

THE
PLACE TO
WHICH
I SHALL
RETURN

Words by Jobin Bekhrad



HOME IS NOT WHERE YOU WERE BORN. HOME IS WHERE ALL YOUR ATTEMPTS TO ESCAPE CEASE.

NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

I'M FIDDLING AROUND with a cracked peanut shell in my hand, eyeing weary, mustachioed faces and green-tinged cheeks. I don't speak Turkish, but I can make out a few words here and there in between sips of what will probably be the last proper beer I'll have in what seems to me like a lifetime. My gaze falls on the fluorescent lights of the little stalls below the makeshift lounge, and, feeling a bit heady, the sonorous song of a lovelorn Turk dripping from my ears, I marvel at the power of the bottle, the boutique, and the bar; had we these three, would we be so quick as to jump headlong into the first plane to take us to swanky Stamboul and Dubai down under? Maybe, maybe not. We might not have had democracy

before the Revolution — the ominous 'R' word — but we had booze aplenty, and no need to throw around our hard-earned *tomans*¹ in the land of the Grand Turk and the Arabian shores of the Persian Gulf.

I was never around to experience those heady, halcyon days (or so they call them); all I have are the stories recounted to me by my parents and relatives. Dubai, save a road sparsely dotted with the odd building here and there, was practically non-existent in terms of a city, and Istanbul was not exactly regarded as a holiday destination by most Iranians. Apparently, whilst driving from Tehran to Istanbul through Anatolia, peasants would throw rocks at cars and passersby if food wasn't dished out to them. Even faraway places like the States and Britain held little appeal for many. Upon finishing his studies in the US, my father had plans to settle down there with my mother, something my grandfather couldn't fathom. Sonny boy, he said, what business do you have in America? Come back to Iran, the land of roses and nightingales. My parents did eventually return to Iran in the 70s — in the winter of 1979, at the zenith of the Revolution — but my father had had a bad feeling all along about the future of his country; even whilst in the States, he knew the times were a-changin'. Being the staunch monarchists they were, however, my grandparents wouldn't hear any of it. The Shah² leave Iran? *Impossible*. Bite your tongue, young man! We had it all back then, as some will tell you; and just a few years later, we lost it all. Everything.

I keep looking at my phone (I'm too hip for watches) to check the time, and my ticket to double and triple-check my flight details. In around half-an-hour or so, I'll be on my way across fabled Anatolia — the land of my beloved Yashar Kemal³ and the legendary bandit Koroğlu⁴ — and the windy Caucasus mountains which I have always regarded as 'home', yet which I know will never be. I can't say whether I'm happy, depressed, or anxious, as I feel all three emotions at once. Though I should, for all practical purposes, be ecstatic to be returning for a month, I can't help but feel an inexplicable heaviness in my heart; perhaps it's because whenever I travel

to Iran, I feel like I'm travelling to another world — which, in a sense, I am. Iran isn't exactly like other countries; it's literally in a category of its own. When I go to Iran, I don't just kiss cold pints of lager goodbye, but also everything I'm used and accustomed to and take for granted on a daily basis. Sure, we have the Internet, but it requires, as is often said, the patience of Ayoub⁵; and besides, most of the sites I visit are blocked. Everyone there uses VPNs ('filter-breakers', as they like to call them), but even those don't work too well, and nothing is ever guaranteed. The speed is so slow that often times checking emails becomes a Sisyphean task, and before going to Iran, I usually tell my colleagues and friends to not bother getting in touch whatsoever.

As with the Internet, you can find anything you want in Iran if you have the will and drive to do so; however, what you find usually has to be attained through illicit means (fancy a glass of Shiraz? You'll have to have that delivered to you in a brown paper bag by a seedy-looking man on a motorbike), over-payment (e.g. in the case of certain articles of branded clothes from abroad), or behind closed doors and curtains (wild parties, anyone?). Not to worry, though; for everything you're accustomed to but for which you don't have the recourses, there's a wholesome, family-friendly, good old-fashioned Iranian alternative. Instead of an ice-cold Heineken, for instance, you and your friends can have fun with a plastic two-litre bottle of Delster (a widely-available local brand of 0.0% non-alcoholic beer) to enjoy along with a bowl of pistachios. And of course, it's largely the domestic products, *sakht-e Iran* (lit. 'made in Iran'), that are conspicuous throughout the city. Brands from the Far East (e.g. China and Korea) also abound, but then again, where don't they? Cut off from all traces of the 'Global North' and the Western world I grew up in, and with a permit to stay for up to a maximum of three months and leave the country once a year (unless I'd like to serve in the military for two years), I often feel — after the excitement of my new surroundings fast dissipate — a sensation somewhere between suffocation, isolation, and unfamiliarity. Yes, my life — for the most part — revolves around Iran,

but I personally like a bit of balance. At times, it simply gets a bit too much for me, and I feel the overwhelming urge to walk into a bar and hear the Stones on the radio; to flick on the television and see Bowie bandying around on a guitar; to read a proper English book not belonging to the 19th century, and to gaze at eccentrics with blue hair on a vine-strewn cobblestone street in the stylish labyrinths of some urban European jungle. For all my nationalist sentiments and feelings of defiant pride, perhaps I'm more Western than I'd like to think. In Persian, there's a word for people like me, and it's not particularly pretty: *gharbzadeh*. I am one, who, in the philosophy of the late Jalal Al-e Ahmad, has been 'struck' by the epidemic of the West. *Khoda shafaham bedeh* — may God grant me health!

I rub my silver *farvahar* necklace as the plane hits the runway. The first time I landed in Tehran, I remember hearing ejaculations of joy and claps; there aren't any this time, but I make nothing of it. I can feel damp patches underneath my arms, and the pungent smell of yesterday's cologne emanating from my chest. I wonder whether or not to button up my shirt and tuck in my pendants — the Zoroastrian *farvahar* and the Hindu *aum* — but later laugh at the idea, and think how much of an outsider I feel like. It was only last year that I was here to meet with local artists and visit my relatives, and I'm back again for the same reasons, more or less; I've also, of course, missed the place immensely. Standing in line at passport control, behind middle-aged ladies adjusting their headscarves and fanning themselves with their passports, I think about what to say if I'm questioned. It's an instinct, an impulse that comes on subconsciously; though I'm always quick to let people know I was born in Tehran, it's not a fact that comes in particularly helpful in transit. It doesn't matter that I've lived 25 out of the 27 years I've been on this earth in Canada, and am a Canadian citizen; the mere mention of my birthplace is enough to spark suspicion and a flurry of questions at the airport, and as such, I'm usually high-strung whilst waiting to have my passport examined. The handsome, young, finely-chiseled fellow

Illustration on previous page by Sassan Behnam Bakhtiar — Untitled (from the Aftermath series)

behind the Plexiglas window, looking like he's just emerged from a slab of Roman marble beckons me with a glance to come forward. With a curt 'salam', I give him my passport from an outstretched, sweaty hand, and after a quick glance through its pages, his stamp comes pounding down, and I'm on my way; no interrogations, no enquiries, no accusations. I've been to Tehran many times, yet I always feel uneasy at the airport, on account of the largely rubbish stories my fellow compatriots — many of whom have almost zero ties to the country — tell one another during their regular gatherings. According to some of them, the majority of Iranians visiting the country from abroad are accused of being spies, hoarded on a bus, and taken straight to Evin Prison to waste away in squalour. Why would they do such a thing, any sensible person would ask; to which the proverbial response would come: ah, they don't need a reason — it's the Islamic Republic! Truth be told, I've never had an easier time entering and leaving a country than in Iran, whereas I'm often in for unpleasant surprises back in Canada and Britain; the US is another animal altogether.

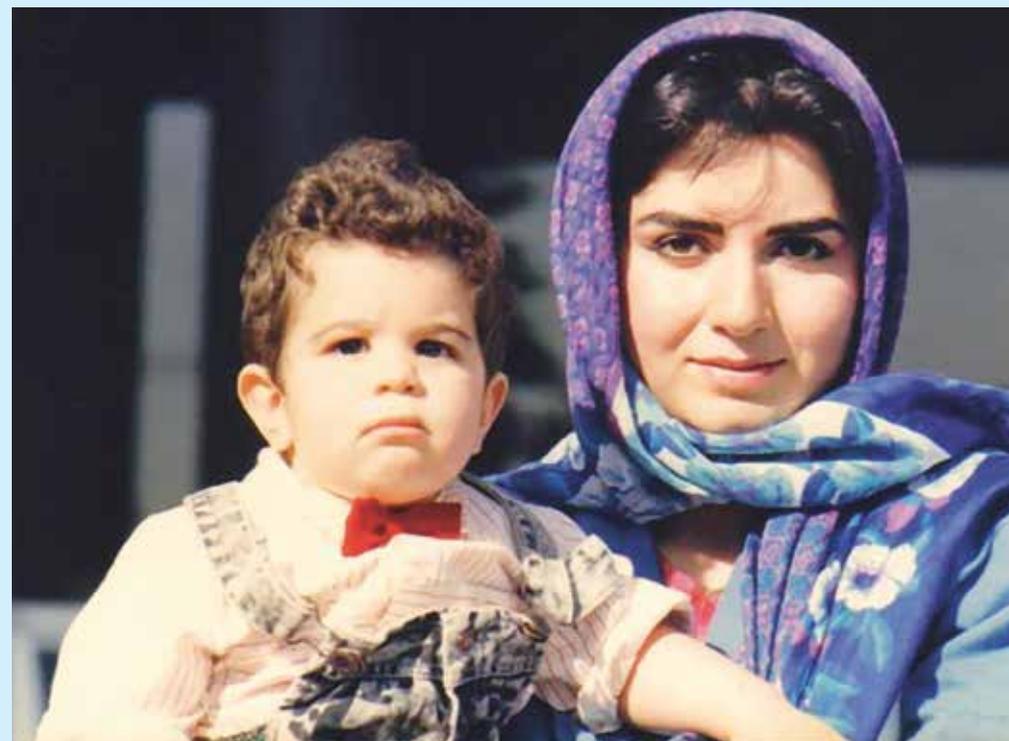
The first familiar faces I see are not those of my grandparents, friends, or relatives, but rather of the late Ayatollah Khomeini, and the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. I've seen them so many times I feel I know them in a way, and their grey beards and turbans remind me of the pictures of my ancestors I often unearth from under my bed to peruse with elation. It's as if, in a grandfatherly sort of way, they're welcoming me back home, to my roots, to my *sarzamin*, to the land of the noble, bastion of the believers — Iran. They don't look particularly happy to see me, but I'm sure they are deep down inside.

It's nearly three in the morning; a disheveled heap of skin and bones, I don't bother shopping around for a cab driver, but rather jump into the first one I can find. I'm so focused on getting home and dropping dead after my journey halfway around the world — a 'journey to Kandahar', as per the proverb — that I barely glance at the driver; I think he gets my drift, as he remains quiet during the entire trip — and

it's not a short one, by any means. We're on the outskirts of the city, and have quite a way to go before we finally reach the beating, thumping, mad heart of this metropolis that beguiles me, seduces me, enamours me, and disgusts me, all at once. I guess it's what one would call a love-hate relationship. I can't argue with that.

No sooner than the driver flicks on the car stereo than we're on the highway towards the city. The song pouring forth from the speakers is characteristically Persian, sung in the avaz style. I'm not listening to the words, but rather looking outside at the bleak landscape. The singer is most probably reciting the heavenly verse of Hafez, Sa'di, or some other master, but to my disinterested, weary ears, it sounds more funereal than mystical, a feeling which becomes accentuated as we pass by the massive Behesht-e Zahra (Zahra's Paradise) cemetery. Somewhere amongst those myriad slabs of stone, I think to myself, lie the bones of my grandfather. I've never visited his grave, and probably never will; such structures have never held any importance for me, and I've never felt any need for them, either; I can feel my grandfather in my blood and bones, and don't need anyone, or thing, to remind me of the fact. Nonetheless, I try to imagine where his grave might be, saying a prayer in my heart all the while.

Whizzing past billboards in praise of Ali, microwaves, and biscuits, we drive past Ayatollah Khomeini's tomb and mosque, a grand, golden edifice glimmering in the night sky, festooned with homely coloured bulbs in green, blue, and red. I try to close my eyes and catch up on some much needed rest, but can't, for some reason, avert my gaze from the bleakness outside, which slowly begins to take on shape and form as we approach the heart of the beast. Hills emerge, as do high-rise buildings dotting the foothills of the Alborz mountains where Arash the archer once let loose his arrow, and the serpentine Zakhak was grounded. I can see, in the corner of my eye, the silver dome and minarets of a mosque, as well as the first of many martyr murals, strewn with tulips⁶. Some of them look just like me. What would I have done had my parents decided to stay in Iran? Would I, who so proudly claim to



Mom and me in Tehran. 1988

be an Iranian and have Ferdowsi's ardent desire seared on my soul — *cho Iran nabashad, tan-e man mabad*⁷ — have fought in the war? Would I, like the scores of countless children, have lunged forth at tanks with but bare hands, and walked over mines? I feel a cold chill run through my legs, and the hair on my arms stand on their ends. Why them, and not me?

The streets are unusually empty; had it been four in the afternoon rather than the morning, we would have been caught in a lethal deadlock, frying away beneath the beating sun. Everywhere I see neon signs, some flickering, some on, and some mere outlines in the darkness. I lower the window, and a cool breeze smelling of gasoline and dust tosses my thick hair about in the wind. Behrouz Vossoughi and Naser Malekmoatie⁸ once strolled these streets looking for trouble, while Shahram Shabpareh⁹ drove about in his little jeep, probably on his way to a gig at Koochini, Chatanooga, or one of the other popular haunts of yesteryear my father so often talks about excitedly. There's

not a *chador*, *hejab*, or policeman in sight, and I lose myself in an early morning daydream as we breeze through boulevards, alleys, and Tehran's main drag, Vali-ye Asr Avenue. Her name may have changed throughout the cruel vicissitudes of time, but she'll always be beautiful to me, lined with her resplendent plane trees and running streams carrying manna from the mountains on high; Mossadegh, Pahlavi, Vali-ye Asr, yet all are but names for one and the same, for Paradise.

At around five in the morning, we pull into a nondescript alley in the city's Gheytrarieh district, a rather upper-class neighbourhood in the northeast. My grandparents sold their apartment in Zafar last year, I don't have a place to stay anymore, and as such, have rented an apartment for a month following the advice of a friend. Like the alley in which it's situated, the building is characterless, and anything but ostentatious. To no avail, I ring the *seraydar* — the superintendent — to open the door. I feel like, to quote the Stones, two thousand light years from home, and on top of that, I'm in the middle of Tehran in the

wee hours of the morning with two suitcases in my hands and not a soul in sight; not a bad start to my sojourn, I think. Even the buzzer for the lower level is broken, and in desperation I give the owner of the building a rude awakening. A few minutes later, the door opens, and my eyes meet those of a smiling, mustachioed man clad in baggy trousers and a grease-smear tartan shirt. Clinging to him is a little girl with a ponytail, who looks at me warily from behind her father's legs. 'Agha Mohammad?' I ask with trepidation. 'Yes, *agha* — welcome!' He's a cheery, good-natured fellow — especially for someone woken up at five in the morning — but that doesn't prevent me from heaping curses on him after he asks for my passport as 'security'. I still, of course, have my Canadian passport, but my Iranian one is my ticket out of this joint. Bloody hell; I have no passport, no home, and no idea as to what awaits me next. Perhaps the Algerian singer Rachid Taha put it best: *andy wahloo! I have nothing baby — no-thing!*

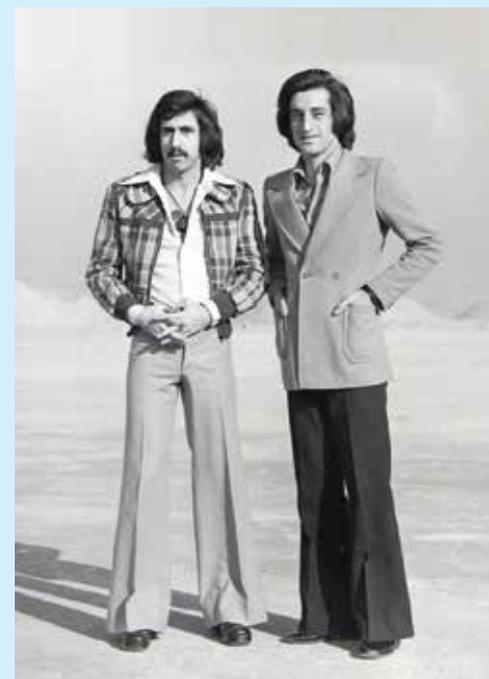
I wince as I flick on the fluorescent lights in my bedroom. The place — sparsely furnished with all but the barest of necessities — bears more resemblance to a prison than a flat. I'm famished, but all I have to snack on are cookies and sour cherry sharbat, the thought of which kill whatever appetite I might have had; dirty, but have no towel to dry myself with, and bored, with only state television to watch. That's all right, I think to myself: as long as there's a half-decent Internet connection, I'm a happy man. I blow on my mobile for good luck, and invoke the name of the Prophet Zarathustra. *Ya Zartosht!* The circle — along with my head — is still spinning, and I'm sat underneath the aura of the sickly fluorescent glow above me. I can't help but grimace; it feels like I'm living a Stones song. I'd always wondered as a kid what they meant by *Exile on Main Street*, but I'm older and wiser now (or so I'd like to think).

Yes, in futility I cursed greasy Agha Mohammad under my breath, streaked my hands through my hair in exasperation, and hurled imprecations at the son-of-a-bitch secretary who got it in

his mind to even consider this place for me; but may the reader make no mistake — it was all down to simple bad luck. It must have been one of those black stray cats who darted past me in the street outside, or — perhaps more plausibly — my own stupidity at having left the business of finding a place until the last minute. There are apartment buildings here, the likes of which I've never seen in Toronto or London, and glamorous neighbourhoods aplenty; all one needs to do is go for a spin (in perhaps a Maserati or Porsche of a nouveau-riche playboy) in the city's many upper-class districts such as Elahiyeh and Velenjak, to have their jaw temporarily dislocated in awe. Gheyтарыeh, too, is looked kindly upon, and as such, I think it took a special talent to find this sorry excuse of a place. But, as they say, there's no use crying over spilt milk (or *doogh*, rather, in my case); I'll be here for a month, and better get used to it, warts and all. If only I could see the mountains, though — if only.

I was born in the month of Aban — the 'waters' — by the foothills of the Alborz mountains, those stony, ancient relics surrounding the city, on the same day as the once-Crown Prince of Iran, Reza Pahlavi. From over the hills and far away, explosive love letters from Saddam whizzed about in the air, occasionally landing in Tehran, as if to remind us that his war¹⁰ wasn't only being fought in the south and the wild, wild west, but at our doorsteps as well. From the unassuming Asia Hospital, I was wrapped up in a blanket, popped in a basket, and taken back home; little did I know then what designs my parents had in mind for me. When it comes to the subject of post-Revolution immigration and the Iranian diaspora, many assume that families left primarily because of their unwillingness to live under the rule of the Islamic Republic, and in some cases, that they fled, being lucky to have 'escaped' in one piece. While such accounts very well exist, it certainly wasn't the case when it came to my family.

My parents met in St. Louis in the 70s, whilst studying at the university there. Despite having become accustomed to life in the land of milk and honey, they decided to move back to Iran in 1979, of all years, when revolutionary zeal was



Shahram Shabpareh and Ebi in the 1970s

at its apex, and the hostage crisis was in full tow. In Tehran, amidst curfews, demonstrations, the commanding voice of Khomeini, and memories of the Shah, my parents enjoyed a makeshift wedding in the apartment of my grandparents' Armenian neighbours. It was anything but glamorous: relatives (the ones who could fit in the tiny place) brought oil as a present, my father had to dodge burning tires on the road from the south to Tehran, and my mother's shoes were furtively slipped underneath an iron door when Khomeini had called for a curfew. Despite all the difficulties they now look back and laugh, they were happy, and soon began making a life for themselves. After stints in Tehran and Mashhad, my father had become a respected engineer and architect making 'good money', and who spent his weekends skiing on the slopes of the Alborz mountains. My mother, on the other hand, was working part-time in a cultural centre previewing films before they were screened in cinemas, surrounded by members of the country's intellectual and artistic elite; in short, they were both doing what they loved, had prestige, and were financially well-off. They weren't forced to leave, nor did

they do so unwillingly: they did it for me, for a son whose tomorrows they wanted to ascertain.

But to return now to the heart of the matter: the mountains. As the capital of Iran, Tehran boasts many iconic landmarks — the Shahyad monument (now Azadi/Freedom), the Milad Tower, the Golestan Palace; but none, perhaps, are as embedded in the history and soul of the city — underneath its skin, as one would say in Persian — as the mountains. Remove any of the aforesaid edifices, and you'd still have Tehran, as bustling and beautiful as ever; without the mountains, however, Tehran as one knows it would cease to exist. Looming on the horizon with their snowcapped peaks, sometimes visible through the miasma of smog that often engulfs the city, and at others vague masses in the distance, they stand proud and resilient, unmoved by the vagaries of brutal time, as old as she herself. While many unfamiliar with the city and country assume it to be, on account of its geography, a barren wasteland of deserts, to paraphrase the 17th century French jeweler-cum-journeyman Sir John Chardin, Iran is a land of mountains, *kuhestan*. Since time immemorial, the Aryan tribes who migrated from the cold steppes of Central Asia atop horse-drawn chariots have been cradled by the mighty Alborz mountains in the north, and the Zagros chain in the south. Across the latter do the ancient Bakhtiari tribesmen make their perilous journeys to their summer and winter pastures, and through the former pass avid weekenders to the shores and villas of the Caspian Sea. It was at the foothills of these redoubtable ranges that empires were formed, maintained, and lost. As goes the proverb, men may move, but mountains do not; while the children of Cyrus have seen Iran ravaged, passed between the hands of her many suitors, conquered, and reclaimed again, the mountains have remained ever standing, keeping a silent vigil they will break only on Judgment Day.

I wake up one morning to the sound of crows cawing on the dusty branches of the ashen-coloured trees outside. I look at myself in the cracked mirror on the chestnut dresser, noticing

my growing beard, and thinking how much it suits me here. I turn my head left and right, keeping one eye focused on the mirror, fancying my profile bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Cyrus the Great (or rather, his posthumous depiction). Striking a match and lighting the little gas stove in the kitchen, I prepare a pot of tea, yearning inside for my grandmother's shiny *samovar* she'd keep alight, even throughout the sultry summer days that afforded no respite save the zephyr from the feeble air conditioner above our heads. I scald my thumb, cursing heaven and hell, as I pour myself an unappetising glass, and flick through the few television stations available disinterestedly. Stern warnings from the *Koran* alongside images of the *Kaaba* in Mecca, imitations of Western game shows, domestic football matches, macaroni advertisements; the day is off to a rather vapid start. Then again, however, I have little else to do, and pinch my nose in vexation at the thought of having to stay here another two-and-a-half weeks. *Khodaya, be dadam beres*: God, where art Thou?

It's not that Tehran is a drag — it's anything but, really — but rather, that I'm far from being at home here. Unlike most of my friends outside Iran who have scores of relatives and close friends here, and dig the whole *mehmooni* (casual gathering) business, I come from a rather small family, have very few close friends (although a great many acquaintances and contacts), and have never really been one for traditional gatherings, let alone the city's infamous, wild parties that implode behind closed doors. I don't have to tell anyone here that I'm out of place; it's almost as if they can smell it, detect it from afar — perhaps in the same way that I can tell if someone is Iranian from observing their gestures from miles away and behind. Without even having to speak and make known my 'Armenian' accent (according to my grandfather), I'm dead on arrival, branded a *khareji*, an outsider. I dress and walk differently; I don't have a bandage on my newly-hacked nose, plucked eyebrows, or an electrically-charged hairdo; I'm calm, and in no hurry, and look at everything inquisitively. To make matters worse, both my first and last name — despite being as

Persian as you can get — are rather uncommon, and I'm often told I don't look Iranian, but rather, Turkish. *Where are you from? Are you Iranian? Are you sure? You don't look Iranian. Joobin — is that a Persian name? Hmm...*

It's quite a strange sensation, really, feeling like a stranger in one's own country. 'Abroad', in Toronto and London, I feel Iranian — or at least, 'Eastern' — to a fault, almost; nearly everything I consume, the places I go, and the people I associate with have something or other to do with Iran. As well, being a [proud] member of a visible minority, my 'Iranian-ness' becomes incredibly pronounced, and I'm constantly on the lookout to let people know about my ethnicity, and talk to them about the culture and heritage of my ancient, magical homeland. In Iran, however, I'm just another Persian guy with bushy eyebrows, facial hair, a *farvahar* necklace, and a big (albeit unadulterated) nose; all the exoticism dissipates along with the romantic feeling of exile and having something to 'fight' for; well, at least my name is still [strangely] unknown to many Iranians, and I apparently don't look very Persian. Oddly enough, many would be happy to be in my situation: who wants to be considered typically Iranian, when you could be mistaken for an Italian, Greek, or Spaniard? They might even play along with the misconception: *Iranian? Moi? My mother's Italian, and my father half-Spanish, half-Persian, baby.*

In the process, my 'Western' identity rears its head, reminding me that perhaps I'm not the lovechild of the East I so often like to fantasise about. Just as the Samanids in the 10th century yearned to hear again the sweet sound of Persian recited in their courts after 'two centuries of silence', in Iran I long to hear — and speak — the English tongue in all its bastardised glory; I miss the amenities and luxuries I often take for granted; I miss the way things once were, and long to return... *home*. In the West, I yearn to go back to Iran, and feel ostentatiously Iranian, while in Iran, I feel undeniably Western. In Persian, we have a proverb for sticky situations like these: I'd be likened to a stick with shit on both ends.



My first birthday in Tehran in 1988



Azadi/Shahyad Tower, 1970s postcard

Yeah, in the city where the streets have two names, I'm an outsider, a foreigner, and at times — God forbid — a *tourist*. The only memories I have of this place are those of lazy summers and prolonged business trips, of my grandmother's little apartment on 32nd street in Shahrara, the labyrinths of Zafar, cool evenings by the foothills of the mountains in Darband, Western Atefi Street by the Park-e Mellat (The People's Park), and getting lost in the Grand Bazaar. I don't remember the War, the 80s, *Kolah Ghermezi* (Red Hat) and *Madreseh-ye Mooshha* (The School of Mice); I never did military service, never had to take a nerve-wracking national exam to enter university, and never for a second thought about the uncertainties of the morrow. I'll never have the honour of saying I'm an Iranian — born *and* bred.

Yet, I still consider Iran home (in a strictly figurative sense), and despite always leaving with a sense of alienation and a heavy heart, long shortly afterwards to return there. It's what I like to call the Sindbad Syndrome: no matter how many journeys I make there, and no matter how disillusioned I become, I know I'll soon tire of the plush comforts of the West, and desire to make, once again, for the Alborz mountains and the land of roses and nightingales; for Iran, no matter how much she vexes me, brings me to tears, and wrings my aching heart, will always be my motherland, my solace, my saviour.

I miss, more than ever, that bustling city with all its beauty and squalour, serenity and madness, jarring contradictions, and



Welcome to Tehran, 1960s

awe-inspiring grandeur. I miss the smell of roses, on paper and in the parks, and the sight of faded tulips strewn across the decaying façade of a highway mural; the taste of hot tea in my grandmother's house, and the sound of Golpayegani bellowing forth from her crackly gramophone; the sight of the mountains on a crisp spring day, a cool northern breeze rushing through my locks; the smell of saffron, crackling *esfand*, and exhaust, all at once; the taste of pomegranates and rosewater, and the feeling of standing on the shoulders of giants.

I once read in a book that the name 'Tehran' is Aramaic for 'the place to which I shall return'. It's not only I who long to return there, but also everyone I know who has had the chance to visit, however briefly, that metropolis nestled within the mountains in a most ancient land, Iranian and *khareji* alike; never, perhaps, has a city been so aptly named. Tehran, from thee I hail, and to thee shall I return...

chapters 4

¹ A denomination of Iranian currency. A *tooman* is the equivalent of ten *rials*.

² Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919 — 1980), the last Shah of Iran.

³ A prominent 20th century Turkish writer of Kurdish origin.

⁴ A Turkic folk hero.

⁵ A Muslim saint revered for his patience.

⁶ It is a belief in Iranian Shi'ism that tulips sprout from the blood of martyrs.

⁷ 'May I cease to live should there be no Iran', a famous line from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

⁸ Prominent pre-Revolution actors.

⁹ A popular Iranian singer.

¹⁰ The Iran-Iraq War (1980 — 1988)