THE RETURN

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

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING FORBIDDEN? FASHION MAGAZINES, TAPES, ALCOHOL, PORK ...
NO, SIR!
PLEASE FIX YOUR VEIL, MY SISTER!

YES, MY BROTHER.
NEXT! COME ON, SPEED IT UP!
BROTHER AND SISTER ARE THE TERMS USED IN IRAN BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LAW TO GIVE ORDERS TO PEOPLE, WITHOUT OFFENDING THEM.

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

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

DAD!
EBI! LOOK! IT'S MARJI!
MARJ..?

MY DARLING, MY DAUGHTER, OH MY! I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU!
I KNEW THAT I HAD GROWN, BUT IT WAS ONLY ONCE I WAS IN THE ARMS OF MY FATHER THAT I REALLY FELT IT. HE, WHO HAD ALWAYS BEFORE APPEARED SO IMPOSING, WAS ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS ME.

I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES! TELL US, ARE YOU HUNGRY?
DAD, YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE ON IRAN AIR. THEY FEED YOU AT LEAST FIFTY TIMES.
THEN WE GOT IN THE CAR.
MY FATHER DIDN'T HAVE HIS CADILLAC ANYMORE, BUT DROVE A RENAULT 5 INSTEAD. THAT SAME CADILLAC IN WHICH I WAS ASHAMED TO SIT BECAUSE IT WAS SO DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT BEING MORE COMFORTABLE THAN OTHERS. NOW THAT I MYSELF HAD UNDERSTOOD DISTRESS, I NO LONGER ASKED THESE KINDS OF QUESTIONS. I WOULD EVEN HAVE PREFERRED THAT HE COME GET ME WITH A BETTER CAR, AS A WAY TO REMIND ME OF A MORE GLORIOUS TIME.
I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE TALKING. I PRETENDED TO LOOK AT THE CITY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING.
WELCOME HOME!
THEY WERE THE MOST COMFORTING WORDS THAT I HAD HEARD IN A LONG TIME.
I WENT STRAIGHT TO THE LIVING ROOM. THERE WAS STILL THAT SOFA ON WHICH MY PARENTS HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WERE SENDING ME TO AUSTRIA.
ENTERING INTO A CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS SUBJECT SCARED ME SO MUCH THAT I HEADED FOR MY ROOM LIKE A BOOR WITHOUT SAYING GOOD NIGHT OR GOODBYE.
MY ROOM . . . MY ROOM!!
I WAS OVERJOYED TO FINALLY HAVE A PLACE OF MY OWN AND THIS REASSURED ME.
I DIDN'T WANT TO TURN ON THE LIGHT. I COULDN'T BEAR TO SEE EVERYTHING AGAIN SO QUICKLY.
I SPENT A GOOD PART OF THE NIGHT IN THE EMPTINESS, JUST HAPPY TO BE THERE.

AND THE NEXT MORNING.
YAY! IT SNOWED!
IN VIENNA, I HATED SNOW. ESPECIALLY WHEN I FOUND MYSELF ON THE STREET. YOU APPRECIATE SNOW MUCH BETTER WHEN YOU SEE IT FROM THE WINDOW OF A WARM ROOM.
I TOOK STOCK OF MY SURROUNDINGS.
PUNK
BEFORE LEAVING IRAN, I WORSHIPPED PUNKS, TO THE POINT OF HAVING DRAWN ONE ON MY WALL.
PFFF! WHAT SHIT!
UNK
THEN, I TOOK STOCK OF MY PROPERTY. I OWNED AN EMPTY ARMOIRE...
...A TOO-SMALL DESK...
...A BED, A RUG, AND A CASSETTE-RADIO.
I WOULDN'T MIND LISTENING TO SOME KIM WILDE.
I LOOKED IN THE DRAWER, WHERE I USUALLY KEPT MY TAPES.
I DIDN'T FIND THEM.

SO I WENT TO SEE MY MOTHER. SHE WOULD SURELY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE. MAYBE SHE EVEN LISTENED TO THEM TO REMEMBER ME.
GOOD MORNING, MOM!
GOOD MORNING! ALREADY DRESSED!
DO YOU WANT SOME TEA? AN OMELET, SOME TOAST..?
I'M NOT HUNGRY. TEA IS FINE.
DO YOU REMEMBER FRAU DOCTOR KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?
HER NAME WAS HELLER! OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT HORSE PISS?
AH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IRANIAN TEA!
OH YES, ESPECIALLY WITH A CIGARETTE. DO YOU WANT ONE?
MOM!
WHAT? YOU KNOW THE PROVERB: "PROSPERITY CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: TEA AFTER A MEAL, AND A CIGARETTE AFTER TEA."
IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY MOTHER HAD SPOKEN TO ME IN THIS TONE: IN HER EYES NOW, I HAD BECOME AN ADULT.
MOM, I CAN'T FIND MY TAPES. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR THEM! DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?
WELL, HMM, YOU SEE... SINCE I DIDN'T THINK THAT... THAT YOU WOULD COME BACK ONE DAY, I GAVE...I GAVE THEM TO HOMA.
HOMA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF HER FRIENDS. SHE WAS FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME. A CHILD!
AFTER ALL, MOM HADN'T BEEN WRONG. IN ANY CASE, I NO LONGER LIKED THE IDOLS OF MY ADOLESCENCE.
YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M GOING TO BUY MYSELF SOME NEW ONES!
CAN YOU GIVE ME A SPONGE?
A SPONGE? OF COURSE, DARLING.
I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS LITTLE PROBLEM AS A SIGN. IT WAS TIME TO FINISH WITH THE PAST...
...AND TO LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE.

A FEW HOURS LATER . .
AH, POUNEH! HOW ARE YOU? MARJI IS.
NO! TELL HER THAT I'VE GONE OUT!
SHE'S GONE OUT! SHE'LL CALL YOU BACK!
WHO TOLD HER THAT I WAS HERE?
I DID. SHE IS YOUR BEST FRIEND.
PLEASE, DON'T TELL ANYONE THAT I'M BACK. I DON'T WANT TO SEE PEOPLE!
OKAY, I'LL BE HOME IN A COUPLE OF HOURS.
DON'T FORGET YOUR VEIL.
OH SHIT! I'LL HAVE TO PUT IT BACK ON!

IT WASN'T JUST THE VEIL TO WHICH I HAD TO READJUST, THERE WERE ALSO ALL THE IMAGES: THE SIXTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH MURALS PRESENTING MARTYRS, ADORNED WITH SLOGANS HONORING THEM, SLOGANS LIKE "THE MARTYR IS THE HEART OF HISTORY" OR "I HOPE TO BE A MARTYR MYSELF" OR "A MARTYR LIVES FOREVER."
ESPECIALLY AFTER FOUR YEARS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, WHERE YOU WERE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ON THE WALLS "BEST SAUSAGES FOR 20 SHILLINGS," THE ROAD TO READJUSTMENT SEEMED VERY LONG TO ME.

THERE WERE ALSO THE STREETS...
...MANY HAD CHANGED NAMES. THEY WERE NOW CALLED MARTYR WHAT'S-HIS-NAME AVENUE OR MARTYR SOMETHING-OR-OTHER STREET.
IT WAS VERY UNSETTLING.
I FELT AS THOUGH I WERE WALKING THROUGH A CEMETERY.
... SURROUNDED BY THE VICTIMS OF A WAR I HAD FLED.
IT WAS UNBEARABLE. I HURRIED HOME.

THAT NIGHT.
HI! I'M HOME!
DO YOU ALWAYS GET HOME SO LATE?
AH YES, I HAVE A LOT OF WORK THESE DAYS.
NOW THAT THE WAR WAS OVER, MY FATHER, AN ENGINEER, DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN.
EVERYTHING HAS TO BE REBUILT NOW.
WHILE WE WAIT FOR THE NEXT WAR WHICH WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING AGAIN.
WHAT NEXT WAR?
ONE HAS TO BE REALISTIC. FOR OVER A CENTURY OUR REGION HAS BEEN UNSTABLE. ONE DAY THEY NATIONALIZE THE OIL, THE NEXT THEY INSTALL A DICTATOR...
...THEN IT'S THE SIX-DAY WAR, THEN IT'S AFGHANISTAN'S TURN AND THE RETURN OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT. WE'LL SEE WHAT COMES NEXT.
I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WOULD ONE DAY HEAR MY MOTHER SOUND SO DISILLUSIONED.
THERE WAS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. EVEN MY MOTHER WAS ILL AT EASE.
HAPPILY, MY FATHER INTERVENED.
SO, DID YOU GET SOME REST? DID YOU SEE HOW IT SNOWED? I HAD TO PUT CHAINS ON MY TIRES TO BE ABLE TO DRIVE. INCREDIBLE! SIXTEEN INCHES OF SNOW!!
I KNOW, IT'S MAGNIFICENT.
DID YOU WALK AROUND A LITTLE? WHAT DID YOU THINK OF TEHRAN?
SORDID.
I WAS SHOCKED. AT LEAST ONE STREET IN THREE IS NAMED AFTER A MARTYR.

AND WE ARE IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY. IF YOU GO INTO THE POOR QUARTERS IN THE SOUTH OF TEHRAN, ALMOST ALL THE STREETS ARE CALLED MARTYR SO-AND-SO.
PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ANYMORE WHY WE'VE HAD EIGHT YEARS OF WAR. WHY THEIR CHILDREN HAVE DIED...
THIS ENTIRE WAR WAS JUST A BIG SETUP TO DESTROY BOTH THE IRANIAN AND THE IRAQI ARMIES. THE FORMER WAS THE MOST POWERFUL IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1980, AND THE LATTER REPRESENTED A REAL DANGER TO ISRAEL.
THE WEST SOLD WEAPONS TO BOTH CAMPS AND WE, WE WERE STUPID ENOUGH TO ENTER INTO THIS CYNICAL GAME... EIGHT YEARS OF WAR FOR NOTHING!
SO NOW THE STATE NAMES STREETS AFTER MARTYRS TO FLATTER THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS. IN THIS WAY, PERHAPS, THEY'LL FIND SOME MEANING IN ALL THIS ABSURDITY.
YES, BUT THERE IS ALSO SOMETHING ELSE. THIS AFTERNOON ON TV, I SAW MOTHERS WHO WERE CLAIMING TO BE OVERJOYED AND GRATIFIED BY THE DEATHS OF THEIR CHILDREN. I CAN'T FIGURE OUT IF IT'S FAITH OR COMPLETE STUPIDITY...
IT'S A BIT OF BOTH... FOR TEN YEARS THEY'VE BEEN MADE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MARTYRS ARE LIVING IN A FIVE-STAR HOTEL IN PARADISE!
IN THE MEANTIME, THE WAR FEELS MORE LIKE HELL! IF YOU KNEW... THE FEW MONTHS THAT LED UP TO THE CEASE-FIRE WERE PARTICULARLY HORRIBLE.
TELL ME, DAD. I'M ALL EARS.

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

ARE YOU SURE THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TELL ALL THIS?
...
MOM! LEAVE HIM ALONE! I'M INTERESTED.
...SO, THE MUJAHIDEEN ALSO KNEW THAT THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS WERE AGAINST THE REGIME, AND THEY WERE THEREFORE COUNTING ON POPULAR SUPPORT. BUT THERE WAS ONE THING THAT WASN'T IN THEIR CALCULATIONS: THEY ENTERED FROM IRAQ. THE SAME IRAQ THAT HAD ATTACKED US AND AGAINST WHICH WE HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR EIGHT YEARS.
WITH THE RESULT THAT, WHEN THEY ARRIVED IN IRAN, NO ONE WELCOMED THEM. FOR THE MOST PART, THEY WERE KILLED BY THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION AND THE ARMY.
I'M GOING TO BED.
BUT THE REGIME GOT SCARED BECAUSE IF THESE OPPONENTS HAD REACHED TEHRAN, THEY WOULD HAVE FREED THOSE WHO REPRESENTED A REAL THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT...
GOOD NIGHT.
...THAT IS TO SAY THE POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO WERE THE LEGITIMATE HEIRS OF THE REVOLUTION AND WHO CONSTITUTED OUR COUNTRY'S INTELLIGENTSIA...
...SO THE STATE DECIDED TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM. THEY PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING CHOICE TO THE DETAINEES: EITHER THEY COULD RENOUNCE THEIR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS, AND PROMISE FIDELITY AND LOYALTY TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, IN WHICH CASE THEY WERE DONE SERVING THEIR TIME...

OR, THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED.
AND, WELL, MOST OF THEM WERE EXECUTED.

HOW MANY DID THEY KILL?
NO ONE KNOWS EXACTLY. MANY THOUSANDS, OR RATHER, MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.
AND THE VICTIMS OF THE WAR?
BETWEEN 500,000 AND 1,000,000.
NOT COUNTING THOSE DISABLED BY THE WAR, THE POPULATIONS RAVAGED BY CHEMICAL WEAPONS...
...THOSE WHO LOST THEIR MINDS FROM THE EXPLOSIONS...
...THE ORPHANS, THE WIDOWS, THE REFUGEES, THE MATERIAL DESTRUCTION...
BUT ALL THAT IS BEHIND US. WE MUST GO FORWARD NOW. WE MUST REBUILD EVERYTHING!
DESPITE MY FATHER'S SOUNDING MOTIVATED, I DIDN'T FEEL ANY REAL CONVICTION IN HIS VOICE. HE SEEMED TO ME AS BLASÉ AS MY MOTHER.
LET'S TURN IN. TOMORROW I HAVE A LONG DAY AT WORK. DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS?
NO, NOT YET.
NEXT TO MY FATHER'S DISTRESSING REPORT, MY VIENNESE MISADVENTURES SEEMED LIKE LITTLE ANECDOTES OF NO IMPORTANCE.
SO I DECIDED THAT I WOULD NEVER TELL THEM ANYTHING ABOUT MY AUSTRIAN LIFE. THEY HAD SUFFERED ENOUGH AS IT WAS.

THE JOKE

I HAD BEEN IN TEHRAN FOR TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY RELUCTANCE, IN THE END MY ENTIRE FAMILY CAME TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THEY KNEW ABOUT MY EUROPEAN FAILURE. I WAS SCARED THAT THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED.
YOU MUST SPEAK GOOD GERMAN NOW.
I KNOW HOW TO SAY "ICH LIEBE DICH" HEE HEE HEE!
YES, I SPEAK A LITTLE.
THANK YOU FOR THE FLOWERS.
THIS IS UNCLE ARDESHIR, MY MOTHER'S UNCLE. HE'S RETIRED FROM THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM.
WHEN I THINK OF VIENNA, I IMMEDIATELY THINK OF SISSI. YOU MUST HAVE SEEN THE FILM STARRING ROMY!
YES.
THAT'S MINA, MY FIRST COUSIN. SHE'S AN IMBECILE. SHE TALKS ABOUT ROMY SCHNEIDER AS IF SHE WERE HER BEST FRIEND.
MARJANE, THE STARS SHINE IN THE SKY AND YOU IN MY HEART . . .
THESE ARE OUR NEIGHBORS. THEY'RE THE INCARNATION OF THE PERFECT FAMILY.
EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT THEY WERE COMING TO SEE ME OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND KINDNESS, I'D QUICKLY HAD ENOUGH OF RECEIVING THEM EVERY DAY.
BUT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE DONE, THE VISITS CONTINUED . . .
ASIDE FROM MY PARENTS, THE ONLY PERSON TO WHOM I REALLY WANTED TO TALK WAS MY GRANDMOTHER. BUT SHE CAME AFTER EVERYONE ELSE.
GRANDMA, WHERE WERE YOU?
I WAS WAITING FOR THE TRIBE TO GO FIRST! OH MY! HOW YOU'VE GROWN. SOON YOU'LL BE CATCHING THE LORD'S BALLS.
SHE WAS STILL HER OLD SELF.

AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.
HI!
HOW ARE YOU?
OHHH . . .
I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.
WHY DO YOU LOOK LIKE A NUN? NO ONE WOULD EVER GUESS THAT YOU'D LIVED IN EUROPE.
OH, REALLY?
COMPARED TO HER FASHIONABLE MAKEUP, I REALLY DID EXUDE ALL THE ALLURE OF A NUN.
COME ON, TALK TO US! YOU MUST HAVE A MILLION THINGS TO TELL US ABOUT.
I DON'T KNOW . . .
WELL, WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHAT THE NIGHTCLUBS IN VIENNA WERE LIKE?
IT'S JUST THAT . . . I DIDN'T GO THAT OFTEN . . . I DON'T REALLY LIKE THEM MUCH.
WHAT?
OH STOP PRETENDING TO BE SO SHOCKED! DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE WAS? ALWAYS GIVING LESSONS!! SHE'S A "REBEL," THIS ONE!
IF THERE WERE STILL NIGHTCLUBS IN TEHRAN, I'D BE THERE EVERY NIGHT!
HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE! ME TOO!
I HAD A HARD TIME REMEMBERING WHAT HAD BROUGHT US TOGETHER BEFORE.
A PART OF ME UNDERSTOOD THEM. WHEN SOMETHING IS FORBIDDEN, IT TAKES ON A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPORTANCE. MUCH LATER, I LEARNED THAT MAKING THEMSELVES UP AND WANTING TO FOLLOW WESTERN WAYS WAS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE ON THEIR PART.
NEVERTHELESS, I FELT TERRIBLY ALONE.

SOME DAYS LATER.
LALEH CALLED FOR YOU.
PFFF...
OH!...MY FRIENDS. . MY FRIENDS, I FIND THEM ALL SO UNBEARABLY INANE!
YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT. NO ONE IS ASKING THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT! COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT!
GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT, MY CHILD. THERE MUST BE SOME PEOPLE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH!
GRANDMA WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE KIDS I USED TO PLAY WITH IN THE STREET.
I'D LIKE TO SEE ARASH AND KIA AGAIN...
...YES! ARASH AND KIA! KIA ESPECIALLY. WE HAD SO MUCH FUN TOGETHER. AND, HE'S A GUY. HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN MAKEUP ON HIS MIND.
UHH..
MY MOTHER'S RESPONSE SEEMED NORMAL. SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED HIM. SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BADLY BROUGHT UP AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DO STUPID THINGS.
MOM, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW. IF I SEE HIM, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK WINDOWS, OR ATTACK PEOPLE WITH NAILS.
IT'S JUST THAT KIA...
KIA WHAT?
WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY.
AND WHERE DID HE GO?
NOWHERE... THEY ARRESTED HIM, THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO DO HIS MILITARY SERVICE... THEY SENT HIM TO THE FRONT AND...
AND THEN WHAT? IS HE DEAD?
ALMOST.
ALMOST DEAD???
YES, WELL HOW DO YOU SAY...HE IS DISABLED.

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

HELLO? COULD I PLEASE SPEAK TO KIA?

LET ME GET HIM... KIA!! TELEPHONE!

KIA! HI-DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

UHH... NO.

AND "MASSACRE RAMIN WITH NAILS!" DOES THAT RING A BELL?

MARJI! IS IT YOU?

NO, THIS IS HER MOTHER!

HA!HA!HA!

OH IT'S SO GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!! WHEN CAN WE SEE EACH OTHER?

TOMORROW IF YOU WANT. DO YOU HAVE OUR ADDRESS?

I WAS RELIEVED. HE DIDN'T SEEM "ALMOST DEAD" AT ALL.

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

WHEN I FINALLY GOT TO HIS HOUSE, I WASN'T AT ALL SURE IF I WANTED TO GO IN.

MISS, YOU HAVE TO GET OUT. WE'RE THERE.

WHATEVER HIS STATE, I WAS CONVINCED OF THE JUSTICE OF MY MISSION.

WHAT FLOOR ARE YOU GOING TO?

THE THIRD. I'VE COME TO VISIT MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, KIA ABADI.

OH! THAT'S GREAT!

THE NEIGHBOR'S "THAT'S GREAT" CALMED ME DOWN EVEN MORE. IF SOMETHING REALLY SERIOUS HAD HAPPENED, HE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT.

I WAS CONFIDENT.

DING DONG

OH KIA!...
...HELLO.
...IT'S CRAZY HOW YOU'VE CHANGED!... COME IN, PLEASE, COME IN!
LOOK AT THAT! YOU'VE BECOME A REAL WOMAN.
AH WELL! WE ALL END UP HAVING TO ACCEPT OURSELVES!
YES... I KNOW THAT BETTER THAN ANYONE!
WHAT AN IDIOT, REALLY, WHAT AN IDIOT I AM!
I QUICKLY CHANGED THE SUBJECT.
DO YOU REMEMBER OUR FRIEND RAMIN?
I ESPECIALLY REMEMBER US AND OUR IRON KNUCKLES! THE POOR BOY! HE MUST HAVE BEEN SCARED SHITLESS!
BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
YES, BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH.
DO YOU WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK?
NO, I'M FINE, THANKS.
I'M THIRSTY, I'M GOING TO GET A COKE.
IN THAT CASE, I'LL HAVE ONE TOO.
I DIDN'T DARE LOOK AT HIM ANYWHERE BUT IN THE EYES.
IT WASN'T UNTIL HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE KITCHEN THAT I NOTICED HE ONLY HAD THE USE OF HIS RIGHT ARM.
HERE, CAN YOU HELP ME, PLEASE?
OF COURSE! GIVE ME THAT!

GLUG, GLUG GLUG
SHIT
THIS TIME, HE'S THE ONE WHO SAVED THE SITUATION.
SO, YOU'RE BACK FROM AUSTRIA? HOW WAS IT THERE?
IT WAS FINE. BUT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOU. HOW ARE YOU DOING?
I'M DOING AS WELL AS I CAN ... I WANT TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES, I HAVE AN UNCLE WHO'S A DOCTOR IN BOSTON. THEY'RE GOING TO MAKE ME TWO BEAUTIFUL PROSTHESES, ONE FOR MY LEG AND ONE FOR MY ARM. BUT WE HAVE TO SEE WHETHER OR NOT THE AMERICANS WILL GIVE ME A VISA.
...
ONE OF MY FRIENDS TOLD ME A GREAT STORY. DO YOU WANT TO HEAR IT?
SURE, GO AHEAD.
HERE GOES. IT'S THE STORY OF A GUY WHO FINDS HIMSELF AT THE FRONT DURING THE WAR. A GRENADE LANDS DIRECTLY ON HIS HEAD ...
... HE'S BLOWN INTO A THOUSAND PIECES ...
...THE STRETCHER-BEARERS ARRIVE, COLLECT THE PIECES, PUT THEM IN A LARGE BAG...
...AND RUSH HIM BACK TO TEHRAN AT TOP SPEED.
آمبولانس حامل امر
EMERGENCY

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

AND WHAT COMES AFTER THE WEDDING?
UHH... I DON'T KNOW.
AFTER THE WEDDING COMES "THE HONEYMOON NIGHT"!
MY DEAR, I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER!
I'M COMING, MY DOE, I'M COMING.
OH, YOUR MOTHER WAS RIGHT TO SAY YOU WERE EXCEPTIONAL, YOU ARE SO...
IN THE NAME OF GOD! WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT?
WHY ISN'T IT IN THE RIGHT PLACE?
OH WELL, IT'S NO BIG DEAL. IT STILL WORKS!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S NO BIG DEAL???!!!
YOUR THING IS ON YOUR HIP, INSTEAD OF BEING BETWEEN YOUR LEGS AND YOU DARE TO TELL ME THAT "IT'S NO BIG DEAL" ???!
YES, BUT IT WORKS...
...LOCK!
I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING! I WAS SOLD DAMAGED GOODS!!
I WANT A DIVORCE AS OF TOMORROW!!!

IMAGINE THAT! HA! HA! HA! HA! SO THE GUY! HA! HA! SO THE GUY WAS SO FED UP! HA! HA! HA! THAT HE SAID:
?
"KISS MY ASS!!!!" HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA!
AH
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
OOPS! CAREFUL!!!
WE SPENT THE WHOLE AFTERNOON TALKING AND JOKING ...
YOU'LL COME SEE ME AGAIN?
OF COURSE, I'LL CALL YOU.
I SAW HIM THREE OR FOUR TIMES, THEN HE LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES. WE WROTE A LITTLE, UNTIL TIME TOOK ITS TOLL AND WE LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER.
THAT DAY, I LEARNED SOMETHING ESSENTIAL: WE CAN ONLY FEEL SORRY FOR OURSELVES WHEN OUR MISFORTUNES ARE STILL SUPPORTABLE ...
... ONCE THIS LIMIT IS CROSSED, THE ONLY WAY TO BEAR THE UNBEARABLE IS TO LAUGH AT IT.

SKIING

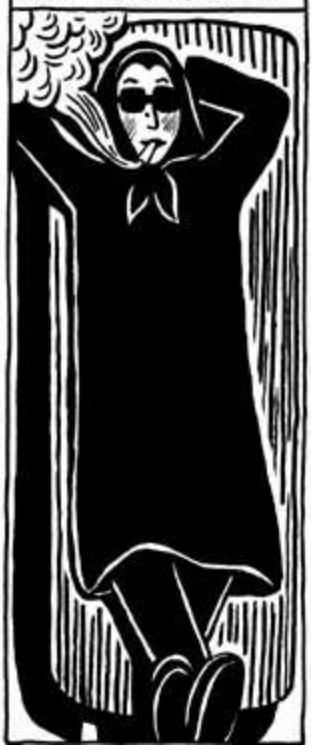
I WASN'T ABLE TO TAKE A STEP BACK EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO GET OUT OF MY FUNK.
AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS, MY FAMILY AND THOSE CLOSE TO ME DECIDED THAT IT WAS TIME I BENEFITED FROM THEIR GOOD ADVICE:
YOU SHOULD JOIN A GYM. I KNOW A GOOD CLUB.
YOU SHOULD FIND YOURSELF A GOOD HUSBAND.
YOU SHOULD REGISTER FOR SOME PREP COURSES. YOU MUST GO TO UNIVERSITY.
YOU SHOULD...
BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO EXERCISE, OR GET MARRIED, OR STUDY ...
...I JUST WANTED THEM TO KNOW THAT I TOO HAD SUFFERED...
MY LIFE IN VIENNA WAS FAR FROM EASY...
I LIVED IN THE STREET.
I SPIT UP BLOOD.
I WAS ALONE.
NO ONE LOVED ME.
OH!
OH! POOR YOU!
OH!
...FOR THEM TO FEEL SOME COMPASSION FOR ME ...
OH MY DEAR, YOU HAVE SUFFERED TOO MUCH... DRINK THIS HERB TEA.
IT'S FRESH-SQUEEZED ORANGE JUICE, I MADE IT MYSELF.
DO YOU WANT ME TO DO A LITTLE DANCE FOR YOU?
FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND ME.
I UNDERSTAND YOU.
CERTAINLY, THEY'D HAD TO ENDURE THE WAR, BUT THEY HAD EACH OTHER CLOSE BY. THEY HAD NEVER KNOWN THE CONFUSION OF BEING A THIRD-WORLDER, THEY HAD ALWAYS HAD A HOME!
AT THE SAME TIME, HOW COULD THEY HAVE PITIED ME? I WAS SO SHUT OFF.
I KEPT REPEATING TO MYSELF THAT I MUSN'T CRACK UP.

I THOUGHT THAT BY COMING BACK TO IRAN, EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE.
THAT I WOULD FORGET THE OLD DAYS.
BUT MY PAST CAUGHT UP WITH ME.
MY SECRETS WEIGHED ME DOWN.
I BECAME DEPRESSED.
MARJI, I'M GOING GROCERY SHOPPING. DO YOU NEED ANYTHING?
CIGARETTES, PLEASE.
I RENTED "LA DOLCE VITA." DON'T YOU WANT TO WATCH IT TOGETHER?
NO ...
EVEN MY GRANDMA COULD NO LONGER GET ME TO LAUGH.
...HE FARTED! IT SMELLED LIKE A DEAD RAT ...
I WAS ALWAYS IN FRONT OF THE TV. THERE WAS A JAPANESE SERIES, CALLED "OSHIN," THAT I WATCHED OFTEN. IT WAS THE STORY OF A POOR GIRL WHO CAME TO WORK IN TOKYO.
AT FIRST, SHE CLEANED HOUSES, THEN SHE BECAME A HAIRDRESSER AND MET A GUY WHOSE MOTHER WAS OPPOSED TO THEIR MARRIAGE.
YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A HAIRDRESSER, YOU AREN'T WORTHY OF MY SON! GET OUT, YOU ROTTEN GIRL!
NO! I LOVE HIM!
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE MOTHER-IN-LAW HATED HAIRDRESSERS SO MUCH.
MUCH LATER, I GOT TO KNOW A GIRL WHO DUBBED TELEVISION SHOWS. SHE TOLD ME THAT OSHIN WAS IN FACT A GEISHA AND SINCE HER PROFESSION DIDN'T SUIT ISLAMIC MORALS, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHANNEL HAD DECIDED THAT SHE'D BE A HAIRDRESSER.
IT WAS BELIEVABLE BECAUSE OSHIN AND HER COURTESAN FRIENDS SPENT THEIR TIME MAKING CHIGNONS.

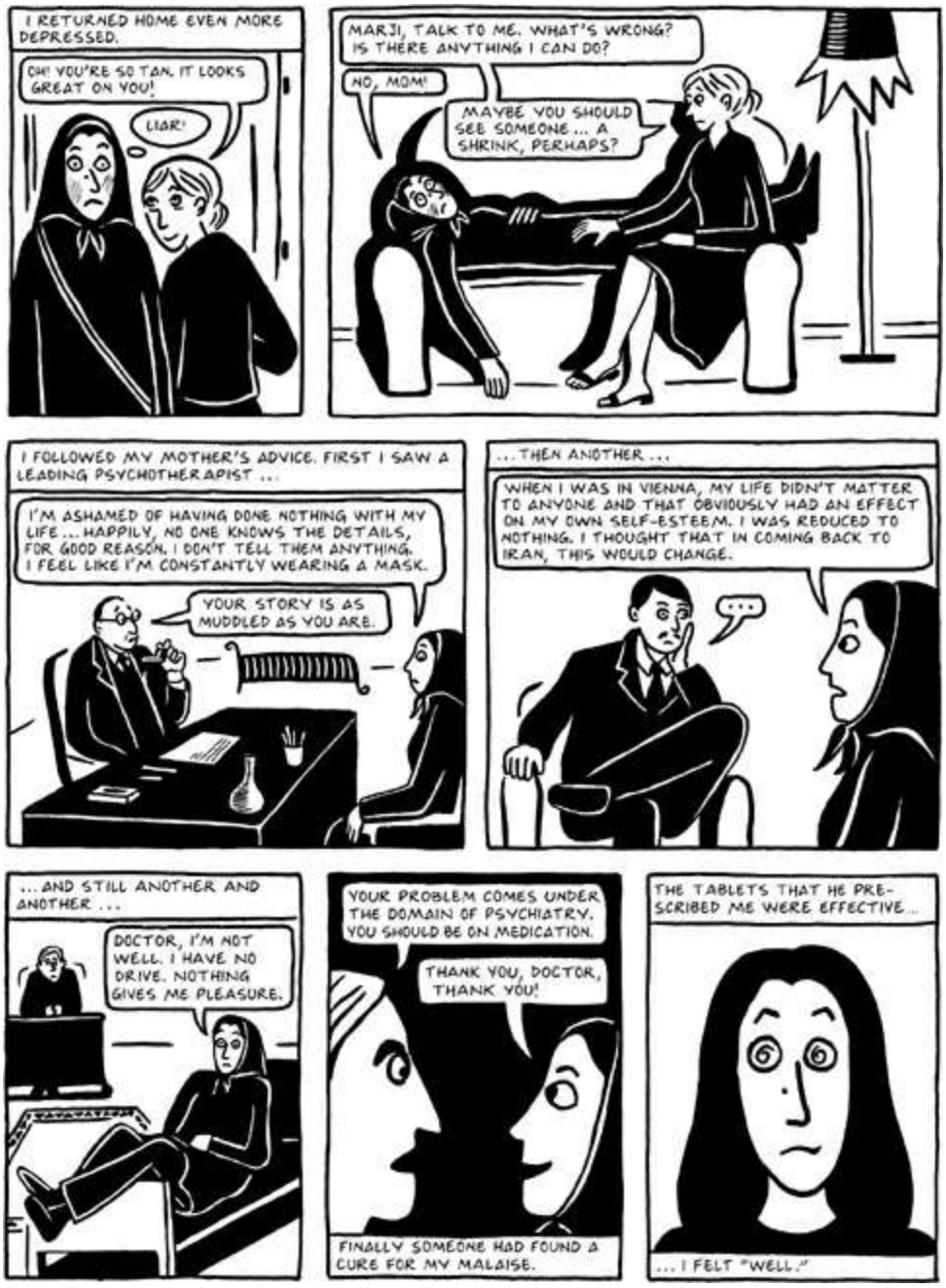
TO LIFT ME OUT OF MY DEPRESSION, MY FRIENDS SUGGESTED TAKING ME SKIING. ONE OF THEIR PARENTS HAD A CHALET AT DIZIN.* I DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT MY MOTHER INSISTED SO MUCH THAT I ENDED UP ACCEPTING.

* A SKI RESORT ABOUT THIRTY MILES FROM TEHRAN.

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



EVENING.
OH MY! I'M EXHAUSTED!
I SAW LOTS OF CUTE GUYS, TALL, MUSCLED ...
OH YES!!! HEE HEE HEE!
TELL US, HAVE YOU HAD SEX?
OF COURSE, I'M NINETEEN!
SO, DO TELL, HOW WAS IT?
SUPPOSEDLY, IT HURTS A LOT THE FIRST TIME.
IT MUST BE GREAT ...
IT DEPENDS WITH WHO. IT'S NOT ALWAYS PLEASURABLE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU'VE DONE THE DEED WITH MANY PEOPLE?
WELL, I MEAN ... I'VE HAD A FEW EXPERIENCES.
SO, WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND A WHORE???
UNDERNEATH THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF BEING MODERN WOMEN, MY FRIENDS WERE REAL TRADITIONALISTS.
THEY WERE OVERRUN BY HORMONES AND FRUSTRATION, WHICH EXPLAINED THEIR AGGRESSIVENESS TOWARD ME. TO THEM, I HAD BECOME A DECADENT WESTERN WOMAN.


I RETURNED HOME EVEN MORE DEPRESSED.
OH! YOU'RE SO TAN. IT LOOKS GREAT ON YOU!
LIAR!
MARJI, TALK TO ME. WHAT'S WRONG? IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?
NO, MOM!
MAYBE YOU SHOULD SEE SOMEONE ... A SHRINK, PERHAPS?
I FOLLOWED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE. FIRST I SAW A LEADING PSYCHOTHERAPIST ...
I'M ASHAMED OF HAVING DONE NOTHING WITH MY LIFE ... HAPPILY, NO ONE KNOWS THE DETAILS, FOR GOOD REASON. I DON'T TELL THEM ANYTHING. I FEEL LIKE I'M CONSTANTLY WEARING A MASK.
YOUR STORY IS AS MUDDLED AS YOU ARE.
... THEN ANOTHER ...
WHEN I WAS IN VIENNA, MY LIFE DIDN'T MATTER TO ANYONE AND THAT OBVIOUSLY HAD AN EFFECT ON MY OWN SELF-ESTEEM. I WAS REDUCED TO NOTHING. I THOUGHT THAT IN COMING BACK TO IRAN, THIS WOULD CHANGE.
...
... AND STILL ANOTHER AND ANOTHER ...
DOCTOR, I'M NOT WELL. I HAVE NO DRIVE. NOTHING GIVES ME PLEASURE.
YOUR PROBLEM COMES UNDER THE DOMAIN OF PSYCHIATRY. YOU SHOULD BE ON MEDICATION.
THANK YOU, DOCTOR, THANK YOU!
FINALLY SOMEONE HAD FOUND A CURE FOR MY MALAISE.
THE TABLETS THAT HE PRESCRIBED ME WERE EFFECTIVE...
... I FELT "WELL."

I WAS OFTEN IN A TRANCE.
marjane, do you want to come
the Caspian Sea
yes
BUT AS SOON AS THE EFFECT OF THE PILLS WORE OFF, I ONCE AGAIN BECAME CONSCIOUS. MY CALAMITY COULD BE SUMMARIZED IN ONE SENTENCE: I WAS NOTHING.
I WAS A WESTERNER IN IRAN, AN IRANIAN IN THE WEST. I HAD NO IDENTITY. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ANYMORE WHY I WAS LIVING.
SO I DECIDED TO DIE. A FEW WEEKS AFTER MY RESOLUTION...
YOU SAID THAT YOU WOULD COME WITH US, TO SEE THE CASPIAN SEA... IF YOU WANT, WE CAN CANCEL THE TRIP. WE DON'T WANT TO LEAVE YOU ...
REALLY, DAD! DIDN'T I MANAGE IN VIENNA? NO, IT'S OKAY, YOU SHOULD GO! IN ANY CASE, I NEED TO BE ALONE.
AND SO THEY WENT FOR TEN DAYS.
THE DAY AFTER THEIR DEPARTURE, I MADE MY ARRANGEMENTS. I HAD SEEN, IN A FILM, A WOMAN WHO DRANK WINE BEFORE SLITTING HER WRISTS. NOT HAVING ANY WINE, I DRANK A HALF BOTTLE OF VODKA.
YUCK
I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO PUSH THE BLADE INTO MY FLESH. I HAD ALWAYS BEEN VERY AFRAID OF BLOOD. NEVERTHELESS, SINCE I WAS DRUNK, I MANAGED TO GRAZE MYSELF.
AS FOR THE REST, I FOLLOWED THE FILM. I STRETCHED OUT IN A HOT BATH, WAITING FOR MY BLOOD TO EMPTY OUT. BUT IT KEPT COAGULATING.
IT MUST BE SAID THAT IT'S A LITTLE DIFFICULT TO KILL YOURSELF WITH A FRUIT KNIFE. WEAPONS WITH BLADES WERE NOT MADE FOR ME. I NEEDED TO FIND SOMETHING ELSE.

SO I WAITED UNTIL MY WRIST HEALED TO SWALLOW ALL MY ANTI-DEPRESSANTS.
I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT WAS THE LAST TIME I WOULD SEE THE SUN. I ALSO SPARED A THOUGHT FOR MY PARENTS.
IT WAS THE END ...
...THREE DAYS LATER ...
IT'S MY HAND! SHIT! I'M STILL ALIVE!
WHEN I WOKE UP, THE DRUGS THAT I HAD TAKEN GAVE ME SEVERAL HOURS' WORTH OF HALLUCINATIONS.
SO I WENT TO SEE MY THERAPIST.
YOU SWALLOWED THEM ALL? ARE YOU SURE?
YES ...
THAT DOSE SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO FINISH OFF AN ELEPHANT! ... EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A BELIEVER, ASIDE FROM DIVINE INTERVENTION, I CAN'T FIND ANY OTHER EXPLANATION FOR YOUR SURVIVAL.
I INFERRED FROM THIS THAT I WAS NOT MADE TO DIE.
FROM NOW ON, I'M TAKING MYSELF IN HAND.

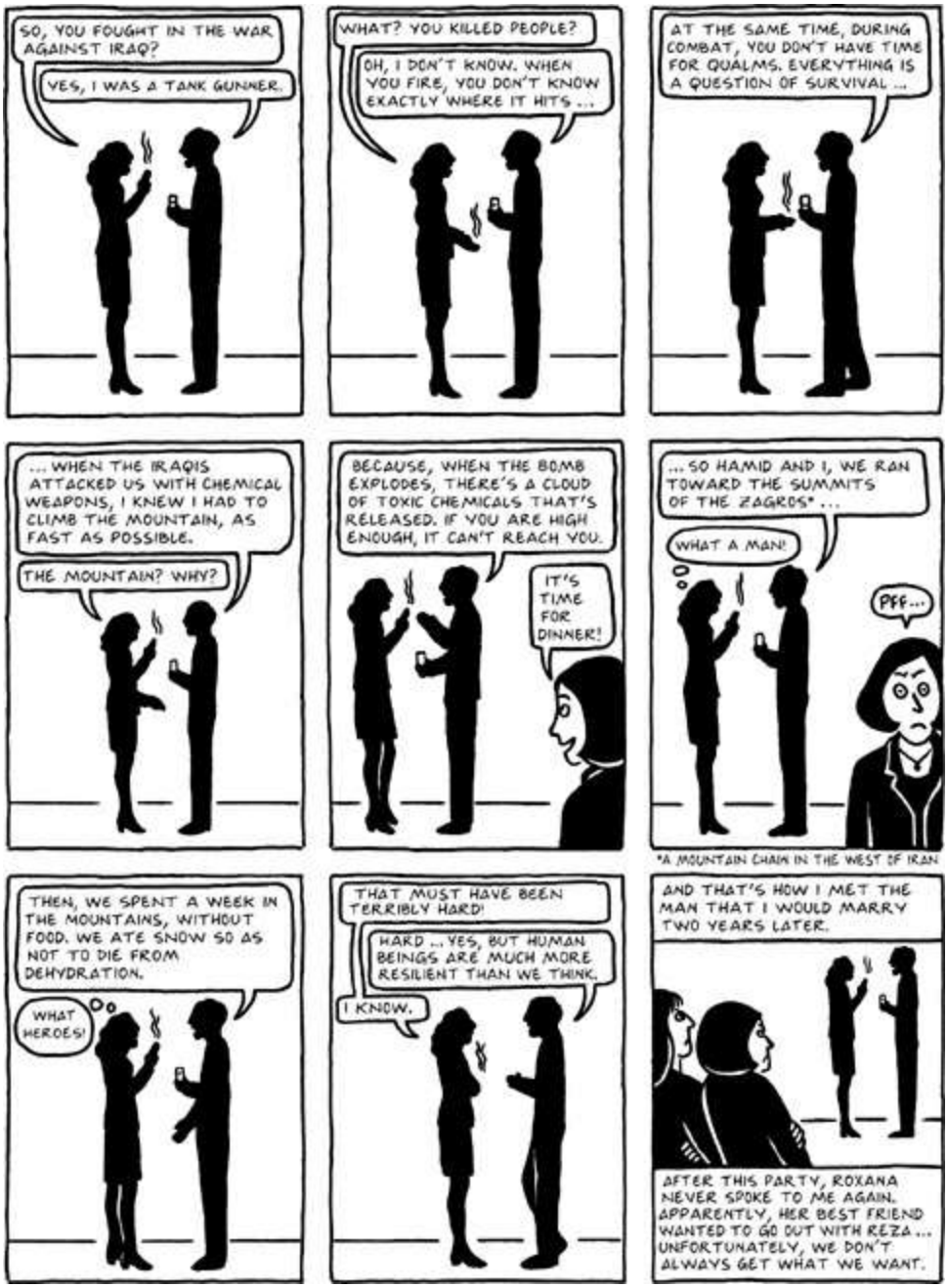
BODY HAIR BEING AN OBSESSION OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN, I BEGAN WITH HAIR REMOVAL.
ME BEFORE.
ME AFTER.
THEN I GOT RID OF MY OLD CLOTHES.
AND HAD SOME NEW CLOTHES MADE.
A MODERN WARDROBE.
ORIGINAL SHOES.
A FASHIONABLE HAIRCUT.
A PERMANENT.
I BECAME A SOPHISTICATED WOMAN ...
SHOPPING.
MAKEUP.

AND AS A HEALTHY MIND IS FOUND IN A HEALTHY BODY, I TOOK UP EXERCISE.
MORE AND MORE,
AND MORE AND MORE,
TO THE POINT WHERE I BECAME AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR.
AND FIVE AND SIX... AND ONE AND TWO...
EYE OF THE TIGER
STRONG AND INVINCIBLE LIKE THIS, I WAS GOING TO MEET MY NEW DESTINY.

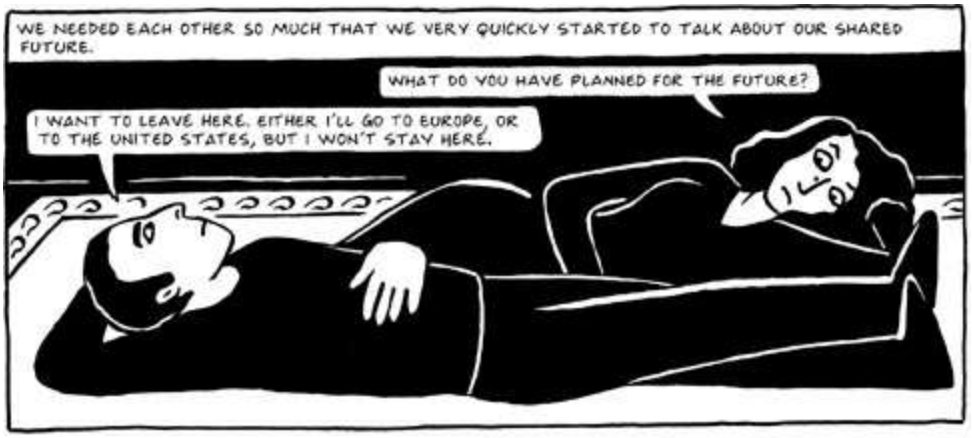
THE EXAM

*THE NAME OF THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN.

OH YOU! EITHER YOU TALK OR YOU SMOKE! COME ON, COME DANCE A LITTLE!
WHO'S THAT GUY?
REZA? HE'S ONE OF OUR NEIGHBORS. BE CAREFUL! HE'S A LADIES' MAN ...
... A MERCILESS SEDUCER!
OH REALLY? HE SEEMS VERY NICE.
OH YES, HE HIDES HIS GAME WELL!
OH, WHERE IS HE?
OUF!
ROXANA WAS WRONG.
HI AGAIN!
HI!
SORRY TO HAVE LEFT YOU BUT I HADN'T SEEN HAMID IN A WHILE.
WHO'S HAMID?
THAT GUY I WAS TALKING TO. WE WERE AT THE FRONT TOGETHER.
YOU WERE IN THE WAR?
YES, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE! BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU HEARD THE STORY OF THE SOLDIER WHO EXPLODED INTO A THOUSAND PIECES?
HE'S THE GUY WHO GETS MARRIED AND HAS HIS THING ON HIS HIP?
UHH ... YEAH!
HEE, HEE, HEE ..HEE, HEE, HEE ...
IT'S TRUE THAT IT'S VERY FUNNY ...IT'S THE JOKE OF FORMER SOLDIERS.


SO, YOU FOUGHT IN THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ?
YES, I WAS A TANK GUNNER.
WHAT? YOU KILLED PEOPLE?
OH, I DON'T KNOW. WHEN YOU FIRE, YOU DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHERE IT HITS ...
AT THE SAME TIME, DURING COMBAT, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR QUALMS. EVERYTHING IS A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL ...
... WHEN THE IRAQIS ATTACKED US WITH CHEMICAL WEAPONS, I KNEW I HAD TO CLIMB THE MOUNTAIN, AS FAST AS POSSIBLE.
THE MOUNTAIN? WHY?
BECAUSE, WHEN THE BOMB EXPLODES, THERE'S A CLOUD OF TOXIC CHEMICALS THAT'S RELEASED. IF YOU ARE HIGH ENOUGH, IT CAN'T REACH YOU.
IT'S TIME FOR DINNER!
... SO HAMID AND I, WE RAN TOWARD THE SUMMITS OF THE ZAGROS* ...
WHAT A MAN!
PFF...
*A MOUNTAIN CHAIN IN THE WEST OF IRAN
THEN, WE SPENT A WEEK IN THE MOUNTAINS, WITHOUT FOOD. WE ATE SNOW SO AS NOT TO DIE FROM DEHYDRATION.
WHAT HEROES!
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN TERRIBLY HARD!
HARD ... YES, BUT HUMAN BEINGS ARE MUCH MORE RESILIENT THAN WE THINK.
I KNOW.
AND THAT'S HOW I MET THE MAN THAT I WOULD MARRY TWO YEARS LATER.
AFTER THIS PARTY, ROXANA NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN. APPARENTLY, HER BEST FRIEND WANTED TO GO OUT WITH REZA ... UNFORTUNATELY, WE DON'T ALWAYS GET WHAT WE WANT.

EVERYTHING ABOUT US WAS OPPOSITE
HIS ROOM
MY ROOM
HIS CHILDHOOD FRIENDS
MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS
HIS FAVORITE ACTIVITY
MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY
HIS IDEAL LIFE
MY IDEAL LIFE
HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER
YES MOM, I'M COMING HOME IN AN HOUR AND A HALF. DON'T WORRY!
?
MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MOTHER
DON'T YOU WANT TO LET YOUR PARENTS KNOW?
NO, WHY?
HIS SOCIAL LIFE
MY SOCIAL LIFE
THE IMAGE I HAD OF HIM
THE IMAGE HE HAD OF ME
HE SOUGHT IN ME A LOST LIGHTHEARTEDNESS.
AND I SOUGHT IN HIM A WAR WHICH I HAD ESCAPED.
IN SHORT, WE COMPLEMENTED EACH OTHER.



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

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

... WE HAD TO WAIT SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE GETTING THE RESULTS IN THE "ETELAAT,"* WHICH DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL 3 P.M. WE WERE IN FRONT OF THE KIOSKS AT 1.

* NAME OF A NEWSPAPER.

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

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

... WHERE HE PUT HIS HAND ON MINE.

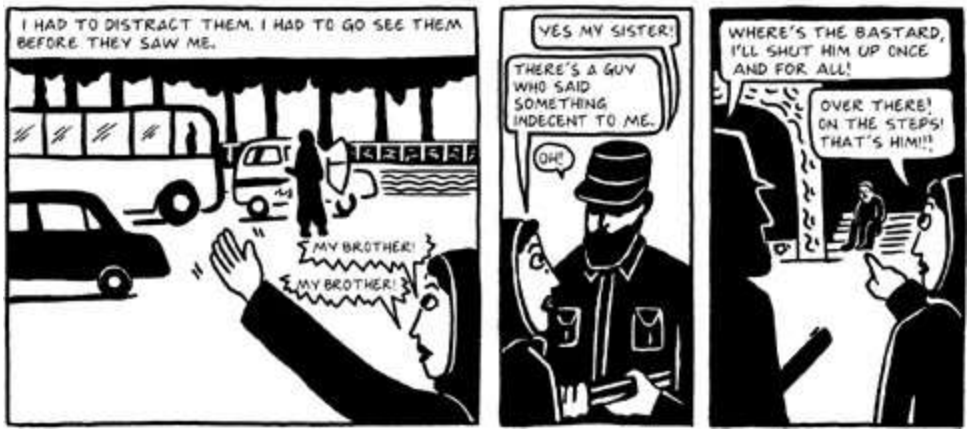
IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY.

AFTER DROPPING REZA OFF AT HIS HOUSE, I WENT HOME.
MOM! DAD! I GOT IN! I WAS ADMITTED FOR GRAPHIC ARTS!
BRAVO! WE KNOW. WE SAW YOUR AND REZA'S NAMES IN THE PAPER.
OH DAD! IT'S SO GREAT!
YES, YES, IT'S WONDERFUL!
NOW, ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THE IDEOLOGICAL TEST, BUT THAT'S JUST A DETAIL.
SHIT!
MY DEAR, UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S NOT JUST A DETAIL.
REALLY?
YES, MY COUSIN BAHMAN'S DAUGHTER WASN'T ADMITTED TO UNIVERSITY BECAUSE HER MOTHER BELONGED TO THE REGIME'S OPPOSITION AND HAD SPENT TWO YEARS IN PRISON.
?
YOU MUST LEARN TO PRAY IN ARABIC, THE NAMES OF ALL THE IMAMS, THEIR HISTORIES, THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHIISM, ETC., ETC., ... IF YOU WANT, I'LL HELP YOU.
NO, THAT'S OKAY ...
I TRIED TO LEARN EVERYTHING BY HEART. I HAD THE BEST OF INTENTIONS ...
... BUT THE WORDS WERE SO OBSCURE THAT I WASN'T ABLE TO RETAIN ANYTHING ...
AFTER MANY DAYS OF RELIGIOUS STUDY, I ENDED UP CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO GET OVER THIS LAST HURDLE WAS TO PRAY.
God, help me!

THE DAY OF THE IDEOLOGICAL TEST.
NEXT!
IS IT DIFFICULT?
PFFF...
MISS SATRAPI, I SEE FROM YOUR FILE THAT YOU HAVE LIVED IN AUSTRIA ... DID YOU WEAR THE VEIL THERE?
NO, I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IF WOMEN'S HAIR POSED SO MANY PROBLEMS, GOD WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE MADE US BALD.
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PRAY?
AND MAY I KNOW WHY?
NO
LIKE ALL IRANIANS, I DON'T UNDERSTAND ARABIC. IF PRAYING IS TALKING TO GOD, I PREFER TO DO IT IN A LANGUAGE THAT I KNOW. I BELIEVE IN GOD, BUT I SPEAK TO HIM IN PERSIAN.
THE PROPHET MOHAMMED SAID: "GOD IS CLOSER TO US THAN OUR JUGULAR VEINS." GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US, HE IS IN US! RIGHT?
THANK YOU, MISS SATRAPI, YOU CAN GO NOW.
I SHOULD HAVE SHUT MY MOUTH, STUDIED HARDER, I SHOULD HAVE ..., IT'S ALL OVER ...
LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING, YOU IDIOT!
TWO WEEKS LATER ...
HERE'S YOUR LETTER OF ADMISSION!
NO WAY!
YES, MY DEAR. NOW, YOU ARE A STUDENT!
A FEW MONTHS LATER, I LEARNED VIA THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ART THAT THE MULLAH WHO HAD INTERVIEWED ME HAD REALLY APPRECIATED MY HONESTY. APPARENTLY, HE'D EVEN SAID THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T LIE. I WAS LUCKY. I HAD STUMBLED ON A TRUE RELIGIOUS MAN.

THE MAKEUP

* NAME OF A SHOPPING CENTER

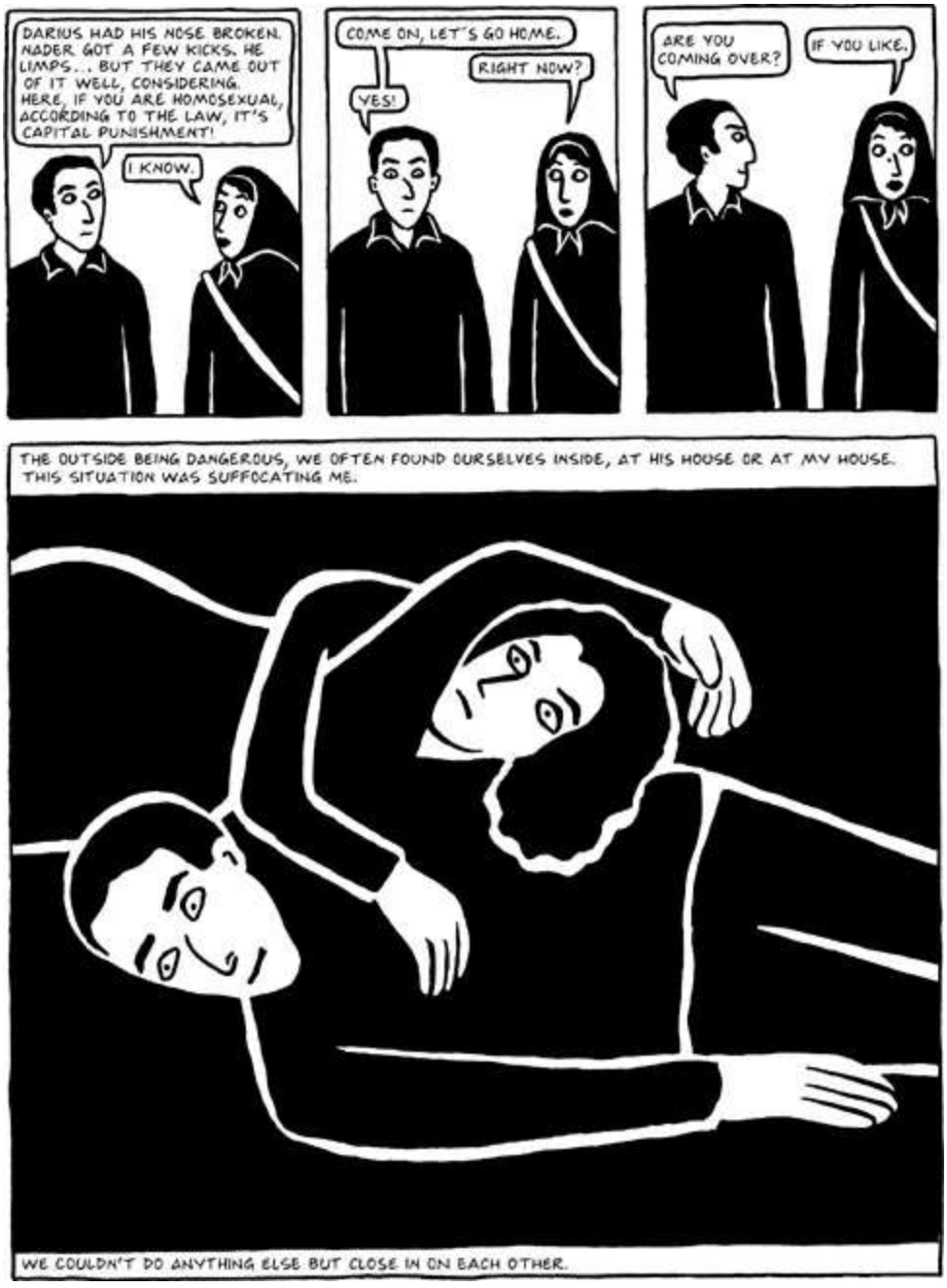


COME WITH ME!
YES BROTHER!
IT SEEMS THAT YOU SAID SOME OBSCENITIES TO THE YOUNG LADY!!
WHO? ME?
WHO ELSE? AREN'T YOU ASHAMED? HAVE YOU NO MOTHER? HAVE YOU NO SISTER? HOW WOULD YOU LIKE IT IF SOMEONE INSULTED THEM?
MISS, PLEASE, TELL THEM THAT I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING!
YOU DARE TO LOOK ME IN THE EYES AND LIE!
REZA ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CHAOS.
GET OUT OF HERE!
I SWEAR ON MY MOTHER'S HEAD, ON THE KORAN, THE PROPHET, THE IMAMS, I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!!!
MISS, PLEASE, DO SOMETHING! TELL THEM THAT I'M INNOCENT!

WHEW!!
I WAS SAVED..
I JUST HAD TO FIND REZA.
HE WASN'T FAR.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT WEARING THAT FLASHY LIPSTICK THAT DOESN'T EVEN SUIT YOU?
IT DOESN'T SUIT ME?
NO!
WHO'S THAT GUY THEY PICKED UP?
I DON'T KNOW. SOME POOR GUY WHO JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE. WHEN I SAW THEM ARRIVE, I FIGURED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO GET AWAY WAS TO PLAY "THE POOR WOMAN WHO NEEDS PROTECTION." SO I TOLD THEM THAT THAT GUY HAD SPOKEN INDECENTLY TO ME AND THEY ARRESTED HIM.
YOU DID THAT??!!
HA! HA! HA! HA! THAT'S TOO COOL! WHAT AN INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL!
YOU THINK?
ABSOLUTELY! HA! HA! HA!
COME ON, LET'S GO SOMEWHERE ELSE! IT'S DANGEROUS HERE!
BUT THEY'RE GONE!
WHEN THEY CARRY OUT RAIDS, THERE'S NEVER ONLY ONE PATROL. THERE WILL BE OTHERS.

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

WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE PARENTS WHO ACCEPT OUR RELATIONSHIP. WE DON'T HAVE TO SEE EACH OTHER IN THE STREET LIKE OTHERS! MOST FAMILIES ARE TRADITIONALISTS. THEY ARE AS TYRANNICAL AS THE STATE.
IN ANY CASE, IF THEY ARREST US, ALL WE HAVE TO SAY IS THAT WE'RE ENGAGED. IT DOESN'T MATTER. IN THE WORST CASE, WE PAY AND IT'S FINE!
EXCEPT WE SHOULDN'T GIVE A CENT TO THOSE ASSHOLES!
WHAT INGRATITUDE! THOSE ASSHOLES JUST PROTECTED YOU FROM A PERVERT.
STOP. . .ACTUALLY, WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO TO HIM?
TO WHO?
TO THE POOR GUY THEY JUST ARRESTED INSTEAD OF ME!
NOTHING! HE'LL GET A FEW SLAPS! THAT'S ALL!
THOUGH, THEY'RE SO SICK THAT IT'S POSSIBLE THEY'LL HANG HIM. YOU REMEMBER MY FRIENDS DARIUS AND NADER?
YES?
WELL, THEY WERE COMING HOME FROM A PARTY LATE ONE NIGHT, WHEN THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION STOPPED THEM.
AT FIRST, THEY THOUGHT THAT IT WAS SIMPLY A ROUTINE CHECK, BUT AFTER HAVING INSPECTED THEIR PAPERS, THE BEARDED GUY ASKED THEM:
WHAT'S YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS MAN?
HE'S MY FRIEND.
...THEY THOUGHT THEY'D HAVE A LITTLE FUN.
"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "FRIEND"?
THAT WE GO OUT TOGETHER!
DIRTY FAG!


DARIUS HAD HIS NOSE BROKEN. NADER GOT A FEW KICKS. HE LIMPS... BUT THEY CAME OUT OF IT WELL, CONSIDERING. HERE, IF YOU ARE HOMOSEXUAL, ACCORDING TO THE LAW, IT'S CAPITAL PUNISHMENT!
I KNOW.
COME ON, LET'S GO HOME.
YES!
RIGHT NOW?
ARE YOU COMING OVER?
IF YOU LIKE.
THE OUTSIDE BEING DANGEROUS, WE OFTEN FOUND OURSELVES INSIDE, AT HIS HOUSE OR AT MY HOUSE. THIS SITUATION WAS SUFFOCATING ME.
WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE BUT CLOSE IN ON EACH OTHER.

I GOT HOME QUITE EARLY.
GRANDMA! WHAT A WONDERFUL SURPRISE! WHERE ARE MOM AND DAD?
THEY WENT TO THE MOVIES. I STAYED HOME TO SEE YOU.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU!
. . . SO I LOOKED AROUND ME AND I FOUND A GUY WHO LOOKED A LITTLE SCRUFFY. I WENT OVER TO THE BEARDED MEN . . .
. . THEY ARRESTED HIM! HA! HA! HA! . . THEY TOOK THE GUY AWAY! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
AND YOU FIND THAT FUNNY?
YOU DON'T?
NO! I THINK THAT YOU'RE A SELFISH BITCH! THAT'S WHAT I THINK!!!
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS? HE SPENT A THIRD OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON FOR HAVING DEFENDED SOME INNOCENTS! AND YOUR UNCLE ANDOSH? HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HIM TOO???! HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR HIS IDEAS! WHAT HAVE I TAUGHT YOU? HUNH??? "INTEGRITY"?! DOES THIS WORD MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
I'M LEAVING. TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT THIS! IT'S THE BLOOD OF YOUR GRANDPA AND OF YOUR UNCLE THAT RUNS IN YOUR VEINS! SHAME ON YOU!
MY GRANDMA HAD JUST YELLED AT ME FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.
I DECIDED THAT IT WOULD ALSO BE THE LAST.

THE CONVOCATION

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

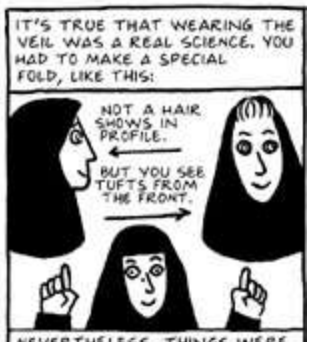
IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS NOT ABLE TO PUT AN END TO OUR CHAUVINISM. TO THE CONTRARY! PEOPLE OFTEN COMPARED THE OBSCURANTISM OF THE NEW REGIME TO THE ARAB INVASION. ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, "BEING PERSIAN" MEANT "NOT BEING A FANATIC." BUT THIS PARALLEL WENT ONLY SO FAR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

DESPITE THEIR UPTIGHT APPEARANCE, THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS SEEMED TO BE QUITE THE COMEDIANS.

THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT REZA. I SUDDENLY FOUND THEM A LOT LESS FUNNY.

NIYOOSHA HAD VERY GREEN EYES WHICH MADE HER THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER GIRL AT THE COLLEGE. (THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS HAVE BLACK EYES.)

SHOUKA WAS VERY FUNNY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED TWO YEARS LATER, HER HUSBAND FORBADE HER FROM ASSOCIATING WITH ME. TO HIM, I WAS AN AMORAL PERSON.



NEVERTHELESS, THINGS WERE EVOLVING... YEAR BY YEAR, WOMEN WERE WINNING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF HAIR AND LOSING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF VEIL.

WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GOT TO THE POINT WHERE YOU COULD GUESS THEIR SHAPE, THE WAY THEY WORE THEIR HAIR AND EVEN THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE MORE A WOMAN SHOWED, THE MORE PROGRESSIVE AND MODERN SHE WAS.
COMING HOME THAT EVENING.
HI EVERYONE!
HI.
SO, HOW WAS YOUR FIRST DAY?
LOOK WHAT GRANDMA BROUGHT FOR YOU.
GRANDMA?
EVER SINCE MY COWARDLY ACT MY GRANDMA HADN'T BEEN SPEAKING TO ME.
WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S A COTTON HEAD-SCARF!
THIS WAY YOUR HEAD CAN BREATHE. OTHERWISE YOU'LL BE BALD IN NO TIME.
SHE HAD GIVEN ME A GIFT, SHE HAD THOUGHT OF MY HAIR, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME ...
... WHEW! SHE HAD FORGIVEN ME.
OH, GRANDMA! THANK YOU!!
FINE, FINE, IT'S OKAY!
I HAD FORGOTTEN HER EXTREME INTRANSIGENCE.

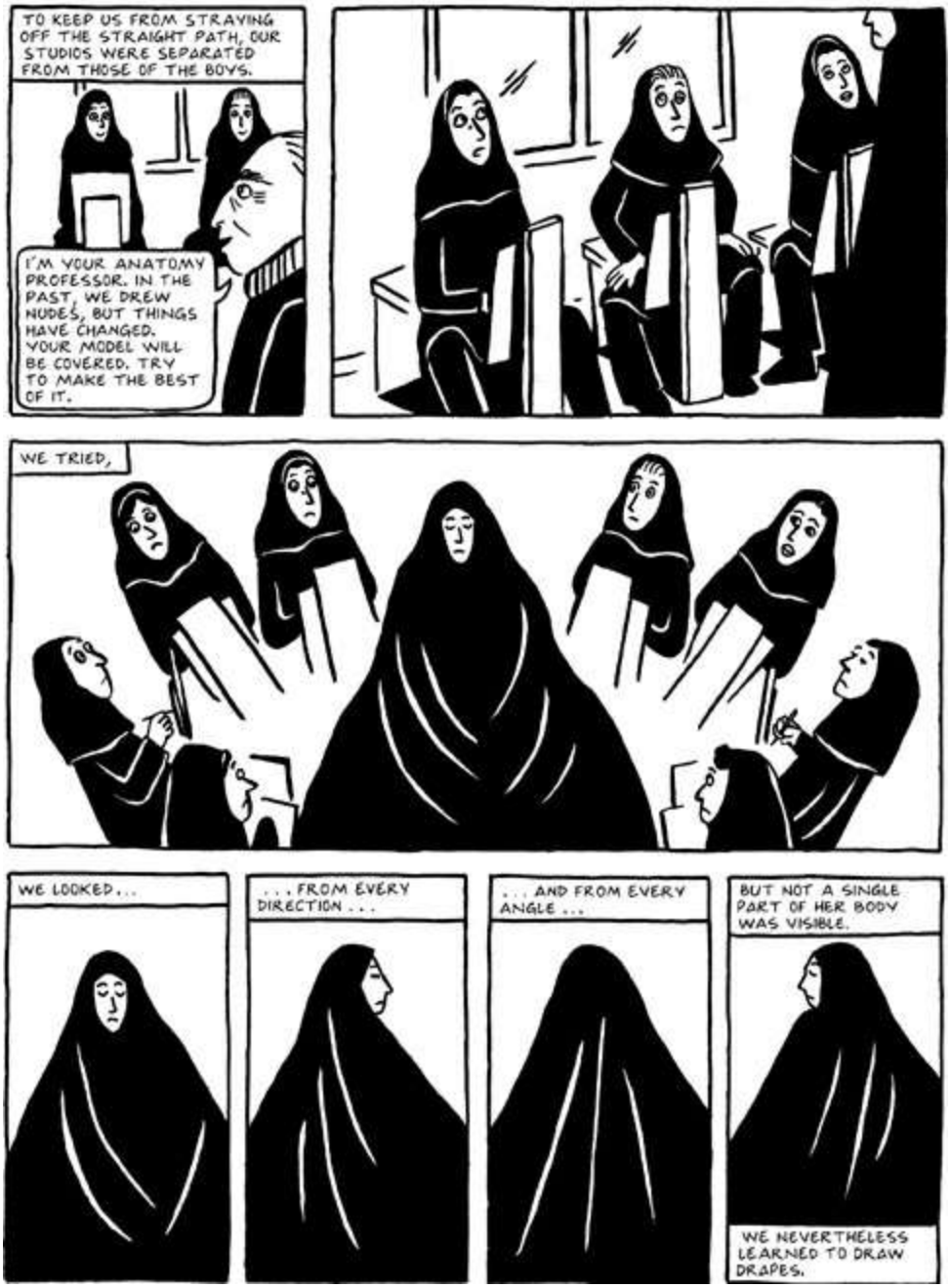
ONE WEEK LATER.
THE CLEAN-SHAVEN GUY, RIGHT OVER THERE, WHAT'S HIS NAME...? REZA, YES, REZA, DO YOU KNOW HIM?
NO, WHY?
WELL, HE CAN'T STOP OGLING YOU, HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE!
NO, NO, I HADN'T EVEN NOTICED HIM!
YOU'RE RIGHT, HE'S NOT THAT GREAT.
OH, HE'S NOT SO BAD.
SEE, YOU DO KNOW HIM!
FACED WITH THE PERSPICACITY OF MY GIRLFRIENDS, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ADMIT THE TRUTH.
STUDENTS, STUDENTS.
SUCH DISCERNMENT!
I CONFESS! I SAW HIM LAST NIGHT IN YOUR CAR.
DIRTY LIAR! YOU REALLY GOT ME!
SHHH LISTEN TO WHAT THE DIRECTOR IS SAYING!
YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED AT 3 O'CLOCK AT THE MAIN CAMPUS! ALL THOSE WHO ARE ABSENT WILL BE BARRED FROM ATTENDING CLASSES FOR TWO WEEKS!
IT WAS AT THE MAIN CAMPUS THAT THE SUBJECTS COMMON TO ALL THE COLLEGES WERE TAUGHT. IT WAS MUCH MORE REPRESSIVE THAN OUR COLLEGE. AS ARTISTS, WE BENEFITED FROM A LITTLE MORE LIBERTY. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE GIRLS AND BOYS HAD TO TAKE DIFFERENT STAIRCASES, WHILE WHERE WE WERE, EVERYONE USED THE SAME STAIRCASE.
I DIDN'T GET THE STAIRCASE THING, BECAUSE IN ANY CASE, WE FOUND OURSELVES TOGETHER UPSTAIRS. BUT SHOUKA SAID THAT IT WAS TO KEEP THE BOYS FROM WATCHING OUR BUTTS WHILE WE CLIMBED.
I THINK SHE WAS RIGHT.

ONCE IN THE AMPHITHEATER, WE DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR OUR CONVOCATION: THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ORGANIZED A LECTURE WITH THE THEME OF "MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDUCT," TO SHOW US THE RIGHT PATH.
WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BEHAVE LOOSELY! IT'S THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS WHICH HAS NOURISHED THE FLOWERS OF OUR REPUBLIC. TO ALLOW ONESELF TO BEHAVE INDECENTLY IS TO TRAMPLE ON THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALSO, I AM ASKING THE YOUNG LADIES PRESENT HERE TO WEAR LESS-WIDE TROUSERS AND LONGER HEAD-SCARVES. YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR HAIR WELL, YOU SHOULD NOT WEAR MAKEUP, YOU SHOULD...

DOES ANYONE HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? IF NOT, THIS MEETING IS OVER.
SIR, I HAVE A QUESTION!
YOU SAY THAT OUR HEAD-SCARVES ARE SHORT, THAT OUR PANTS ARE INDECENT, THAT WE MAKE OURSELVES UP, ETC., ...
BUT AS A STUDENT OF ART, A GOOD PORTION OF MY TIME IS SPENT IN THE STUDIO. I NEED TO BE ABLE TO MOVE FREELY TO BE ABLE TO DRAW. A LONGER HEAD-SCARF WILL MAKE THE TASK EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.
AS FOR OUR TROUSERS, YOU CRITICIZE THEM FOR BEING TOO WIDE EVEN THOUGH THEY EFFECTIVELY HIDE OUR SHAPE. KNOWING THAT THESE TROUSERS ARE IN VOGUE RIGHT NOW, I ASK THE QUESTION: IS RELIGION DEFENDING OUR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OR IS IT JUST OPPOSED TO FASHION?
YOU DON'T HESITATE TO COMMENT ON US, BUT OUR BROTHERS PRESENT HERE HAVE ALL SHAPES AND SIZES OF HAIRCUTS AND CLOTHES. SOMETIMES, THEY WEAR CLOTHES SO TIGHT THAT WE CAN SEE EVERYTHING.
WHY IS IT THAT I, AS A WOMAN, AM EXPECTED TO FEEL NOTHING WHEN WATCHING THESE MEN WITH THEIR CLOTHES SCULPTED ON BUT THEY, AS MEN, CAN GET EXCITED BY TWO INCHES LESS OF MY HEAD-SCARF?
OHHHH!!

AFTER THE LECTURE.
YOU'RE REALLY COURAGEOUS.
BRAVO! WHAT FRANK SPEAKING!
THANKS.
SATRAPI!
YOU'VE BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ISLAMIC COMMISSION. GOOD LUCK!
IS IT SERIOUS?
I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
THE DIRECTOR OF OUR COLLEGE HAD STUDIED IN THE UNITED STATES AND REMAINED QUITE SECULAR.
WHAT IS IT?
I'VE BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ISLAMIC COMMISSION!
OH SHIT!
WISH ME LUCK!
IT WAS AS IF I WERE GOING TO MEET MY EXECUTIONER.
. . BUT TO MY PLEASANT SURPRISE, MY EXECUTIONER PROVED TO BE THE "TRUE RELIGIOUS" MAN, THE ONE WHO HAD PASSED ME ON THE IDEOLOGICAL TEST.
SO MISS SATRAPI. . ALWAYS SAYING WHAT YOU THINK . . . IT'S GOOD! YOU'RE HONEST, BUT YOU ARE LOST.
YES.
READ THE SACRED TEXT. YOU'LL SEE THAT WEARING THE VEIL IS SYNONYMOUS WITH EMANCIPATION.
IF YOU SAY SO.
IT IS NOT I WHO SAYS IT, IT'S GOD. . . I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A SECOND CHANCE. THIS TIME, YOU'RE NOT EXPELLED. IN EXCHANGE, I AM ASKING YOU TO IMAGINE THE UNIFORM ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS IN YOUR COLLEGE. NOTHING EXTRAVAGANT, YOU UNDERSTAND.
OF COURSE.
I APPLIED MYSELF. DESIGNING THE "MODEL" THAT WOULD PLEASE BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE INTERESTED PARTIES WASN'T EASY. I MADE DOZENS OF SKETCHES.
THIS WAS THE RESULT OF MY RESEARCH.
SHORT HEAD-SCARF
WIDE TROUSERS
THOUGH SUBTLE, THESE DIFFERENCES MEANT A LOT TO US.
THIS LITTLE REBELLION RECONCILED MY GRANDMOTHER AND ME.
IT'S FEAR THAT MAKES US LOSE OUR CONSCIENCE. IT'S ALSO WHAT TRANSFORMS US INTO COWARDS. YOU HAD GUTS! I'M PROUD OF YOU!
AND THIS IS HOW I RECOVERED MY SELF-ESTEEM AND MY DIGNITY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, I WAS HAPPY WITH MYSELF.

THE SOCKS


TO KEEP US FROM STRAYING OFF THE STRAIGHT PATH, OUR STUDIOS WERE SEPARATED FROM THOSE OF THE BOYS.
I'M YOUR ANATOMY PROFESSOR. IN THE PAST, WE DREW NUDES, BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED. YOUR MODEL WILL BE COVERED. TRY TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.
WE TRIED,
WE LOOKED...
...FROM EVERY DIRECTION...
...AND FROM EVERY ANGLE...
BUT NOT A SINGLE PART OF HER BODY WAS VISIBLE.
WE NEVERTHELESS LEARNED TO DRAW DRAPES.

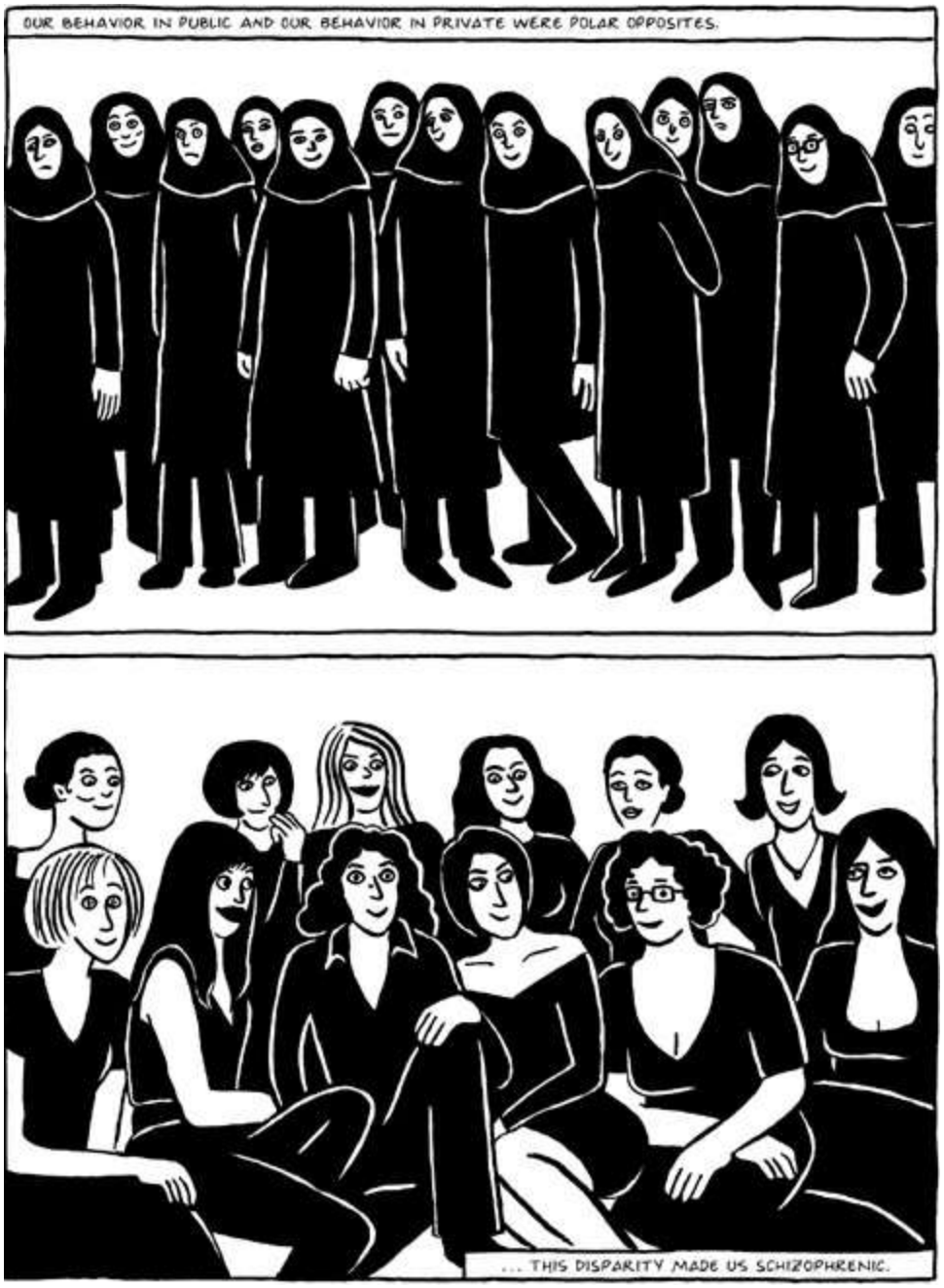
AFTER A FEW WEEKS, WE DISCOVERED, ALONG WITH OUR PROFESSOR, THAT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A MODEL ON WHOM YOU COULD AT LEAST DISTINGUISH THE LIMBS. OUR DIRECTOR APPROVED.
ONE EVENING, BEFORE THE COLLEGE CLOSED, ONE OF THE SUPERVISORS PAID ME A VISIT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE SO LATE?
I'M DRAWING.
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT THIS MAN?
WELL, BECAUSE I'M DRAWING HIM.
YES, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LOOK AT HIM. IT'S AGAINST THE MORAL CODE.
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? SHOULD I DRAW THIS MAN WHILE LOOKING AT THE DOOR???!!
YES.

THESE ABSURD SITUATIONS WERE QUITE FREQUENT. ONE DAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO SEE MY DENTIST, BUT CLASSES FINISHED LATER THAN EXPECTED.
SUDDENLY, I HEARD A VOICE OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER:
THE LADY IN THE BLUE COAT! DON'T RUN!
?
THE LADY IN THE BLUE COAT!! STOP RUNNING!
??
HEY—BLUE COAT! STOP RUNNING!
???
ME?
MADAM, WHY WERE YOU RUNNING?
I'M VERY LATE! I WAS RUNNING TO CATCH MY BUS.
YES... BUT... WHEN YOU RUN, YOUR BEHIND MAKES MOVEMENTS THAT ARE... HOW DO YOU SAY... OBSCENE!
WELL THEN DON'T LOOK AT MY ASS!
I YELLED SO LOUDLY THAT THEY DIDN'T EVEN ARREST ME.

WE CONFRONTED THE REGIME AS BEST WE COULD.
IN 1990, THE ERA OF GRAND REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS AND DEMONSTRATIONS WAS OVER. BETWEEN 1980 AND 1983, THE GOVERNMENT HAD IMPRISONED AND EXECUTED SO MANY HIGH-SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS THAT WE NO LONGER DARED TO TALK POLITICS.
OUR STRUGGLE WAS MORE DISCREET.
IT HINGED ON THE LITTLE DETAILS. TO OUR LEADERS, THE SMALLEST THING COULD BE A SUBJECT OF SUBVERSION.
SHOWING YOUR WRIST.
A LOUD LAUGH.
HAVING A WALKMAN.
IN SHORT... EVERYTHING WAS A PRETEXT TO ARREST US.
I EVEN REMEMBER SPENDING AN ENTIRE DAY AT THE COMMITTEE BECAUSE OF A PAIR OF RED SOCKS.
THE REGIME HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT ONE PERSON LEAVING HER HOUSE WHILE ASKING HERSELF:
ARE MY TROUSERS LONG ENOUGH?
IS MY VEIL IN PLACE?
CAN MY MAKE-UP BE SEEN?
ARE THEY GOING TO WHIP ME?
NO LONGER ASKS HERSELF:
WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF THOUGHT?
WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF SPEECH?
MY LIFE, IS IT LIVABLE?
WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE POLITICAL PRISONS?
IT'S ONLY NATURAL! WHEN WE'RE AFRAID, WE LOSE ALL SENSE OF ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION. OUR FEAR PARALYZES US. BESIDES, FEAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ALL DICTATORS' REPRESSION.
SHOWING YOUR HAIR OR PUTTING ON MAKEUP LOGICALLY BECAME ACTS OF REBELLION.

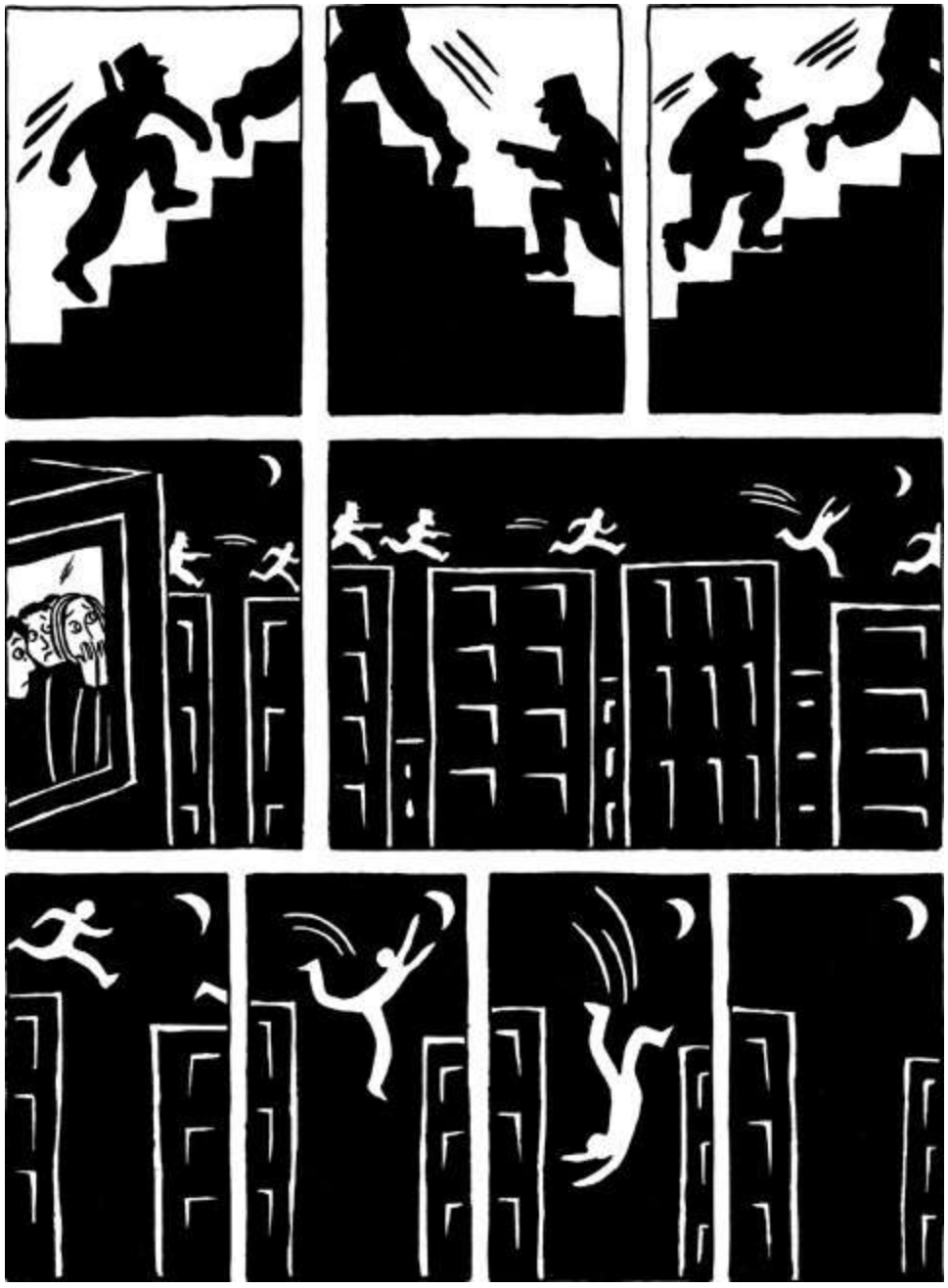
UNFORTUNATELY, MANY OF US WERE REBELS ONLY IN APPEARANCE. ONE DAY, IN CLASS...
MARYANE! YOUR PENCIL CASE!
THANKS DORNA, THANKS!
YOU'RE WELCOME.
YOU TAKE THE PILL?
YES.
ME TOO, I'M IRREGULAR. ARE YOU IRREGULAR, TOO?
NO, NOT AT ALL. I TAKE IT BECAUSE I SLEEP WITH MY BOYFRIEND!
OOOOH!!!!
A LITTLE DECENCY, PLEASE!
CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME WHAT'S INDECENT ABOUT MAKING LOVE WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND?
SHUT UP!
SHUT UP YOURSELF! MY BODY IS MY OWN! I GIVE IT TO WHOMEVER I WANT! IT'S NOBODY ELSE'S BUSINESS!
I DIDN'T SAY EVERYTHING I COULD HAVE: THAT SHE WAS FRUSTRATED BECAUSE SHE WAS STILL A VIRGIN AT TWENTY-SEVEN! THAT SHE WAS FORBIDDING ME WHAT WAS FORBIDDEN TO HER! THAT TO MARRY SOMEONE THAT YOU DON'T KNOW, FOR HIS MONEY, IS PROSTITUTION. THAT DESPITE HER LOCKS OF HAIR AND HER LIPSTICK, SHE WAS ACTING LIKE THE STATE. THAT... ETC.... THAT DAY, HALF THE CLASS TURNED IT'S BACK ON ME.

HAPPILY, THERE WAS STILL THE OTHER HALF. LITTLE BY LITTLE, I GOT TO KNOW THE STUDENTS WHO THOUGHT LIKE ME.
WE WOULD GO TO ONE ANOTHER'S HOUSES, WHERE WE POSED FOR EACH OTHER ... WE HAD AT LAST FOUND A PLACE OF FREEDOM.
AT FIRST THERE WERE ONLY FIVE OF US.
THEN ...
AND FINALLY ...
WE WERE MUCH MORE NUMEROUS THAN I WOULD HAVE BELIEVED.
OUR PROFESSOR WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE THE SKETCHES WE DID AT HOME.
BRAVO! AN ARTIST SHOULD DEFY THE LAW! I CON-GRATULATE YOU!
THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I BECAME CONSCIOUS OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION OF MY COUNTRY AND THE REAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE, THE ONE THAT WENT ON BEHIND THE WALLS.


OUR BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC AND OUR BEHAVIOR IN PRIVATE WERE POLAR OPPOSITES.
... THIS DISPARITY MADE US SCHIZOPHRENIC.

TO FIND A SEMBLANCE OF EQUILIBRIUM, WE PARTIED ALMOST EVERY NIGHT ...
...BUT EVEN IN OUR HOMES, THEY DIDN'T LEAVE US ALONE.
I SAW A PATROL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION OUT THE WINDOW! I THINK THEY'RE COMING TO ARREST US!
COME ALONG YOU LITTLE BASTARD! YOU'RE ORGANIZING PARTIES! I'LL CURE YOU OF YOUR TASTE FOR PLEASURE!
THEY CARTED EVERYONE OFF TO PRISON. OBVIOUSLY, WE WERE VERY SCARED THE FIRST TIME.
...BUT WE QUICKLY GOT USED TO IT. WE WOULD EVEN ARRIVE LAUGHING.
OH BEARDED ONE, YOUR BEARD STINKS!
THEN CAME THE USUAL SPIEL ...
..AGAINST THE MORAL CODE... THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS... TWENTY THOUSAND TUMANS...
OUR PARENTS PAID AND WE WERE RELEASED.
...UNTIL THE NEXT TIME. TO BE ABLE TO PARTY, YOU HAD TO HAVE MEANS.

AND THEN ONE NIGHT.



YOUR PAL HAS GONE TO HELL!
GO ON, PUT ON YOUR VEILS!
LET'S LOAD UP THESE WHORES!!

DAD, FARZAD IS..
I KNOW. I WAS SCARED... MAYBE YOU SHOULD..
BUT HE DIDN'T FINISH HIS SENTENCE. DESPITE THE DANGER, MY FATHER ALWAYS LET ME LIVE THE WAY I FELT WAS RIGHT.
THE NEXT DAY, WE GATHERED AT MY HOUSE.
POOR FARZAD. HE WAS SO HANDSOME. I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S DEAD!
I COULD KILL THOSE BEARDED MEN WITH MY OWN HANDS.
I'M NOT COMING TO ANY MORE PARTIES. IT'S TOO FRIGHTENING!
YOU'RE WRONG. THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT! TO STOP US FROM LIVING! NOTHING BOTHERS THEM MORE THAN TO SEE US HAPPY!
ALI IS RIGHT!
THAT SAME NIGHT, ALI HAD A BIG PARTY AT HIS HOUSE.
I NEVER DRANK SO MUCH IN MY LIFE.

THE WEDDING

IN 1994, I WAS IN MY SECOND YEAR OF GRAPHIC ARTS.
EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL: MY STUDIES INTERESTED ME, I LOVED MY BOYFRIEND, I WAS SURROUNDED BY FRIENDS.
MY FRIENDS AND I HAD EVOLVED. I HAD TEMPERED MY WESTERN VISION OF LIFE AND THEY, FOR THEIR PART, HAD MOVED AWAY FROM TRADITION. AS A RESULT, MANY UNMARRIED COUPLES HAD FORMED.
IT MUST BE SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BE TOGETHER OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE. IF WE WENT ON A TRIP:
SIR, WE WOULD LIKE A ROOM FOR TWO NIGHTS.
YOUR MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE, PLEASE.
...IF WE WANTED TO RENT AN APARTMENT:
I'M A REAL ESTATE AGENT. MY AIM IS TO SIGN A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CONTRACTS. YOUR FAMILY SITUATION DOESN'T MATTER TO ME, BUT THE OWNER REFUSES. TO BE FAIR, HE'S RIGHT. HE'LL HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE AUTHORITIES ... AND THEN FROM A MORAL STANDPOINT, WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS NOT RIGHT. YOU SHOULD GET MARRIED.
DEEP DOWN, NEITHER REZA NOR I WAS READY TO GET ENGAGED. IN TWO YEARS, WE HAD ONLY SEEN EACH OTHER AT HIS HOUSE OR AT MY HOUSE (I MEAN, AT OUR PARENTS' HOUSES).
I LOVE YOU. DO YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED?
?
I'M ONLY TWENTY-ONE! I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING YET! BUT I LOVE HIM! HOW CAN I KNOW IF HE'S THE MAN OF MY LIFE WITHOUT HAVING LIVED WITH HIM?..
SO?
GIVE ME A LITTLE TIME.
TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.
I NEEDED TO TALK IT OVER WITH MY PARENTS BUT MY MOTHER WAS ON A TRIP ABROAD.
HAPPILY, MY FATHER WAS HOME.
DAD! REZA ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KNOW. AT THE SAME TIME, IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HIM, YOU MUST LIVE WITH HIM, AND FOR THAT, YOU MUST MARRY.
WORST CASE, WE DIVORCE.
WELL, YES.

A FEW DAYS LATER, MY DECISION WAS MADE: I WAS GOING TO GET MARRIED. I ANNOUNCED IT TO MY FATHER. HE INVITED US, ME AND REZA, TO A RESTAURANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
WELCOME!
AFTER DINNER.
AS YOUR FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW, I'M TAKING THE LIBERTY OF ASKING YOU THREE THINGS.
FIRST: YOU ARE SURELY AWARE THAT IN THIS COUNTRY A WOMAN'S "RIGHT TO DIVORCE" IS NOT GUARANTEED. SHE ONLY HAS IT IF HER HUSBAND ALLOWS THIS OPTION DURING THE SIGNING OF THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE. MY DAUGHTER MUST ENJOY THIS RIGHT.
SECOND: MY WIFE AND I HAVE RAISED OUR DAUGHTER WITH COMPLETE FREEDOM. IF SHE SPENDS HER WHOLE LIFE IN IRAN, SHE'LL WITHER. I'M THEREFORE ASKING THE BOTH OF YOU TO LEAVE TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES IN EUROPE AFTER YOUR DIPLOMA. YOU WILL HAVE MY FINANCIAL SUPPORT.
THIRD: LIVE TOGETHER AS LONG AS YOU FEEL TRULY HAPPY. LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO BE LIVED BADLY.
WAITER, THE CHECK, PLEASE!
YES, SIR.
LONG AFTERWARD MY FATHER ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE HAD ALWAYS KNOWN THAT I WOULD GET DIVORCED. HE WANTED ME TO REALIZE BY MYSELF THAT REZA AND I WERE NOT MADE FOR EACH OTHER. HE WAS RIGHT.

NEXT, I CALLED MY MOTHER AT MY AUNT'S HOUSE IN VANCOUVER.
HELLO, MOM! HOW ARE YOU?
MUCH BETTER NOW THAT I'VE HEARD YOUR VOICE!
MOM, I HAVE SOME VERY BIG NEWS TO TELL YOU... I'M GETTING MARRIED!
YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED? BUT TO WHOM??
WHO DO YOU THINK? TO REZA, OF COURSE!
BUT YOU ARE STILL TOO YOUNG! LISTEN! YOU WAIT UNTIL I GET BACK. I'LL BE THERE IN THREE WEEKS. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN THEN.
SO?
WELL, SHE DOESN'T APPROVE.
I HALF EXPECTED THAT... IT'S NOT SERIOUS. I'LL TALK TO HER. DON'T WORRY.
I NEVER KNEW WHAT THEY SAID TO EACH OTHER, NEVERTHELESS WHEN MY MOTHER GOT BACK TO TEHRAN...
OH MY DARLING, I'LL MAKE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS. THIS CEREMONY MUST BE WORTHY OF YOU.

AND STARTING THE NEXT DAY.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS?
UHH ... IT'S A PRETTY DRESS, BUT I CAN'T WEAR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
NEXT, SHE TOOK ME TO A PLACE KNOWN FOR ITS "WEDDING HAIRDOS," TO TRY SOME OUT.
DO YOU LIKE IT, BABY?
...
I WAS THE SUBJECT OF DOZENS OF EXPERIMENTS, OF ALL KINDS: MAKEUP, FLOWER BOUQUETS, SHOES, ...
I KNOW THAT YOU WANT TO DO YOUR BEST FOR ME, BUT I DETEST WEDDING DRESSES, FASHIONABLE HAIRSTYLES AND ALL THE REST. COULDN'T WE HAVE JUST A SMALL LITTLE PARTY ...
LISTEN, WE HAVE ONLY ONE CHILD: YOU! IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THIS WILL BE YOUR ONE AND ONLY WEDDING. YOU DRESS AND WEAR YOUR HAIR THE WAY YOU WANT, BUT LET US AT LEAST CELEBRATE THIS EVENT IN OUR OWN WAY.
I GAVE IN, AND MY PARENTS TOOK ADVANTAGE BY INVITING FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE, HAVING TWO BANDS, A VIDEO CREW, FLOWERS ...
THE BRIDE IS HERE!
MY DARLING!

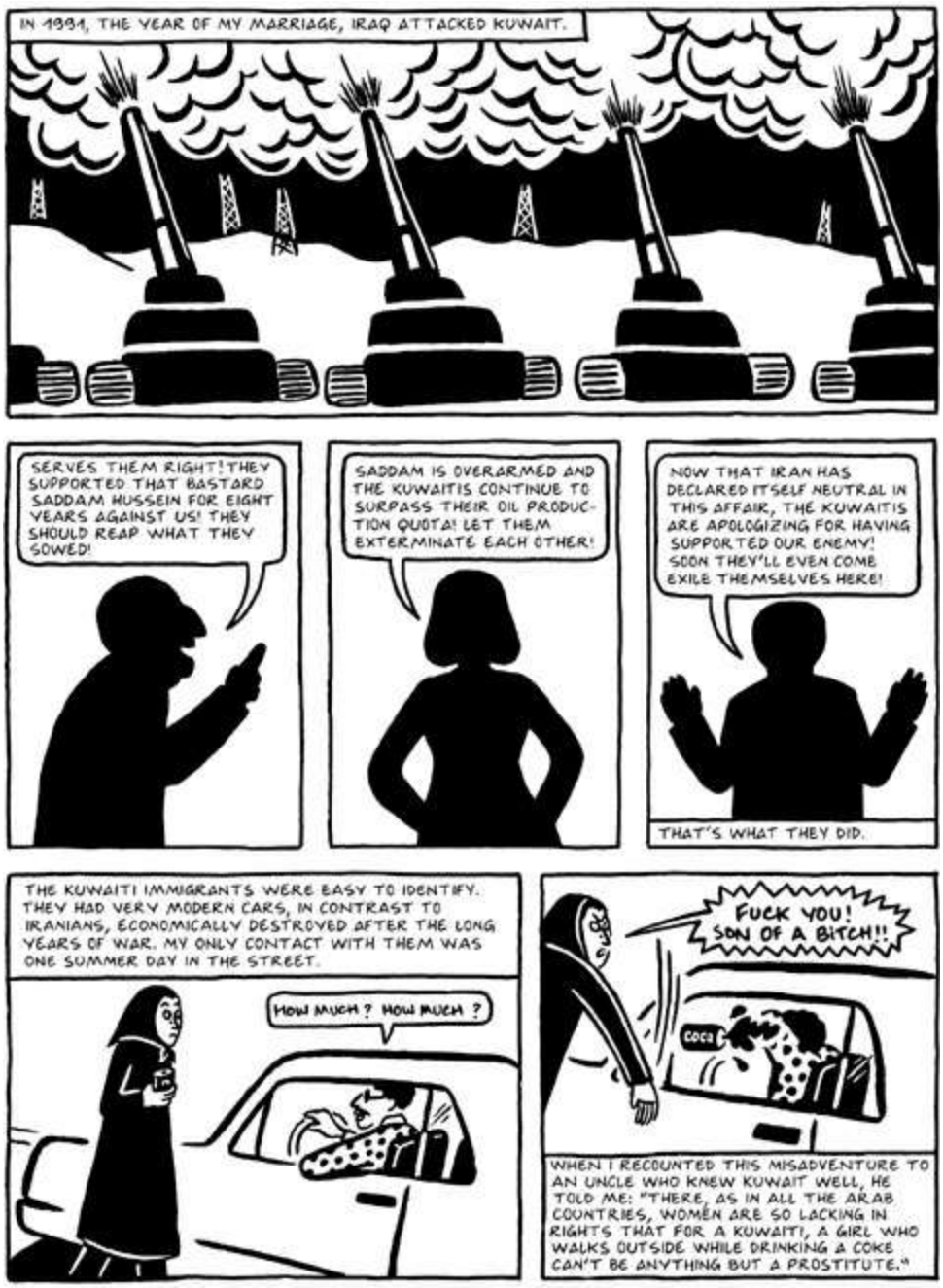
FIRST, WE WENT BEFORE THE MULLAH.
MR. REZA... DO YOU TAKE MISS MARJANE ... MISS MARJANE ... DO YOU TAKE MR. REZA ...
YES!
YES!
THEN IT WAS FOLKLORE'S TURN. TRADITION REQUIRED THAT A HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN RUB TWO SUGAR LOAVES ABOVE OUR HEADS TO PASS ON HER JOY AND PROSPERITY.
TRADITION ALSO REQUIRED THAT WE PLUNGE OUR FINGERS IN HONEY...
AND THAT WE SUCK ONE ANOTHER'S FINGERS TO BEGIN OUR MARRIED LIFE ON A SWEET NOTE.
THEN CAME THE GIFTS.
HERE, IT'S FOR YOU!
MOM!
SO, WHEN CAN WE EXPECT KIDS?
SOON.
YOU LOOK RADIANT!
THANK YOU!
ARE YOU THE BRIDE?
HEE! HEE! HEE! NO, SHE IS!
?

MOM, ARE YOU IN THERE?
NO!
HAVE YOU BEEN CRYING?
NO.
I HAD ONLY TO PUT MY HAND ON HER SHOULDER FOR HER TO START AGAIN.
I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED FOR YOU TO BECOME INDEPENDENT, EDUCATED, CULTURED ... AND HERE YOU ARE GETTING MARRIED AT TWENTY-ONE. I WANT YOU TO LEAVE IRAN, FOR YOU TO BE FREE AND EMANCIPATED ...
MY SWEET LITTLE MOM! TRUST ME. I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING.
THE REST OF THE EVENING ALTERNATED BETWEEN LAUGHTER AND TEARS BUT ESPECIALLY LOTS OF WEARINESS. FINALLY, AT TWO IN THE MORNING ...
GOODBYE!
BE HAPPY!
GOOD LUCK!
WE WENT HOME ...
... WHEN THE APARTMENT DOOR CLOSED, I HAD A BIZARRE FEELING.
...I WAS ALREADY SORRY! I HAD SUDDENLY BECOME "A MARRIED WOMAN." I HAD CONFORMED TO SOCIETY, WHILE I HAD ALWAYS WANTED TO REMAIN IN THE MARGINS. IN MY MIND, "A MARRIED WOMAN" WASN'T LIKE ME. IT REQUIRED TOO MANY COMPROMISES. I COULDN'T ACCEPT IT, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE.

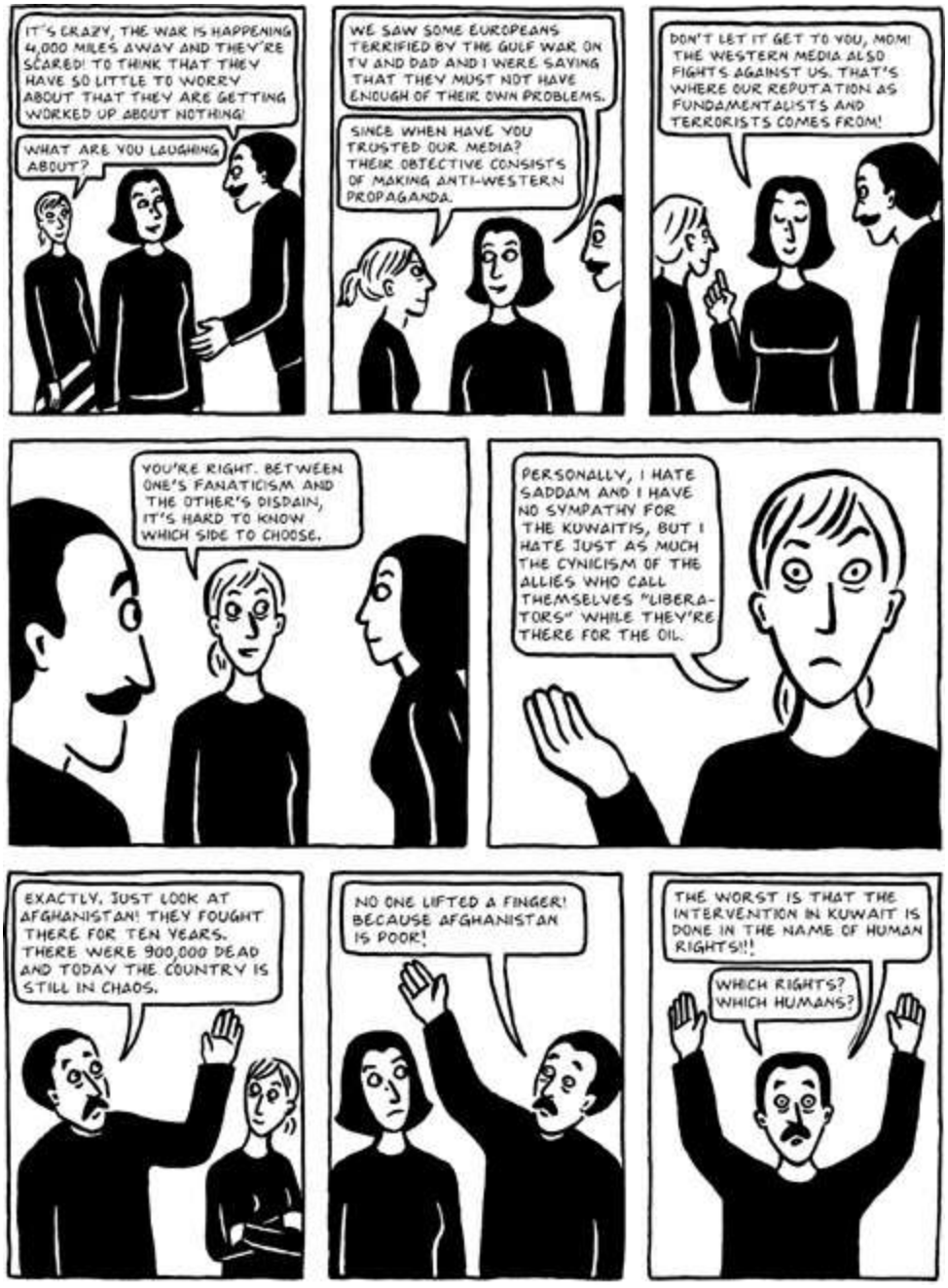
DESPITE EVERYTHING I TRIED, MY EXISTENTIALIST AND IDENTITY CRISIS WAS ONLY ONE PART OF THE PROBLEM. THE OTHER PART WAS REZA.
I'D LIKE TO HANG THE PAINTING THERE!
NO, I PREFER IT HERE!
I'M GOING TO HAVE LUNCH AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE. ARE YOU COMING?
NO, I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.
DON'T YOU WANT TO COME TO KIANA'S BIRTHDAY PARTY?
NO.
I'LL BE BACK LATE.
WHATEVER YOU WANT.
IN RETROSPECT, I CAN SEE THAT I HAD ALWAYS KNOWN THAT IT WOULDN'T WORK BETWEEN US. BUT AFTER MY PITIFUL LOVE STORY IN VIENNA, I NEEDED TO BELIEVE IN SOMEONE AGAIN...
... SO MUCH SO THAT I CONTINUALLY LIED TO HIM.
I LOVE GIRLS IN SUITS.
THAT'S JUST MY STYLE!
I DON'T LIKE RUDE GIRLS.
OH! I HATE THEM!
I LIKE LIGHT EYES.
... AND I BOUGHT MYSELF BLUE CONTACTS.
BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH
I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING YOU SAY!
HE MARRIED:
Her
AND FOUND HIMSELF WITH:
HER

AFTER ONE MONTH OF MARRIAGE, WE SET UP SEPARATE BEDROOMS.
HE HAD HIS LIFE ...
WHERE'S YOUR WIFE?
ON VACATION, WITH HER COUSIN.
...AND I HAD MINE.
AND REZA'S WELL?
YEAH, HE'S WITH HIS BROTHER.
WE HAD BEEN CONSIDERED THE MODEL COUPLE FOR SO LONG AND BY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ACCEPT OUR FAILURE ...
...WE WERE KEEPING UP APPEARANCES IN PUBLIC.
IS SHE GOING TO SHUT HER BIG MOUTH?
WHAT AN ASS!
BUT AS SOON AS WE WERE ALONE.
YOU NEVER WANT TO GO OUT! IF I HAVE TO GO EVERYWHERE ALONE, WHAT'S THE POINT OF LIVING TOGETHER?
I LET YOU DO WHATEVER YOU WANT! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE MACHO MEN WHO EXPECTS YOU TO REPORT BACK! SO LEAVE ME ALONE!
IN THE SPACE OF TWO MONTHS, WE WENT FROM WEEKLY FIGHTS TO DAILY INSULTS.

THE SATELLITE



ASIDE FROM THESE LITTLE DISAPPOINTMENTS, WE DIDN'T FEEL AT ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE EVENTS, EVEN IF THEY WERE TAKING PLACE IN THE PERSIAN GULF, WHICH IS TO SAY, IN OUR BACKYARD!
MARJI, COME SEE!
THIS WAR HAS UNLEASHED A PANIC IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ...
PEOPLE ARE FILLING THEIR SHOPPINGCARTS. IT'S LIKE A MADHOUSE IN WESTERN SUPERMARKETS.
...HERE ARE SOME ACCOUNTS:
I LIVED THROUGH THE SECOND WORLD WAR! IT WAS HORRIBLE!
WE HAVE TWO BABIES! WE HAVE TO STOCK UP ON POWDERED MILK AND DIAPERS.
THERE ARE GOING TO BE ATTACKS! THEY'LL COUNTER-ATTACK! THEY'LL COME AFTER US ON OUR OWN TERRITORY!
!
!!
HA! HA! HA!
HA!HA!HA!


IT'S CRAZY, THE WAR IS HAPPENING 4,000 MILES AWAY AND THEY'RE SCARED! TO THINK THAT THEY HAVE SO LITTLE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT THEY ARE GETTING WORKED UP ABOUT NOTHING!
WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT?
WE SAW SOME EUROPEANS TERRIFIED BY THE GULF WAR ON TV AND DAD AND I WERE SAYING THAT THEY MUST NOT HAVE ENOUGH OF THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.
SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU TRUSTED OUR MEDIA? THEIR OBTECTIVE CONSISTS OF MAKING ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA.
DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU, MOM! THE WESTERN MEDIA ALSO FIGHTS AGAINST US. THAT'S WHERE OUR REPUTATION AS FUNDAMENTALISTS AND TERRORISTS COMES FROM!
YOU'RE RIGHT. BETWEEN ONE'S FANATICISM AND THE OTHER'S DISDAIN, IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHICH SIDE TO CHOOSE.
PERSONALLY, I HATE SADDAM AND I HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR THE KUWAITIS, BUT I HATE JUST AS MUCH THE CYNICISM OF THE ALLIES WHO CALL THEMSELVES "LIBERATORS" WHILE THEY'RE THERE FOR THE OIL.
EXACTLY. JUST LOOK AT AFGHANISTAN! THEY FOUGHT THERE FOR TEN YEARS. THERE WERE 900,000 DEAD AND TODAY THE COUNTRY IS STILL IN CHAOS.
NO ONE LIFTED A FINGER! BECAUSE AFGHANISTAN IS POOR!
THE WORST IS THAT THE INTERVENTION IN KUWAIT IS DONE IN THE NAME OF HUMAN RIGHTS!!!
WHICH RIGHTS? WHICH HUMANS?

AT THE TIME, THIS KIND OF ANALYSIS WASN'T COMMONPLACE. AFTER OUR OWN WAR, WE WERE HAPPY THAT IRAQ GOT ITSELF ATTACKED AND DELIGHTED THAT IT WASN'T HAPPENING IN OUR COUNTRY.
SADDAM STOLE MY LEG FROM ME. I HOPE THEY KILL HIM.
THERE'S NO MORE WAR IN IRAN. I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE REST.
NOW OUR ECONOMY WILL FINALLY PICK UP!
MY HUSBAND IS A WAR MARTYR. I HOPE SADDAM GOES TO HELL!
I'LL DO MY MILITARY SERVICE IN PEACE-TIME.
I HAVE A HEART CONDITION. HAPPILY, WE'RE THROUGH WITH BOMBS!!
DOWN WITH SADDAM!
WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO SLEEP PEACEFULLY WITHOUT FEAR OF MISSILES...
WE NO LONGER NEEDED TO LINE UP WITH OUR FOOD RATION COUPONS ...
DETERGENT
SUGAR
RICE
OIL
...THE REST MATTERED LITTLE.
AND THEN, THERE WASN'T ANY MORE OPPOSITION. THE PROTESTERS HAD BEEN EXECUTED.
OR HAD FLED THE COUNTRY ANY WAY POSSIBLE.
THE REGIME HAD ABSOLUTE POWER ...
... AND MOST PEOPLE, IN SEARCH OF A CLOUD OF HAPPINESS, HAD FORGOTTEN THEIR POLITICAL CONSCIENCE.

I WASN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM THEM. ASIDE FROM THE TIME I SPENT WITH MY PARENTS, I LIVED FROM DAY TO DAY WITHOUT ASKING MYSELF ANY QUESTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN JANUARY 1992, A BIG EVENT OCCURRED:

THAT WAS FARIBORZ ON THE TELEPHONE. HE JUST INSTALLED A SATELLITE ANTENNA AT HIS HOUSE!

COME ON, HURRY UP! LET'S GO!!

THE SATELLITE ANTENNA WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE OPENING UP OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.

WE COULD FINALLY EXPERIENCE A VIEW DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE DICTATED BY OUR GOVERNMENT.

LOOK AT THIS ONE! HE'S SO IMPATIENT THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY HELLO!

WHERE IS THIS ANTENNA?

HERE IT IS!

WE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY AT FARIBORZ'S WATCHING MTV AND EUROSPORT.

BY THE END OF THE EVENING, OUR MINDS WERE MUCH BROADER!

SOON THIS DEVICE DECORATED THE ROOFS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN.*

THE REGIME BECAME AWARE THAT THIS NEW PHENOMENON WAS WORKING AGAINST THEIR INDOCTRINATION. IT THEREFORE DECREED A BAN, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. PEOPLE WHO HAD TASTED IMAGES OTHER THAN THOSE OF BEARDED MEN RESISTED BY HIDING THEIR ANTENNAS DURING THE DAY.

NIGHT SATELLITE

DAY SATELLITE

*THE CHIC NEIGHBORHOODS

MY PARENTS PROCURED ONE FOR THEMSELVES, TOO. FROM THEN ON I SPENT WHOLE DAYS AND NIGHTS AT THEIR HOUSE WATCHING TV.
THE PROGRAM DIDN'T MATTER. FROM THE MOMENT THERE WERE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, I WAS HAPPY. ONE NIGHT ...
HI! ARE YOU STILL HERE? WHERE'S YOUR MOTHER?
WITH HER FRIENDS.
THAT BASTARD! HE ESCAPED UNSCATHED AGAIN!
LISTEN, WE NEED TO TALK!
WAIT, WAIT, THEY'RE GOING TO ARREST HIM!
NO! WE'RE GOING TO TALK FIRST.
BUT ... WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU??
THIS MORNING WHEN I LEFT FOR WORK, YOU WERE ON THE SOFA. I COME HOME TWELVE HOURS LATER, AND YOU ARE STILL IN THE SAME PLACE.
WHAT'S GOING ON? IS IT YOUR MARRIAGE THAT'S MAKING YOU DEPRESSED? I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU ANYMORE! YOU WERE ALWAYS CURIOUS, YOU READ, YOU WERE INTERESTED IN EVERYTHING! YOU WERE ALWAYS AHEAD OF YOUR YEARS... NOW ...
... NOW I AM A MARRIED WOMAN. I'M TWENTY-TWO. I'M AN ADULT!
ANYONE CAN BE TWENTY-TWO AND BE MARRIED. IT DOESN'T REQUIRE AN EXCEPTIONAL INTELLECTUAL EFFORT!! ... YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF THINKING ABOUT GETTING YOUR DIPLOMA! IT'S IN LESS THAN A YEAR.
IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!
GOODBYE THEN.

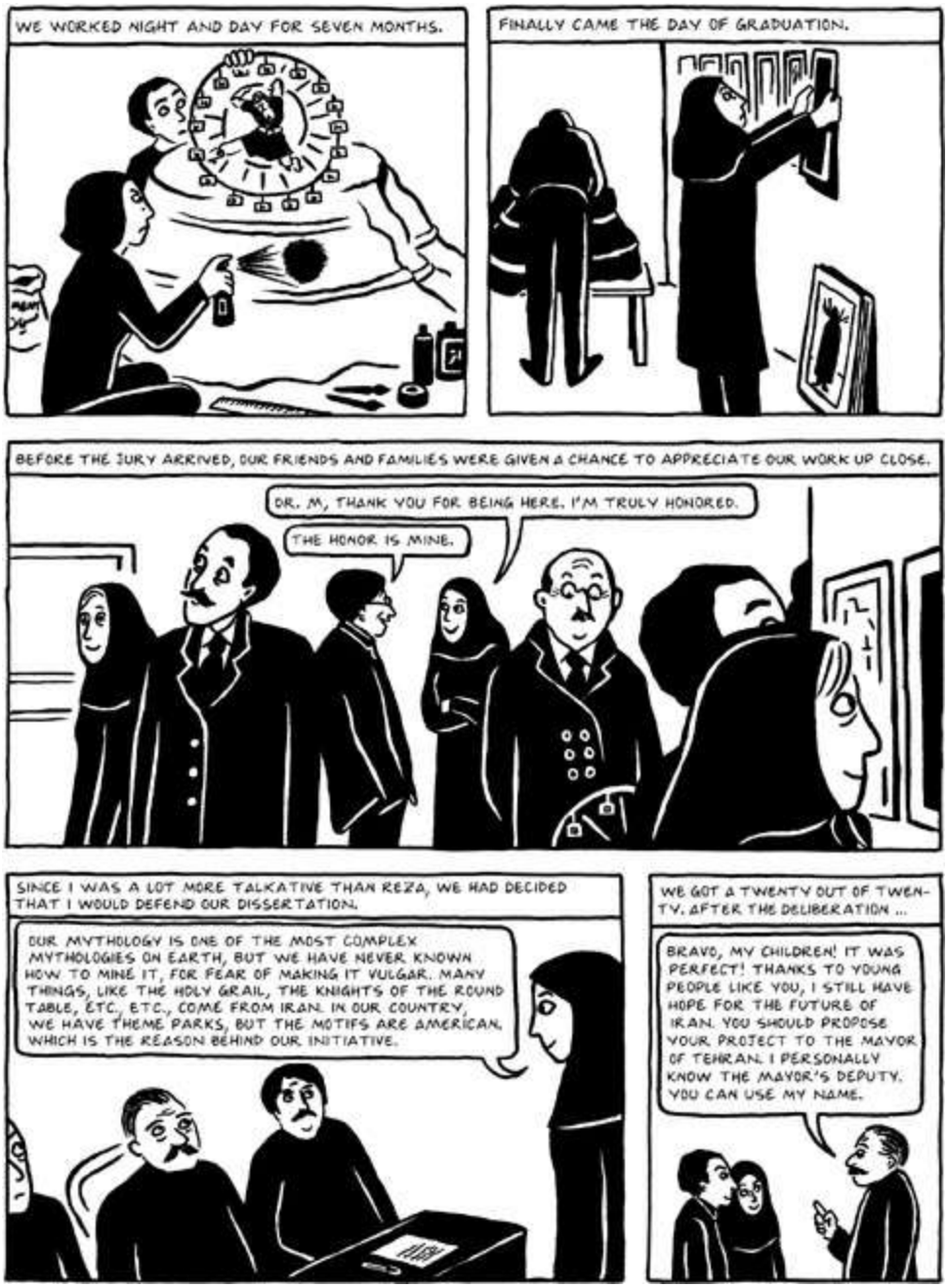
MY FATHER WAS RIGHT. ANYONE COULD GET MARRIED. IN FACT, EVERYONE WAS GETTING MARRIED. THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE MARRYING IRANIANS IN AMERICA IN THE HOPES OF ONE DAY BECOMING ACTRESSES IN HOLLYWOOD,
THOSE WHO WERE JOINING THEMSELVES TO RICH OLD MEN,
LUCKIER ONES WITH RICH YOUNG MEN,
THERE WERE ALSO SOME REAL LOVE STORIES, LIKE THAT OF NIVOOSHA AND ALI.
... AND THEN THERE WAS REZA AND ME.
AS FOR THE SINGLE ONES, THEY WERE WAITING THEIR TURN:
RIGHT NOW, I HAVE THREE CANDIDATES: ONE IS A DOCTOR BUT HE LIVES IN IRAN, THE OTHER LIVES IN LOS ANGELES BUT HE'S SUPER UGLY AND THE THIRD IS VERY HANDSOME BUT POOR.
IF I WERE YOU, I'D TAKE ALL THREE!
MY FATHER WAS SO RIGHT THAT THE NEXT DAY, I APOLOGIZED TO HIM.
DAD, DO YOU STILL WANT TO TALK TO ME?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU. I JUST WANTED TO SHAKE YOU A LITTLE.
I KNOW, DAD. I REACTED VIOLENTLY BECAUSE YOU HIT A NERVE.
THEN HE RUSHED INTO THE LIBRARY AND CAME BACK WITH THREE BOOKS.
HERE, READ THESE. THERE'S "THE SECRETS OF THE CIA," "FREEMASONRY IN IRAN" AND "THE MEMOIRS OF MOSSADEGH!"*
OH GREAT! COOL!
TO CATCH UP, I READ ALL OF THEM IN TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY ASSUMPTIONS, I FOUND THEM REALLY INTERESTING.
*IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER. HE NATIONALIZED THE OIL INDUSTRY IN 1951.

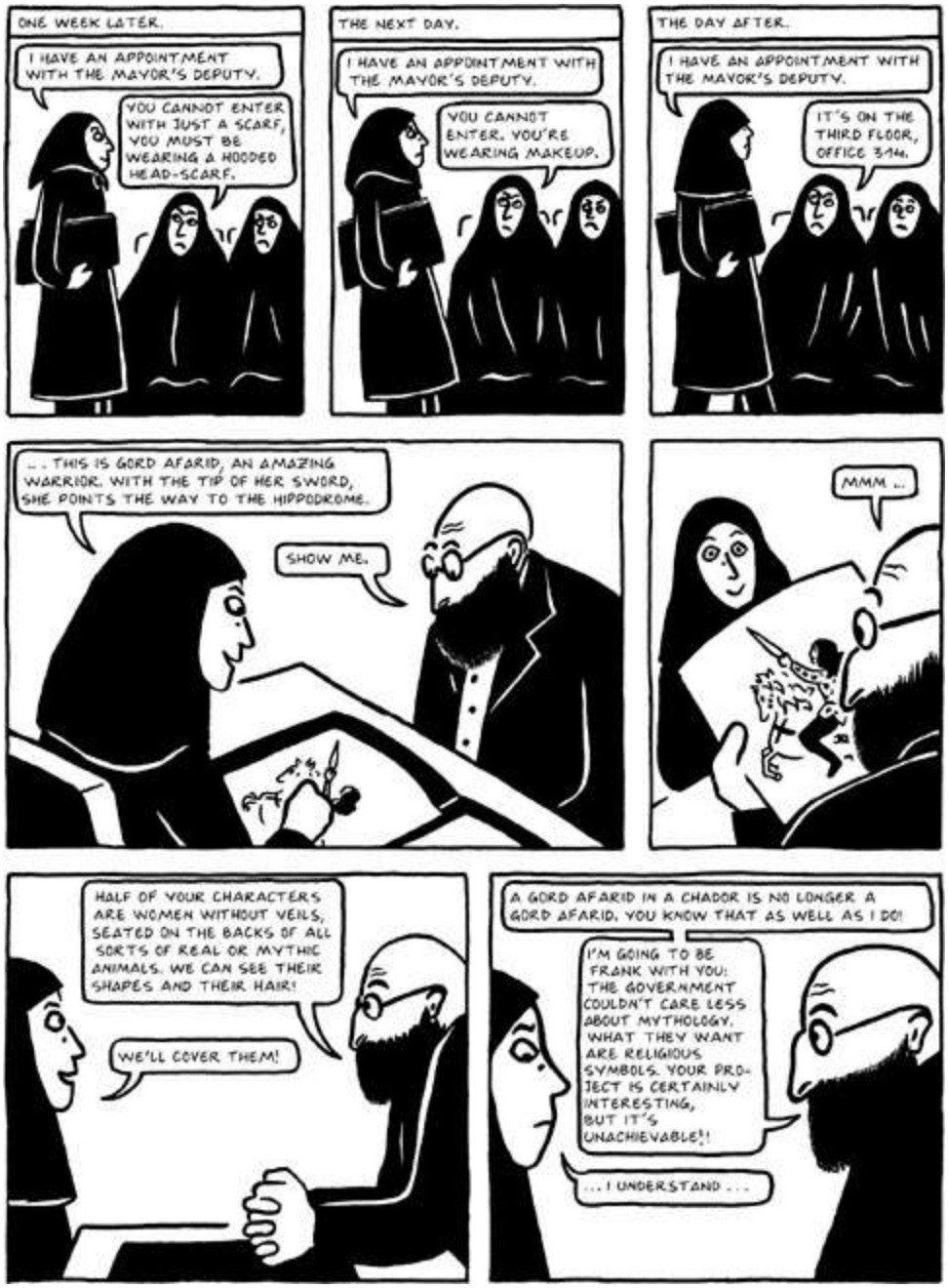
MY NEW SPHERES OF INTEREST BROUGHT ME INTO CONTACT WITH NEW PEOPLE, OFTEN MUCH OLDER THAN ME. AMONG THEM, A CERTAIN DR. M, AT WHOSE HOUSE ALL THE INTELLECTUALS GATHERED ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH.
IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, WITH AS MANY RESOURCES AS WE HAVE, IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT 70% OF THE POPULATION SHOULD LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE!
IF MOSSADEGH HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE OUT HIS PROJECT OF REFORM, IRAN WOULDN'T BE FINDING ITSELF IN THIS SITUATION TODAY.
IT'S THE ENGLISH AND THE AMERICANS' FAULT. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO DEPOSED HIM BY ORGANIZING THE COUP D'ETAT IN 1953!
MAYBE, BUT WHAT DID WE DO TO STOP THEM? OUTSIDERS WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS WITHOUT CERTAIN IRANIAN TRAITORS! IF WE WANT TO RECONSTRUCT THIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE TO BEGIN BY ADMITTING OUR OWN MIS-DEEDS!!
PUSHED BY MY PARENTS, ENCOURAGED BY DR. M AND HIS FRIENDS, AND ALSO A LITTLE THANKS TO MYSELF, I CHANGED MY LIFE.
ONCE AGAIN, I ARRIVED AT MY USUAL CONCLUSION: ONE MUST EDUCATE ONESELF.

THE END

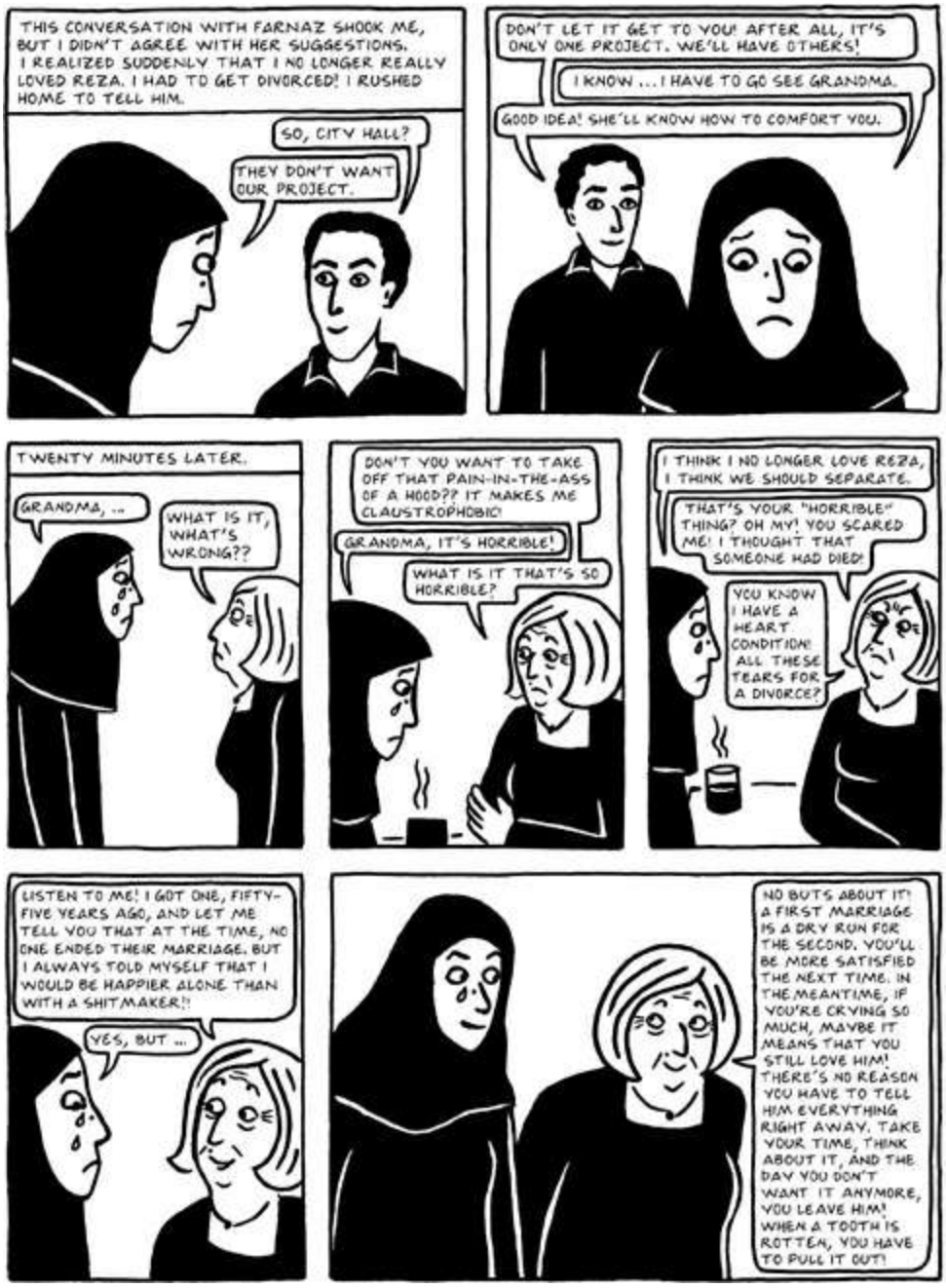
IN JUNE 1993, AT THE END OF OUR FOURTH YEAR OF STUDY, REZÁ AND I WERE CALLED IN BY THE PROFESSOR WHO WAS HEAD OF THE VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT.
YOU ARE MY TWO BEST STUDENTS. I THEREFORE HAVE A FINAL PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO YOU. IT INVOLVES CREATING A THEME PARK BASED ON OUR MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES.
THE SUBJECT WAS SO EXTRAORDINARY THAT WE FORGOT OUR CONFLICTS AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER.
WE SPENT THE WHOLE SUMMER IN LIBRARIES, ...
MUSEUMS, ...
WITH SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS AND DOCTORS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES.
IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, HEROES ARE PREDESTINED, WHILE OUR MYTHOLOGY IS LACKING IN THE NOTION OF DESTINY!
FROM JUNE 1993 TO JANUARY 1994, WE WERE SO BUSY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT ONCE.

WE WANTED TO CREATE THE EQUIVALENT OF DISNEYLAND IN TEHRAN. WE HAD THOUGHT OF ALL THE DETAILS: DINING, LODGING, ATTRACTIONS...
HOTEL
RESTAURANT
...IT WAS EXCITING.


WE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY FOR SEVEN MONTHS.
FINALLY CAME THE DAY OF GRADUATION.
BEFORE THE JURY ARRIVED, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPRECIATE OUR WORK UP CLOSE.
DR. M, THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE. I'M TRULY HONORED.
THE HONOR IS MINE.
SINCE I WAS A LOT MORE TALKATIVE THAN REZA, WE HAD DECIDED THAT I WOULD DEFEND OUR DISSERTATION.
OUR MYTHOLOGY IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX MYTHOLOGIES ON EARTH, BUT WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN HOW TO MINE IT, FOR FEAR OF MAKING IT VULGAR. MANY THINGS, LIKE THE HOLY GRAIL, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, ETC., ETC., COME FROM IRAN. IN OUR COUNTRY, WE HAVE THEME PARKS, BUT THE MOTIFS ARE AMERICAN. WHICH IS THE REASON BEHIND OUR INITIATIVE.
WE GOT A TWENTY OUT OF TWENTY. AFTER THE DELIBERATION ...
BRAVO, MY CHILDREN! IT WAS PERFECT! THANKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU, I STILL HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAN. YOU SHOULD PROPOSE YOUR PROJECT TO THE MAYOR OF TEHRAN. I PERSONALLY KNOW THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY. YOU CAN USE MY NAME.


ONE WEEK LATER.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
YOU CANNOT ENTER WITH JUST A SCARF, YOU MUST BE WEARING A HOODED HEAD-SCARF.
THE NEXT DAY.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
YOU CANNOT ENTER. YOU'RE WEARING MAKEUP.
THE DAY AFTER.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY.
IT'S ON THE THIRD FLOOR, OFFICE 344.
... THIS IS GORD AFARID, AN AMAZING WARRIOR. WITH THE TIP OF HER SWORD, SHE POINTS THE WAY TO THE HIPPODROME.
SHOW ME.
MMM ...
HALF OF YOUR CHARACTERS ARE WOMEN WITHOUT VEILS, SEATED ON THE BACKS OF ALL SORTS OF REAL OR MYTHIC ANIMALS. WE CAN SEE THEIR SHAPES AND THEIR HAIR!
WE'LL COVER THEM!
A GORD AFARID IN A CHADOR IS NO LONGER A GORD AFARID. YOU KNOW THAT AS WELL AS I DO!
I'M GOING TO BE FRANK WITH YOU: THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT MYTHOLOGY. WHAT THEY WANT ARE RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS. YOUR PROJECT IS CERTAINLY INTERESTING, BUT IT'S UNACHIEVABLE!!
... I UNDERSTAND ...

AFTER CITY HALL, I HAD A RENDEZVOUS WITH A CHILDHOOD FRIEND, FARNAZ.
THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE SAVED MY RELATIONSHIP WAS THIS PROJECT. NOW THAT IT'S A LOST CAUSE, I THINK WE'LL SEPARATE.
I DON'T SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR THEME PARK AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP!
SINCE WE BEGAN OUR SHARED LIFE, IT'S THE FIRST TIME THAT WE REALLY INVESTED IN SOMETHING TOGETHER. IT BROUGHT US CLOSER.
DO YOU STILL LOVE HIM?
I DON'T KNOW.
THEN LISTEN TO ME. A YEAR AGO, MY SISTER LEFT HER HUSBAND ...
... FROM THE MINUTE SHE HAD THE TITLE OF DIVORCED WOMAN, THE BUTCHER,
THE PASTRY CHEF,
THE BAKER,
THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELLER,
THE ITINERANT CIGARETTE SELLER,
MALBORO
EVEN BEGGARS IN THE STREET, ALL MADE IT CLEAR THEY'D LIKE TO SLEEP WITH HER.
FROM MEN'S POINT OF VIEW, FOR ONE THING, THEIR DICKS ARE IRRESISTIBLE, AND FOR ANOTHER THING, SINCE YOU ARE DIVORCED, YOU'RE NO LONGER A VIRGIN AND YOU HAVE NO REASON TO REFUSE THEM. THEY HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE!!! LISTEN, THERE'S NOTHING SURPRISING ABOUT IT! EVER SINCE THEIR BIRTH, THEIR MOTHERS HAVE CALLED THEM "DOUDOUL TALA."*
SO, AS LONG AS YOUR LIFE ISN'T HELL, STAY WITH YOUR HUSBAND! I KNOW YOUR FAMILY IS OPEN-MINDED, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL JUDGE YOU!
*GOLDEN PENIS


THIS CONVERSATION WITH FARNAZ SHOOK ME, BUT I DIDN'T AGREE WITH HER SUGGESTIONS. I REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT I NO LONGER REALLY LOVED REZA. I HAD TO GET DIVORCED! I RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM.
SO, CITY HALL?
THEY DON'T WANT OUR PROJECT.
DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY ONE PROJECT. WE'LL HAVE OTHERS!
I KNOW ... I HAVE TO GO SEE GRANDMA.
GOOD IDEA! SHE'LL KNOW HOW TO COMFORT YOU.
TWENTY MINUTES LATER.
GRANDMA, ...
WHAT IS IT, WHAT'S WRONG??
DON'T YOU WANT TO TAKE OFF THAT PAIN-IN-THE-ASS OF A HOOD?? IT MAKES ME CLAUSTROPHOBIC!
GRANDMA, IT'S HORRIBLE!
WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO HORRIBLE?
I THINK I NO LONGER LOVE REZA, I THINK WE SHOULD SEPARATE.
THAT'S YOUR "HORRIBLE" THING? OH MY! YOU SCARED ME! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HAD DIED!
YOU KNOW I HAVE A HEART CONDITION! ALL THESE TEARS FOR A DIVORCE?
LISTEN TO ME! I GOT ONE, FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AND LET ME TELL YOU THAT AT THE TIME, NO ONE ENDED THEIR MARRIAGE. BUT I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD BE HAPPIER ALONE THAN WITH A SHITMAKER!!
YES, BUT ...
NO BUTS ABOUT IT! A FIRST MARRIAGE IS A DRY RUN FOR THE SECOND. YOU'LL BE MORE SATISFIED THE NEXT TIME. IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU'RE CRYING SO MUCH, MAYBE IT MEANS THAT YOU STILL LOVE HIM! THERE'S NO REASON YOU HAVE TO TELL HIM EVERYTHING RIGHT AWAY. TAKE YOUR TIME, THINK ABOUT IT, AND THE DAY YOU DON'T WANT IT ANYMORE, YOU LEAVE HIM! WHEN A TOOTH IS ROTTEN, YOU HAVE TO PULL IT OUT!

I FOLLOWED MY GRANDMOTHER'S ADVICE. I WAITED. I FOUND A JOB AS AN ILLUSTRATOR AT AN ECONOMICS MAGAZINE.

I WAS BORED AT HOME, I CAME TO DRAW HERE. I'M NOT DISTURBING YOU?

NOT AT ALL!

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!

EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL. THE RAPPORT WITH MY COLLEAGUES MADE ME FORGET THE REST.

BUT TWO MONTHS LATER, IN MARCH 1994, AN ILLUSTRATOR MADE THE FOLLOWING DRAWING FOR AN ARTICLE ON IRANIAN SOCCER:

JALLAD*

* ASSASSIN

THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T TOLERATE A MULLAH BEING CALLED AN ASSASSIN. THEY THEREFORE ARRESTED THE ILLUSTRATOR IN QUESTION.

NO ONE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, BUT EVERYONE HAD HIS OWN THEORY.

THEY MUST HAVE HANGED HIM!!

THEY SHOT HIM!

THEY CUT OFF HIS HANDS SO HE CAN'T DRAW ANYMORE!

THEY TORTURED HIM!

HE'S ALIVE BUT HE IS BLIND!

WHATEVER THE CASE, FROM THAT MOMENT ON, ALL THE PRESS WAS EXAMINED WITH A MAGNIFYING GLASS.

A FEW DAYS LATER, WHEN I GOT TO WORK.

MARJANE! THEY ARRESTED BEHZAD!

OUR BEHZAD? BEHZAD RADI?

YES.

THE MAGAZINE CAME OUT YESTERDAY AND THEY WENT TO COLLECT HIM AT HIS HOUSE TODAY, AT FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING!

...ALL BECAUSE OF THIS!!...

HIS DRAWING ILLUSTRATED AN ARTICLE ABOUT ALARM SYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE VILLAS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN AGAINST BURGLARIES.

BEHZAD HAD MADE THE MISTAKE OF DRAWING A BEARDED MAN.

BUT A FEW HAIRS NOT BEING ENOUGH TO CONDEMN HIM, HE WAS SET FREE AFTER TWO WEEKS. GILA, THE MAGAZINE'S GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.
HELLO!
HELLO, COME IN!
SO, WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US!
NOTHING! I EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT MY DESIGN CAME FROM A FAIRY TALE IN WHICH A PRINCESS' LOVER CLIMBS INTO HER ROOM BY USING THE LONG HAIR OF HIS LOVED ONE AND, NOT BEING ABLE TO DRAW A WOMAN WITHOUT A VEIL, I HAD DRAWN A BEARDED MAN.
AT THAT, THEY STARTED TO YELL, SAYING THAT I WAS INSINUATING THAT BEARDED MEN WERE SISSIES. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.
AND THEY BEAT ME UP...I HAD BRUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL... YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.
DING! DONG!
I'M GOING TO GET THE DOOR. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
HELLO, I'M MANDANA.
MARJANE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.
AND THIS IS NIMA.

MANDANA, CAN'T YOU SEE WE HAVE GUESTS? GO MAKE US SOME TEA. ACTUALLY, THEY BROUGHT SOME CAKES, BRING THOSE IN, TOO!
THANKS SO MUCH.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
POOR MANDANA SUFFERED A LOT DURING MY TWO WEEKS OF INCARCERATION.
SO, WHAT DO YOU DO?
WELL, I...
SHE STUDIED PHARMACOLOGY, BUT WE HAD NIMA VERY QUICKLY AFTER GETTING MARRIED. SO NOW SHE'S A HOUSEWIFE.
AND HOW OLD IS NIMA?
HE'S ...
EIGHT AND A HALF!
IN JULY, HE'LL BE NINE!!!
DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?
NO!
UHH ... NO!
MARJANE'S NOT EVEN TWENTY-FIVE, AS FOR GILA, SHE DOESN'T HAVE A HUSBAND YET!

ON OUR WAY BACK.
TO THINK THAT HE WAS MY HERO FOR TWENTY DAYS!! HIS WHOLE SPIEL ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, WHILE HE DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE SAY ONE WORD! AH, IRANIAN MEN!
DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S NOT IRANIAN MEN, BUT MEN, PERIOD. TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS GOING OUT WITH A SPANISH DIPLOMAT. ON THE SURFACE, HE BEHAVED BETTER, BUT DEEP DOWN, IT WAS THE SAME THING.
EXCEPT HERE, ALL THE LAWS ARE ON THEIR SIDE!
IF A GUY KILLS TEN WOMEN IN THE PRESENCE OF FIFTEEN OTHERS, NO ONE CAN CONDEMN HIM BECAUSE IN A MURDER CASE, WE WOMEN, WE CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY! HE'S ALSO THE ONE WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO DIVORCE AND EVEN IF HE GIVES IT TO YOU, HE NONETHELESS HAS CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE GRAIN AND WOMAN, THE EARTH IN WHICH THE GRAIN GREW, THEREFORE THE CHILD NATURALLY BELONGED TO HIS FATHER! DO YOU REALIZE?? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!

GILA DROPPED ME OFF AT HOME. MY SISTER-IN-LAW WAS THERE.
HELLO KATAYONE, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
LIKE A WOMAN WHO'S EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT! I FEEL HEAVY, BUT AT LEAST I ONLY HAVE TO BEAR IT FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS.
WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO. DON'T FORGET THAT MY SON NEEDS A COUSIN. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
WE NEED TO TALK.
WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS, AND FOR THREE YEARS WE'VE HAD OUR OWN ROOMS. WE'RE NOT A REAL COUPLE...
WE'RE NOT A COUPLE AT ALL.
WE'VE STAYED TOGETHER OUT OF AFFECTION, CERTAINLY, BUT MOSTLY OUT OF HABIT. WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ADMIT THAT WE AREN'T MADE FOR EACH OTHER, BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN THAT WE RECOGNIZED OUR FAILURE.
YES, BUT I'M STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU.
WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU, YOU DIDN'T LET ME IN. NOW IT'S TOO LATE, REZA. I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE.
LET'S GO TO FRANCE TOGETHER. I'M SURE IT'S THE SOCIAL PRESSURE THAT'S AFFECTING US.
BUT IT'S FOR THIS SAME REASON THAT WE GOT MARRIED, TO GET AROUND THE SOCIAL PRESSURE. OUR LOVE HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME! THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING AGAIN. IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I MANAGED TO TELL HIM ALL THAT SO SUDDENLY. MY GRANDMA WAS RIGHT: I HAD TAKEN MY TIME, AND I NEVER REGRETTED WHAT I SAID.

A FEW DAYS LATER, I WENT OVER TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE.
I WANT TO GO TO FRANCE!
THAT'S GREAT. YOU'LL BOTH NEED VISAS, HAVE THE TWO OF YOU THOUGHT OF ...
DAD, IT'S NOT US, IT'S ME. REZA WILL GO IF HE WANTS TO, BUT WE'RE GOING TO GET DIVORCED!
I KNEW IT ALL ALONG!
YOU KNEW IT ALL ALONG AND YET YOU TALKED MY EAR OFF FOR A WEEK SO THAT I WOULD APPROVE OF THIS MARRIAGE?
YES, BUT IF SHE HADN'T GOTTEN MARRIED, SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WOULDN'T WORK BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM—EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE HER OWN EXPERIENCE.
MANIPULATOR!
WHAT MANIPULATION?
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU ANYMORE.
WELL, WE'RE VERY HAPPY WITH YOUR DECISION. YOU WEREN'T MADE TO LIVE HERE. WE IRANIANS, WE'RE CRUSHED NOT ONLY BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT BY THE WEIGHT OF OUR TRADITIONS!
OUR REVOLUTION SET US BACK FIFTY YEARS. IT WILL TAKE GENERATIONS FOR ALL THIS TO EVOLVE. YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE. IT'S YOUR DUTY TO LIVE IT WELL. AND NOW THAT YOU ARE TWENTY-FOUR, IT'S NOT LIKE WHEN YOU WENT TO AUSTRIA. YOU DON'T NEED US ANYMORE.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU: "DON'T WORRY ABOUT HER, OUR DAUGHTER HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HOW TO TAKE CARE OF HERSELF."
IT'S TRUE.
WERE YOU WORRYING ABOUT ME?
I WAS SCARED THAT YOU'D RUIN YOUR LIFE.
ME TOO.
... NOT HAVING BEEN ABLE TO BUILD ANYTHING IN MY OWN COUNTRY, I PREPARED TO LEAVE IT ONCE AGAIN. I WENT TO FRANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JUNE 1994 TO TAKE A TEST TO ENTER THE SCHOOL OF DECORATIVE ARTS IN STRASBOURG. I WAS ACCEPTED. THEN I HAD TO GO BACK TO IRAN TO EXCHANGE MY TOURIST VISA FOR A STUDENT VISA.

BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER '94, THE DATE OF MY DEFINITIVE DEPARTURE, I SPENT EVERY MORNING WANDERING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TEHRAN, WHERE I MEMORIZED EVERY CORNER.
I WENT ON A TRIP WITH MY GRANDMA TO THE SHORE OF THE CASPIAN SEA, WHERE I FILLED MY LUNGS WITH THAT VERY SPECIAL AIR. THAT AIR THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.
I WENT TO MY GRANDFATHER'S TOMB, WHERE I PROMISED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.
I ALSO WENT BEHIND THE EVINE PRISON WHERE THE BODY OF MY UNCLE ANOOSH LAY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, NEXT TO THOUSANDS OF OTHER CADAVERS. I GAVE HIM MY WORD TO TRY TO REMAIN AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE.
I ALSO SPENT SOME WONDERFUL MOMENTS WITH MY PARENTS ...
...UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, WHEN, ALONG WITH MY GRANDMA, THEY ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEHRABAD AIRPORT.

I HAD CHOSEN THIS DEPARTURE BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING, I FELT VERY SAD.
MY FATHER CRIED AS USUAL,
AND MY MOTHER KEPT HER HEAD.
THIS TIME, YOU'RE LEAVING FOR GOOD. YOU ARE A FREE WOMAN. THE IRAN OF TODAY IS NOT FOR YOU. I FORBID YOU TO COME BACK!
YES, MOM.

THE GOODBYES WERE MUCH LESS PAINFUL THAN TEN YEARS BEFORE WHEN I EMBARKED FOR AUSTRIA: THERE WAS NO LONGER A WAR, I WAS NO LONGER A CHILD, MY MOTHER DIDN'T FAINT AND MY GRANDMA WAS THERE, HAPPILY...
... HAPPILY, BECAUSE SINCE THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 9, 1984, I ONLY SAW HER AGAIN ONCE, DURING THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR IN MARCH 1995. SHE DIED JANUARY 4, 1996 ... FREEDOM HAD A PRICE ...

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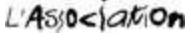

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