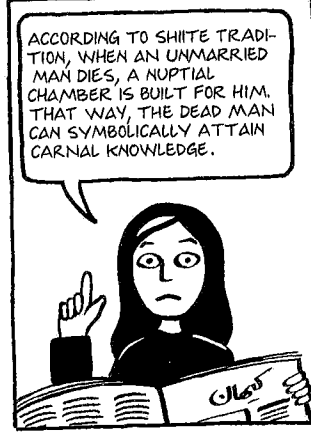
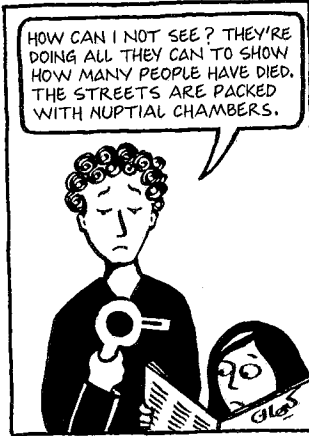
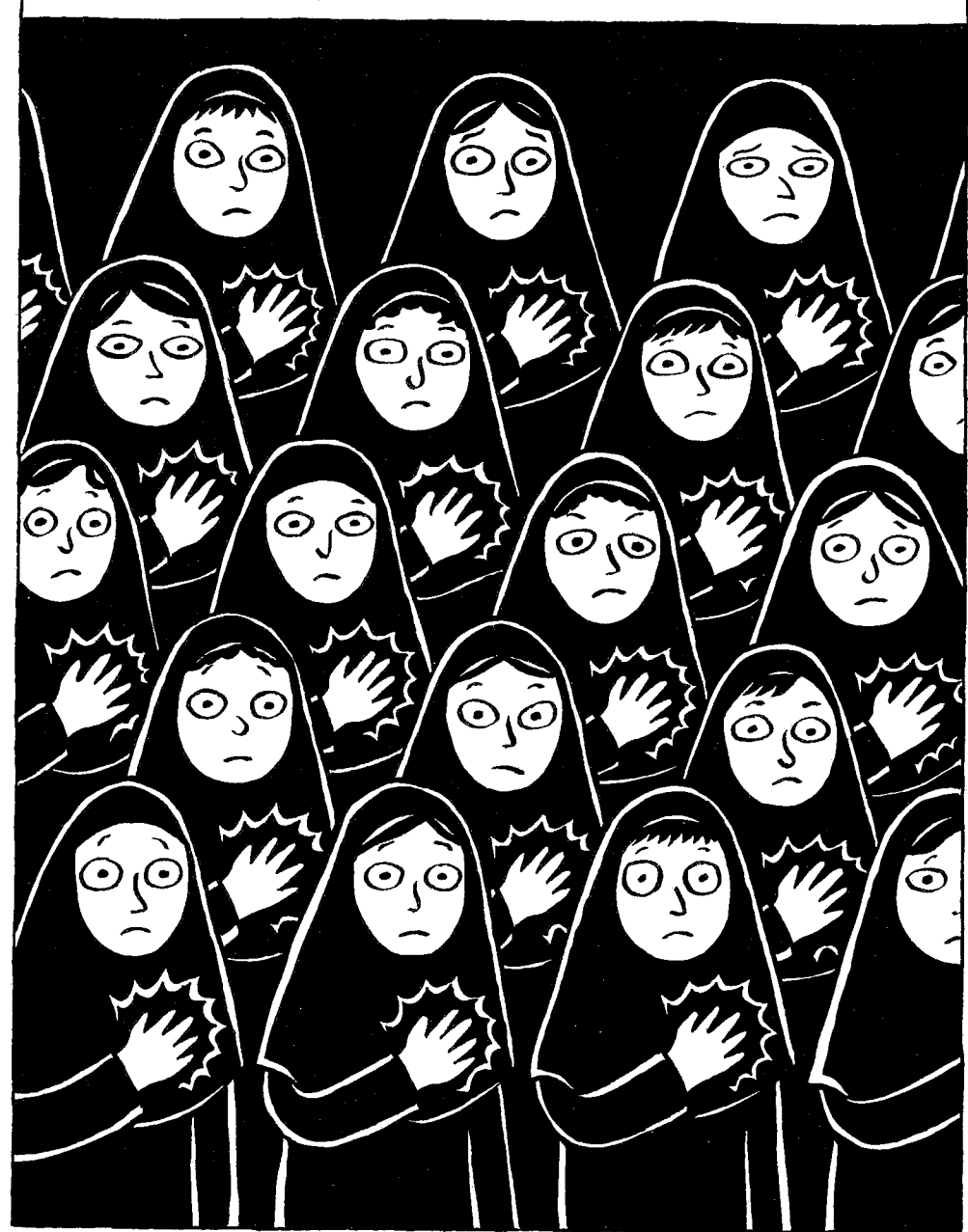


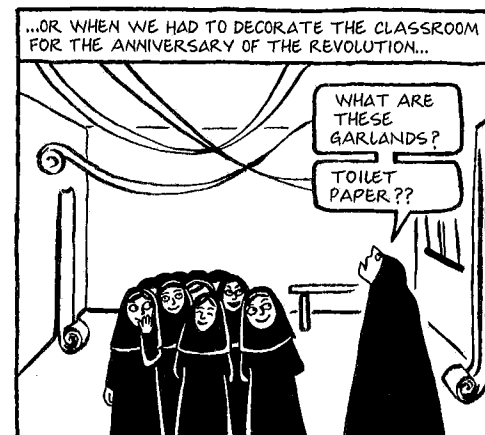
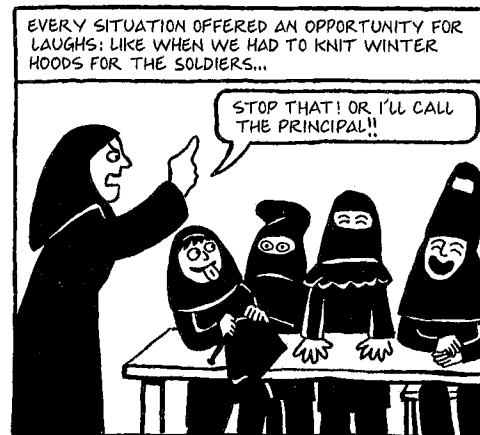
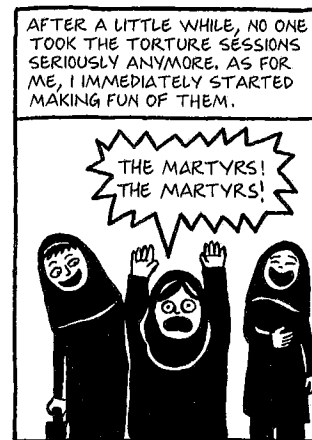
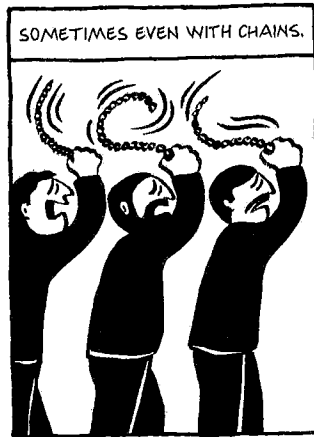
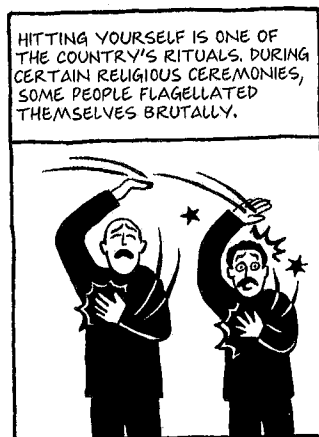
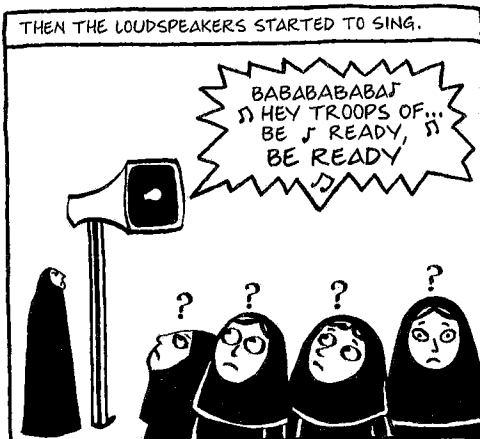
THE KEY

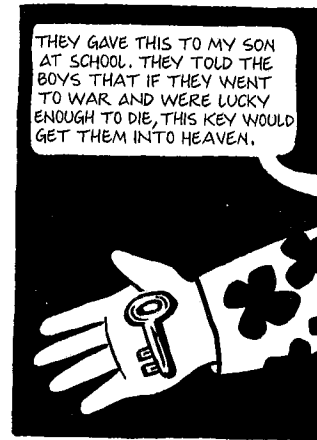
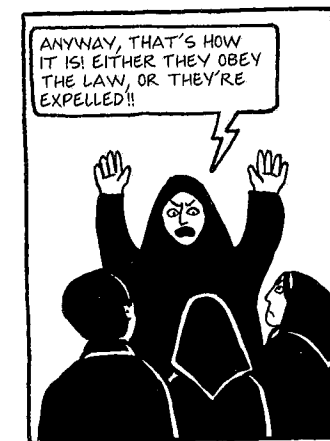
THE IRAQI ARMY HAD CONQUERED THE CITY OF KHORRAMSHAHR. THEIR ARMS WERE MODERN, BUT WHERE IRAQ HAD QUALITY, WE HAD QUANTITY. COMPARED TO IRAQ, IRAN HAD A HUGE RESERVOIR OF POTENTIAL SOLDIERS. THE NUMBER OF WAR MARTYRS EMPHASIZED THAT DIFFERENCE.

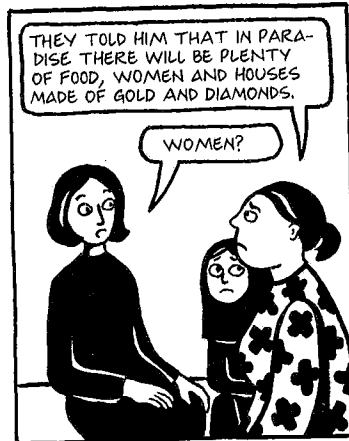


I AGREED WITH MY MOTHER. I TOO TRIED TO THINK ONLY OF LIFE. HOWEVER, IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY: AT SCHOOL, THEY LINED US UP TWICE A DAY TO MOURN THE WAR DEAD. THEY PUT ON FUNERAL MARCHES, AND WE HAD TO BEAT OUR BREASTS.









THE KEY TO PARADISE WAS FOR POOR PEOPLE. THOUSANDS OF YOUNG KIDS, PROMISED A BETTER LIFE, EXPLODED ON THE MINEFIELDS WITH THEIR KEYS AROUND THEIR NECKS.



MRS. NASRINE'S SON MANAGED TO AVOID THAT FATE, BUT LOTS OF OTHER KIDS FROM HIS NEIGHBORHOOD DIDN'T.

MEANWHILE, I GOT TO GO TO MY FIRST PARTY. NOT ONLY DID MY MOM LET ME GO, SHE ALSO KNITTED ME A SWEATER FULL OF HOLES AND MADE ME A NECKLACE WITH CHAINS AND NAILS. PUNK ROCK WAS IN.



I WAS LOOKING SHARP.



THE WINE

AFTER THE BORDER TOWNS, TEHRAN BECAME THE BOMBERS' MAIN TARGET. TOGETHER WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE IN OUR BUILDING, WE TURNED THE BASEMENT INTO A SHELTER. EVERY TIME THE SIREN RANG OUT, EVERYONE WOULD RUN DOWNSTAIRS...



PUT YOUR CIGARETTE OUT. THEY SAY THAT THE GLOW OF A CIGARETTE IS THE EASIEST THING TO SEE FROM THE SKY.

BUT WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT HERE!





IN SPITE OF ALL THE DANGERS, THE PARTIES WENT ON. "WITHOUT THEM IT WOULDN'T BE PSYCHOLOGICALLY BEARABLE," SOME SAID. "WITHOUT PARTIES, WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST BURY OURSELVES NOW," ADDED THE OTHERS. MY UNCLE INVITED US TO HIS HOUSE TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF MY COUSIN. EVERYONE WAS THERE. EVEN GRANDMA WAS DANCING.



DAMN!
POWER OUTAGE!!

BE CAREFUL
WHERE YOU
STEP!!!

AWWWW! NO MORE MUSIC!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
I'LL GO GET THE ZARB.

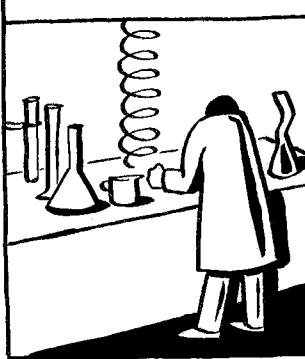


A ZARB IS A KIND OF DRUM. MY FATHER PLAYED IT VERY WELL. LIKE A PRO.

WE HAD EVERYTHING. WELL, EVERYTHING THAT WAS FORBIDDEN. EVEN ALCOHOL, GALLONS OF IT.



MY UNCLE WAS THE VINTNER. HE HAD BUILT A GENUINE WINE-MAKING LAB IN HIS BASEMENT.



MRS. NASRINE, WHO WAS ALSO HIS CLEANING LADY, CRUSHED THE GRAPES.

GOD FORGIVE ME!
GOD FORGIVE ME!



SUDDENLY, SIRENS STARTED TO WAIL...



...AND MY AUNT DID TOO.

IT'S ALRIGHT, STAY CALM!

AAAA...!



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

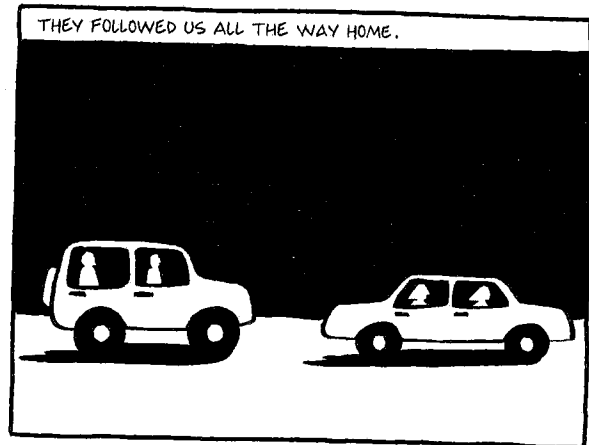
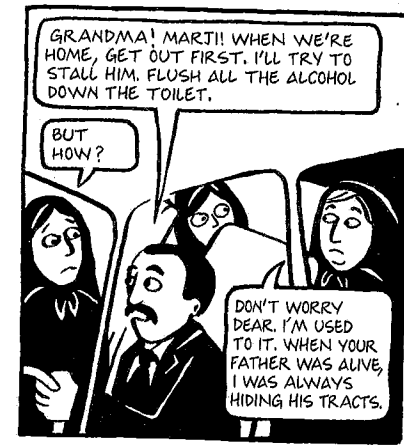


HER MOTHER HAD ALREADY ABANDONED HER.



SINCE THAT DAY, I'VE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT THE SO-CALLED "MATERNAL INSTINCT."



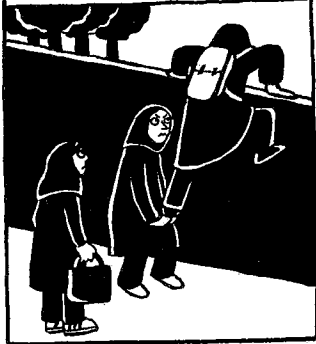




THE CIGARETTE



JORDAN AVENUE WAS WHERE THE TEENAGERS FROM NORTH TEHRAN (THE NICE NEIGHBORHOODS) HUNG OUT. KANSAS WAS ITS TEMPLE.



IF SOME PUBLIC PLACES HAD SURVIVED THE REGIME'S REPRESSION, EITHER IT WAS TO LEAVE US A LITTLE FREE SPACE, OR ELSE IT WAS OUT OF IGNORANCE. PERSONALLY, THE LATTER THEORY SOUNDED MORE LIKELY: THEY PROBABLY HADN'T THE SLIGHTEST IDEA WHAT "KANSAS" WAS.



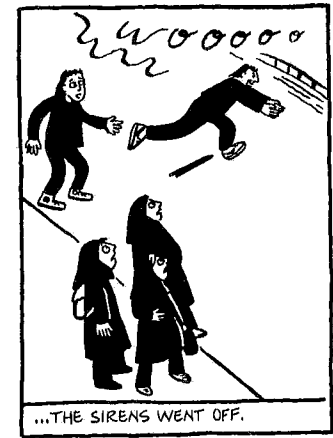
...IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, KIDS WERE TRYING TO LOOK HIP, EVEN UNDER RISK OF ARREST.

MY FRIENDS WEREN'T ACTUALLY THAT INTERESTED IN THE HAMBURGERS...



WE LET THE BOYS KNOW THAT THEY COULD FOLLOW US BY A FEW SIGNS.

FOLLOW THE OTHERS, I MEAN. I WAS TOO YOUNG TO INTEREST THEM.



THE WONDERFUL DAY WAS SPOILED BY MY MOM.

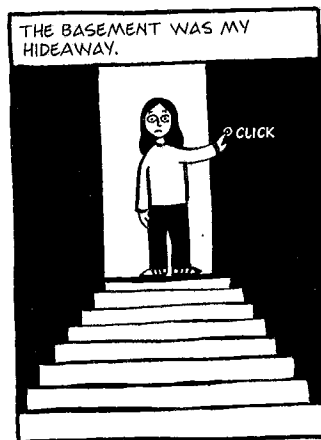


YOU DARE TO LIE STRAIGHT TO MY FACE?

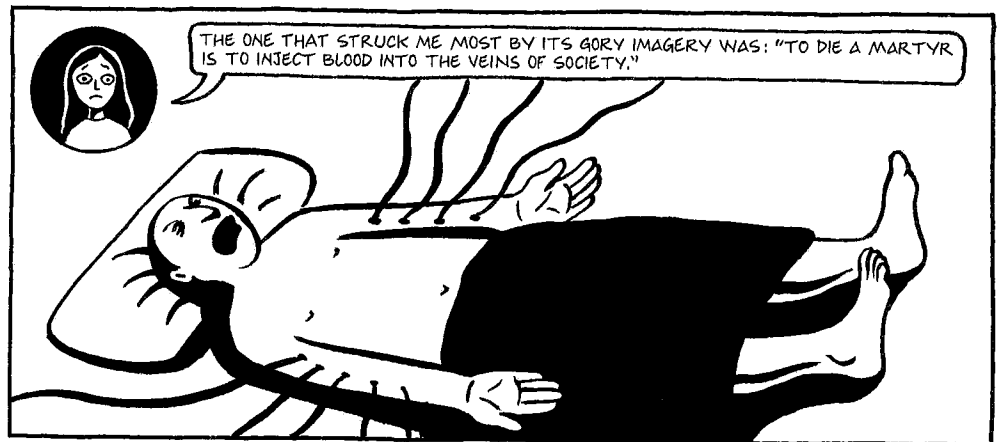


SO MAYBE IT'S ME WHO CUT CLASS?





*A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ





THEY EVENTUALLY ADMITTED THAT THE SURVIVAL OF THE REGIME DEPENDED ON THE WAR.

WHEN I THINK WE COULD HAVE AVOIDED IT ALL... IT JUST MAKES ME SICK. A MILLION PEOPLE WOULD STILL BE ALIVE.

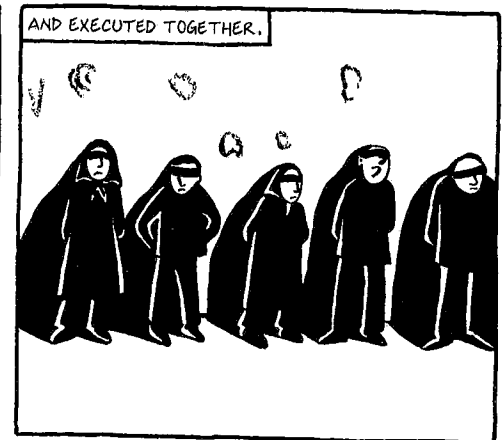


NATURALLY, THE REGIME BECAME MORE REPRESSIVE.

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



THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE REGIME WERE SYSTEMATICALLY ARRESTED...



AND EXECUTED TOGETHER.



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



KOFFF! KOFFF! KOFFF!!!



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



WITH THIS FIRST CIGARETTE, I KISSED CHILDHOOD GOODBYE.

NOW I WAS A GROWN-UP.

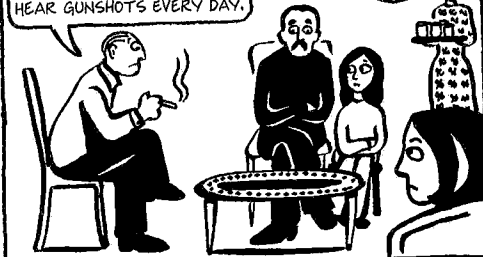


THE PASSPORT

JULY 1982. WE WERE AT MY AUNT'S PLACE. THE INTERNAL WAR HAD BECOME A BIGGER ISSUE THAN THE WAR AGAINST IRAQ. ANYONE SHOWING THE SLIGHTEST RESISTANCE TO THE REGIME WAS PERSECUTED.

THERE MUST BE A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE OPPOSITION IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. WE HEAR GUNSHOTS EVERY DAY.

TAHER, STOP SMOKING!



THE STRESS I GET FROM EVERY GUNSHOT I HEAR IS MUCH WORSE FOR ME THAN THE CIGARETTES.

SINCE HE HAD SENT HIS OLDEST SON TO HOLLAND, UNCLE TAHER HAD HAD TWO HEART ATTACKS. HE WAS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN TO SMOKE.



THE BUTCHER TOLD ME HE'S SEEN KIDS EXECUTED IN THE STREET WITHOUT EVEN HAVING BEEN JUDGED. THE SHAME OF IT.

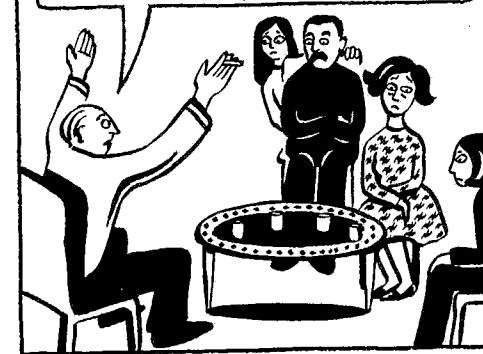


WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, I'M GLAD THAT MY SON IS SAFELY ABROAD. BUT WITH THE BORDERS CLOSED, HOW AM I EVER GOING TO SEE HIM AGAIN?

THE BORDERS WERE CLOSED FOR THREE YEARS BETWEEN 1980 AND 1983.



HOW MANY TIMES DID I SAY TO MY WIFE, "COME ON, LET'S JOIN HIM." SHE DIDN'T WANT TO. SHE INVOKED HER COUNTRY, HER FAMILY, ETC., ETC.



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

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



SOME DAYS LATER.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

ABOUT TAHER. HIS SON LEAVING HAS DONE HIM IN. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THAT.



CAN YOU IMAGINE? A THIRTEEN, FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD CHILD, ALONE IN A COUNTRY WHERE HE DOESN'T EVEN SPEAK THE LANGUAGE?

TCH...AT FOURTEEN YOU DON'T NEED YOUR PARENTS ANYMORE!



GET REAL. UP TO A CERTAIN AGE, YOU NEED YOUR PARENTS, THEN LATER, THEY NEED YOU.



YOU'D BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT NAIL POLISH. YOU COULD GET ARRESTED.

I'LL PUT MY HANDS IN MY POCKETS.



PRETTY STUBBORN GIRL, HUH?

WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE GETS THAT?



SOMETIMES IT SCARES ME HOW BLUNT SHE IS.

IT'LL HELP HER LATER ON. YOU'LL SEE.



I AM SO LUCKY TO BE MARRIED TO A MAN LIKE YOU. YOU'RE SO SENSITIVE. THE KINDEST MAN ON EARTH.

HOW CAN YOU BE INSENSITIVE TO THE WOMAN YOU LOVE?

RRING... RRING...



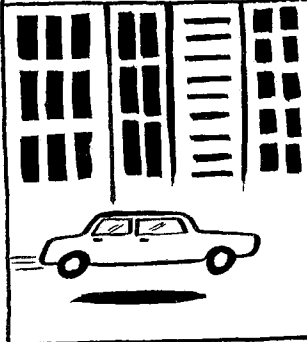
IT ALWAYS RINGS AT THE WRONG TIME!



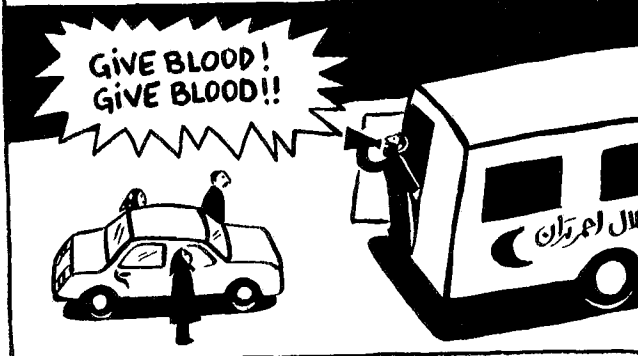
GOOD LORD, AGAIN!



UNCLE TAHER HAD JUST SUFFERED HIS THIRD HEART ATTACK. WE WERE OFF TO THE HOSPITAL.

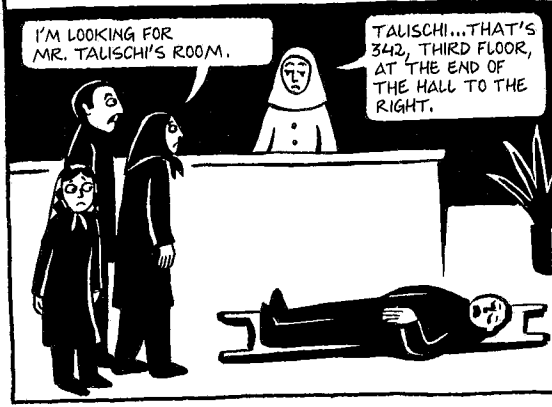


RED CRESCENT TRUCKS WERE PULLED UP IN FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL, CALLING FOR PEOPLE TO GIVE BLOOD FOR THE WAR WOUNDED. THERE WERE SO MANY OF THEM.



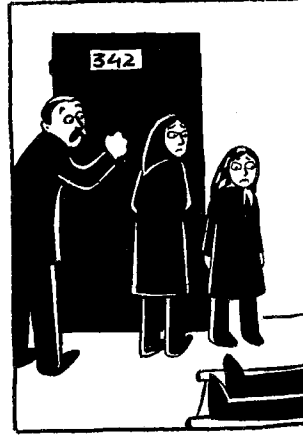
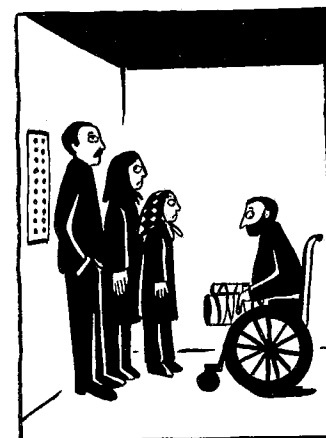
I FELT BOTH ANGRY AND EMBARRASSED...

ONCE INSIDE THE HOSPITAL I FELT EVEN WORSE.



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

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



THEY THREW A GRENADE... THEY WANTED TO ARREST SOME COMMUNISTS WHO WERE HIDING NEAR OUR PLACE, AND THEY THREW A GRENADE... TAHER COULDN'T DEAL WITH IT... WHEN I CAME INTO THE LIVING ROOM, HE WAS LYING ON THE FLOOR...



HE NEEDS OPEN HEART SURGERY, BUT THEY'RE NOT EQUIPPED HERE. THEY TOLD ME THAT HE HAS TO BE SENT TO ENGLAND.



TO DO THAT, HE NEEDS A PERMIT. THEY GAVE ME THE NAME OF THE HOSPITAL DIRECTOR. IF HE AGREES, TAHER WILL GET A PASSPORT SO HE CAN GO.



SINCE THE BORDERS WERE CLOSED, ONLY VERY SICK PEOPLE (IF THEY GOT A PERMIT FROM THE HEALTH MINISTRY) WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE.

IT'S ON THE 4TH FLOOR, NUMBER 406.



ONLY MY AUNT WAS ALLOWED IN. SHE HAD A BIG SURPRISE. THE DIRECTOR WAS HER FORMER WINDOW WASHER. SHE ACTED AS IF SHE DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM TO AVOID OFFENDING HIM.

MY HUSBAND HAD HIS THIRD HEART ATTACK. HE NEEDS MEDICAL CARE OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY.

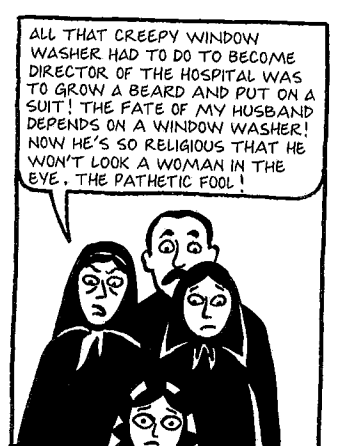
HMM...



WE'LL DO OUR BEST. IF GOD WILLS IT, HE'LL GET BETTER. EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GOD.

I NEED YOUR AUTHORIZATION SO HE CAN GET A PASSPORT!

IF GOD WILLS IT.



ALL THAT CREEPY WINDOW WASHER HAD TO DO TO BECOME DIRECTOR OF THE HOSPITAL WAS TO GROW A BEARD AND PUT ON A SUIT! THE FATE OF MY HUSBAND DEPENDS ON A WINDOW WASHER! NOW HE'S SO RELIGIOUS THAT HE WON'T LOOK A WOMAN IN THE EYE. THE PATHETIC FOOL!

AFTER THE DIRECTOR, WE WENT TO SEE THE CHIEF OF STAFF, DR. FATHI.

MA'AM, WE WILL DO WHAT WE CAN. WE ARE TERRIBLY STRAPPED AT THE MOMENT.



LOOK IN THIS ROOM. THEY'RE ALL VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS!



THE GERMANS SELL CHEMICAL WEAPONS TO IRAN AND IRAQ. THE WOUNDED ARE THEN SENT TO GERMANY TO BE TREATED. VERITABLE HUMAN GUINEA PIGS.



WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?! I COULDN'T CARE LESS. I WANT MY HUSBAND TO GET WELL!

CALM DOWN



CALM DOWN, DEAR. EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT. DON'T WORRY.



WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK!



WE WENT TO SEE AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MY FATHER'S, KHOSRO. HIS BROTHER AND MY UNCLE ANOOSH WERE IN PRISON TOGETHER DURING THE REIGN OF THE SHAH.

EBI, THE BROTHER OF ANOOSH? COME IN! COME IN!



SINCE THEY SHUT DOWN MY PUBLISHING COMPANY, I'VE BEEN PRINTING FAKE PASSPORTS. BIG SELLERS. YOU WANT ONE?

NOT ME, MY BROTHER-IN-LAW.



WHEN THEY LET HIM OUT, MY BROTHER STARTED GOING TO COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY DEMONSTRATIONS. HE TOLD ME THAT THE CHIEF OF THE NEW EXECUTIONERS WAS HIS TORTURER IN THE SHAH'S PRISON. HE SAID 'KHOSRO, I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE.' I MADE HIM A FAKE PASSPORT AND HE SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM IN SWEDEN.



LOOK, EBI, A WHOLE MONTH'S WORK, JUST FOR THE STAMP.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE TO MAKE A PASSPORT?



A WEEK.



YOU CAN COME IN. THEY'RE FRIENDS.



THIS IS NILOUFAR. HER BROTHER WAS MY MESSENGER BOY. THEY ARE LOOKING ALL OVER FOR HER BECAUSE SHE'S A COMMUNIST. I LET HER STAY IN MY BASEMENT.



SHE'S EIGHTEEN, THE SAME AGE AS MY DAUGHTER, MANDANA.



KHOSRO'S DAUGHTER HAD LEFT WITH HER MOTHER RIGHT AFTER THE REVOLUTION.

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



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

