

# PERSEPOLIS

THE STORY OF A CHILDHOOD



MARJANE SATRAPI

## CREDITS

Translation of first part: Mattias Ripa

Translation of second part: Blake Ferris

Supervision of translation: Marjane Satrapi and Carol Bernstein

Lettering: Eve Deluze

Additional hand lettering: Céline Merrien

## THANKS TO

L'Association

David B.

Jean-Christophe Menu

Emile Bravo

Christophe Blain

Guillaume Dumora

Fanny Dalle-Rive

Nicolas Leroy

Matthieu Wahiche

Charlotte Miquel



# INTRODUCTION

**I**n 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 “Aryana 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

# PERSEPOLIS





# 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.



OF DECADENCE.



WE FOUND OURSELVES VEILED AND SEPARATED FROM OUR FRIENDS.



AND THAT  
WAS THAT...



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.



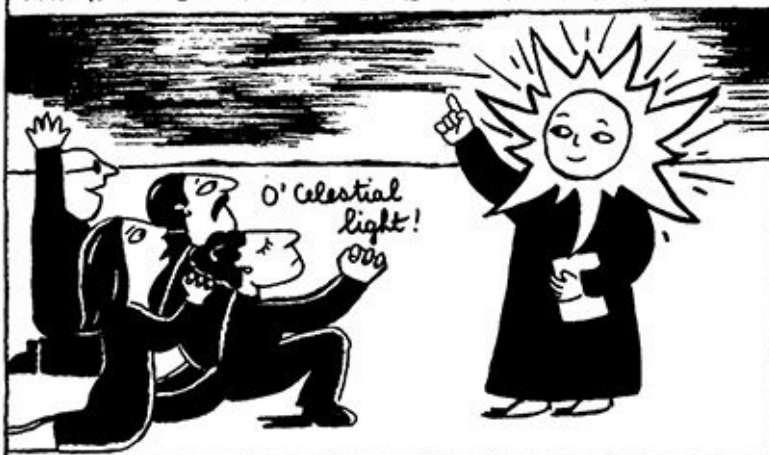
I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE VEIL. DEEP DOWN I WAS VERY RELIGIOUS BUT AS A FAMILY WE WERE VERY MODERN AND AVANT-GARDE.



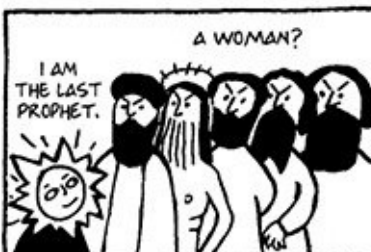
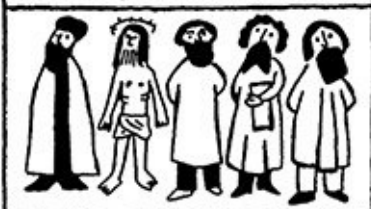
I WAS BORN WITH RELIGION.



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.

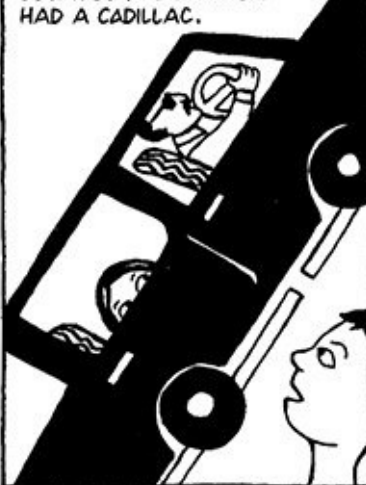


I WANTED TO BE A PROPHET...

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.







NONETHELESS, MY PARENTS WERE PUZZLED.



I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR.



THAT'S FINE MY LOVE. THAT'S FINE.



I FELT GUILTY TOWARDS GOD.



I WANTED TO BE JUSTICE, LOVE AND THE WRATH OF GOD ALL IN ONE.





# THE BICYCLE

MY FAITH WAS NOT UNSHAKABLE.



THE YEAR OF THE REVOLUTION I HAD TO TAKE ACTION, SO I PUT MY PROPHETIC DESTINY ASIDE FOR A WHILE.

TODAY MY NAME IS CHE GUEVARA.

I AM FIDEL.

AND I WANT TO BE TROTSKY.



WE DEMONSTRATED IN THE GARDEN OF OUR HOUSE.

DOWN WITH THE KING!

DOWN WITH THE KING!



THE REVOLUTION IS LIKE A BICYCLE. WHEN THE WHEELS DON'T TURN, IT FALLS.

WELL SPOKEN!



AND SO WENT THE REVOLUTION IN MY COUNTRY.



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



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

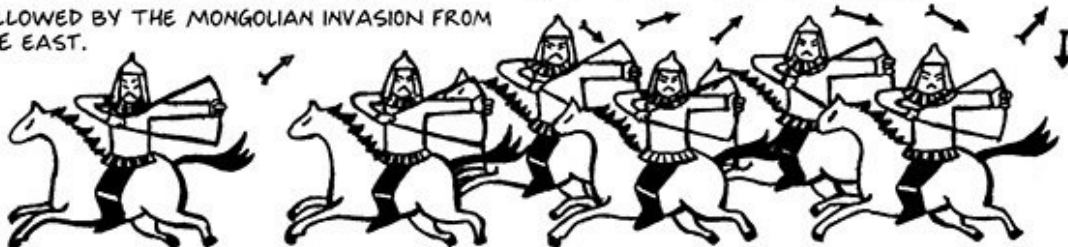
FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.



THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.



FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.



AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.







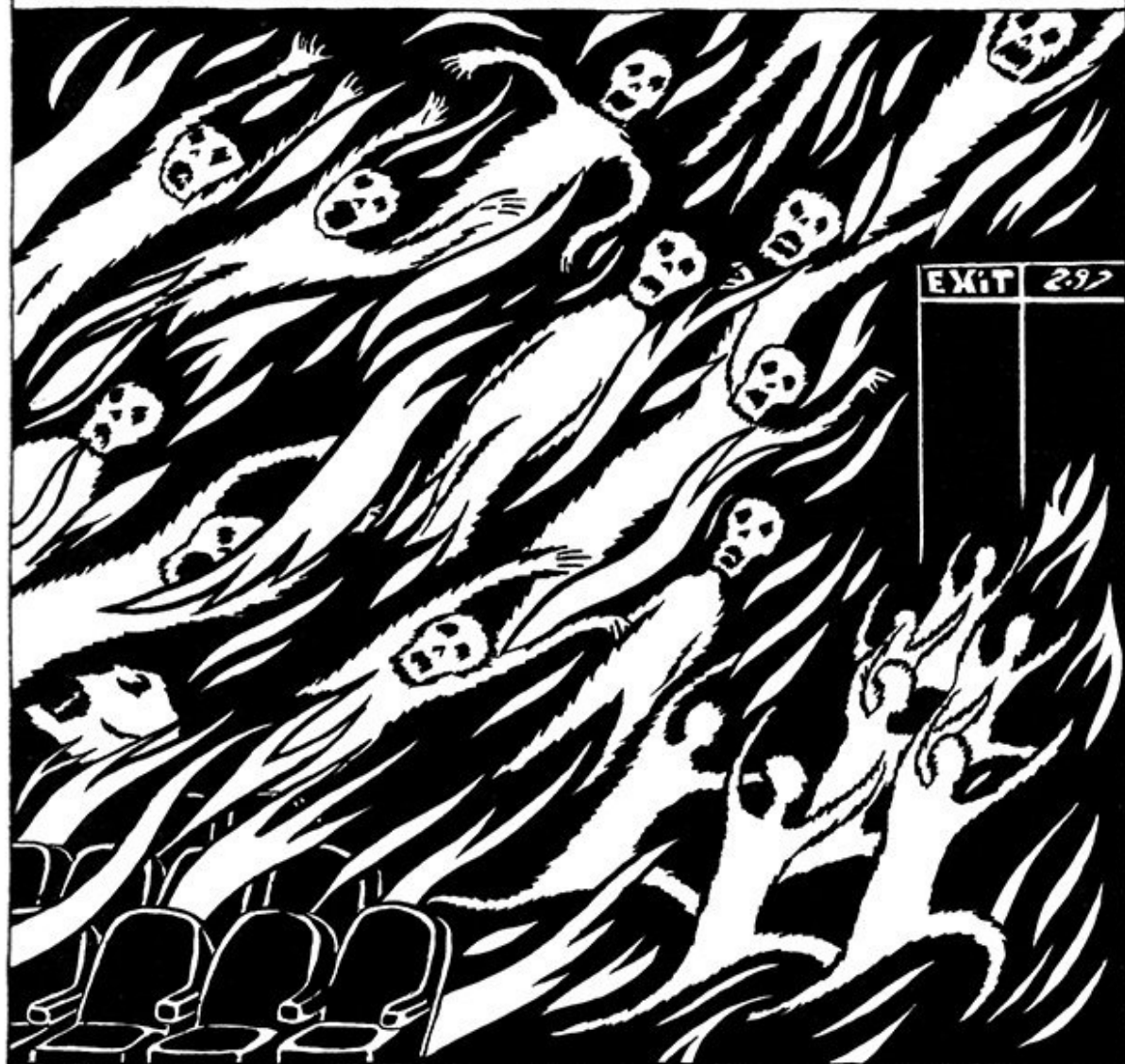




THE FIREMEN DIDN'T ARRIVE UNTIL FORTY MINUTES LATER.



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

MY PARENTS DEMONSTRATED EVERY DAY.



THINGS STARTED TO DEGENERATE.  
THE ARMY SHOT AT THEM.



AND THEY THREW STONES AT THE ARMY.



AFTER MARCHING AND THROWING STONES ALL DAY, BY EVENING  
THEY HAD ACHES ALL OVER, EVEN IN THEIR HEADS.





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!

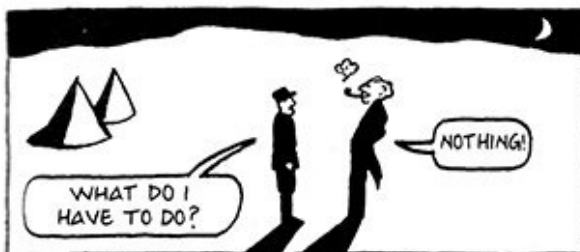
AND THE BOLSHEVIKS  
ARE NEAR.

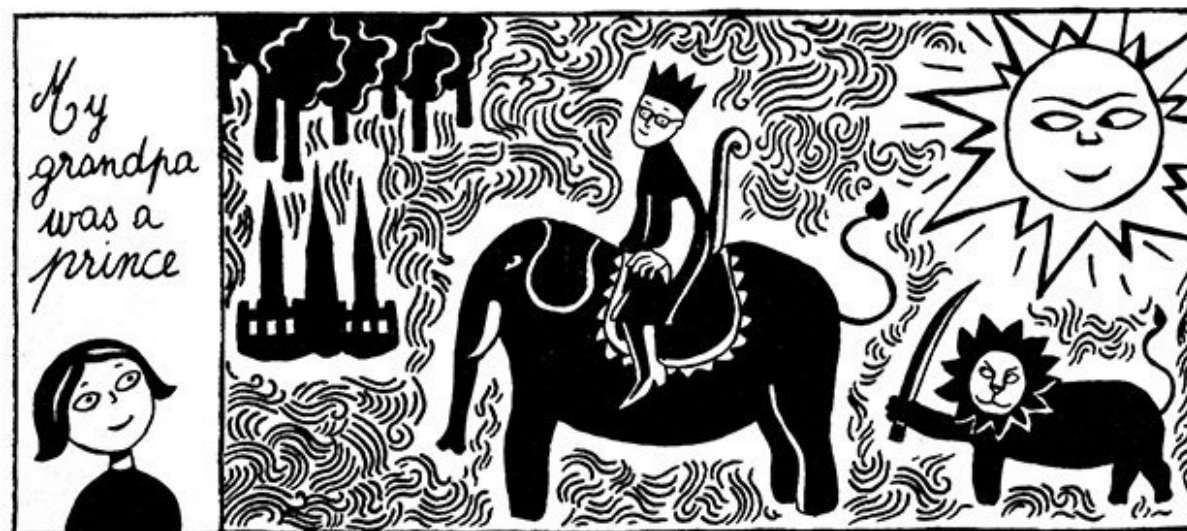
WHAT'S THAT SOL-  
DIER'S NAME AGAIN?

REZA! WE SHOULD  
GO MEET HIM.

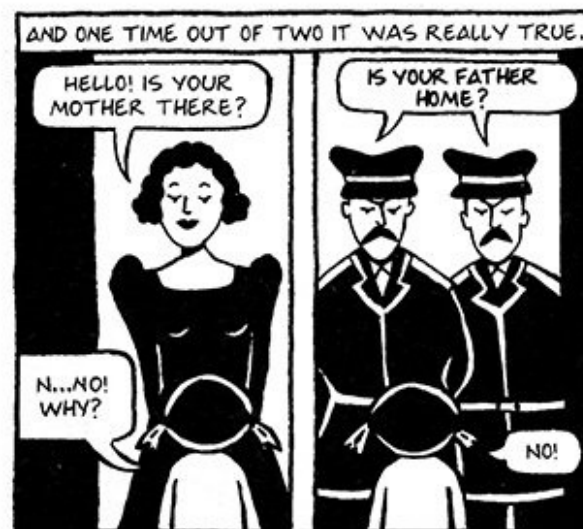
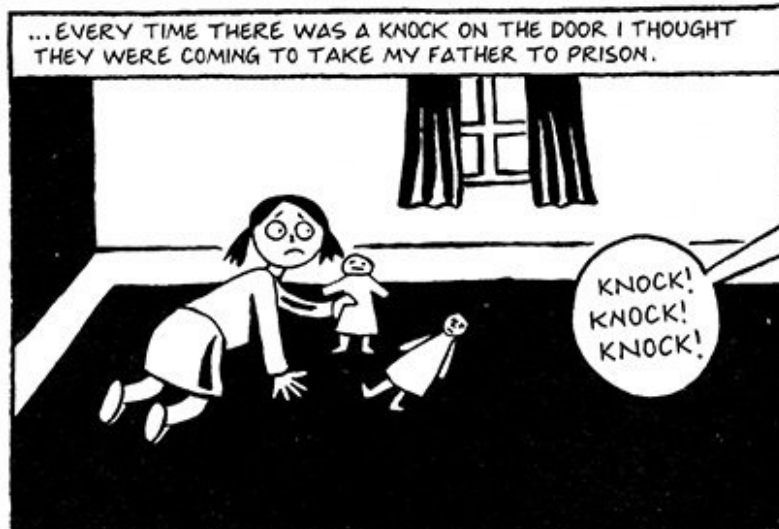
IMMEDIATELY! PERSIA  
IS FULL OF OIL!

















# PERSEPOLIS





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



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

SHE WON'T TELL ME ABOUT GRANDPA.





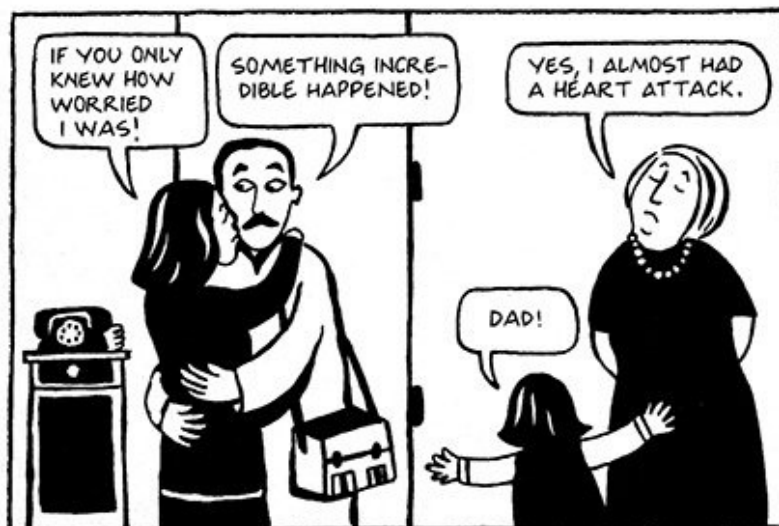
HE TOOK PHOTOS EVERY DAY. IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. HE HAD EVEN BEEN ARRESTED ONCE BUT ESCAPED AT THE LAST MINUTE.



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.











# 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.



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.



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.



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...



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



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





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.

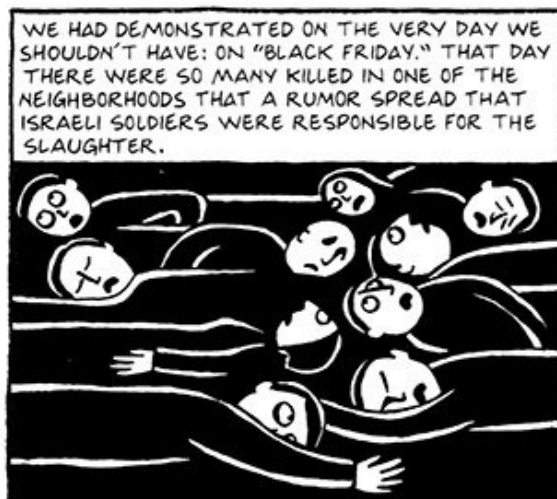
WHO'S THERE?

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



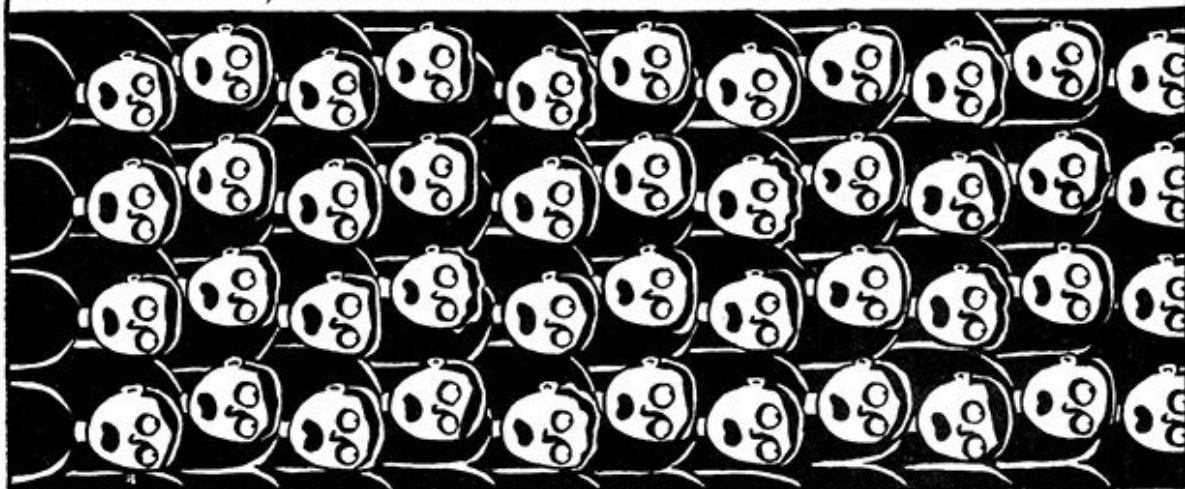




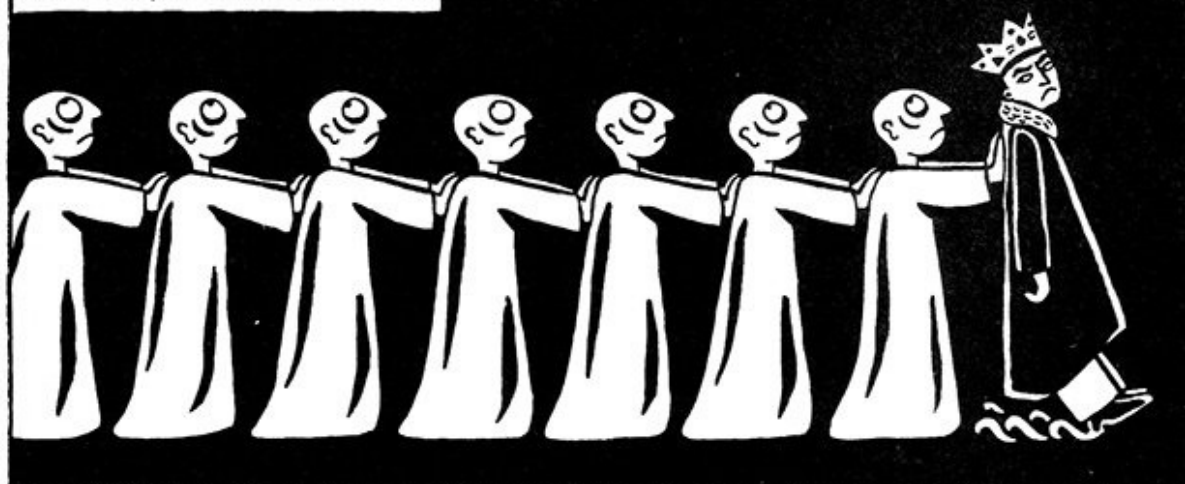


# THE PARTY

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.





FOR A FEW MONTHS, HE ACTUALLY DID TRY: HE TESTED A DOZEN PRIME MINISTERS.

A FREEMASON?  
THAT'S NOT  
SUITABLE.

YOU REMIND  
THEM TOO  
MUCH OF MY  
FATHER!

TOO  
THIN!

TOO SHORT!

ONE-EYED!

....



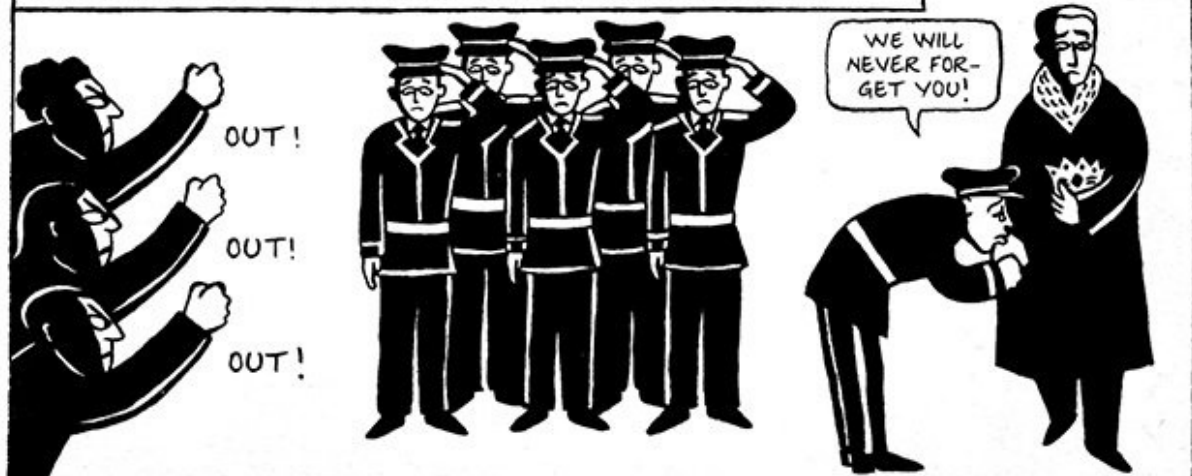
THE MORE HE TRIED DEMOCRACY, THE MORE HIS  
STATUES WERE TORN DOWN.



...THEN HIS EFFIGY WAS BURNED.



THE PEOPLE WANTED ONLY ONE THING: HIS DEPARTURE! SO FINALLY...



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...



THESE STRANGE PHENOMENA WERE EVERYWHERE.



\* SECRET POLICE OF THE SHAH'S REGIME.





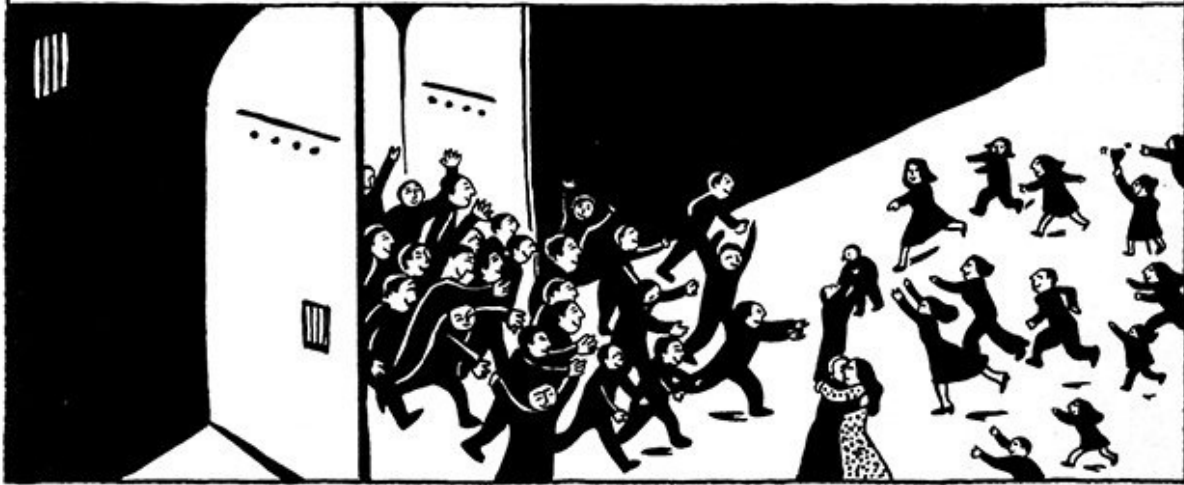






# THE HEROES

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



AFTER THE REVOLUTION I REALIZED THAT YOU COULD BE MISTAKEN.

TODAY IS A GREAT DAY, DARLING. WE'VE INVITED LALY'S FATHER AND MOHSEN. THEY BOTH JUST LEFT PRISON.

LALY'S FATHER?

WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?

YOU'LL SOON FIND OUT.

DING! DONG!

SIAMAK!

I'M SO HAPPY THAT YOU ARE BACK... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

DON'T SAY ANYTHING. I KNOW!

OH TAJI! STILL A BEAUTY!

STILL A FLATTERER!

AND THIS MUST BE MARJI. LORD! THE LAST TIME I SAW HER SHE WAS ONLY THREE YEARS OLD.

TIME IS IRRETRIEVABLE. WHEN THEY ARRESTED ME, LALY BARELY SPOKE AND NOW SHE IS A REAL YOUNG LADY.

WELL, YES.

YES.

DING! DONG!

YOU WANT TO PLAY?

NO.

THAT MUST BE MOHSEN.





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...

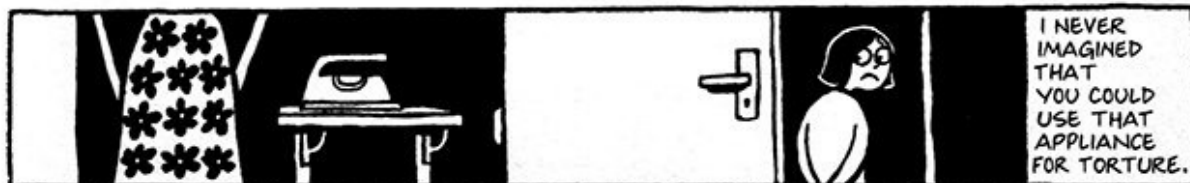


HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS?

CONFESS! WHERE ARE THE OTHERS!

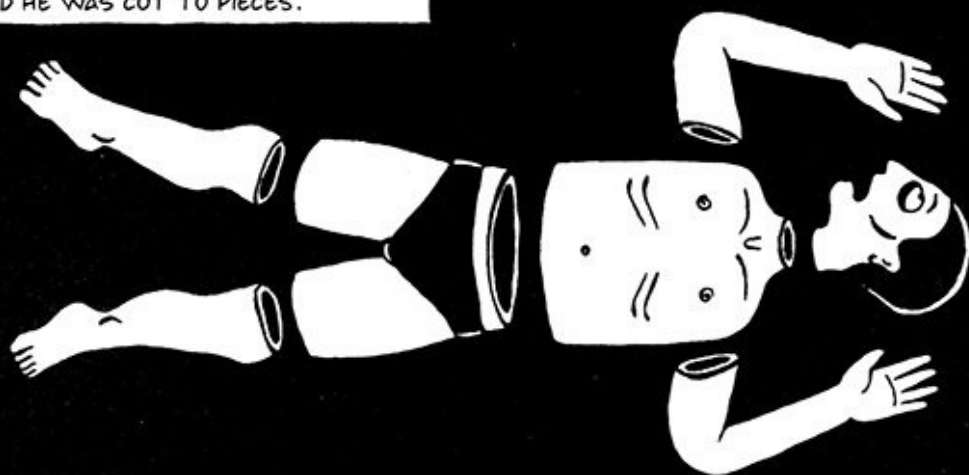


THEY BURNED HIM WITH AN IRON.



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

IN THE END HE WAS CUT TO PIECES.



HE WAS IN MY CLASS AT THE UNIVERSITY.



BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT I WASN'T COMPLETELY WRONG WHEN I SAID HE WAS NOT ON A TRIP.



MAYBE, BUT MY FATHER IS A HERO!



ALL TORTURERS SHOULD BE MASSACRED!



MY FATHER WAS NOT A HERO, MY MOTHER WANTED TO KILL PEOPLE...SO I WENT OUT TO PLAY IN THE STREET.







# MOSCOW

SO MY FATHER WAS NOT A HERO.

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, MARTI?

YEAH, SURE...



IF ONLY HE HAD BEEN IN PRISON.

THEY CUT MY DAD'S LEG OFF, BUT HE STILL DIDN'T CONFESS!... SO THEY CUT OFF AN ARM AS WELL.

TOO MUCH!



LUCKILY, ONE DAY THEY TOLD ME ABOUT MY UNCLE ANDOSH.



THE ONLY ONE OF MY FATHER'S BROTHERS I HAD NEVER MET. BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN IN PRISON. AND NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 30 YEARS, MY GRANDMA WAS REUNITED WITH HER SIX CHILDREN.



AND I HAD A HERO IN MY FAMILY... NATURALLY I LOVED HIM IMMEDIATELY.

WHY DON'T YOU COME AND LIVE WITH US?



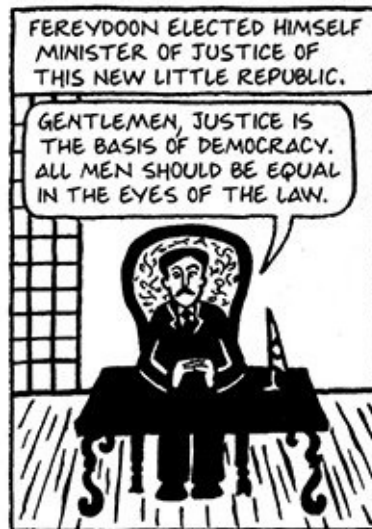
SUCH A SWEET CHILD! I'LL SLEEP HERE TONIGHT AND TELL YOU STORIES.



ARE YOU MARRIED? DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? HOW OLD ARE YOU?

LATER MARTI, LATER.







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



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.



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



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.

YOUR FATHER TOLD YOU THAT?



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

WHAT MY WIFE MADE ME SUFFER WAS MUCH WORSE.



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.

DON'T WORRY, I'LL NEVER FORGET.



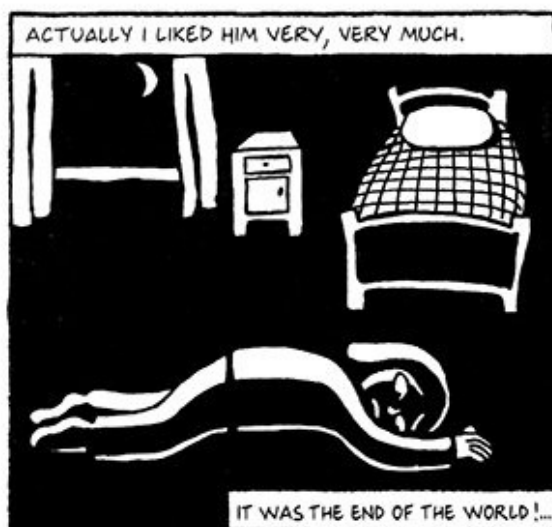




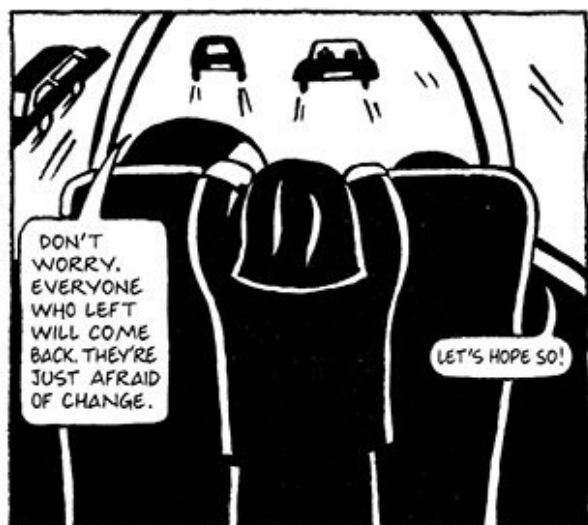
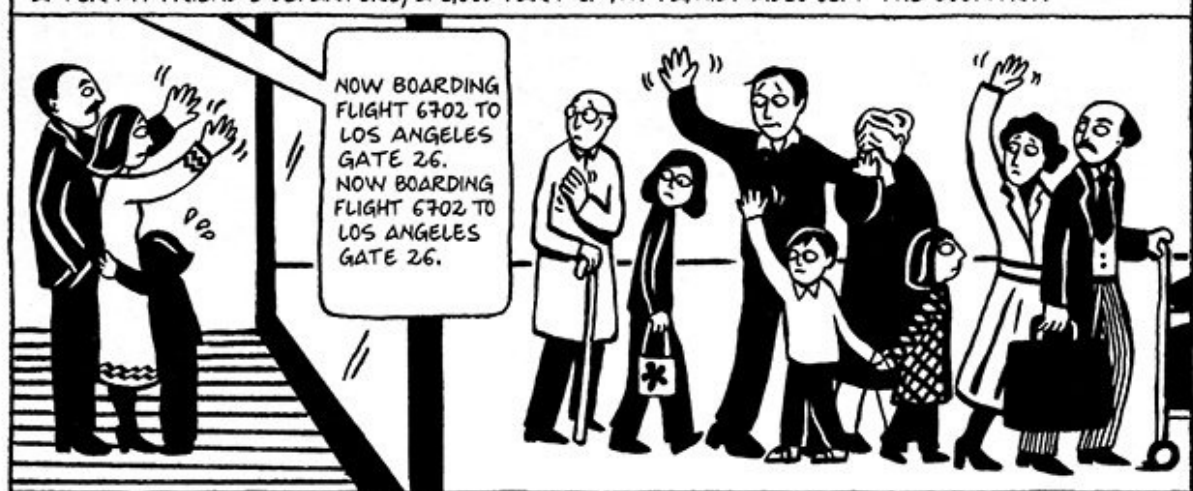


# THE SHEEP





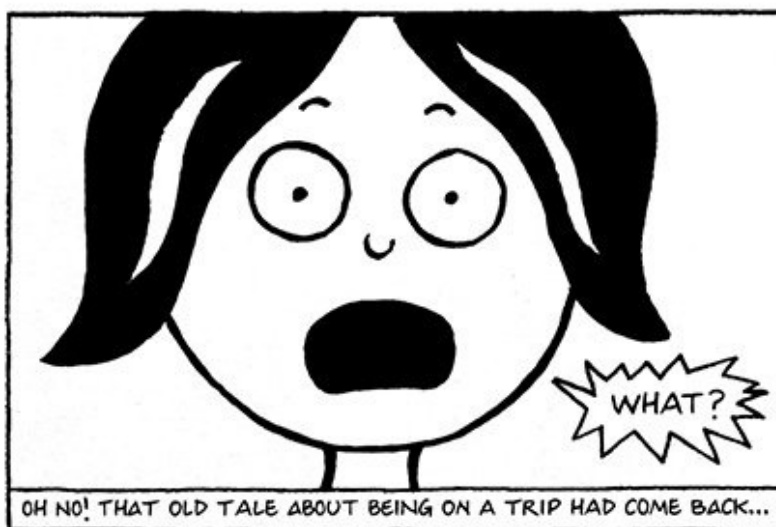
AFTER MY FRIEND'S DEPARTURE, A GOOD PART OF MY FAMILY ALSO LEFT THE COUNTRY.













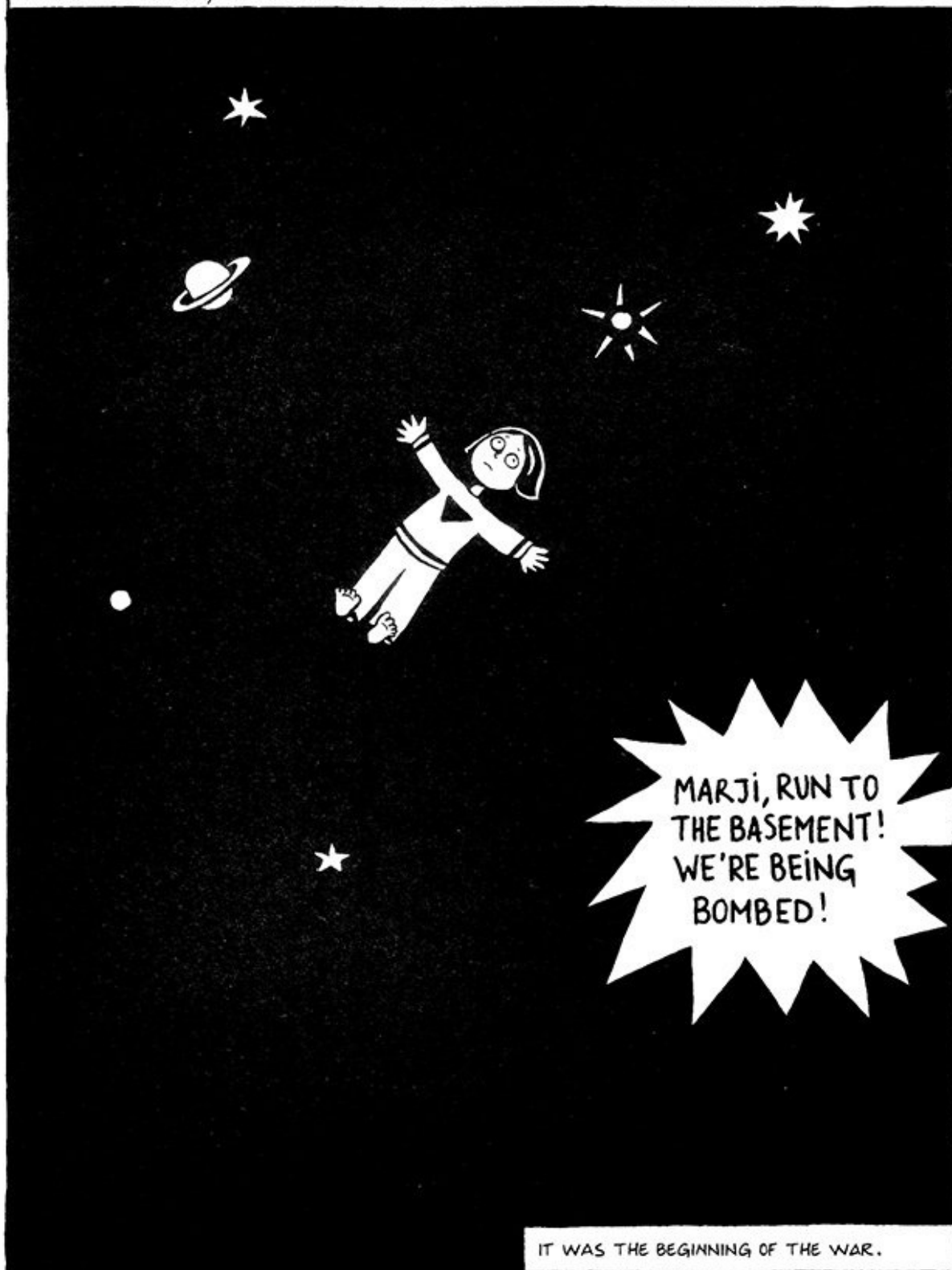


THAT WAS MY LAST MEETING WITH MY BELOVED ANOOSH...



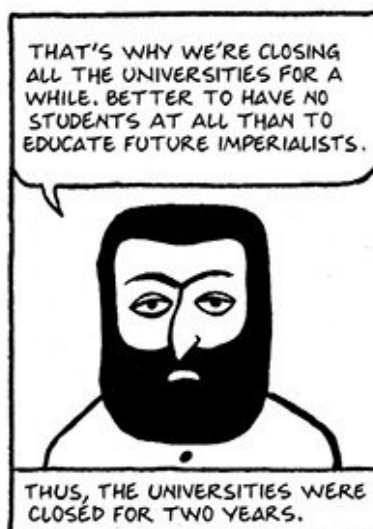


AND SO I WAS LOST, WITHOUT ANY BEARINGS... WHAT COULD BE WORSE THAN THAT?



# 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.



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



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



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







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...

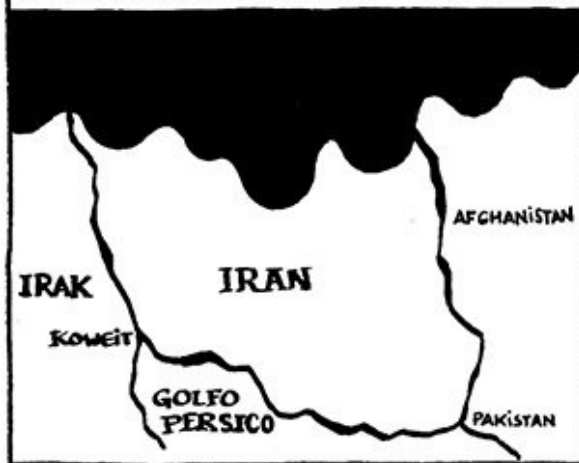


...IT WAS WONDERFUL.

RIGHT BEFORE GOING BACK, IN THE HOTEL ROOM IN MADRID.



THE TV SHOWED A MAP OF IRAN AND A BLACK CLOUD COVERING THE COUNTRY LITTLE BY LITTLE.



WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THIS?

TOO BAD WE DON'T KNOW SPANISH.



MAYBE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT POLLUTION. YOU KNOW, TEHRAN IS THE FOURTH MOST POLLUTED CITY IN THE WORLD.



IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THE WHOLE COUNTRY, NOT JUST THE CAPITAL.



THE NEXT DAY MY GRANDMOTHER CAME TO PICK US UP AT THE AIRPORT.



SHE LOOKED WORRIED.

EVERYTHING OK, MOM?

YES...





# THE F-14s













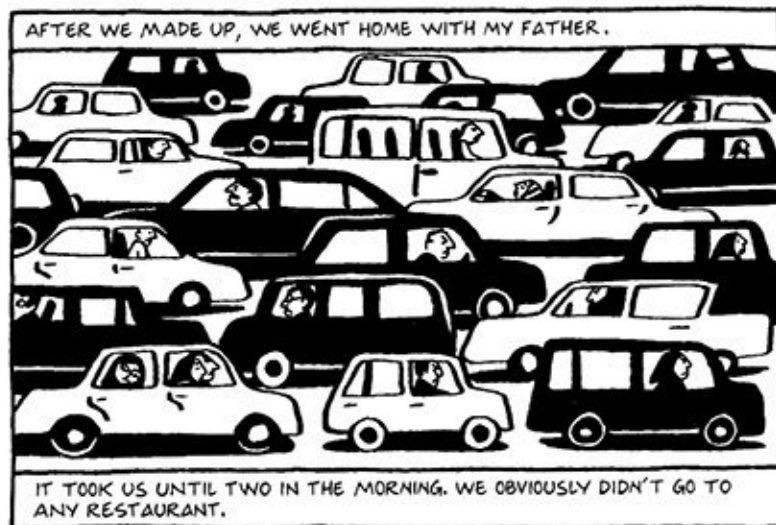






# THE JEWELS



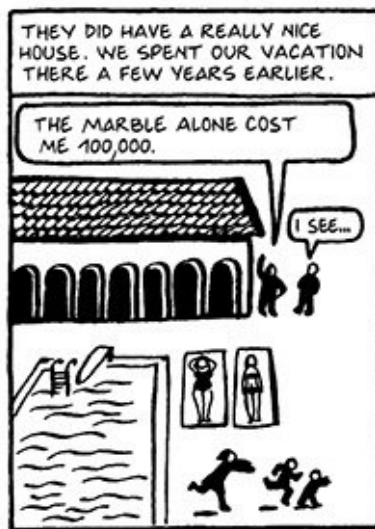




AFTER ABADAN, EVERY BORDER TOWN WAS TARGETED BY BOMBERS. MOST OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THOSE AREAS HAD TO FLEE NORTHWARD, FAR FROM THE IRAQI MISSILES.





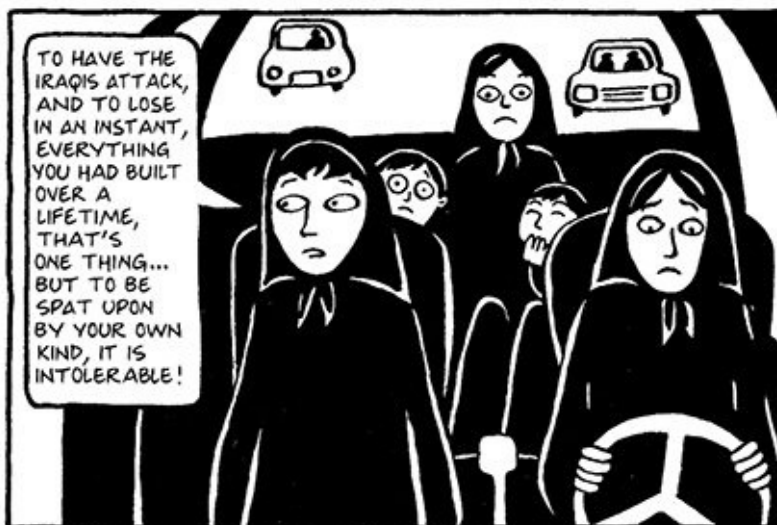
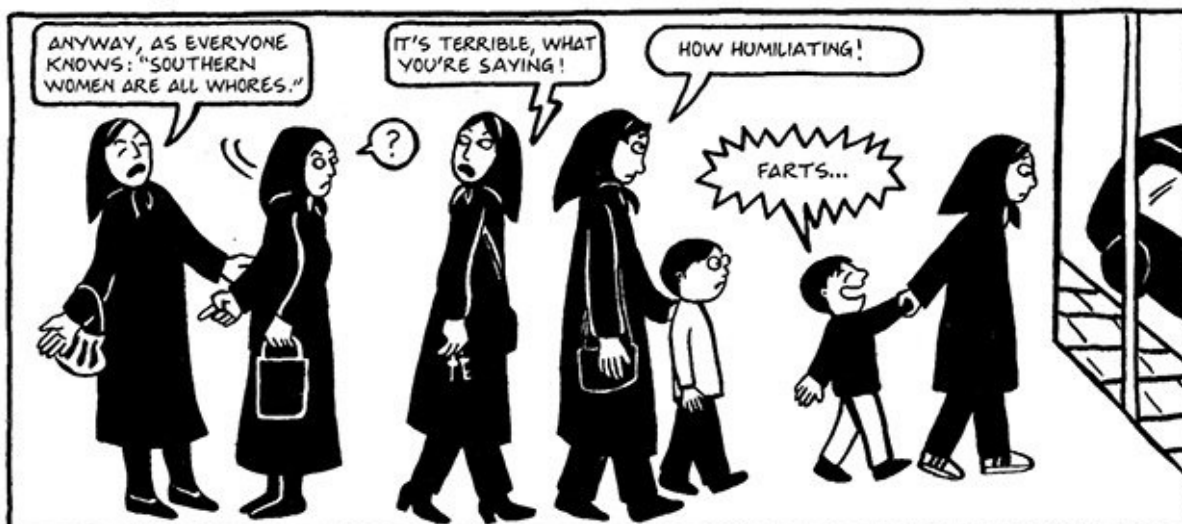
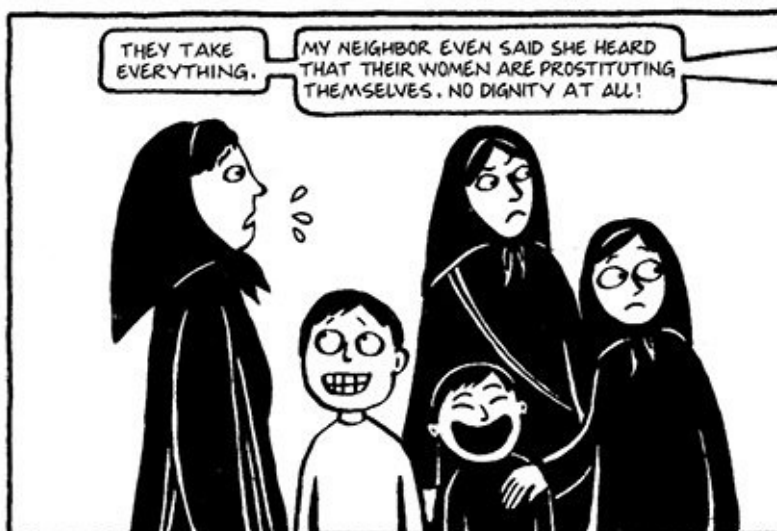






MALI AND HER FAMILY SPENT A WEEK WITH US. THAT'S HOW LONG IT TOOK TO SELL THE JEWELRY AND START OVER AGAIN. MALI'S MOTHER WAS BITTER AND HARD TO DEAL WITH (AND DEAF). BUT THEY WERE HAPPY AT OUR PLACE. THEN, ONE DAY, WE WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.

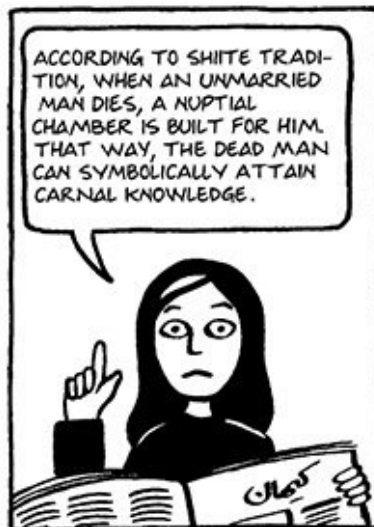






# THE KEY

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.



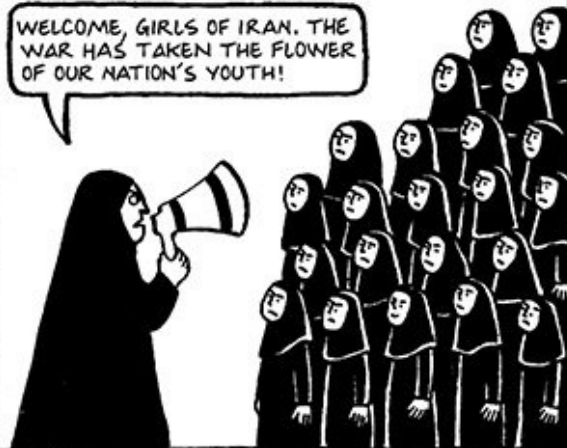
I AGREED WITH MY MOTHER. I TOO TRIED TO THINK ONLY OF LIFE. HOWEVER, IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY:  
AT SCHOOL, THEY LINED US UP TWICE A DAY TO MOURN THE WAR DEAD. THEY PUT ON FUNERAL MARCHES,  
AND WE HAD TO BEAT OUR BREASTS.





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.

BABABABABA  
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.











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 TINOOSH'S DAD?

TINOOSH, 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!

UM...

...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.



I FOUND MYSELF WITH THE NEWBORN BABY WE HAD BEEN CELEBRATING IN MY ARMS.

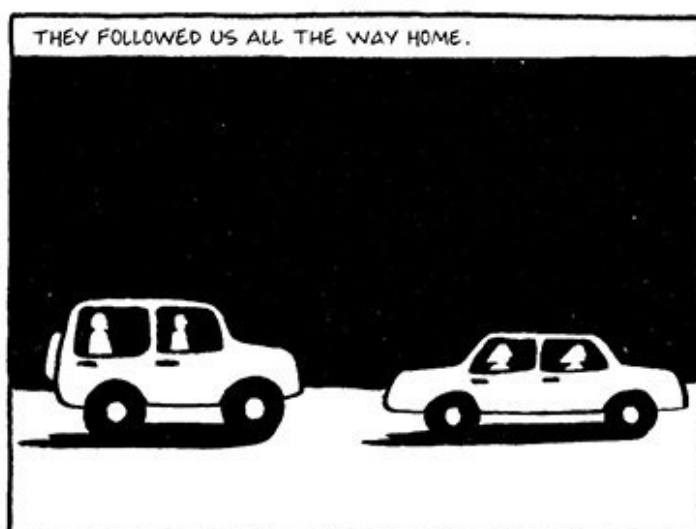


HER MOTHER HAD ALREADY ABANDONED HER.



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.



BRINGGG...



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.



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.

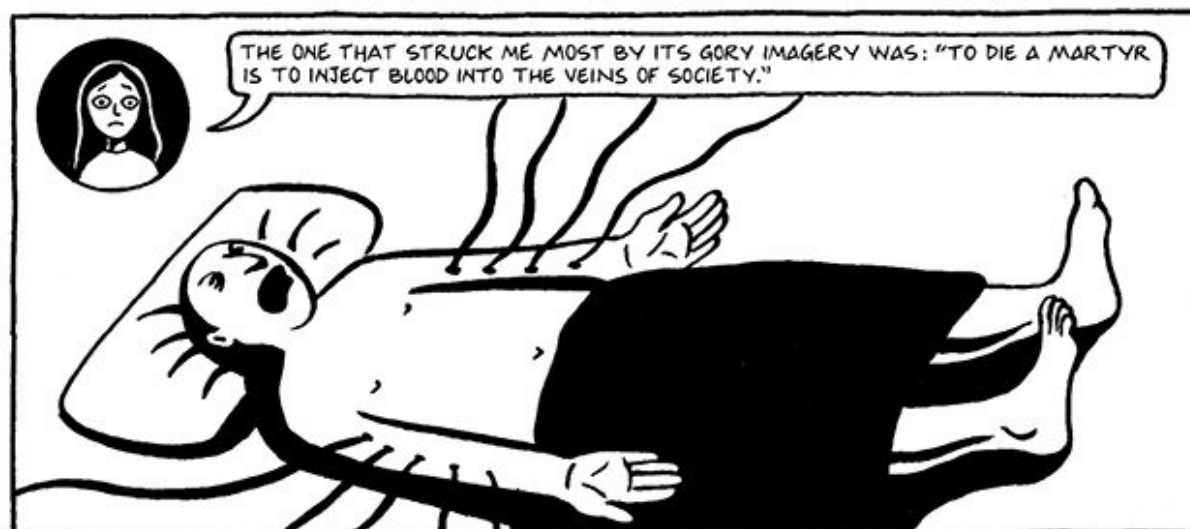








\* A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ









NATURALLY, THE REGIME  
BECAME MORE REPRESSIVE.



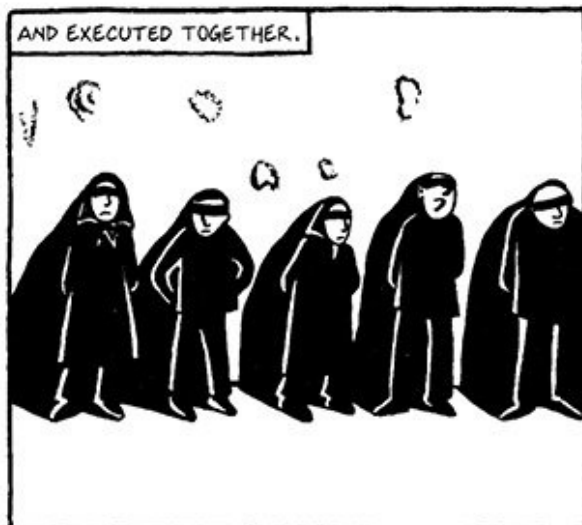
IN THE NAME OF THAT WAR, THEY  
EXTERMINATED THE ENEMY WITHIN.



THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE REGIME WERE  
SYSTEMATICALLY ARRESTED...



AND EXECUTED TOGETHER.



AS FOR ME, I SEALED  
MY ACT OF REBELLION  
AGAINST MY MOTHER'S  
DICTATORSHIP BY  
SMOKING THE  
CIGARETTE I'D STOLEN  
FROM MY UNCLE TWO  
WEEKS EARLIER.



KOFFF! KOFFF!  
KOFFF!!!



IT WAS AWFUL. BUT  
THIS WAS NOT THE  
MOMENT TO GIVE IN.



WITH THIS FIRST  
CIGARETTE, I KISSED  
CHILDHOOD GOODBYE.



NOW I WAS A GROWN-UP.



# 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!



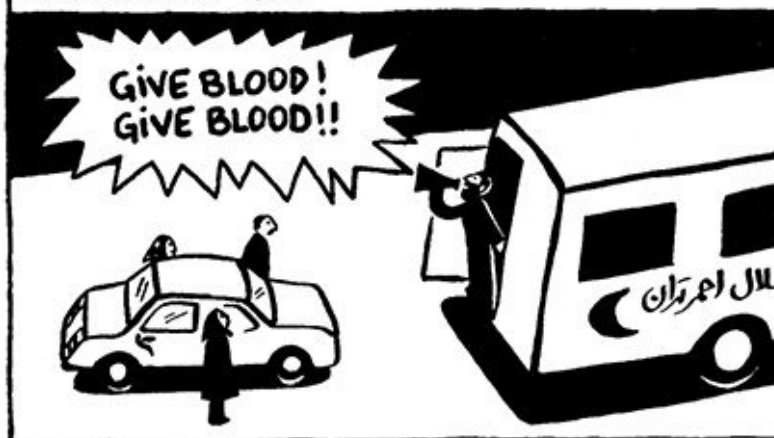
MY UNCLE TAHER WAS SO SAD THAT IT HURT TO LOOK AT HIM. NO ONE DARED SAY A WORD.



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.

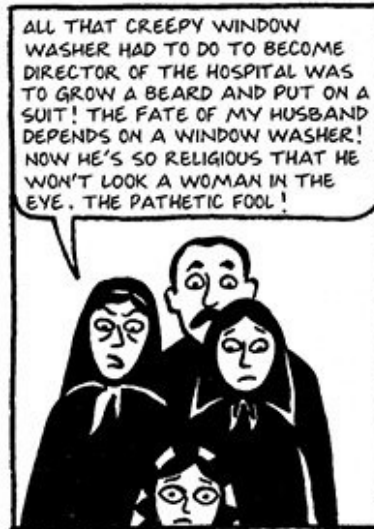


I FELT BOTH ANGRY AND EMBARRASSED...

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 ANOOSH WERE IN PRISON TOGETHER DURING THE REIGN OF THE SHAH.

EBI, THE BROTHER OF ANOOSH? 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 SAW IT WITH HIS OWN EYES. 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.



DON'T UPSET YOURSELF, TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.



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...

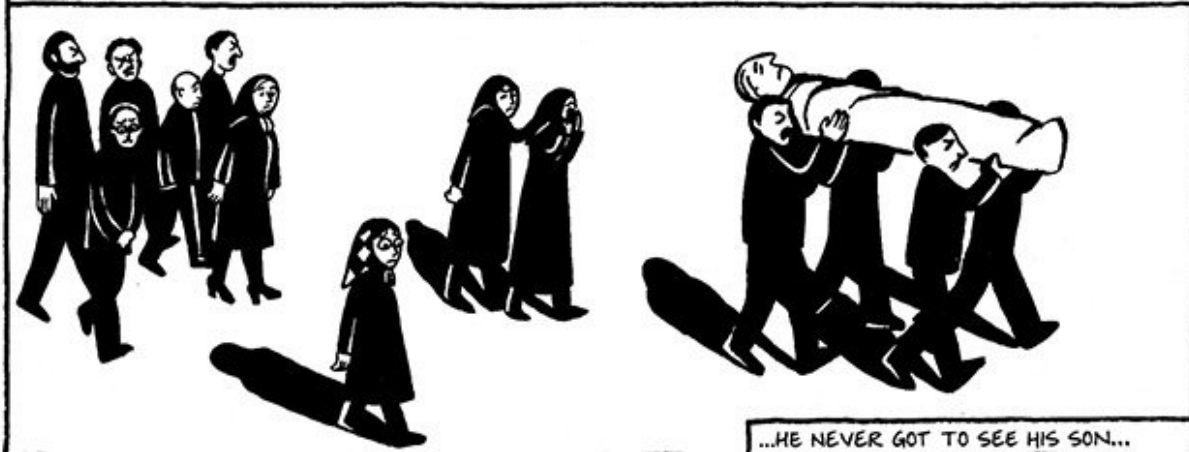


AND SOUGHT ASYLUM WITH HIS BROTHER IN SWEDEN.



HE NEVER GOT TO MAKE THE PASSPORT.

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



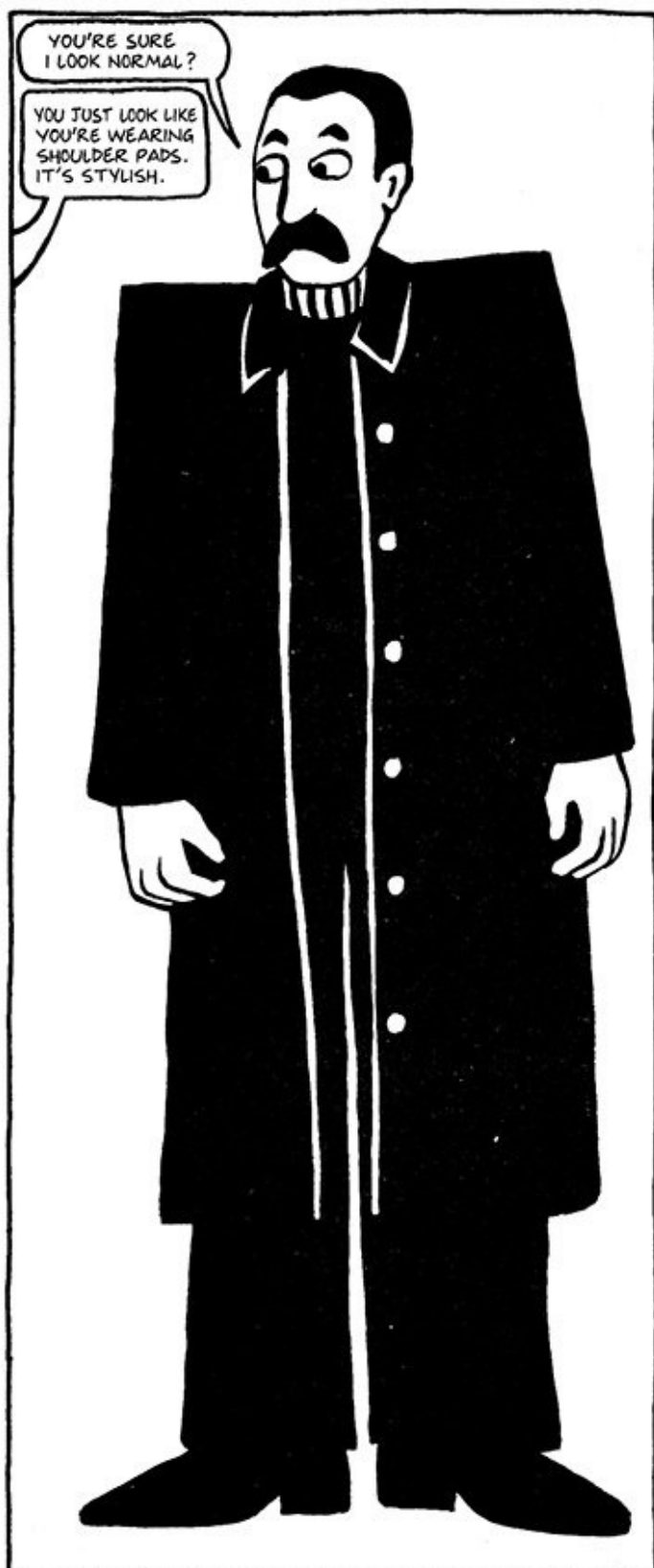
...HE NEVER GOT TO SEE HIS SON...



# KIM WILDE















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.



I BOUGHT TWO TAPES: KIM WILDE AND CAMEL.





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!



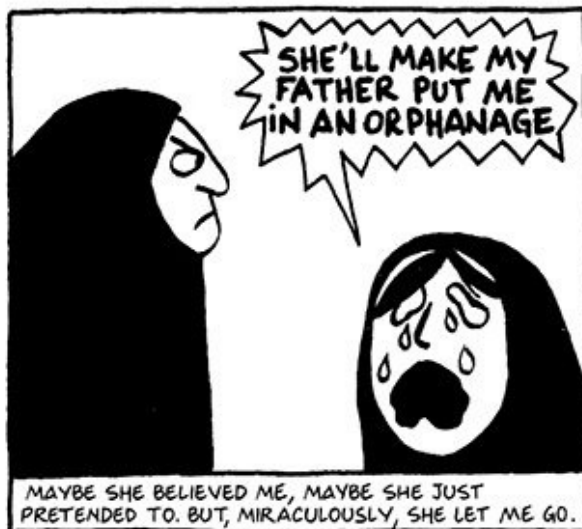
MA'AM, MY MOTHER'S DEAD. MY STEPMOTHER IS REALLY CRUEL AND IF I DON'T GO HOME RIGHT AWAY, SHE'LL KILL ME...



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...

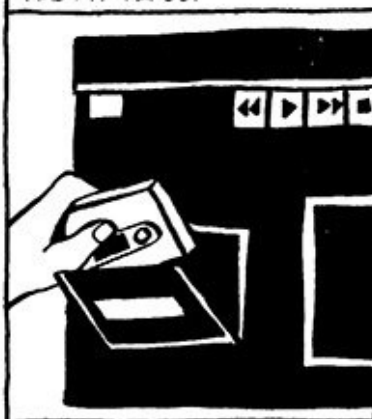
MARJI! WHAT HAPPENED? HAVE YOU BEEN CRYING?

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

TO KEEP US FROM FORGETTING THAT WE WERE AT WAR, IRAQ OPTED FOR A NEW STRATEGY...

I HEARD THEY'RE GOING TO USE BALLISTIC MISSILES AGAINST US.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WE'RE NOT AT WAR WITH THE SOVIET UNION. I DON'T BELIEVE THE IRAQIS HAVE WEAPONS LIKE THAT.



FROM THE IRAQI BORDER TO TEHRAN IT'S THOUSANDS OF MILES. MISSILES THAT CAN GO THAT FAR COST A FORTUNE!

WELL, THAT'S WHAT THE RUMORS SAY!

WE IRANIANS ARE OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS WHEN IT COMES TO GOSSIP.



SHE'S RIGHT. WE LOVE TO EXAGGERATE.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE THE OPPOSITE SYMPTOM.

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

EVEN WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING WITH YOUR OWN EYES, YOU NEED CONFIRMATION FROM THE BBC.

MY NATURAL OPTIMISM JUST LEADS ME TO BE SKEPTICAL.





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.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE BASEMENT?

IT WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!!



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!

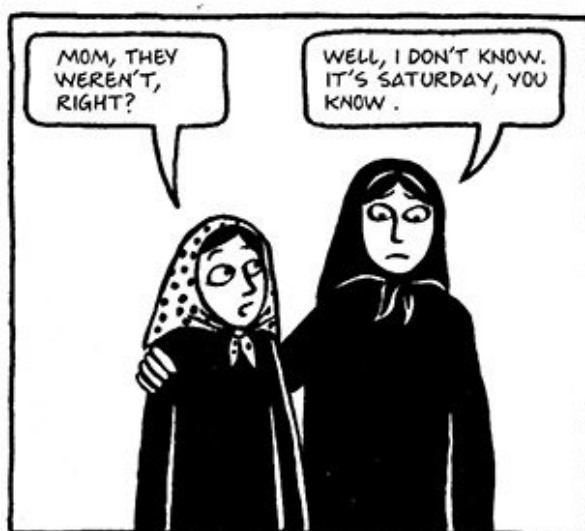
SO LIFE WENT ON...











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 THE DEATH OF NEDA BABA-LEVY, MY LIFE TOOK A NEW TURN. IN 1984, I WAS FOURTEEN AND A REBEL. NOTHING SCARED ME ANYMORE.



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...

SINCE THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS FOUNDED, WE NO LONGER HAVE POLITICAL PRISONERS.



MA'AM!



MY UNCLE WAS IMPRISONED BY THE SHAH'S REGIME, BUT IT WAS THE ISLAMIC REGIME THAT ORDERED HIS EXECUTION.



YOU SAY THAT WE DON'T HAVE POLITICAL PRISONERS ANYMORE. BUT WE'VE GONE FROM 3000 PRISONERS UNDER THE SHAH TO 300,000 UNDER YOUR REGIME.



HOW DARE YOU LIE TO US LIKE THAT?



OH, SATRAPI!

CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!  
CLAP!









\*EQUIVALENT TO \$5.00







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.



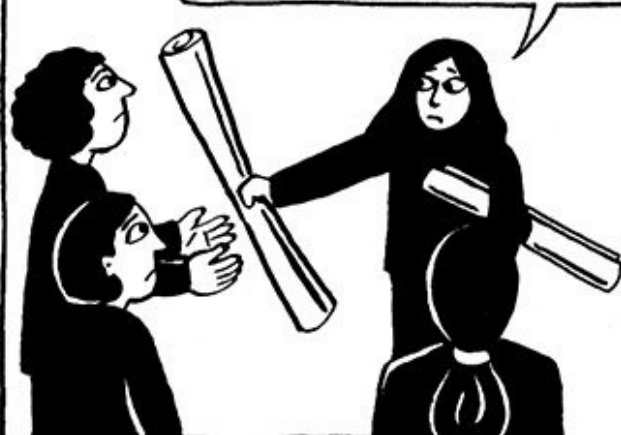
I TOOK DOWN ALL OF MY POSTERS.



I INVITED MY GIRLFRIENDS OVER TO SAY GOODBYE.



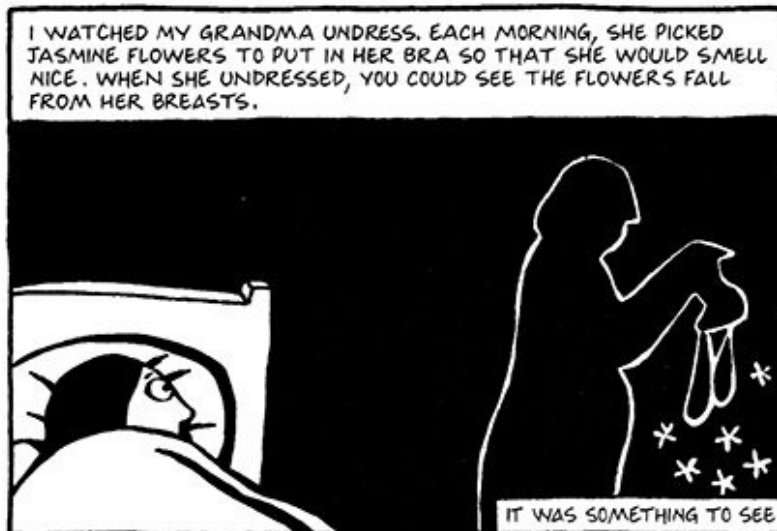
HERE. I'M GIVING YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS THINGS, SO THAT YOU WON'T FORGET ME.



I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH THEY LOVED ME.



AND I UNDERSTOOD HOW IMPORTANT THEY WERE TO ME.













*Marjane Satrapi* was born in 1969 in Rasht, Iran. She grew up in Tehran, where she studied at the Lycée Français before leaving for Vienna and then going to Strasbourg to study illustration. She currently lives in Paris, where she is at work on the sequel to *Persepolis* and where her illustrations appear regularly in newspapers and magazines. She is also the author of several children's books.

'A triumph... Like *Maus*, *Persepolis* is one of those comic books capable of seducing even those most allergic to the genre. The author's masterstroke is to allow us to experience history from within her family, with irony and tenderness.'—*Libération*

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Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road  
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'A superb piece of work. Satrapi shows us how growing up takes place in a society ruled by rigid religious dogma, and how under the conformist surface all kinds of rebellions can take place—some comic, some ending in tragedy. You can see the presence of other predecessors: the Hernandez brothers, Frans Masereel, Art Spiegelman.'—Philip Pullman

'You've never seen anything like *Persepolis*—the intimacy of a memoir, the irresistibility of a comic book, and the political depth of the conflict between fundamentalism and democracy. Marjane Satrapi may have given us a new genre.'—Gloria Steinem

'I grew up reading the Mexican comics of Gabriel Vargas, graduated to the political teachings of Rius, fell under the spell of Linda Barry and Art Spiegelman, and now I am a fan of Marjane Satrapi. Part history book, part Scheherazade, astonishing as only true stories can be, *Persepolis* gave me hope for humanity in these unkind times.'—Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*

'I cannot praise enough Satrapi's moving account of growing up as a spirited young girl in revolutionary and wartime Iran. *Persepolis* is disarming and often humorous, but ultimately it is shattering.'—Joe Sacco, author of *Palestine* and *Safe Area Gorazde*

'Blending the historical with the personal is not an easy task; to blend the individual with the universal is even more challenging. But Satrapi has succeeded brilliantly. This graphic novel is a reminder of the human spirit that fights oppression and death.'—Hanan al-Shaykh, author of *Women of Sand and Myrrh* and *Only in London*

ISBN 0-224-06440-1



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