

PANTHEON  BOOKS

THE COMPLETE PERSEPOLIS



MARJANE SATRAPI



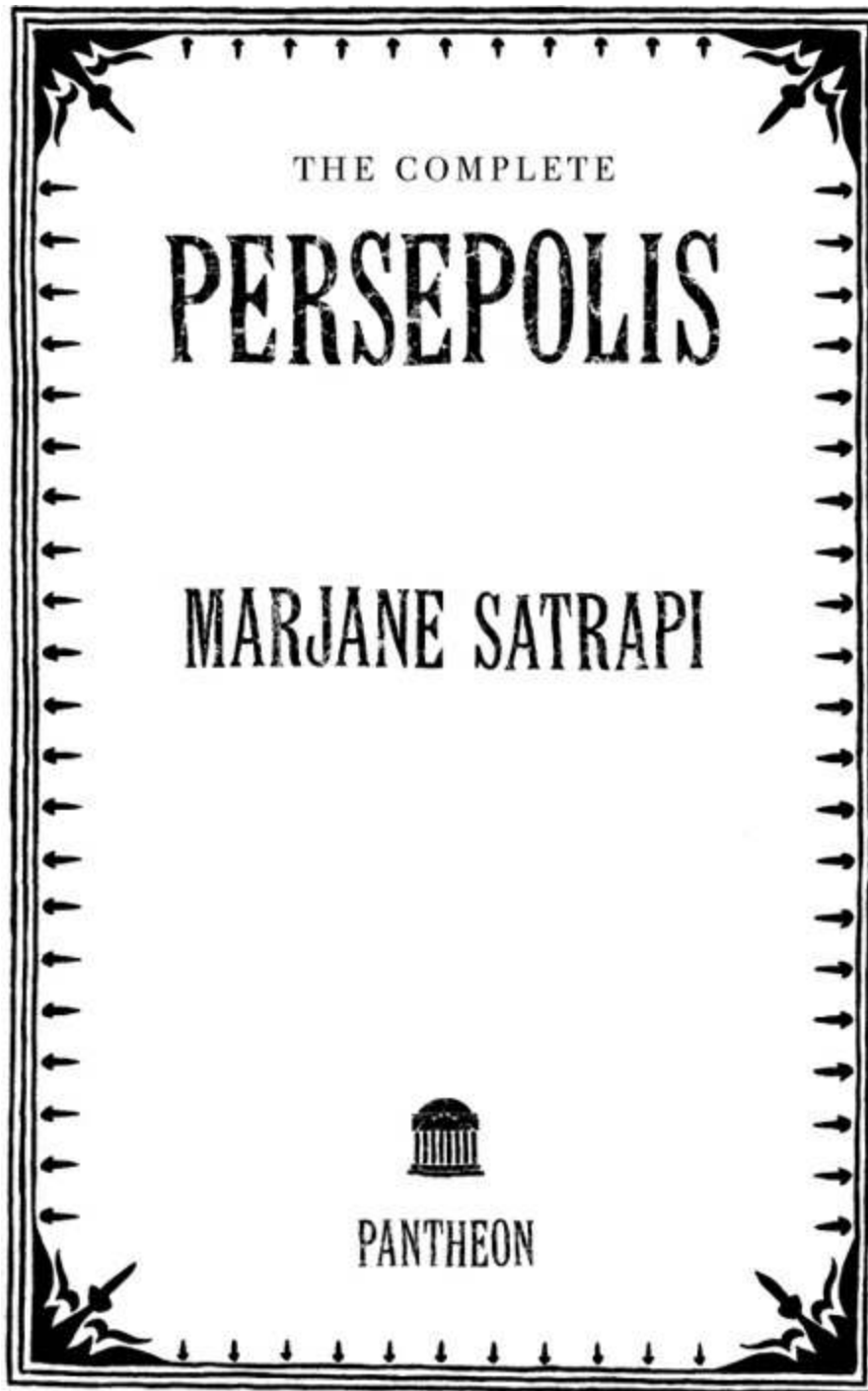
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To my parents



INTRODUCTION

In the second millennium B.C., while the Elam nation was developing a civilization alongside Babylon, Indo-

European invaders gave their name to the immense Iranian plateau where they settled. The word "Iran" was derived from "Aryana Vaejo," which means "the origin of the Aryans." These people were semi-nomads whose descendants were the Medes and the Persians. The Medes founded the first Iranian nation in the seventh century B.C.; it was later destroyed by Cyrus the Great. He established what became one of the largest empires of the ancient world, the Persian Empire, in the sixth century B.C. Iran was referred to as Persia — its Greek name — until 1935 when Reza Shah, the father of the last Shah of Iran, asked everyone to call the country Iran.

Iran was rich. Because of its wealth and its geographic location, it invited attacks: From Alexander the Great, from its Arab neighbors to the west, from Turkish and Mongolian conquerors, Iran was often subject to foreign domination. Yet the Persian language and culture withstood these invasions. The invaders assimilated into this strong culture, and in some ways they became Iranians themselves.

In the twentieth century, Iran entered a new phase. Reza Shah decided to modernize and westernize the country, but

meanwhile a fresh source of wealth was discovered: oil. And with the oil came another invasion. The West, particularly Great Britain, wielded a strong influence on the Iranian economy. During the Second World War, the British, Soviets, and Americans asked Reza Shah to ally himself with them against Germany. But Reza Shah, who sympathized with the Germans, declared Iran a neutral zone. So the Allies invaded and occupied Iran. Reza Shah was sent into exile and was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was known simply as the Shah.

In 1951, Mohammed Mossadeq, then prime minister of Iran, nationalized the oil industry. In retaliation, Great Britain organized an embargo on all exports of oil from Iran. In 1953, the CIA, with the help of British intelligence, organized a coup against him. Mossadeq was overthrown and the Shah, who had earlier escaped from the country, returned to power. The Shah stayed on the throne until 1979, when he fled Iran to escape the Islamic revolution. Since then, this old and great civilization has been discussed mostly in connection with fundamentalism, fanaticism, and terrorism. As an Iranian who has lived more

than half of my life in Iran, I know that this image is far from the truth. This is why writing *Persepolis* was so important to me. I believe that an entire nation should not be judged by the wrongdoings of a few extremists. I also don't want those Iranians who lost their lives in prisons defending freedom, who died in the war against Iraq, who suffered under various repressive regimes, or who were forced to leave their families and flee their homeland to be forgotten.

One can forgive but one should never forget.

Marjane Satrapi

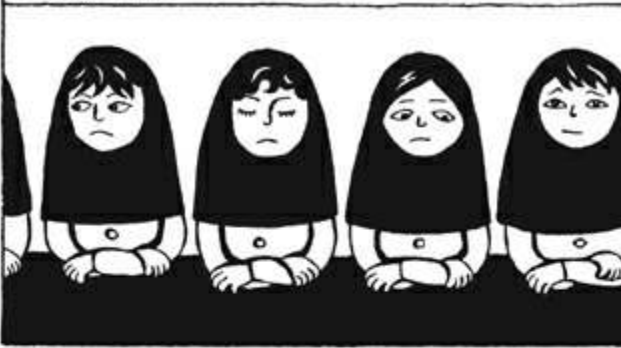
Paris, September 2002



THIS IS ME WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD. THIS WAS IN 1980.



AND THIS IS A CLASS PHOTO. I'M SITTING ON THE FAR LEFT SO YOU DON'T SEE ME. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GOLNAZ, MAHSHID, NARINE, MINNA.



IN 1979 A REVOLUTION TOOK PLACE. IT WAS LATER CALLED "THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION".



THEN CAME 1980: THE YEAR IT BECAME OBLIGATORY TO WEAR THE VEIL AT SCHOOL.



WE DIDN'T REALLY LIKE TO WEAR THE VEIL, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY WE HAD TO.



AND ALSO BECAUSE THE YEAR BEFORE, IN 1979,
WE WERE IN A FRENCH NON-RELIGIOUS SCHOOL.



WHERE BOYS AND GIRLS WERE TOGETHER.



AND THEN SUDDENLY IN 1980...

ALL BILINGUAL SCHOOLS
MUST BE CLOSED DOWN.



THEY ARE SYMBOLS
OF CAPITALISM.



OF DECADENCE.



WE FOUND OURSELVES VEILED AND SEPARATED FROM OUR FRIENDS.



AND THAT
WAS THAT...



EVERYWHERE IN THE STREETS THERE WERE DEMONSTRATIONS FOR AND AGAINST THE VEIL.



AT ONE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS, A GERMAN JOURNALIST TOOK A PHOTO OF MY MOTHER.



I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HER. HER PHOTO WAS PUBLISHED IN ALL THE EUROPEAN NEWSPAPERS.



AND EVEN IN ONE MAGAZINE IN IRAN. MY MOTHER WAS REALLY SCARED.



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS?

DON'T WORRY, DARLING.

SHE DYED HER HAIR,



AND WORE DARK GLASSES FOR A LONG TIME.



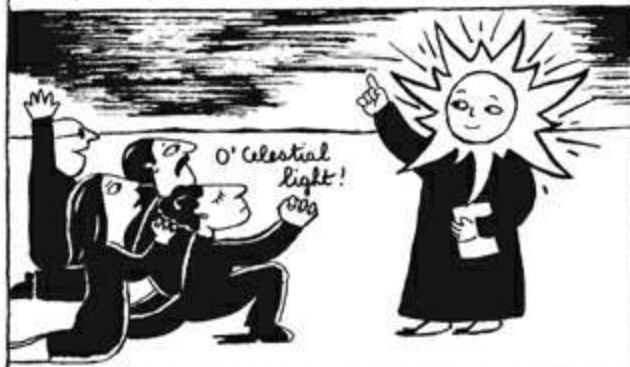
I REALLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK ABOUT THE VEIL. DEEP DOWN I WAS VERY RELIGIOUS BUT AS A FAMILY WE WERE VERY MODERN AND AVANT-GARDE.



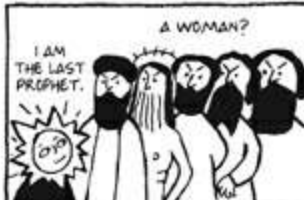
I WAS BORN WITH RELIGION.



AT THE AGE OF SIX I WAS ALREADY SURE I WAS THE LAST PROPHET. THIS WAS A FEW YEARS BEFORE THE REVOLUTION.



BEFORE ME THERE HAD BEEN A FEW OTHERS.

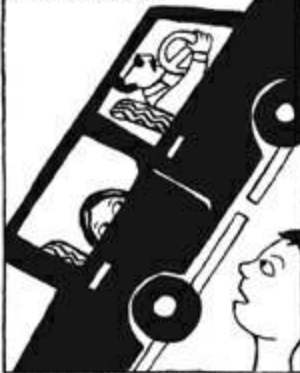


I WANTED TO BE A PROPHET...

BECAUSE OUR MAID DID NOT EAT WITH US.



BECAUSE MY FATHER HAD A CADILLAC.



AND, ABOVE ALL, BECAUSE MY GRANDMOTHER'S KNEES ALWAYS ACHED.

COME HERE MARJI! HELP ME TO STAND UP.

DON'T WORRY. SOON YOU WON'T HAVE ANY MORE PAIN. YOU'LL SEE.



LIKE ALL MY PREDECESSORS
I HAD MY HOLY BOOK.



THE FIRST THREE RULES CAME FROM ZARATHUSTRA. HE WAS
THE FIRST PROPHET IN MY COUNTRY BEFORE THE ARAB INVASION.



I ALSO WANTED US TO CELEBRATE THE TRADITIONAL
ZARATHUSTRIAN HOLIDAYS. LIKE THE FIRE CEREMONY,



BEFORE THE PERSIAN NEW YEAR, NOROUZ,
ON MARCH 21ST, THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING.



ONLY MY GRANDMOTHER KNEW ABOUT MY BOOK.



EVERY NIGHT I HAD A BIG DISCUSSION WITH GOD.

GOD, GIVE ME
SOME MORE TIME.
I AM NOT QUITE
READY YET.



YES YOU ARE,
CELESTIAL LIGHT,
YOU ARE MY
CHOICE, MY LAST
AND MY BEST
CHOICE.



EXCEPT FOR MY GRANDMOTHER I WAS
OBVIOUSLY THE ONLY ONE WHO BELIEVED
IN MYSELF.

WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO BE WHEN
YOU GROW UP?



MY PARENTS WERE CALLED IN BY THE TEACHER.

YOUR CHILD IS
DISTURBED. SHE WANTS
TO BECOME A PROPHET.







"AFTER A LONG SLEEP OF 2500 YEARS, THE REVOLUTION HAS FINALLY AWAKENED THE PEOPLE."



"2500 YEARS OF TYRANNY AND SUBMISSION" AS MY FATHER SAID.

FIRST OUR OWN EMPERORS.



THEN THE ARAB INVASION FROM THE WEST.



FOLLOWED BY THE MONGOLIAN INVASION FROM THE EAST.



AND FINALLY MODERN IMPERIALISM.









THE FIREMEN DIDN'T ARRIVE UNTIL FORTY MINUTES LATER.



THE BBC SAID THERE WERE 400 VICTIMS. THE SHAH SAID THAT A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS PERPETRATED THE MASSACRE. BUT THE PEOPLE KNEW THAT IT WAS THE SHAH'S FAULT !!!



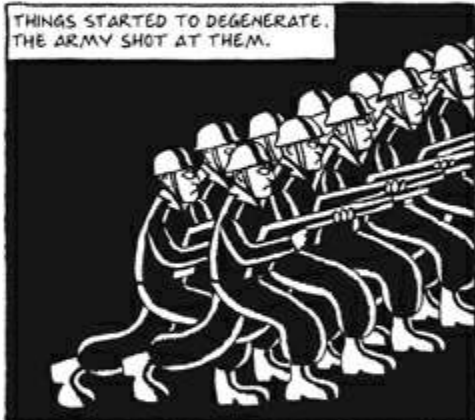




MY PARENTS DEMONSTRATED EVERY DAY.

**DOWN WITH
THE KING!**

THINGS STARTED TO DEGENERATE.
THE ARMY SHOT AT THEM.



AND THEY THREW STONES AT THE ARMY.



AFTER MARCHING AND THROWING STONES ALL DAY, BY EVENING
THEY HAD ACHES ALL OVER, EVEN IN THEIR HEADS.





AT THE TIME THE REPUBLICAN IDEAL WAS POPULAR IN THE REGION BUT EVERYBODY INTERPRETED IT IN HIS OWN WAY.

GANDHI IN INDIA



THE HINDUS
AND THE MUSLIMS
MUST MAKE PEACE
TO OVERTHROW
THE BRITISH.

ATATURK IN TURKEY



WE, THE TURKS,
ARE SECULAR
WESTERNERS.
FOR PROOF, LOOK AT
MY GREEN EYES.

SO THE FATHER OF THE SHAH
WANTED TO DO THE SAME.



BUT HE WASN'T
EDUCATED LIKE GANDHI,
WHO WAS A LAWYER...



...NOR WAS HE A
LEADER OF MEN
LIKE ATATURK, WHO
WAS A GENERAL.



HE WAS AN ILLITERATE LOW-RANKING
OFFICER.



A BLESSING FOR THE VERY INFLUENTIAL BRITISH WHO SOON
LEARNED OF HIS PROJECTS.



THE COUNTRY IS RICH!

AND THE BOLSHIEVICS
ARE NEAR.

WHAT'S THAT SOL-
DIER'S NAME AGAIN?

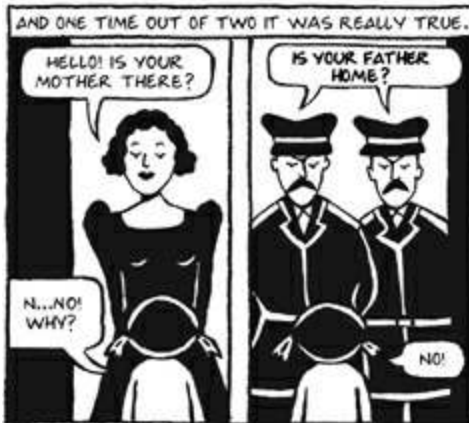
REZA! WE SHOULD
GO MEET HIM.

IMMEDIATELY! PERSIA
IS FULL OF OIL!













OH, YES. SO POOR THAT WE HAD ONLY BREAD TO EAT. I WAS SO ASHAMED THAT I PRETENDED TO COOK SO THAT THE NEIGHBORS WOULDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING.

