



THE CIGARETTE

THE WAR HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR TWO YEARS. WE WERE USED TO IT. I WAS GROWING UP AND I EVEN HAD FRIENDS OLDER THAN ME.

YESTERDAY ON THE NEWS THEY SAID WE DESTROYED 13 IRAQI PLANES. RIGHT AFTER ON THE BBC, I HEARD THAT IN FACT THE IRAQIS HAD SHOT DOWN TWO OF OURS.



IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR. EVERY DAY THEY TELL US THAT WE'VE DESTROYED TEN PLANES AND FIVE TANKS. IF YOU START FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR, THAT MAKES SIX THOUSAND PLANES AND THREE THOUSAND TANKS DESTROYED. EVEN THE AMERICANS DON'T HAVE AN ARMY THIS BIG.

I GET IT. I'M GOING TO TELL MY DAD THAT ONE.



BRINGGG...



HEY, THERE'S THE BELL. DON'T YOU HAVE CLASS?



NO, WE'VE GOT PHYSICAL EDUCATION BUT WE'RE NOT GOING. WE'RE GOING FOR BURGERS.

BURGERS?

THEY ALSO HAVE HOT DOGS.



ALL YOU NEEDED WAS SOME MONEY.

YEAH! AT KANSAS ON JORDAN AVENUE.

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. WE'LL CLIMB THE WALL.

THE WALL??!!



HA HA HA HA!
HA HA HA!



IF I WANTED TO BE FRIENDS WITH 14-YEAR-OLDS, I HAD TO DO IT.

I WASN'T CHICKEN, SO I FOLLOWED THEM.



I HAD ALREADY BROKEN THE RULES ONCE BY GOING TO THE DEMONSTRATION IN '79. THIS WAS THE SECOND TIME.

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.

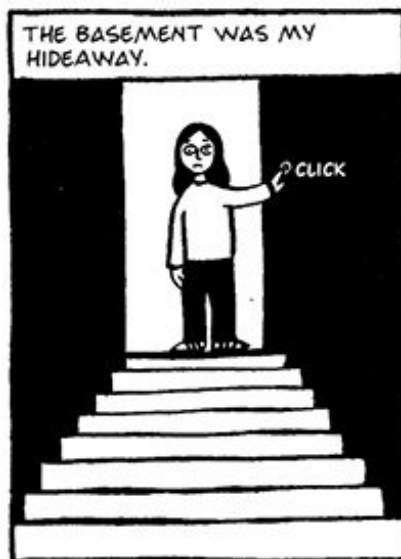
FOLLOW THE OTHERS, I MEAN. I WAS TOO YOUNG TO INTEREST THEM.



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





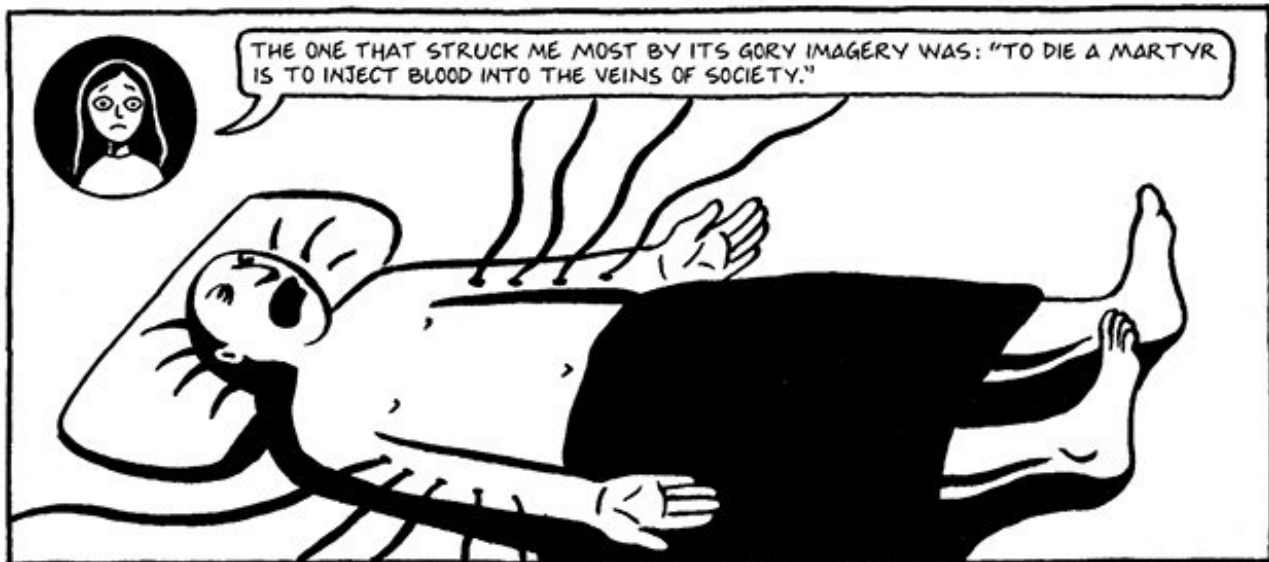




* A SHIITE HOLY CITY IN IRAQ



THE WALLS WERE SUDDENLY COVERED WITH BELLIGERENT SLOGANS.





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.