

# PERSEPOLIS

THE STORY OF A CHILDHOOD



MARJANE SATRAPI

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# 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 “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

# PERSEPOLIS



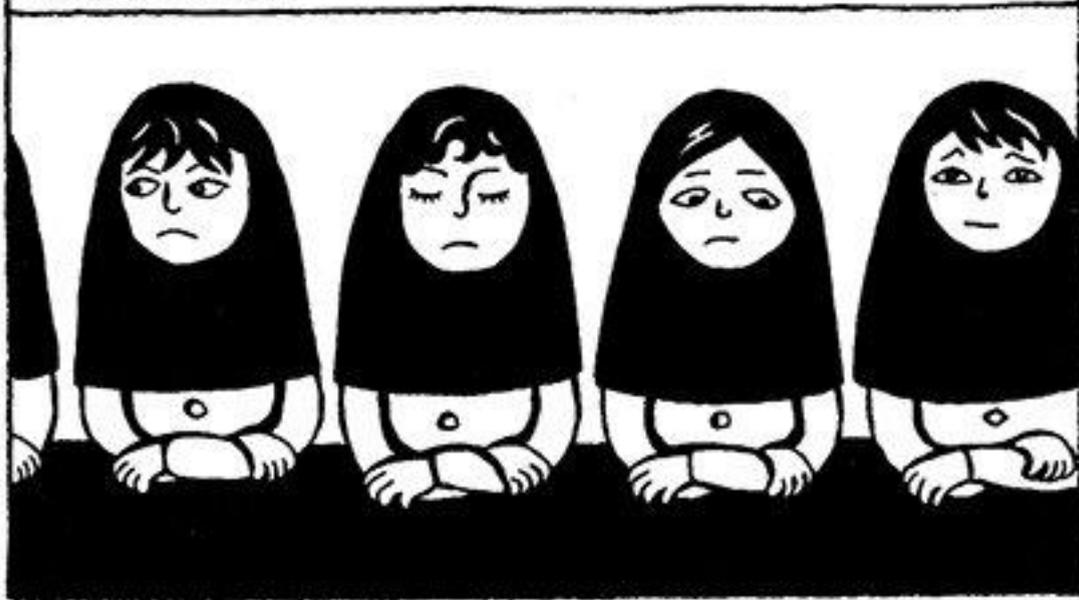


# THE VEIL

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, NARINE, 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.

BRAVO!

WHAT WISDOM!



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.



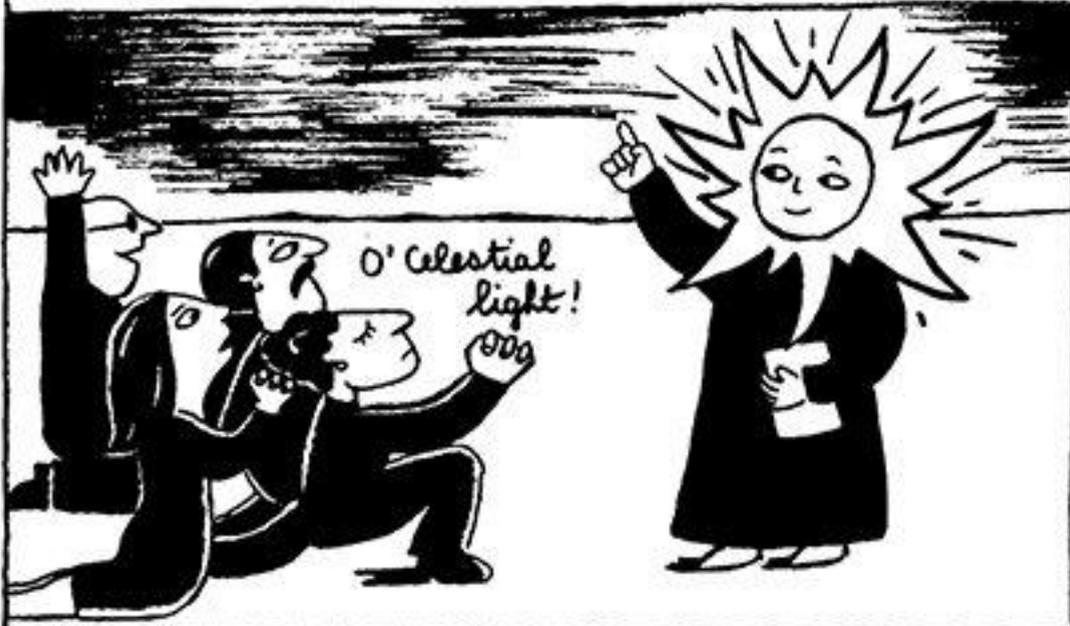
I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE VEIL. DEEP DOWN I WAS VERY RELIGIOUS BUT AS A FAMILY WE WERE VERY MODERN AND AVANT-GARDE.



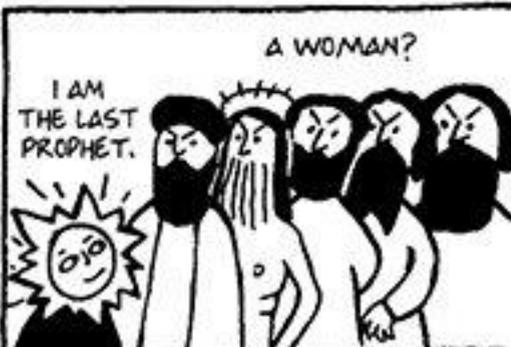
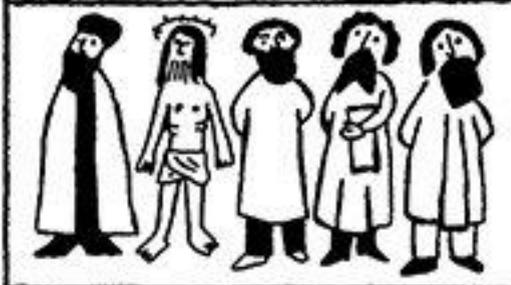
I WAS BORN WITH RELIGION.



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.

COME HERE MARJI! HELP ME TO STAND UP.

DON'T WORRY. SOON YOU WON'T HAVE ANY MORE PAIN. YOU'LL SEE.



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 21ST, 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.



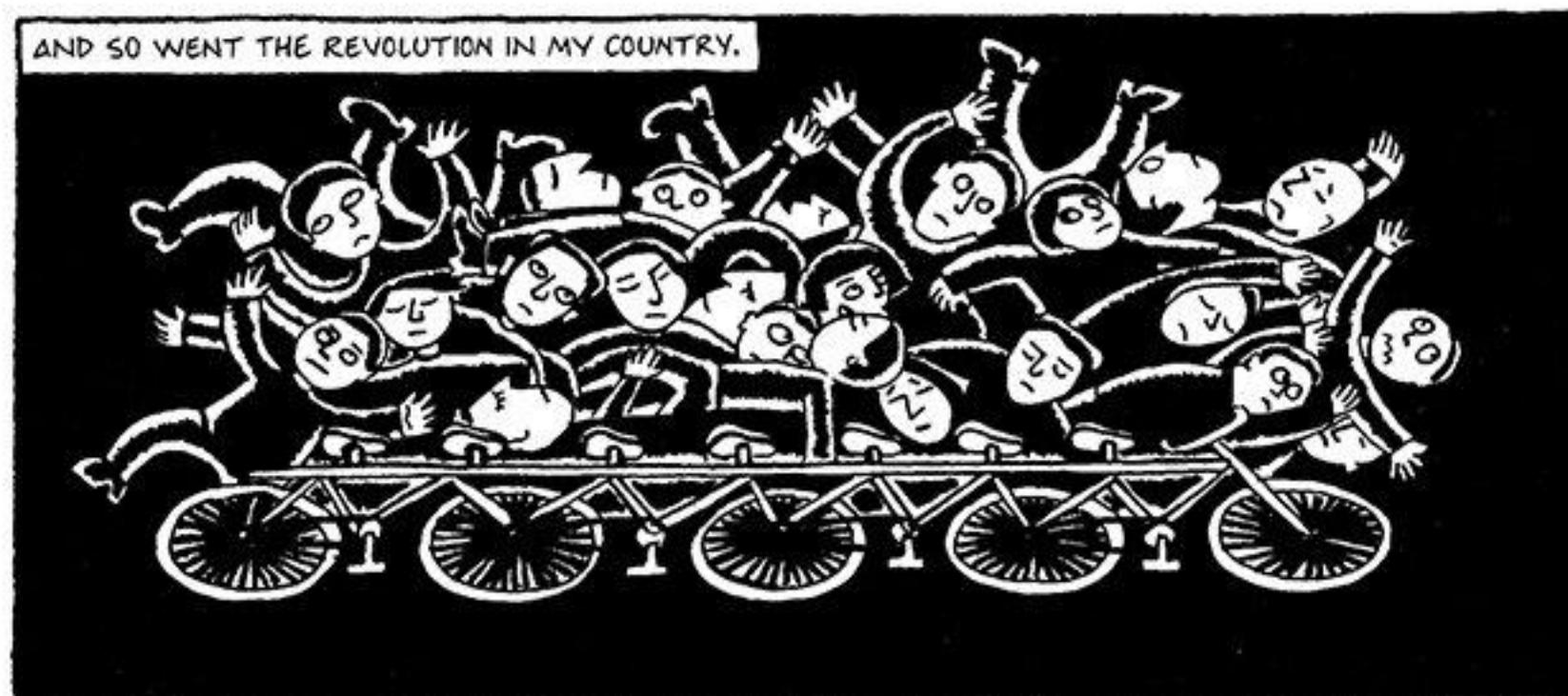
I FELT GUILTY TOWARDS GOD.



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



# THE BICYCLE



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



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

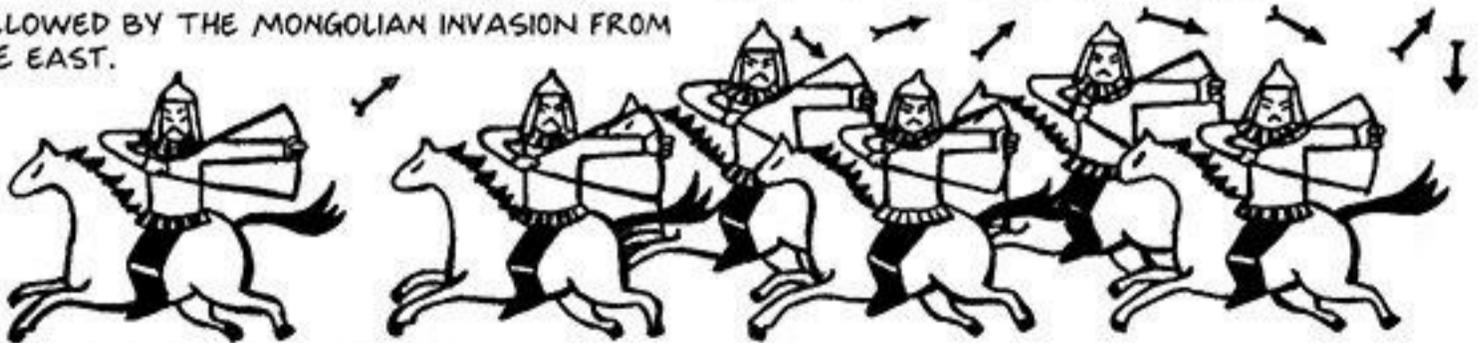
FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.



THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.

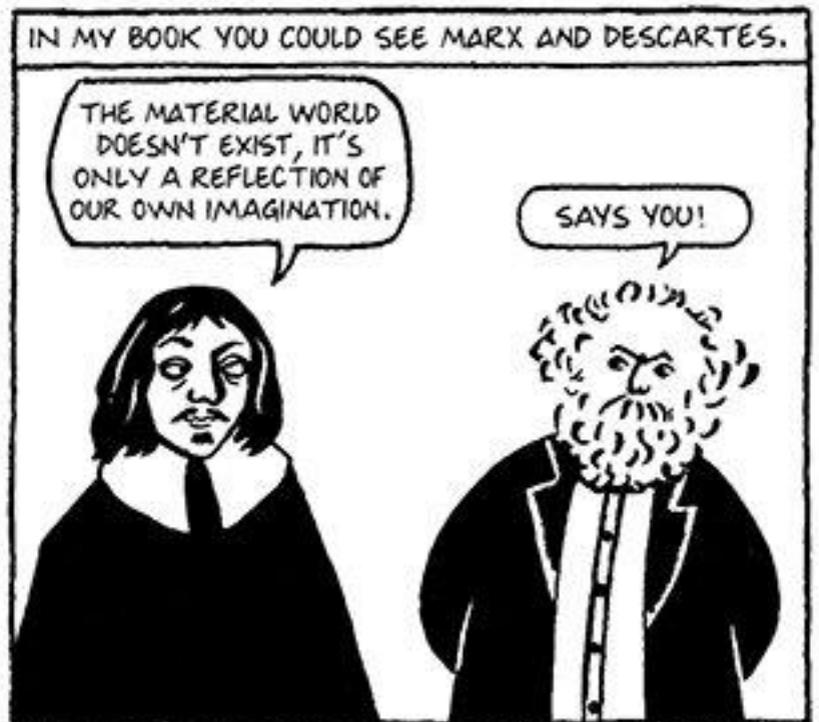


FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.



AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.





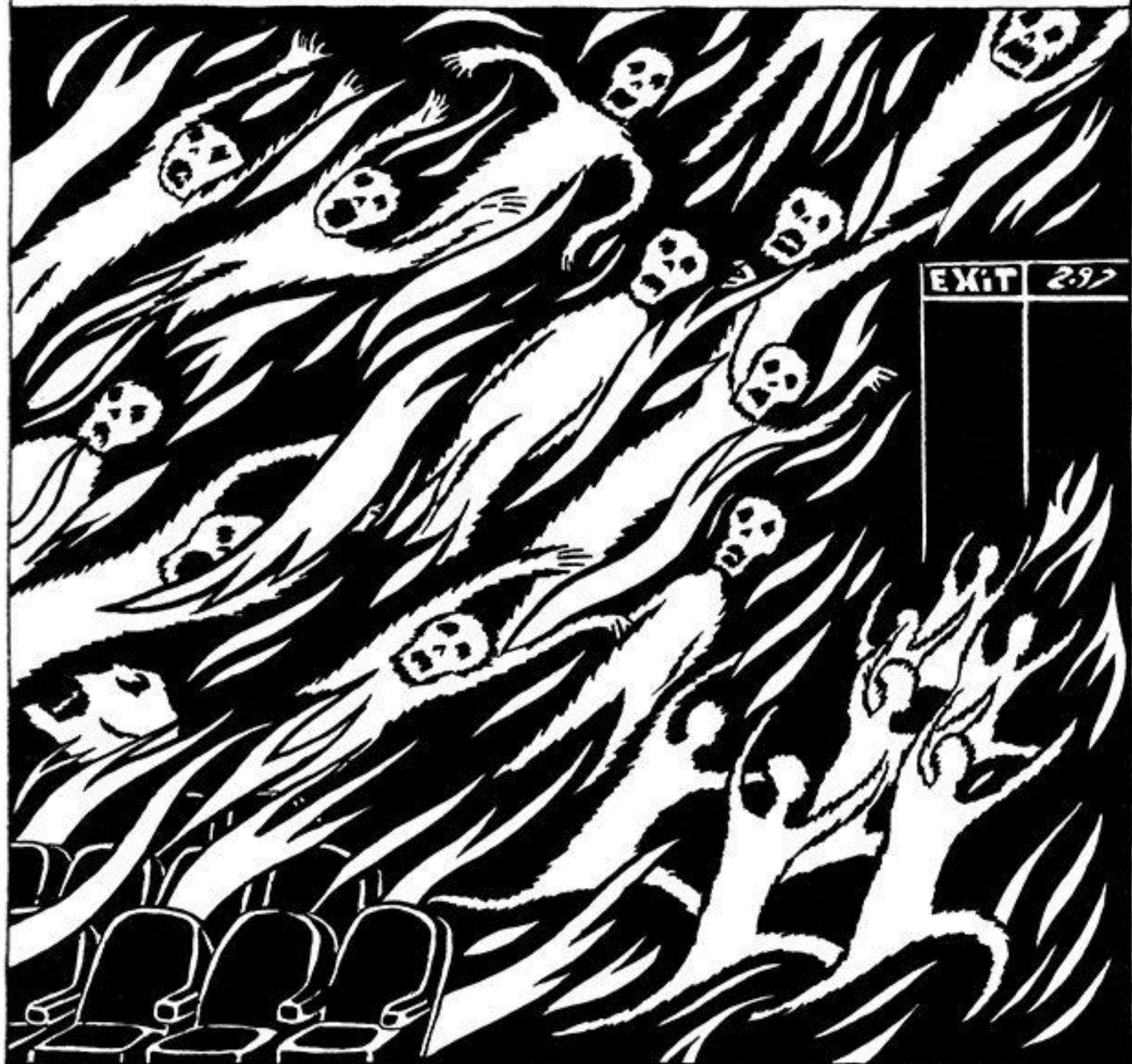




THE FIREMEN DIDN'T ARRIVE UNTIL FORTY MINUTES LATER.



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.



## DOWN WITH THE KING!

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.



HEY MOM, DAD, LET'S PLAY MONOPOLY.

DARLING, WE ARE TIRED.

NOW IS NOT THE RIGHT TIME.



MONOPOLY! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. HA! HA!

IT IS NEVER THE RIGHT TIME!



THE TRUTH IS THAT 50 YEARS AGO THE FATHER OF THE SHAH, WHO WAS A SOLDIER, ORGANIZED A PUTSCH TO OVERTHROW THE EMPEROR AND INSTALL A REPUBLIC.



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.

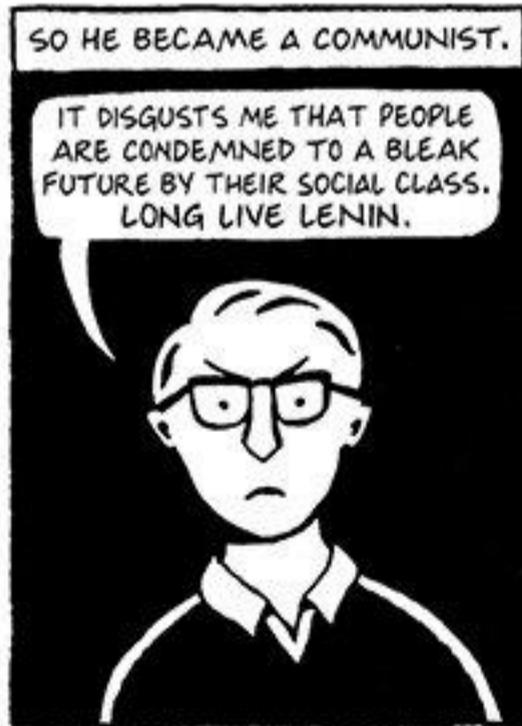
WHAT'S THAT SOLDIER'S NAME AGAIN?

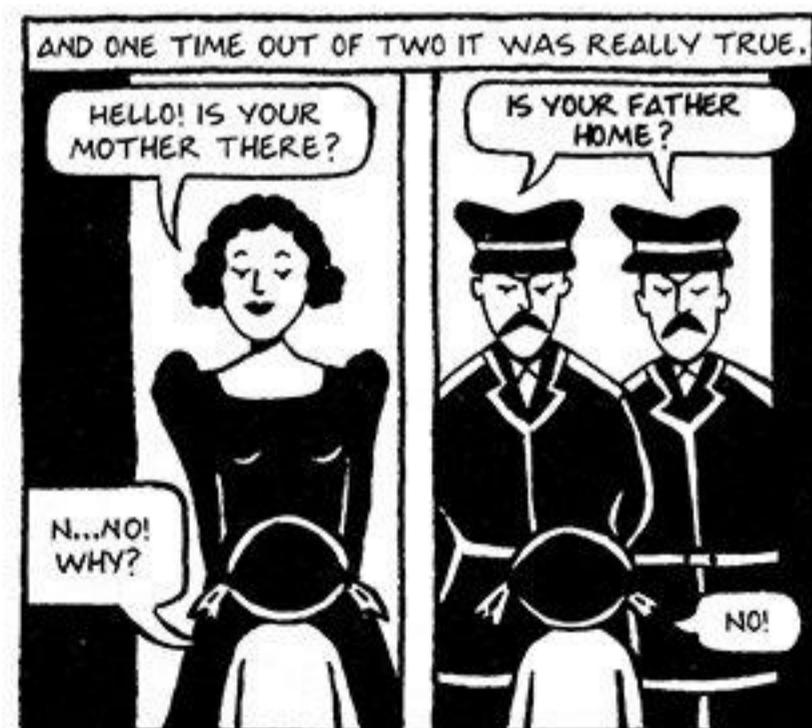
REZA! WE SHOULD GO MEET HIM.

IMMEDIATELY! PERSIA IS FULL OF OIL!











GIDDYAP!  
GIDDYAP!



THE POOR MAN!!!  
PRISON HAD  
DESTROYED HIS  
HEALTH. HE HAD  
RHEUMATISM.



ALL HIS LIFE HE  
WAS IN PAIN.



COME ON. THAT  
TIME IS PAST.



DO YOU WANT TO  
PLAY MONOPOLY?



I WANT TO  
TAKE A BATH.



WE CAN PLAY AFTER YOUR  
BATH IF YOU WANT TO.

NO! I WANT TO  
TAKE A REALLY  
LONG BATH.

THAT NIGHT I STAYED A VERY LONG TIME IN THE BATH. I WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE IN A CELL FILLED WITH WATER.



WHAT ARE  
YOU DOING?

MY HANDS WERE WRINKLED  
WHEN I CAME OUT, LIKE  
GRANDPA'S.





# PERSEPOLIS



OH, YES. SO POOR THAT WE HAD ONLY BREAD TO EAT. I WAS SO ASHAMED THAT I PRETENDED TO COOK SO THAT THE NEIGHBORS WOULDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING.





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.





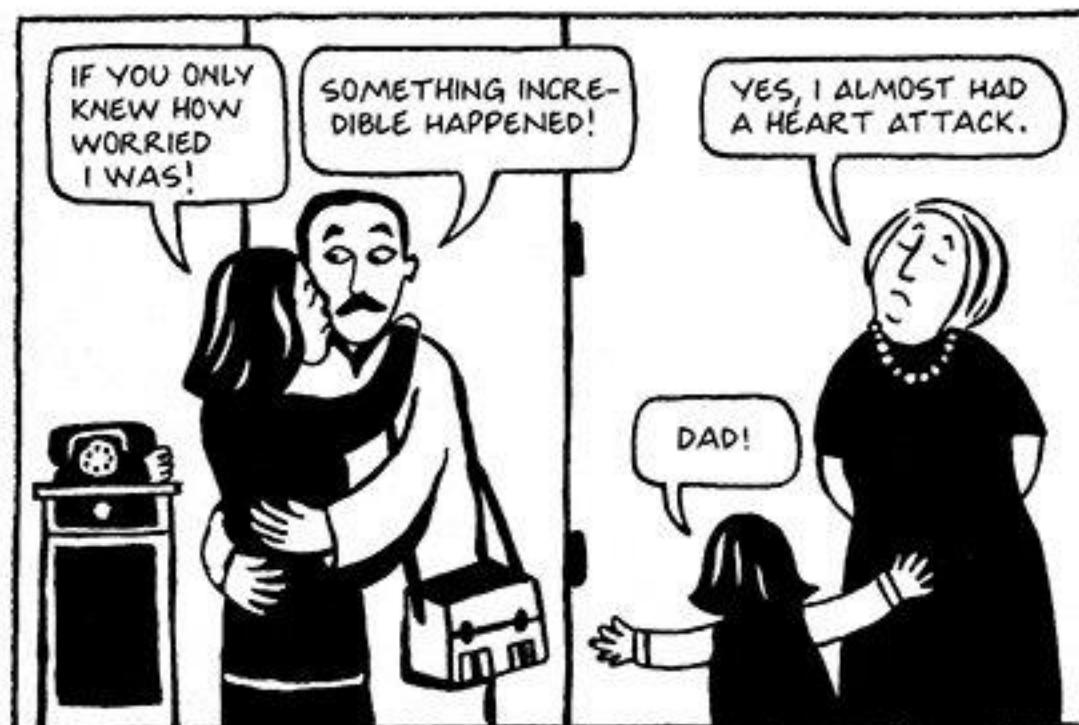
HE TOOK PHOTOS EVERY DAY. IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. HE HAD EVEN BEEN ARRESTED ONCE BUT ESCAPED AT THE LAST MINUTE.

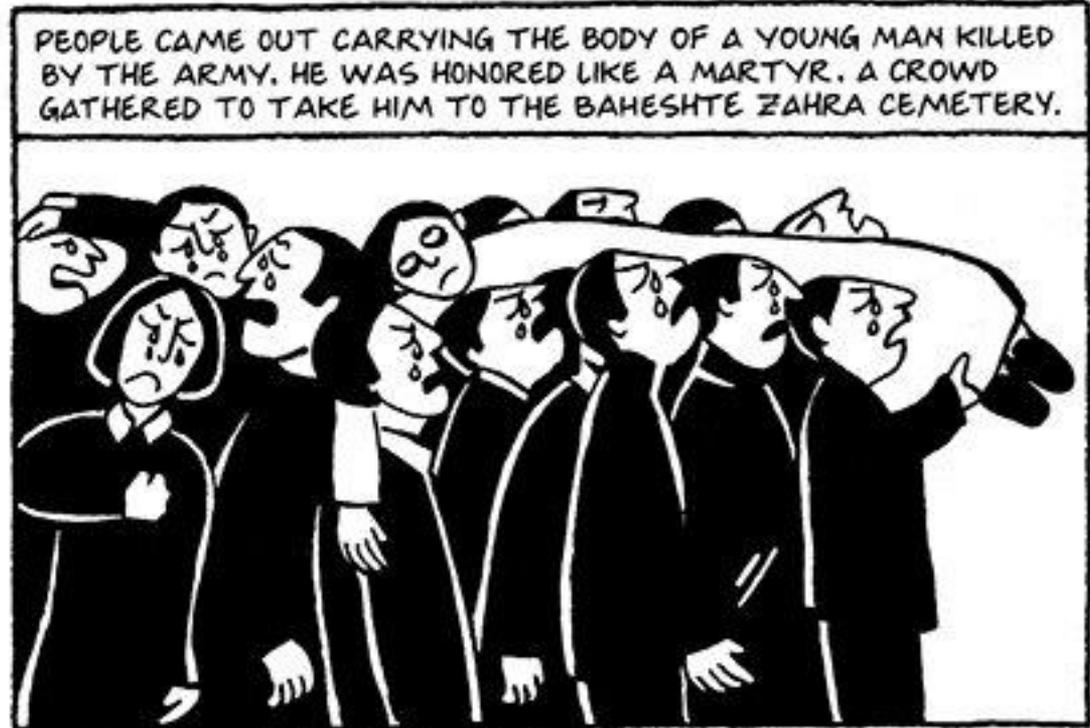


WE WAITED FOR HIM FOR HOURS. THERE WAS THE SAME SILENCE AS BEFORE A STORM.



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





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.





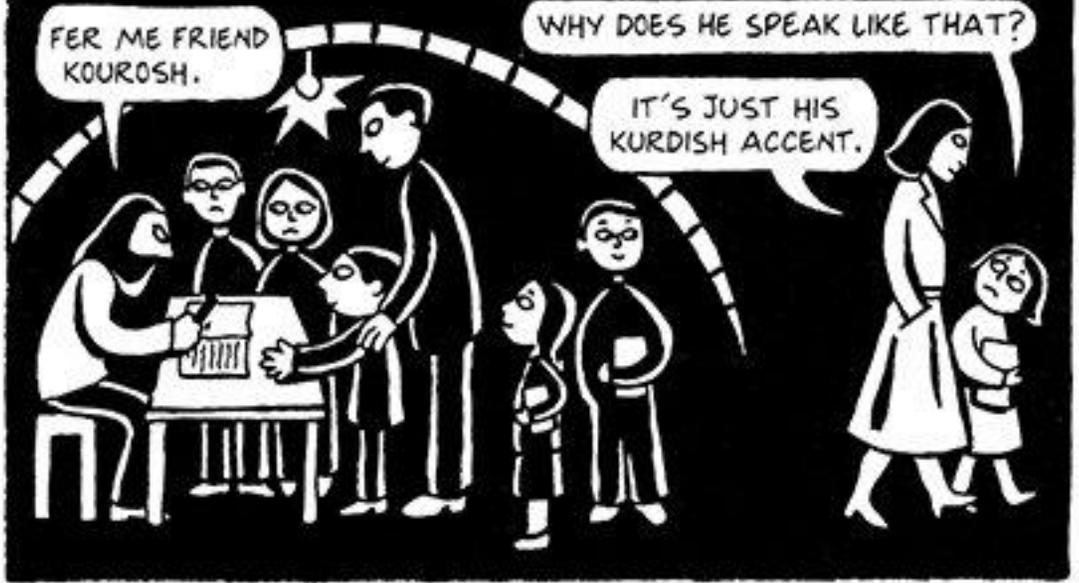


# THE LETTER

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.



CAN YOU HELP ME LACE MY SHOES?

la la la la

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.

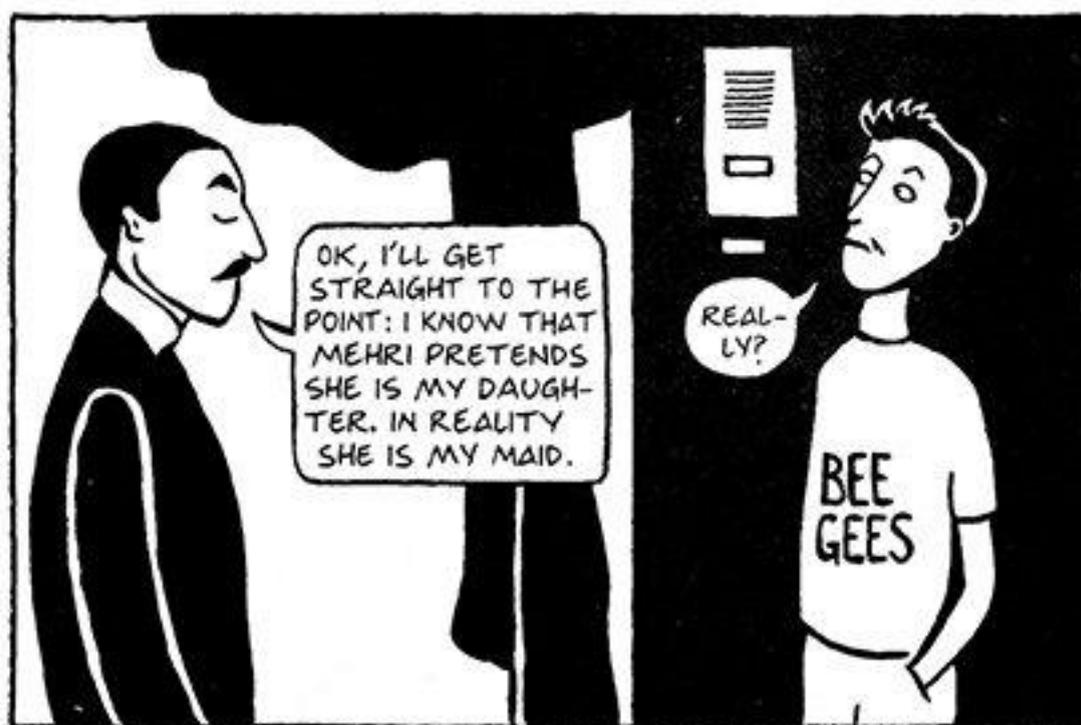


MY DEAR HOSSEIN, I MISS YOU A LOT. IT HAS BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE I SAW YOU AT THE WINDOW. I OFTEN TALK ABOUT YOU TO MY SISTER.

WHICH SISTER?

YOU!

I WAS VERY DEVOTED.









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.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR REVOLT.



TOGETHER WE WILL TRY TO MARCH TOWARDS DEMOCRACY.

AFTER ALL THAT HE HAS DONE!

QUIET!



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

A FREEMASON?  
THAT'S NOT  
SUITABLE.

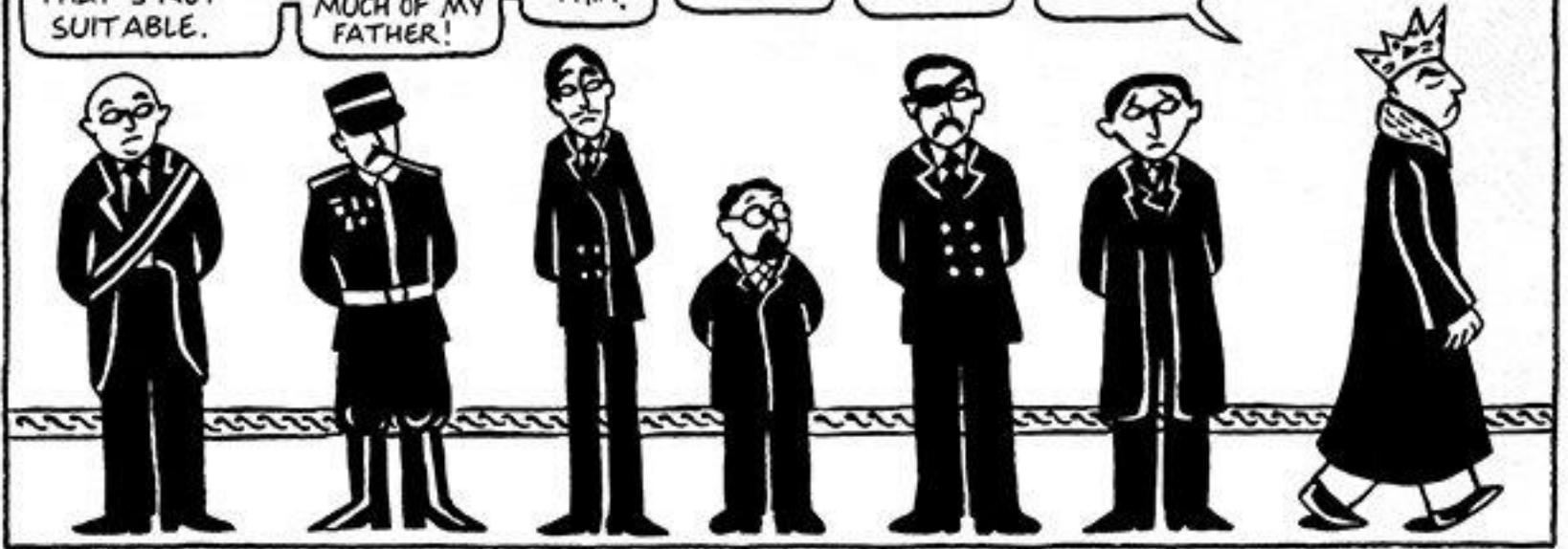
YOU REMIND  
THEM TOO  
MUCH OF MY  
FATHER!

TOO  
THIN!

TOO SHORT!

ONE-EYED!

....



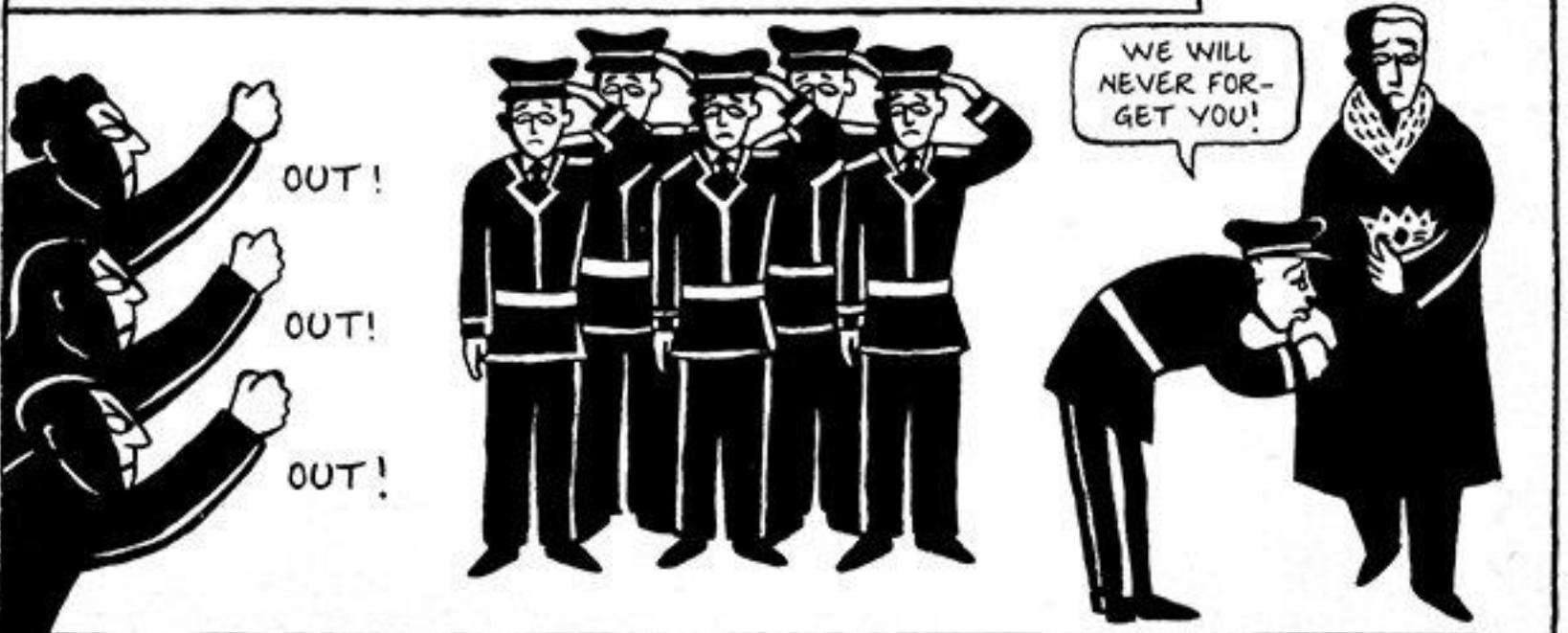
THE MORE HE TRIED DEMOCRACY, THE MORE HIS  
STATUES WERE TORN DOWN.



...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.







\* SECRET POLICE OF THE SHAH'S REGIME.

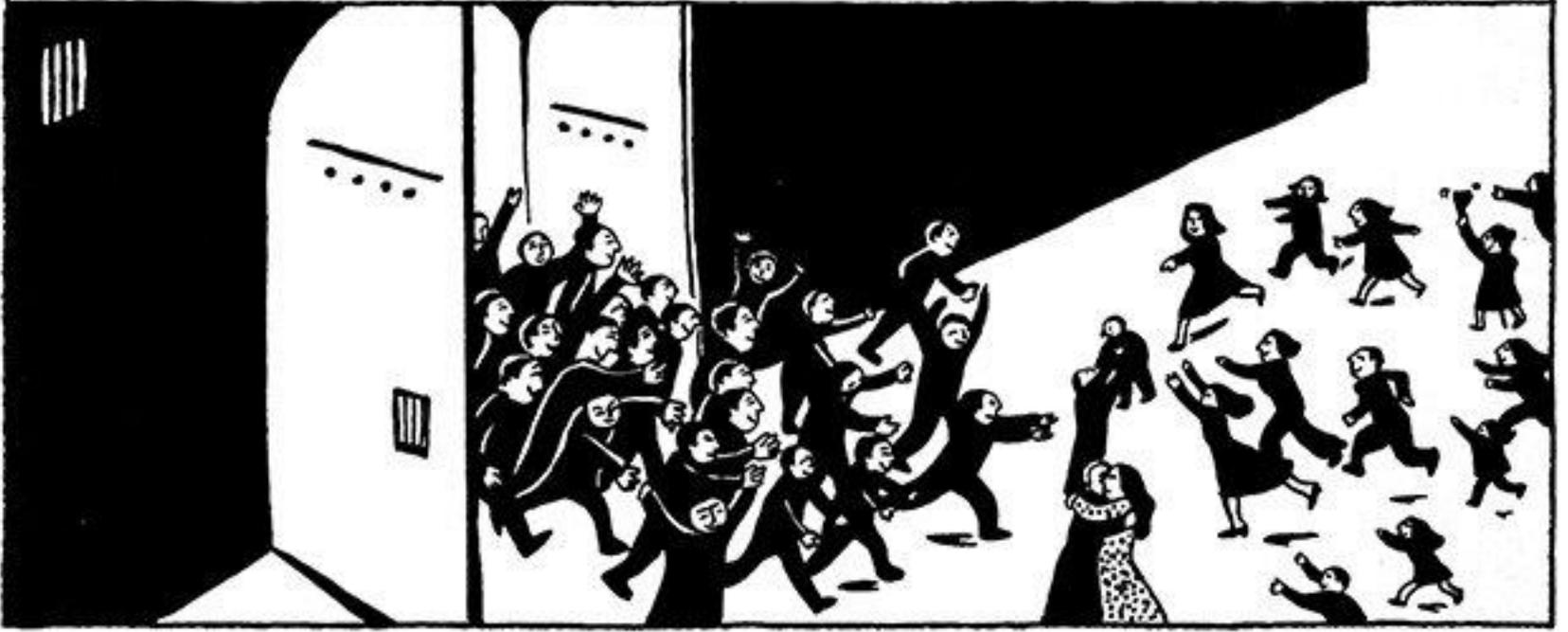






# THE HEROES

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

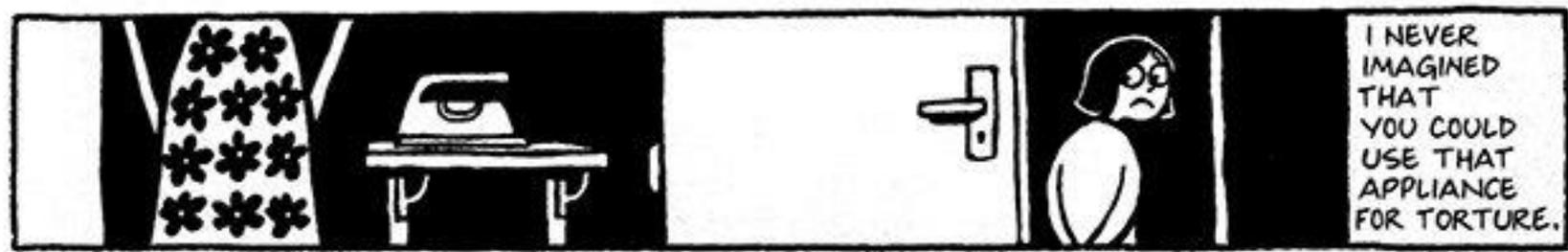
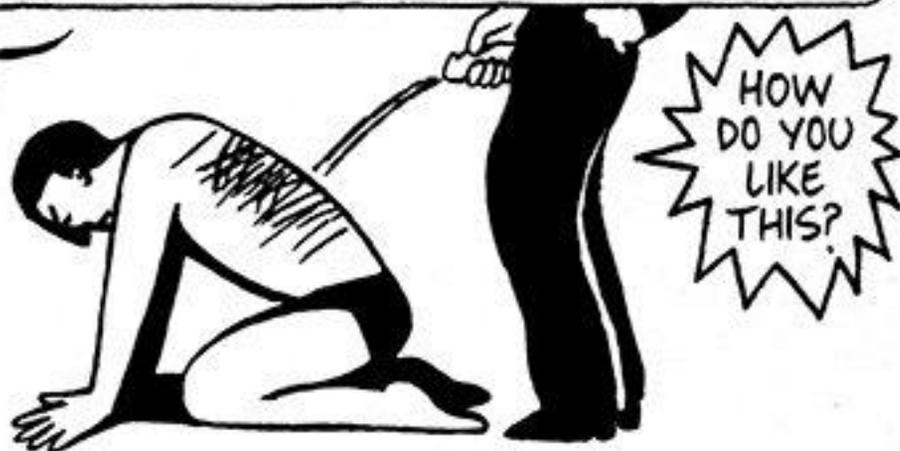




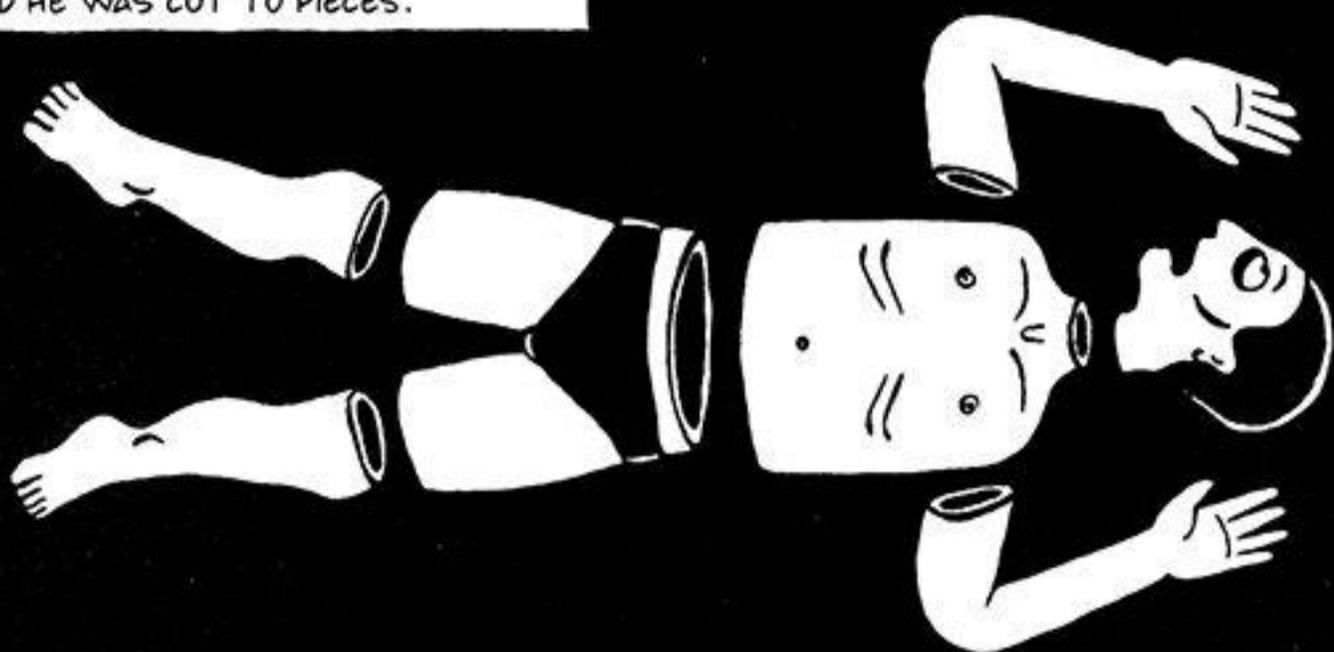




AHMADI... AHMADI WAS ASSASSINATED. AS A MEMBER OF THE GUERRILLAS, HE SUFFERED HELL. HE ALWAYS HAD CYANIDE ON HIM IN CASE HE WAS ARRESTED, BUT HE WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND UNFORTUNATELY HE NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO USE IT... SO HE SUFFERED THE WORST TORTURE...



IN THE END HE WAS CUT TO PIECES.



HE WAS IN MY CLASS AT THE UNIVERSITY.



IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DIDN'T KILL YOUR FATHER IN PRISON.

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.



THOSE STORIES HAD GIVEN ME NEW IDEAS FOR GAMES.



I HAVE IMAGINATION TOO... THE MUSTACHE-ON-FIRE TORTURE CONSISTS OF PULLING ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE UPPER LIP.



THE TWISTED ARM.



THE MOUTH FILLED WITH GARBAGE.



BACK AT HOME THAT EVENING, I HAD THE DIABOLICAL FEELING OF POWER...



BUT IT DIDN'T LAST. I WAS OVERWHELMED.



DON'T CRY DARLING, THEY WILL PAY FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE.

BUT I THOUGHT ONE SHOULD FORGIVE.



BAD PEOPLE ARE DANGEROUS BUT FORGIVING THEM IS TOO. DON'T WORRY, THERE IS JUSTICE ON EARTH.



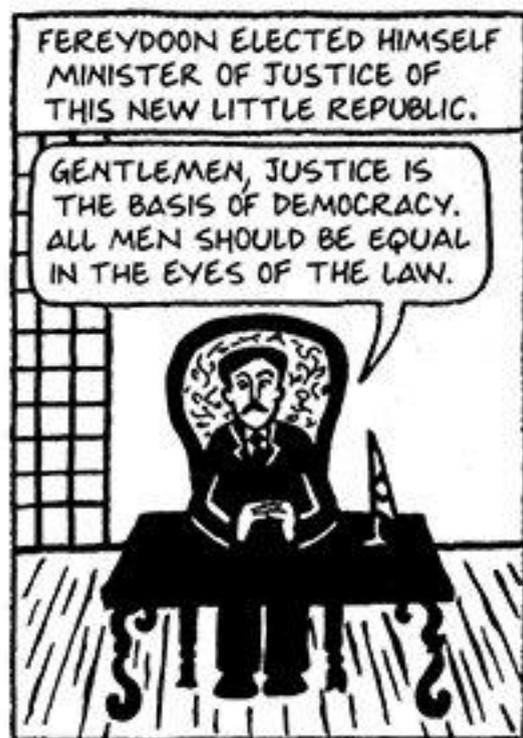
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT JUSTICE WAS. NOW THAT THE REVOLUTION WAS FINALLY OVER ONCE AND FOR ALL, I ABANDONED THE DIALECTIC MATERIALISM OF MY COMIC STRIPS. THE ONLY PLACE I FELT SAFE WAS IN THE ARMS OF MY FRIEND.





# MOSCOW





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.









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.





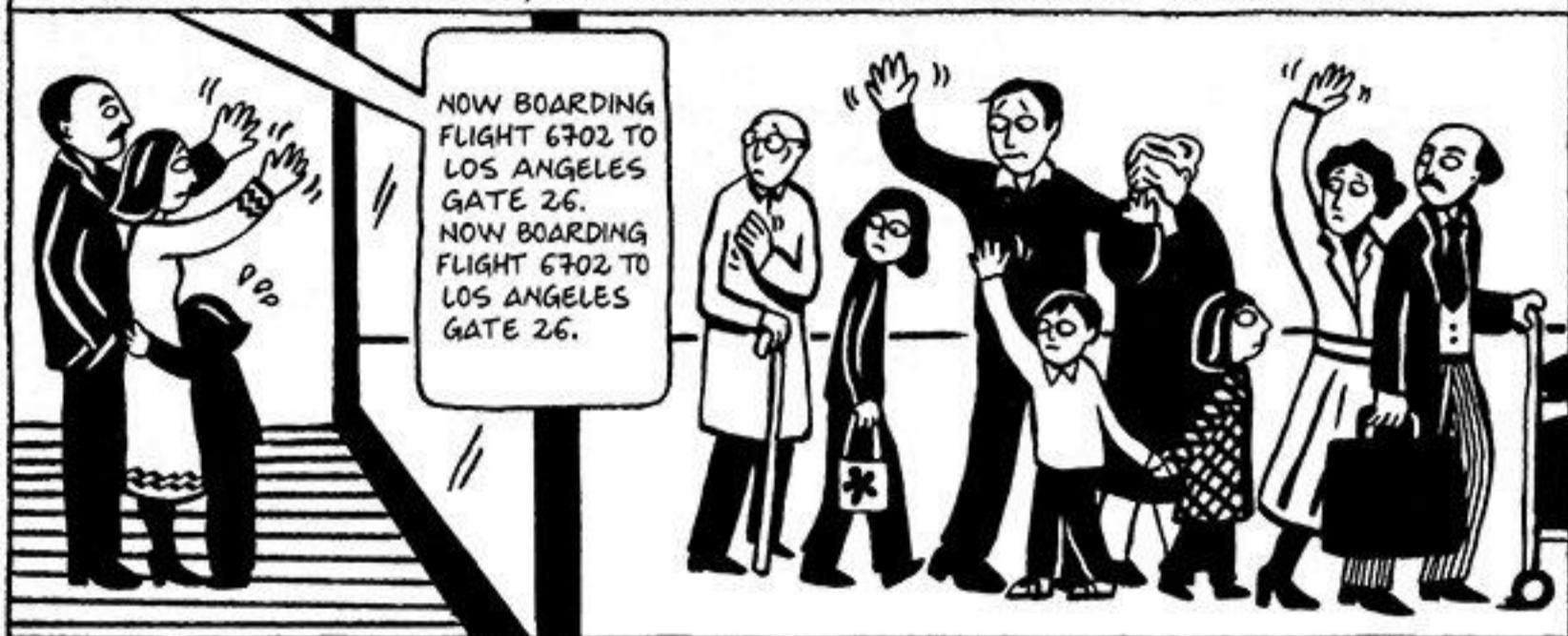


# THE SHEEP





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



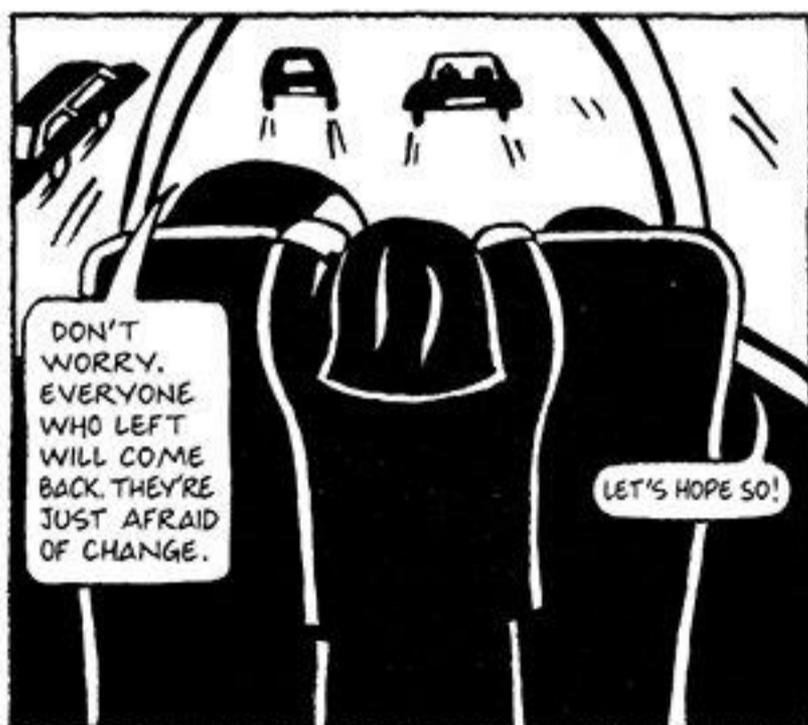
MAYBE WE SHOULD LEAVE  
TOO...



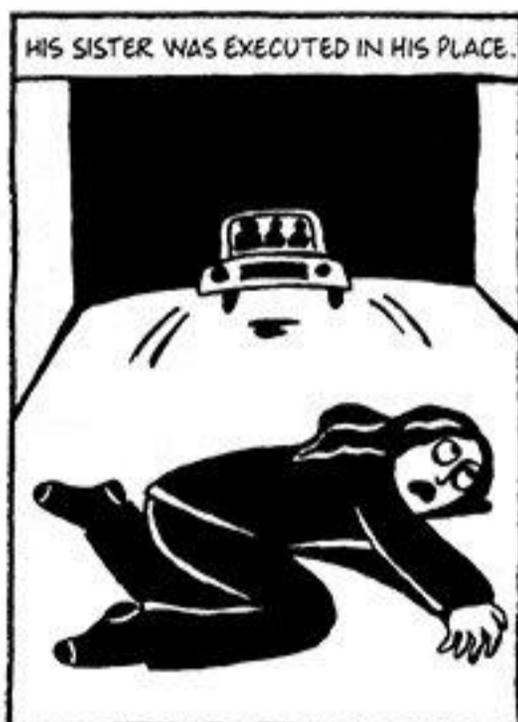
SO THAT I CAN BECOME  
A TAXI DRIVER AND YOU  
A CLEANING LADY?



MY FRIEND KAVEH LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES TOO.













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



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

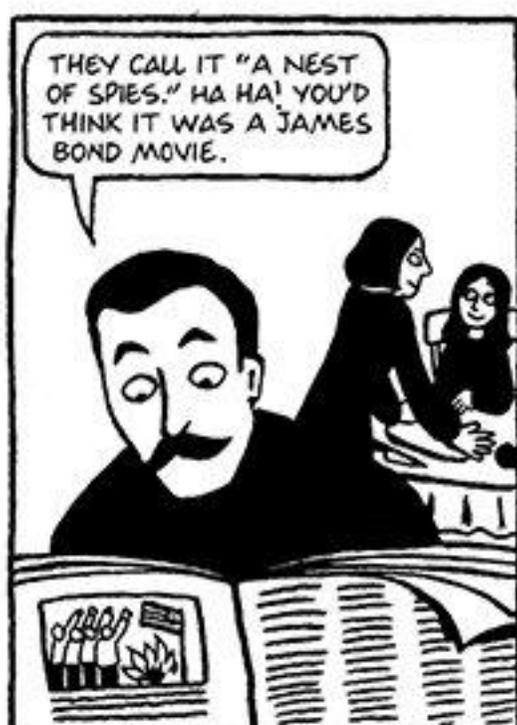


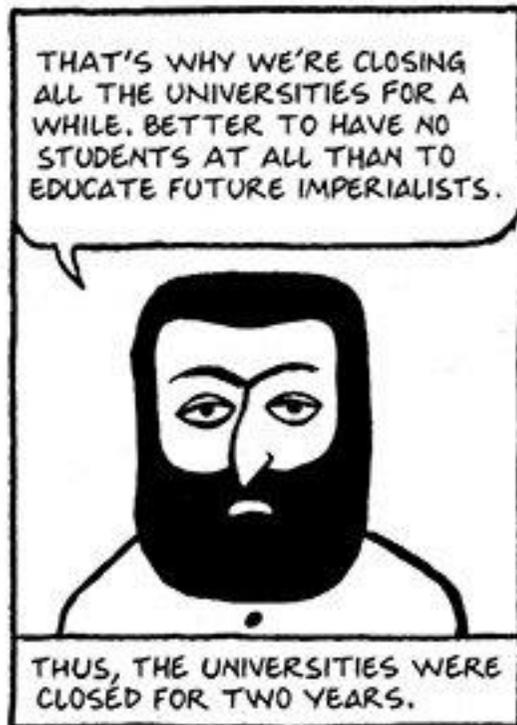
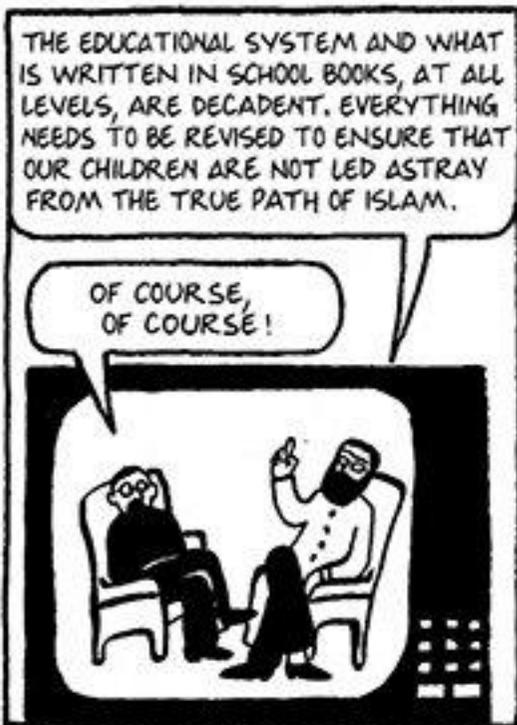
MARJI, RUN TO  
THE BASEMENT!  
WE'RE BEING  
BOMBED!

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



BEARD

SHIRT HANGING OUT

THE PROGRESSIVE MAN

SHAVED, WITH OR WITHOUT MUSTACHE



SHIRT TUCKED IN

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."

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...

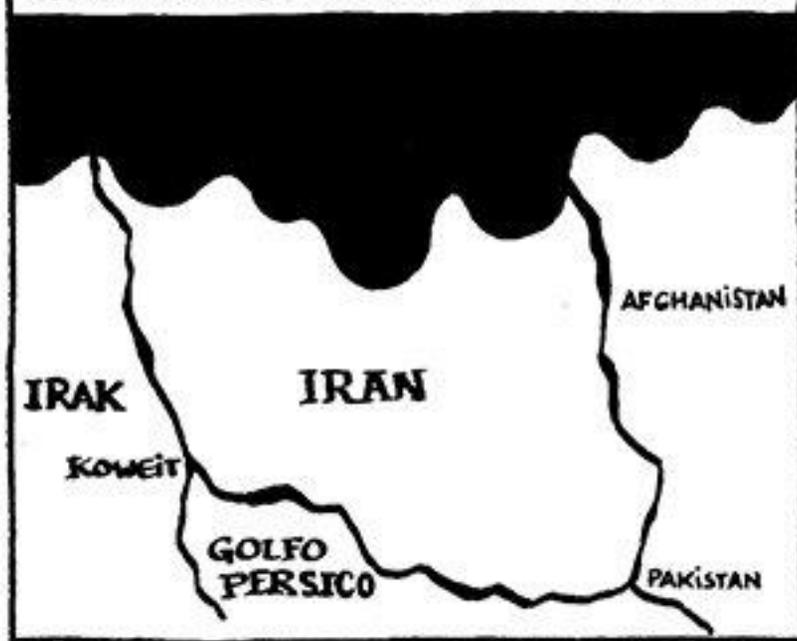


...IT WAS WONDERFUL.

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

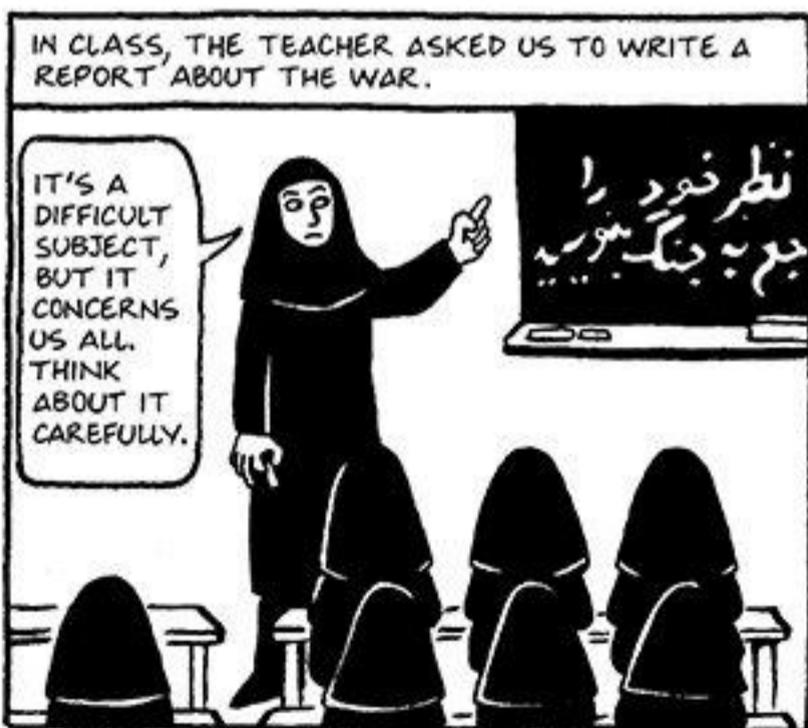










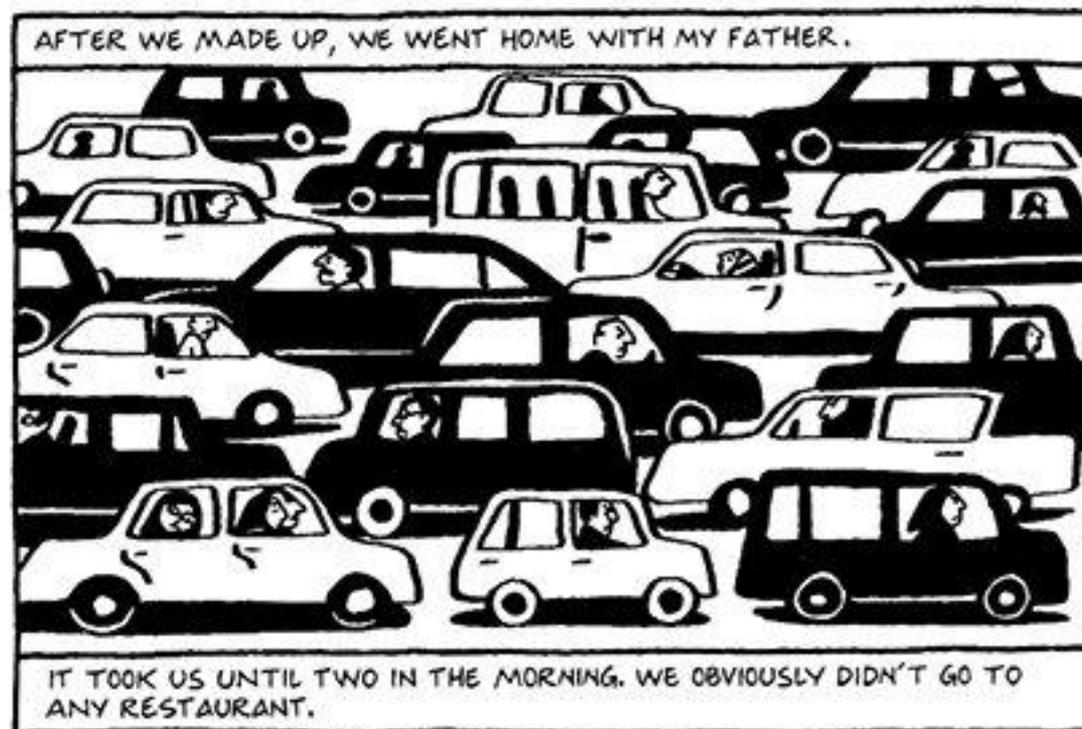






# THE JEWELS

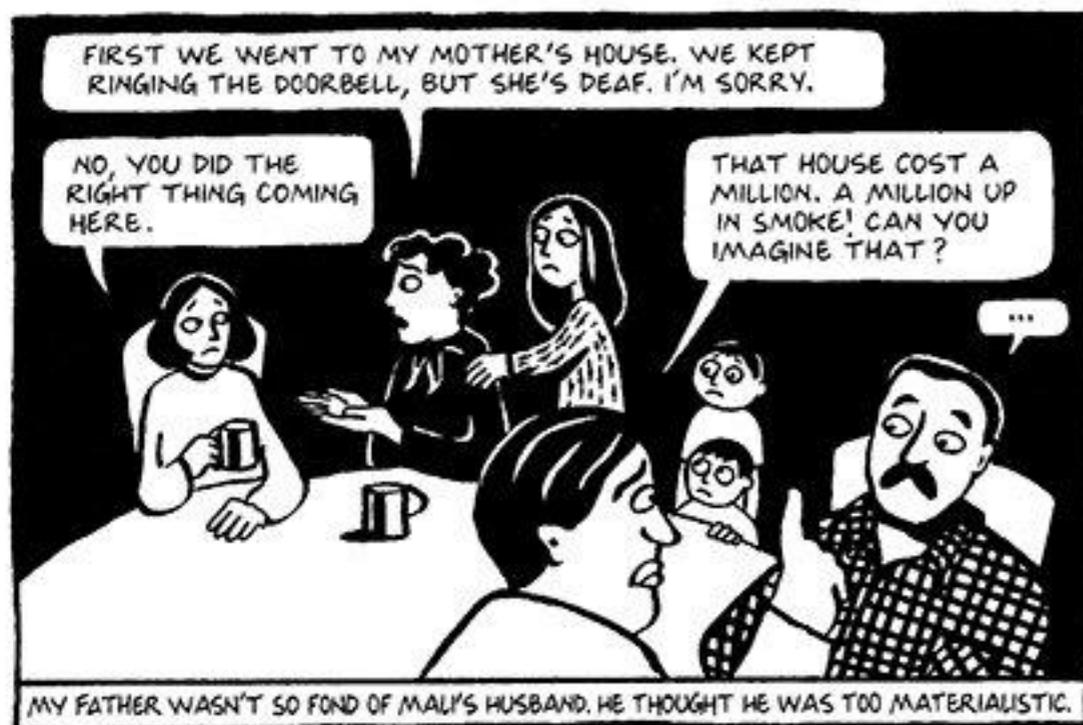






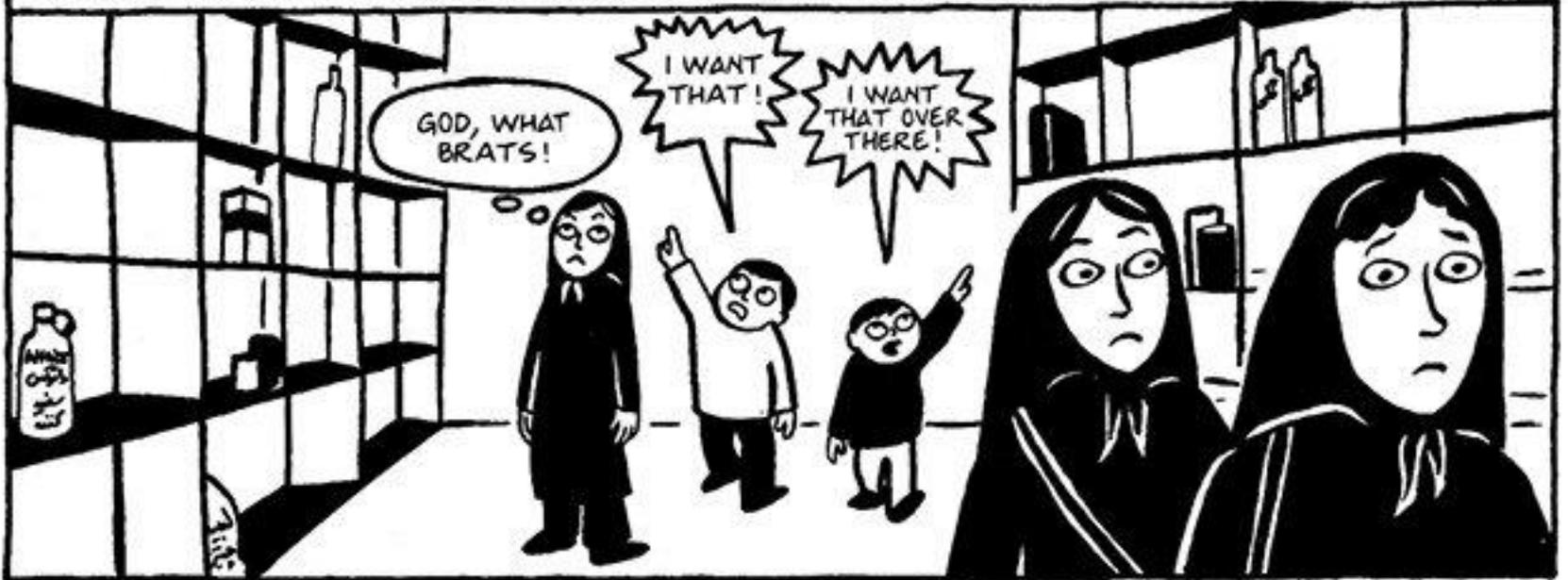
AFTER ABADAN, EVERY BORDER TOWN WAS TARGETED BY BOMBERS. MOST OF THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THOSE AREAS HAD TO FLEE NORTHWARD, FAR FROM THE IRAQI MISSILES.

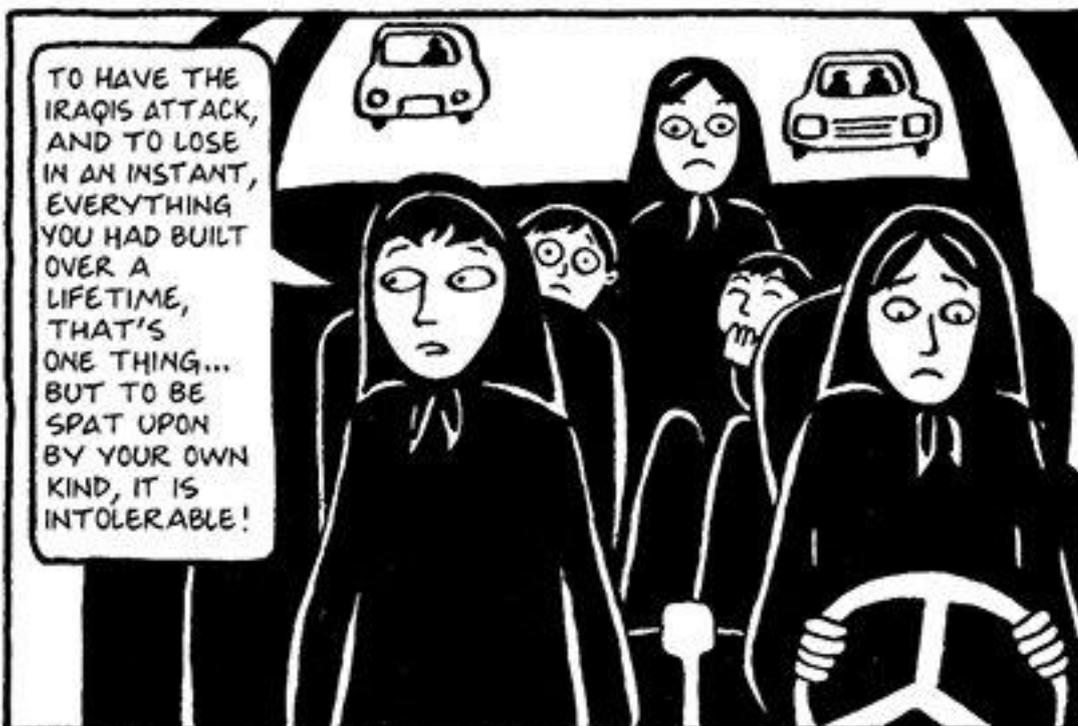
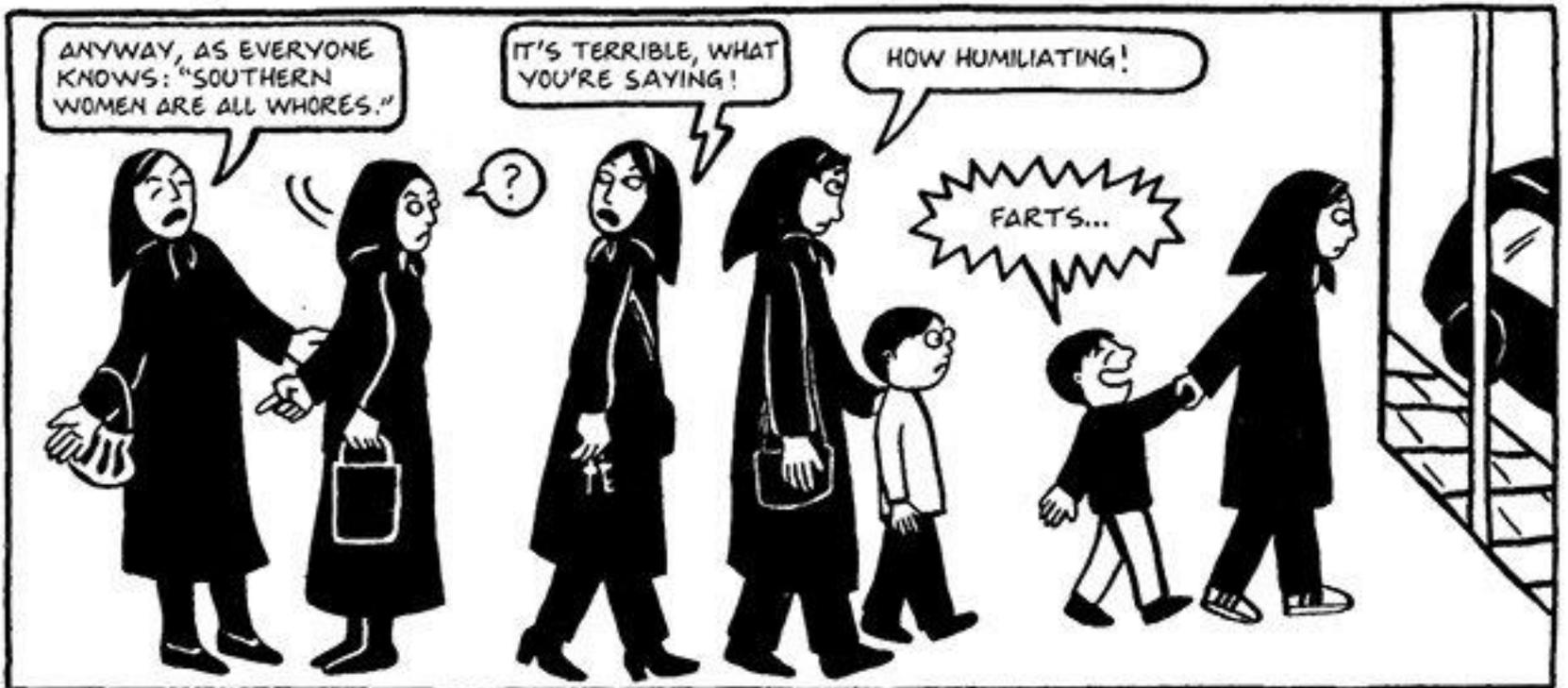
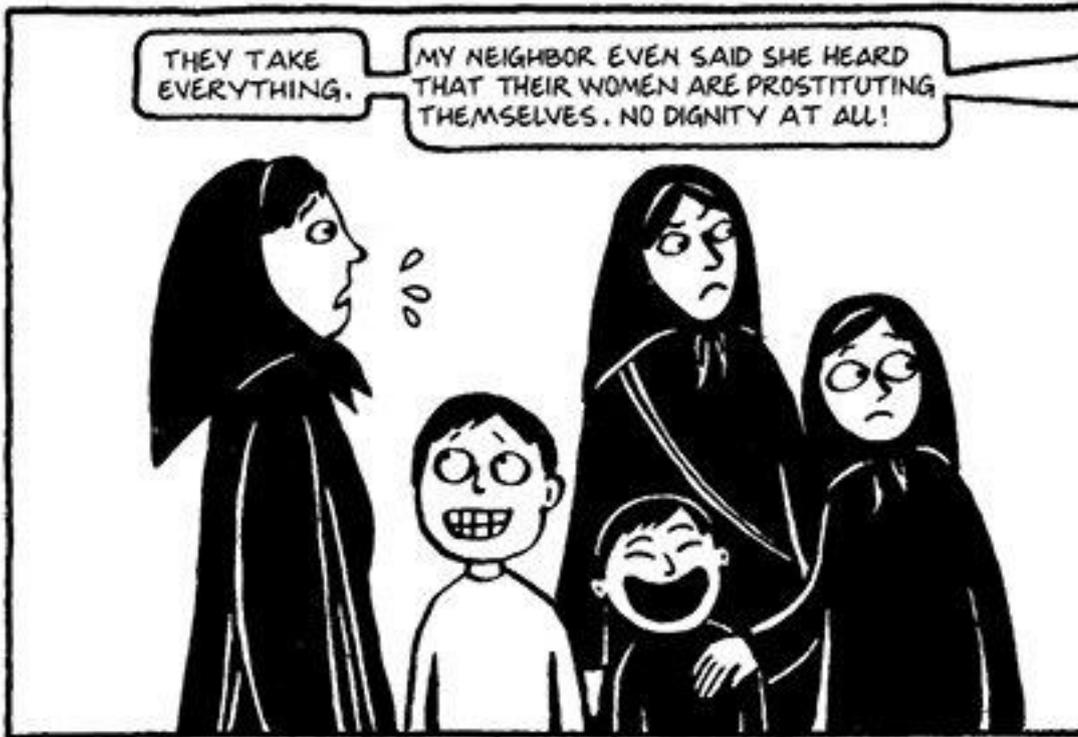






MALI AND HER FAMILY SPENT A WEEK WITH US. THAT'S HOW LONG IT TOOK TO SELL THE JEWELRY AND START OVER AGAIN. MALI'S MOTHER WAS BITTER AND HARD TO DEAL WITH (AND DEAF). BUT THEY WERE HAPPY AT OUR PLACE. THEN, ONE DAY, WE WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.







# 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.

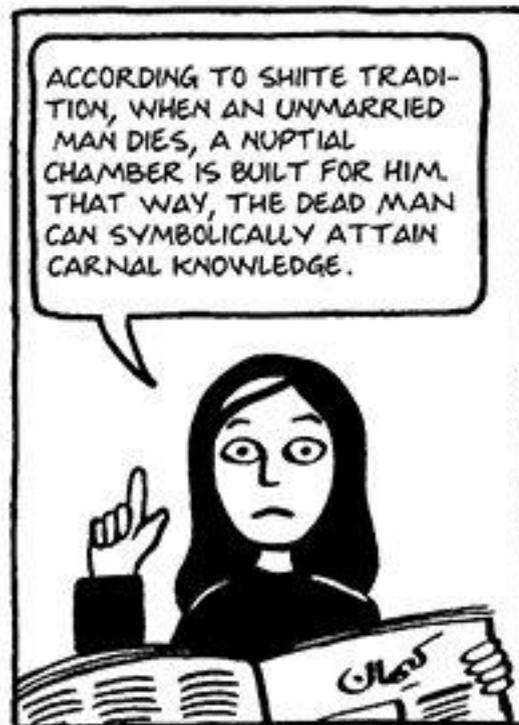


CAN YOU HELP ME STYLE MY HAIR?

HAVE YOU SEEN ALL THESE CASUALTIES?



HOW CAN I NOT SEE? THEY'RE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO SHOW HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED. THE STREETS ARE PACKED WITH NUPTIAL CHAMBERS.



ACCORDING TO SHIITE TRADITION, WHEN AN UNMARRIED MAN DIES, A NUPTIAL CHAMBER IS BUILT FOR HIM. THAT WAY, THE DEAD MAN CAN SYMBOLICALLY ATTAIN CARNAL KNOWLEDGE.



IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT MANY OF THE FIGHTERS DIED VIRGINS.



VRUUUUUUU



MOM, DON'T ALL THESE DEAD MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

OF COURSE THEY MEAN SOMETHING TO ME! BUT WE ARE STILL LIVING!



OUR COUNTRY HAS ALWAYS KNOWN WAR AND MARTYRS. SO, LIKE MY FATHER SAID: "WHEN A BIG WAVE COMES, LOWER YOUR HEAD AND LET IT PASS!"

THAT'S VERY PERSIAN. THE PHILOSOPHY OF RESIGNATION.

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.

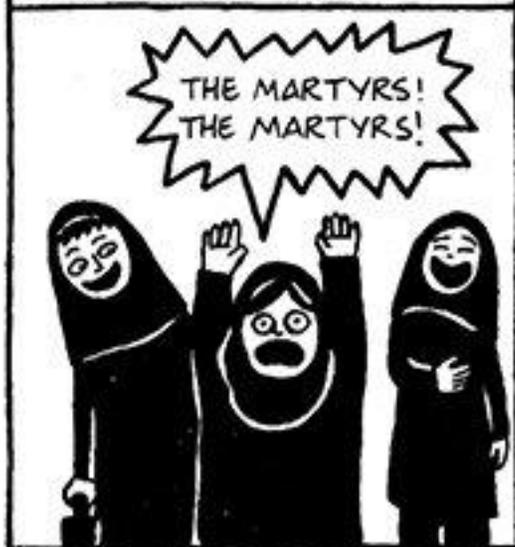


IT COULD GO VERY FAR.

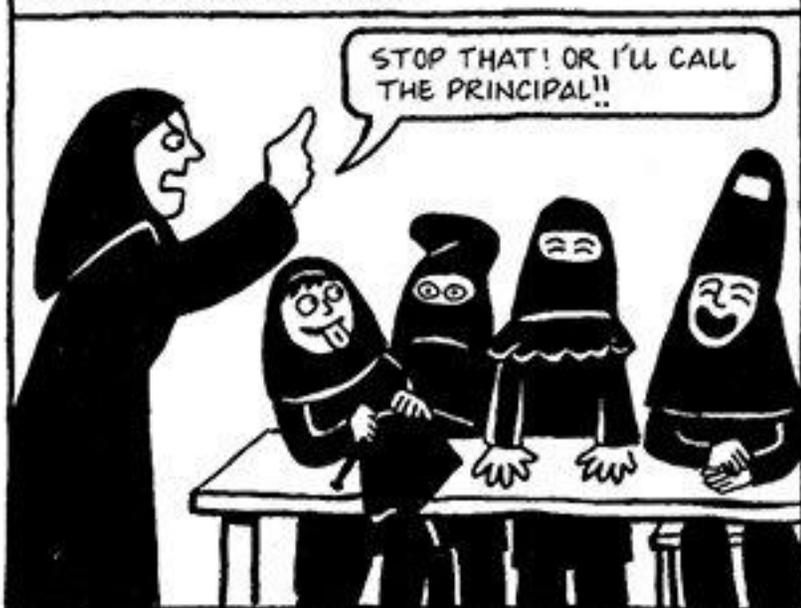


SOMETIMES IT WAS CONSIDERED A MACHO THING.

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.

YOUR CHILDREN HAVE NO RESPECT FOR ANYTHING. NO SELF-CONTROL! THE BASIS OF EDUCATION COMES FROM THE FAMILY!

STOP RIGHT THERE. YOU'RE SAYING THAT WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN?

LISTEN, WE'RE AT WAR. A LOT OF CHILDREN DON'T EVEN HAVE SCHOOL THESE DAYS. YOURS HAVE A RARE OPPORTUNITY. SO YOU SHOULD MAKE SURE THEY'RE WELL-BEHAVED!

WELL-BEHAVED? SO THEY CAN HIT THEMSELVES TWICE A DAY??

SO THEY CAN BE COVERED FROM HEAD TO TOE?

SO THAT THEY CAN BE FORBIDDEN TO PLAY LIKE THE KIDS THEY ARE ??

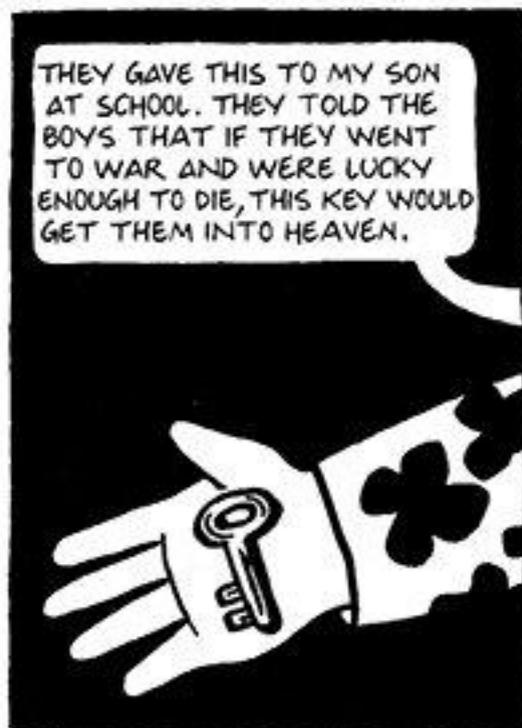
OH!

ANYWAY, THAT'S HOW IT IS! EITHER THEY OBEY THE LAW, OR THEY'RE EXPELLED!!

AND MAKE SURE THEY WEAR THEIR VEILS CORRECTLY...

IF HAIR IS AS STIMULATING AS YOU SAY, THEN YOU NEED TO SHAVE YOUR MUSTACHE!

MY FATHER ACTUALLY SAID THAT.







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.

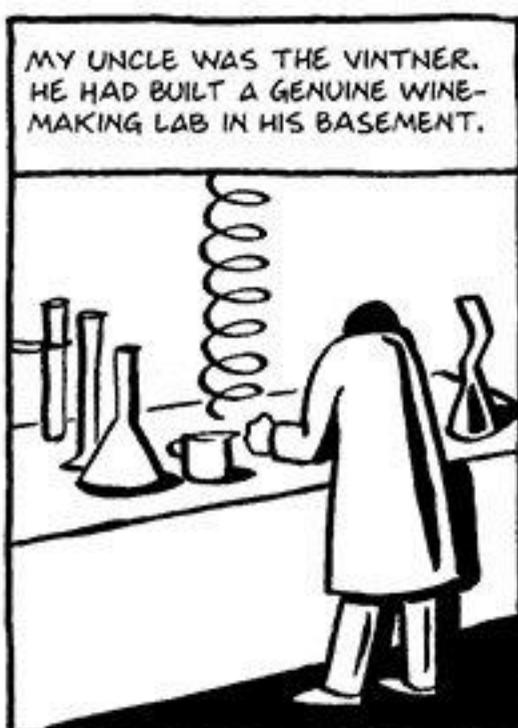
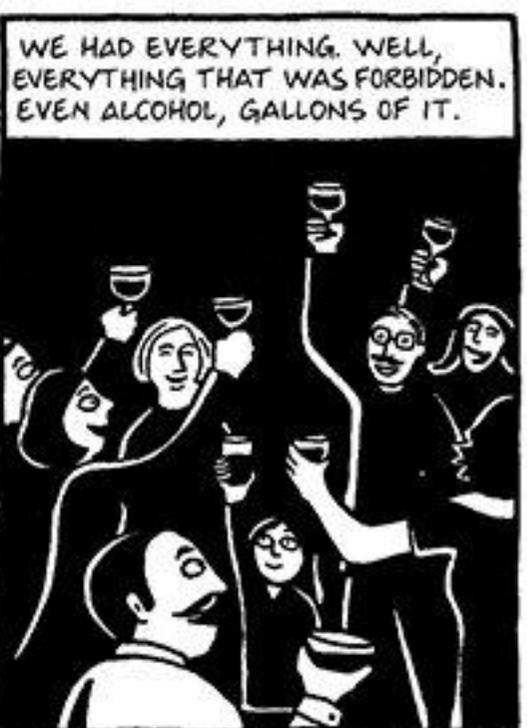
HIS WIFE CRIED SO MUCH THAT THEY FINALLY LET HER OFF WITH A HEFTY FINE. BUT HE CAN'T WALK ANYMORE...NOW YOU SEE WHY I'M PUTTING UP THE CURTAINS. WITH THE PARTIES WE HAVE ON THURSDAYS AND THE CARD GAMES ON MONDAYS, WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

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!!!**



SUDDENLY, SIRENS STARTED TO WAIL...



...AND MY AUNT DID TOO.



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

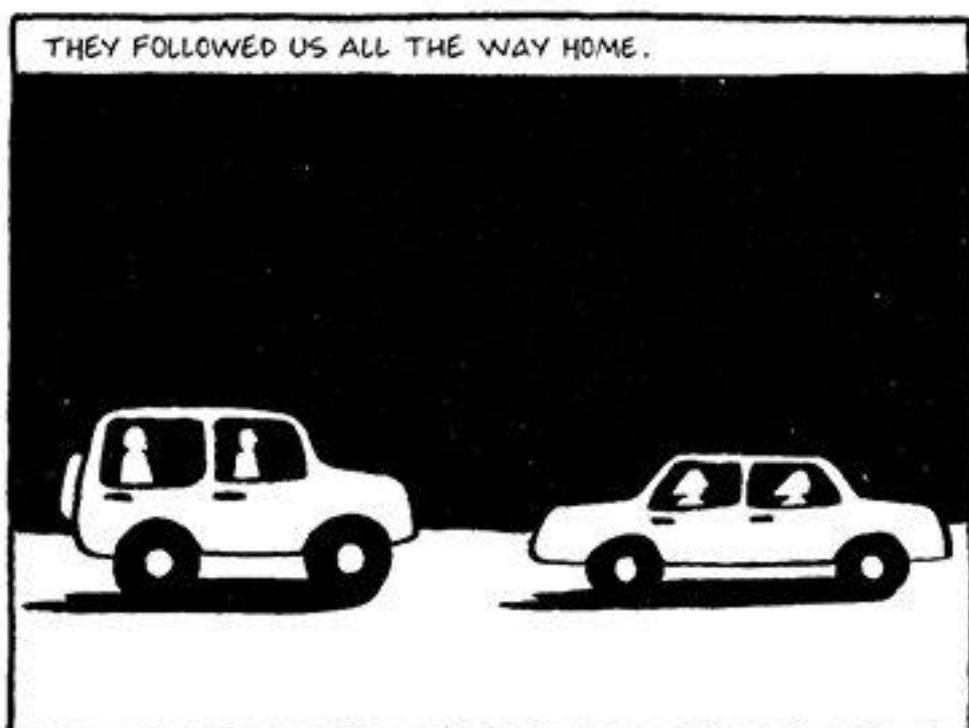


HER MOTHER HAD ALREADY ABANDONED HER.



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.



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.



DID YOU SEE HIS HAIR? JUST LIKE ROD STEWART!

YEAH, IF HE GETS CAUGHT, HE'LL GET A BUZZ CUT!

...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.



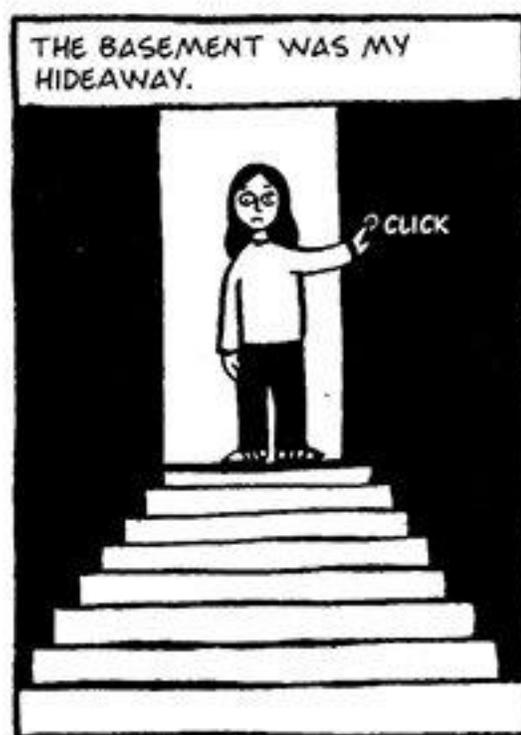
...THE SIRENS WENT OFF.



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









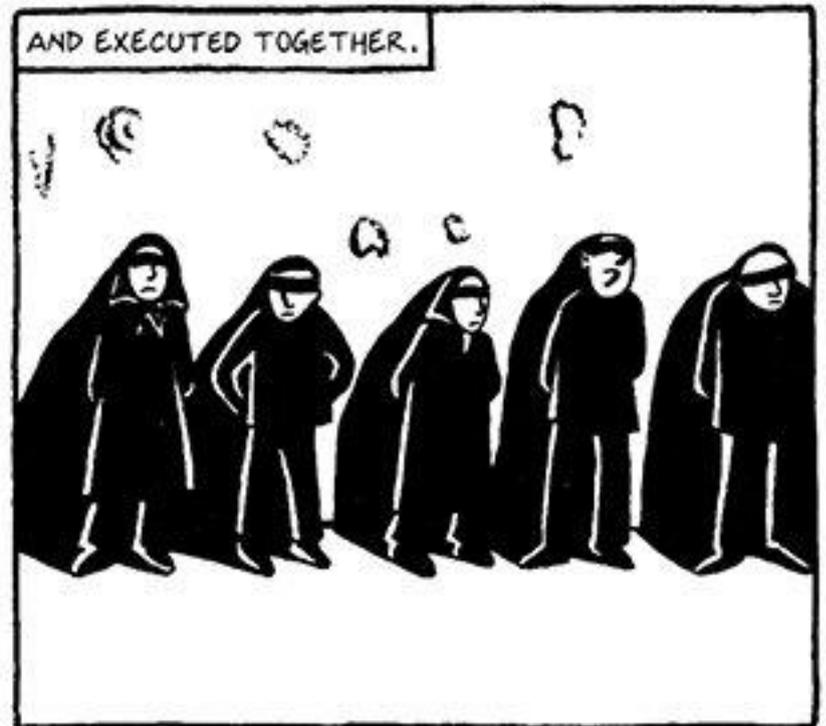
\*A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ





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.



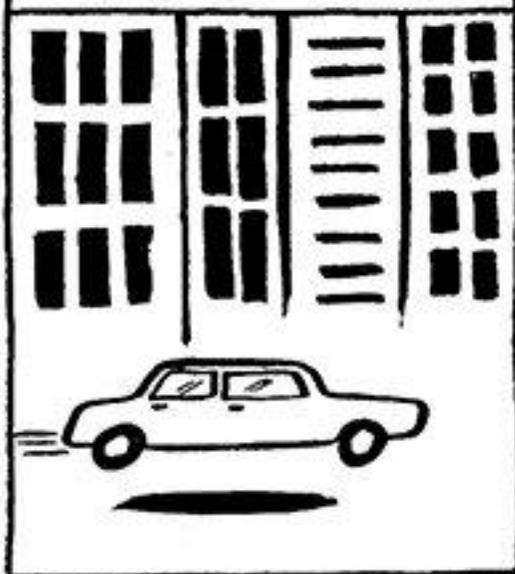
ANYWAY, I'M ALREADY 59. BUT THOSE POOR 20-YEAR-OLDS WHO GET SLAUGHTERED. THEY KILL ME... THEY KILL ME!



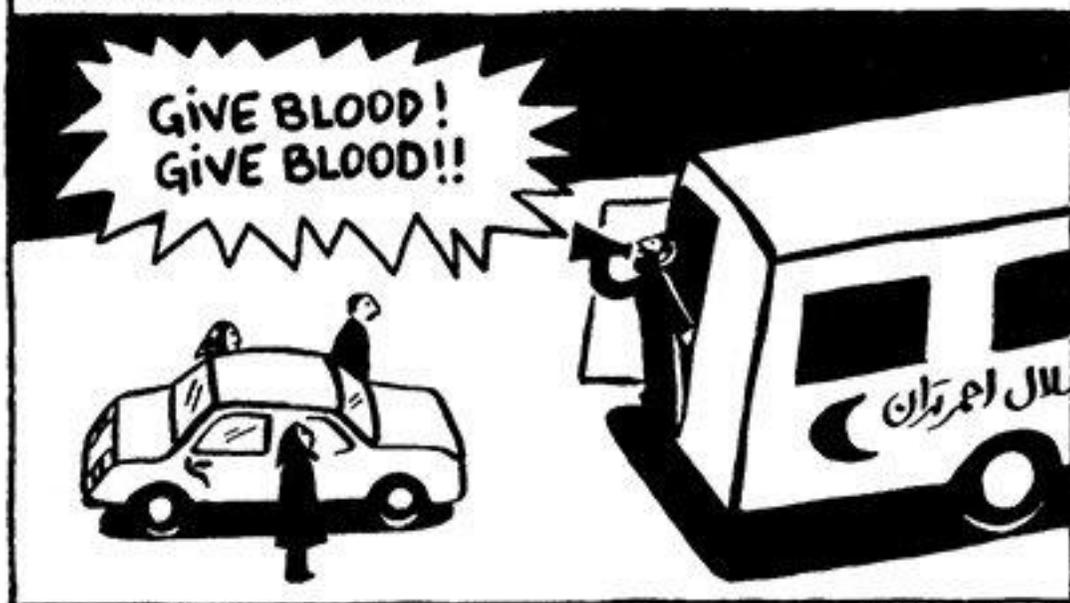
MY UNCLE TAHER WAS SO SAD THAT IT HURT TO LOOK AT HIM. NO ONE DARED SAY A WORD.



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.

I'M LOOKING FOR MR. TALISCHI'S ROOM.

TALISCHI... THAT'S 342, THIRD FLOOR, AT THE END OF THE HALL TO THE RIGHT.





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 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.

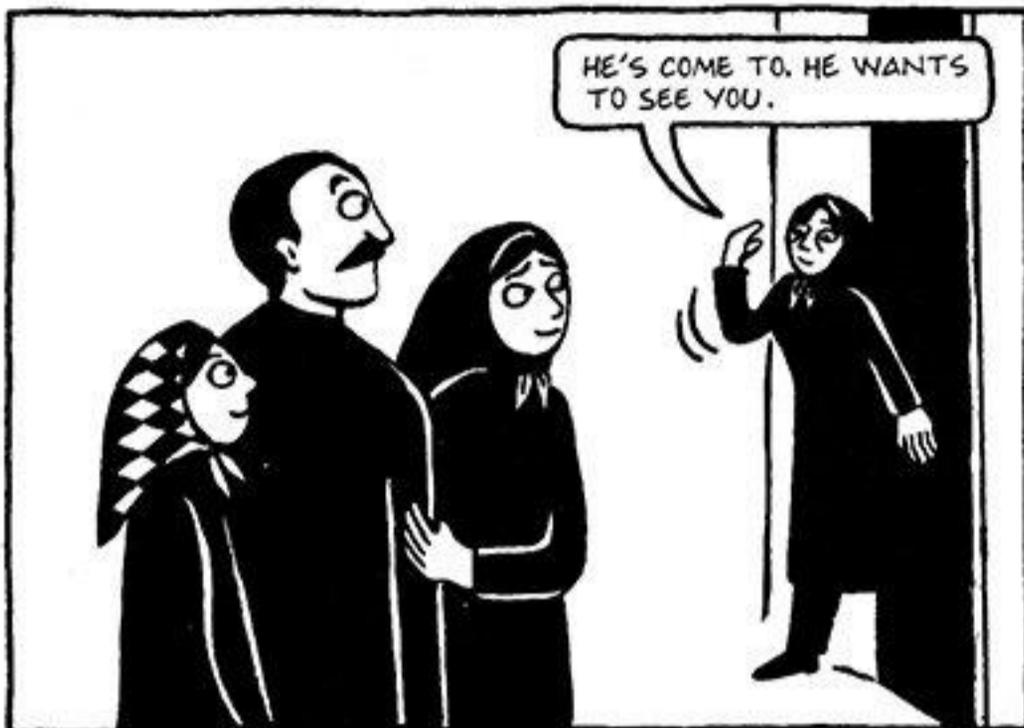
THEY'VE BEEN SEARCHING THE HOUSES OF EVERYONE IN HER FAMILY. THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE SHE'S SAFE.

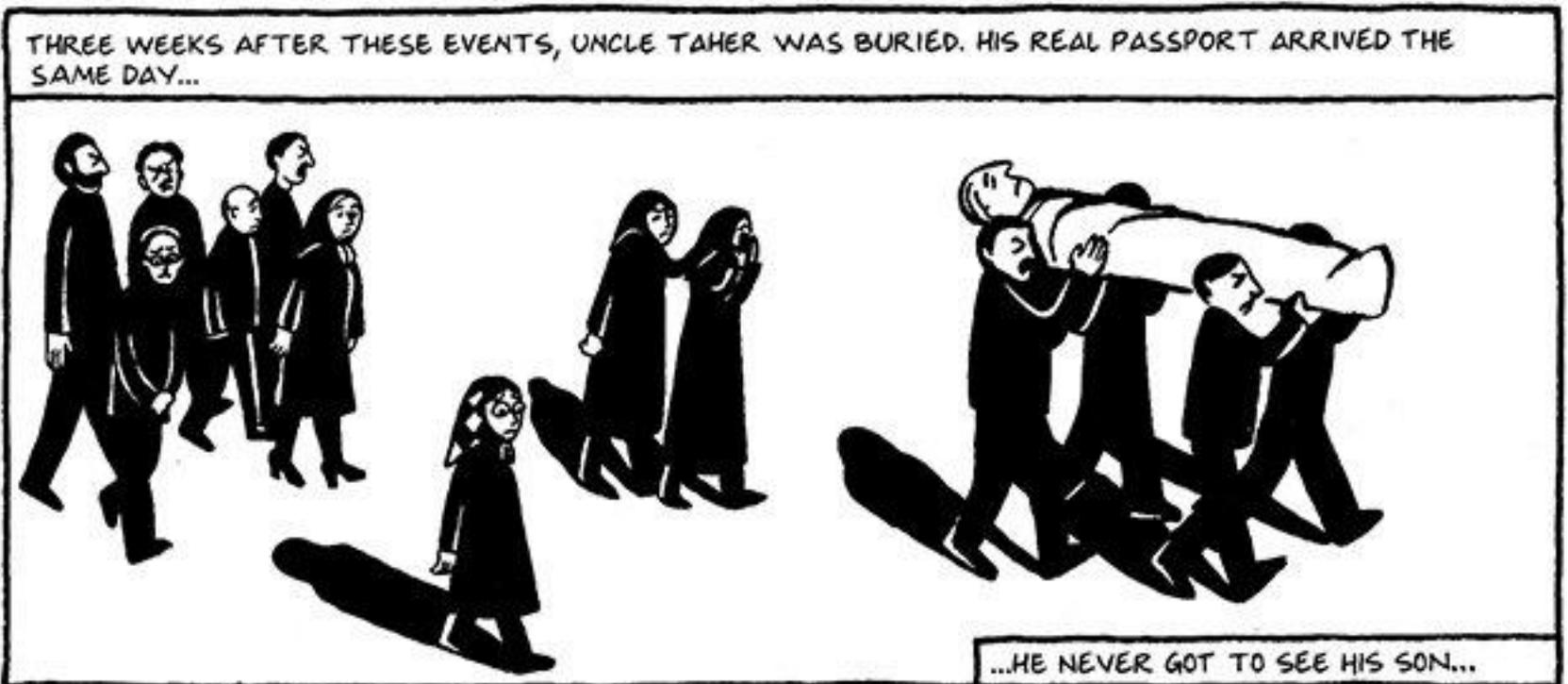


AFTER NEGOTIATING A PRICE, THE EQUIVALENT OF ABOUT \$200, KHOSRO AGREED TO MAKE A PASSPORT IN FIVE DAYS. WE WENT BACK TO THE HOSPITAL FEELING A LITTLE BETTER.

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

SO?





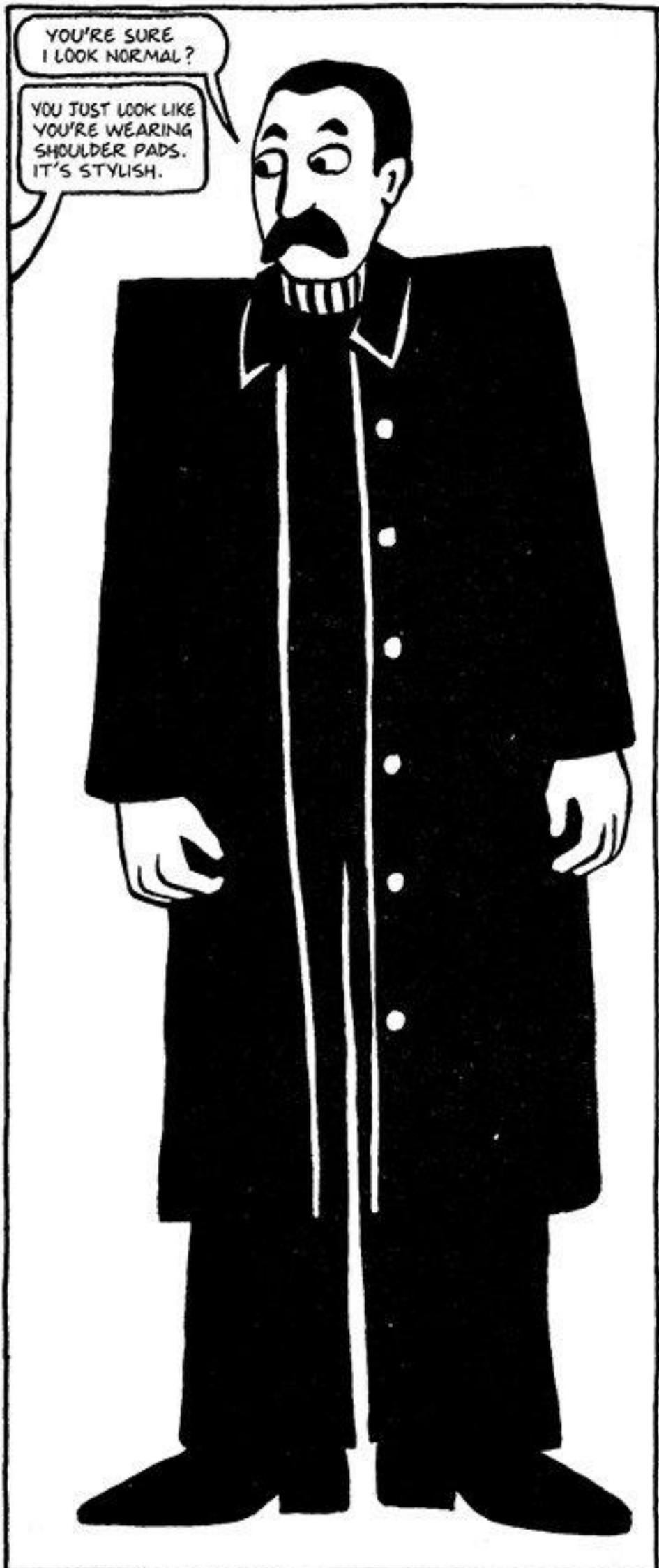


# KIM WILDE



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.



I BOUGHT TWO TAPES: KIM WILDE AND CAMEL.



THEY WERE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION, THE WOMEN'S BRANCH. THIS GROUP HAD BEEN ADDED IN 1982, TO ARREST WOMEN WHO WERE IMPROPERLY VEILED. (LIKE ME, FOR EXAMPLE.)



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!



 **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.

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.

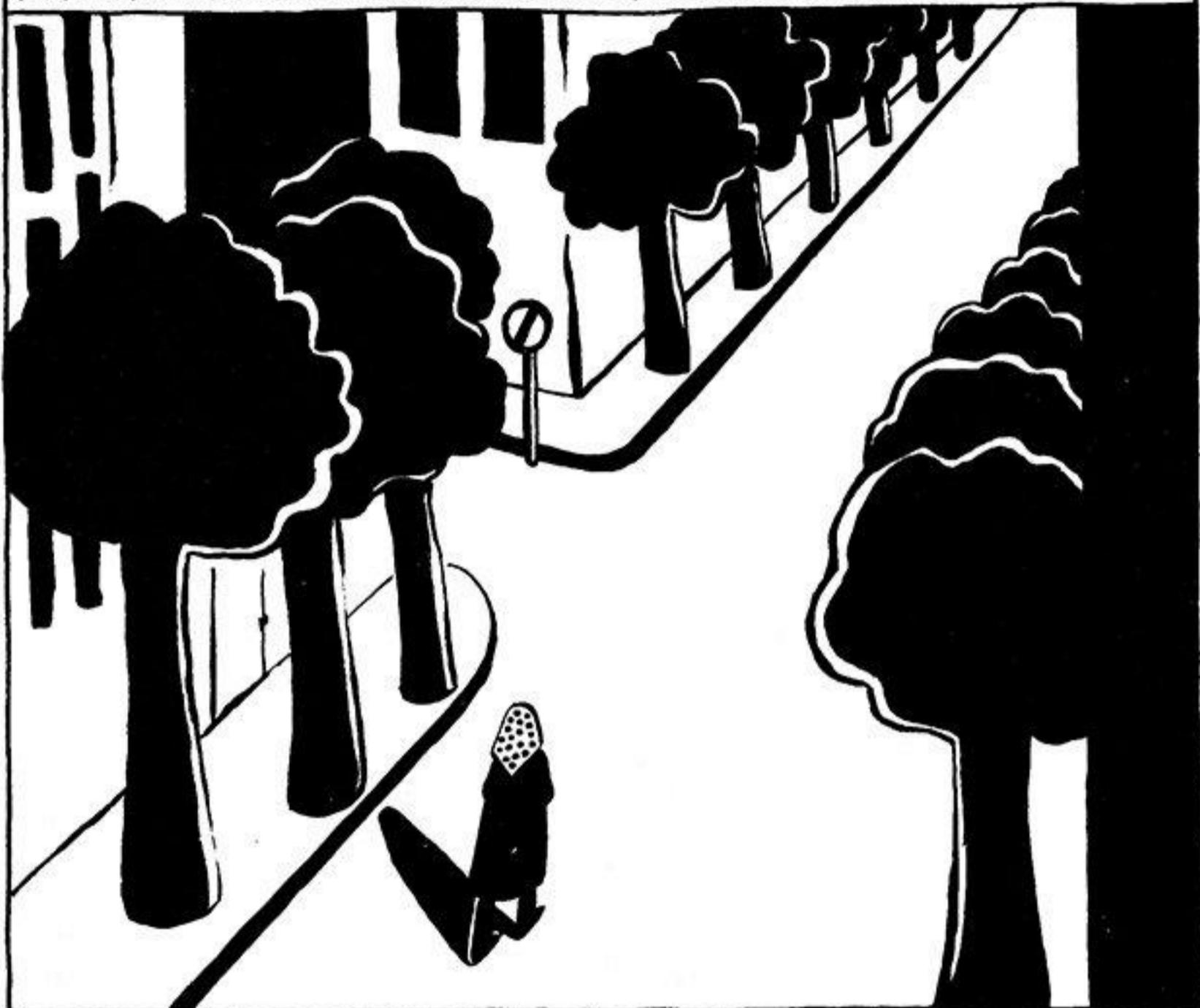


I DON'T WANT TO DIE!

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...





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...



MARJI



MARJI!

MOM!



YOU'RE ALL RIGHT? DAD'S ALL RIGHT? GRANDMA'S ALL RIGHT?

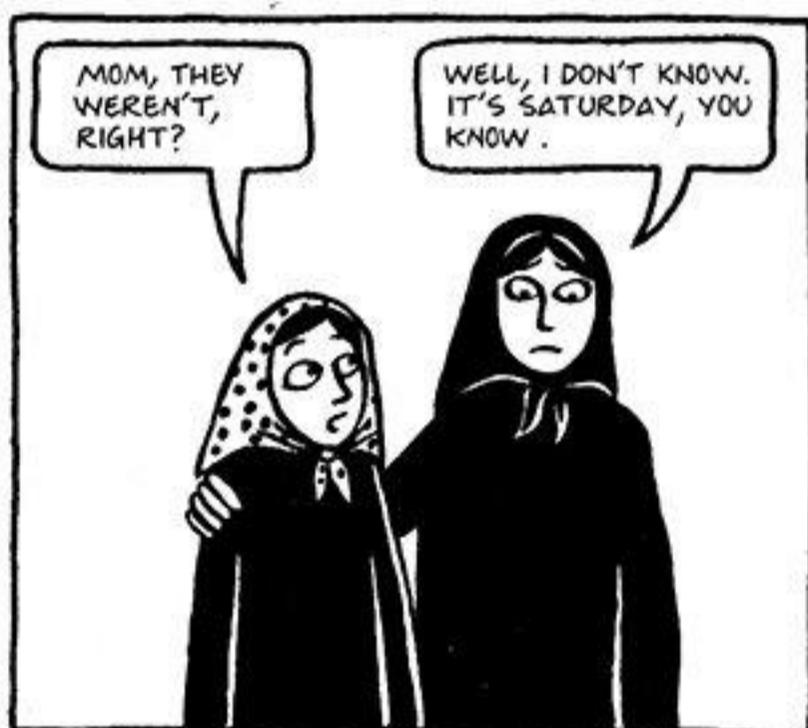
EVERYONE'S OK. I WAS THE ONLY ONE HOME.



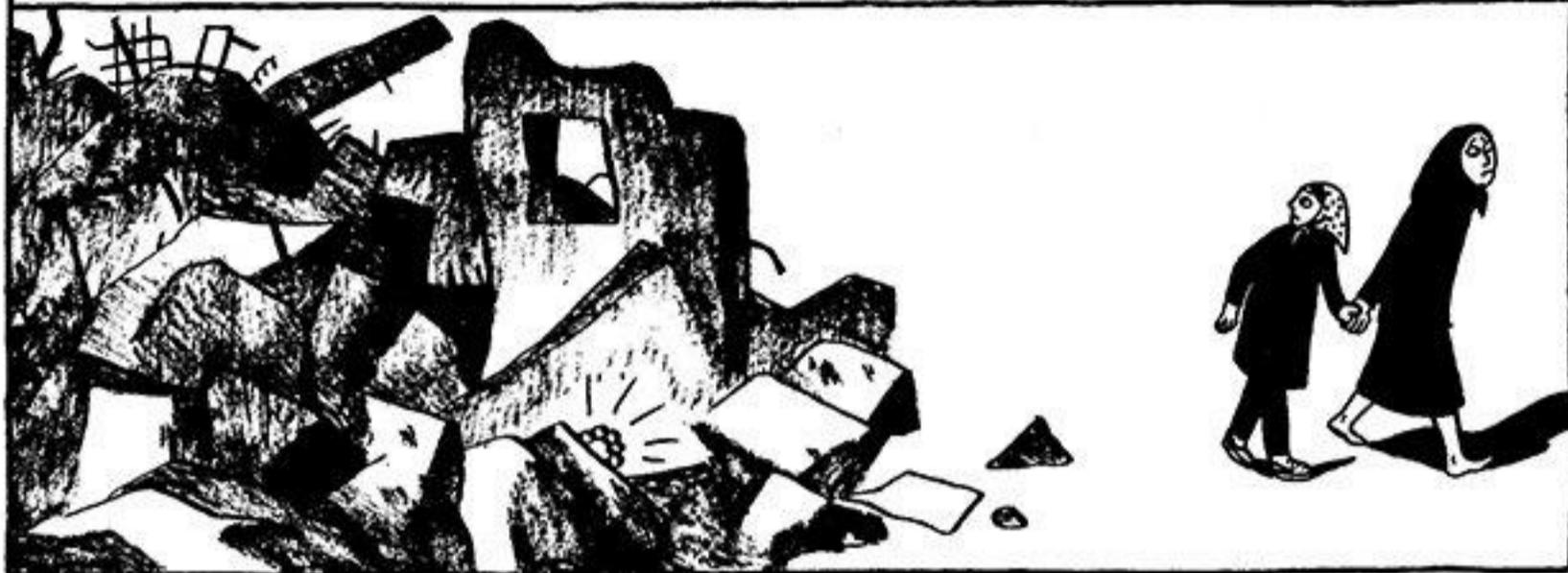
OH, MOM.

...





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.



I'VE TOLD YOU A HUNDRED TIMES THAT IT IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO WEAR JEWELRY AND JEANS!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT BRACELET? GIVE IT TO ME RIGHT NOW!

OVER MY DEAD BODY! IT WAS A GIFT FROM MY MOM.



I HAD LEARNED THAT YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SHOUT LOUDER THAN YOUR AGGRESSOR.

IF YOU'RE STILL WEARING JEWELRY TOMORROW...

YEAH, I KNOW!



AND THE NEXT DAY...

LET ME SEE YOUR WRIST.

WHAT FOR?



LET ME SEE IT, I'M TELLING YOU.

WITH ALL THE JEWELRY YOU STEAL FROM US, YOU MUST BE MAKING A PILE OF MONEY.



WHAT HAPPENED?

MARTI HIT THE PRINCIPAL

SHE'S FINISHED!

EXCUSE ME! I DIDN'T MEAN IT!

**SATRAPI, YOU'RE EXPELLED!**

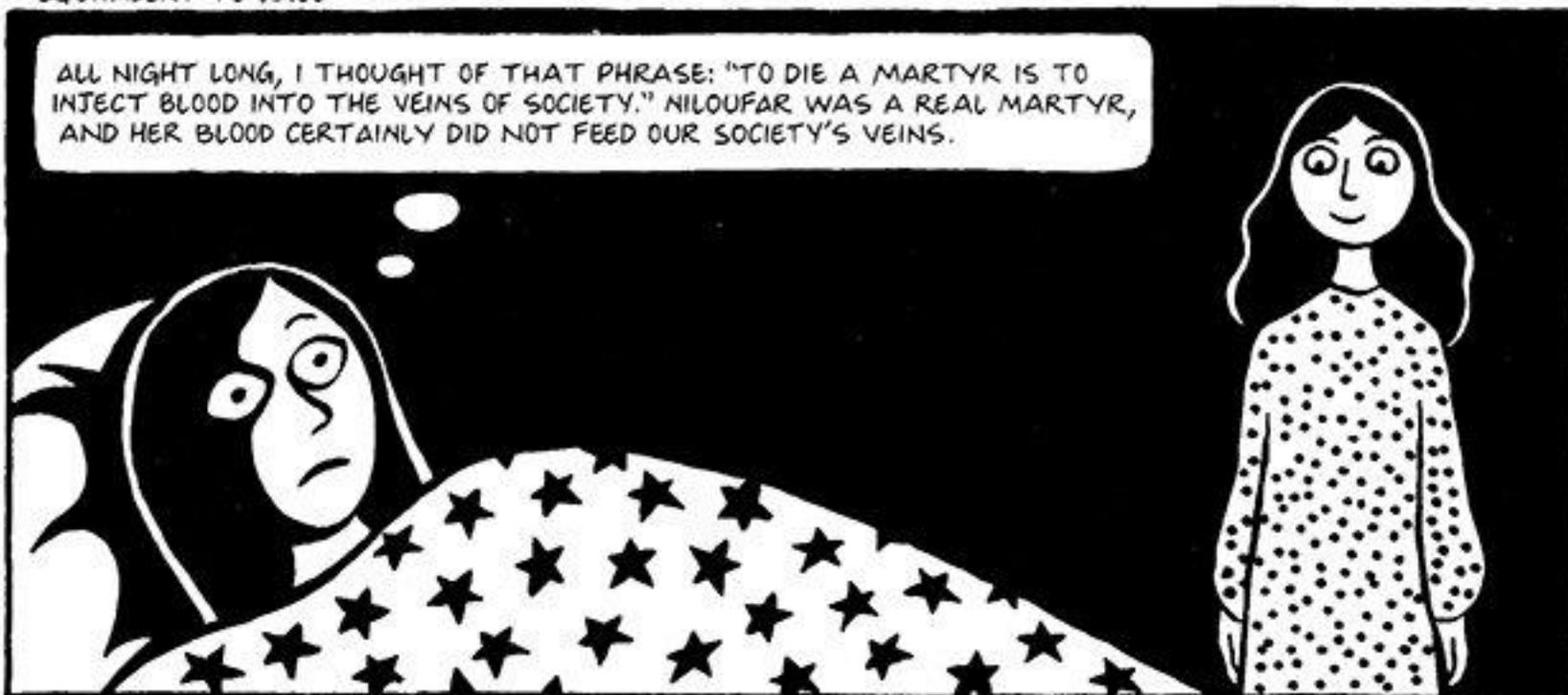
AFTER I WAS EXPELLED, IT WAS A REAL STRUGGLE TO FIND ANOTHER SCHOOL THAT WOULD ACCEPT ME. HITTING THE PRINCIPAL WAS A VERITABLE CRIME. BUT THANKS TO MY AUNT, WHO KNEW SOME BUREAUCRATS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, THEY MANAGED TO PLACE ME IN ANOTHER SCHOOL. AND THERE...







\*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.



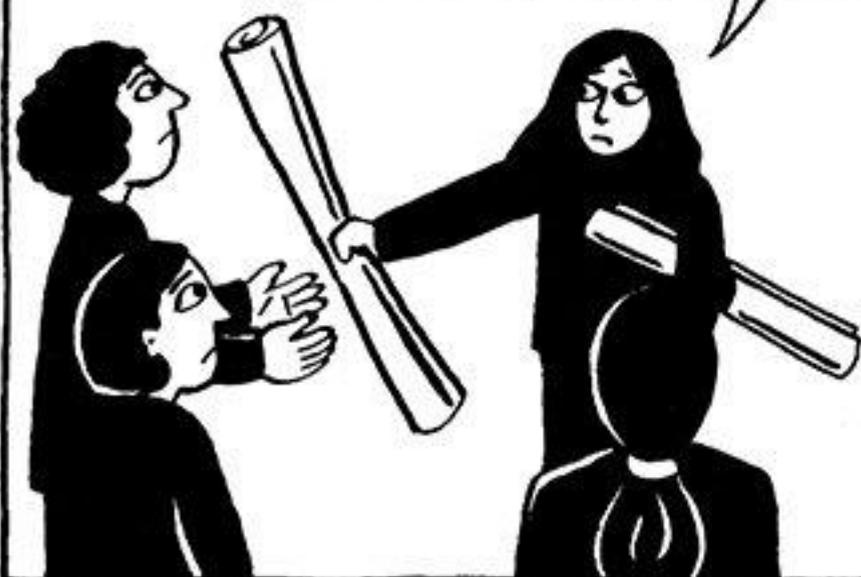
I TOOK DOWN ALL OF MY POSTERS.



I INVITED MY GIRLFRIENDS OVER TO SAY GOODBYE.



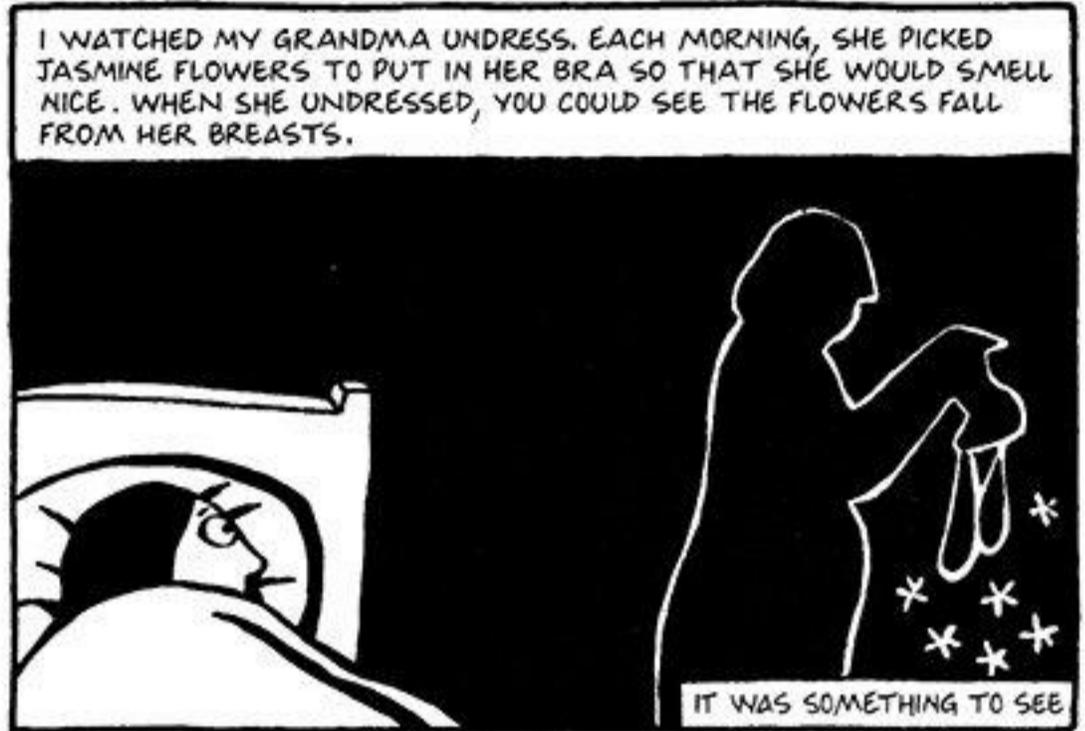
HERE. I'M GIVING YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS THINGS, SO THAT YOU WON'T FORGET ME.

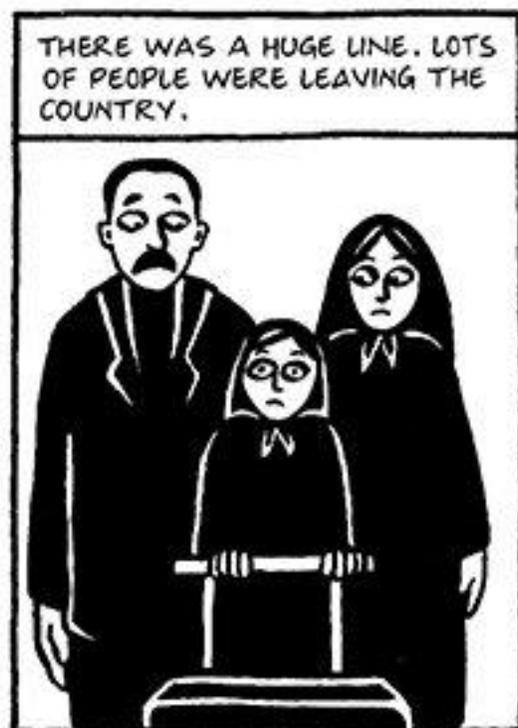


I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH THEY LOVED ME.



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*

Jacket and binding design by Jean-Christophe Menu

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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*

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