



THE DOWRY

AFTER THE DEATH OF NEDA BABA-LEVY, MY LIFE TOOK A NEW TURN. IN 1984, I WAS FOURTEEN AND A REBEL. NOTHING SCARED ME ANYMORE.



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



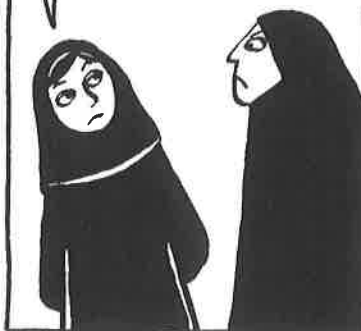
I HAD LEARNED THAT YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SHOUT LOUDER THAN YOUR AGGRESSOR.



AND THE NEXT DAY...

LET ME SEE YOUR WRIST.

WHAT FOR?



LET ME SEE IT, I'M TELLING YOU.

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



WHAT HAPPENED?

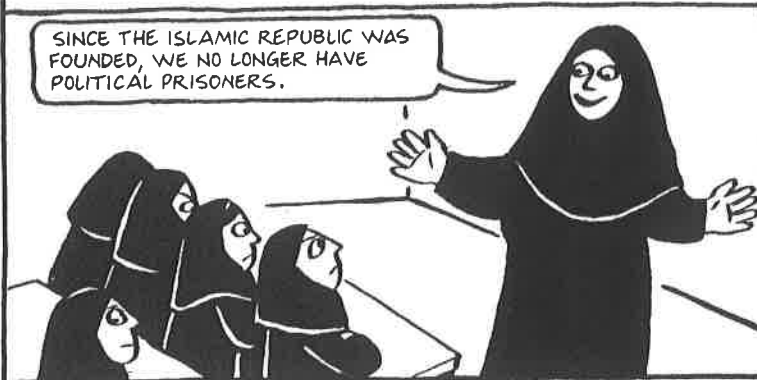
MARTI HIT THE PRINCIPAL

SHE'S FINISHED!

EXCUSE ME! I DIDN'T MEAN IT!



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



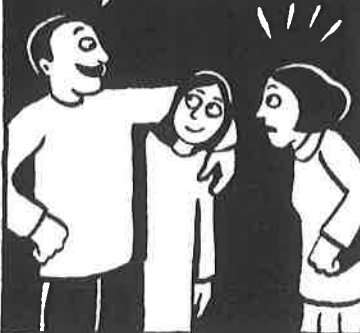
OBVIOUSLY, THAT EVENING MY FATHER GOT A PHONE CALL.

YES. OF COURSE...YES...

WHO IS IT?



IT WAS THE PRINCIPAL OF MARTI'S SCHOOL. APPARENTLY SHE TOLD OFF THE RELIGION TEACHER. SHE GETS THAT FROM HER UNCLE.



MAYBE YOU'D LIKE HER TO END UP LIKE HIM TOO? EXECUTED?



YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DO TO THE YOUNG GIRLS THEY ARREST?



YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO NILOUFAR? THE GIRL YOU MET AT KHOSRO'S HOUSE? THE MAN WHO MADE PASSPORTS?



YOU KNOW THAT IT'S AGAINST THE LAW TO KILL A VIRGIN...



SO A GUARDIAN OF THE REVOLUTION MARRIES HER...

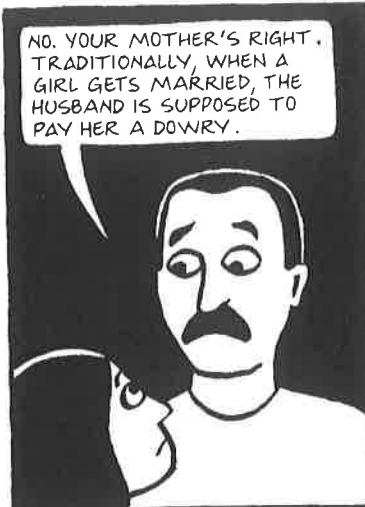


...AND TAKES HER VIRGINITY BEFORE EXECUTING HER. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANS???

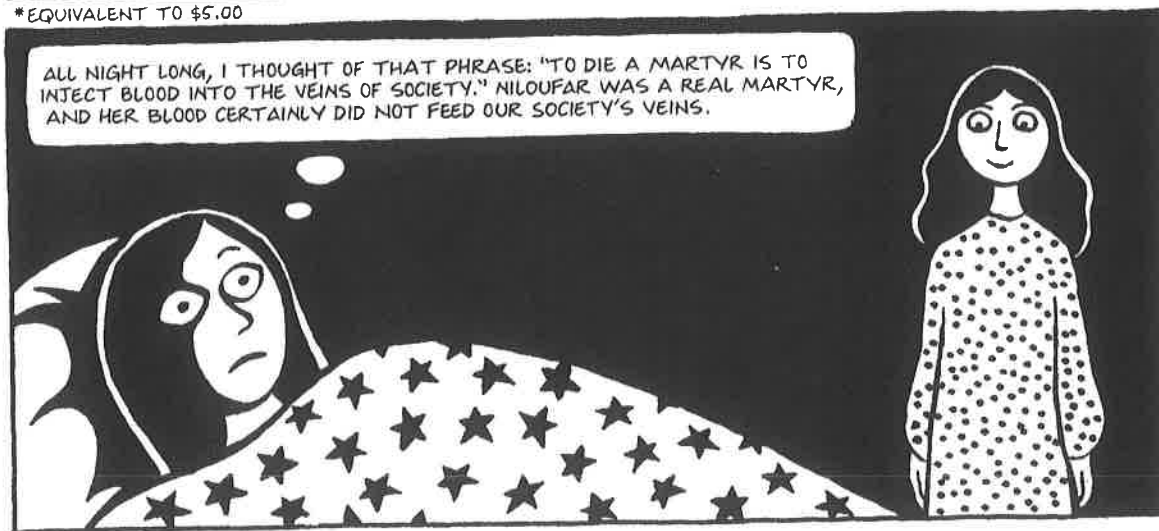


IF SOMEONE SO MUCH AS TOUCHES A HAIR ON YOUR HEAD, I'LL KILL HIM!





*EQUIVALENT TO \$5.00



ONE WEEK LATER...



I WENT TO SEE THE PRINCIPAL TODAY. SHE ASSURED ME THAT SHE HAD NOT SENT A REPORT THIS TIME. BUT CONSIDERING THE PERSON YOU ARE AND THE EDUCATION YOU'VE RECEIVED, WE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU LEFT IRAN.



YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE DECIDED TO SEND YOU TO AUSTRIA.



FIRST OF ALL, BECAUSE IT'S EASIER TO GET AN AUSTRIAN VISA, AND SECOND BECAUSE MY BEST FRIEND LIVES IN VIENNA. DO YOU REMEMBER HER? ZOZO? SHERINE'S MOM?



THERE'S A FRENCH SCHOOL IN VIENNA. ONE OF THE BEST IN EUROPE!

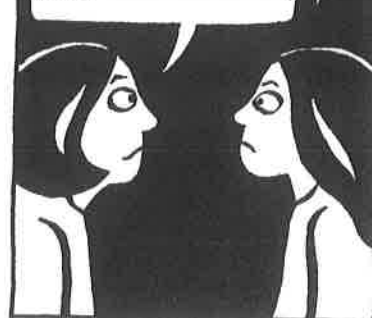


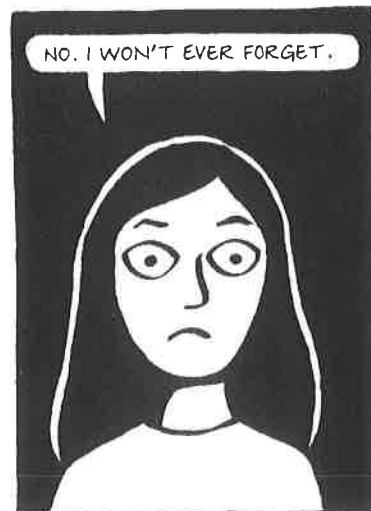
YOU'RE GOING ON AHEAD OF US. WE HAVE SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF. WE'LL JOIN YOU A FEW MONTHS FROM NOW!



BUT I'M ONLY FOURTEEN! YOU TRUST ME?

YOU'RE FOURTEEN AND I KNOW HOW I BROUGHT YOU UP. ABOVE ALL, I TRUST YOUR EDUCATION.





I REPEATED WHAT THEY HAD TOLD ME OVER AND OVER IN MY HEAD. I WAS PRETTY SURE THEY WEREN'T COMING TO VIENNA.



I STAYED UP ALL NIGHT AND WONDERED IF THE MOON SHONE AS BRIGHTLY IN VIENNA.



THE NEXT DAY I FILLED A JAR WITH SOIL FROM OUR GARDEN. IRANIAN SOIL.



I TOOK DOWN ALL OF MY POSTERS.



I INVITED MY GIRLFRIENDS OVER TO SAY GOODBYE.



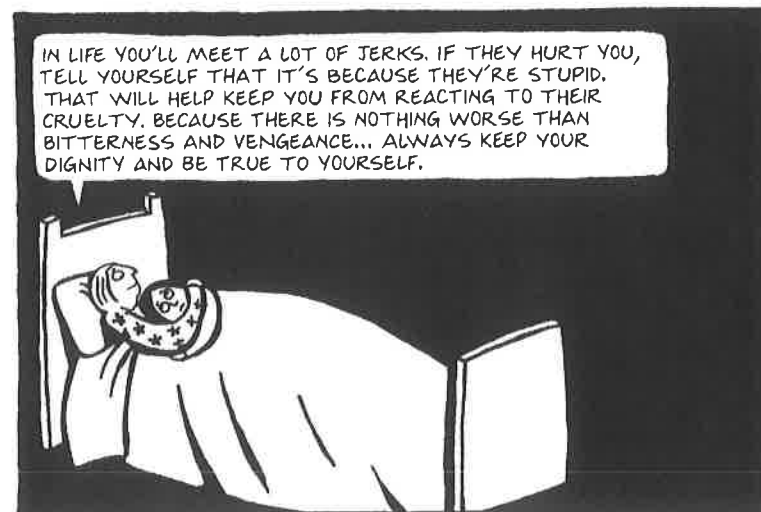
HERE. I'M GIVING YOU MY MOST PRECIOUS THINGS, SO THAT YOU WON'T FORGET ME.



I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH THEY LOVED ME.



AND I UNDERSTOOD HOW IMPORTANT THEY WERE TO ME.







I COULDN'T BEAR LOOKING AT THEM THERE BEHIND THE GLASS.
NOTHING'S WORSE THAN SAYING GOODBYE. IT'S A LITTLE LIKE DYING.



I COULDN'T JUST GO.



I TURNED AROUND TO SEE THEM
ONE LAST TIME.



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER TO JUST GO.