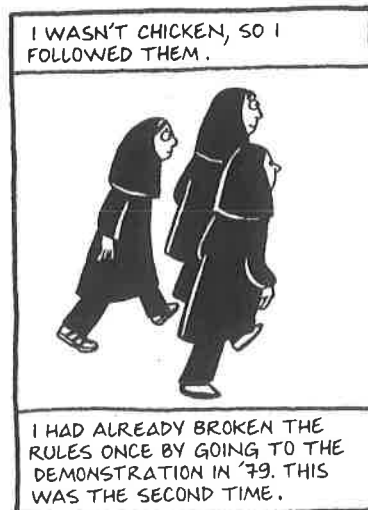


THE CIGARETTE



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.



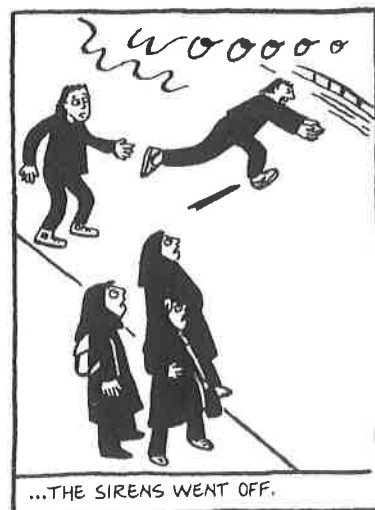
...IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, KIDS WERE TRYING TO LOOK HIP, EVEN UNDER RISK OF ARREST.

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.



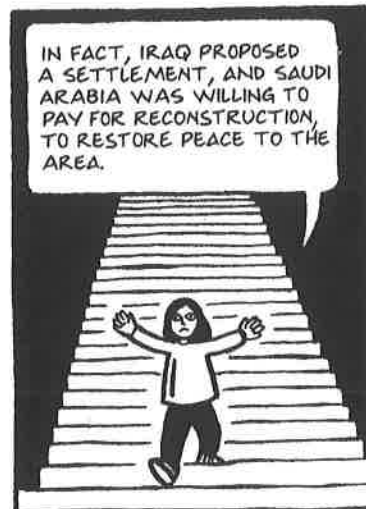
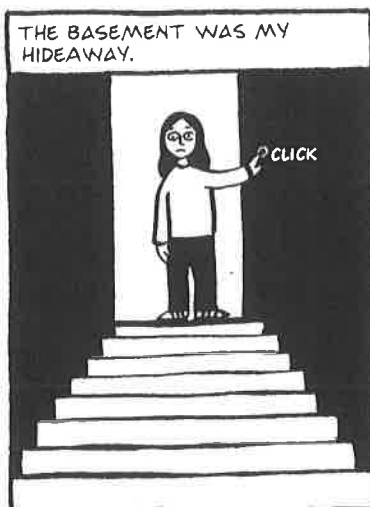
...THE SIRENS WENT OFF.



WE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT IF WE WERE IN THE STREET DURING A BOMBING, WE SHOULD LIE DOWN IN THE GUTTER FOR SAFETY.

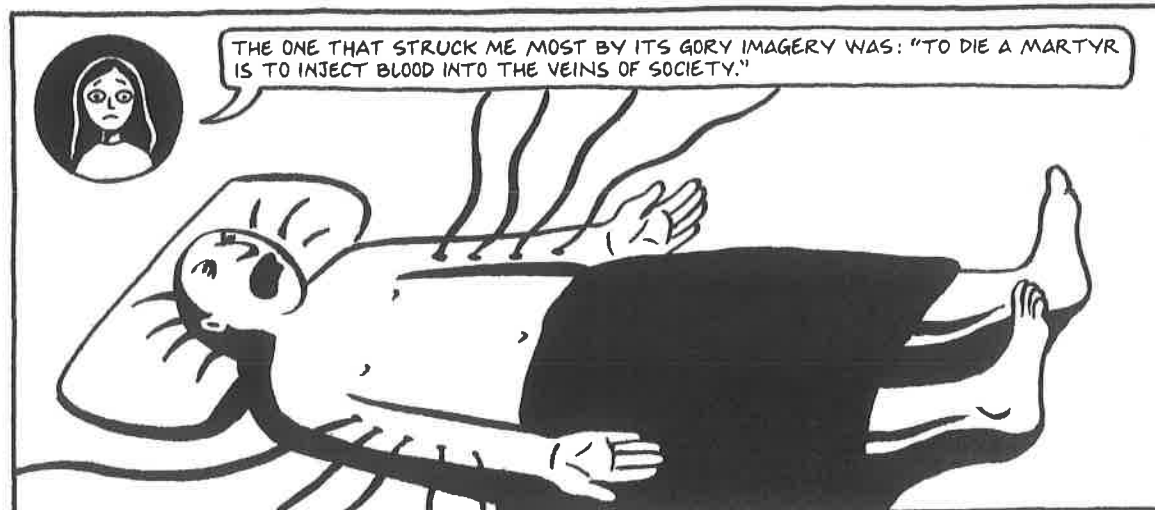
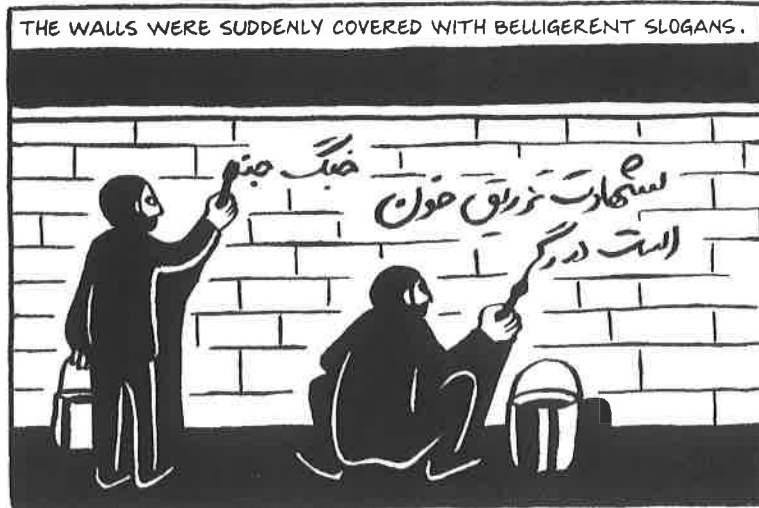








*A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ







NATURALLY, THE REGIME
BECAME MORE REPRESSIVE.



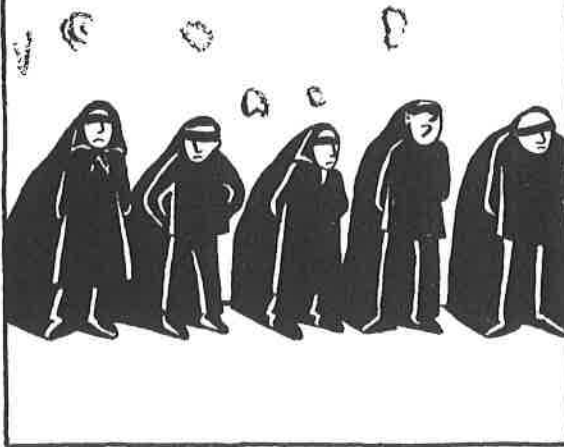
IN THE NAME OF THAT WAR, THEY
EXTERMINATED THE ENEMY WITHIN.



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.