

CHICKEN WITH PLUMS



MARJANE SATRAPI

AUTHOR OF *PERSEPOLIS*

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In her acclaimed *Persepolis* books and in *Embroideries*, Marjane Satrapi rendered the events of her life and times in a uniquely captivating and powerful voice and vision. Now she turns that same keen eye and ear to the heartrending story of her great-uncle, a celebrated Iranian musician who gave up his life for music and love.

We are in Tehran in 1958, and Nasser Ali Khan, one of Iran's most revered tar players, discovers that his beloved instrument is irreparably damaged. Though he tries, he cannot find one to replace it, one whose sound speaks to him with the same power and passion with which his music speaks to others. In despair, he takes to his bed, renouncing the world and all its pleasures, closing the door on the demands and love of his wife and his four children. Over the course of the week that follows, his family and close friends attempt to change his mind, but Nasser Ali slips further and further into his own reveries: flashbacks and flash-forwards (with unexpected appearances by the likes of the Angel of Death and Sophia Loren) from his own childhood through his children's futures. And as the pieces of his story slowly fall into place, we begin to understand the profundity of his decision to give up life.

Marjane Satrapi brings what has become her signature humor, insight, and generosity to this emotional tale of life and death, and the courage and passion both require of us. The poignant story of one man, it is also a story of stunning universality—and an altogether luminous work.

ALSO BY MARJANE SATRAPI

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return

Embroideries

CHICKEN WITH PLUMS

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CHICKEN WITH PLUMS

TEHRAN, 1958



MADAM!...
MADAM! MADA...



YOU WOULDN'T BE NAMED
IRANE ?

YES! HOW DO YOU
KNOW MY NAME ?



YOU DON'T REMEMBER
ME ?

TO TELL THE TRUTH,
NOT AT ALL .



GRANDMA! I'M HUNGRY!

WE'RE GOING, MY DEAR.



I MUST HAVE CONFUSED
YOU WITH SOMEONE ELSE...
I BEG YOUR PARDON.

NO HARM DONE,
SIR.





NASSER ALI KHAN*!!! WHAT AN HONOR TO WELCOME YOU TO MY HUMBLE SHOP !!

MIRZA! I'M LOOKING FOR A TAR.



A TAR ?? BUT YOU OWN PROBABLY THE BEST ONE IN THE COUNTRY !

SOMEONE BROKE IT .



IN THE NAME OF GOD ! WHO DARED TO BREAK THE TAR OF NASSER ALI KHAN ?

CAN I TRY THIS ONE ?



SO WHAT DO YOU THINK ? IT'S FIFTY YEARS OLD . IT BELONGED TO AGHA ...

TOO LOW ...



THE STORE IS DAMP ! THAT'S WHY ! LISTEN TO THIS ZARB.** IT SOUNDS LIKE AN INDIAN DRUM .



HUMIDITY, I TELL YOU !!



HOW LONG HAVE WE KNOWN EACH OTHER ? YOU CAN TRUST ME !



STORE IT IN A VERY DRY PLACE . YOU'LL SEE ! AFTER A WEEK, ITS TONE WILL BE PERFECT .



GOOD-BYE MIRZA .

*KHAN MEANS "LORD-SIR."

**IRANIAN PERCUSSION INSTRUMENT.

ONE WEEK LATER



SHIT! SHIT! SHIT!



TAKE BACK YOUR TAR!

DID YOU KEEP ...?



YES! IT GOT SO DRY THAT IT BECAME ROUGH !!



COME, DON'T GET UPSET!
LET'S GO INSIDE. I DON'T
WANT TO DISAPPOINT SUCH A

GREAT
MUSICIAN...
MY LATE
FATHER
REVERED
YOU... I
HAVE MANY
TARS...



ONE MONTH LATER

IT'S THE FOURTH TIME IN A MONTH THAT YOU'VE TRIED TO CHEAT ME!



TAKE BACK YOUR DAMN TAR!!

BUT...



THERE'S NO "BUT"! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A CHARLATAN! THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE! A SWINE! EXACTLY LIKE YOUR FATHER!!

DON'T INSULT MY FATHER!



SWINE! SWINE!



THE NEXT DAY



SO, HOW ARE THINGS?

AS YOU CAN SEE, STILL BREATHING.

AS SOMEONE ONCE SAID, "TO LIVE, IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BE ALIVE."

YOU DON'T SEEM TO BE IN GOOD SHAPE.



ALTHOUGH, HOW ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO FEEL GOOD WITH THINGS AS THEY ARE.

I'VE REALLY HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT SINCE THE COUP D'ÉTAT, EVERYTHING IS GETTING OUT OF HAND... WE ARE ENTERING A NEW ERA.

PERSONALLY, I HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE.



*IN MARCH 1951, MOSSADEGH, THEN A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, NATIONALIZED IRAN'S OIL. IN APRIL OF THE SAME YEAR, HE WAS NAMED PRIME MINISTER. IN AUGUST 1953, MOSSADEGH WAS OUSTED IN A COUP D'ÉTAT INSTIGATED BY THE CIA WITH THE HELP OF THE BRITISH.

DO YOU REMEMBER THE SPRING OF '51?
WE WERE SO ENTHUSIASTIC... OUR OIL
WAS NATIONALIZED. MOSSADEGH WAS
OUR PRIME MINISTER...



TWO YEARS OF
EUPHORIA AND WHAM!
MOSSADEGH IS IN EXILE.
THE AMERICANS AND
THEIR ALLIES OWN
EVERYTHING...



THEY THINK THEY'RE PUMPING
OUR OIL... IN REALITY, IT'S OUR
BLOOD THEY'RE SUCKING...



ARE YOU LISTENING?

MMMM, YES, YES.

SOMEONE BROKE MY TAR.

WHO DID IT?

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?



DID YOU GO SEE MIRZA?


THAT OTHER CROOK!?
WHATEVER...

HE TRIED TO CON ME FOUR
TIMES. FOUR TARS,
EACH ONE WORSE THAN
THE OTHER.

IDON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ANYMORE.

I THINK I HAVE A
SOLUTION TO
YOUR PROBLEM.





I HAVE AN OLD FRIEND WHO LIVES IN MASHAD.* HE SELLS A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING. I STOPPED BY HIS PLACE LAST MONTH. HE HAD JUST ACQUIRED A YAHYA TAR,** A MUSEUM PIECE! A ONE-OF-A-KIND INSTRUMENT!!... AND, HE'S ONE OF YOUR MOST FERVENT ADMIRERS, EVEN THOUGH HE'S NEVER HEARD YOU PLAY. I'LL WRITE HIM TO LET HIM KNOW... ALLOWING TIME FOR THE MAIL TO ARRIVE... IF YOU CAN BE THERE THREE WEEKS FROM NOW, THAT WILL BE PERFECT! I'M SURE THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND YOUR HAPPINESS.

* HOLY CITY IN THE NORTHEAST OF IRAN.

** THE EQUIVALENT OF A STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN.

18 DAYS LATER,
NOVEMBER 10, 1958

I'M LEAVING FOR MASHAD
IN TWO DAYS .



DID YOU HEAR WHAT I
SAID ?

I'M NOT DEAF LIKE
YOUR MOTHER !

LEAVE THE DEAD
WHERE THEY ARE .



I WORK ALL DAY . MINA,
FARZANEH AND REZA GO
TO SCHOOL, BUT HIM !



WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM ?

WELL, YOUR
MOTHER, AS USUAL .

SHE'S NOT HERE THIS WEEK .



THAT'S NOT MY
PROBLEM ! IF YOU
HADN'T BROKEN MY
TAR, I WOULDN'T BE
FORCED TO MAKE
THIS TRIP !



YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO
GET ON MY NERVES .



YOU DARE ?

AND HOW !



BITCH !

BASTARD !



I'LL GO ALONE !!
YOU HEAR ?
ALONE !!!





♪♪♪♪♪
 MY BALL IS RED,
 LA, LA, LA.



♪♪♪♪
 ...THERE WAS
 LITTLE BOAT...



THE NEXT DAY

5 AM

PRISONER! ARMS
 CROSSED!...



1 PM

MMMM...
 MM...MM



8 PM

♪
 SLEEP, SLEEP,
 MY BABY!



THE DAY AFTER

2 AM

THE SUN SHINES,
 I WANT...



3 AM

AND THE HANDS AND THE HANDS AND THE
 HEAD AND THE HEAD, A A A A, ALOUETTE...



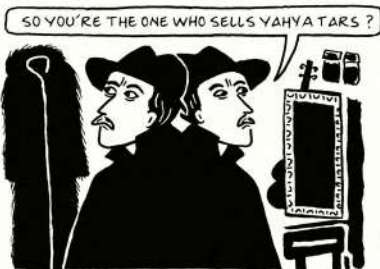
6 AM



7 AM

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,
 WE HAVE ARRIVED.







HERE, TAKE THIS LITTLE BIT OF OPIUM . IT WILL CALM THE LITTLE ONE . MIX IT WITH WARM MILK, AND IT'S GUARANTEED SLEEP FOR TWO DAYS .

HOW VERY KIND.



AND AS LONG AS YOU'RE IN MASHAD, TAKE ADVANTAGE BY VISITING THE MAUSOLEUM OF IMAM REZA .*

I DON'T HAVE TIME .

I WANT SOME OPIUM!



YOU'RE WRONG . HE PERFORMS MIRACLES !!! WITH MY OWN EYES I'VE SEEN BLIND MEN RECOVER THEIR SIGHT, THE PARALYZED WALK ...

FINE ! BUT I'M NEITHER BLIND NOR LAME .



AND GOD ?

DEAR FRIEND, LIFE PASSES WITH OR WITHOUT GOD .



DO YOU KNOW KHAYYAM**?

OF COURSE !

OPIUM !



"MY COMING BROUGHT NO PROPHET TO THE SKY



NOR DOES MY GOING SWELL ITS MAJESTY



COMING AND GOING PUT ME TO A STAND



EAR NEVER HEARD THEIR WHEREFORE NOR THEIR WHY."



*EIGHTH IMAM OF THE SHIITES. **IRANIAN POET (1048-1131).

THEY LEFT THAT VERY NIGHT...



...AND ARRIVED TWO NIGHTS LATER IN TEHRAN. NASSER ALI KHAN PUT MOZAFFAR TO BED. HE HAD ONLY ONE DESIRE: TO PLAY HIS TAR. BUT HE TOLD HIMSELF HE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL MORNING.

NOVEMBER 15, 1958,
HE WOKE AT 7 AM,

WENT TO THE HAIRDRESSER,

THEN TO THE
BARBER.

FINALLY, HE PUT ON
HIS BEST CLOTHES.



DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE
PRIME MINISTER?...OR MAYBE YOU'LL BE
MEETING THE SHAH IN PERSON!

HE WAITED UNTIL EVERYONE HAD LEFT THE HOUSE.



HE ASKED THE NEIGHBORS TO LOOK AFTER
MOZAFFAR.

HE RETURNED HOME AND SMOKED A
CIGARETTE.

I HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO DO.
COULD I LEAVE HIM WITH YOU FOR THE DAY?

OF COURSE. HE'S SO CUTE!


DO YOU HAVE
OPIUM?



HE CONTEMPLATED HIS NEW TAR
FOR ALMOST AN HOUR...

...BEFORE PLAYING THE FIRST NOTE.





...EIGHT DAYS LATER, NOVEMBER 22,
1958, HE WAS BURIED BESIDE HIS
MOTHER IN SHEMIRAN'S ZAHIROLODDEH
CEMETARY.* ALL THOSE WHO HAD KNOWN
HIM WERE PRESENT ON THAT DAY.

* LOCATED NORTH OF TEHRAN .



THE FIRST DAY

NOVEMBER 15, 1958

NOVEMBER 15, 1958 . NASSER ALI KHAN MADE UP HIS MIND TO SURRENDER HIS SOUL . HE CONSIDERED THE DIFFERENT WAYS TO PUT AN END TO HIS DAYS .



HE CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO WAIT FOR DEATH TO COME TO HIM .

THE SAME DAY AT FOUR O'CLOCK, HIS WIFE, NAHID, A TEACHER BY PROFESSION, RETURNED FROM SCHOOL WITH HER FIRST THREE CHILDREN, MINA, REZA AND FARZANEH .













OF HIS FOUR CHILDREN, FARZANEH WAS HER FATHER'S FAVORITE . POSSESSED BY AN UNUSUAL INTEREST IN MORPHOPSYCHOLOGY, NASSER ALI KHAN WAS CONVINCED THAT HIS PHYSICAL RESEMBLANCE TO HIS YOUNGEST DAUGHTER PROVED THE CLOSENESS OF THEIR SOULS . AND HE WASN'T WRONG . THEY WERE BOTH VERY INTELLIGENT, LIVELY AND SPIRITUAL BEINGS . I REMEMBER IN 1998, DURING ONE OF MY VISITS TO TEHRAN...









THIS IS HOW NASSER ALI KHAN'S FIRST DAY DREW TO A CLOSE...



THE SECOND DAY

NOVEMBER 16, 1958

THE SECOND DAY FELL ON A FRIDAY. AT 12:30, NASSER ALI KHAN'S WIFE, NAHID, REALIZED THAT HER HUSBAND STILL HADN'T EMERGED FROM THE BEDROOM. SHE WAS WORRIED, BUT GIVEN THE DAMAGED STATE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP, SHE DECIDED THAT SHE'D BE BETTER OFF CONSULTING ABDI, HER HUSBAND'S BROTHER.







DON'T BE RIDICULOUS: YOUR WIFE IS IN LOVE WITH YOU, YOUR CHILDREN CHERISH YOU.

OF COURSE!

TO OUR SISTER AND TO ME, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW.

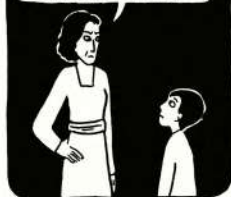
THAT'S RIGHT!



NOT TO MENTION MOTHER, WHO ADORED YOU...



NASSER ALI ! I WAS CALLED IN BY THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL !



WHEN WILL YOU PUT AN END TO YOUR PRANKS ?



LOOK AT YOUR BROTHER ! HE'S A YEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU AND HE ALREADY ACTS LIKE AN ADULT.



GOD ! WHAT DID I DO TO HAVE SUCH A SON ?



EVERYONE RESPECTS YOU, EVERYONE ADMIRES YOU, WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT ?



ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME ?

YES, YOU WERE SAYING THAT I'M A PLANETARY IDOL.



ABSOLUTELY !



I'M NOT THE ONE WHO MOM ADORED.

ENOUGH OF THAT, PLEASE !





*THE SHAH OF IRAN'S FATHER .

WHAT HAVE PEOPLE LIKE YOU CHANGED ?



WHERE WERE YOU, COMARADE, WHEN MOSSADEGH WAS DEPOSED ?

MOSSADEGH WAS PRO-AMERICAN !



HA ! HA ! LET ME LAUGH ! HE WAS SO "PRO-AMERICAN" THAT HE WAS CHASED OUT BY THE "AMERICANS."



NOT TO MENTION MOM, WHO HAD TO SQUANDER OUR FAMILY'S ENTIRE FORTUNE SO THAT YOU COULD PLAY AT BEING A HERO !



ABDI !

WHAT ?

I'M SORRY !

IT'S NOTHING .



ABDI !

YES ?

WHEN I DIE, YOU'LL LOOK AFTER MY CHILDREN ?

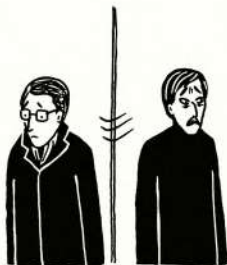


DON'T TALK NONSENSE .



I'LL COME SEE YOU AGAIN . I HOPE THAT NEXT TIME , YOU'LL ACCEPT MY INVITATION TO COME ADMIRE THE BEAUTIFUL SOPHIA WITH ME .

MAYBE .



NIGHT FELL , AND MASSER ALI KHAN WAS VERY HUNGRY .



UNDERSTANDABLY , IT HAD BEEN TWO WHOLE DAYS SINCE HE HAD EATEN ANYTHING .

HE THOUGHT ABOUT ALL THE THINGS HE LIKED TO EAT .



HE FINALLY SETTLED ON HIS FAVORITE DISH : CHICKEN WITH PLUMS . HIS MOTHER'S SPECIALTY , PREPARED WITH CHICKEN , PLUMS , CARAMELIZED ONIONS , TOMATOES , TURMERIC AND SAFFRON , SERVED WITH RICE .





AT SUNSET OF THE SECOND DAY,
NASSER AL KHAN REMEMBERED WHAT
PLEASURE WAS. DURING THE NIGHT, HIS
BITTERNESS DISAPPEARED.
HE SLEPT PEACEFULLY.



THE THIRD DAY

NOVEMBER 17, 1958

THE THIRD DAY, NASSER ALI KHAN WOKE UP HAPPY .



IT WAS A SATURDAY . * THIS MEANT THAT HE WAS HOME ALONE . AT LEAST UNTIL SCHOOL GOT OUT .



HE WASN'T HUNGRY OR THIRSTY . HE JUST WANTED TO SMOKE .



AS HIS MOTHER OFTEN SAID : CIGARETTES ARE FOOD FOR THE SOUL .



HE KNEW THAT HE HAD TWO IN HIS JACKET POCKET .



IT WASN'T EASY TO GET UP . HE WAS DIZZY, THEN NAUSEOUS .



BUT AS SOON AS HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR, THE SMILE REAPPEARED ON HIS FACE .



HE LAY DOWN RIGHT AWAY TO BETTER SAVOR THIS MOMENT OF GRACE .



IT WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT . THE CIGARETTE TASTED LIKE DIRT .



NEVER THELESS, HE DETERMINED TO SMOKE THE SECOND NOT FOR PLEASURE, BUT OUT OF PRINCIPLE .



AROUND 5 PM, EVERYONE WAS BACK .



CHICKEN WITH PLUMS .



NASSER ALI KHAN'S SURPRISE WAS IMMENSE .

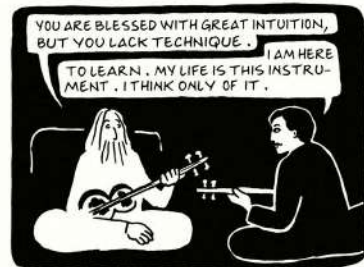
*IN IRAN, FRIDAY IS THE HOLIDAY .

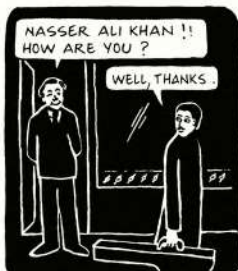
FINALLY, THAT NIGHT, HOPING FOR A POSSIBLE RECONCILIATION, NAHID DECIDED TO SERVE A PLATE TO HER HUSBAND .



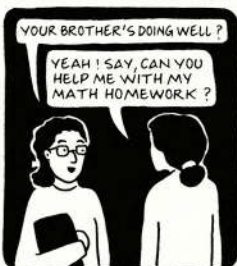








*IN JANUARY 1936, REZA SHAH FORBADE THE WEARING OF THE VEIL IN IRAN .









THE FOURTH DAY

NOVEMBER 18, 1958

NO DAY IN THE SHORT LIFE OF NASSER ALI KHAN WAS MORE BLEAK THAN NOVEMBER 18, 1958 . NOT ONLY HAD HE VICIOUSLY ARGUED WITH HIS WIFE THE DAY BEFORE, BUT TO MAKE MATTER WORSE, FOR THE FOUR DAYS THAT HE'D BEEN AWAITING DEATH, ONLY HIS YOUNGEST DAUGHTER, FARZANEH, HAD DEVOTED HIM A FEW MINUTES OF HER TIME . THE INGRATITUDE OF HIS THREE OTHER CHILDREN UPSET HIM DEEPLY .



BUT WHEN NIGHT CAME, NASSER ALI KHAN CHANGED HIS MIND . CONVINCED THAT HIS END WAS NEAR, HE TOLD HIMSELF THAT HE HAD A DUTY TO LEAVE THEM WITH THE IMAGE OF A GOOD AND GENEROUS MAN . WHICH, AFTER ALL, HE WAS ...



IF I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO, YOU WOULD NEVER COME VISIT ME...

WE HAVE COME, BUT YOU'RE ALWAYS SLEEPING!



WHERE ARE MINA AND REZA?

MINA WENT TO STUDY AT HER FRIEND AZAM'S HOUSE, AND REZA, I DON'T KNOW.

YEAH.



HA!
HA!

HA! HA!
HA! HA!
HA!

HA!
HA! HA!
HA!
HA!



DID YOU FART?

NO!
YOU DID!



DON'T YOU WANT A HUG?

NO! YOU STINK!



I'M GOING TO DIE AND MY SON FARTS IN MY FACE... WHAT A WASTE!



NASSER ALI KHAN DIDN'T LIKE MOZAFFAR FOR TWO VERY PRECISE REASONS: FIRST, BECAUSE HIS WIFE HAD DECIDED ALONE TO BRING THIS CHILD INTO THE WORLD, AND SECOND, BECAUSE THE TWO OF THEM HAD NOTHING IN COMMON...

MOZAFFAR EMBODIED EVERYTHING THAT NASSER ALI KHAN SCORNE D :



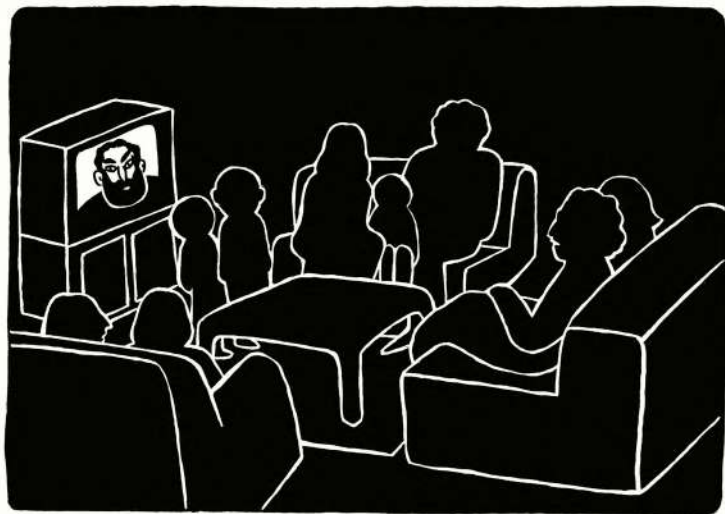
DESTINY PROVED NASSER ALI KHAN RIGHT : INDEED, MOZAFFAR NEVER BECAME THIN, OR AN ARTIST, OR SUICIDAL, OR EVEN MOROSE AND MELANCHOLIC . IN 1975, HIS TWENTY-SECOND YEAR, MOZAFFAR MARRIED A CERTAIN GILA WHO WAS STUDYING ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT WITH HIM .



ALSO IN 1979, AT THE TIME OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION, MOZAFFAR WORKED AS A MANAGER IN THE ARMY AND HIS WIFE WAS AN ACCOUNTANT . EVERYTHING WAS GOING WONDERFULLY . GILA HAD FINALLY BEEN ACCEPTED BY HER IN-LAWS .



BUT IN 1980 WAR ERUPTED AND THAT WAS THE END OF HAPPINESS .



GIVEN THAT MOZAFFAR WORKED FOR THE ARMY, HIS LIFE WAS IN REAL DANGER . ACCOMPANIED BY HIS FAMILY, HE LEFT IRAN AND SETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES .



EVERYTHING WAS GOING SWIMMINGLY IN THE MOST PERFECT OF WORLDS, EXCEPT... EXCEPT THAT THEIR CHILDREN HAD SOME SERIOUS WEIGHT PROBLEMS . MOZAFFAR AND HIS WIFE, ONCE CONSIDERED FAT IN IRAN, LOOKED THIN BESIDE THEM .



KATY WAS SO FAT THAT ACCORDING TO HER AUNT THE ONLY PART OF HER BODY THAT LOOKED NORMAL WAS HER FINGERS. INDEED, SHE LAVISHED FERVENT ATTENTION ON THEM.



ALSO ACCORDING TO HER AUNT, ONE NIGHT KATY HAD A TERRIBLE STOMACHACHE. SHE WAS SEVENTEEN AT THE TIME.

HELP ! HELP !



WHAT'S THE MATTER ? DID YOU EAT COOKIES AGAIN ?

NO, I ONLY HAD CHIPS !



HELP ME !



MY POOR DARLING, WHERE DOES IT HURT ?

HERE ! HERE ! EVERYWHERE



IT MUST BE APPENDICITIS !

LET'S RUSH HER TO THE HOSPITAL !





APPARENTLY, WHEN THE AUNT IN QUESTION ASKED MOZAFFAR HOW IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT HE WASN'T AWARE OF HIS DAUGHTER'S PREGNANCY, HE ANSWERED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO MAKE OUT AN 8-POUND FETUS IN 400 POUNDS OF MEAT . THE AUNT ADDED : " I AM SURE THAT EVEN MY NIECE DIDN'T KNOW . "



I AM DYING AND NOBODY CARES .



NASSER ALI KHAN DIDN'T KNOW HOW LUCKY HE WAS TO DIE FOUR DAYS LATER . IF HE HAD KNOWN THE STORY OF MOZAFFAR AND HIS DAUGHTER, HE WOULD SURELY HAVE CONTRACTED CANCER, WHICH BY ALL ACCOUNTS IS A MUCH SLOWER AND SIGNIFICANTLY MORE PAINFUL WAY TO DIE .



NOVEMBER 19, 1958

AT THE DAWN OF THE FIFTH DAY, NASSER ALIKHAN FELT THAT DEATH COULD NO LONGER BE VERY FAR . HE THOUGHT OF ALL THOSE WHO HAD PASSED AWAY, ALL THOSE WHOM HE HAD LOVED AND WHO WERE GONE, AS THOUGH THEY HAD NEVER EXISTED . SUDDENLY, HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF HIS MOTHER IN THE CROWD .



LIKE ALL SONS, NASSER ALI KHAN WAS VERY ATTACHED TO HIS MOTHER . HE REMEMBERED THE TIME WHEN SHE FELL GRAVELY ILL, FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE .

GOD, I PRAY TO YOU, PLEASE DON'T TAKE MY MOTHER .



GOD, GIVE HER A LITTLE MORE TIME .



GOD ! I'M BEGGING ! TAKE SOME YEARS FROM MY LIFE AND ADD THEM TO HERS ...



OF COURSE HE NEVER TOLD ANYONE ABOUT HIS NIGHTTIME PRAYERS . THEN ONE DAY HIS MOTHER SUMMONED HIM TO HER ROOM :

NASSER ALI, SIT DOWN . I NEED TO TALK TO YOU .



I'M IN TERRIBLE PAIN AND I HAVE ONLY ONE WISH : TO DIE !



BUT YOU'RE NOT LETTING ME GO ! YOU PRAY, YOU PRAY, AND YOU KEEP PRAYING ...



YOUR PRAYERS ARE PREVENTING ME FROM JOINING THE OTHER WORLD !



I KNOW IT !

FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE, MY SON, SHOW A LITTLE LESS SELFISHNESS .



YOU WANT ME TO STAY ALIVE FOR YOU, BUT LIVING HAS BECOME UNBEARABLE TO ME! ...



STOP CALLING ON THE GOOD LORD ! LET ME GO .



NASSER ALI KHAN OBEYED . HE BOUGHT THREE DOZEN PACKS OF CIGARETTES AND HANDED THEM OVER TO HIS MOTHER . HE NO LONGER PRAYED FOR HER AND HE PLAYED MUSIC EVERY DAY, FROM SUNRISE TO THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT .



FROM THE TIME NASSER ALI KHAN STOPPED HIS PRAYERS TO THE NIGHT HIS MOTHER SURRENDERED HER SOUL, EXACTLY SIX DAYS HAD PASSED .

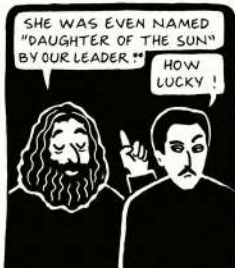
IT SEEMS THAT WHEN THEY DISCOVERED HER BODY, IT WAS ENVELOPED IN A THICK CLOUD OF SMOKE .



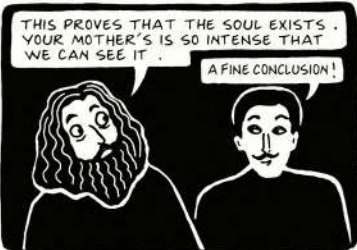
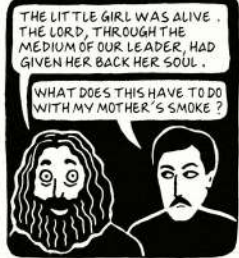
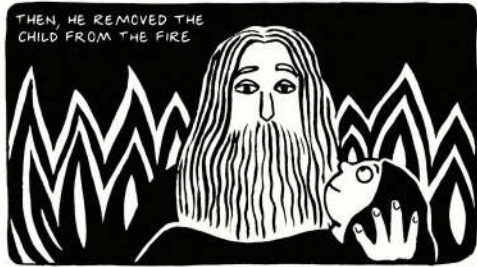
THE FUNERAL TOOK PLACE TWO DAYS LATER . THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED, ALL THE DERVISHES* OF TEHRAN, AS WELL AS THE CLOUD OF SMOKE WERE PRESENT AT THE BURIAL .



THE OPINIONS ON THIS DENSE FOG WERE VERY DIVERGENT :
THE RATIONAL ONES THOUGHT THAT IT WAS THE CIGARETTE SMOKE LEAVING HER BODY .
HAVING SAID THIS, THEY WERE NEVER ABLE TO EXPLAIN SCIENTIFICALLY HOW A CADAVER
COULD CONTINUE TO EXHALE .
THE DERVISHES, MORE MYSTICAL, HAD A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT OPINION ON THIS SUBJECT :



*SUFI MYSTICS . ** HEAD OF THE DERVISHES ("GHOTB" IN PERSIAN).



*THE DERVISHES' MOSQUE .



*IRANIAN POET (1207-1273). BARD OF MYSTICAL LOVE AND FOUNDER OF THE MOWLAVI ORDER OF SUFIS (KNOWN AS WHIRLING DERVISHES).

THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN,
THE CANDLES WERE LIT
AND THE FIVE MEN SAW
THE WHOLE ELEPHANT .



EACH ONE HAD GIVEN HIS INTERPRE-
TATION OF THE ANIMAL, ACCORDING TO
WHAT HE HAD TOUCHED .



LIFE IS THE SAME . WE GIVE MEANING
TO LIFE BASED ON OUR POINT OF VIEW .



ONLY WISDOM, LIKE THE LIGHT OF THE
CANDLE, CAN BRING US A COMPLETE
VIEW OF EXISTENCE .



THE KEY TO WISDOM IS DOUBT !



IF YOU DOUBTED A LITTLE, YOU WOULD
DEFINITELY BE LESS ARROGANT .



GOOD-BYE !





FIVE DAYS HAD PASSED AND NASSER ALI KHAN WAS ASKING HIMSELF MANY QUESTIONS :

WHEN WILL MY TURN COME ?

IS IT MY TIME NOW ?

I'VE HAD ENOUGH . I WANT TO DIE .

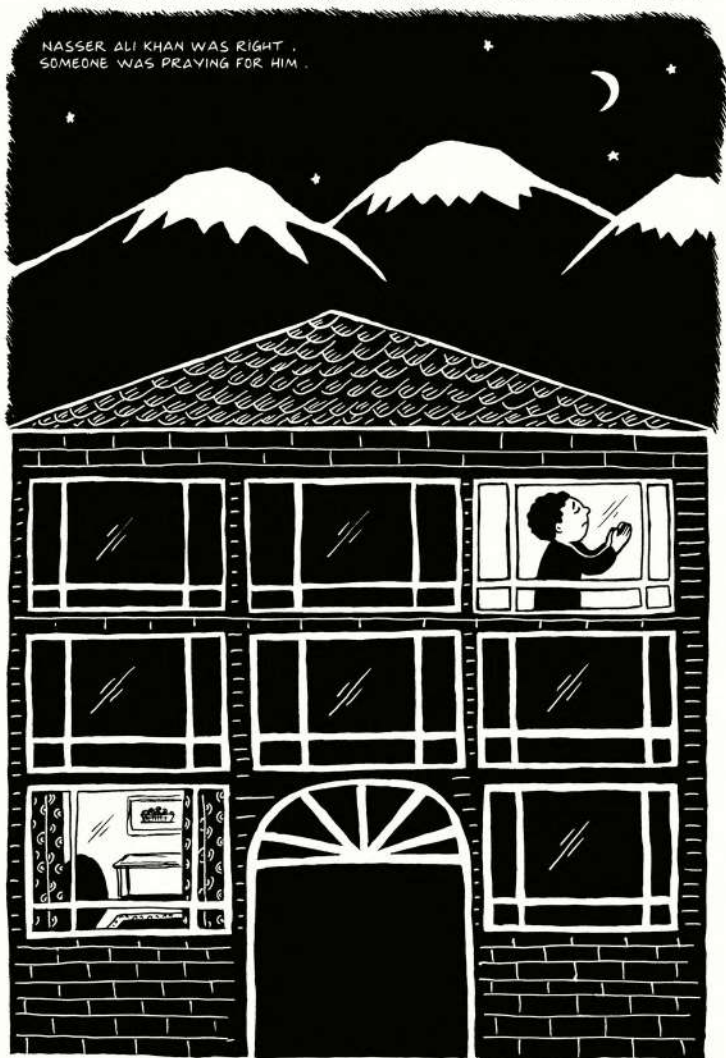


HE CONCLUDED THAT IF DEATH WASN'T KEEPING THEIR APPOINTMENT, IT WAS BECAUSE SOMEONE WAS PRAYING FOR HIM TO GO ON LIVING .



THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 19, 1958, A DARK SILENCE REIGNED OVER THE HOUSE .

NASSER ALI KHAN WAS RIGHT .
SOMEONE WAS PRAYING FOR HIM .





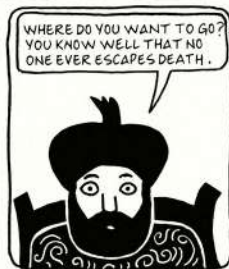
THE SIXTH DAY

NOVEMBER 20, 1958

IN THE COURSE OF THE SIXTH DAY, NASSER ALI KHAN FINALLY SAW AZRAEL, THE ANGEL OF DEATH. EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ANXIOUS TO LEAVE THIS WORLD, HE WAS VERY, VERY SCARED.









OF COURSE . HIS HOUR
HAD COME .



AND MINE ? WHEN WILL
MINE BE ?



I CAN'T TELL YOU
THAT . IT'S GOD'S
WILL .

DO YOU KNOW WHAT
KHAYYAM SAID ?



"WHOE'ER RETURNED OF
ALL THAT WENT BEFORE
TO TELL OF THAT LONG
ROAD THEY TRAVEL O'ER
LEAVE NAUGHT UNDONE OF
WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO ...

... FOR WHEN YOU GO,
YOU WILL RETURN NO
MORE."

HE WAS RIGHT. YES, I KNOW.
YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO NEEDED TO
HEAR IT ...



WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU . I
HAVE PLENTY OF LIVES TO
TAKE TODAY .

AZRAEL !

NASSER ALI !



IS IT A LITTLE LATE FOR
ME TO GO BACK ?

IT'S NOT "A LITTLE
LATE," MY DEAR FRIEND,
IT'S "TOO LATE" !



DON'T WORRY . IT
WON'T BE LONG .



SINCE THAT'S HOW IT WAS, NASSER ALI KHAN WOULD WAIT .



NOVEMBER 21, 1958

- NAHID ! WHERE IS NASSER ALI ?
- IN HIS ROOM .

- NASSER ALI ! ... NASSER ALI !
ANSWER ME...

- PARVINE ! IS THAT YOU ?
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN
YOU ...

- I KNOW... I WAS ON A TRIP... I...

- BUT, PARVINE, I'M NOT COMPLAINING .

- NASSER ALI, I LOVE YOU SO MUCH .

- ME TOO, LITTLE SISTER,
I ADORE YOU TOO .

- I'LL NEVER FORGET YOUR LOVING
SUPPORT DURING MY DIVORCE . I WILL
NEVER FORGET HOW YOU STOOD UP
FOR ME AGAINST THE ENTIRE FAMILY .

- YOU WERE ALWAYS VERY COURAGEOUS .
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING .

- DON'T SAY THAT, NASSER ALI .
WITHOUT YOU, I WOULD NEVER HAVE
GOTTEN THROUGH IT .

- I REALLY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO LIVE
WITH A MAN YOU DIDN'T LOVE .
I REALLY DIDN'T WANT YOU TO RUIN
YOUR LIFE .

- YOU SUCCEEDED . I AM HAPPY .

- I AM DELIGHTED TO HEAR THAT ...



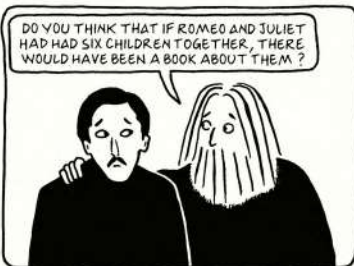
...AT LEAST I MANAGED TO BE GOOD FOR SOMETHING .



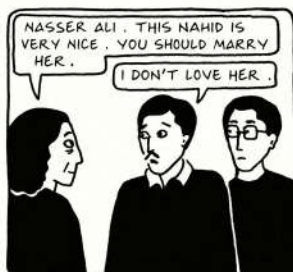
THE EIGHTH DAY

NOVEMBER 22, 1958

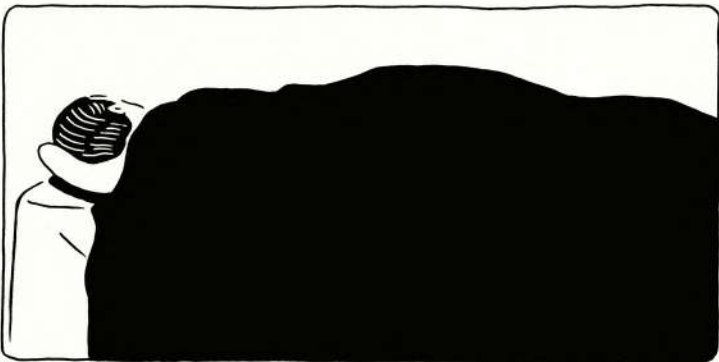
















ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marjane Satrapi was born in 1969 in Rasht, Iran. She now lives in Paris, where she is a regular contributor to magazines and newspapers throughout the world, including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. She is the author of several children's books, *Embroideries*, and her critically acclaimed and internationally best-selling memoir published in two volumes as *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*. *Persepolis* has been translated into more than twenty languages, was a *New York Times* Notable Book, and received the Harvey Award for best American edition of foreign material and an Alex Award from the American Library Association. *Persepolis* is also being made into an animated feature film, cowritten and codirected by Ms. Satrapi, to be distributed by Sony Picture Classics in 2007.



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