THE SHABBAT

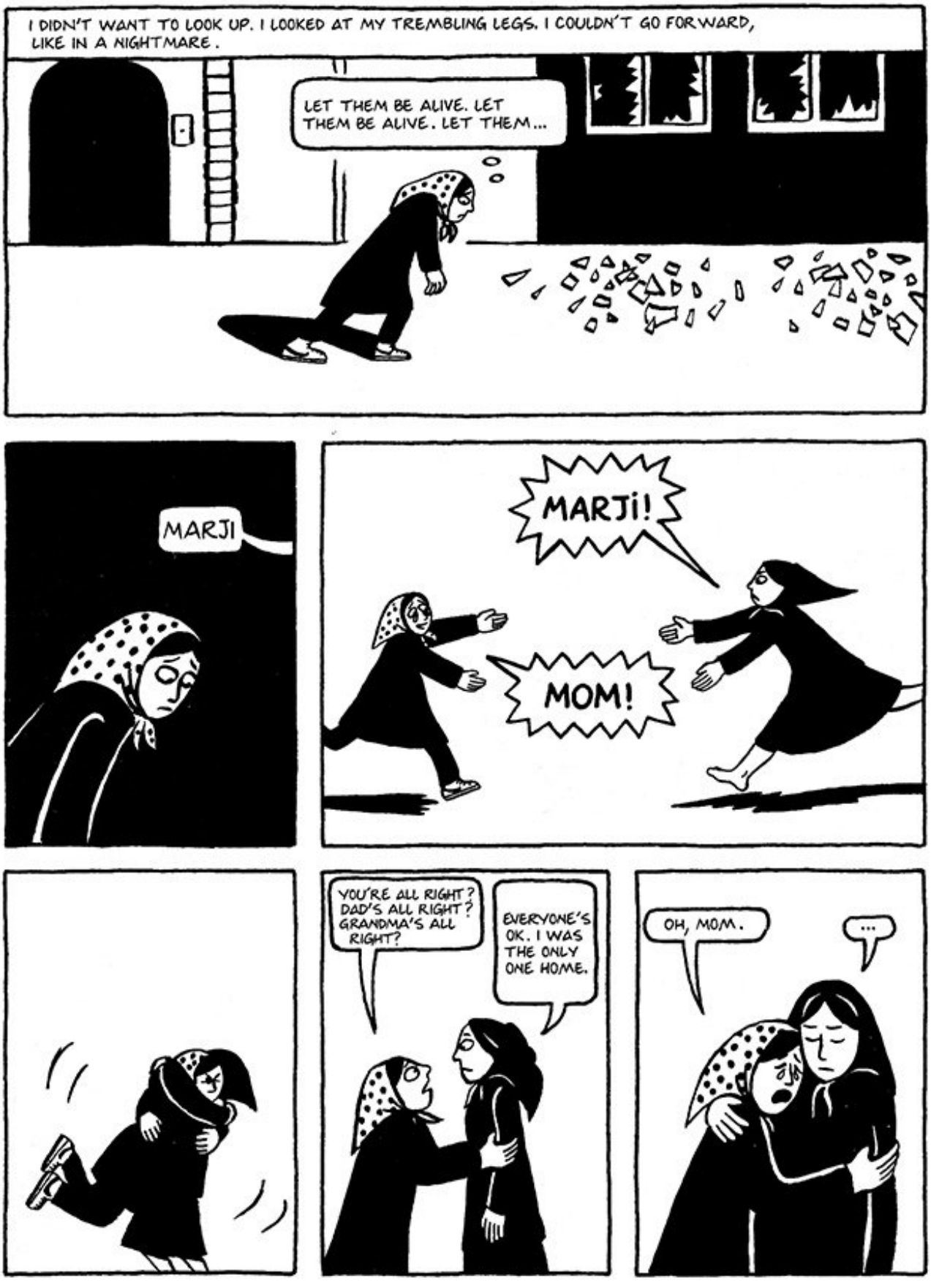
TO KEEP US FROM FORGETTING THAT WE WERE AT WAR, IRAQ OPTED FOR A NEW STRATEGY...
I HEARD THEY'RE GOING TO USE BALLISTIC MISSILES AGAINST US.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WE'RE NOT AT WAR WITH THE SOVIET UNION. I DON'T BELIEVE THE IRAQIS HAVE WEAPONS LIKE THAT.
FROM THE IRAQI BORDER TO TEHRAN IT'S THOUSANDS OF MILES. MISSILES THAT CAN GO THAT FAR COST A FORTUNE!
WELL, THAT'S WHAT THE RUMORS SAY!
WE IRANIANS ARE OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS WHEN IT COMES TO GOSSIP.
SHE'S RIGHT. WE LOVE TO EXAGGERATE.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE THE OPPOSITE SYMPTOM.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
EVEN WHEN YOU SEE SOMETHING WITH YOUR OWN EYES, YOU NEED CONFIRMATION FROM THE BBC.
MY NATURAL OPTIMISM JUST LEADS ME TO BE SKEPTICAL.

MOM'S PESSIMISM SOON WON OUT OVER DAD'S OPTIMISM. IT TURNED OUT THAT THE IRAQIS DID HAVE MISSILES. THEY WERE CALLED "SCUDS" AND TEHRAN BECAME THEIR TARGET.
WHEN THE SIRENS WENT ON, IT MEANT WE HAD THREE MINUTES TO KNOW IF THE END HAD COME.
WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE BASEMENT?
IT WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!!
CONSIDERING THE DAMAGE THEY DO, WHETHER WE'RE IN THE BASEMENT OR ON THE ROOF, IT'S THE SAME THING.
THE THREE MINUTES SEEMED LIKE THREE DAYS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, I REALIZED JUST HOW MUCH DANGER WE WERE IN.
BOOM!!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
YOU WON'T DEAR. I PROMISE YOU!

NOW THAT TEHRAN WAS UNDER ATTACK, MANY FLED. THE CITY WAS DESERTED. AS FOR US, WE STAYED. NOT JUST OUT OF FATALISM. IF THERE WAS TO BE A FUTURE, IN MY PARENTS' EYES, THAT FUTURE WAS LINKED TO MY FRENCH EDUCATION. AND TEHRAN WAS THE ONLY PLACE I COULD GET IT.
SOME PEOPLE, MORE CIRCUMSPECT, TOOK SHELTER IN THE BASEMENTS OF BIG HOTELS, WELL-KNOWN FOR THEIR SAFETY. APPARENTLY, THEIR REINFORCED CONCRETE STRUCTURES WERE BOMBPROOF.
ONE EXAMPLE WAS OUR NEIGHBORS, THE BABA-LEVYS. THEY WERE AMONG THE FEW JEWISH FAMILIES THAT HAD STAYED AFTER THE REVOLUTION. MR. BABA-LEVY SAID THEIR ANCESTORS HAD COME THREE THOUSAND YEARS AGO, AND IRAN WAS THEIR HOME.
...THEIR DAUGHTER NEDA WAS A QUIET GIRL WHO DIDN'T PLAY MUCH, BUT WE WOULD TALK ABOUT ROMANCE FROM TIME TO TIME.
...ONE DAY A BLOND PRINCE WITH BLUE EYES WILL COME AND TAKE ME TO HIS CASTLE...
OH YEAH! ME TOO!
SO LIFE WENT ON...

...ON ONE DAY, LIKE ANY OTHER:
MOM, CAN I HAVE SOME MONEY? I WANT TO GET SOME JEANS AND ESPADRILLES.
HOW MUCH?
OH, 1000, 1200 TUMANS.
1000 TUMANS?
YEP, THAT'S HOW MUCH THEY COST.
I SEE.
OUR CURRENCY HAD LOST ALL ITS VALUE. IT WAS SEVEN TUMANS TO THE DOLLAR WHEN THE SHAH WAS STILL AROUND. FOUR YEARS LATER IT WAS 110 TUMANS TO THE DOLLAR. FOR MY MOTHER, THE CHANGE WAS SO SUDDEN THAT SHE HAD A HARD TIME ACCEPTING IT.
I WENT WITH MY FRIEND SHADI.
SO, HOW DO THEY LOOK?
THEY LOOK SUPER!
OK, I'LL TAKE THE JEANS, AND THESE EARRINGS.
AND I'LL TAKE THAT RING, THERE!
WE WERE IN THE MIDST OF SHOPPING EUPHORIA, WHEN SUDDENLY...
BOOM!!!
A MISSILE HAS JUST EXPLODED IN THE TAVANIR NEIGHBORHOOD.
WHAT!
TAVANIR WAS WHERE I LIVED.
THE JEANS!
IF SOMEONE HAD TIMED ME, I THINK I WOULD HAVE BEAT THE WORLD SPEED RECORD.
TAXI!

FASTER! PLEASE HURRY...
A CROWD HAD GATHERED IN FRONT OF MY STREET! THE BOMB HAD HIT MY STREET!
MA'AM, WHICH BUILDING WAS HIT?
APPARENTLY, IT EXPLODED AT THE END OF THE STREET.
MY BUILDING AND THE BABA-LEVY'S WERE AT THE END OF THE STREET.
LET ME THROUGH.
ONE CHANCE IN TWO THAT IT WAS OUR BUILDING.
PLEASE, LET ME THROUGH.
YOU CAN'T GO BEYOND THIS POINT!
...I LIVE HERE...
AND HE LET ME THROUGH.


I DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK UP. I LOOKED AT MY TREMBLING LEGS. I COULDN'T GO FORWARD, LIKE IN A NIGHTMARE.
LET THEM BE ALIVE. LET THEM BE ALIVE. LET THEM...
MARJI
MARJI!
MOM!
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT? DAD'S ALL RIGHT? GRANDMA'S ALL RIGHT?
EVERYONE'S OK. I WAS THE ONLY ONE HOME.
OH, MOM.
...

WHERE DID IT HIT?
THE BABA-LEVY'S HOUSE.
AT LEAST THEY WEREN'T HOME!
...
MOM, THEY WEREN'T, RIGHT?
WELL, I DON'T KNOW. IT'S SATURDAY, YOU KNOW.
I KNOW IT'S SATURDAY. SO?
SATURDAY IS THE JEWISH SABBATH. WHEREVER THEY ARE, JEWS ARE SUPPOSED TO GO HOME.
...YOU THINK THAT...?
IT'S TRUE THAT THEY WEREN'T VERY OBSERVANT. I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY MUST HAVE STAYED AT THE HILTON.
YOU KNOW THE TAPE I PUT ON THE WINDOWS? IT WORKED PERFECTLY. ALL THE WINDOWS ARE BROKEN, BUT THERE'S NOT A PIECE OF BROKEN GLASS IN THE HOUSE!
I COULD TELL THAT MY MOTHER WAS TRYING TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

WHEN WE WALKED PAST THE BABA-LEVY'S HOUSE, WHICH WAS COMPLETELY DESTROYED, I COULD FEEL THAT SHE WAS DISCREETLY PULLING ME AWAY. SOMETHING TOLD ME THAT THE BABA-LEVYS HAD BEEN AT HOME. SOMETHING CAUGHT MY ATTENTION.
I SAW A TURQUOISE BRACELET. IT WAS NEDA'S. HER AUNT HAD GIVEN IT TO HER FOR HER FOURTEENTH BIRTHDAY...
THE BRACELET WAS STILL ATTACHED TO... I DON'T KNOW WHAT...
NO SCREAM IN THE WORLD COULD HAVE RELIEVED MY SUFFERING AND MY ANGER.