PERSEPOLIS 2
THE STORY OF A RETURN

MARJANE SATRAPI
CREDIT
Lettering Céline Merrien

THANKS TO
Emile Bravo
Amber Hoover
Jean-Christophe Menu
Céline Merrien
Anjali Singh
November 1984. I am in Austria. I had come here with the idea of leaving a religious Iran for an open and secular Europe and that 2020, my mother’s best friend, would love me like her own daughter.

Only here I am. She left me at a boarding house run by nuns.

My room was small, and for the first time in my life, I had to share my space with another person.

I hadn’t met her yet. I only knew that her name was Lucia.

I wondered what she would look like.

Europe. The Alps. Switzerland, Austria. From this I judged that she would be like Heidi.

This was okay with me. I really liked Heidi.
I had been in Vienna eleven days. 2020 and her daughter Shirin, whom I had known during my childhood, had come to get me at the airport.

Shirin was as I remembered her. However, I detected something unkind in the look her mother gave me.

You haven't changed much. Well yes! Can you believe her hair?

You haven't a thing. You're the same.

It's going to be cool to go to school without a veil, to not have to beat oneself every day for the war martyrs.

Have you seen these? They're really fashionable. They're to protect your ears from the cold. Do you want to try them on?

No thanks.

This is my raspberry-scented pen. I also have strawberry and blackberry ones, too.

Do you want to put on some lipstick? I love pearly pink. It's very hip.

Hmph!

What a traitor. While people were dying in our country, she was talking to me about trivial things.
I live with them for ten days. There were fights daily.

You incompetent! Did I work myself to the bone so that you can throw money away on flowers?

But 1920 is our wedding anniversary!

You can give me what ever you want the day you've earned some money. I've had enough!

In Tehran 1920 was her husband. Houshang's secretary.

In Vienna she became a hairdresser.

It was she, in the way who cut off my long hair.

As for Houshang, 1920's husband, he was a cop in Iran.

But in Austria he was nothing.

Thanks to a dozen bad investments, Houshang had lost all his capital. "You gambled it away!" I heard that in the course of one of their habitual quarrels.

I saw you at the cafe with those two bastards! They'd have to steal the clothes off your back for you to recognize their ingratitude.

I was ashamed. I'd never heard my parents bicker over money.

Perhaps because my father wasn't incompetent.
AND AFTER THESE TEN DAYS

MARIANE SPOKE TO YOUR MOTHER

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

T'S RUN BY NUNS. THE MOTHER SUPERIOR AND SEVERAL OF THE SISTERS SPEAK FLUENT FRENCH.

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

WELL, WE SEE US ON WEEKENDS. WE'LL GO ICE SKATING.

Yeah. Yeah.

Despite everything I was happy to leave their house in this way. I'd be rid of Zozo the mean and selfish nun.

Jean of Arc School.

The only one I was going to miss was Housshang. I saw in him a protector.

Aye care of yourself.

LIKE UNCLE Housshang.

HE SAW IN ME AN ALLY.

RAN THAT'S ENOUGH LET'S GO.

And we left.
Here's your new home.

It's imperative that you be back by 9:30 after that the door will be locked.

Here, mademoiselle this is your room. You'll share it with Lucia she's arriving this afternoon.

You'll see, you'll be happy with us which denomination are you?

None.

The shared kitchen.

The washers.

For your shopping, you can go to "Alm" go out and turn left, links!

Links!

Now I had a real independent adult life. I was going to feed myself, do my own laundry.

I headed straight for the supermarket to buy groceries like a woman.

*Alm is a supermarket and Links means left in German*
IT HAD BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I'D SEEN SUCH A WELL-STOCKED STORE

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

WE COULDN'T FIND THEM IN IRAN ANYMORE.

I FILLED THE CART WITH ALL KINDS OF PRODUCTS.

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

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

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

ACH! DU NUCHTIG ZEIGST DEINETTE.

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

Nein

Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

Ih"
I offered her some of the pistachios I'd brought with me, a present from my uncle. They are a specialty of Iran that is often given when someone is going abroad. We consider our pistachios to be the world's best.

Lucia made me a Knorr soup, "cream of mushroom."

I didn't like it much.

Magst du Fernsehen?

Fernsehen?

Fen, fung, fenlock, fenêtre!!

Nen, himhihi, das ist Fenster!

Warte mal.

Das ist ein Fernsehen.

Ar Ty, it's the same thing.

TV!!

Fernsehen! Ya! Ya! Fernsehen!

Was happy! Was speaking German.
So we went to the TV room, which was on the ground floor.

Hello

Everyone was watching a movie. They seemed to be enjoying themselves except me! I was hearing “Hey!” and “Yeah!”, “Yeah!” and “Ugh!” but nothing that I could understand.

Ha! Ha! Ha! Hi! Hi! Hi!

I decided to leave discreetly.

Bye bye Lucia

She didn't even answer me.
EVERY MORNING, I WAS RARELY AWAKENED BY THE SOUND OF LUCIA’S HAIR DRYER.

IT WAS MY VERY OWN ALARM CLOCK SET FOR 6:30 ON THE DOT.

MORNING!

HELLO!

WOKEN BY A HAIR DRYER TO THEN RETURN TO A SCHOOL WHERE I HAD NO FRIENDS.

BUT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED: I WAS ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRINITY AND CLiques HAD ALREADY FORMED!
AND THEN THERE WAS THE FIRST MATH TEST. I DISTINGUISHED MYSELF BY MY HIGH LEVEL.

SATURDAY BRANV! EXCELLENT WORK. JUST ONE MISTAKE: IF YOU HAD A POINT YOU GET A 95 OUT OF 100.

OH SHIT!

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

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

THESE PORTRAITS ALSO BROUGHT ME SOME GOODWILL.

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

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

WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT THING YOU KNOW, LIKE A RULER?

OH, THAT THING! YOU KNOW, A DICK.

OH, RIGHT WE CALL IT A BOK.

WHAT IS A DICK?

CAN YOU SEND ME YOUR DICK?

HAHAHAHA!

WELL, AT LEAST I EXISTED.

* MEAN'T A TRIANGLE
THINGS EVOLVED. AFTER SOME TIME, JULIE, THE SULLEN GIRL IN THE SECOND ROW, TOOK AN
INTEREST IN ME. SHE WAS AN EIGHTEEN YEAR-OLD FRENCH GIRL, IN A CLASS WHERE THE
AVERAGE AGE WAS FOURTEEN.

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

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

YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN LOTS OF DEAD PEOPLE?

UM, A FEW

COOL!

MEMO GREETED PEOPLE IN HIS
OWN WAY.

MMA

MAM

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

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

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

I'M ALSO A BIT OF AN ORPHAN.

YOUR PARENTS ARE DEAD?

NO, THEY'RE IN IRAN.
AN ECCENTRIC, A PUNK, TWO ORPHANS AND A THIRD-WORLDER. WE MADE QUITE A GROUP OF FRIENDS THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY STORY. ESPECIALLY MONTI HE WAS FASCINATED BY DEATH.
Christmas vacation was approaching. Everyone was talking about their plans.

I'm going to be bored out of my mind with my parents in Nice.

Fiji

Róa Róa

Chicago

It's good for business.

Christmas is an American invention. A Santa Claus decked out in red and white was Coca Cola's mascot.

Barcelona

Méndez

I'm going back to France to see my father.

I'm going to my grandmother's in Salzburg. She's the only one in my family who's still bearable.

We're going to be bored crazy in the Alps.

Yeah, we're going skiing. It'll be cool!

You know, here we don't celebrate Christmas.

You're going skiing? That's so great!

It's no big deal.

Our new year is March 21, the

You'll be inancy. We'll be neighbors. We could maybe see each other.
Friday December 22, 1974. The streets were packed. The holiday frenzy had infected everyone. Thought of Thievery when he talked about it being good for business.

My street though was deserted. There weren't any stores.

What am I going to do all alone for two weeks? Even the boarding house will be empty.

When I got back, I found Lucia still faithful to her post.

Are you okay?
You don't seem okay.
I know! It's not easy to spend Christmas without your family.

Christmas? No, it's not that.

Tomorrow, I'm leaving with my aunt. I think there'll be room in the car. If you like, you can come with us.

Where?

To the Tyrol!

Tyrol?

O Turia, Tyrol! Tyrol!

Hahahaha!

You know, if you come, you mustn't talk about Klaus.

Klaus?

My boy friend.

Ah

Lucia's family was very strictly Catholic.

If you want me to keep my mouth shut, you have to stop waking me up with your hair dryer.

Jawohl!

The next day, Lucia's aunt came to pick us up.

Let's go, girls.

We were off to the southwest of Austria.
LUCIA'S PARENTS WERE INCREDIBLE. THEY WERE UNLIKE ANYONE I'VE EVER MET. HER TYROLEAN AUSTRIAN FATHER WORE PANTS MADE OF LEATHER. HER TYROLEAN ITALIAN MOTHER HAD A MUSTACHE. ONLY HER SISTER REMINDED ME OF HEIDI.

AFTER DINNER, WE ARE GOING TO CHURCH.

JA!

THEIR GERMAN WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

AND INDEED WE WENT TO CHURCH FOR MIDNIGHT MASS.

IT ENDED AT THREE IN THE MORNING!
MY GERMAN WAS RUDIMENTARY. THEIRS USUAL A CUP IN WHO HAD SPENT FOUR YEARS IN FRANCO- PHONE SWITZERLAND ENJOYED ACTING AS MY TRANSLATOR.

SHE SAYS THAT SHE LIKES TYROL A LOT.

DESSERT.

SHE SAYS THAT TYROLEANS ARE VERY NICE.

THEY SAY THAT THEY LIKE YOU, TOO.

AS OPPOSED TO MY SCHOOL FRIENDS' FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSATION, WE NEVER TOUCHED ON WAR, OR DEATH.

IT'S WONDERFUL TO HAVE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS.

TA AA.

LUCIA WAS MY SISTER.

AFTER THIS TRIP, I NEVER COM PLAINED ABOUT HER HAIR DRYER.
PASTA

RAKUNIN WAS AGAINST MARX
WHO'S RAKUNIN?

WHAT? YOU DON'T KNOW RAKUNIN?

HE WAS AN ANARCHIST.

AH! HE WAS THE ANARCHIST.

WELL, LONG LIVE VACATIONS.

MORE VACATION??

FOR, WE NOT GOING TO SCHOOL WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH SELITUDE, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT LUCIA WAS SPENDING ALL HER TIME WITH HER BOYFRIEND, KLAUS.

DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH VACATION?

WE WENT TO SCHOOL AT HOME. WE HAD TWO WEEKS OF REST FOR THE NEW YEAR AND AFTER THAT WE HAD TO WAIT UNTIL SUMMER.

YOU'LL GET USED TO IT THANKS TO THE LEFT. THERE ARE SLOVAKS IN EUROPE. WE ARE NOT FORCED TO WORK ALL THE TIME.

AND YOUR PANT?

IF, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY, THE ANARCHISTS HAD TRIUMPHED WE WOULDN'T WORK AT ALL. MAN THIS MADE FOR WORK.

COME ON, RELAX. TAKE ADVANTAGE. CULTIVATE YOURSELF. YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW RAKUNIN!

AND YOU ARE YOU GOING SKIING?

YEAH, AS USUAL.

SO, I CREATED A REASON.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING ON VACATION?

NOWHERE. I'M GOING TO READ. I LOVE READING.

IN FACT, IT WAS A USEFUL ANSWER TO THE PERENNIAL QUESTION "WHERE ARE YOU GOING?" ALL THE WHILE GIVING ME A RISE.

THIS CREATION WASN'T ALL TOGETHER WRONG. I NEEDED TO FILL IN AND FOR THAT I NEEDED TO EDUCATE MYSELF.
So they went off skiing and I got myself to reading. I started with Brecht. I learned that he was Russian, that he had been excluded from the First International, and that he rejected all authority, especially that of the state.

Aside from that, I don't understand much of his philosophy as surely modernist, either.

Then I studied the history of the commune. I conclude that the French right of this epoch were worthy of my country's fundamentalists.

When I had enough of reading, I went to the supermarket.

The idea of wearing my ski suit brought from Tehran to go out.

I was so bored that to buy four different products, I would go to the supermarket at least four times.

Decked out like this in Vienna, I felt like I was on the slopes of Hinterland, close to my friends.

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

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

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

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

"THE MANDARINS," SAYS MARIE DE BEAUVIR.

SHE HAD READ ME SOME EXCERPTS BUT I WAS A LITTLE YOUNG.

SO I TRIED IT. PAINFULLY DOWN MY LEFT LEG IT WAS A LITTLE DISGUSTING.
AND THEN CAME THE DAY THE FAMOUS DAY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WHEN I WAS PREPARING A "ETERNAL STICKETY." I WAS VERY HUNGRY SO HUNGRY THAT ONE PLATE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH. I WENT DOWNSTAIRS WITH MY PATE TO WATCH TV IN THE REFECTORY.

I LIVED THAT AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN "INSPECTOR DERRICK" WAS ON, THE NUNS LIKED IT A LOT.
When suddenly the Mother Superior blocked my line of vision.

But here everyone eats while watching TV.

But not nuns. What kind of manners are these?

It's true what they say about you. Too you were all prostitutes before becoming nuns!
THE MOTHER SUPERIOR NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE ME, SO I WAS CALLED BEFORE HER ASSISTANT.

APPROACH

IT'S UNACCEPTABLE, WHAT YOU SAID TO MOTHER BRIDGET.

AND WHAT SHE SAID TO ME, YOU FIND THAT ACCEPTABLE?

YOU'RE EXPELLED, I'M GOING TO CALL YOUR MOTHER'S FRIEND TO COME GET YOU.

DON'T MOTHER I HAVE FRIENDS WHO WILL BE HAPPY TO TAKE CARE OF ME.

I WAS THINKING OF JULIE.

YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF.

SO SHOULD YOU!

SHUT UP, YOU INSULTING GIRL AS YOU'VE SAID, YOU CAN STAY UNTIL THE END OF THE MONTH.

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO ME?

EXCUSE ME?

I SAID THANK YOU.

IN EVERY RELIGION YOU FIND THE SAME EXTREMISTS.
I didn't wait for the end of the month. A few days later, I called Julie.

They threw me out. I don't know what to do.

Hold on a minute. I'm going to ask my mother if you can come live here.

She says that she is thrilled to have you.

Oh, Julie, thank you!!

I repacked my bag.

I said goodbye to Lucia, whom I never saw again.

The sisters sent a letter to my parents.

Explain to them that, humiliated to have been caught red-handed stealing a fruit yogurt, I had decided to leave the boarding house of my own volition.

But what in the world can this mean? She hates fruit yogurt?

Don't understand.

Happily, my parents knew my tastes.

Oh, those liars! They could have at least found a better excuse.

Reading wasn't enough to fit in, I still had a long way to go.
MY NEW HOME WAS A LOT MORE COMFORTABLE THAN THE BOARDING HOUSE I SHARED JULIE'S ROOM.

WOUUL YOU BELIEVE I HAVE A DATE WITH ERNST, THE OWNER OF CAFE SHELTER?

THE OWNER?

BUT HOW OLD IS THIS OWNER?

TWENTY SIX

OK, I'M OFF

DID YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK?

IN MY CULTURE PARENTS WERE SACRED WE AT LEAST OWE THEM AN ANSWER

ARMELLE, WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA?

YES

AND THE SISTERS WHO FOUND ME INSISTENT IF ONLY THEY'D SEEN JULIE

TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS TOWARD ONE'S OWN MOTHER MADE ME INSIGNIFICANT

BYE, MUM!

JULIE, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

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I really liked Armeille. She was gentle and discreet. In fact, a little too much so, compared to my mother. She lacked authority.

Don't put too much in when the tea is strong. It loses its flavor.

I know, at home we drink tea all day long.

Of course, how silly of me! Tea India, Persia, Russia, Samvar.

Armeille was very cultured. Even if she didn't know Bakunin, Lacan was her thing. She was passionate about him.

You know, he opened up the field of psychoanalysis with structural linguistics.

He managed to isolate the registers of the symbolic imagination and reality.

He is one of the first to have undertaken group therapy.

A woman and a man don't think alike, don't function alike. Don't write alike. Women's literature, blah, blah, men's literature, blah, blah, blah.

And also because she was the only one who knew Iran. She understood my nostalgia for the Caspian Sea. She was also the only one to have seen a samvar.

I listened out of disillusion.

And then, she was the one who had called my parents to reassure them.
Jude and I discussed a lot before bed.

She was very nice.

She can be really unbearable, like when she won't let me

But she really likes you, too. Thanks to you, she goes easier on me. She thinks that you're a good influence on me.

What kind of good influence?

Oh, you're the pure type of innocent virgin who does her homework. I'm not like that; I've been having sex for five years.

I already slept with eighteen guys: Fabrice, Vier, Laurent, Luc, Marc, another, René, Sébastien.

I was shocked in my country even when you had sex before marriage; you did it.

Well, Virginia.

Okay.

Now I'm on the pill. That's why I have such a big butt.

At first we used condoms, but the guy feels less.

Feels less? What?

I had a big behind too, and I wasn't even taking contraceptives.
ARNELLE HAD A GOOD JOB AT THE UNITED NATIONS. SHE TRAVELED FREQUENTLY.

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

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE GONE?

OKAY.

I STOCKED THE REFRIGERATOR. STUDDY HARD! JUDE, DON'T CUT CLASS!

YES MAAM.

4X DAYS. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, CALL MARTIN.

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

IT WAS JULIE WHO HAD EXPLAINED IT TO ME.

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

I DON'T YET HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ARNELLE'S CHARACTER AND HER SEX LIFE.

YOU'VE SEEN HOW ANNOYING SHE IS. SHE'S NOT FUCKING.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

HEN SPENCER WAS HER MOTHER GONE

HAVE A GOOD TRIP!

THAN JULIE ORGANIZED A PARTY FOR THE DAY AFTER WITH HER FRIENDS FROM THE CAFE SCHLITER.
THE NIGHT OF THE PARTY

HOW DO I LOOK?

NOT SO GOOD

WAIT, I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU UP, YOU'LL SEE

THICK LINES OF BLACK EYELINER THAT, FROM THEN ON, BECAME MY USUAL MAKEUP

I THOUGHT I LOOKED VERY BEAUTIFUL

WHAT ARE YOU BRINGING? TULIPS? YOU'RE PUTTING PERFUME THERE?

THERE! IT HAS A NAME! IT'S CALLED A NURSE, A PUSSY, A MINI!

MINI? THAT'S MY AUNT'S NAME.

GOOD FOR HER!

MADE MINI IN FRENCH MEANS PARADISE

HA HA HA!

GENTLEMEN WELCOME TO PARADISE.

DO YOU HAVE ANY GOOD MUSIC?

YES, HAVE ALL OF PINK FLOYD

I KNEW PINK FLOYD, MY PARENTS LISTEN TO THEM WHEREVER WE WENT ON A TRIP

TO ME IT WASN'T EXACTLY PARTY MUSIC
AND THE PARTY WAS NOT WHAT I IMAGINED. IN IRAQ, AT PARTIES, EVERYONE WOULD DANCE AND EAT. IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES, PEOPLE PREFERRED TO LIE AROUND AND SMOKE.

AND THEN I WAS TURNED OFF BY ALL THESE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? I CAME FROM A TRADITIONALIST COUNTRY.
Around four in the morning, the last guest finally left. I was so sleepy.

I wanted to remove my makeup, but it wasn't coming off with water.

I went to ask Julie for some makeup remover, but apparently she and Ernst were already asleep in our room.

When suddenly, "Ah! Ah! Oh! Ahh! Ah!

Oh, oh, oh! Ah, ah! Oh yes! Oh! Ah! Yes!

My God, they were in the middle of having sex.
I rushed to the living room to protect myself from I don't know what. Behind my best friend a book.

It goes without saying that I didn't understand a word I read.

Several minutes later, I made out in the dark the silhouette of a naked man.

Followed by one of a naked woman.

Then a man and woman half naked.

I couldn't believe my eyes.

I'd never seen that.
IT REMINDED ME OF THE DAY, EIGHT YEARS BEFORE, IN THE CAR WITH MY DAD

DAD: WHAT ARE BALLS?

WHAT? WE SAY TESTICLE. A MAN'S SEX IS MADE OF TWO BALLS AND A PENIS. THESE BALLS ARE CALLED TESTICLES.

Balls? Balls like THESE?

AND A LITTLE RED, MY FATHER ANSWERED SERIOUSLY.

NO MORE LIKE THIS. THEY'RE NOT TENNIS BALLS. THEY'RE MORE LIKE PING PONG BALLS.

AH PING PONG BALLS. HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!

DON'T BELIEVE IT YOU YOU YOU'RE STONED!

BUT THAT'S SO COOL!

SHE'S TRIPPING ON WOLFY. WHY DON'T YOU PUT SOME MUSIC ON?

WOLFY?

SO HE WASN'T ERNST THE OWNER OF CAFE SCHELTER! JULIE HAD JUST SLEPT WITH HER, NINETEENTH GUY.

THAT NIGHT, I REALLY UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION.

IT WAS MY FIRST BIG STEP TOWARD ASSIMILATING INTO WESTERN CULTURE.
THE VEGETABLE

My mental transformation was followed by my physical metamorphosis.

Between the ages of fifteen and sixteen I grew seven inches. It was impressive.

Me at fifteen

Me at sixteen

My head also changed in its own way. First, my face got longer.

Then my right eye grew followed swiftly by my chin which doubled in length.

Then it was my mouth.

Then my chin advanced modestly. Only to retreat to its original position several months later.

Finally my chest developed. And my center of gravity was balanced out by the pounds on my butt.

In short, it was an ugly stage seemingly without end.
As if my natural deformity wasn't enough, I tried a few new haircuts a little snip of the scissors on the left.

And a week later, a little snip of the scissors on the right.

I looked like Cosette in "Les Misérables.

So I coated my hair with gel.

I added a thick line of eyeliner.

A few safety pins,

which were replaced by a scarf. It softened the look.

It was beginning to look like something.

Have you seen how beautiful she is now?

UH?

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

YOU CHANGE YOUR HAIRSTYLE EVERY DAY WHO CUTS YOUR HAIR?

I DO.

IF PAY YOU, WILL YOU CUT MY HAIR, TOO?

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

I HELPED ME EARN A LITTLE SPENDING MONEY.
MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE
SCHOOL'S LACKEYS DIDN'T
PLEASE MY FRIENDS MUCH.

YOU SEEM TO BE OK
AWFUL SEEN TERMS WITH THE FEDER.

NOT REALLY. I JUST CUT
THEIR HAIR.

THAT'S NOT ALL. YOU DO FOR
THEM, YOU KISS THEIR ASSES
FROM TIME TO TIME.

I DO NOT THINK THEY'RE
HERE. THAT'S ALL.

JEANS. THEY'RE JEANS. THEY
HAVE A FIXED PSYCHOLOGICAL
PROFILE. THEY ARE THIRSTY
FOR POWER AND ARE LOOKING
TO CONTROL US.

YEAH LIKE
THE COPS.

EXACTLY LIFE IS PAIN.
PAIN IS EVERYTHING.
EVERYTHING IS
NOTHINGNESS.

THEREFORE LIFE IS
NOTHINGNESS. WHEN
MAN RECOGNIZES THIS
HERE, HE CAN NO
LONGER LIVE LIKE AN

GATHERER. INVENTING
MOVING GAMES OF LEADERS
AND FOLLOWERS TO
FORGET HIS FICKLENESS.

WHATSOEVER EXISTENCE IS
NOT ABSURD. THERE ARE
PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN IT
AND WHO GIVE THEIR LIVES
FOR VALUES LIKE LIBERTY.

WHAT RUBBISH! EVEN
THAT, IT'S A DISTRACTION
FROM OURSELF.

MY UNCLE DIED TO
DISTRACT HIMSELF?

FOR HIM, DEATH WAS THE ONLY
REASON TO WORRY WITH KNOWLEDGE.
EXCEED HIS ON THIS SUBJECT,
I ALWAYS HAD THE LAST WORD.

NOBLE LOMBARD
BLAH BLAH BLAH.
SURE.

OK! ARE WE GOING
TO SMOKE A JOINT?
IT WAS ALWAYS THE REY WHO ROLLED THE JOINTS
WHILE WE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR THE MENTORS
SO WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE.

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

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

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

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

BECOMING A VEGETABLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

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

AND AS SOON AS MY FRIENDS BACKS WERE TURNED I STICK MY FINGERS IN MY EYES TO
MAKE THEM GRIP AND RED.

THEN I IMITATED THEIR LAUGHTER.

I WAS QUITE BELIEVABLE.
The harder I tried to assimilate, the more I had the feeling that I was distancing myself from my culture, betraying my parents and my origins, that I was playing a game by somebody else’s rules.

Each telephone call from my parents reminded me of my cowardice and my betrayal. I was at once happy to hear their voices and ashamed to talk to them.

- Yes, I'm doing fine. I'm getting good grades.
- Friends? Of course, lots!
- Bad.
- Dad, I love you.

You have some good friends?
- That doesn’t surprise me, you always had a talent for communicating with people!
- Eat oranges, they’re full of vitamin C.
- Us too, we adore you. You’re the child all parents dream of having.

If only they knew... if they knew that their daughter was made up like a punk, that she smoked joints to make a good impression, that she had seen men in their underwear, while they were being bombed every day, they wouldn’t call me their dream child.
I felt so guilty that whenever there was news about Iran, I changed the channel.

It was too unbearable.

Were you watching TV yesterday? You must be weird.

No, it's okay! I talked to my parents. They're fine.

I was dying, I knew nothing and I didn't want to know more.

I wanted to forget everything, to make my past disappear, but my unconscious caught up with me.
EVEN MANAGED TO DENT MY NATIONALITY

DURING A PARTY AT SCHOOL

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

MARIJANE I'VE BEEN HERE A YEAR

AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM MARIJANE?

FRENCH

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

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

HE'S NOT AS BAD AS THEY SAY leap that burden

WHY THAT GUY?

MARC? HE'S ANAS BROTHER THE GIRL IN THE STRIPED SWEATSHIRT HE'S A JEW FROM BOURGE, YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO THESE PEOPLE

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

OH GRANDMA
Unfortunately, it all came out in the end. A few days later in a café near school.

She told my brother that she was French.

And your brother believed her?

What do you think? Have you heard the way she talks?

Have you seen her face?

But your brother was hitting on her or what?

Of course not.

Ah that's a relief. Considering how ugly she is; it would be really unfair if she got a guy like Macq.

Ha, ha, ha! I would commit suicide if my brother was going out with a cow like that.

I don't know if you've noticed, but she never talks about either her country or her parents.

Well, of course! She lies when she says that she's known war. It's all to make herself seem interesting.

Anyway, her parents clearly don't care about her, or they wouldn't have sent her alone.

That was too much. Saw red.
YOU ARE GOING TO SHUT UP OR I AM GOING TO MAKE YOU!
I AM IRANIAN AND PROUD OF IT!

SHE IS COMPLETELY CRAZY

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

BUT REALLY, I HAD NOTHING TO CRY ABOUT
I HAD JUST REDEEMED MYSELF

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A YEAR, I FELT PROUD
I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT MY GRANDMOTHER MEANT IF I WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH MYSELF, I WOULD NEVER BE COMFORTABLE
Julie and her mother had left Vienna. Now I was living in a Wohngemeinschaft. The Wohngemeinschaft is a communal apartment I could stay for four months.

The window of my room.

It was full of light, I had a double-bed, a bureau, and a desk. For the first time in a long time I had my own space.

My eight housemates were eight men, all homosexuals.

Franz, Andreas, Markus, Klaus, Jan, Oliver, Me, Maren, Manfred.
I HAD BEEN IN AUSTRIA FOR OVER A YEAR AND A HALF. I HAD ABANDONED MY FUNKY LOOK AND NO LONGER WANTED TO BE MARRIABLE.

MARJANE: IT'S YOUR MOTHER ON THE PHONE.

I'M COMING.

WHAT?!

OH, MY MOTHER, MY MOTHER!

SHE'S COMING TO SEE ME.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?

THAT'S GREAT!

WHEN?

IN TWO WEEKS.
Even though it had been nineteen months since I had seen my mother, the fifteen days of waiting were very long. The day of her arrival, I bathed like never before.

I ironed my clothes for the first time.

I made myself as beautiful as I could before going to meet her at the airport.

I saw from afar a woman who looked like her, the same silhouette, the same walk. But with gray hair. My mother was a brunette.

When this woman got close, there wasn't any doubt. It was really her. Before I left home, mom only had a few gray hairs. It's incredible what time does to you.

I didn't know if she hadn't recognized me, or hadn't heard me.

In any case, she didn't stop.

She hasn't recognized me, and with good reason. I'm almost doubled in height and size.

Oh my dear, you are so tall!

Mom, mom, you've gone gray!

It felt strange to take her in my arms. Our proportions had been reversed.
WITH THE OTHERS, PERMIKKIN Brought me TO STAY WITH ME.

I Live here, you'll see, you'll like it. My housemates are very nice. They're very excited by the thought of meeting you.

WELCOME.

Hello.

HOW ARE YOU?

Make yourself at home.

Hello.

THIS IS My ROOM. We'll share the same bed.

IT'S NICE... I hadN'T UNDERStOOD that your housemates were men.

It's amazing how you've grown.

I don't repeat that she, too, had changed at her age. you don't grow up. you grow old.

IN person grammar, there's no gender. masculine and feminine are interchangeable.

Just like that... you live with eight men.

Don't worry. none of them are homosexuals.

RESIDES, I SURPRISED her one day in the M I N S T E R of teaching. "I love you" in person to Franz, who had just met an iranian guy.

Do you understand? Oui.

Do you understand? Oui.

Doesn't param, oui.

PSTETE PIRAM.

NO... OUI.

HOMOSEXUALS??

I had told her that to reassure her, and I think that, despite the shock, she was appeased.
Recounting nineteen months in a few days isn’t easy. We had to talk a lot to make up for lost time. Our conversations were always disjointed.

Tell me, how’s Dad? What’s he doing?

Oh, he takes care of the gas in Teheran’s buildings.

Is he happy anyway?

Yes, he’s okay. He misses you enormously, but he’s happy that you’re living here, far from the problems.

Now, where’s your necklace?

My mother always wore a golden pendant that Dad had given her for their tenth wedding anniversary.

Left it in Iran, you see, we didn’t have the right to take anything of value out of the country?

I learned later that she has lied to me.

You don’t like what I made?

No, no, I love it. I’m just not very hungry.

Here’s a letter from your father. I’m not the one who opened it. It’s the customs in Teheran. They check everything.

In the letter, he was overjoyed by the thought that I had a peaceful life in Vienna.

If you only knew.

I have the impression that he didn’t realize what I was enduring.
WE OFTEN WENT WALKING, MY MOTHER AND I.

HOW'S OUR COUNTRY DOING?

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

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

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

SHE NEVER ASKED ME ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY SITUATION CERTAINLY NOT OF A SENSE OF RESTRICTION. BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID OF THE ANSWERS. IF SHE HAD SACRIFICED HERSELF SO THAT I COULD LIVE FREE, THE LEAST I COULD DO WAS REMAIN WELL.

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

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

WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT, DO YOU KNOW YOUR UNCLE HASSELD, SITTING IN GERMANY?

I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S NEXT DOOR, HE DON'T WANT TO COME VISIT US.

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

REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN WE TRAVELED AROUND EUROPE IT WAS ENOUGH TO CARRY AN EGYPTIAN PASSPORT. THEY KILLED OFF THE RED CARPET. WE WERE RICH BEFORE. NOW AS SOON AS THEY LEARN OUR NATIONALITY, THEY CEASED TO TREAT US AS THROUGH WE WERE ALL TERRORISTS. THEY TREAT US AS THROUGH WE HAVE THE PLAGUE.
A FEW DAYS LATER AT THE CAFE HAWELKA

GIVE ME A CIGARETTE.

DON'T FLAY THE INNOCENT WITH ME, I KNEW YOU SMOKED!

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?

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

I'VE BEEN LIVING ALONE TOO LONG TO ACCEPT ANY INVASION OF MY PRIVACY!

YOU WENT THROUGH MY THINGS??

COME ON... GIVE ME THAT CIGARETTE!

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

HERE. HERE'S YOUR CIGARETTE.

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

LIKE I TOLD YOU.

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

WELL DONE!

YOU WON'T DO IT AGAIN RIGHT?

OF COURSE NOT.

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

WHEN YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS RARELY, ALL IS FORGIVEN.
My stay at the Wandler-Menschen was temporary; I had to find new lodgings.

Maxi, I passed by the university; I saw an ad for a room in the thirteenth quarter.

We went there that afternoon. Hansa Niersweg 1.

Halo! I'm Frau Doctor Heller.
Mrs. Satrapi?

Here. The rent is two thousand shillings. She can use the kitchen and the bathroom which she'll share with three roommates: two English musicians and an American architecture student.

All the terms suited us.

Take good care of my daughter. Of course, Mrs. Satrapi, of course.

And at the tram stop:

What did you think of the tea? Like horse piss?

Her too, she looked like a horse.

Mehr. Mehr.

Horsey, a horse face!!

Even today this infantile joke brings tears to our eyes.
I spent twenty-seven days by her side. I tasted the heavenly food of my country, prepared by my mother. It was a change from pasta.

She stroked my hair every night to put me to sleep. It relaxed me to talk to her. It had been so long since I'd been able to talk to someone without having to explain my culture.

The eve of her departure...

My dear, you won't insult me, will you? I promise.

Buy yourself fruits and vegetables. You must eat well. 'Tis not for nothing that we say a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Look! I made some sketches inspired by our window shopping. I'll make you some outfits. You're in need of some new ones.

Ever since my arrival in Austria, I hadn't bought myself anything and given an growth sport. My clothes no longer fit me.

Then came the dreaded day of departure. I was sad. But, well, I'd begun to get used to separations.

My mother left.

I'm sure that she understood the misery of my isolation. Even if she kept a straight face and gave nothing away, she left me with a bag of affection that sustained me for several months.
Frau Doctor Heller's house was an old villa built by her father, a 1930s sculptor of some renown. The big terrace that looked out on the garden was my favorite place. I spent some very pleasant moments there.

Only the excrement of Victor, Frau Doctor Heller's dog, disturbed this harmony.

On average, he defecated once a week on my bed.

Do you have any idea? It's the fifth time in a month! It's unacceptable! Why don't you train him?

Yes, well! I'm going to have the sheets changed.

You are really very uptight!

I often forget that he was too old to learn anything.
All my friends had left for school. Julie was in Spain, Thierry and Oliver had gone back to Switzerland and Momo had been expelled. I was alone at school, but I didn't care.

My lack of interest in others made me more interesting.

How's it going, Marjane?

Fine. Fine!

Ever since I'd seen my mother, I didn't need anyone.

Well, almost.

Do you want to walk home together?

No, my boyfriend's coming to get me.

His name was Enrique. I'd met him through Dieter, one of my former housemates.

What do you say about going to an anarchist party this weekend?

Of course! I'd love to.

I asked him a lot. There'll be about twenty of us. It'll be cool.

Do you know all of them?

Yes.

Enrique was half Austrian half Spanish.

Enrique was twenty and played the piano.

Learning that he knew real anarchists only intensified my feelings for him.
"A REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST'S PARTY!" IT REMINDED ME OF THE COMMITMENT AND THE BATTLES OF MY CHILDHOOD IN IRAN EVEN BETTER, IT WOULD PERHAPS ALLOW ME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BAKUNIN.

DOWN WITH THE BOURGEOISIE

LONG LIVE BAKUNIN

I WAS COUNTING THE HOURS
Finally "the big day arrived"

After an hour and a half on the road, we arrived in the middle of the fires.

In the distance I saw a group of adults chasing one another and shouting.

You're it!

You'll never get me!

Catch me if you can!

What a disappointment... my enthusiasm was quickly replaced by a feeling of disgust and profound contempt.
S. These are the anarchists?
What do you think?

Come on, you'll see we'll have a good time.

Carole, we're going to join in the game.

I'm not really in the mood for a party.

At this instant, my love for our que was suffused with panic.

We played hide-and-seek.

Then volleyball.

To wrap up the party, we grilled sausages while singing Janis Joplin.

The sausages and the music were good - I was in love again.
THEN WE WENT INSIDE TO GO TO SLEEP

GOOD NIGHT ALL

SWEET DREAMS!

WE'RE ALL GOING TO SLEEP HERE?

IT EMBARRASSED ME TO SLEEP WITH ENRIQUE IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE. I CAME FROM A CULTURE WHERE EVEN KISSING IN PUBLIC WAS CONSIDERED A SEXUAL ACT.

HERE, MARIANE, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MIGUEL.

DELIGHTED TO MEET YOU, MARIANE. THERE'S A ROOM UPSTAIRS. YOU CAN SLEEP THERE IF YOU LIKE.

THANKS, THAT'S KIND OF YOU.

SHE'S VERY CUTE, YOUR GIRLFRIEND!

KNOW

GOOD NIGHT, LOVE BIRDS.

UNTIL THAT NIGHT, MY RELATIONSHIP WITH ENRIQUE WAS STRICTLY PLATONIC. I HAD GROWN UP IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE SEX ACT WAS NEVER CONSUMMATED UNTIL AFTER MARRIAGE. FOR ENRIQUE, IT WASN'T A PROBLEM. WE SAT SPREADING OURSELVES WITH TENDER KISSES.

BUT THIS NIGHT WAS DIFFERENT. I FELT READY TO LOSE MY INNOCENCE.

AND TOO BAD IF ENRIQUE EVER MARRIES ME. I LIVE IN EUROPE AND I WILL MARRY A EUROPEAN.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A TIMID VIRGIN ANY LONGER.
UNFORTUNATELY, THE NEXT MORNING I WAS AS MUCH A VIRGIN AND AS TIMID AS THE NIGHT BEFORE.

NEVERTHELESS I HAD TRIED MY BEST.

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

I DON'T SEE ANY OTHER EXPLANATION.

I WENT TO JOIN HIM SO WE COULD TALK.

HII? INGRID!

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

YES.

I HAVE SOME THINGS TO DO. SEE YOU LATER.

SEE YOU.

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

WHY ARE YOU SO SAD?

I KNOW COME! HE NEED TO TALK TO YOU.

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

COME.
MARIAH, I ADORE YOU. THINGS YOU NEVER DISCOVERED SOMETHING ABOUT ME WHICH I'VE HEARD BEFORE.

I'M LISTENING.

I HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE. I WANTED TO SHARE THIS SECRET WITH YOU FIRST.

IT'S TRUE? YOU DONT' EVEN TELL INGRID?

YOU'RE GAY? WHAT?

I WAS INCREDIBLE. FIRST MY EIGHT HUSBANDS AND NOW MY BOYFRIEND. TO THINK THAT ALL THE MEN I KNEW FOUND LOVE AMONGST THEMSELVES.

IF IT DONT WORK WITH YOU, IT WOULDN'T WORK WITH ANYONE.

I NEVER REALLY KNEW WHO I WAS, YOU REMOVED ALL MY DREAMS.

I SWEAR, IT'S NOT YOU. I THINK YOU'RE PRETTY ATTRACTIVE. SWEET. SWEET. AND PRUDENT, IT'S ME.

NEVER THELESS SOMEWHERE INSIDE I WAS REASSURED. IT WAS EASIER TO ACCEPT THAT HE WAS AFRID THAN THAT HE HAD A PREFERENCE FOR INGRID OR HE FOUND ME UGLY.

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.

I PROMISE ME THAT WE'LL ALWAYS BE FRIENDS.

I GAVE MY WORD BUT I WAS TOO YOUNG TO KEEP IT. THIS CHASTE LOVE AFFAIR FRUSTRATED ME MORE THAN IT SATISFIED ME. I WANTED TO LOVE AND BE LOVED FOR REAL.
I lost touch with Enrique but his anarchist friends adopted me. My life was split between them, my school and Frau Doctor Heller's house.

The communal life went hand in hand with the use of all kinds of mind enhancers. Weeb Hash

My physics teacher, Yonnel Arruas, was worried about me.

I persisted anyway. I needed to talk so much.

At home there's a war. I'm scared for my parents. I'm angry and I feel guilty. I don't have much money. My uncle was assassinated. I saw my neighbor die in a bombing.

I sensed that he didn't believe me. He must have thought that I was exaggerating.

Then I live in this crazy war. War is a house. My physician.

Acceptee

At his house I played with his twins. Johanna and Caroline.

I spent a long time talking to his mother. My teacher's mother. A Frenchwoman of Jewish Moroccan origin.

I understand how rare it is for you. You have to make three times the effort of anyone else to succeed! That's the immigrant lot! It was the same for me, when I arrived in France.

But we never saw each other again. Yonnel's wife didn't like me. She must have thought that I was making up stories. So I was never again invited over.
After my romantic disappointment with Enrique, I understood Julie better when she talked about the negative effects of a platonic affair on her mother. I had grasped the necessity of a normal relationship, but after this incident, what was I to do? I felt even more unlovable and had even less self-confidence.

And then one day a new student arrived in my class. His name was Jean-Paul. I liked him.

Marta: Would you like to grab a drink this weekend? You and me?

Jean-Paul: Who else? When?

Marta: Well, this weekend. Saturday perhaps.

We arranged to meet at Café de l'Europe at 5:30.

I put on my best clothes. I was so excited that I got there an hour early.

He was half an hour late.

At last!

Hi! What are you reading?

Oh, it's you! I wasn't noticed.

Have you been here long?

No, I just got here.
I really liked him

SO, HOW ARE YOU?

FINE, FINE, AND YOU?

I'm okay. It's just... you know. I'm experiencing a great lack of affection.

I was hoping to move her enough that he'd take my hand conspicuously placed on the table while saying, 'Don't worry! I'll take care of you.'

Instead, he said

EVERYTHING COMES TO HE WHO WAITS

I didn't really understand what he was trying to say.

We were together until nine o'clock, talking about functions and trigonometry.

What do you think you stupid girl? Do you think that a guy like him could be interested in a girl like you?

What an imbecile! How could I have been so delusional?
THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND, I WAS BACK AT THE COMMUNE
WHERE WERE YOU THE PAST TWO WEEKS? WHY DIDN'T YOU COME SEE US?
ONE OF MY TEACHERS INVITED ME OVER, AND LAST WEEK I SAW A FRIEND.

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

I DON'T ALWAYS LIKE IT BUT I SOON PREFERRED BORING MYSELF WITH HER TO HAVING TO CONFRONT MY SOLITUDE AND MY DISAPPOINTMENTS.
LITTLE BY LITTLE I BECAME THE PORTRAIT OF DAMIAN GRAY THE MORE TIME PASSED THE MORE I WAS HAUNTED.

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

MEY MARSHAL.

His name was Marcus. He was studying literature. At least I was sure that he didn't want to see me because of his math problems.

What are you doing tomorrow? I'm going to see my friends in the country why?

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO A CLUB SURE WHY NOT?

This time I didn't make any effort at all. I didn't put on my best clothes and I arrived an hour late.

If you're up thought I wouldn't come. I'm happy that you're here. Do you want to dance?

HE, I DON'T LIKE DANCING. ACTUALLY DON'T LIKE CLUBS.

We danced anyway. We're so beautiful tonight.

Aside from the fact that we were both only children. We didn't have anything in common. I was uncomfortable.

HAPPILY, THIS PATHETIC SITUATION DIDN'T LAST LONG. THE CLUB CLOSED AT 3:30 IN THE MORNING.

If you want I can take you home. But I need to fill up. First shall we split it?

Okay.

Nothing surprised me anymore even paying the gas so that my white knight could drive me home seemed completely normal.

You know what I love about you, your rebellious side and your natural melancholy.

THANKS.

THINGS ALWAYS HAPPEN WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT WAS HAPPINESS.
I finally had a real boyfriend. I was over the moon one night at Markus's house.

I'm going to write a play. Oh yeah, I love to be at it.

But this was different. It was neither an old man destroyed by the war, nor a young one. But it was my boyfriend's mother who attacked me. She was saying that I was taking advantage of Markus and his situation to obtain an Austrian passport. That was just... crazy.

Think she'd never locked herself in the marker.

Raus! Ich sage Raus!!

Then they threw her out.

Go on. I'll come see you tomorrow at your house.

Markus must have been suffering more than he had to back off his relationship with his mother to continue to see me. I didn't want to add to it, so I said nothing.
At my house, it wasn't much better.
You don't have anything to smoke?
No, mom, that I don't see
It's so stupid, my mother cut off my allowance.
Really?

Gem Raus!

Mier ist nicht ein Nuttenhaus!

* This isn't a brothel

What do you think? You think I don't know anything about your 'secret prostitution'?

Have you no shame? He's my boyfriend.
Of course! It's obvious.

What? To you, true Austrians don't go out with girls like me?

You would have made Freud an excellent patient.

Frau Richter Heller was a crockpot. She was a real psychopath. A crazy woman. Really wanted to insult me, but I had already told her that I wouldn't.

So I insulted her very strongly in Persian.

She didn't understand anything, and I got to let off steam.

* I had just read his three essays on the theory of sexuality
Markus and I didn't know where to go. We often ended up in his car, where we smoked joints to distract ourselves.

I went in. I was very, very scared. It was the first time that I'd set foot in such a sordid place.

But it wasn't a big deal after all. I was doing it for love.

Listen, I heard of a cafe where you can buy cheap hash if you want to go see? I can't find anywhere to park.

Of course! Here's 200 shilling.

N't s. Okay, I've got money.

Excuse me, I want two bags for 200 bucks.

Follow me.

Markus was proud of me, so proud that he told the whole school that his girlfriend had contacts at Cafe Camera.

This is how. For love. I began my career as a drug dealer. Haven't followed my mother's advice? To give the best of myself? I was no longer a simple junkie, but my school's official dealer.
LUCIUS. I HAD ENGAGED ENOUGH FROM A COLD EDUCATION TO NEVER DRIFT TOO FAR. IT WAS THE END OF MY LAST YEAR. I WAS GOING TO TAKE THE FRENCH BACCALAUREATE.

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

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

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

THE NEXT MORNING I CALLED MY MOTHER.

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

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

DO YOU LIKE THE 18TH CENTURY?

YES.

DO YOU LIKE MONTESQUIEU?

YES.

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

I GOT A 17 THE BEST GRADE IN SCHOOL.
Then came summer time. I was making anything by selling because I was doing it as a favor; so I set out to find some odd jobs.

It was sometimes boring.

Sometimes fun.

One day I saw an ad in a newspaper: "Café Sile is looking for a waitress. Three European languages required."

You speak German, English and French. That's good, have you ever worked in a bar?

Yes?

Good! You start tomorrow. But watch out! The customer is always right!

Café Sile was located in the best neighborhood in Vienna. I was fat recently, but it wasn't always easy with the customers sometimes. I really wanted to slap them.

The customer is always right."

Nonetheless, I had an ally. It was Svetlana, the Yugoslavian chef.

Tell me, what did he order? This son-of-a-bitch?

A Wiener Schnitzel!

God forgive me!

Raah! Pooow!

There's justice and done.

She really made me laugh. I was able to work there without having to irritate a few men where it counts.
I was so busy I didn't notice when the start of the school year arrived.

Marianne, Satrapi! The principal wants to see you.

I saw that you have the best score for the French Baccall. All my congratulations.

Thank you, sir. Have a seat.

If you will, the usage of certain substances does not have the same effect on everyone. In certain individuals, it can lead to deplorable consequences.

Let me explain myself. We have a real problem with the consumption of cannabis in this school.

Whoever procures it for the students of this establishment could be severely punished.

You are intelligent and I trust I won't have to speak to you about this a second time.

No, you won't have to.

Remember yourself, Satrapi! I'm counting on you.

Yes, yes.

I was very scared. It was the end of my career.
Admittedly, I wasn't selling drugs anymore, but I had started taking more and more. At first, Markus was very impressed,

And then she said, you're too strong!

Then, he started to lecture me,

In the name of God, look at what you're becoming.

And finally, he distanced himself.

This recadent side, which had so pleased him at first, ended up profoundly annoying him.

I should say that I was smoking too many joints. I was constantly tired and I often fell asleep.

The definite integral of function f(x)...

What do you want me to say: sick? That I'm the vegetable that I refused to become?

Marianne, are you okay?

What?

Do you feel well?

That I am so disappointed in myself that I can no longer look at myself in the mirror? That I hate myself?

Everything's fine, sick. I'm a little sick, I feel very tired.

I remained in this state for the rest of the school year, but thanks to the registered letters, sent to God every day by my mother, I graduated by the skin of my teeth. I was relieved.
IT WAS 1988. MARKUS HAD STARTED STUDYING THEATER. I HAD REGISTERED AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT I NEVER WENT

YOU DON'T WANT TO GO OUT?

I DON'T HAVE TIME. MY EXAMS ARE NEXT WEEK.

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

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

IT'S THE RETURN OF NAZISM, IT'S SERIOUS.

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

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? WE'VE GONE FROM SOCIALISM TO NAZISM.

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

I KEPT A LOW PROFILE.

ASSUMES THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU THINK THAT THERE AREN'T ANY WHERE I COME FROM? THEY'RE TEN TIMES MORE FEARSOME THAN THEY WERE A YEAR AGO. THEY KILL THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T THINK LIKE THE LEADERS.

IT'S INTERESTING TO HAVE AN OUTSIDE OPINION.

YES, IT'S TRUE.

SINCE THEN, I HADN'T NOTICED THEIR NUMBERS GROWING.
DURING THIS PERIOD THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION LIKE MOST YOUNG VIENNESE WERE VERY POLITICAL. THEY DEMONSTRATED EVERY SO OFTEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER. SOMETIMES I JOINED THEM.

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

IT'S CRAZY HOW PEOPLE ARE ALL S Oinaire AND NICE WE ARE IN VIENNA. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW IT MUST BE IN THE TWEED?

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

MY FRIEND'S FATHER EVEN MADE ME A FRANET.

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

I ASKED MYSELF IF THEY WOULD HAVE SAT BEHIND ME IF I HAD BEEN A FRIZZY HAIR AND DARK SKINNED BOY?
AS FOR MARKUS, HE NEVER PARTICIPATED IN ANYTHING HE WAS WRITING HIS PLAY

YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US?

HEH NON, I'M WORKING, I DON'T HAVE TIME.

AND ANYWAY IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. WILHELMINA WAS DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED IT WAS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

CLICK CLICK

AND YOUR CONSCIENCE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE?

WRITE CULTURE AND EDUCATION ARE THE LETHAL WEAPONS AGAINST ALL KINDS OF FUNDAMENTALISM WE HAVE TO EDUCATE THE PEOPLE SO THAT THEY DON'T VOTE FOR NAZIS.

Yeah, the intellectuals are too precious to waste their time shouting!

Whatever.

In any case, it's the cowardice of people like you who give neo-Nazis the chance to install themselves.

These arguments marked the beginning of the end of the story.
NEVERTHELESS HE, LIKE I TRIED TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST TWO YEARS THE NIGHT BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY

I'VE BEEN WALKING AND THEN HE SAT DOWN AND TOLD ME "I'M NOT CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY WITH YOU"

NO, NO, A-ALL

WELL, GOOD. WELL AFTER ALL MAYBE THIS VACATION WAS GOING TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP

YOU'RE GOING TO MISS ME IF YOU SEE ME TONIGHT. YOU'RE GOING TO SLEEP AT YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT. I'M GONNA COME OVER TONIGHT AND TELL YOU A STORY. I'M GONNA COME OVER TONIGHT AND TELL YOU A STORY.

YOU'RE GONNA MISS ME IF YOU MAKE IT CLEAR.

AFTER ALL, I'M GONNA COME OVER TONIGHT AND TELL YOU A STORY. I'M GONNA COME OVER TONIGHT AND TELL YOU A STORY.
So I slept at my house and the next morning.

I missed my train.

This must be destiny's sign that I should celebrate turning eighteen with him.

I had an ingenious idea. I am going to surprise him by bringing him hot croissants.

Oh yeah, I'm just too cool.

I turned the key in the lock delicately, not to wake him, to better surprise him.
IT WAS LIKE A BAD AMERICAN MOVIE ONE OF THOSE FILMS WHERE THE SURPRISED MAN WRAPS HIMSELF IN A SHEET OUT OF MODESTY AND SAYS

WAIT, CAN I EXPLAIN EVERYTHING

LET ME TALK TO YOU TONY

“I LOVE YOU MARJANE. YOU MUST BELIEVE ME. I LOVE YOU”

BASTARD, ASSHOLE, SIT FACE

FUCK, HOW IT IS. GET OUT. GO ON BEAT IT.

SO BY ORDER OF THE TRAITRIOUS WAKKUS! BEAT IT, I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN!
MY BREAKUP WITH MARKUS REPRESENTED MORE THAN A SIMPLE SEPARATION. I HAD JUST LOST MY ONE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, THE ONLY PERSON WHO CARED FOR ME, AND TO WHOM I WAS ALSO WHOLLY ATTACHED.

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

OH, THERE YOU ARE! I LOST MY SCREW! I'M SURE THAT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO TOOK IT.

LEAVE ME ALONE, PLEASE!

OH NO, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.

GO TO HELL, LEAVE! I DETEST YOU! I HATE YOU!

EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF MARKUS. THIS BERE? READ IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO ME.

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

WHERE WAS MY MOTHER TO STRIKE MY NAME?

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

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

AS BE FROM HIM WHO ELSE WAS SINCERELY INTERESTED IN ME DURING THESE FOUR YEARS IN VIENNA?
In this room, everything evoked Markus. I couldn't stand it anymore.

I took my bag,

My passport, the plane ticket, my parents had given me to visit them at Christmas, and a little money.

So I got dressed.

Where are you going like that?

Adieu.

You're not going to get out of this so easily!

Go fuck yourself.

Thief! I'm going to call the police! I am going to do this and that!

Clack.
It was November 22, my birthday. It was bitterly cold. I stayed on a bench, immobile. I watched the people going to work.

Then coming back.

Night fell...

"Night brings good counsel," my grandmother always told me.
IN EFFECT, SHE CLEARED UP A LOT OF POINTS SUDDENLY, HAD A REVELATION

MARKUS IS A REAL BASTARD

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

HE KNEW THAT COPS COME BY FROM TIME TO TIME ON RAIDS

"WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED HIM IF I HAD BEEN ARRESTED"

AND THE TIME WHEN HIS MOTHER FINALLY TOLD ME OFF

HE COULD HAVE TAKEN MY DEFENSE INSTEAD OF Sending ME HOME!

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

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

WHAT I MEAN ABOUT YOU, IT'S YOUR REBELLIOUS SIDE AND YOUR NATURAL NONCOMPLIANCE

REPRESS ED AS HE WAS, HE MUST HAVE IDENTIFIED WITH MY REBELLIOUS SIDE
I don't know what to do. I'm starting university in a month if I start working at the same time it's going to take me ten years to finish my studies. Don't worry, I have some savings.

In this way, all the money that my parents had sent me which I was supposed to live on for a year, was spent in three months.

The check? It's for me.

It's not possible. His mother loved him too much to cut off his allowance. I'm sure she was giving him money he must have blown it all on her.

I was going completely crazy.

Today, in retrospect, I no longer consider him. Markus had a history of family friends. I had no one but him. I wanted him to be at once my brother and my father, my mother, my twin.

I had projected everything onto him. It was surely not easy for a boy of nineteen.

What misery.

Spent my first night on the street. There were plenty of others.
In the morning, I took the tram.

Inside there were two spots that were very warm, because they were above the motor. I fell asleep on one of these seats. It was peaceful.

For almost a month, I lived at this rhythm. The night prostrate and the day letting myself be carried across Vienna by sleep and the tramway.
Very quickly, my savings vanished. I was broke.

It's incredible how quickly you can lose your dignity. I found myself smoking butts.

Looking for food in trash cans.

I, who before couldn't even taste from others' plates.

Soon, I was recognized and thrown out of all the trains.

So I had to find a well-hidden place to sleep at night. Nights on the street could end very badly for a young girl like me.

I don't have anyone. My entire existence had been planned around Markus. It's surely for this reason that I found myself wandering like this.

It was unthinkable that I go back to see Zoro.

Don't care. Our apartment is too small.

Nor Ingrid.

You dropped us for a guy who wasn't even worth it.

As for Frau Doctor Heller, let's not even talk about her. She represented absolute evil in my eyes.
I spent more than two months on the street in the middle of winter.

It was very cold.

I got sick.

Krouf Kof Kof

Keuh Keuh

I started to cough a little.

Then a little more.

Then a little more strongly.

My cough became continuous.

Until I spit blood.

And ended up.
I woke up in a hospital. It was a miracle. If I had fainted during the night, no one would have noticed and the glacial cold would surely have prevented me from fulfilling my destiny.

I had known a revolution that had made me lose part of my family.

Breathe, breathe.

I had survived a war that had distanced me from my country and my parents.

Pedal as fast as you can.

And it's a sexual story of love that almost carried me away.
You have a clean bill of health. We have conducted a complete check-up.

So, you had severe bronchitis without getting treatment. I forbid you to smoke one single cigarette and you will put yourself in serious danger.

Where do you live?

In Iran.

In Iran?

Yes, well, I don't really have an address in Vienna.

I suddenly remembered this conversation with my mother.

You know, Zita owes me 300 shillings. If you have the courage you can go reclaim them.

I'll see.

Even if it cost me to call Zita, I didn't have a choice. I didn't even have a groschen.

OK, I'm coming this afternoon.
The hospital had given me clean clothes. I was presentable.

Hello. Hello.

Say, you've grown. Where did you disappear to? Your uncle Massoud came from Germany to look for you.

My uncle? Yes. Your uncle. We mixed heaven and earth to find you.

Your parents too. They've already called me ten times.

My parents? Well, what do you think? That you can disappear for three months without them worrying?

If they didn't have to wait four months to get a visa, they would already be here.

Ding! Ding! Look, here are the few shillings. I'm going to answer the phone.

It's for you. It's your parents.

My father's voice was soft and soothing.

-Dad, it's you?

-My darling, we looked for you everywhere.

-Can I come back?

-Of course, what a question.

-Dad, promise me to never ask me anything about these three months.

-I promise you. Here's your mother.

Another miracle has just occurred.

My mother's voice was tender, too.

-I am very happy.

-Mom, please, don't cry.

-These are tears of joy.

-Mom.

-Come home, darling. We are waiting for you.

-Mom.

-No one will ask you any questions, it's a promise.
Before my departure, I went to Frau Doctor Heller's. I came to get my things.

Here they are. Where is the rest? There is no rest. The rest will compensate the brood that you stole from me.

I didn't say anything in any case. I couldn't take four years of my life back with me.

I found an inexpensive hotel. I had five days ahead of me, before the next flight to Tehran.

I finally found a place of my own, some privacy.

Despite the doctor's orders, I bought myself several cartons of cigarettes.

You are putting yourself in serious danger.

I think that I preferred to put myself in serious danger rather than confront my shame. My shame at not having made some of the sacrifices they had made for me. The shame of having become a mediocre nihilist.
THE FIVE DAYS PASSED LIKE THE WIND AND THE CIGARETTES DIDN'T GET THE BETTER OF ME. I GOT DRESSED.

I PACKED MY BAG

I AGAIN PUT ON MY VEIL

AND SO MUCH FOR MY INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LIBERTIES.

I NEEDED SO BADLY TO GO HOME.
After four years living in Vienna, here I am back at 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, perfume?

No sir.

Please fix your vest. My sister?

Yes, my brother.

Next! Come on. Speed it up.

My mother and sister are the terms used in Iran by the representative. Yes of the law to give orders to people without defending them.

It wasn't reciprocal of course it made sense. One changes were between the ages of fourteen and sixteen than between thirty and forty.

Bad, I'm not sure.

What?

My daughter. My daughter. Am I didn't recognize you!

I knew that had grown but it was only once was in the arms of my father. That I really felt it. You who had always before appeared so missing was about the same size as me.
I can’t believe my eyes. Tell us, are you hungry?

And you know what it is? We’re on Iran Air. They feed you at least fifty times.

Then we got in the car.

I didn’t feel like talking. I pretended to look at the city. Even though it was too dark to see anything.

Welcome home!

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 had barely finished my room like a poor without saving good night or goodbye.

I didn’t want to turn in the light. I couldn’t bear to see everything again so quickly.

I was astonished to finally have a place of my own and this reassured me.

My room. My room.

They were the most comforting words that I had heard in a long time.

My father didn’t have his Cadillac anymore. But prove a Renault is 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 was under stress. 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 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

BEFORE LEAVING IRAN, I WORKED AS A PUNKS, TO THE POINT OF HAVING DRAWN ONE ON MY WALL.

THEN I TOOK STOCK OF MY PROPERTY. I OWNED AN EMPTY ARMORIE.

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! TEA IS FINE.

DO YOU WANT SOME TEA?

I'M NOT HUNGRY. TEA IS FINE.

DO YOU REMEMBER DR. KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?

HER NAME WAS Helga. OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT NICE MISS?

Ah, there's nothing like Irish tea.

Oh yes, especially with a cigarette. Do you want one?

What? You know the proverb: "Disrelish consists of two things: tea after a meal, and a cigarette after tea."

I was the first time that my mother had spoken to me in this tone in her eyes now. I had become an adult.

Mama 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 idios 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, dear me.

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

A: WHERE ARE YOU? MARTY?
B: I'LL BE THERE IN A WHILE.

WHO TOLD HER THAT I WAS HERE?

I'D LIKE TO BE YOUR 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.

I'M SITTING HERE AND HAVING TO PUT IT BACK ON.

It wasn't just the veil to which I had to adjust; there were also all the images. The sixty-five-foot high murals presenting martyrs adorning 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 was 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

OF MY HOME

DO YOU ALWAYS GET HOME SO LATE?

AH YES, I HAVE A LOT OF WORK THESE DAYS.

THAT'S RIGHT. I'M NOT SURE 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. THEN 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?

ID GO SEE HOW IT SNOWED?

I HAD TO PUT CHAINS ON MY TIRES TO BE ABLE TO DRIVE INCREASINGLY! SIXTEEN INCHES OF SNOW!

KNOW, IT'S MAGNETIC.

DO YOU WALK AROUND A LITTLE?

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF TERROR?

SORRY.

I WAS SHOCKED AT LEAST ONE STREET IN THREE IS NAMED AFTER A MARTYR.
AND WE ARE IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY. I WENT INTO THE POOR QUARTERS IN THE SOUTH OF TEHRAN, ALMOST ALL THE STREETS ARE CALLED MARTYR ST AND SR.

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 THREAT TO ISRAEL.

THE WEST SOLD WEAPONS TO BOTH ARMIES AND 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 SUFFERING.

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 FIVE STAR HELL FOR TEN YEARS. THEY'VE BEEN MADE TO BELIEVE THAT THEIR MARTYRS ARE LIVING 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 peace hadn't yet been announced when the armed groups opposed to the Islamic regime, the Iranian Mujahideen, entered the country from the Iraqi border with the support of Saddam Hussein to liberate Iran from the hands of its fundamentalist leaders.

The term Mujahideen isn't specific to Afghanistan. It means a 'Striker'.

You surely heard about it.

No, dad. I didn't know.

What do you mean?

I really she just spent four years in Europe.

Yes of course.

What was I saying?

Right. The Mujahideen fought that since it was the end of the war our army wouldn't have the strength to fight anymore.
ARE YOU SURE THAT THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO TELL ALL THIS?

MOM! LEAVE HIM ALONE, I'M INTERESTED.

So, the Mujaheddin also knew that the majority of the people 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 Raq the same way 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 COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT!

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.

GOD NIGH

That's to say the political prisoners who were the legitimate members of the revolution and who constituted our country's intellectual class.

SO THE STATE DECIDED TO ELIMINATE THE PROBLEM. THEY PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING CHOICE TO THE DETAINEDS: EITHER THEY COULD DENOUNCE THEIR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS AND PROMISE FIDELITY AND LOYALTY TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, IN WHICH CASE THEY WERE FONN SERVING THEIR TIME.
Yes, well, most of them were executed.
How many did they kill?
No one knows exactly how many thousands. Or rather, many tens of thousands of people.

Not counting those disabled by the war. The populations ravaged by chemical weapons.

Those who lost their minds from the explosions.

The refugees. The material destruction.

Next to my father's distressing report, my Viennese misadventures seemed like little anecdotes of no importance.

Despite my father's sound no. I don't feel any real conviction in his voice. He seemed to me as blasé as my mother.

But all that is behind us. We must go forward. How we must rebuild everything.

It's seven. You have a long day at work. Do you have any plans?

No. Yet.

He'd tell them anything about my Austrian life. They had suffered enough as it was.
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.

VER. SPEAK A LITTLE!

THANK YOU FOR THE FLOWERS.

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

I KNOW HOW TO SAY "TOUCH Höhe OTT" HERE. NOT HERE!

WHEN I THINK OF VENICE, I IMMEDIATELY THINK OF SISI. YOU MUST HAVE SEEN THE FILM STARRED KARYN!

YOU MUST SEE THOSE STARS SHINE IN THE SKY.

THAT'S MIMA. MY FIRST COUSIN. SHE'S AN IMPERIAL. SHE TALKS ABOUT Romy Schneider As If She Were Her Best Friend.

MojTaneh is the HEART AND SOUL OF THE PERFECT FAMILY.

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

EVEN THOUGH I KNEW THAT THEY WERE COMING TO SEE ME. BUT IF FRIENDSHIP AND OLISHNESS COULD ONLY HAVE ENOUGH OF RECEIVING THEM EVERY DAY.

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. SISI. YOU'LL BE CATCHING THE LIKE'S BALL.

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

SHE WAS STILL HER OLD SELF.
AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIEND'S TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM. WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.

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

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

OH, REALLY?

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?

WHAT?

COMPARED TO HER FASHIONABLE MAKEUP, I REALLY DID EXCITE ALL THE ADULTS OF A NUN.

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! HEE! TOO!

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.
GONE DAYS EATER

LALEH CALLED FOR YOU

ONE NIGHT MY FRIENDS AND I FIND THE Mall SO UNBEARABLY INANE

YOU KNOW IT S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT NO ONE IS ASKING
THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT ESPECIALLY THE OPPOSITE IN FACT

WE ve SOME THOUGH MY CHILD
THERE MUST BE
SOME PEOPLE THAT
YOU d LIKE TO
Spend TIME WITH

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

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

MY MOTHER S RESPONSE SEEMED
NORMAL SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED
HIM SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS
BABY BOY UP AND ENCOUR
AGED ME TO DO STUFF THINGS

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

IT S JUST THAT
KIA

WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR
SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO
LEAVE THE COUNTRY ELEGANTLY
AND WHERE DID HE GO?

NOWHERE THEY ARRESTED
MAY BE 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 DEAD???

YES WELL I WOULD SAY HE
IS DISABLED
I decided to go see him. I learned that his family had moved away, and my mother set up an inquiry in the neighborhood and finally found their telephone number. How could I please speak to him?

Maari? Is it you?

No, this is her mother.

Maari? Maari.

Oh it's so good to hear your voice! When can we see each other?

Tomorrow if you want. Do you have our address?

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 children. I'm going abroad.

Oh, that's great.

The neighbor's that's great. Calms me down even more. If something really serious had happened, he certainly wouldn't have said that.
It's crazy how you've changed! Come in please, come in!

Oh, I'm fine, thanks. I'm thirsty. I'm going to get a coke. In that case, I'll have one too.

Yes, I know that better than anyone.


Do you remember our friend Ramin?

I especially remember us and our iron knuckles. The poor boy had his arm smashed.

What an idiot! Really, what an idiot I am!

I didn't dare look at him anywhere but in the eyes.
This time, he's the one who saved the situation.

Are you 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.
He ended up landing in a good hospital there. The doctors set themselves to sticking the pieces back together. They stitched and stitched.

And finally, after one hundred fifty operations and a year and a half of surgeries...

He became, once again a whole man.

"Oh doctor! I've never felt so good! Thanks to you, I can begin a new life."

To help him lead his new life, his family needed to find him a wife. His mother went round the rounds of their friends and their neighbors and found a rare pearl. As tradition requires, the man, accompanied by his family, went to ask for the young girl's hand.

"Our son is exceptional. Our daughter is magnificent!"

After long negotiations over the amount of the dowry, the wedding rings, the dress, the flowers, the hairdresser, the makeup artist, the wedding video crew, the caterers, the waiters, the musicians, the number of guests, the two families reached an agreement.

"It's the most beautiful day of my life."

"I'll love you forever."

"Mr. Nakano, the husband who must pay his wife a dowry."

110
AND WHAT COMES AFTER THE WEDDING?

UM I DON'T KNOW

AFTER THE WEDDING COMES "THE HONEYMOON NIGHT"

MY DEAR I CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER

I'M COMING MY DEAR I'M COMING

OH YOUR MOTHER WAS RIGHT TO SAY YOU WERE EXCEPTIONAL, YOU ARE SO

IN THE NAME OF GOD WHAT A THE WORLD IS THAT?

WHY SN - - N'T 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 WP INSTEAD OF BEING BETWEEN YOUR LEGS AND YOU DARE TO TELL ME THAT IT'S NO BIG DEAL ???

YES BUT IT WORKS

DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING I WAS SOLD DAMAGED GOODS!

WANT A DIVORCE AS OF TOMORROW!
Imagine that! Ha! Ha! Ha! So the guy was so fed up. Ha! Ha! Ha! that he said:

"Kiss my ass!!" Ha! Ha! Ha!

HA! HA! HA!

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

Oops! Careful!

We spent the whole afternoon talking and joking.

You remember what came out of that, don't you?

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...
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, no one loved me. Oh, dear. Oh, I was alone. For them to feel some compassion for me.

Certainly they had to endure the war, but they had each other close by. They had never known the confusion of being a third. Perhaps they had always had a home.

At the same time, how could they have pitied me? I was so shut off.

Kept repeating to myself: my heart wasn't cracked up.

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, know yourself a good club. You should register for some adult education courses. You must go to university. You should...

But I don't want to exercise or get married or study.
I thought that by coming back to Japan, 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 repressed.

Mari: I'm going grocery shopping. Do you need anything?

Cigarettes, please.

Renting "La Dolce Vita." Don't you want to watch it together?

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.

Soon later, I got to know a girl who buried television in showing. She told me that Oshin was in fact a geisha and since her profession don't suit Islamic morals, the director of the channel had decided that she'd be a hairdresser.

I was reparable because Oshin and her courtesan friends spent their time making wigs.
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.

YOU KNOW, YOU CAN RENT EQUIPMENT. IF YOU WANT, WE CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO SKI.

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

NO, THANKS, I AM VERY HAPPY LIKE THIS.
EVEN NO. EH MY IM EXHAUSTED
I SAW LOTS OF CUTE GUYS TALL, MUSCLED
OH YES EH HE HE HE

"TELL US HAVE YOU HAD SEX?
OF COURSE IM !NTEEN

SO DO TELL ME WAGS IT?
SUPPOSEDLY IT HURTS A LOT THE FIRST TIME, MUST BE GREAT

"DOES THIS WITH AND IT S NOT ALWAYS PAINLESS"
"WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOUve DONE THE DEED WITH MANY PEOPLE?"
"MEAN I HAD FEW EXPERIENCES"

SO WHAT S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND A WHORE???

THEY WERE OVERLAPPED BY HER VENUES AND FRICTION WHICH EXPLAINED THEIR AGGRESSIVENESS TOWARD ME TO THEM I HAD BECOME A SCABDoes IT MAKE

UNDERNEATH THEIR GOWAN APPEARANCE I BEING MODERN WOMAN. MY FRIENDS WERE REAL TRUE T session.
I returned home even more depressed.

Oh you're so tan it looks great on you!

Maaji 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 some reason I can't tell them anything. I feel like I'm constantly wearing a mask.

Your story's as muddled as you are.

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.
Was often in a trance

"Maman, do you want to come to the Caspian Sea?"

"Yes."

But as soon as the effect of the pills wore off, I once again became conscious. My identity 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 be 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?"

"No."

"OK."

"OK."

The day after their departure, I made my arrangements. I had seen a film. A woman who drank wine and cut her wrists. Not having any wine, drank a half bottle of vodka.

I couldn't bring myself to push the blade into my flesh. I had always been very afraid of blood. Nevertheless, since I was drunk, I managed to graze myself.

And so they went for ten days.

As for the rest, I followed the film. I stretched out in a hot bath. Waiting for my blood to empty out but kept coagulating.

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 PROOF SHOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO FINISH OFF AN ELEPHANT. EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A BELIEVER, GOOD 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.
Hair being an obsession of the Oriental woman, I began with hair removal.

Then I got rid of my old clothes.

And had some new clothes made.

A modern wardrobe.

Original shoes.

A fashionable haircut.

A permanent.

I became a sophisticated woman.

Shopping.

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

MORE AND MORE,

AND MORE AND MORE

TO THE POINT WHERE I BECAME AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR

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

STONG AND INVINCIBLE LIKE THIS I WAS GOING TO MEET MY NEW DESTINY.
THE EXAM

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

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

WELCOME, PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.

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

CAN S. WE?

WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'M AN INSTRUCTOR IN STRUC. I ALSO TEACH FRENCH.

HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANCE?

I WAS IN AUSTRIA. I STUDIED AT THE LYCEE FRANCAIS IN TEHRAN AND IN VIENNA.

AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO?

PLANTING.

NO WAY! I'M NOT A PLANT!
OHH! YOU EITHER TALK OR YOU SHINE! COME ON, COME DANCE A LITTLE!

WHO'S THAT GUY?

REZA? HE'S ONE OF OUR NEIGHBORS. BE CAREFUL. HE'S A LITTLE MAN.

A MERCILESS SER.Logger

REALLY? HE SEEMS VERY NICE.

OH WHERE IS HE?

YES, WE EVERYONE ELSE AND WE MAY HAVE YOU HEARD THE STORY OF THE SOLDIER WHO EXPELLED INTO A THOUSAND PIECES?

SORRY TO HAVE LEFT YOU BUT I HADN'T SEEN HAMID IN A WHILE.

HAMID:

HAMID WAS TALKING TO US. WE WERE AT THE FRONT TOGETHER. YOU WERE IN THE WAR.

HE'S THE ONE WHO GETS MARRIED AND HAS HIS THING ON HIS MOUTH.
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!

And that's how I met the man that I would marry two years later.

Then we spent a week in the mountains, without food we ate snow so as not to die from dehydration.

What hered?

That must have been terribly hard.

Here, yes, but human beings are much more resilient than we think.

I knew.

After this party, Rokana never spoke to me again. Apparently, her post friend wanted to go out with Alza. Unfortunately, we don't always get what we want.
EVERYTHING ABOUT US WAS OPPOSITE

HIS ROOM  MY ROOM

HIS FAVORITE ACTIVITY  MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY

HIS CHILDHOOD FRIENDS  MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS

HIS REAL LIFE  MY REAL 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
CAN'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 WAX WHICH I HAD ESCAPED

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

WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

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

WHERE WILL YOU GO IN EUROPE?

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

YOU'LL COME WITH ME?

NOUS.

DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY RIGHT AWAY. IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE STILL NESTLED HERE YOULL SEE. A YEAR FROM NOW PEOPLE WILL DISGUST YOU ALWAYS INTERFERING IN THINGS THAT DON'T CONCERN THEM.

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

DON'T WORRY, WE'LL FIND A SOLUTION.

HAPPILY GETTING A VISA PROVED TO BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT SO WE DECIDED TO STUDY FOR THE NATIONAL EXAM. SO AS NOT TO WASTE YEARS OF OUR LIVES DOING NOTHING. IT WAS VERY HARD. IT HAD BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE REZA HAD GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL. HE WAS OUT OF PRACTICE FOR STUDYING AS FOR ME, I HAVEN'T READ IRanian WRITING SINCE I WAS FOURTEEN.
I was very pleased with my drawing.

I saw that red tulips grow from the head of martyrs.
WE HAD TO WAIT SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE GETTING THE RESULTS IN THE "ETELAAT," WHICH DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL 3 PM. WE WERE IN FRONT OF THE KIOSKS AT 1.

LOOK! THERE'S MY NAME!

NAME OF A NEWSPAPER

SHIT! HERE'S YOURS TOO.

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

SINCE WE WEREN'T MARRIED, WE COULDN'T KISS EACH OTHER IN PUBLIC, OR EVEN GIVE EACH OTHER 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. MEM DAM! I SAT IN! I WAS ADMITTED TO GRAPHIC ARTS. BRAVO! WE KNOW WE SAW YOUR AND REZA'S NAMES IN THE PAPER.

IN BAD 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 AHMAD'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 SHISISM 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 END UP CONVINCED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO GET OVER THIS LAST HURDLE WAS TO PRAY.

God, help me!
THE DAY OF THE IDENTICAL TEST

MISS SATRAFI: I SEE FROM YOUR FILE THAT YOU HAVE LIVED IN AUSTRALIA. DID YOU WEAR THE VEIL THERE?

NO. I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IF WOMEN'S HAIR POSES SO MANY PROBLEMS GOD WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE MADE US BALD.

YOU KNOW HOW TO PRAY?

AND MAY I KNOW WHY?

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 MUHAMMAD SAID GOD IS CLOSER TO US THAN OUR JUGULAR VEIN. GOD IS ALWAYS WITH US, HE IS IN US, RIGHT?

THANK YOU, MISS SATRAFI. 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.

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 EVEN SAID THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T LIE. I WAS LUCKY. I HAD STUMBLED ON A TRUE RELIGIOUS MAN.
For success on the exam, I made Bazaari and me more calm about our shared future. Now we were able to stay together, because neither of us was going to leave Iran without the other. From then on, we became a real couple. Which naturally meant that we began to pick on each other. I reproached him for not being active enough, he chose to criticize my physical characteristics: not elegant enough, not made up enough, etc.

At the time, I thought I should make some efforts. One day when we had a rendezvous in front of the Saffar Bazaar, I arrived very made up to give him a surprise.

Late as usual.

Name of a shopping center.

Suddenly, from the other side of the street, I saw a car full of revolutionaries, followed by a bus. When they came with the bus, I meant to be dead.

If they see me with this lipstick, they'll take me away.

This called for action.

What am I going to do?

That's it! I've got it.

I had to distract them. I had to go see them before they saw me.

Yes, my sister.

There's a guy who said something indecent to me.

Oh!

My brother.

My brother.

Where's the bastard? I'll shut him up once and for all.

Over there! In the steps. That's him!
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!

KEZA 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!
WHHEW!!

I JUST HAD TO FIND KARIM.

HE WASN'T FAR.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN A MESS LIKE THAT? THAT DOESN'T EVEN SUIT YOU?

IT DOESN'T SUIT ME?

NO.

WHAT'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" AND TELL THEM THAT THAT GUY HAD SPEAK OF INDECENCY TO ME AND THEY ARRESTED HIM.

YOU THINK?

YOU THINK?

ABSOLUTELY NO! NO!

COME ON LET'S GO SOMEWHERE ELSE IT'S DANGEROUS HERE!

BUT THEY'RE GONE!

WHEN THEY CARRY OUT RASIS, THERE'S NEVER ONLY ONE PATROL THERE WILL BE OTHERS.
IT MUST BE SAID THAT DURING THIS PERIOD YOUNG COUPLES WHO SHOVED THEMSELVES IN PUBLIC WERE RUNNING A RISK.

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

MY BROTHER, WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS WOMAN?

SHE'S MY WIFE.

BUT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A PHOTOCOPY OF YOUR MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE IN YOUR POCKET.

OKAY, IT'S FINE.

THE TRIBUNAL BEGIN IF THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE WERE NOT UNITED BY SACRED TIES.

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THIS MAN?

HE'S MY CRUSIN.

ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAD JUST MET.

WHAT'S YOUR MOTHER'S NAME?

AZAM KOLKHOZMI.

WHAT'S HIS MOTHER'S NAME?

I FORGOT.

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

COME ON, GET IN THE CAR!

THEY TOOK THEM TO THE COMMITTEE. THEN THEY CALLED THEIR PARENTS TO FINE THEIR CHILDREN.

SIT YOUR DAUGHTER IS AT THE COMMITTEE OF SADAR TAR, ACCOMPANIED BY A YOUNG MAN. A CERTAIN SADAR THEY WERE WALKING TOGETHER IN THE PARK. IT'S AN ACT AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS MORAL CODE.

AND THE VALUES OF OUR REPUBLIC. YOU CAN COME GET HER IN EXCHANGE FOR 20,000 TUMANS* IN CASH. OTHERWISE SHE WILL BE WHIPPED.

* 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.

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 WHOM?

TO THE POOR GUY THEY JUST ARRESTED INSTEAD OF ME!

NOTHING! HE'LL GET A FEW SLAPS, THAT'S ALL.

THOUGH THEY'RE GOING TO SICK THAT IT'S POSSIBLE THEY'LL HANG HIM. YOU REMEMBER MY FRIENDS DARISUS AND MODER?

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 IS MY FRIEND.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY FRIEND?

THAT WE GO OUT TOGETHER.

They thought they'd have a little fun.

What do you mean by friend?
Darius had his nose broken. He was given a few kicks. He was released. But they came out of it well. Considering here, if you are homosexual, according to the law it's capital punishment.

Come on, let's go home. Right now.

Yes.

Are you coming over? If you like.

We couldn't do anything else but close in on each other.

The outside was dangerous. We often found ourselves inside. At his house or at my house. This situation was suffocating me.
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!

Hai Hai Hai!

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 and everyone have you forgotten him too? He gave his life for his ideas. What have I taught you? Honor?

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.
SEPTEMBER 1989. I WAS FINALLY A STUDENT.

THE BREAKFAST THAT MY MOTHER HAD PREPARED JUST LIKE SHE USED TO. THE MELANCHOLY ATMOSPHERE OF THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN. MY UNIFORM. EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF THE BEGINNING OF SCHOOL.

"I'M REALLY EXCITED!"

REZA FOUND ME ON THE WAY.

DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN TELL PEOPLE WE'RE TOGETHER?

ARE YOU CRAZY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE. IF THE ADMINISTRATION DISCOVERS OUR RELATIONSHIP, WE'LL BE KICKED OUT TO THEM, WE'RE BREAKING THE LAW.

HE WAS EXAGGERATING A LITTLE. FROM THE MOMENT WE ARRIVED AT UNIVERSITY, ALTHOUGH BOYS AND GIRLS DIDN'T MIX, THIS DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM THROWING EACH OTHER FLIRTATIOUS LOOKS.

NATURALLY, AFTER ALL LAW OR NO LAW. THESE WERE HUMAN BEINGS.
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 part history.

What is generally known as Arab art and architecture should in fact be called the art of the Islamic Empire, which stretched from China to Spain. This art is a cross between Indian, Persian and Mesopotamian art. Those whom we consider, like Augustine, to be Arab scholars are for the most part anything but Arabs. Even the first book of Arabic grammar was written by an Iranian.

It was funny to see what extent the Islamic Republic was not able to put an end to our chauvinism. The contrary! People often compared the prejudice of the new regime to the Arab invasions. According to this logic, being Persian meant "not being a fanatic" but this parallel went only so far. Considering the fact that our government wasn't composed of Arab invaders but Persian fundamentalists.

At lunch time

The professor is very interesting, but oh my! Bone his mouth smells even thirty feet away. You can smell his toothache breath.

Despite their upright appearance, the girls in my class seemed to be quite the comedians.

Hey, look the guy in the blue shirt. He's really not bad.

They were talking about Keria. I suddenly found them a lot less funny.

Hi I'm Shouka and Myooshah. Nice to meet you I am Marjane.

You've lived abroad?

Yes, how did you know?

Because of your language? You wear it like a beginner.

Myooshah had very green eyes which made her the most sought after after 62 at the College. (The majority of Iranians have black eyes.)

Shouka was very funny. Unfortunately, when she got married two years later, her husband and father see her from associating with me to him, I was an immoral 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.

Note: Head scarf.
WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GET 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!"

ST. 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 HALED IN NO TIME.

WHHEW! SHE HAS FORGIVEN ME

OH GRANDMA, THANK YOU!

SHE HAD GIVEN ME A GIFT, SHE HAD THOUGHT OF MY HAIR, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME.

I HAD FORGOTTEN HER EXTREME INTRANSIGENCE.
ONE WEEK LATER

THE CLEAN SHAVEN GUI, RIGHT OVER THERE, WHAT'S HIS NAME? 
REZA, YES, REZA DO YOU KNOW HIM? 
NO, WHY?

WELL, HE CAN'T STOP OGLING YOU, MR. HEE HEE HEE!

FACED WITH THE PERSECUTION OF MY GIRLFRIENDS, I HAD NO 
CHOICE BUT TO ADMIT THE TRUTH

STUDENT'S STUDENT'S

SUCH DISGUSTING

I COMPASS I SAW
HIM LAST NIGHT
IN YOUR CAR

DIRTY HAI!
YOU REALLY
GET ME!

SHH LISTEN TO 
WHAT THE DIRECTOR IS SAYING

IT WAS AT THE MAIN CAMPUS THAT THE SUBJECTS
COMMENTED ALL THE COLLEGES WERE TAUGHT IT
WAS MUCH MORE REPRESSIVE THAN OUR
COLLEGE AS ARTISTS, WE BENEFITED
FROM A LITTLE MORE LIBERTY FOR
EXAMPLE, THOSE GIRLS AND BOYS
HAD TO TAKE DIFFERENT
STAIRCASES WHERE 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 SHEUKA SAID THAT IT WAS TO
KEEP THE BOYS FROM WATCHING OUR BUTTS
WHILE WE CLIMBED

THANK SHE WAS RIGHT

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!
Once in the amphitheater, we discovered the reason for our convocation. The administration had organized a lecture on 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, 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 SAYS!
THANKS!

YOU’VE BEEN SUMMONED BY THE ISLAMIC COMMISSION. GOOD LUCK
IS IT SERIOUS?
I REALLY DON’T KNOW

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 PROVES TO BE THE “TRUE RELIGIOUS” MAN THE ONE WHO PASSED ME IN THE RELIGIOUS 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 YEL IS SYNONYMOUS WITH EMANATION.
IF YOU SAY SO?

IT IS NOT I WHO SAYS IT. IT’S GOD. I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU A SECOND CHANCE THIS TIME. YOU ARE 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 studies 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 dressed. Try to make the best of it.

We tried.

We looked from every direction. We painted 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?

DRAWING.

WELL, BECAUSE I'M DRAWING.

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 DOE??
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!

Mayhem! 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!

Yelled so loudly that they didn't even arrest me.
WE CONFRONTED THE REGIME AS BEST WE COULD.


OUR STRUGGLE WAS MORE DISCREET.

IT HINGED ON THE LITTLE DETAILS TO OUR LEADERS, THE SMALLEST THINGS COULD BE A SUBJECT OF SURVEYS IN SHOwing YOUR WRIST

A LEUG LAUGH

HAVING A WALKMAN

IN SHIRT EVERYTHING WAS A PRETEXT TO ARREST US.

THE REGIME HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT ONE PERSON LEAVING HER HOUSE WHILE ASKING HERSELF ARE MY TROUSERS LONG ENOUGH?

IS MY VEIL IN PLACE?

ARE THEY GOING TO WRAP ME?

CAN MY MAKE-UP BE SEEN?

NO LONGER ASKS Herself WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF THOUGHT?

WHERE IS MY FREEDOM OF SPEECH?

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.
I DON'T SAY EVERYTHING OUTLINED HERE 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 LACK OF HAIR AND HER LIPSTICK SHE WAS ACTING LIKE THE STATE THAT BIC THAT DAY HALF THE CLASS TURNED ITS BACK ON ME.
HAPPY, 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 FOCUSED FOR EACH OTHER AT LAST FOUND A PLACE OF FREEDOM.

AT FIRST THERE WERE ONLY FIVE OF US.

THEN

AND FINALLY

WE WERE MUCH MORE FREE THAN I WOULD HAVE BELIEVED.

OUR PROFESSOR WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE THE SKETCHES WE DID. HE GAVE AN ARTIST SHOULD DEFY THE LAW! I CONGRATULATE YOU!

OUR BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC AND OUR BEHAVIOR IN PRIVATE WERE POLAR OPPOSITES.

THIS 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 CARRIED EVERYONE OFF TO PRISON. OBVIOUSLY, WE WERE VERY SCARED THE FIRST TIME.

BUT WE QUICKLY GOT USED TO IT. WE WOULD EVEN ARRIVE LAUGHING.

THEN CAME THE USUAL SPEECH AGAINST THE MORAL CODE.

THE SITUATION DETERIORATED. THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS, TWENTY THOUSAND TOMANS.

OH BEARDED, ONE, YOUR BEAR STINKS!

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!

Get 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.

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!

All is right!

That same night, Ali had a big party at his house.

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.

S E: WE WOULD LIKE A ROOM FOR TWO NIGHTS.

YOUR MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE PLEASE.

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?

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 SUGGESTS WE'LL HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE AUTHORITIES. AND THEN FROM A MORAL STANDPOINT, WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS NOT RIGHT. YOU SHOULD GET MARRIED.

I'M READY TO GET ENGAGED.

WE HAD ONLY SEEN EACH OTHER AT HIS HOUSE OR AT MY HOUSE (I MEAN, AT OUR PARENTS' HOUSES.)

PEEK DOWN ME. THEN REZZ NIK.

I LOVE YOU IF YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED?

GO?

GIVE ME A LITTLE TIME.

TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.

HAPPY. MY FATHER WAS HOME.

SAD REZZ ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KNOW. AS THE SAME TIME. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW HIM, YOU MUST LIVE WITH HIM. AND FOR THAT YOU MUST MARRY.

WORST CASE WE ENTRANCE.

WELL, YES.

NEEDED TO TALK TO SWEET WITH MY PARENTS. BUT MY MOTHER WAS ON A TRIP ABROAD.
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 Keza, 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 Japan, she'll neither. 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: I live together as long as you feel truly happy. Life is too short to be lived badly.

Waiter, the check, please!

Yes, sir.

Long afterwards, my father admitted to me that he had always known that I would get divorced. He wanted me to realize by myself that Keza 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?

Mom, I have some very big news to tell you. I'm getting married!

You're getting married? But to whom?

Much better now that I've heard your voice.

Who do you think? 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.

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.

Well, she doesn't approve.

I never knew what they said to each other, Nevertheless, when my mother got back to Tehran.

I half expected that it's not serious. I'll talk to her. Don't worry.

Oh my darling, I'll make all the arrangements. This ceremony must be worthy of you.
And starting the next day

I was the subject of dozens of experiments, of all kinds. Makeup, flower bouquets, shoes.

What do you think of this?

Ohh... It's a pretty dress, but I can't wear something like that.

Do you like it, baby?

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 at video crew flowers.

The bride is here!

My darling!
FIRST, WE WENT BEFORE THE MULLAH

MR. REZA: TO YOU TAKE MISS MARYAM?
MISS MARYAM: DO YOU TAKE ME, REZA?

YES

YES

THEN IT WAS FOLKIRE'S TURN. TRADITION REQUIRED THAT A HAPPLY MARRIED WOMAN RUN TWO SUGAR LEAVES ABOVE YOUR HEADS TO PASS ON HER JOY AND PROSPERITY.

TRADITION ALSO REQUIRED THAT WE DUNK OUR FINGERS IN MONEY.

AND THAT WE SUCK ONE ANOTHER'S FINGERS TO BEGIN OUR MARRIED LIFE ON A SWEET NOTE.

THEN CAME THE GIFTS.

HERE, THIS FOR YOU!

MOM!

SO, WHEN CAN WE EXPECT KIDS?

MOM:

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?
Me!

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 remain free.

My sweet little men! I trust me. I know what I'm doing.

The rest of the evening alternates 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 have conferred 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 re.escape.

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 continuously 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.

I agree with everything you say.

He married her.

And found himself with her.
After one month of marriage, we set up separate bathrooms.

He had his life.

Where's your wife?

In jail with her cousin.

And had mine.

Yeah, he's with his brother.

And Reza's wife?

We were keeping up appearances in public.

She's going to shut her big mouth?

What an ass.

We had been considered the model couple for so long and by so many people that we weren't able to accept our failure.

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 be whatever you want. I'm not one of those male chauvinists who expects you to report back. So leave me alone.

In the space of two months, we went from weekly fights to daily insults.
IN 1991 THE YEAR OF MY MARRIAGE, IRAQ ATTACKS KUWAIT

SERVES THEM RIGHT! THEY SUPPORTED THAT BASTARD SADDAM HUSSEIN FOR EIGHT YEARS AGAINST US! THEY SHOULD REAP WHAT THEY SOWED.

SADDAM IS OVERARMED AND THE KUWAITIS CONTINUE TO SURPASS THEIR OIL PRODUCTION QUOTA! LET THEM EXTERMINATE EACH OTHER!

NOW THAT IRAN HAS DECLARED ITSELF NEUTRAL IN THIS AFFAIR, THE KUWAITIS ARE APPLAUDING FOR HAVING SUPPORTED OUR ENEMY SOON THEY'LL EVEN COME EXILE THEMSELVES HERE.

THAT'S WHAT THEY DID.

THE KUWAITI IMMIGRANTS WERE EASY TO IDENTIFY THEY HAD VERY MODERN CARS. IN CONTRAST TO IRANIANS, ECONOMICALLY DESTROYED AFTER THE LONG YEARS OF WAR. MY ONLY CONTACT WITH THEM WAS ONE SUMMER DAY IN THE STREET.

HOW MUCH? HOW MUCH?

WHEN I RECOUNTED THIS MISADVENTURE TO MY UNCLE WHO KNEW KUWAIT WELL, HE TOLD ME "THERE, AS IN ALL THE ARAB COUNTRIES, WOMEN ARE SO LACKING IN RIGHTS THAT FOR A KUWAITI A GIRL WHO WALKS OUTSIDE WHILE DRINKING A COKE CAN'T BE ANYTHING BUT A PROSTITUTE."
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.

Maciej, come see!

This war has unleashed a panic in European countries.

People are filling their shopping carts. 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 parties! 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.

Hahahaha!
IT'S CRAZY. THE WAR IS HAPPENING 4,000 MILES AWAY AND THEY'RE FOCUSED ON THINKING THAT THEY HAVE SO LITTLE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT THEY ARE GETTING WORKER UP ABOUT NOTHING!

WHAT ARE YOU LAUGHING ABOUT?

WE SAW SOME EUROPEANS TERRORIZED BY THE GULF WAR ON TV AND SAW AND WE WERE SAYING THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE ENOUGH OF THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.

SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU TRUSTED OUR MEDIA? THEIR REPORTING CONSISTS OF MAKING ANTI-WESTERN PROPAGANDA.

DO YOU LET IT GET TO YOU HOW THE WESTERN MEDIA ALSO SUPPORTS AGAINST US. THAT'S WHERE OUR REPUTATION AS FUNDAMENTALISTS AND TERRORISTS COMES FROM!

YOU'RE RIGHT BETWEEN ONE'S FANATISM AND THE OTHER'S RATIONALITY, IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHICH SIDE TO CHOOSE!

PERSONALLY, I HATE SADAM 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 90,000 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 HUMAN?
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 $100 from me. I hate him. Now my economy will finally pick up.

Our husband is a war martyr. I hope Saddam goes to hell.

I lost my job. We're through with him. 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, as he from the time I spent with my parents, I lived from day to day without asking myself any questions. Nevertheless, in January 1992, a huge event occurred.

That was Fariborz on the telephone. He just installed a satellite antenna at his house.

Come on, hurry up! Let's go!

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.

The satellite antenna was synonymous with the opening up of the rest of the world.

The regime became aware that this new phenomenon was working against their indoctrination. Therefore, degrees 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.
My parents are dead. For them selves, 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:

- 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 ask first.

But what's gotten into you?

This morning, when I left for work, you were on the sofa. I came 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 a adult.

Anyone can. Be twenty. Two and be married. It doesn't require an except one intellectual effort. You would be better off thinking about getting your diploma in less than a year.

If that's how it is, I'm getting out of here.

Groove them.
My father was eight, anyone could get married. In fact everyone was getting married. There were those who were marrying rich men in America in the hopes of one day becoming actresses in Hollywood.

There were also some real love stories, like that of Hiva and Reza.

And then there was Reza and me.

As for the single ones, they were waiting for their turn.

Right now I have three candidates. One is a doctor but he's 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.

Bad, do you still want to talk to me?

What do you think?

I don'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 three: "The Secrets of the OAP" - "Fire Brides in Iran" and "The Memoirs of Messiah:"

Oh, great deal!

To catch up, I read all of them in ten days. Despite my assumptions, I found them really interesting.

Iranian Prime Minister, he nationalized the oil industry in 1954.
Amidst my spheres of interest, I found contact with new people, often much older than me. Among them, a certain Mr. 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 30% of the population should live below the poverty line.

Ms. Massadegh 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 AmeriCONS. Fauley. 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 misdeeds.

Pashed by my parents, encouraged by Mr. M. and his friends, and not a little thanks to myself, I changed my life.

Once again, I arrived at my usual conclusion. One must educate oneself.
In June 1993, at the end of our fourth year of study, Reza and I were called in by the professor who was head of the Visual Communications Department.

You are my two best students! Therefore, I 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 1993.

Museums

We met with scholars, researchers, and lecturers in the human sciences.

In Greek mythology, these 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... IT WAS EXCITING.
Finally came the day of graduation.

Before the jury arrived, our friends and families were given a chance to appreciate our work up close.

Mr. M. thank you for being here. I am truly honored.

The honor is mine.

Since I was a lot more talkative than Reza, we had decided that I would present 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 motives are American which is the reason behind our initiative.

Bravo, my children! It was perfect! Thanks to young people like you, I still have hope for the future of Iran. You should preserve your irrevocable role to the mayor of Tehran. Personally, I know the mayor's beauty. 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 GORGEOUS AMITRARR WAS A WARRIOR WITH THE TIP OF HER SWORD! SHE POINTS THE WAY TO THE HIPPOKRAME

SHOW ME

MMH

HALF OF YOUR CHARACTERS ARE WOMEN WITHOUT VEILS SEATED ON THE BACKS OF ALL SPECIES OF REAL OR MYTHICAL MAILS. WE CAN SEE THEIR SHAPES AND THEIR HAIR!

WE'LL COVER THEM!

A GORGEOUS AMITRARR A CHAPARR IS NO LONGER A GORGEOUS AFRAID 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, FARAH.

THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE
SAVED MY RELATIONSHIP WAS THE
PROJECT NOW THAT'S A LOST
CAUSE, I THINK WE'LL SEPARATE.

DON'T SEE THE CONNECTION
BETWEEN YOUR THEME PARK
AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

SINCE WE BEGAN OUR SHARE
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

EVEN BEGGAKS 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 "ROZOUAL TALK.

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.
This conversation with Farnaz shocked me. 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.

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 neck? It makes me claustrophobic!

Grandma. It's horrible. What is it? That's so horrible?

Think I no longer love Reza. I think we should separate.

That's your "horrific" thing? On my you scared me. I thought that someone had died.

You know. I have a heart condition. All these years for a divorce?

Listen to me. I got one fifty-five years ago. And let me tell you that at the time he was envious their marriage. But I always tell myself that I would be happier alone than with a shitmaker.

Yes, but.

No guts 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 can't stand 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.

But two months later, in March 1934, an illustrator made the following drawing for an article on Iranian soccer:

Everything was going well. The rapport with my colleagues made me forget the rest.

The government couldn't tolerate a Muslim being called an assassin. They therefore arrested the illustrator in question.

The magazine came out yesterday and they went to collect him at his house today. At five o'clock in the morning!

His drawing illustrates an article about alarm systems to protect the villages in the north of Iran against burglaries.

A few days later, when I got to work:

Whatever the case, from that moment on, all the press was examined with a magnifying glass.

But I knew what had happened to him. But everyone had his own theory:

No one knew what had happened to him, but everyone had his own theory:

They must have hanged him.

They cut off his hands so he can't draw anymore.

They shot him.

They tortured him.

He's alive. But he's blind.

His hands can't draw anymore.

I think he's tortured.

Yes.

Alia.

All because of this.

Our Behzad? Behzad Radio?
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 LIVER 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 INSULATING THAT BEARDED MAN WERE SISSELS. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.

AND THEY BEAT ME UP. I HAD BUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL, YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.

I'M GOING TO GET THE FOUNT. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

NARJANE. I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.

HELLO, I'M MANDANA.

AND THIS IS MY SON.
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.

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?

Um... no!

Marta's not even twenty-five. As for Gita, she doesn't have a husband yet!
ON OUR WAY BACK

TO THINK THAT HE WAS MY HERO FOR TWENTY YEARS! HIS WHOLE SPIEL ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WHILE HE DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE SAY ONE WORD OH! 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!

F 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 IF THE CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE GAIN AND WOMAN THE GROUND IN WHICH THE GRAIN GREW THEREFORE THE CHILD NATURALLY BELONGS TO HIS FATHER!

DO YOU REALIZE? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!
GLA dropped me off at home. My sister-in-law was there.

Hello Katavou. 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.

We've been married for three years, and for three years we've had our own icons. 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. Alza 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 the same reason that we got married to get around the social pressure. Our love has been bear for a long time. There's no point in trying again. It's a waste of time.

Don't know how I managed to tell him all that. So I suddenly. My grandma was right. I had taken my time, and I never regretted what I did.
A few days later, I went over to my parents' house.

Want to go to France?

That's great, you'll both need visas, have the two of you thought of that? It's not as if she's never been well or if he wants to, but we're going to get divorced.

WHAT MANIPULATION?

I'm not talking to you anymore.

What do I tell you? Don't worry about her, our daughter has always known how to take care of herself.

Weren't you worrying about me?

I was scared that you'd ruin your life.

It's true.

You knew it all along.

You knew it all along and yet you talked to 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 their own experience.

Well, we're very happy with your decision, you weren't made to live here anyway. We're crushed, not only by the government but by the weight of our traditions.

Revolution set us back fifty years. It will take generations for all this to end. You only have one life. It's your duty to live it well and now that you are twenty-five, it's not like when you went to Austria you don't need us anymore.

Our revolution set us back fifty years. It will take generations for all this to end. You only have one life. It's your duty to live it well and now that you are twenty-five, it's not like when you went to Austria you don't need us anymore.

Not having been able to do anything in my own country, I prepared to leave it once again. I went to France for the first time in 1984 to take a test to enter the school for 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 84, 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 shrine of the Caspian Sea, where I filled my lungs with that very special air that doesn't exist anywhere else.

I also went to my grandfather's tomb, where I promised him that he would be proud of me.

I also went behind the divine prison where the body of my uncle again lay in his unmarked grave, next to thousands of other caravans. I gave him my word to try to remain as honest as possible.

I also spent some wonderful moments with my parents.

I also spent some wonderful moments with my parents.

Until September 8, 1984, when along with my grandma, they accompanied me to Mehrabad Airport.
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 March 25, 1935. She died January 4, 1936. Freedom had a price.
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