME FROM A TRADITIONALIST COUNTRY.

AROUND FOUR IN THE MORNING, THE LAST GUESTS FINALLY LEFT. I WAS SO SLEEPY.



I WANTED TO REMOVE MY MAKEUP, BUT IT WASN'T COMING OFF WITH WATER.



I WENT TO ASK JULIE FOR SOME MAKEUP REMOVER, BUT APPARENTLY SHE AND ERNST WERE ALREADY ASLEEP IN OUR ROOM.



WHEN SUDDENLY



I RUSHED TO THE LIVING ROOM TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM I DON'T KNOW WHAT, BEHIND MY BEST FRIEND, A BOOK.



IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD I READ.



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, I MADE OUT IN THE DARK THE SILHOUETTE OF A NAKED MAN,



FOLLOWED BY ONE OF A NAKED WOMAN,



THEN A MAN AND WOMAN HALF-NAKED!

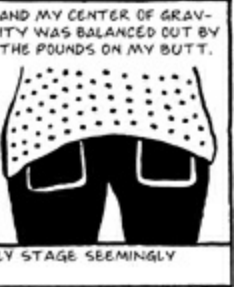
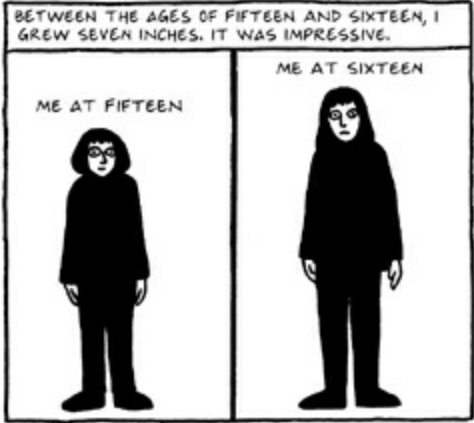


I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES...





# THE VEGETABLE



IN SHORT, I WAS IN AN UGLY STAGE SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END.

AS IF MY NATURAL DEFORMITY WASN'T ENOUGH, I TRIED A FEW NEW HAIRCUTS. A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE LEFT.



AND A WEEK LATER, A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE RIGHT.



I LOOKED LIKE COSETTE IN 'LES MISÉRABLES.'



SO I COATED MY HAIR WITH GEL,



I ADDED A THICK LINE OF EYELINER,



A FEW SAFETY PINS,



WHICH WERE REPLACED BY A SCARF. IT SOFTENED THE LOOK.



IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE SOMETHING.

HAVE YOU SEEN HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS NOW?



TO MY ENORMOUS SURPRISE, MY NEW LOOK EVEN PLEASSED THE HALL MONITORS. IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THEY WERE VERY YOUNG.



THAT'S HOW I BECAME THE SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL HAIRCUTTER.



IT HELPED ME EARN A LITTLE SPENDING MONEY.





IT WAS ALWAYS THIERRY WHO ROLLED THE JOINTS WHILE WE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR THE MONITORS SO WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE.



I DIDN'T LIKE TO SMOKE, BUT I DID IT OUT OF SOLIDARITY. AT THE TIME, TO ME, GRASS AND HEROIN WERE THE SAME THING.

EACH TIME I WAS OFFERED A JOINT, I REMEMBERED THIS CONVERSATION MY PARENTS HAD ABOUT MY COUSIN KAMRAN.

POOR BOY, HE'S STUCK HIMSELF SO MANY TIMES HE'S BEGUN TO LOOK LIKE A VEGETABLE.

THIS KIND OF THING ALWAYS HAPPENS TO THE MOST FRAGILE ONES.



BECOMING A VEGETABLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.



SO I PRETENDED TO PARTICIPATE, BUT I NEVER INHALED THE SMOKE.



AND AS SOON AS MY FRIENDS' BACKS WERE TURNED, I STUCK MY FINGERS IN MY EYES TO MAKE THEM GOOD AND RED.



THEN, I IMITATED THEIR LAUGHTER.



I WAS QUITE BELIEVABLE.

THE HARDER I TRIED TO ASSIMILATE, THE MORE I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WAS DISTANCING MYSELF FROM MY CULTURE, BETRAYING MY PARENTS AND MY ORIGINS, THAT I WAS PLAYING A GAME BY SOMEBODY ELSE'S RULES.



EACH TELEPHONE CALL FROM MY PARENTS REMINDED ME OF MY COWARDICE AND MY BETRAYAL. I WAS AT ONCE HAPPY TO HEAR THEIR VOICES AND ASHAMED TO TALK TO THEM.

- YES, I'M DOING FINE. I'M GETTING GOOD GRADES.  
- FRIENDS? OF COURSE, LOTS!  
- DAD ...  
- DAD, I LOVE YOU!

- YOU HAVE SOME GOOD FRIENDS?  
- THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME, YOU ALWAYS HAD A TALENT FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE!  
- EAT ORANGES. THEY'RE FULL OF VITAMIN C.  
- US TOO, WE ADORE YOU. YOU'RE THE CHILD ALL PARENTS DREAM OF HAVING!



IF ONLY THEY KNEW ... IF THEY KNEW THAT THEIR DAUGHTER WAS MADE UP LIKE A PUNK, THAT SHE SMOKED JOINTS TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION, THAT SHE HAD SEEN MEN IN THEIR UNDERWEAR WHILE THEY WERE BEING BOMBED EVERY DAY, THEY WOULDN'T CALL ME THEIR DREAM CHILD.

I FELT SO GUILTY THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS NEWS ABOUT IRAN, I CHANGED THE CHANNEL.



IT WAS TOO UNBEARABLE.



DID YOU WATCH TV YESTERDAY? YOU MUST BE WORRIED.

NO, IT'S OKAY! I TALKED TO MY PARENTS. THEY'RE FINE.



I WAS LYING. I KNEW NOTHING AND I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW MORE.

I WANTED TO FORGET EVERYTHING, TO MAKE MY PAST DISAPPEAR, BUT MY UNCONSCIOUS CAUGHT UP WITH ME.



I EVEN MANAGED TO DENY MY NATIONALITY.



DURING A PARTY AT SCHOOL.



HI, I'M MARC. I GRADUATED LAST YEAR. YOU'RE NEW! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

MARJANE. I'VE BEEN HERE A YEAR.

AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM MARIE-JEANNE?

I'M FRENCH.

OH REALLY? YOU HAVE A FUNNY ACCENT FOR A FRENCH GIRL.

OH! I HAVE TO FIND MY FRIENDS. BYE.



I SHOULD SAY THAT AT THE TIME, IRAN WAS THE EPITOME OF EVIL AND TO BE IRANIAN WAS A HEAVY BURDEN TO BEAR.



IT WAS EASIER TO LIE THAN TO ASSUME THAT BURDEN.

WHO'S THAT GUY?

MARC? HE'S ANNA'S BROTHER, THE GIRL IN THE STRIPED SWEATER. HE'S A JERK FROM BOURGE. YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO THOSE PEOPLE.



AND WHEN I GOT BACK THAT NIGHT, I REMEMBERED THAT LINE MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME: "ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DIGNITY AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF!"

OH GRANDMA ...



UNFORTUNATELY, IT ALL CAME OUT IN THE END. A FEW DAYS LATER IN A CAFE NEAR SCHOOL.



SHE TOLD MY BROTHER THAT SHE WAS FRENCH.

AND YOUR BROTHER BELIEVED HER?

WHAT DO YOU THINK? HAVE YOU HEARD THE WAY SHE TALKS?



HAVE YOU SEEN HER FACE?



BUT YOUR BROTHER WAS HITTING ON HER OR WHAT?

OF COURSE NOT!!

AH, THAT'S A RELIEF. CONSIDERING HOW UGLY SHE IS, IT WOULD BE REALLY UNFAIR IF SHE GOT A GUY LIKE MARC.



HA, HA, HA! I WOULD COMMIT SUICIDE IF MY BROTHER WAS GOING OUT WITH A COW LIKE THAT!



I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE NOTICED, BUT SHE NEVER TALKS ABOUT EITHER HER COUNTRY OR HER PARENTS.

WELL, OF COURSE! SHE LIES WHEN SHE SAYS THAT SHE'S KNOWN WAR. IT'S ALL TO MAKE HERSELF SEEM INTERESTING.



ANYWAY, HER PARENTS CLEARLY DON'T CARE ABOUT HER, OR THEY WOULDN'T HAVE SENT HER ALONE.

THAT WAS TOO MUCH. I SAW RED.



YOU ARE GOING TO SHUT UP OR I AM GOING TO MAKE YOU!  
I AM IRANIAN AND PROUD OF IT!



SHE IS COMPLETELY CRAZY.



I WANTED TO DIE.

WHERE WERE MY PARENTS TO TAKE ME IN THEIR ARMS, TO REASSURE ME?



BUT REALLY, I HAD NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT.



I HAD JUST REDEEMED MYSELF.



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A YEAR, I FELT PROUD.

I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT MY GRANDMOTHER MEANT. IF I WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH MYSELF, I WOULD NEVER BE COMFORTABLE.



# THE HORSE

JULIE AND HER MOTHER HAD LEFT VIENNA. NOW I WAS LIVING IN A WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT. THE WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT IS A COMMUNAL APARTMENT. I COULD STAY FOR FOUR MONTHS.



IT WAS FULL OF LIGHT. I HAD A DOUBLE-BED, A BUREAU AND A DESK. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME I HAD MY OWN SPACE.



MY EIGHT HOUSEMATES WERE EIGHT MEN, ALL HOMOSEXUALS.







EVEN THOUGH IT HAD BEEN NINETEEN MONTHS SINCE I HAD SEEN MY MOTHER, THE FIFTEEN DAYS OF WAITING WERE VERY LONG. THE DAY OF HER ARRIVAL, I BATHED LIKE NEVER BEFORE.



I IRONED MY CLOTHES FOR THE FIRST TIME,



I MADE MYSELF AS BEAUTIFUL AS I COULD BEFORE GOING TO MEET HER AT THE AIRPORT.



I SAW FROM AFAR A WOMAN WHO LOOKED LIKE HER, THE SAME SILHOUETTE, THE SAME WALK, BUT WITH GRAY HAIR. MY MOTHER WAS A BRUNETTE.



WHEN THIS WOMAN GOT CLOSE, THERE WASN'T ANY DOUBT. IT WAS REALLY HER. BEFORE I LEFT HOME, MOM ONLY HAD A FEW GRAY HAIRS. IT'S INCREDIBLE WHAT TIME DOES TO YOU.



I DIDN'T KNOW IF SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, OR HADN'T HEARD ME.

IN ANY CASE, SHE DIDN'T STOP.



SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, AND WITH GOOD REASON: I'D ALMOST DOUBLED IN HEIGHT AND SIZE.



IT FELT STRANGE TO TAKE HER IN MY ARMS. OUR PROPORTIONS HAD BEEN REVERSED.



RECOUNTING NINETEEN MONTHS IN A FEW DAYS ISN'T EASY. WE HAD TO TALK A LOT TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME. OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE ALWAYS DISJOINTED.

TELL ME, HOW'S DAD? WHAT'S HE DOING?

OH, HE TAKES CARE OF THE GAS IN TEHRAN'S BUILDINGS.



IT FRUSTRATES HIM A LITTLE. YOU KNOW, YOUR FATHER SPECIALIZED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF STEEL FACTORIES, BUT DURING WARTIME THERE'S NO POINT IN BUILDING.



IS HE HAPPY ANYWAY?

YES, HE'S OKAY. HE MISSES YOU ENORMOUSLY, BUT HE'S HAPPY THAT YOU'RE LIVING HERE, FAR FROM THE PROBLEMS.



MOM, WHERE'S YOUR NECKLACE?



MY MOTHER ALWAYS WORE A GOLDEN PENDANT THAT DAD HAD GIVEN HER FOR THEIR TENTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

I LEFT IT IN IRAN. YOU SEE, WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE ANYTHING OF VALUE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.



I LEARNED LATER THAT SHE HAD LIED TO ME.

YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I MADE?

NO, NO, I LOVE IT. I'M JUST NOT VERY HUNGRY.



THERE AGAIN, SHE WAS LYING. AFTER THIS DAY, SHE NEVER AGAIN LET ME DO THE COOKING.

HERE - A LETTER FROM YOUR FATHER. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO OPENED IT, IT'S THE CUSTOMS IN TEHRAN. THEY CHECK EVERYTHING!



IN THE LETTER, HE WAS OVERJOYED BY THE THOUGHT THAT I HAD A PEACEFUL LIFE IN VIENNA.

IF YOU ONLY KNEW...



I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS ENDURING.



WE OFTEN WENT WALKING, MY MOTHER AND I.

HOW'S OUR COUNTRY DOING?

SIGH! STILL THE SAME, BOMBINGS, ARRESTS, WE'RE SO USED TO IT THAT THE CALM HERE MAKES ME A LITTLE NERVOUS.



DO YOU REMEMBER OUR NEIGHBORS, THE KIANIS? THEY BOUGHT A HOUSE IN DEMAVEND.\* WHEN WE HEAR THAT THERE'S GOING TO BE AN AIR STRIKE, WE TAKE REFUGE AT THEIR HOUSE. THE AIR IS VERY PURE UP THERE. WE HAVE A GOOD TIME.



HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO WALK WITHOUT A VEIL ON MY HEAD, WITHOUT THE WORRY OF BEING ARRESTED OVER TWO LOCKS OF HAIR OR MY NAIL POLISH.

SHE NEVER ASKED ME ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY SITUATION. CERTAINLY OUT OF A SENSE OF RESTRAINT AND ALSO BECAUSE SHE WAS SCARED OF THE ANSWERS. IF SHE HAD SACRIFICED HERSELF SO THAT I COULD LIVE FREELY, THE LEAST I COULD DO WAS BEHAVE WELL.

\* A MOUNTAINOUS CITY NORTH OF TEHRAN.

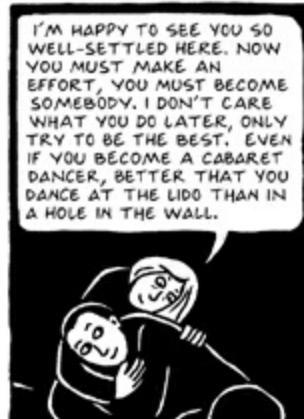


SO WHEN WORDS FAILED US, GESTURES CAME TO OUR AID.



I LOVE MY MOM.

SHE LOVES YOU, TOO.



I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU SO WELL-SETTLED HERE. NOW YOU MUST MAKE AN EFFORT, YOU MUST BECOME SOMEBODY. I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO LATER, ONLY TRY TO BE THE BEST. EVEN IF YOU BECOME A CABARET DANCER, BETTER THAT YOU DANCE AT THE LIDO THAN IN A HOLE IN THE WALL.



WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, DID YOU KNOW YOUR UNCLE MASSOUD IS LIVING IN GERMANY?

IN GERMANY? BUT THAT'S NEXT DOOR. HE DIDN'T WANT TO COME VISIT US?



HE'S VERY DEPRESSED. IN IRAN, HE WAS SOMEBODY: "MR. CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT!" IN GERMANY, THEY THINK HE'S A TURK... AT OUR AGE, IT'S DIFFICULT TO START OVER AT ZERO.



I REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN WE TRAVELED AROUND EUROPE. IT WAS ENOUGH TO CARRY AN IRANIAN PASSPORT, THEY ROLLED OUT THE RED CARPET. WE WERE RICH BEFORE. NOW AS SOON AS THEY LEARN OUR NATIONALITY, THEY GO THROUGH EVERYTHING, AS THOUGH WE WERE ALL TERRORISTS. THEY TREAT US AS THOUGH WE HAVE THE PLAGUE.



A FEW DAYS LATER AT THE CAFÉ HAWELKA.

GIVE ME A CIGARETTE.

!?



DON'T PLAY THE INNOCENT WITH ME, I KNOW YOU SMOKE!

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?



YOU SMELL LIKE SMOKE AND I SAW A PACKET OF CAMELS IN YOUR BAG!

YOU WENT THROUGH MY THINGS??



I'D BEEN LIVING ALONE TOO LONG TO ACCEPT ANY INVASION OF MY PRIVACY.

COME ON... GIVE ME THAT CIGARETTE!



I DECIDED TO LET IT GO. I KNEW SHE WAS LEAVING IN TWENTY DAYS AND I DIDN'T WANT TO REGRET ANYTHING.

HERE, HERE'S YOUR CIGARETTE.



IT'S MAYBE RIDICULOUS TO ASK YOU THIS QUESTION NOW, BUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WITH THE NUNS?

LIKE I TOLD YOU.



THEY SAID THAT IRANIANS DON'T HAVE ANY EDUCATION AND I ANSWERED BACK THAT THEY WERE ALL PROSTITUTES.

WELL DONE!

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, SHE WOULD SURELY HAVE REPRIMANDED ME FOR INSULTING PEOPLE.



YOU WON'T DO IT AGAIN, RIGHT?

OF COURSE NOT.

WHEN YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS RARELY, ALL IS FORGIVEN.



I SPENT TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS BY HER SIDE. I TASTED THE HEAVENLY FOOD OF MY COUNTRY, PREPARED BY MY MOTHER. IT WAS A CHANGE FROM PASTA.

SHE STROKED MY HAIR EVERY NIGHT TO PUT ME TO SLEEP.

IT RELAXED ME TO TALK TO HER. IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'D BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE WITHOUT HAVING TO EXPLAIN MY CULTURE.

از این آدم‌ها که با ما سر و صدا می‌کنند. می‌دانم که ما را از این آدم‌ها جدا می‌کنند. در این کشور ما هستیم. در این کشور ما هستیم.

THE EVE OF HER DEPARTURE.

MY DEAR, YOU WON'T INSULT DR. HELLER, RIGHT?

I PROMISE.

BUY YOURSELF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. YOU MUST EAT WELL. IT'S NOT FOR NOTHING THAT WE SAY "A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY!"

LOOK! I MADE SOME SKETCHES INSPIRED BY OUR WINDOW-SHOPPING. I'LL MAKE YOU SOME OUTFITS. YOU'RE IN NEED OF SOME NEW ONES.

EVER SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUSTRIA, I HADN'T BOUGHT MYSELF ANYTHING AND, GIVEN MY GROWTH SPURT, MY CLOTHES NO LONGER FIT ME.

THEN CAME THE DREADED DAY OF DEPARTURE. I WAS SAD BUT, WELL, I'D BEGUN TO GET USED TO SEPARATIONS.

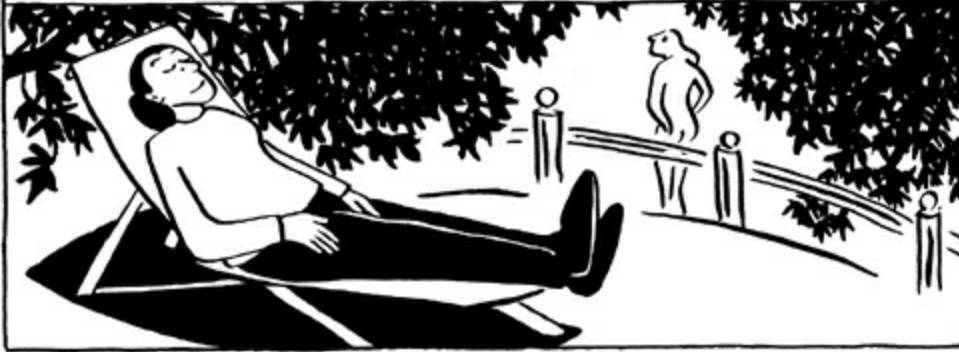
MY MOTHER LEFT.

I'M SURE THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THE MISERY OF MY ISOLATION EVEN IF SHE KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE AND GAVE NOTHING AWAY. SHE LEFT ME WITH A BAG OF AFFECTION THAT SUSTAINED ME FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.



# HIDE AND SEEK

FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE WAS AN OLD VILLA, BUILT BY HER FATHER, A 1930S SCULPTOR OF SOME RENOWN. THE BIG TERRACE THAT LOOKED OUT ON THE GARDEN WAS MY FAVORITE PLACE. I SPENT SOME VERY PLEASANT MOMENTS THERE.



ONLY THE EXCREMENT OF VICTOR, FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S DOG, DISTURBED THIS HARMONY.



ON AVERAGE, HE DEFECATED ONCE A WEEK ON MY BED.



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA? IT'S THE FIFTH TIME IN A MONTH! IT'S UNACCEPTABLE! WHY DON'T YOU TRAIN HIM?

YES, WELL! I'M GOING TO HAVE THE SHEETS CHANGED.



I OFTEN FORGOT THAT HE WAS TOO OLD TO LEARN ANYTHING.

YOU ARE REALLY VERY UPTIGHT!





ALL MY FRIENDS HAD LEFT OUR SCHOOL. JULIE WAS IN SPAIN, THIERRY AND OLIVIER HAD GONE BACK TO SWITZERLAND AND MOMO HAD BEEN EXPELLED. I WAS ALONE AT SCHOOL, BUT I DIDN'T CARE.



MY LACK OF INTEREST IN OTHERS MADE ME MORE INTERESTING.



EVER SINCE I'D SEEN MY MOTHER, I DIDN'T NEED ANYONE.



WELL, ALMOST.



HIS NAME WAS ENRIQUE. I'D MET HIM THROUGH DIETER, ONE OF MY FORMER HOUSEMATES.



ENRIQUE WAS HALF-AUSTRIAN, HALF-SPANISH.



ENRIQUE WAS TWENTY AND PLAYED THE PIANO.



LEARNING THAT HE KNEW REAL ANARCHISTS ONLY INTENSIFIED MY FEELINGS FOR HIM.

"A REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISTS' PARTY!" IT REMINDED ME OF THE COMMITMENT AND THE BATTLES OF MY CHILDHOOD IN IRAN. EVEN BETTER, IT WOULD PERHAPS ALLOW ME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BAKUNIN.



FINALLY THE BIG DAY ARRIVED.



AFTER AN HOUR AND A HALF ON THE ROAD, WE ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST.

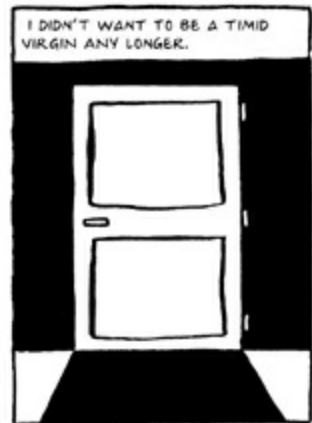


IN THE DISTANCE I SAW A GROUP OF ADULTS CHASING ONE ANOTHER AND SHOUTING:



WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT... MY ENTHUSIASM WAS QUICKLY REPLACED BY A FEELING OF DISGUST AND PROFOUND CONTEMPT.





UNFORTUNATELY, THE NEXT MORNING I WAS AS MUCH A VIRGIN AND AS TIMID AS THE NIGHT BEFORE.

NEVERTHELESS I HAD TRIED MY BEST.

IT'S MY FAULT! I'M SO UNBELIEVABLY UGLY. I'M SURE THAT'S WHY HE DIDN'T WANT ME.

I DIDN'T SEE ANY OTHER EXPLANATION.

I'M UGLY. I SMELL. I'M TERRIBLE. I'M HAIRY!

I WENT TO JOIN HIM SO WE COULD TALK.

?!?!? INGRID!

I HAD JUST FOUND ANOTHER EXPLANATION: "HE WAS IN LOVE WITH INGRID."

HI, MY SWEETPEA. I DIDN'T WANT TO WAKE YOU, YOU WERE SLEEPING SO PEACEFULLY. ARE YOU OKAY?

YES.

I HAVE SOME THINGS TO DO. SEE YOU LATER.

SEE YOU.

WHY ARE YOU SO SAD?

I KNOW. COME, I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

HE'S GOING TO TELL ME THAT HE'S MARRYING THAT FAT COW.

COME...

HE'S GOING TO TELL ME THAT SHE IS THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE, THAT I'M LIKE A SISTER TO HIM.



I LOST TOUCH WITH ENRIQUE BUT HIS ANARCHIST FRIENDS ADOPTED ME. MY LIFE WAS SPLIT BETWEEN THEM, MY SCHOOL, AND FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE.



THE COMMUNAL LIFE WENT HAND IN HAND WITH THE USE OF ALL KINDS OF MOOD ENHANCERS: WEED, HASH, ...



I TRIPPED EVERY WEEKEND, AND YOU COULD SEE IT ON MY FACE.

MY PHYSICS TEACHER, YONNEL ARROUAS, WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME.

MARJANE, ARE YOU OKAY? YOU CAN TALK TO ME IF YOU'D LIKE.



AT HOME, THERE'S A WAR. I'M SCARED FOR MY PARENTS. I'M ALONE AND I FEEL GUILTY. I DON'T HAVE MUCH MONEY. MY UNCLE WAS ASSASSINATED. I SAW MY NEIGHBOR DIE IN A BOMBING...



I SENSED THAT HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME. HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WAS EXAGGERATING.

I PERSISTED ANYWAY. I NEEDED TO TALK SO MUCH.

THEN, I LIVE IN THIS CRAZY WOMAN'S HOUSE, MY BOYFRIEND...

ENOUGH, IT'S OKAY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME OVER FOR LUNCH AT OUR HOUSE ON SATURDAY? MY MOTHER WILL BE THERE, TOO.



I ACCEPTED.

AT HIS HOUSE, I PLAYED WITH HIS TWINS, JOHANNA AND CAROLINE.



I SPENT A LONG TIME TALKING TO MRS. ARROUAS, MY TEACHER'S MOTHER, A FRENCHWOMAN OF JEWISH-MOROCCAN ORIGINS.

I UNDERSTAND HOW HARD IT IS FOR YOU. YOU HAVE TO MAKE THREE TIMES THE EFFORT OF ANYONE ELSE TO SUCCEED! THAT'S THE IMMIGRANT LOT! IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME, WHEN I ARRIVED IN FRANCE.



BE STRONG. ALL WILL GO WELL FOR YOU. I HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON.



BUT WE NEVER SAW EACH OTHER AGAIN. YONNEL'S WIFE DIDN'T LIKE ME. SHE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WAS MAKING UP STORIES. SO I WAS NEVER AGAIN INVITED OVER.



AFTER MY ROMANTIC DISAPPOINTMENT WITH ENRIQUE, I UNDERSTOOD JULIE BETTER WHEN SHE TALKED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF A PLATONIC AFFAIR ON HER MOTHER. I HAD GRASPED THE NECESSITY OF A CARNAL RELATIONSHIP. BUT AFTER THIS INCIDENT, WHAT WAS I TO DO? I FELT EVEN MORE UNLOVABLE AND HAD EVEN LESS SELF-CONFIDENCE.

AND THEN ONE DAY A NEW STUDENT ARRIVED IN MY CLASS. HIS NAME WAS JEAN-PAUL. I LIKED HIM.

MARIANE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO GRAB A DRINK THIS WEEKEND?

YOU AND ME?

WHO ELSE?

WHEN?

WELL, THIS WEEKEND. SATURDAY PERHAPS.

WE ARRANGED TO MEET AT CAFE DE L'EUROPE AT SIX O'CLOCK.

I PUT ON MY BEST CLOTHES. I WAS SO EXCITED THAT I GOT THERE AN HOUR EARLY.

HE WAS HALF AN HOUR LATE.

AT LAST!

HI! WHAT ARE YOU READING?

OH, IT'S YOU! I HADN'T NOTICED.

HAVE YOU BEEN HERE LONG?

NO, I JUST GOT HERE.

...

...



THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND, I WAS BACK AT THE COMMUNE.

WHERE WERE YOU THE PAST TWO WEEKS? WHY DIDN'T YOU COME SEE US?

ONE OF MY TEACHERS INVITED ME OVER, AND LAST WEEK I SAW A FRIEND.



INGRID, MY FORMER ENEMY, HAD NOW BECOME A GREAT FRIEND. SHE TAUGHT ME TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION. WITH HER, I SPENT MY TIME EITHER MEDITATING,



OR TRIPPING.



I DIDN'T ALWAYS LIKE IT, BUT I BY FAR PREFERRED BORING MYSELF WITH HER TO HAVING TO CONFRONT MY SOLITUDE AND MY DISAPPOINTMENTS.

LITTLE BY LITTLE, I BECAME THE PORTRAIT OF DORIAN GRAY. THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I WAS MARKED.



BUT THIS KIND OF DECADENCE WAS PLEASING TO SOME. AND THAT'S HOW I MET THE FIRST GREAT LOVE OF MY LIFE.



HIS NAME WAS MARKUS. HE WAS STUDYING LITERATURE. AT LEAST I WAS SURE THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ME BECAUSE OF HIS MATH PROBLEMS.





I FINALLY HAD A REAL BOYFRIEND. I WAS OVER THE MOON. ONE NIGHT AT MARKUS' HOUSE,

I'M GOING TO WRITE A PLAY.

OH YEAH, I'D LOVE TO BE IN IT.



WHEN SUDDENLY,

WAS MACHST SIE HIER? SIE MUSS RAUS GEHEN!

IT WAS HIS MOTHER. MARKUS DIDN'T HAVE A FATHER. SHE THOUGHT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND GERMAN. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I HAD TO GO "RAUS," OUTSIDE.



I'D ALREADY HEARD THIS THREATENING WORD YELLED AT ME IN THE METRO.

DU SCHEIß AUSLÄNDERIN! GEH RAUS!

IT WAS AN OLD MAN WHO SAID "DIRTY FOREIGNER, GET OUT!" I HAD HEARD IT ANOTHER TIME IN THE STREET. BUT I TRIED TO MAKE LIGHT OF IT. I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS JUST THE REACTION OF A NASTY OLD MAN.



BUT THIS, THIS WAS DIFFERENT. IT WAS NEITHER AN OLD MAN DESTROYED BY THE WAR, NOR A YOUNG IDIOT. IT WAS MY BOYFRIEND'S MOTHER WHO ATTACKED ME. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MARKUS AND HIS SITUATION TO OBTAIN AN AUSTRIAN PASSPORT, THAT I WAS A WITCH.

I THINK SHE'D NEVER LOOKED AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR.



LAß UNS IN RUHE!

SHE ORDERED ME TO LEAVE THEM ALONE, HER AND HER SON.



RAUS! ICH SAGE RAUS!!

THEN THREW ME OUT.



GO ON HOME. I'LL COME SEE YOU TOMORROW AT YOUR HOUSE.

MARKUS MUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING MORE THAN I. HE HAD TO SACRIFICE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER TO CONTINUE TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T WANT TO ADD TO IT. SO I SAID NOTHING ...



\* I HAD JUST READ HIS THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY.

MARKUS AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO. WE OFTEN ENDED UP IN HIS CAR, WHERE WE SMOKED JOINTS TO DISTRACT OURSELVES.

LISTEN, I HEARD OF A CAFE WHERE WE CAN BUY CHEAP HASH. DO YOU WANT TO GO SEE? I CAN'T FIND ANYWHERE TO PARK.

OF COURSE!

HERE'S 200 SHILLINGS.



NO, IT'S OKAY, I'VE GOT MONEY.

I WENT IN. I WAS VERY, VERY SCARED. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I'D SET FOOT IN SUCH A SORDID PLACE.



BUT IT WASN'T A BIG DEAL. AFTER ALL, I WAS DOING IT FOR LOVE.



EXCUSE ME, I WANT TWO BAGS FOR 200 BUCKS.



FOLLOW ME.



HERE.

THANKS.




MARKUS WAS PROUD OF ME. SO PROUD THAT HE TOLD THE WHOLE SCHOOL THAT HIS GIRLFRIEND HAD CONTACTS AT CAFE CAMERA.



THIS IS HOW, FOR LOVE, I BEGAN MY CAREER AS A DRUG DEALER. HADN'T I FOLLOWED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE? TO GIVE THE BEST OF MYSELF? I WAS NO LONGER A SIMPLE JUNKIE, BUT MY SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL DEALER.

# THE CROISSANT

LUCKILY, I HAD BENEFITED ENOUGH FROM A SOLID EDUCATION TO NEVER DRIFT TOO FAR. IT WAS THE END OF MY LAST YEAR. I WAS GOING TO TAKE THE FRENCH BACCALAUREATE.



WHEN I STUDIED WITH THE OTHERS, I REALIZED THAT I HAD MANY GAPS. I NEEDED A MIRACLE TO PASS.

AND THIS MIRACLE HAPPENED ONE NIGHT IN JUNE, DURING MY SLEEP.



HEY, MARI, THE SUBJECT ON THE BAC, IT WILL BE MONTESQUIEU'S "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."

THE NEXT MORNING I CALLED MY MOTHER,



WHO CALLED GOD, WHO IN TURN SENT HIS MESSAGE TO THE EXAMINER.



EACH TIME THAT I ASKED MY MOTHER TO PRAY FOR ME, MY WISH WAS GRANTED.

DO YOU LIKE THE 18TH CENTURY?

YES.



DO YOU LIKE MONTESQUIEU?

YES.



YOU HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO PREPARE "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."

I GOT A 17, THE BEST GRADE IN SCHOOL.





THEN CAME SUMMER. TO BE TRUTHFUL, I WASN'T MAKING ANYTHING BY DEALING BECAUSE I WAS DOING IT AS A FAVOR. SO I SET OUT TO FIND SOME ODD JOBS.



IT WAS SOMETIMES BORING.



SOMETIMES FUN.



ONE DAY I SAW AN AD IN A NEWSPAPER: "CAFÉ SOLE IS LOOKING FOR A WAITRESS, THREE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES REQUIRED."



YOU SPEAK GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THAT'S GOOD. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN A BAR?



CAFÉ SOLE WAS LOCATED IN THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD IN VIENNA, I WAS PAID DECENTLY, BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY WITH THE CUSTOMERS. SOMETIMES, I REALLY WANTED TO SLAP THEM.



\* I LIED.

NONETHELESS, I HAD AN ALLY. IT WAS SVETLANA, THE YUGOSLAVIAN CHEF.



TELL ME, WHAT DID HE ORDER, THIS SON-OF-A-BITCH?



SHE REALLY MADE ME LAUGH. THANKS TO HER, I WAS ABLE TO WORK THERE WITHOUT HAVING TO INJURE A FEW MEN WHERE IT COUNTS.



I WAS SO BUSY I DIDN'T NOTICE WHEN THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR ARRIVED.

MARJANE SATRAPI!  
THE PRINCIPAL  
WANTS TO  
SEE YOU.



I SAW THAT YOU HAD THE BEST SCORE FOR THE FRENCH B&C. ALL MY CONGRATULATIONS.

THANK YOU, SIR.  
HAVE A SEAT.



IF YOU WILL, THE USAGE OF CERTAIN SUBSTANCES DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME EFFECT ON EVERYONE. IN CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS, IT CAN LEAD TO DEPLORABLE CONSEQUENCES.



LET ME EXPLAIN MYSELF. WE HAVE A REAL PROBLEM WITH THE CONSUMPTION OF CANNABIS IN THIS SCHOOL.



WHOEVER PROCURES IT FOR THE STUDENTS OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT COULD BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.



YOU ARE INTELLIGENT AND I TRUST I WON'T HAVE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THIS A SECOND TIME.

NO, YOU WON'T HAVE TO.



REMEMBER YOURSELF, SATRAPI, I'M COUNTING ON YOU!

YES, YES.

I WAS VERY SCARED. IT WAS THE END OF MY CAREER.

ADMITTEDLY, I WASN'T SELLING DRUGS ANYMORE, BUT I HAD STARTED TAKING MORE AND MORE. AT FIRST, MARKUS WAS VERY IMPRESSED,

ANOTHER ONE?? YOU'RE TOO STRONG!



THEN, HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME,

IN THE NAME OF GOD! LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE BECOMING.



AND FINALLY, HE DISTANCED HIMSELF.



THIS DECADENT SIDE, WHICH HAD SO PLEASED HIM AT FIRST, ENDED UP PROFOUNDLY ANNOYING HIM.

I SHOULD SAY THAT I WAS SMOKING TOO MANY JOINTS. I WAS CONSTANTLY TIRED AND I OFTEN FELL ASLEEP.

THE DEFINITE INTEGRAL OF FUNCTION  $f$  ON...



MARJANE, ARE YOU OKAY?



WHAT?  
DO YOU FEEL WELL?



WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, SIR? THAT I'M THE VEGETABLE THAT I REFUSED TO BECOME?



THAT I'M SO DISAPPOINTED IN MYSELF THAT I CAN NO LONGER LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR? THAT I HATE MYSELF?...



EVERYTHING'S FINE, SIR. I'M A LITTLE SICK, I FEEL VERY TIRED.



I REMAINED IN THIS STATE FOR THE REST OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, BUT THANKS TO THE REGISTERED LETTERS, SENT TO GOD EVERY DAY BY MY MOTHER, I GRADUATED BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH. I WAS RELIEVED.

IT WAS 1988. MARKUS HAD STARTED STUDYING THEATER. I HAD REGISTERED AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT I NEVER WENT.



THIS SAME YEAR, I BECAME AWARE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA WAS NAMED KURT WALDHEIM.



THROUGH MARKUS, I HAD GOTTEN TO KNOW SOME OTHER STUDENTS. WE WOULD OFTEN GET TOGETHER AT THE CAFE HAWELKA, WHERE WE DISCUSSED POLITICS.



WE SHOULDN'T EXAGGERATE. WALDHEIM WAS ELECTED A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY RADICAL CHANGES, WE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.



PERSONALLY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THIS DIFFERENCE. THE FIRST TIME I SAW SKINHEADS WAS IN 1984. AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT MEANT. AND I DIDN'T SPEAK MUCH GERMAN. SO I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WANTED WITH ME. I SENSED THAT THEY WERE HOSTILE, BUT HAVING GROWN UP WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION, I KNEW WHAT TO DO IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION ...



I KEPT A LOW PROFILE.



SINCE THEN, I HADN'T NOTICED THEIR NUMBERS GROWING.

ASSHOLES, THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU THINK THAT THERE AREN'T ANY WHERE I COME FROM? THEY'RE TEN TIMES MORE FEARSOME THAN YOURS. IN IRAN, THEY KILL THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T THINK LIKE THE LEADERS!



DURING THIS PERIOD, THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION, LIKE MOST YOUNG VIENNESE, WERE VERY POLITICIZED. THEY DEMONSTRATED EVERY SO OFTEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER. SOMETIMES I JOINED THEM.



THEY SAID THAT THE OLD NAZIS HAD BEEN TEACHING "MEIN KAMPF" IN THEIR HOMES TO NEW NAZIS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 80s, THAT SOON THERE WOULD BE A RISE IN THE EXTREME RIGHT THROUGHOUT EUROPE.



IT'S CRAZY HOW PEOPLE ARE ALL COWARDS. AND HERE WE ARE IN VIENNA. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW IT MUST BE IN THE TYROL!!

BUT I'VE BEEN TO THE TYROL, I THOUGHT THEY WERE VERY NICE.



MY FRIEND'S FATHER EVEN MADE ME A FRAME ...



IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A GIRL. IF YOU WERE A BOY WITH FRIZZY HAIR AND YOUR SKIN WAS A LITTLE DARKER, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN LIKE THAT.



I ASKED MYSELF IF THEY WOULD HAVE SAT BESIDE ME IF I HAD BEEN A FRIZZY-HAIRED AND DARK-SKINNED BOY?



NEVERTHELESS HE, LIKE I, TRIED TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP. WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST TWO YEARS. THE NIGHT BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY,

I'VE BEEN INVITED TO GRAZ BY A FRIEND. THAT'S GOOD.



IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU THAT I WON'T BE CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY WITH YOU?

NO, NOT AT ALL.



IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU.



IT WAS GOOD TIMING AFTER ALL. MAYBE THIS VACATION WAS GOING TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP.

YOU'RE GOING TO MISS ME, YOU'LL SEE...



GOOD, I'M GOING TO SLEEP AT YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT. MY TRAIN IS AT 7:30 TOMORROW.

WAIT, YOU'RE CLOSER TO THE STATION THAN I AM. IF YOU COME OVER, YOU'LL MISS YOUR TRAIN.



YES, YOU'RE RIGHT!

WHEN YOU GET BACK, WE'LL CELEBRATE TOGETHER.









SO, BY ORDER OF THE TRAITOROUS MARKUS, I BEAT IT. I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

# THE VEIL

MY BREAKUP WITH MARKUS REPRESENTED MORE THAN A SIMPLE SEPARATION. I HAD JUST LOST MY ONE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, THE ONLY PERSON WHO CARED FOR ME, AND TO WHOM I WAS ALSO WHOLLY ATTACHED.



I HAD NO FAMILY OR FRIENDS. I HAD COUNTED ON THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR EVERYTHING. THE WORLD HAD JUST CRUMBLING IN FRONT OF MY EYES.



EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF MARKUS. THIS BEDSPREAD, IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO ME.



THIS POSTER, HE BOUGHT IT FOR ME AT THE PICASSO SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.



HIS T-SHIRT. OH, HIS T-SHIRT!



WHERE WAS MY MOTHER TO STROKE MY HAIR?

WHERE WAS MY GRANDMOTHER TO TELL ME THAT LOVERS, I WOULD HAVE THEM BY THE DOZEN?

WHERE WAS MY FATHER TO PUNISH THIS BOY WHO DARED HURT HIS DAUGHTER? WHERE?

ASIDE FROM HIM, WHO ELSE WAS SINCERELY INTERESTED IN ME DURING THESE FOUR YEARS IN VIENNA?

IN THIS ROOM, EVERYTHING  
EVOKED MARKUS. I COULDN'T  
STAND IT ANYMORE.



SO I GOT DRESSED,

I TOOK MY BAG,



MY PASSPORT, THE PLANE TICKET  
MY PARENTS HAD GIVEN ME  
TO VISIT THEM AT CHRISTMAS,  
AND A LITTLE MONEY.



WHERE ARE YOU GOING LIKE THAT?

ADIEU!

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET  
OUT OF THIS SO EASILY!



GO FUCK YOURSELF.



THIEF! I'M GOING TO  
CALL THE POLICE!  
I AM GOING TO DO  
THIS AND THAT...

CLACK



IT WAS NOVEMBER 22. MY BIRTHDAY. IT WAS BITTERLY COLD. I STAYED ON A BENCH, IMMOBILE ...  
I WATCHED THE PEOPLE GOING TO WORK ...



... THEN COMING BACK ...



NIGHT FELL ...



"NIGHT BRINGS GOOD COUNSEL," MY GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME.

IN EFFECT, SHE CLEARED UP A LOT OF POINTS. SUDDENLY, I HAD A REVELATION.

MARKUS IS A REAL BASTARD.



ALL THOSE TIMES WHEN, ON THE PRETEXT OF NOT FINDING A PARKING PLACE, HE MADE ME GO DOWN INTO CAFE CAMERA ...



... HE KNEW THAT COPS CAME BY FROM TIME TO TIME ON RAIDS.



IT WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED HIM IF I HAD BEEN ARRESTED.

AND THE TIME WHEN HIS MOTHER MEANLY TOLD ME OFF...



... HE COULD HAVE TAKEN MY DEFENSE INSTEAD OF SENDING ME HOME! ...



... NOT TO MENTION THE FIRST TIME WE WENT OUT TO A NIGHTCLUB TOGETHER, WHEN HE ASKED ME TO PAY FOR GAS AND ONCE THE GAS WAS PAID FOR HE TOLD ME:

WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU, IT'S YOUR REBELLIOUS SIDE AND YOUR NATURAL NONCHALANCE.



REPRESSSED AS HE WAS, HE MUST HAVE IDENTIFIED WITH MY REBELLIOUS SIDE.

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO BLIND? WHAT RELATIONSHIP? WHAT LOVE? WHAT SUPPORT? WHAT AN ASSHOLE!!!





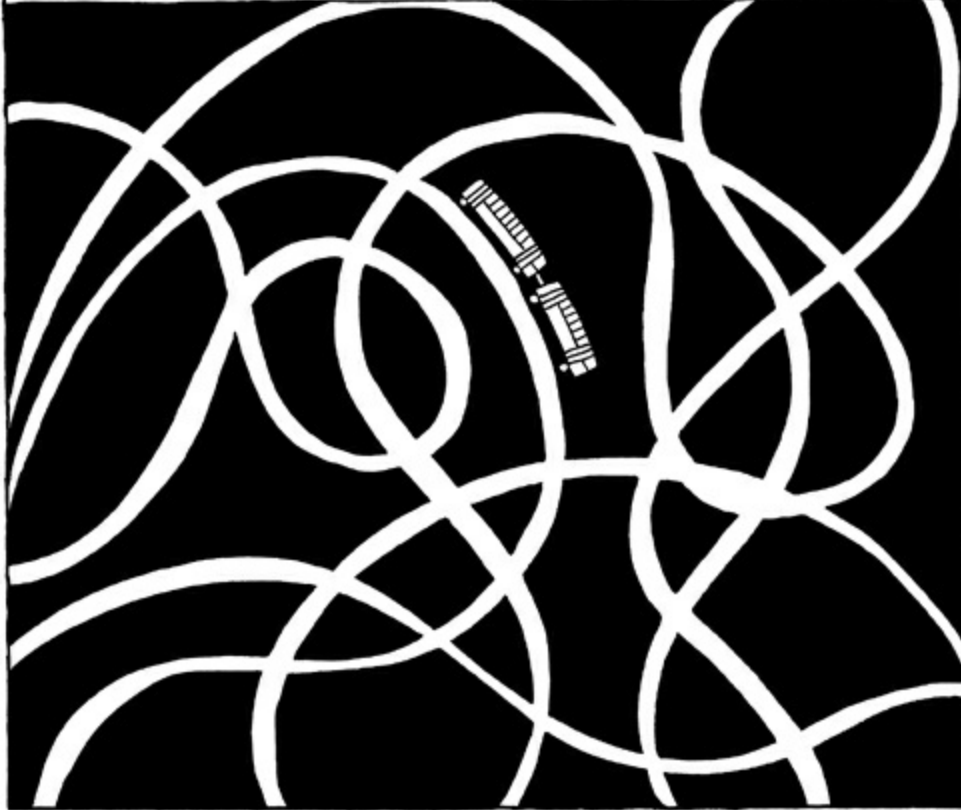
IN THE MORNING, I TOOK THE TRAM.



INSIDE, THERE WERE TWO SPOTS THAT WERE VERY WARM, BECAUSE THEY WERE ABOVE THE MOTOR. I FELL ASLEEP ON ONE OF THESE SEATS. IT WAS PEACEFUL.



FOR ALMOST A MONTH, I LIVED AT THIS RHYTHM: THE NIGHT PROSTRATE AND THE DAY LETTING MYSELF BE CARRIED ACROSS VIENNA BY SLEEP AND THE TRAMWAY.



VERY QUICKLY, MY SAVINGS VANISHED. I WAS BROKE.



IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW QUICKLY YOU CAN LOSE YOUR DIGNITY. I FOUND MYSELF SMOKING BUTTS,



LOOKING FOR FOOD IN TRASH CANS,



I, WHO BEFORE COULDN'T EVEN TASTE FROM OTHERS' PLATES.

SOON, I WAS RECOGNIZED AND THROWN OUT OF ALL THE TRAMS.



SO I HAD TO FIND A WELL-HIDDEN PLACE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. NIGHTS ON THE STREET COULD END VERY BADLY FOR A YOUNG GIRL LIKE ME.



I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE. MY ENTIRE EXISTENCE HAD BEEN PLANNED AROUND MARKUS. IT'S SURELY FOR THIS REASON THAT I FOUND MYSELF WANDERING LIKE THIS.

IT WAS UNTHINKABLE THAT I GO BACK TO SEE ZOZO.



I DON'T CARE. OUR APARTMENT IS TOO SMALL.

NOR INGRID.



YOU DROPPED US FOR A GUY WHO WASN'T EVEN WORTH IT.

AS FOR FRAU DOCTOR HELLER, LET'S NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT HER. SHE REPRESENTED ABSOLUTE EVIL IN MY EYES.





I SPENT MORE THAN TWO MONTHS ON THE STREET IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER.



IT WAS VERY COLD.



I GOT SICK.



I STARTED TO COUGH A LITTLE,



THEN A LITTLE MORE,



THEN A LITTLE MORE STRONGLY,



MY COUGH BECAME CONTINUOUS,



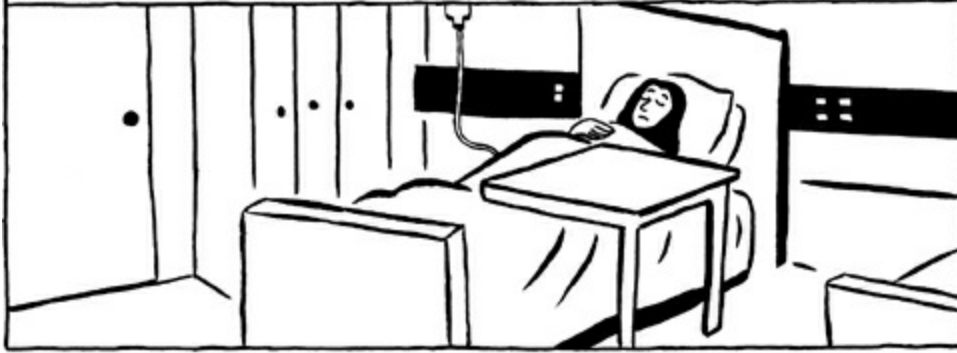
UNTIL I SPIT BLOOD,



AND ENDED UP...



I WOKE UP IN A HOSPITAL. IT WAS A MIRACLE. IF I HAD FAINTED DURING THE NIGHT, NO ONE WOULD HAVE NOTICED AND THE GLACIAL COLD WOULD SURELY HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM FULFILLING MY DESTINY.

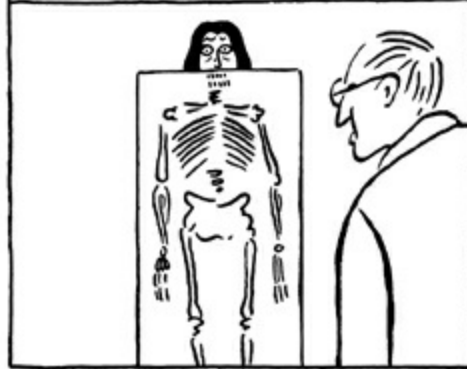


I HAD KNOWN A REVOLUTION THAT HAD MADE ME LOSE PART OF MY FAMILY.

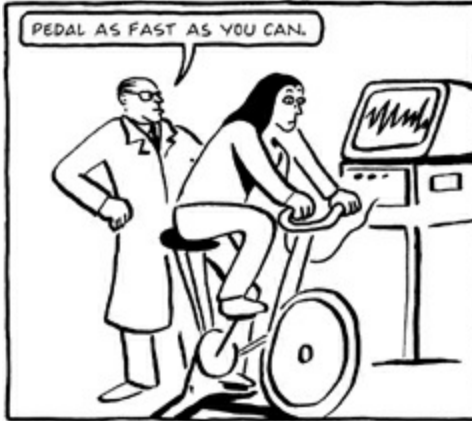
BREATHE, BREATHE



I HAD SURVIVED A WAR THAT HAD DISTANCED ME FROM MY COUNTRY AND MY PARENTS...



PEDAL AS FAST AS YOU CAN.



... AND IT'S A BANAL STORY OF LOVE THAT ALMOST CARRIED ME AWAY.







MY FATHER'S VOICE WAS SOFT AND SOOTHING:

- DAD, IT'S YOU?
- MY DARLING, WE LOOKED FOR YOU EVERYWHERE.
- CAN I COME BACK?
- OF COURSE, WHAT A QUESTION.
- DAD, PROMISE ME TO NEVER ASK ME ANYTHING ABOUT THESE THREE MONTHS.
- I PROMISE YOU... HERE'S YOUR MOTHER.

MY MOTHER'S VOICE WAS TENDER, TOO.

- I AM VERY HAPPY...
- MOM, PLEASE, DON'T CRY.
- THESE ARE TEARS OF JOY.
- MOM...
- COME HOME, DARLING, WE ARE WAITING FOR YOU...
- MOM...
- NO ONE WILL ASK YOU ANY QUESTIONS. IT'S A PROMISE.



BEFORE MY DEPARTURE, I WENT BY FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S.

I CAME TO GET MY THINGS.



HERE THEY ARE!

WHERE IS THE REST?  
THERE IS NO REST. THE REST WILL COMPENSATE THE BROOCH THAT YOU STOLE FROM ME.



I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING. IN ANY CASE, I COULDN'T TAKE FOUR YEARS OF MY LIFE BACK WITH ME.



I FOUND AN INEXPENSIVE HOTEL. I HAD FIVE DAYS AHEAD OF ME, BEFORE THE NEXT FLIGHT TO TEHRAN.



I FINALLY FOUND A PLACE OF MY OWN, SOME PRIVACY.



DESPITE THE DOCTOR'S ORDERS, I BOUGHT MYSELF SEVERAL CARTONS OF CIGARETTES.



YOU ARE PUTTING YOURSELF IN SERIOUS DANGER...



I THINK THAT I PREFERRED TO PUT MYSELF IN SERIOUS DANGER RATHER THAN CONFRONT MY SHAME. MY SHAME AT NOT HAVING BECOME SOMEONE, THE SHAME OF NOT HAVING MADE MY PARENTS PROUD AFTER ALL THE SACRIFICES THEY HAD MADE FOR ME. THE SHAME OF HAVING BECOME A MODOCRANE NIHILIST.

THE FIVE DAYS PASSED LIKE THE WIND AND THE CIGARETTES DIDN'T GET THE BETTER OF ME. I GOT DRESSED,



I PACKED MY BAG...



... I AGAIN PUT ON MY VEIL ...



... AND SO MUCH FOR MY INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LIBERTIES ...



... I NEEDED SO BADLY TO GO HOME.

# THE RETURN

AFTER FOUR YEARS LIVING IN VIENNA, HERE I AM BACK IN TEHRAN. FROM THE MOMENT I ARRIVED AT MEHRABAD AIRPORT AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIRST CUSTOMS AGENT, I IMMEDIATELY FELT THE REPRESSIVE AIR OF MY COUNTRY.



DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING FORBIDDEN? FASHION MAGAZINES, TAPES, ALCOHOL, PORK ...

NO, SIR!

PLEASE FIX YOUR VEIL, MY SISTER!



YES, MY BROTHER.

NEXT! COME ON, SPEED IT UP!

BROTHER AND SISTER ARE THE TERMS USED IN IRAN BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LAW TO GIVE ORDERS TO PEOPLE, WITHOUT OFFENDING THEM.



THERE WERE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE. EACH PASSENGER WAS BEING MET BY A DOZEN PEOPLE. SUDDENLY, AMONGST THE CROWD, I SPOTTED MY PARENTS ...



...BUT IT WASN'T RECIPROCAL. OF COURSE IT MADE SENSE. ONE CHANGES MORE BETWEEN THE AGES OF FOURTEEN AND EIGHTEEN THAN BETWEEN THIRTY AND FORTY.



DAD!

EBI! LOOK! IT'S MARJI!

MARJ..?



MY DARLING, MY DAUGHTER, OH MY! I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU!

I KNEW THAT I HAD GROWN, BUT IT WAS ONLY ONCE I WAS IN THE ARMS OF MY FATHER THAT I REALLY FELT IT. HE, WHO HAD ALWAYS BEFORE APPEARED SO IMPOSING, WAS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS ME.

I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES! TELL US, ARE YOU HUNGRY?

DAD, YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE ON IRAN AIR. THEY FEED YOU AT LEAST FIFTY TIMES.



THEN WE GOT IN THE CAR.

MY FATHER DIDN'T HAVE HIS CADILLAC ANYMORE, BUT DROVE A RENAULT 5 INSTEAD. THAT SAME CADILLAC IN WHICH I WAS ASHAMED TO SIT BECAUSE IT WAS SO DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT BEING MORE COMFORTABLE THAN OTHERS. NOW THAT I MYSELF HAD UNDERSTOOD DISTRESS, I NO LONGER ASKED THESE KINDS OF QUESTIONS. I WOULD EVEN HAVE PREFERRED THAT HE COME GET ME WITH A BETTER CAR, AS A WAY TO REMIND ME OF A MORE GLORIOUS TIME.



I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE TALKING. I PRETENDED TO LOOK AT THE CITY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING.

WELCOME HOME!



THEY WERE THE MOST COMFORTING WORDS THAT I HAD HEARD IN A LONG TIME.


I WENT STRAIGHT TO THE LIVING ROOM. THERE WAS STILL THAT SOFA ON WHICH MY PARENTS HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE SENDING ME TO AUSTRIA.



ENTERING INTO A CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS SUBJECT SCARED ME SO MUCH THAT I HEADED FOR MY ROOM LIKE A BOOK WITHOUT SAYING GOOD NIGHT OR GOODBYE.



MY ROOM... MY ROOM!!



I WAS OVERJOYED TO FINALLY HAVE A PLACE OF MY OWN AND THIS REASSURED ME.

I DIDN'T WANT TO TURN ON THE LIGHT. I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE EVERYTHING AGAIN SO QUICKLY.



I SPENT A GOOD PART OF THE NIGHT IN THE EMPTINESS, JUST HAPPY TO BE THERE.







SO I WENT TO SEE MY MOTHER. SHE WOULD SURELY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE. MAYBE SHE EVEN LISTENED TO THEM TO REMEMBER ME.

GOOD MORNING, MOM!

GOOD MORNING! ALREADY DRESSED!



DO YOU WANT SOME TEA? AN OMELET, SOME TOAST. ?

I'M NOT HUNGRY. TEA IS FINE.



DO YOU REMEMBER FRAU DOCTOR KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?

HER NAME WAS HELLER! OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT HORSE PISS?



AH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IRANIAN TEA!

OH YES, ESPECIALLY WITH A CIGARETTE. DO YOU WANT ONE?



MOM!!

WHAT? YOU KNOW THE PROVERB: "PROSPERITY CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: TEA AFTER A MEAL, AND A CIGARETTE AFTER TEA."

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY MOTHER HAD SPOKEN TO ME IN THIS TONE: IN HER EYES NOW, I HAD BECOME AN ADULT.



MOM, I CAN'T FIND MY TAPES. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR THEM! DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?

WELL, HMM, YOU SEE ... SINCE I DIDN'T THINK THAT ... THAT YOU WOULD COME BACK ONE DAY, I GAVE ... I GAVE THEM TO HOMA.

HOMA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF HER FRIENDS. SHE WAS FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME. A CHILD!



AFTER ALL, MOM HADN'T BEEN WRONG. IN ANY CASE, I NO LONGER LIKED THE IDOLS OF MY ADOLESCENCE.



YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M GOING TO BUY MYSELF SOME NEW ONES!

CAN YOU GIVE ME A SPONGE?

A SPONGE? OF COURSE, DARLING.



I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS LITTLE PROBLEM AS A SIGN. IT WAS TIME TO FINISH WITH THE PAST ...

... AND TO LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE.



IT WASN'T JUST THE VEIL TO WHICH I HAD TO READJUST, THERE WERE ALSO ALL THE IMAGES: THE SIXTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH MURALS PRESENTING MARTYRS, ADORNED WITH SLOGANS HONORING THEM, SLOGANS LIKE "THE MARTYR IS THE HEART OF HISTORY" OR "I HOPE TO BE A MARTYR MYSELF" OR "A MARTYR LIVES FOREVER."



ESPECIALLY AFTER FOUR YEARS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, WHERE YOU WERE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ON THE WALLS "BEST SAUSAGES FOR 20 SHILLINGS," THE ROAD TO READJUSTMENT SEEMED VERY LONG TO ME.







AND WE ARE IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY. IF YOU GO INTO THE POOR QUARTERS IN THE SOUTH OF TEHRAN, ALMOST ALL THE STREETS ARE CALLED MARTYR SO-AND-SO.



PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ANYMORE WHY WE'VE HAD EIGHT YEARS OF WAR. WHY THEIR CHILDREN HAVE DIED...



THIS ENTIRE WAR WAS JUST A BIG SETUP TO DESTROY BOTH THE IRANIAN AND THE IRAQI ARMIES. THE FORMER WAS THE MOST POWERFUL IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1980, AND THE LATTER REPRESENTED A REAL DANGER TO ISRAEL.



THE WEST SOLD WEAPONS TO BOTH CAMPS AND WE, WE WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO ENTER INTO THIS CYNICAL GAME... EIGHT YEARS OF WAR FOR NOTHING!



SO NOW THE STATE NAMES STREETS AFTER MARTYRS TO FLATTER THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS. IN THIS WAY, PERHAPS, THEY'LL FIND SOME MEANING IN ALL THIS ABSURDITY.



YES, BUT THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING ELSE. THIS AFTERNOON ON TV, I SAW MOTHERS WHO WERE CLAIMING TO BE OVERJOYED AND GRATIFIED BY THE DEATHS OF THEIR CHILDREN. I CAN'T FIGURE OUT IF IT'S FAITH OR COMPLETE STUPIDITY...

IT'S A BIT OF BOTH... FOR TEN YEARS THEY'VE BEEN MADE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MARTYRS ARE LIVING IN A FIVE-STAR HOTEL IN PARADISE!



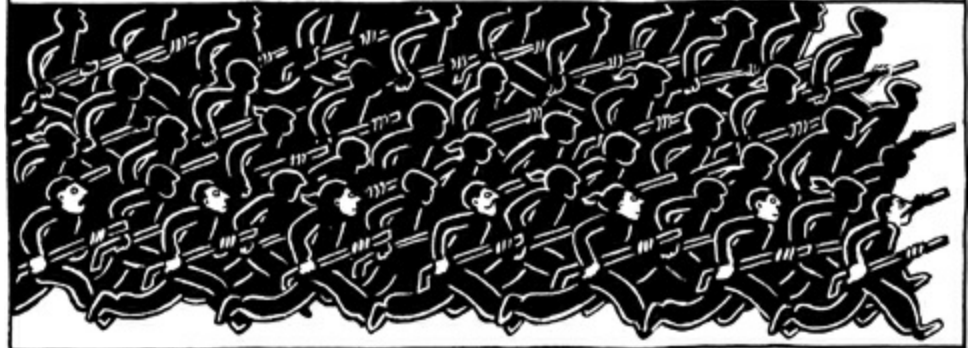
IN THE MEANTIME, THE WAR FEELS MORE LIKE HELL! IF YOU KNEW... THE FEW MONTHS THAT LED UP TO THE CEASE-FIRE WERE PARTICULARLY HORRIBLE.

TELL ME, DAD. I'M ALL EARS.



ONE MONTH BEFORE THE ARMISTICE, IRAQ BEGAN BOMBING TEHRAN EVERY DAY, AS IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO DESTROY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BEFORE IT WAS OVER...

...THE PEACE HADN'T YET BEEN ANNOUNCED WHEN THE ARMED GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE ISLAMIC REGIME, THE IRANIAN MUJAHIDEEN,\* ENTERED THE COUNTRY FROM THE IRAQI BORDER WITH THE SUPPORT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN TO LIBERATE IRAN FROM THE HANDS OF ITS FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERS.



\*THE TERM "MUJAHIDEEN" ISN'T SPECIFIC TO AFGHANISTAN. IT MEANS A COMBATANT.



YOU SURELY HEARD ABOUT IT.  
NO, DAD, I DIDN'T KNOW.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



EB!! REALLY! SHE JUST SPENT FOUR YEARS IN EUROPE!

YES, OF COURSE.



WHAT WAS I SAYING?...  
RIGHT, THE MUJAHIDEEN THOUGHT THAT SINCE IT WAS THE END OF THE WAR, OUR ARMY WOULDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FIGHT ANYMORE.







OR, THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED.



AND, WELL, MOST OF THEM WERE EXECUTED.





# THE JOKE

I HAD BEEN IN TEHRAN FOR TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY RELUCTANCE, IN THE END MY ENTIRE FAMILY CAME TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THEY KNEW ABOUT MY EUROPEAN FAILURE. I WAS SCARED THAT THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED.



THIS IS UNCLE ARDESHIR, MY MOTHER'S UNCLE. HE'S RETIRED FROM THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.



THAT'S MINA, MY FIRST COUSIN. SHE'S AN IMBECILE. SHE TALKS ABOUT ROMY SCHNEIDER AS IF SHE WERE HER BEST FRIEND.



THESE ARE OUR NEIGHBORS. THEY'RE THE INCARNATION OF THE PERFECT FAMILY.

EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT THEY WERE COMING TO SEE ME OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND KINDNESS, I'D QUICKLY HAD ENOUGH OF RECEIVING THEM EVERY DAY.



BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE DONE, THE VISITS CONTINUED...

ASIDE FROM MY PARENTS, THE ONLY PERSON TO WHOM I REALLY WANTED TO TALK WAS MY GRANDMOTHER. BUT SHE CAME AFTER EVERYONE ELSE.



SHE WAS STILL HER OLD SELF.

AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.



I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.

WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A NUN? NO ONE WOULD EVER GUESS THAT YOU'D LIVED IN EUROPE.



OH, REALLY?  
COMPARED TO HER FASHIONABLE MAKEUP, I REALLY DID EXUDE ALL THE ALLURE OF A NUN.

COME ON, TALK TO US! YOU MUST HAVE A MILLION THINGS TO TELL US ABOUT.



I DON'T KNOW...  
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHAT THE NIGHTCLUBS IN VIENNA WERE LIKE?

IT'S JUST THAT... I DIDN'T GO THAT OFTEN... I DON'T REALLY LIKE THEM MUCH.



OH STOP PRETENDING TO BE SO SHOCKED! DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE WAS? ALWAYS GIVING LESSONS! SHE'S A "REBEL," THIS ONE!



I HAD A HARD TIME REMEMBERING WHAT HAD BROUGHT US TOGETHER BEFORE.

A PART OF ME UNDERSTOOD THEM. WHEN SOMETHING IS FORBIDDEN, IT TAKES ON A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPORTANCE. MUCH LATER, I LEARNED THAT MAKING THEMSELVES UP AND WANTING TO FOLLOW WESTERN WAYS WAS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE ON THEIR PART.



NEVERTHELESS, I FELT TERRIBLY ALONE.



SOME DAYS LATER.

LALEH CALLED FOR YOU.

PFFF...



OH!...MY FRIENDS... MY FRIENDS, I FIND THEM ALL SO UNBEARABLY INANE!

YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT. NO ONE IS ASKING THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT! COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT!

GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT, MY CHILD. THERE MUST BE SOME PEOPLE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH!



GRANDMA WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE KIDS I USED TO PLAY WITH IN THE STREET.

I'D LIKE TO SEE ARASH AND KIA AGAIN...



... YES! ARASH AND KIA! KIA ESPECIALLY. WE HAD SO MUCH FUN TOGETHER. AND, HE'S A GUY. HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN MAKEUP ON HIS MIND.

UHH...

MY MOTHER'S RESPONSE SEEMED NORMAL. SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED HIM. SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BADLY BROUGHT UP AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DO STUPID THINGS.



MOM, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW. IF I SEE HIM, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK WINDOWS, OR ATTACK PEOPLE WITH NAILS.

IT'S JUST THAT KIA...



KIA WHAT?

WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY.

AND WHERE DID HE GO?

NOWHERE... THEY ARRESTED HIM. THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO DO HIS MILITARY SERVICE... THEY SENT HIM TO THE FRONT AND...



AND THEN WHAT? IS HE DEAD?

ALMOST.



ALMOST DEAD???

YES, WELL HOW DO YOU SAY... HE IS DISABLED.

I DECIDED TO GO SEE HIM. I LEARNED THAT HIS FAMILY HAD MOVED. MY MOTHER SET UP AN INQUIRY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND FINALLY FOUND THEIR TELEPHONE NUMBER.



THE NEXT DAY, I PUT ON MY BEST CLOTHES. IT HAD SNOWED AGAIN. I SPENT TWO HOURS IN TRAFFIC JAMS, ENOUGH TIME TO ASK MYSELF ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS: "WHAT IF HE LOST AN EYE?" "WHAT IF HE LOST A LEG?" "WHAT IF HE IS HORRIBLY DISFIGURED?" ...













\*IN IRAN, IT'S THE HUSBAND WHO MUST PAY HIS WIFE A DOWRY.





# SKIING



I THOUGHT THAT BY COMING BACK TO IRAN, EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE.



THAT I WOULD FORGET THE OLD DAYS.



BUT MY PAST CAUGHT UP WITH ME.



MY SECRETS WEIGHED ME DOWN.



I BECAME DEPRESSED.



MARJI, I'M GOING GROCERY SHOPPING. DO YOU NEED ANYTHING?

CIGARETTES, PLEASE.

I RENTED "LA DOLCE VITA." DON'T YOU WANT TO WATCH IT TOGETHER?



NO ...

EVEN MY GRANDMA COULD NO LONGER GET ME TO LAUGH.



...HE FARTED! IT SMELLED LIKE A DEAD RAT ...

I WAS ALWAYS IN FRONT OF THE TV. THERE WAS A JAPANESE SERIES, CALLED "OSHIN," THAT I WATCHED OFTEN. IT WAS THE STORY OF A POOR GIRL WHO CAME TO WORK IN TOKYO.



AT FIRST, SHE CLEANED HOUSES, THEN SHE BECAME A HAIRDRESSER AND MET A GUY WHOSE MOTHER WAS OPPOSED TO THEIR MARRIAGE.



YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A HAIRDRESSER, YOU AREN'T WORTHY OF MY SON! GET OUT, YOU KOTTEN GIRL!

NO! I LOVE HIM!

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE MOTHER-IN-LAW HATED HAIRDRESSERS SO MUCH.

MUCH LATER, I GOT TO KNOW A GIRL WHO DUBBED TELEVISION SHOWS. SHE TOLD ME THAT OSHIN WAS IN FACT A GEISHA AND SINCE HER PROFESSION DIDN'T SUIT ISLAMIC MORALS, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHANNEL HAD DECIDED THAT SHE'D BE A HAIRDRESSER.



IT WAS BELIEVABLE BECAUSE OSHIN AND HER COURTESAN FRIENDS SPENT THEIR TIME MAKING CHIGNONS.

TO LIFT ME OUT OF MY DEPRESSION, MY FRIENDS SUGGESTED TAKING ME SKIING. ONE OF THEIR PARENTS HAD A CHALET AT DIZIN.\* I DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT MY MOTHER INSISTED SO MUCH THAT I ENDED UP ACCEPTING.



\* A SKI RESORT ABOUT THIRTY MILES FROM TEHRAN.



ACTUALLY, I FELT ON TOP OF THE WORLD. THE MOUNTAIN, THE BLUE SKY, THE SUN, ... ALL OF IT SUITED ME. LITTLE BY LITTLE MY HEAD AND MY SPIRIT TOOK ON SOME COLOR.









I WAS OFTEN IN A TRANCE.

Marjane, do you want to come

the Caspian Sea

yes



BUT AS SOON AS THE EFFECT OF THE PILLS WORE OFF, I ONCE AGAIN BECAME CONSCIOUS. MY CALAMITY COULD BE SUMMARIZED IN ONE SENTENCE: I WAS NOTHING.



I WAS A WESTERNER IN IRAN, AN IRANIAN IN THE WEST. I HAD NO IDENTITY. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ANYMORE WHY I WAS LIVING.

SO I DECIDED TO DIE. A FEW WEEKS AFTER MY RESOLUTION ...

YOU SAID THAT YOU WOULD COME WITH US, TO SEE THE CASPIAN SEA ... IF YOU WANT, WE CAN CANCEL THE TRIP. WE DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU ...

REALLY, DAD! DIDN'T I MANAGE IN VIENNA? NO, IT'S OKAY, YOU SHOULD GO! IN ANY CASE, I NEED TO BE ALONE.



AND SO THEY WENT FOR TEN DAYS.



THE DAY AFTER THEIR DEPARTURE, I MADE MY ARRANGEMENTS. I HAD SEEN, IN A FILM, A WOMAN WHO DRANK WINE BEFORE SLITTING HER WRISTS. NOT HAVING ANY WINE, I DRANK A HALF BOTTLE OF VODKA.



I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO PUSH THE BLADE INTO MY FLESH. I HAD ALWAYS BEEN VERY AFRAID OF BLOOD. NEVERTHELESS, SINCE I WAS DRUNK, I MANAGED TO GRAZE MYSELF.



AS FOR THE REST, I FOLLOWED THE FILM. I STRETCHED OUT IN A HOT BATH, WAITING FOR MY BLOOD TO EMPTY OUT. BUT IT KEPT COAGULATING.



IT MUST BE SAID THAT IT'S A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO KILL YOURSELF WITH A FRUIT KNIFE. WEAPONS WITH BLADES WERE NOT MADE FOR ME. I NEEDED TO FIND SOMETHING ELSE.

SO I WAITED UNTIL MY WRIST HEALED TO SWALLOW ALL MY ANTI-DEPRESSANTS.



I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT WAS THE LAST TIME I WOULD SEE THE SUN. I ALSO SPARED A THOUGHT FOR MY PARENTS.



IT WAS THE END ...



...THREE DAYS LATER ...



IT'S MY HAND! SHIT! I'M STILL ALIVE!



WHEN I WOKE UP, THE DRUGS THAT I HAD TAKEN GAVE ME SEVERAL HOURS' WORTH OF HALLUCINATIONS.



SO I WENT TO SEE MY THERAPIST.



YOU SWALLOWED THEM ALL? ARE YOU SURE?

YES ...

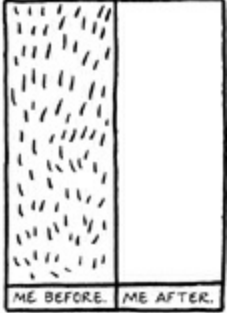
THAT DOSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO FINISH OFF AN ELEPHANT! ... EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A BELIEVER, ASIDE FROM DIVINE INTERVENTION, I CAN'T FIND ANY OTHER EXPLANATION FOR YOUR SURVIVAL.

I INFERRED FROM THIS THAT I WAS NOT MADE TO DIE.



FROM NOW ON, I'M TAKING MYSELF IN HAND.

BODY HAIR BEING AN OBSESSION OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN, I BEGAN WITH HAIR REMOVAL.



THEN I GOT RID OF MY OLD CLOTHES.



AND HAD SOME NEW CLOTHES MADE.



A MODERN WARDROBE.



ORIGINAL SHOES.



A FASHIONABLE HAIRCUT.



A PERMANENT.



I BECAME A SOPHISTICATED WOMAN ...



SHOPPING.



MAKEUP.



AND AS A HEALTHY MIND IS FOUND IN A HEALTHY BODY, I TOOK UP EXERCISE.



MORE AND MORE,



AND MORE AND MORE,



TO THE POINT WHERE I BECAME AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR.



AND FIVE AND SIX... AND ONE AND TWO...

♪ ♪ ♪  
EYE OF THE TIGER  
♪ ♪ ♪

STRONG AND INVINCIBLE LIKE THIS, I WAS GOING TO MEET MY NEW DESTINY.

مادر من همیشه می گفت که من باید یک دختر باشم. اما من یک پسر هستم. این باعث شد که من همیشه احساس می کنم که من یک دختر نیستم. این باعث شد که من همیشه احساس می کنم که من یک پسر نیستم.

# THE EXAM

MY PARENTS OBVIOUSLY NEVER KNEW THE REASONS FOR MY METAMORPHOSIS. MY NEW APPROACH TO LIFE DELIGHTED THEM TO THE POINT OF THEIR BUYING ME A CAR, BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.



I HAD NEW FRIENDS, I WENT TO PARTIES ... IN SHORT, MY LIFE HAD TAKEN A COMPLETELY NEW TURN. ONE EVENING IN APRIL 1989, I WAS INVITED TO MY FRIEND ROXANA'S HOUSE.



ASIDE FROM THE LADY OF THE HOUSE, I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE.



I'M REZA. HOW ARE YOU?  
AND YOURSELF?

CAN I SIT DOWN?



PLEASE DO.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



I'M AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR, I ALSO TEACH FRENCH.  
HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANCE?

NO, IN AUSTRIA, BUT I STUDIED AT THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN AND IN VIENNA.  
WERE YOU AT THE LYCÉE RAZI?\*



YES, WERE YOU TOO?  
NO, NOT ME, MY FRIENDS.

AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO?



PAINTING.



NO WAY! I PAINT TOO!

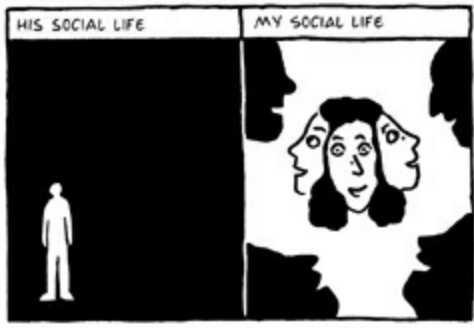
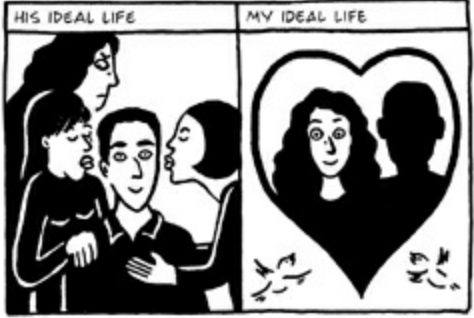
\*THE NAME OF THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN.





\*A MOUNTAIN CHAIN IN THE WEST OF IRAN







WE NEEDED EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT WE VERY QUICKLY STARTED TO TALK ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

I WANT TO LEAVE HERE. EITHER I'LL GO TO EUROPE, OR TO THE UNITED STATES, BUT I WON'T STAY HERE.



WHERE WILL YOU GO IN EUROPE?

ITALY, FRANCE, SWEDEN, SPAIN, ENGLAND... IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. I JUST DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN IRAN ANYMORE.



AND US?

YOU'LL COME WITH ME!



I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY RIGHT AWAY.

IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE STILL NOSTALGIC. YOU'LL SEE, A YEAR FROM NOW PEOPLE WILL DISGUST YOU. ALWAYS INTERFERING IN THINGS THAT DON'T CONCERN THEM.



MAYBE SO, BUT IN THE WEST YOU CAN COLLAPSE IN THE STREET AND NO ONE WILL GIVE YOU A HAND.

DON'T WORRY! WE'LL FIND A SOLUTION!



HAPPILY, GETTING A VISA PROVED TO BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT. SO WE DECIDED TO STUDY FOR THE NATIONAL EXAM\* SO AS NOT TO WASTE YEARS OF OUR LIVES DOING NOTHING. IT WAS VERY HARD! IT HAD BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE REZA HAD GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL. HE WAS OUT OF PRACTICE FOR STUDYING. AS FOR ME, I HADN'T READ OR WRITTEN IN PERSIAN SINCE I WAS FOURTEEN.



\* IN IRAN, YOU CAN'T ENTER UNIVERSITY WITHOUT HAVING PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

JUNE 1989. AFTER TWO MONTHS OF HARD WORK, THE BIG DAY FINALLY ARRIVED.



THE CANDIDATES TOOK THE EXAMS IN DIFFERENT PLACES, ACCORDING TO THEIR SEX.



THERE WERE QUESTIONNAIRES SPECIFIC TO EACH SECTION.

TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF ART, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER TESTS, THERE WAS A DRAWING QUALIFICATION. I WAS SURE THAT ONE OF ITS SUBJECTS WOULD BE "THE MARTYRS," AND FOR GOOD REASON! SO I PRACTICED BY COPYING A PHOTO OF MICHELANGELO'S "LA PIETÀ" ABOUT TWENTY TIMES. ON THAT DAY, I REPRODUCED IT BY PUTTING A BLACK CHADOR ON MARY'S HEAD, AN ARMY UNIFORM ON JESUS, AND THEN I ADDED TWO TULIPS, SYMBOLS OF THE MARTYRS, ON EITHER SIDE SO THERE WOULD BE NO CONFUSION.



I WAS VERY PLEASED WITH MY DRAWING.

IT'S SAID THAT RED TULIPS GROW FROM THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS.

... WE HAD TO WAIT SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE GETTING THE RESULTS IN THE "ETELAAT,"\* WHICH DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL 3 P.M. WE WERE IN FRONT OF THE KIOSKS AT 7.



LOOK, THERE'S MY NAME!

\* NAME OF A NEWSPAPER.



SHIT! HERE'S YOURS TOO!

KNOWING THAT 40% OF THE PLACES WERE RESERVED FOR CHILDREN OF MARTYRS AND THOSE DISABLED BY THE WAR, THE SEATS WERE LIMITED. IT WAS AN UNEXPECTED STROKE OF LUCK THAT WE BOTH PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

SINCE WE WEREN'T MARRIED, WE COULDN'T KISS EACH OTHER IN PUBLIC, OR EVEN GIVE ONE ANOTHER A FRIENDLY HUG TO EXPRESS OUR EXTREME JOY. WE RISKED IMPRISONMENT AND BEING WHIPPED. SO WE GOT INTO THE CAR QUICKLY ...



... WHERE HE PUT HIS HAND ON MINE.



IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY.





A FEW MONTHS LATER, I LEARNED VIA THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ART THAT THE MULLAH WHO HAD INTERVIEWED ME HAD REALLY APPRECIATED MY HONESTY. APPARENTLY, HE'D EVEN SAID THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T LIE. I WAS LUCKY. I HAD STUMBLED ON A TRUE RELIGIOUS MAN.

# THE MAKEUP

OUR SUCCESS ON THE EXAM MADE REZA AND ME MORE CALM ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE. NOW WE WERE ABLE TO STAY TOGETHER, BECAUSE NEITHER OF US WAS GOING TO LEAVE IRAN WITHOUT THE OTHER. FROM THEN ON, WE BECAME A REAL COUPLE, WHICH NATURALLY MEANT THAT WE BEGAN TO PICK ON EACH OTHER. I REPROACHED HIM FOR NOT BEING ACTIVE ENOUGH. HE CHOSE TO CRITICIZE MY PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: NOT ELEGANT ENOUGH, NOT MADE-UP ENOUGH, ETC., ETC., ...



AT THE TIME, I THOUGHT I SHOULD MAKE SOME EFFORTS... ONE DAY, WHEN WE HAD A RENDEZVOUS IN FRONT OF THE SAVAFIEH BAZAAR,\* I ARRIVED VERY MADE-UP TO GIVE HIM A SURPRISE.



\* NAME OF A SHOPPING CENTER

SUDDENLY, FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET, I SAW A CAR FULL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION ARRIVE, FOLLOWED BY A BUS. WHEN THEY CAME WITH THE BUS, IT MEANT A RAID.



THIS CALLED FOR ACTION.

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?



THAT'S IT!! I'VE GOT IT!



I HAD TO DISTRACT THEM. I HAD TO GO SEE THEM BEFORE THEY SAW ME.



YES MY SISTER!

THERE'S A GUY WHO SAID SOMETHING INDECENT TO ME.

OHC



WHERE'S THE BASTARD, I'LL SHUT HIM UP ONCE AND FOR ALL!

OVER THERE! ON THE STEPS! THAT'S HIM!!









IT MUST BE SAID THAT DURING THIS PERIOD, YOUNG COUPLES WHO SHOWED THEMSELVES IN PUBLIC WERE RUNNING A RISK.



IF THEY WERE MARRIED, THERE OBVIOUSLY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A PROBLEM ...

MY BROTHER, WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS WOMAN?

SHE'S MY WIFE.



BUT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE ON YOU.

OKAY, IT'S FINE!



THE TROUBLES BEGAN IF THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE WERE NOT UNITED BY SACRED TIES.

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS MAN?

HE'S MY COUSIN.



ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAD JUST MET.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

AZAM KOLAHDOUZ



WHAT'S HIS MOTHER'S NAME?

I FORGOT.

WHAT'S THAT? HE'S YOUR COUSIN, RIGHT? YOU MUST KNOW THE NAME OF YOUR AUNT!



COME ON, GET IN THE CAR!



THEY TOOK THEM TO THE COMMITTEE.\* THEN THEY CALLED THEIR PARENTS WHO CAME TO FREE THEIR CHILDREN, BY PAYING A FINE.

SIR, YOUR DAUGHTER IS AT THE COMMITTEE OF SAAD ABAD, ACCOMPANIED BY A YOUNG MAN... A CERTAIN SAID! THEY WERE WALKING TOGETHER IN THE PARK. IT'S AN ACT AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS MORAL CODE AND THE VALUES OF OUR REPUBLIC. YOU CAN COME GET HER IN EXCHANGE FOR 20,000 TUMANS\*\* IN CASH, OTHERWISE SHE WILL BE WHIPPED.

SORRY! SORRY!

SORRY

\*THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION. \*\*AT THE TIME, THE MONTHLY SALARY OF A GOVERNMENT WORKER.







I GOT HOME QUITE EARLY.

GRANDMA! WHAT A WONDERFUL SURPRISE! WHERE ARE MOM AND DAD?

THEY WENT TO THE MOVIES. I STAYED HOME TO SEE YOU.

I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU!



... SO I LOOKED AROUND ME AND I FOUND A GUY WHO LOOKED A LITTLE SCRUFFY. I WENT OVER TO THE BEARDED MEN ...



... THEY ARRESTED HIM! HA! HA! HA! ... THEY TOOK THE GUY AWAY! HA! HA! HA!



HA! HA! HA!  
HA! HA!



AND YOU FIND THAT FUNNY?

YOU DON'T?

NO! I THINK THAT YOU'RE A SELFISH BITCH! THAT'S WHAT I THINK!!



HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS? HE SPENT A THIRD OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON FOR HAVING DEFENDED SOME INNOCENTS! AND YOUR UNCLE ANDOOSH? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HIM TOO??? HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS IDEAS! WHAT HAVE I TAUGHT YOU? HUNH???

"INTEGRITY"!!! DOES THIS WORD MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?



I'M LEAVING. TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT THIS! IT'S THE BLOOD OF YOUR GRANDPA AND OF YOUR UNCLE THAT RUNS IN YOUR VEINS! SHAME ON YOU!



MY GRANDMA HAD JUST VELLED AT ME FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.

I DECIDED THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE THE LAST.

# THE CONVOCATION



MANY OF THE STUDENTS KNEW ONE ANOTHER ALREADY. IN LISTENING TO THEM, I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY'D TAKEN THE PREPARATORY CLASSES TOGETHER. OUR FIRST LESSON WAS "ART HISTORY."

WHAT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AS ARAB ART AND ARCHITECTURE SHOULD IN FACT BE CALLED THE ART OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE, WHICH STRETCHED FROM CHINA TO SPAIN. THIS ART IS A CROSS BETWEEN INDIAN, PERSIAN, AND MESOPOTAMIAN ART. THOSE WHOM WE CONSIDER, LIKE AVICENNA, TO BE "ARAB SCHOLARS" ARE FOR THE MOST PART ANYTHING BUT ARABS. EVEN THE FIRST BOOK OF ARABIC GRAMMAR WAS WRITTEN BY AN IRANIAN.



IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS NOT ABLE TO PUT AN END TO OUR CHAUVINISM. TO THE CONTRARY! PEOPLE OFTEN COMPARED THE OBSCURANTISM OF THE NEW REGIME TO THE ARAB INVASION. ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, "BEING PERSIAN" MEANT "NOT BEING A FANATIC." BUT THIS PARALLEL WENT ONLY SO FAR CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WASN'T COMPOSED OF ARAB INVADERS BUT PERSIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS.

AT LUNCH TIME.

THE PROFESSOR IS VERY INTERESTING, BUT OH MY! DOES HIS MOUTH SMELL EVEN THIRTY FEET AWAY YOU CAN SMELL HIS JACKAL'S BREATH!

AMONG THE GUYS, A FEW EVEN HAVE HAIR CUTS!!! MY GOD!

HA! HA! HA!



DESPITE THEIR UPTIGHT APPEARANCE, THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS SEEMED TO BE QUITE THE COMEDIANS.

HEY! LOOK, THE GUY IN THE BLUE SHIRT... HE'S REALLY NOT BAD!



THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT REZA. I SUDDENLY FOUND THEM A LOT LESS FUNNY.

HI, I'M SHOUKA.

AND I'M NIYOOSHA.

NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M MARJANE.



NIYOOSHA HAD VERY GREEN EYES WHICH MADE HER THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER GIRL AT THE COLLEGE. (THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS HAVE BLACK EYES.)

YOU'VE LIVED ABROAD?

YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE OF YOUR MAGHNAEH\* YOU WEAR IT LIKE A BEGINNER.



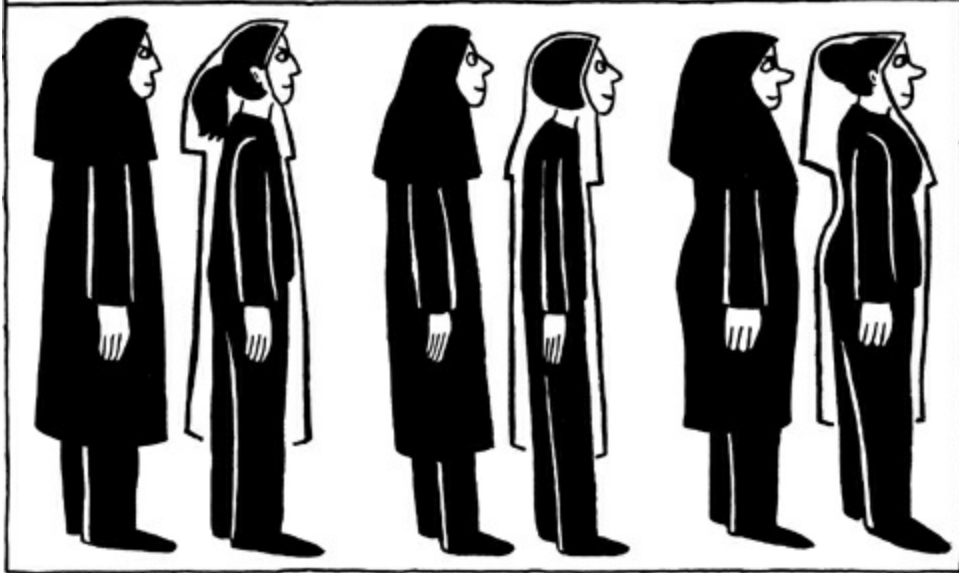
SHOUKA WAS VERY FUNNY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED TWO YEARS LATER, HER HUSBAND FORBADE HER FROM ASSOCIATING WITH ME. TO HIM, I WAS AN AMORAL PERSON.

IT'S TRUE THAT WEARING THE VEIL WAS A REAL SCIENCE. YOU HAD TO MAKE A SPECIAL FOLD, LIKE THIS:



NEVERTHELESS, THINGS WERE EVOLVING... YEAR BY YEAR, WOMEN WERE WINNING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF HAIR AND LOSING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF VEIL.

WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GOT TO THE POINT WHERE YOU COULD GUESS THEIR SHAPE, THE WAY THEY WORE THEIR HAIR AND EVEN THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE MORE A WOMAN SHOWED, THE MORE PROGRESSIVE AND MODERN SHE WAS.





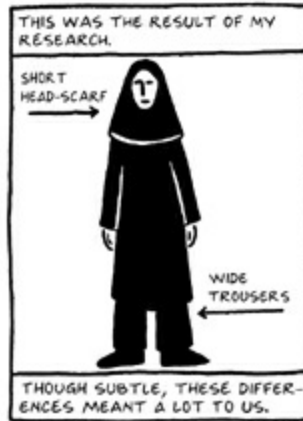


ONCE IN THE AMPHITHEATER, WE DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR OUR CONVOCATION: THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ORGANIZED A LECTURE WITH THE THEME OF "MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDUCT," TO SHOW US THE RIGHT PATH.

WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BEHAVE LOOSELY! IT'S THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS WHICH HAS NOURISHED THE FLOWERS OF OUR REPUBLIC. TO ALLOW ONESELF TO BEHAVE INDECENTLY IS TO TRAMPLE ON THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALSO, I AM ASKING THE YOUNG LADIES PRESENT HERE TO WEAR LESS-WIDE TROUSERS AND LONGER HEAD-SCARVES. YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR HAIR WELL, YOU SHOULD NOT WEAR MAKEUP, YOU SHOULD...







# THE SOCKS



AFTER A FEW WEEKS, WE DISCOVERED, ALONG WITH OUR PROFESSOR, THAT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A MODEL ON WHOM YOU COULD AT LEAST DISTINGUISH THE LIMBS. OUR DIRECTOR APPROVED.



ONE EVENING, BEFORE THE COLLEGE CLOSED, ONE OF THE SUPERVISORS PAID ME A VISIT.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE SO LATE?

I'M DRAWING.



WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT THIS MAN?

WELL, BECAUSE I'M DRAWING HIM.



YES, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LOOK AT HIM. IT'S AGAINST THE MORAL CODE.



WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? SHOULD I DRAW THIS MAN WHILE LOOKING AT THE DOOR???!?

YES.

THESE ABSURD SITUATIONS WERE QUITE FREQUENT. ONE DAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO SEE MY DENTIST, BUT CLASSES FINISHED LATER THAN EXPECTED.



SUDDENLY, I HEARD A VOICE OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER:



WE CONFRONTED THE REGIME AS BEST WE COULD.



IN 1990, THE ERA OF GRAND REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS WAS OVER. BETWEEN 1980 AND 1983, THE GOVERNMENT HAD IMPRISONED AND EXECUTED SO MANY HIGH-SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS THAT WE NO LONGER DARED TO TALK POLITICS.



OUR STRUGGLE WAS MORE DISCREET.



IT HINGED ON THE LITTLE DETAILS. TO OUR LEADERS, THE SMALLEST THING COULD BE A SUBJECT OF SUBVERSION.



IN SHORT... EVERYTHING WAS A PRETEXT TO ARREST US.

I EVEN REMEMBER SPENDING AN ENTIRE DAY AT THE COMMITTEE BECAUSE OF A PAIR OF RED SOCKS.



THE REGIME HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT ONE PERSON LEAVING HER HOUSE WHILE ASKING HERSELF:

ARE MY TROUSERS LONG ENOUGH?  
IS MY VEIL IN PLACE?  
CAN MY MAKE-UP BE SEEN?  
ARE THEY GOING TO WHIP ME?



NO LONGER ASKS HERSELF:

WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF THOUGHT?  
WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF SPEECH?  
MY LIFE, IS IT LIVABLE?  
WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE POLITICAL PRISONS?



IT'S ONLY NATURAL! WHEN WE'RE AFRAID, WE LOSE ALL SENSE OF ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION. OUR FEAR PARALYZES US. BESIDES, FEAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ALL DICTATORS' REPRESSION.

SHOWING YOUR HAIR OR PUTTING ON MAKEUP LOGICALLY BECAME ACTS OF REBELLION.



UNFORTUNATELY, MANY OF US WERE REBELS ONLY IN APPEARANCE. ONE DAY, IN CLASS...

MARTANE! YOUR PENCIL CASE!



THANKS DORNA, THANKS!

YOU'RE WELCOME.

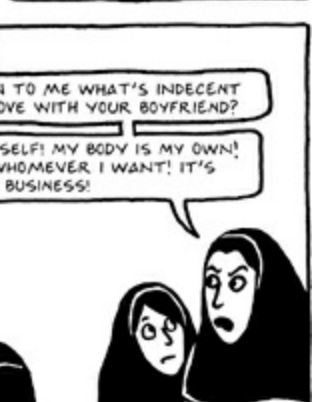


YOU TAKE THE PILL?

YES.

ME TOO, I'M IRREGULAR. ARE YOU IRREGULAR, TOO?

NO, NOT AT ALL. I TAKE IT BECAUSE I SLEEP WITH MY BOYFRIEND!



OOOOH!!!!

A LITTLE DECENCY, PLEASE!

SHUT UP!

CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT'S INDECENT ABOUT MAKING LOVE WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND?

SHUT UP YOURSELF! MY BODY IS MY OWN! I GIVE IT TO WHOMEVER I WANT! IT'S NOBODY ELSE'S BUSINESS!

I DIDN'T SAY EVERYTHING I COULD HAVE: THAT SHE WAS FRUSTRATED BECAUSE SHE WAS STILL A VIRGIN AT TWENTY-SEVEN! THAT SHE WAS FORBIDDING ME WHAT WAS FORBIDDEN TO HER! THAT TO MARRY SOMEONE THAT YOU DON'T KNOW, FOR HIS MONEY, IS PROSTITUTION. THAT DESPITE HER LOCKS OF HAIR AND HER LIPSTICK, SHE WAS ACTING LIKE THE STATE. THAT... ETC... THAT DAY, HALF THE CLASS TURNED ITS BACK ON ME.





HAPPILY, THERE WAS STILL THE OTHER HALF. LITTLE BY LITTLE, I GOT TO KNOW THE STUDENTS WHO THOUGHT LIKE ME.



WE WOULD GO TO ONE ANOTHER'S HOUSES, WHERE WE POSED FOR EACH OTHER ... WE HAD AT LAST FOUND A PLACE OF FREEDOM.



AT FIRST THERE WERE ONLY FIVE OF US.



THEN ...



AND FINALLY ...



WE WERE MUCH MORE NUMEROUS THAN I WOULD HAVE BELIEVED.

OUR PROFESSOR WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE THE SKETCHES WE DID AT HOME.



BRAVO! AN ARTIST SHOULD DEFEY THE LAW! I CONGRATULATE YOU!

THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I BECAME CONSCIOUS OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION OF MY COUNTRY AND THE REAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE, THE ONE THAT WENT ON BEHIND THE WALLS.



OUR BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC AND OUR BEHAVIOR IN PRIVATE WERE POLAR OPPOSITES.



... THIS DISPARITY MADE US SCHIZOPHRENIC.

TO FIND A SEMBLANCE OF EQUILIBRIUM, WE PARTIED ALMOST EVERY NIGHT ...



... BUT EVEN IN OUR HOMES, THEY DIDN'T LEAVE US ALONE.



I SAW A PATROL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION OUT THE WINDOW! I THINK THEY'RE COMING TO ARREST US!

COME ALONG YOU LITTLE BASTARD! YOU'RE ORGANIZING PARTIES! I'LL CURE YOU OF YOUR TASTE FOR PLEASURE!



THEY CARTED EVERYONE OFF TO PRISON. OBVIOUSLY, WE WERE VERY SCARED THE FIRST TIME.

... BUT WE QUICKLY GOT USED TO IT. WE WOULD EVEN ARRIVE LAUGHING.



OH BEARDED ONE, YOUR BEARD STINKS!

THEN CAME THE USUAL SPIEL ...



...AGAINST THE MORAL CODE ... THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS ... TWENTY THOUSAND TUMANS ...

OUR PARENTS PAID AND WE WERE RELEASED.



... UNTIL THE NEXT TIME. TO BE ABLE TO PARTY, YOU HAD TO HAVE MEANS.

AND THEN ONE NIGHT.









DAD, FARZAD IS...

I KNOW. I WAS SCARED... MAYBE YOU SHOULD...

BUT HE DIDN'T FINISH HIS SENTENCE. DESPITE THE DANGER, MY FATHER ALWAYS LET ME LIVE THE WAY I FELT WAS RIGHT.

THE NEXT DAY, WE GATHERED AT MY HOUSE.

POOR FARZAD. HE WAS SO HANDSOME. I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S DEAD!

I COULD KILL THOSE BEARDED MEN WITH MY OWN HANDS.

I'M NOT COMING TO ANY MORE PARTIES. IT'S TOO FRIGHTENING!

YOU'RE WRONG. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT! TO STOP US FROM LIVING! NOTHING BOTHERS THEM MORE THAN TO SEE US HAPPY!

ALI IS RIGHT!

THAT SAME NIGHT, ALI HAD A BIG PARTY AT HIS HOUSE.

I NEVER DRANK SO MUCH IN MY LIFE.



# THE WEDDING





LONG AFTERWARD MY FATHER ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE HAD ALWAYS KNOWN THAT I WOULD GET DIVORCED. HE WANTED ME TO REALIZE BY MYSELF THAT REZA AND I WERE NOT MADE FOR EACH OTHER. HE WAS RIGHT.



AND STARTING THE NEXT DAY.  
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS?  
UHH ... IT'S A PRETTY DRESS, BUT I CAN'T WEAR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



NEXT, SHE TOOK ME TO A PLACE KNOWN FOR ITS "WEDDING HAIRDOS," TO TRY SOME OUT.  
DO YOU LIKE IT, BABY?



I WAS THE SUBJECT OF DOZENS OF EXPERIMENTS, OF ALL KINDS: MAKEUP, FLOWER BOUQUETS, SHOES, ...  
I KNOW THAT YOU WANT TO DO YOUR BEST FOR ME, BUT I DETEST WEDDING DRESSES, FASHIONABLE HAIRSTYLES AND ALL THE REST. COULDN'T WE HAVE JUST A SMALL LITTLE PARTY ...  
LISTEN, WE HAVE ONLY ONE CHILD: YOU! IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THIS WILL BE YOUR ONE AND ONLY WEDDING. YOU DRESS AND WEAR YOUR HAIR THE WAY YOU WANT, BUT LET US AT LEAST CELEBRATE THIS EVENT IN OUR OWN WAY.



I GAVE IN, AND MY PARENTS TOOK ADVANTAGE BY INVITING FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE, HAVING TWO BANDS, A VIDEO CREW, FLOWERS ...







DESPITE EVERYTHING I TRIED, MY EXISTENTIALIST AND IDENTITY CRISIS WAS ONLY ONE PART OF THE PROBLEM. THE OTHER PART WAS REZA.

I'D LIKE TO HANG THE PAINTING THERE!

NO, I PREFER IT HERE!

IN RETROSPECT, I CAN SEE THAT I HAD ALWAYS KNOWN THAT IT WOULDN'T WORK BETWEEN US. BUT AFTER MY PITIFUL LOVE STORY IN VIENNA, I NEEDED TO BELIEVE IN SOMEONE AGAIN...

I'M GOING TO HAVE LUNCH AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE. ARE YOU COMING?

NO, I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.

... SO MUCH SO THAT I CONTINUALLY LIED TO HIM.

I LOVE GIRLS IN SUITS.

THAT'S JUST MY STYLE!

I DON'T LIKE RUDE GIRLS.

OH! I HATE THEM!

I LIKE LIGHT EYES.

... AND I BOUGHT MYSELF BLUE CONTACTS.

DON'T YOU WANT TO COME TO KIANA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY?

NO. I'LL BE BACK LATE.

WHATEVER YOU WANT.

BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH

I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING YOU SAY!

HE MARRIED:

Her

AND FOUND HIMSELF WITH:

HER

AFTER ONE MONTH OF MARRIAGE, WE SET UP SEPARATE BEDROOMS.



HE HAD HIS LIFE ...

WHERE'S YOUR WIFE?

ON VACATION, WITH HER COUSIN.



...AND I HAD MINE.

AND REZA'S WELL?

YEAH, HE'S WITH HIS BROTHER.

WE HAD BEEN CONSIDERED THE MODEL COUPLE FOR SO LONG AND BY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ACCEPT OUR FAILURE ...



...WE WERE KEEPING UP APPEARANCES IN PUBLIC.

IS SHE GOING TO SHUT HER BIG MOUTH?

WHAT AN ASS!



BUT AS SOON AS WE WERE ALONE.

YOU NEVER WANT TO GO OUT! IF I HAVE TO GO EVERYWHERE ALONE, WHAT'S THE POINT OF LIVING TOGETHER?



I LET YOU DO WHATEVER YOU WANT! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE MACHO MEN WHO EXPECTS YOU TO REPORT BACK! SO LEAVE ME ALONE!



IN THE SPACE OF TWO MONTHS, WE WENT FROM WEEKLY FIGHTS TO DAILY INSULTS.





# THE SATELLITE







AT THE TIME, THIS KIND OF ANALYSIS WASN'T COMMONPLACE. AFTER OUR OWN WAR, WE WERE HAPPY THAT IRAQ GOT ITSELF ATTACKED AND DELIGHTED THAT IT WASN'T HAPPENING IN OUR COUNTRY.



WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO SLEEP PEACEFULLY WITHOUT FEAR OF MISSILES...



WE NO LONGER NEEDED TO LINE UP WITH OUR FOOD RATION COUPONS ...



AND THEN, THERE WASN'T ANY MORE OPPOSITION. THE PROTESTERS HAD BEEN EXECUTED.



OR HAD FLED THE COUNTRY ANY WAY POSSIBLE.



THE REGIME HAD ABSOLUTE POWER ...



... AND MOST PEOPLE, IN SEARCH OF A CLOUD OF HAPPINESS, HAD FORGOTTEN THEIR POLITICAL CONSCIENCE.

I WASN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM THEM. ASIDE FROM THE TIME I SPENT WITH MY PARENTS, I LIVED FROM DAY TO DAY WITHOUT ASKING MYSELF ANY QUESTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN JANUARY 1992, A BIG EVENT OCCURRED:

THAT WAS FARIBORZ ON THE TELEPHONE. HE JUST INSTALLED A SATELLITE ANTENNA AT HIS HOUSE!



THE SATELLITE ANTENNA WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE OPENING UP OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.



WE COULD FINALLY EXPERIENCE A VIEW DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE DICTATED BY OUR GOVERNMENT.

LOOK AT THIS ONE! HE'S SO IMPATIENT THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY HELLO!

WHERE IS THIS ANTENNA?



HERE IT IS!



WE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY AT FARIBORZ'S WATCHING MTV AND EUROSPORT.

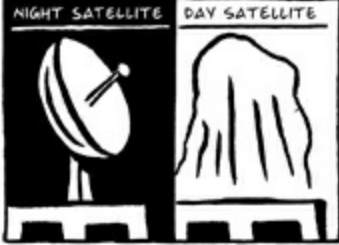


BY THE END OF THE EVENING, OUR MINDS WERE MUCH BROADER!

SOON THIS DEVICE DECORATED THE ROOFS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN!



THE REGIME BECAME AWARE THAT THIS NEW PHENOMENON WAS WORKING AGAINST THEIR INDOCTRINATION. IT THEREFORE DECREED A BAN, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. PEOPLE WHO HAD TASTED IMAGES OTHER THAN THOSE OF BEARDED MEN RESISTED BY HIDING THEIR ANTENNAS DURING THE DAY.



THE CHIC NEIGHBORHOODS

MY PARENTS PROCURED ONE FOR THEMSELVES, TOO. FROM THEN ON I SPENT WHOLE DAYS AND NIGHTS AT THEIR HOUSE WATCHING TV.



THE PROGRAM DIDN'T MATTER. FROM THE MOMENT THERE WERE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, I WAS HAPPY. ONE NIGHT ...



HI! ARE YOU STILL HERE? WHERE'S YOUR MOTHER? WITH HER FRIENDS.

THAT BASTARD! HE ESCAPED UNSCATHED AGAIN!



LISTEN, WE NEED TO TALK!

WAIT, WAIT, THEY'RE GOING TO ARREST HIM!



NO! WE'RE GOING TO TALK FIRST.

BUT ... WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU??



THIS MORNING WHEN I LEFT FOR WORK, YOU WERE ON THE SOFA. I COME HOME TWELVE HOURS LATER, AND YOU ARE STILL IN THE SAME PLACE.



WHAT'S GOING ON? IS IT YOUR MARRIAGE THAT'S MAKING YOU DEPRESSED? I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU ANYMORE! YOU WERE ALWAYS CURIOUS, YOU READ, YOU WERE INTERESTED IN EVERYTHING! YOU WERE ALWAYS AHEAD OF YOUR YEARS ... NOW ...



... NOW I AM A MARRIED WOMAN. I'M TWENTY-TWO. I'M AN ADULT!

ANYONE CAN BE TWENTY-TWO AND BE MARRIED. IT DOESN'T REQUIRE AN EXCEPTIONAL INTELLECTUAL EFFORT!! ... YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF THINKING ABOUT GETTING YOUR DIPLOMA! IT'S IN LESS THAN A YEAR.



IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

GOODBYE THEN.

MY FATHER WAS RIGHT. ANYONE COULD GET MARRIED. IN FACT, EVERYONE WAS GETTING MARRIED. THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE MARRYING IRANIANS IN AMERICA IN THE HOPES OF ONE DAY BECOMING ACTRESSES IN HOLLYWOOD,



THOSE WHO WERE JOINING THEMSELVES TO RICH OLD MEN,



LUCKIER ONES WITH RICH YOUNG MEN,



THERE WERE ALSO SOME REAL LOVE STORIES, LIKE THAT OF NIYOOSHA AND ALI.



... AND THEN THERE WAS REZA AND ME.



AS FOR THE SINGLE ONES, THEY WERE WAITING THEIR TURN:

RIGHT NOW, I HAVE THREE CANDIDATES: ONE IS A DOCTOR BUT HE LIVES IN IRAN, THE OTHER LIVES IN LOS ANGELES BUT HE'S SUPER UGLY AND THE THIRD IS VERY HANDSOME BUT POOR.



MY FATHER WAS SO RIGHT THAT THE NEXT DAY, I APOLOGIZED TO HIM.



I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU. I JUST WANTED TO SHAKE YOU A LITTLE.



THEN HE RUSHED INTO THE LIBRARY AND CAME BACK WITH THREE BOOKS.

HERE, READ THESE. THERE'S "THE SECRETS OF THE CIA," "FREEMASONRY IN IRAN" AND "THE MEMOIRS OF MOSSADEGH."



TO CATCH UP, I READ ALL OF THEM IN TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY ASSUMPTIONS, I FOUND THEM REALLY INTERESTING.

\*IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER. HE NATIONALIZED THE OIL INDUSTRY IN 1954.

MY NEW SPHERES OF INTEREST BROUGHT ME INTO CONTACT WITH NEW PEOPLE, OFTEN MUCH OLDER THAN ME. AMONG THEM, A CERTAIN DR. M, AT WHOSE HOUSE ALL THE INTELLECTUALS GATHERED ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, WITH AS MANY RESOURCES AS WE HAVE, IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT 70% OF THE POPULATION SHOULD LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE!



IF MOSSADEGH HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE OUT HIS PROJECT OF REFORM, IRAN WOULDN'T BE FINDING ITSELF IN THIS SITUATION TODAY.



IT'S THE ENGLISH AND THE AMERICANS' FAULT. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO DEPOSED HIM BY ORGANIZING THE COUP D'ETAT IN 1953!



MAYBE, BUT WHAT DID WE DO TO STOP THEM? OUTSIDERS WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS WITHOUT CERTAIN IRANIAN TRAITORS! IF WE WANT TO RECONSTRUCT THIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE TO BEGIN BY ADMITTING OUR OWN MIS-DEEDS!!



PUSHED BY MY PARENTS, ENCOURAGED BY DR. M AND HIS FRIENDS, AND ALSO A LITTLE THANKS TO MYSELF, I CHANGED MY LIFE.



ONCE AGAIN, I ARRIVED AT MY USUAL CONCLUSION: ONE MUST EDUCATE ONESELF.





# THE END

IN JUNE 1993, AT THE END OF OUR FOURTH YEAR OF STUDY, REZÁ AND I WERE CALLED IN BY THE PROFESSOR WHO WAS HEAD OF THE VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT.

YOU ARE MY TWO BEST STUDENTS. I THEREFORE HAVE A FINAL PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO YOU. IT INVOLVES CREATING A THEME PARK BASED ON OUR MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES.



THE SUBJECT WAS SO EXTRAORDINARY THAT WE FORGOT OUR CONFLICTS AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER.



WE SPENT THE WHOLE SUMMER IN LIBRARIES, ...



MUSEUMS, ...



WITH SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS AND DOCTORS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES.



FROM JUNE 1993 TO JANUARY 1994, WE WERE SO BUSY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT ONCE.



WE WANTED TO CREATE THE EQUIVALENT OF DISNEYLAND IN TEHRAN. WE HAD THOUGHT OF ALL THE DETAILS: DINING, LODGING, ATTRACTIONS ...



WE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY FOR SEVEN MONTHS.



FINALLY CAME THE DAY OF GRADUATION.



BEFORE THE JURY ARRIVED, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPRECIATE OUR WORK UP CLOSE.



DR. M, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE. I'M TRULY HONORED.

THE HONOR IS MINE.

SINCE I WAS A LOT MORE TALKATIVE THAN REZA, WE HAD DECIDED THAT I WOULD DEFEND OUR DISSERTATION.



OUR MYTHOLOGY IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX MYTHOLOGIES ON EARTH, BUT WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN HOW TO MINE IT, FOR FEAR OF MAKING IT VULGAR. MANY THINGS, LIKE THE HOLY GRAIL, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, ETC., ETC., COME FROM IRAN. IN OUR COUNTRY, WE HAVE THEME PARKS, BUT THE MOTIFS ARE AMERICAN, WHICH IS THE REASON BEHIND OUR INITIATIVE.

WE GOT A TWENTY OUT OF TWENTY. AFTER THE DELIBERATION ...



BRAVO, MY CHILDREN! IT WAS PERFECT! THANKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU, I STILL HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAN. YOU SHOULD PROPOSE YOUR PROJECT TO THE MAYOR OF TEHRAN. I PERSONALLY KNOW THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY. YOU CAN USE MY NAME.





THIS CONVERSATION WITH FARNAZ SHOOK ME, BUT I DIDN'T AGREE WITH HER SUGGESTIONS. I REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT I NO LONGER REALLY LOVED REZA. I HAD TO GET DIVORCED! I RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM.



SO, CITY HALL?

THEY DON'T WANT OUR PROJECT.

DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY ONE PROJECT. WE'LL HAVE OTHERS!



I KNOW ... I HAVE TO GO SEE GRANDMA.

GOOD IDEA! SHE'LL KNOW HOW TO COMFORT YOU.

TWENTY MINUTES LATER.



GRANDMA, ...

WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S WRONG??



DON'T YOU WANT TO TAKE OFF THAT PAIN-IN-THE-ASS OF A HOOD?? IT MAKES ME CLAUSTROPHOBIC!

GRANDMA, IT'S HORRIBLE!

WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO HORRIBLE?



I THINK I NO LONGER LOVE REZA, I THINK WE SHOULD SEPARATE.

THAT'S YOUR "HORRIBLE" THING? OH MY! YOU SCARED ME! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HAD DIED!

YOU KNOW I HAVE A HEART CONDITION! ALL THESE TEARS FOR A DIVORCE?



LISTEN TO ME! I GOT ONE, FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AND LET ME TELL YOU THAT AT THE TIME, NO ONE ENDED THEIR MARRIAGE. BUT I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD BE HAPPIER ALONE THAN WITH A SHITMAKER!!

YES, BUT ...



NO BUTS ABOUT IT! A FIRST MARRIAGE IS A DRY RUN FOR THE SECOND. YOU'LL BE MORE SATISFIED THE NEXT TIME. IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU'RE CRYING SO MUCH, MAYBE IT MEANS THAT YOU STILL LOVE HIM! THERE'S NO REASON YOU HAVE TO TELL HIM EVERYTHING RIGHT AWAY. TAKE YOUR TIME, THINK ABOUT IT, AND THE DAY YOU DON'T WANT IT ANYMORE, YOU LEAVE HIM! WHEN A TOOTH IS ROTTEN, YOU HAVE TO PULL IT OUT!

I FOLLOWED MY GRANDMOTHER'S ADVICE. I WAITED. I FOUND A JOB AS AN ILLUSTRATOR AT AN ECONOMICS MAGAZINE.



EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL. THE RAPPORT WITH MY COLLEAGUES MADE ME FORGET THE REST.

BUT TWO MONTHS LATER, IN MARCH 1994, AN ILLUSTRATOR MADE THE FOLLOWING DRAWING FOR AN ARTICLE ON IRANIAN SOCCER:



\* ASSASSIN

THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T TOLERATE A MULLAH BEING CALLED AN ASSASSIN. THEY THEREFORE ARRESTED THE ILLUSTRATOR IN QUESTION.



NO ONE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, BUT EVERYONE HAD HIS OWN THEORY.



WHATEVER THE CASE, FROM THAT MOMENT ON, ALL THE PRESS WAS EXAMINED WITH A MAGNIFYING GLASS.



A FEW DAYS LATER, WHEN I GOT TO WORK.



THE MAGAZINE CAME OUT YESTERDAY AND THEY WENT TO COLLECT HIM AT HIS HOUSE TODAY, AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING!



HIS DRAWING ILLUSTRATED AN ARTICLE ABOUT ALARM SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE VILLAS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN AGAINST BURGLARIES.



BEHZAD HAD MADE THE MISTAKE OF DRAWING A BEARDED MAN.

BUT A FEW HAIRS NOT BEING ENOUGH TO CONDEMN HIM, HE WAS SET FREE AFTER TWO WEEKS. GILA, THE MAGAZINE'S GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.



SO, WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US!

NOTHING! I EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT MY DESIGN CAME FROM A FAIRY TALE IN WHICH A PRINCESS' LOVER CLIMBS INTO HER ROOM BY USING THE LONG HAIR OF HIS LOVED ONE AND, NOT BEING ABLE TO DRAW A WOMAN WITHOUT A VEIL, I HAD DRAWN A BEARDED MAN.



AT THAT, THEY STARTED TO YELL, SAYING THAT I WAS INSINUATING THAT BEARDED MEN WERE SISSIES. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.



AND THEY BEAT ME UP... I HAD BRUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL... YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.



I'M GOING TO GET THE DOOR. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



HELLO, I'M MANDANA.

MARTANE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.







ON OUR WAY BACK.



TO THINK THAT HE WAS MY HERO FOR TWENTY DAYS! HIS WHOLE SPIEL ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, WHILE HE DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE SAY ONE WORD! AH, IRANIAN MEN!

DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S NOT IRANIAN MEN, BUT MEN, PERIOD. TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS GOING OUT WITH A SPANISH DIPLOMAT. ON THE SURFACE, HE BEHAVED BETTER, BUT DEEP DOWN, IT WAS THE SAME THING.



EXCEPT HERE, ALL THE LAWS ARE ON THEIR SIDE!



IF A GUY KILLS TEN WOMEN IN THE PRESENCE OF FIFTEEN OTHERS, NO ONE CAN CONDEMN HIM BECAUSE IN A MURDER CASE, WE WOMEN, WE CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY! HE'S ALSO THE ONE WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO DIVORCE AND EVEN IF HE GIVES IT TO YOU, HE NONETHELESS HAS CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE GRAIN AND WOMAN, THE EARTH IN WHICH THE GRAIN GREW, THEREFORE THE CHILD NATURALLY BELONGED TO HIS FATHER! DO YOU REALIZE?? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!



A FEW DAYS LATER, I WENT OVER TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE.

I WANT TO GO TO FRANCE!

THAT'S GREAT. YOU'LL BOTH NEED VISAS, HAVE THE TWO OF YOU THOUGHT OF ...

DAD, IT'S NOT US, IT'S ME. REZA WILL GO IF HE WANTS TO, BUT WE'RE GOING TO GET DIVORCED!

I KNEW IT ALL ALONG!

YOU KNEW IT ALL ALONG AND YET YOU TALKED MY EAR OFF FOR A WEEK SO THAT I WOULD APPROVE OF THIS MARRIAGE?

YES, BUT IF SHE HADN'T GOTTEN MARRIED, SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WOULDN'T WORK BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM—EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE HER OWN EXPERIENCE.

MANIPULATOR!

WHAT MANIPULATION?

I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU ANYMORE.

WELL, WE'RE VERY HAPPY WITH YOUR DECISION. YOU WEREN'T MADE TO LIVE HERE. WE IRANIANS, WE'RE CRUSHED NOT ONLY BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT BY THE WEIGHT OF OUR TRADITIONS!

OUR REVOLUTION SET US BACK FIFTY YEARS. IT WILL TAKE GENERATIONS FOR ALL THIS TO EVOLVE. YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE. IT'S YOUR DUTY TO LIVE IT WELL. AND NOW THAT YOU ARE TWENTY-FOUR, IT'S NOT LIKE WHEN YOU WENT TO AUSTRIA. YOU DON'T NEED US ANYMORE.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU: "DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER, OUR DAUGHTER HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF."

IT'S TRUE.

WERE YOU WORRYING ABOUT ME?

I WAS SCARED THAT YOU'D RUIN YOUR LIFE.

ME TOO.

... NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO BUILD ANYTHING IN MY OWN COUNTRY, I PREPARED TO LEAVE IT ONCE AGAIN. I WENT TO FRANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JUNE 1994 TO TAKE A TEST TO ENTER THE SCHOOL OF DECORATIVE ARTS IN STRASBOURG. I WAS ACCEPTED. THEN I HAD TO GO BACK TO IRAN TO EXCHANGE MY TOURIST VISA FOR A STUDENT VISA.

BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER '94, THE DATE OF MY DEFINITIVE DEPARTURE, I SPENT EVERY MORNING WANDERING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TEHRAN, WHERE I MEMORIZED EVERY CORNER.



I WENT ON A TRIP WITH MY GRANDMA TO THE SHORE OF THE CASPIAN SEA, WHERE I FILLED MY LUNGS WITH THAT VERY SPECIAL AIR. THAT AIR THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.



I WENT TO MY GRANDFATHER'S TOMB, WHERE I PROMISED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.



I ALSO WENT BEHIND THE EVINE PRISON WHERE THE BODY OF MY UNCLE ANOOSH LAY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, NEXT TO THOUSANDS OF OTHER CADAVERS. I GAVE HIM MY WORD TO TRY TO REMAIN AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE.



I ALSO SPENT SOME WONDERFUL MOMENTS WITH MY PARENTS ...



... UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, WHEN, ALONG WITH MY GRANDMA, THEY ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEHRABAD AIRPORT.



I HAD CHOSEN THIS DEPARTURE BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING, I FELT VERY SAD.



MY FATHER CRIED AS USUAL,



AND MY MOTHER KEPT HER HEAD.

THIS TIME, YOU'RE LEAVING FOR GOOD. YOU ARE A FREE WOMAN. THE IRAN OF TODAY IS NOT FOR YOU. I FORBID YOU TO COME BACK!



YES, MDM.

THE GOODBYES WERE MUCH LESS PAINFUL THAN TEN YEARS BEFORE WHEN I EMBARKED FOR AUSTRIA: THERE WAS NO LONGER A WAR, I WAS NO LONGER A CHILD, MY MOTHER DIDN'T FAINT AND MY GRANDMA WAS THERE, HAPPILY...



... HAPPILY, BECAUSE SINCE THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, I ONLY SAW HER AGAIN ONCE, DURING THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR IN MARCH 1995. SHE DIED JANUARY 4, 1996 ... FREEDOM HAD A PRICE ...

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