

# **Unimaginable Resilience of a Pen**

(screen play)

Shahriar Jahanian

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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to all highly self-motivated BIHE students and dedicated BIHE professionals.

## **About The Author**

The author, “Shahriar Jahanian,” is a retired college professor. He received his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University and taught for several years at different colleges and universities. He retired in 2017, and during his retirement, he wrote several philosophical books and true stories. He has also published several books, articles, and papers in prestigious journals and proceedings.

His previous experience includes publishing numerous scientific articles and ten books, which have served as a source of motivation to write more books and publish more articles.

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# Chapter 1

September 23, 1976.

## INT. TEHRAN - DAY

The city of Tehran, the capital city of Iran, sprawls out beneath ancient mountains—a timeless backdrop to the bustling streets below.

We meet MARYAM (6years old), an innocent young girl in the capital city of Iran, walking hand in hand with her mother, SIMIN (Mid 30's). Maryam's eyes are wide with wonder as she takes in the sights.

## MARYAM

(voiceover)

There was always a calmness here in Tehran. For generations, this city has remained unchanged. And the charm remained forever present.

As they walk, Maryam's mother explains their family's connection to the Baha'i religion.

## SIMIN

(softly)

Our faith may have Persian roots, Maryam, but its teachings belong to the world. It is a message of unity and love that exists way beyond borders.

Maryam listens intently.

## MARYAM

(voiceover)

Today marks a special occasion for me—my first day of school. Usually, my special day is Naw Ruz—the Baha'i and Iranian New Year—but it's six months away.

## MARYAM

(excitedly)

I can't wait, Mother! I want to learn everything there is to know!

## SIMIN

(smiling, squeezing her hand gently)

You will, my dear. Today marks the beginning of a new journey for you.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY**

The day is sunny. The school is bustling with energetic students. Maryam's dark hair cascades over her right shoulder in a silky braid.

**MARYAM**

(excited)

Mother, look! There are so many children here!

Maryam's eyes sparkle as she takes in the sight of her new surroundings. The courtyard is alive with activity—girls playing hopscotch, boys engaged in animated conversations, and the distant sound of laughter echoing off the walls.

**SIMIN**

(affectionately)

Take it slow, Maryam. There's plenty of time to explore.

Simin's grip on Maryam's hand is gentle yet firm. She watches her daughter with pride while Maryam's eyes dart from one classroom to the next.

**MARYAM**

(wide-eyed wonder)

I can hardly believe it, Mother. I'm finally here!

They reach one class, and Simin nods, standing behind as Maryam enters the class.

**INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY**

The class was filled with youthful energy as MARYAM timidly approached the teacher's desk, where AZADEH, Simin's old friend, looked over the group of students.

**AZADEH**

(smiling warmly)

Salaam, Simin. It's been too long. How have you been?

**SIMIN**

(returning the smile)

Walykum Salam, Azadeh. I've been well, thank you. And yourself?

Azadeh gestures towards Maryam.

**AZADEH**

(excitedly)

And who is this little angel? Your daughter, I presume?

Simin nods proudly, prompting Maryam to shyly extend her hand towards Azadeh.

**MARYAM**

(softly)

Hello, Miss Azadeh.

Azadeh clasps Maryam's hand gently, leading her to a nearby table where a group of girls are gathered.

**AZADEH**

(to the girls)

Girls, this is Maryam. She's new here, so let's make her feel welcome, alright?

The girls nod enthusiastically. Some were smiling, some were confused, and some were looking at her with a judgmental gaze.

Maryam's smile lights up as she meets PARVANEH, a pale, skinny girl with big, dreamy eyes.

**MARYAM**

(excitedly)

Hi, I'm Maryam. It's nice to meet you!

**PARVANEH**

(softly)

Hi, Maryam. I'm Parvaneh. Good to meet you, too!

**FADE IN:**

**MONTAGE:**

**EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY**

Sunlight bathes the schoolyard as MARYAM (a young girl) enters, shyly approaching a group of CHILDREN. They laugh and play.

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Maryam and the children raise hands, answer questions, and celebrate small moments together.

**MARYAM (V.O.) (softly)**

"New friends, new lessons... my first day at school was truly an adventure."

**FADE OUT**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY**

The sun shines brightly as children laugh and play during recess. MARYAM sits quietly on a bench. Roya, who is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and older than her, sits beside her.

**MARYAM**

Hi, my name is Maryam, and I am in first grade.

**ROYA**

My name is Roya. I am in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and next year I will be going to junior high.

**MARYAM**

I am excited to come to school and learn everything I can, especially about our country, Iran.

**ROYA**

That's nice.

**MARYAM (curiously)**

What do you want to do in school?

**ROYA (smiling)**

I like learning about the history of our country.

**MARYAM**

Our history?

**ROYA (excitedly)**

Yeah. You know, back in the olden days, Iran was like a magical place. My father told me during that time, we were one of the world's biggest and most powerful countries.

Maryam's eyes lit up.

**ROYA (cont'd)**

My father said the great king Cyroos of Iran, more than 2000 years ago, wrote the first charter of human rights, and in his eyes, everyone was equal. It was amazing!

Maryam nods.

**ROYA (cont'd)**

"My father says that Iran has faced many challenges, but our current king, Mohammad Reza Shah, is going to modernize and improve our country to the level of Japan or America through various changes."

Maryam imagines the grandeur of future Iran, filled with bustling streets and towering skyscrapers.

**ROYA (cont'd)**

He even threw this huge party in 1971 to show the world how great Iran was! And he really cares about women, too. He wants them to have the same lives as men.

**ROYA (cont'd)**

But my father also says some people are ungrateful for what he is doing. They go around and say wrong and bad things about him.

Maryam's brow furrows.

**ROYA (cont'd)**

Some people call him a dictator, but I don't think he is like that. He just wants what is best for his country. He's like a strict but caring father.

As ROYA finishes her story, Maryam sits in silence.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Maryam sits at a table with her classmates, a box of colored pencils spread out before them. She is coloring in a book.

She turns to a girl with dark, curly hair named SARA.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Sara, what's your favorite color? Mine's blue!

SARA (pointing at a purple pencil)

Purple! It's so pretty, don't you think?

**MARYAM (nods)**

Yeah, it's like the color of royalty!

They both giggle and continue coloring.

Maryam then moved to another table, where a BOY named FARHAD was seated.

**MARYAM**

Hey, Farhad, do you like drawing trees too?

**FARHAD (nods, showing a sketch of a tree)**

I love drawing trees! Especially when they're full of leaves like this.

Maryam smiles. She turns and looks at her new friend, PARVANEH.

**PARVANEH (choosing a colored pencil)**

I think I'll color the apple green today. What about you, Maryam?

**MARYAM (picking up a red-colored pencil)**

I'm going to make mine red! Like the ones in the storybooks, Baba reads them to me.

They begin to color together and laugh with each other.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY**

The school day ends. Maryam waves bye and hugs her friends.

**MARYAM (bouncing with excitement)**

Maman! Maman! I'm here!

Maryam rushes towards her mother by the door. She hugs her.

**SIMIN (teasingly)**

Took you long enough, little one. I was starting to think you'd forgotten about me!

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

I can't, Maman! I had so much fun!

**SIMIN (teasingly)**

Why did it take you so long? I was waiting for you.

**MARYAM (energetically)**

Why? Why? Why?

**SIMIN (smiling)**

I have Tahdig waiting for you at home.

**MARYAM (eyes wide with delight)**

Tahdig? Really, Maman? You're the best!

Simin chuckles as Maryam wraps her arms around her neck.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOME – EVENING**

**MARYAM (through a mouthful of food)**

Baba, I drew a sun today and colored it bright orange. My friends made a mountain behind where the sun was setting. Can you tell me where the sun goes when it goes behind the mountains? Why does it not get wet when it goes into the sea?

**SIMIN (chiding gently)**

Maryam, don't talk with your mouth full. It's bad manners.

Maryam obeys, nodding sheepishly as she continues to eat. Her father smiles warmly at her.

**BABA (softly)**

Your questions are always so thoughtful, Maryam. The sun doesn't go anywhere. It just looks like it's sitting behind the mountains because of the Earth's rotation. And as for the sea, the sun doesn't get wet because it's so far away. It's like asking why the stars don't fall from the sky.

**MARYAM (eyes wide, nodding)**

That's why!

**CUT TO:**

**MONTAGE:**

**Text: A Month Later**

**26<sup>th</sup> October, 1976.**

**EXT. TEHRAN BAZAAR - DAY**

Maryam and Simin Walk through Bazaar,

**MARYAM (in awe, looking around)**

Look, Maman! The colors, the smells... it's like a whole new world! Where do all these people come from, Maman? And where are they going?

**SIMIN (softly)**

They come from all corners of the world, my dear. And they come here to experience the beauty of Iran, just like we do.

**MARYAM (voiceover)**

Life in Tehran is like a box of chocolates—full of surprises, delights, and endless possibilities. And amidst it all, I am grateful for the sweetness that fills my days, like the sugary poem of Gaz.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOME - DAY**

Maryam bursts through the front door excitedly. She chews on a piece of Gaz as she drags her mother inside.

**MARYAM (energetically)**

Maman, Maman! The bazaar was amazing! I saw so many colors and smelled so many different things. And thank you for buying me those delicious Gazes.

**SIMIN (laughing)**

I'm glad you had fun.

**MARYAM (voiceover)**

Tehran truly is a beautiful city, full of life and culture. Tomorrow is our King's birthday. And the real fun was about to begin.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MARYAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Maryam is in her bed. It is night. With a soft breeze outside.

**MARYAM (dreamily)**

I can't wait for tomorrow. The flowers, the lights—it's going to be magical!

**SIMIN (smiling)**

Sleep tight, my little flower. Tomorrow will be a day to remember. It is our King's birthday.

**MARYAM (drowsily)**

Will I meet the Queen?

**SIMIN (smiling)**

I hope so. Now, hush. And sleep.

Maryam sleeps.

**FADE IN.**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MARYAM'S ROOM - MORNING**

**MARYAM (energetic, bouncing on the balls of her feet)**

Maman! Maman! Wake up!

**SIMIN (calm, smiling) (Stirring)**

Good morning, sweetheart...

**MARYAM (Still bouncing)**

It's Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's birthday!

Simin smiles wider.

## **SIMIN**

Ah, yes, a special day indeed.

## **INT. MARYAM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Maryam pulls Simin out of bed, both laughing.

MARYAM Baba promised to take us to the Amjadiyeh Stadium! We'll see the parade, the celebration, and the fireworks!

## **MONTAGE – PREPARATIONS** (Upbeat music plays)

### **INT. MARYAM'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Simin helps Maryam get dressed in a beautiful dress. Maryam admires her reflection in the mirror, a touch of kohl adding a festive twinkle to her eyes.

### **INT. CAR - DAY**

Maryam sits excitedly in the back seat, her nose pressed against the window. The family drives towards the stadium, the anticipation buzzing in the car.

### **EXT. AMJADIYEH STADIUM - DAY**

The stadium is a vibrant scene, filled with thousands of cheering people. Flags wave, music soars, and excitement fills the air. Maryam's eyes widened as she took in the spectacle.

## **MONTAGE – CELEBRATION** (Upbeat music fades into festive fanfare)

- A vibrant parade marches through the stadium. (MARYAM (V.O.): The parade was so loud and colorful! I saw horses!
- Young athletes perform. (MARYAM (V.O.): The athletes were so fast and strong. (I wish I could jump like them!)
- Selected students recite poetry. (MARYAM (V.O.): The poems were beautiful, even though I didn't understand all the words.)
- As dusk falls, a hush descends on the crowd. Suddenly, the night sky erupts in a display of fireworks.

**EXT. AMJADIYEH STADIUM - NIGHT**

The fireworks fade, and the stadium erupts in cheers and applause. Maryam, with joy, leans into her father.

**MARYAM**

(Whispering) Thank you, Baba. This day is incredible.

**FADE OUT.**

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - LATER**

The bell rings. Maryam rushes out to the playground. Simin hugs her.

**SIMIN (hugging Maryam tightly)**

My darling. Did you have a good day at school?

**MARYAM (nodding)**

Yes, Maman! I made so many new friends, and Ms. Azadeh taught us a new lesson!

**SIMIN (teasingly)**

Well, I hope you saved some energy for dinner tonight. You're going to Parvaneh's house, remember?

**(FADE IN)**

**INT. PARVANEH'S HOUSE - EVENING**

Maryam arrives at Parvaneh's house dressed in her pink dress.

LEILA, Parvaneh's mother, welcomes them.

**LEILA (kindly, smiling)**

Salam, Simin. Thank you for bringing Maryam. Please, come inside. I've just made some tea.

**SIMIN (gratefully)**

Thank you, Leila. I'll leave Maryam in your capable hands. I'll pick her up later.

**MONTAGE:**

**INT. PARVANEH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

**MARYAM (V.O.)** Parvaneh's apartment was filled with warmth and laughter.

**SHOTS:**

Simin says goodbye with a warm hug. Maryam and Parvaneh share a meal, laughing as they talk. Parvaneh tells stories with animated gestures, while Maryam listens with wide eyes.

**EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT**

**MARYAM (V.O.)** We spent hours under the stars, whispering dreams and secrets.

**SHOTS:**

Maryam and Parvaneh lie side-by-side on a rug, gazing at the night sky. The camera pans up to the stars.

**FADE OUT**

**FADE IN**

Maryam wakes up, excited for the day ahead.

**SHOTS:**

Maryam gets to the breakfast table, where she is welcomed by Simin.

**SIMIN (In an enthusiastic way)**

Finish your breakfast, Maryam, so we can then head to the BAZAAR.

**INT. BAZAAR - DAY**

Maryam walks hand in hand with her mother, Simin.

**SIMIN (eyes twinkling)**

Look, Maryam, isn't it wonderful? All these vibrant colors and enticing scents.

**MARYAM (nodding eagerly)**

Yes, Maman! It's like Cartoon movies

They pass by a stall carrying beautiful carpets, catching Maryam's eye.

**MARYAM (pointing excitedly)**

Maman, look at those carpets! They're so beautiful!

**SIMIN (smiling)**

Indeed, they are. Each one tells a story, my sweet girl.

They continued their stroll, stopping at a newspaper stand.

**NEWSPAPER STAND**

Welcome, welcome! What can I interest you in today?

**SIMIN**

We need the daily paper "Etelat."

**NEWSPAPER SELLER**

Ah, excellent choices!

**MARYAM (eyes wide with wonder)**

Maman, look at those dishes! They're so pretty.

**SIMIN (gently)**

Yes, they are, Maryam. But remember, it's not just about how something looks but also its quality and usefulness.

**MARYAM (smiling)**

Understood Maman!

MARYAM (cont'd)

Maman, why are there so many tourists here?

**SIMIN (smiling)**

They've come from far and wide to experience the beauty of our culture, Maryam. It's a reminder of how special our traditions are.

**MARYAM (looking around)**

Where do they come from?

**SIMIN (smiling)**

They come from all over the world, Maryam. They're here to experience the beauty and richness of our culture.

**MARYAM (fascinated)**

Wow, that's amazing! I wonder what their homes are like.

**SIMIN (chuckling)**

I'm sure they're very different from ours, Maryam. But they've come here to see our home and learn about our traditions.

Maryam's attention is drawn to a group of tourists haggling over souvenirs as they walk.

**MARYAM (enthralled)**

Look, Maman! They're so excited to take something back with them.

**SIMIN (nodding)**

Yes, they want to share their experience with the world and show how wonderful our country is.

**MARYAM (pulling on Simin's hand, looking at a nearby candy stall)**

Maman, can we get some candies, please? I want to try them all!

**SIMIN (sigh)**

Alright, Maryam. But just a few.

Maryam selects some candies excitedly. Simin pays for the candies, and they head back home.

**SIMIN (laughing)**

My, my, Maryam! That candy seems to have given you quite an energy boost.

**MARYAM (grinning)**

Yes, Maman! It's like I'm flying.

**CUT TO**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOME - NIGHT**

Maryam sits cozily on the couch, her head resting on Simin's lap, as NESHAT comes in.

**MARYAM (excitedly giving a paper to NESHAT)**

Baba, today we went to Bazar. Look, we have your favorite daily newspaper.

**BABA (smiling and kissing Maryam)**

Thank you, Maryam.

**SIMIN (Looking at Neshat fearfully)**

Did you see the first page? A group of terrorists shot Captain Turner, who was an American captain.

Maryam goes to the family room to watch TV.

**NESHAT**

I know, some crazy people did that. A few weeks ago, Lieutenant General Farsio was shot by another group of terrorists.

**SIMIN**

I do not know what is happening to this country. Why did Shah buy this much weaponry from the U.S. and invite so many Americans?

**NESHAT (cont'd)**

Shah wanted a prosperous Iran. He established good relations with the US to strengthen Iran's military and defend against Russia or Iraq after witnessing the destruction of Iran's army during WWII.

**SIMIN (with surprise and sadness)**

I do not understand why Shah is trying to advance the country and why these people are going against him.

**NESHAT (Shaking his head with sorrow and sadness)**

Wrong propaganda by some people who do not understand the world's politics., but they are thirsty for power. Whatever bad happens, even if their hands are behind it, they blame it on the Shah and SAVAK.

**FADE IN**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOME - MORNING**

The morning sun filters through the windows where Maryam and her parents are having breakfast.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Maman, can we have Tahdig for breakfast today? It's my favorite!

**SIMIN (chuckling)**

Of course, my dear. Anything for my little sunshine.

Maryam eats her breakfast, savoring each crispy bite of the golden Tahdig.

**MARYAM (while munching)**

Maman, can I invite Parvaneh over to our house after school today? I want to show her my new room and all the toys you got for me.

**SIMIN (smirking)**

Of course, Maryam. It'll be lovely to have Parvaneh over. Just make sure to ask her parents first, okay?

**MARYAM (nodding eagerly)**

Yes, Maman! I'll ask her as soon as I see her.

Maryam finishes her breakfast and rushes off to get ready for school.

**CUT TO**

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

Maryam bursts into the classroom. Her classmates turn towards her.

**ROYA**

Maryam's here!

**SHIRIN**

Hey, Maryam! We missed you!

Maryam's new friend, Parvaneh, rushes over to her, smiling.

**PARVANEH**

Maryam! I'm so glad you're back!

They embrace each other tightly, laughing.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Parvaneh, look what Maman got me! New crayons!

Parvaneh smiles as she examines the colorful crayons and colored pencils in Maryam's hand.

**PARVANEH**

Wow, Maryam! These are amazing! We can use them to draw a picture of the garden we talked about yesterday!

**MARYAM (nodding enthusiastically)**

Yes, let's do it! And we can make the flowers even brighter with these colors!

They quickly gathered around a table, their classmates joining them as they started coloring.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. BAHÁ'Í CLASSROOM - DAY**

**MARYAM (V.O)**

On Fridays, we go to Baha'i school, which is held in one of the Volunteered Baha'i houses. Here, we learn about the Baha'i religion with other Baha'i kids.

The classroom buzzes with activity as Maryam sits at her desk, her hand raised high in the air.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Ms. Farideh, I have a question!

Ms. Farideh looks up from her papers, smiling at Maryam's energy.

**FARIDEH**

Yes, Maryam? What's your question?

**MARYAM (leaning forward)**

Why can't we see the wind, but we can feel it? And why does it make my feet cold at night? Why did God make them that way?

Ms. Farideh pauses, contemplating Maryam's question. The other students in the classroom lean in.

**FARIDEH (putting her pen down)**

That's a great question, Maryam. You see, some things in life are like the wind. They're invisible, but we can still feel their presence. Just like love, God, and the wind, they're all around us, even if we can't see them with our eyes.

**MARYAM (in awe)**

Wow, I never thought of it that way!

The bell rings, and the students begin to gather their belongings, chattering excitedly as they head out to the playground to meet their parents.

**CUT TO**

**INT. SCHOOL GATE - AFTERNOON**

Maryam bursts out of the classroom. She spots her mother waiting by the school gate and rushes over to her.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Maman!

Simin's eyes light up as she sees Maryam approaching and hugs her. Maryam giggles, hugging her.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MAHIN'S APARTMENT - DAY**

**SOUND:** Doorbell rings. Mahin opens the door to reveal Simin.

**MAHIN**

Simin! Come in, come in. How are Neshat and Maryam?

**SIMIN**

They're well. (They embrace)

(They chat and drink tea.)

**SOUND: Loud gunfire erupts outside.**

Simin and Mahin rush to the window.

**MAHIN**

The street's crawling with police! Look, there's a firefight across the street!

**SIMIN (Stuttering)**

And...a helicopter? Landed on the roof?

(Two hours pass. The gunfire stops. Bloodied bodies are carried out of the building. A woman and two young men are handcuffed and taken away by the police.)

**SIMIN (Shaken)**

Mahin, I'm scared. Can I stay here tonight?

**MAHIN**

Of course, Simin. Come on, let's get you settled.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. SIMIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Simin rushes in, shaken.

**SIMIN**

Neshat, you won't believe what happened yesterday!

**NESHAT (Concerned)**

What is it?

**SIMIN**

At Mahin's, we heard gunfire! There was a shootout across the street—even a helicopter! They said there were...terrorists.

**NESHAT (Sighs)**

Sadly, it's all too common these days.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. MARYAM'S SCHOOL - DAY**

The school bell rings. Maryam bursts out, eager to see Simin.

**MARYAM**

Maman! Parvaneh's mom is making Ash Reshteh tonight, and I can't wait! Can I go?

**SIMIN (Smiling)**

Of course, sweetheart. Let's get you home and ready.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

Simin and Maryam walk home, and Maryam chatters excitedly. Simin listens, a shadow of worry lingering in her eyes.

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN**

**INT. PARVANEH'S HOUSE – DAY**

Simin and Maryam approach the house, hand in hand.

**MARYAM (excitedly)**

Maman, can we get Gaz for Parvaneh?

**SIMIN (smiling)**

Of course, darling. After dinner.

**LEILA (greeting at the door)**

Salam, come in! I've just made tea.

**SIMIN**

Thank you, but I need to get home. I'll pick Maryam up later.

**LEILA**

Don't worry, sister. We'll have her dropped off at home after dinner.

**SIMIN (touched)**

Thank you, Leila.

**SIMIN (kissing Maryam goodbye)**

Be a good girl, alright? I'll see you later.

**MARYAM (nodding)**

Okay, Maman!

Simin smiles at Leila and leaves.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. PARVANEH'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Maryam and Parvaneh sit on the roof. Their bellies were full. They look at the twinkling stars above.

**MARYAM (Excitedly)**

Parvaneh, do you think the stars have magic?

**PARVANEH (Thoughtfully, looking up at the stars)**

I'm not sure, Maryam. But Maman tells me that each star has its own story.

**MARYAM (curiously)**

I hope we have a story of our own as well.

**CUT TO**

**INT. PARVANEH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Maryam and Parvaneh lie side by side in Parvaneh's cozy bed. The bedside lamp glows over their faces.

**MARYAM (Whispering)**

Parvaneh, do you think we'll ever have stories of our own to tell, like the ones your mother shared with us?

**PARVANEH (Yawning, stirring slightly)**

I hope so, Maryam. But for now, I think it's time for our dreams, not our stories.

**MARYAM (With a soft sigh, smiling)**

Goodnight, Parvaneh.

**PARVANEH (Sleepily)**

Goodnight, Maryam.

Maryam and Parvaneh drift off to sleep.

## Chapter 2

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - CORRIDOR - DAY (SEPTEMBER 1977)**

Sunlight streams through the ornately decorated corridor. The SHAH (60s, regal) strides alongside FARAH (50s, elegant).

They head towards a grand double door guarded by two stoic officials.

**FARAH** (Smiling)

Nervous about the meeting, Mohmad Reza?

**SHAH** (Stops abruptly, hand on his chest)

Farah, my Quran! I forgot it.

Farah's smile falters a touch.

**FARAH** (Concerned)

Surely you don't still believe....

**SHAH** (Interrupting, voice firm)

My mother gave it to me the day I took office. It's always been with me.

**FARAH** (Sighs)

Mohammad Reza, you're a powerful Shah. Not a man ruled by superstition.

The Shah hesitates, his expression troubled. He looks at Farah, then back towards their room.

**SHAH**

Please, Farah. Just a moment.

\*\*\*

### **INT. SHAH'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

The Shah enters his chamber, a look of worry on his face. He moves to a private cabinet and retrieves a small, worn, leather-bound book—his Quran. He presses it close to his chest with teary eyes.

### **INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

The Shah rejoins Farah, the Quran tucked into a pocket close to his heart. They proceed towards the meeting room.

### **INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A grand mahogany table dominates the richly decorated room. NEMATOLLAH NASSIRI (60s, stern) sits at the head. Around the table are AMIR ABBAS HOVIDA (50s, serious), HOSEIN FARDOOST (60s, loyal), ARDESHIR ZAHEDI (40s, tense), GHOLAMREZA PAHLAVI (50s, concerned), and two HIGH-RANKING ARMY COLONELS (50s, stoic).

Everyone rises as the Shah and Queen enter. The Shah gestures for them to sit.

**SHAH** (Taking a seat, voice grave)

Gentlemen. The situation grows more volatile by the day. I've called this meeting to hear your assessments.

Nassiri leans forward.

**NASSIRI**

Your Majesty, our intelligence indicates the protests are becoming increasingly organized. We've identified a radical cleric, Khomeini, as a key figure fueling the unrest.

**HOVIDA** (Nervously)

The people's grievances, Your Majesty... They cannot be ignored. The economic disparity...

**SHAH** (Interrupting, voice rising)

There will be no concessions! We've brought Iran progress! Modernity!

**FARDOOST** (Leaning in)

Perhaps a more... conciliatory approach? A public address reassuring the people of your commitment to reform?

The Shah considers this for a moment, his brow furrowed.

**SHAH** (Sighs)

Very well, Fardust. We will explore that avenue. But let there be no mistake. The order will be maintained.

**ARMY COLONEL 1** (Nodding resolutely)

Your Majesty, the military is fully prepared to quell any further disturbances.

**ARMY COLONEL 2** (Grimly)

But, Your Majesty, whispers of dissent are growing even within the ranks.

A tense silence descends upon the room. The Shah exchanges a worried glance with Farah.

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - MEETING ROOM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 1977)**

A tense atmosphere surrounds the palace as the SHAH (60s) sits at the head of a grand mahogany table. NEMATOLLAH NASSIRI (60s), Director of SAVAK, stands beside him. Around the table are AMIR ABBAS HOVIDA (50s), Prime Minister, HOSEIN FARDOOST (60s), Shah's confidant, ARDESHIR ZAHEDI (40s), Shah's former son-in-law, GHOLAMREZA PAHLAVI (50s), Shah's brother, and two HIGH-RANKING ARMY COLONELS (50s).

**SHAH** (Sternly)

The agenda today is the recent spate of terrorist attacks plaguing Tehran and other parts of Iran. General Nassiri, brief us.

**NASSIRI** (Steps forward)

While there have been several incidents since 1974, the most critical event was the "Siahkal incident" of 1971. Perhaps your brother, Gholamreza, can elaborate. He played a vital role in suppressing that operation.

**GHOLAMREZA PAHLAVI (Nods)**

The Siahkal incident was a terrorist attack by a group calling themselves the Fadaian Khalq. On February 8, 1971, they assaulted a gendarmerie post in Siahkal, Gilan, killing three officers and freeing imprisoned comrades. Thirteen terrorists, including two already incarcerated, were apprehended and executed. This group espoused a dangerous ideology.

**NASSIRI (Resumes)**

However, Your Majesty, we now face three distinct threats:

One: The Fadaian Khalq.

Two: Fanatical Muslim fundamentalists led by Ayatollah Khomeini, exiled to Najaf, Iraq, in 1962.

Three: The Mujahedin, a group that blends the ideologies of the previous two.

**ZAHEDI (Scoffs)**

The second group seems straightforward. We could request Khomeini's elimination from the Iraqi President and his ruthless Vice President, Saddam Hussein. He wouldn't hesitate.

**SHAH (Shakes head)**

No. I will not have the death of an Ayatollah on my conscience.

**HOVIDA (Worried)**

Your Majesty, we can't let superstition dictate our actions.

**SHAH (Firmly)**

There's a better plan. We'll destroy his reputation. However, first, securing American support, particularly from President Carter, is crucial. After all, we significantly funded President Ford's 1976 campaign.

**FARDOOST** (Leans in)

Meanwhile, we'll focus on dismantling the Fadaian Khalq and the Mujahedin.

**SHAH** (Nods)

Excellent. We will not tolerate these threats.

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN:**

**INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - MEETING ROOM - DAY (SEPTEMBER 1977)**

**(CONTINUOUS from SCENE 2)**

The Shah nods in approval of Fardust's suggestion.

**SHAH**

Excellent. We will not tolerate these threats. General Nassiri, redouble your efforts to dismantle these groups.

**NASSIRI** (Salutes)

Yes, Your Majesty.

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**INT. SHAH'S STUDY - NIAVARAN PALACE - MONTHS LATER (DECEMBER 1977)**

The Shah sits behind his desk, a satisfied smile playing on his lips. He reviews reports with FARAH by his side.

**SHAH** (Chuckles)

Seems our strategy has paid off, Farah. The Fadaian Khalq and Mujahedin are in disarray. Their leadership neutralized.

**FARAH** (Smiling)

Indeed. Now, perhaps it's time to focus on mending the social unrest.

**SHAH** (Waving a dismissive hand)

There will always be some discontent. Nothing a firm hand can't handle.

**FARAH** (Frowning)

But the people's grievances, Mohammad Reza...

**SHAH** (Interrupting)

We've brought Iran progress! Modernization! They should be grateful.

**FARAH** (Sighs)

Perhaps a more moderate approach-

**A knock on the door interrupts them. FARAH gestures for the person to enter.**

**ENTER HOOVIDA**

**HOOVIDA** (Bowing slightly)

Your Majesties. Excellent news. President Carter of the United States will be visiting Iran for New Year's celebrations.

**The Shah's face breaks into a wide grin.**

**SHAH** (Delighted)

Splendid! It is a coup! A public display of American support will silence any remaining doubters.

**Farah, however, remains unconvinced, a flicker of worry in her eyes.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**INT. NIAVARAN PALACE - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT (DECEMBER 31, 1977)**

A lavish New Year's Eve celebration is in full swing. Dignitaries and officials mingle, clinking glasses of champagne. The Shah and Farah stand at the head table, with President CARTER (50s) by Shah's side.

**A hush falls over the room as Carter raises his glass.**

**CARTER** (Smiling)

May I propose a toast? To a great nation led by a visionary leader! Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, stands as an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world. It is a great tribute to you and your leadership, Your Majesty.

**A wave of applause washes over the room. The Shah beams, basking in the public validation. Farah, however, remains a solitary figure, her expression unreadable.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN:**

**INT. SHAH'S PRIVATE CHAMBERS - NIAVARAN PALACE - NIGHT (LATER)**

The Shah, still in his formal attire from the New Year's Eve celebration, sips brandy. A look of triumph flickers across his face. Ardeshir Zahedi (40s) stands across from him, a glass of wine in hand.

**SHAH** (Beaming)

Did you see Carter's toast, Ardeshir? A resounding success!

**ZAHEDI** (Nods, a slight smirk playing on his lips)

Indeed, Your Majesty. A powerful endorsement of your leadership.

**SHAH** (Circling the room)

Now, we can truly focus on marginalizing Khomeini. The people need to see him for the charlatan he is.

**ZAHEDI** (Frowning)

A risky move, Your Majesty. Suppressing dissent often fuels the flames.

**SHAH** (Scoffs)

Nonsense! We'll expose his hypocrisy. His lies. The people are not stupid. Once they see the truth-

**The Shah stops abruptly, his eyes narrowing.**

**SHAH** (Cont.)

Farah... where is she?

**ZAHEDI** (Looks around, shrugs)

I haven't seen her since the festivities ended, Your Majesty.

**The Shah strides to the window, his gaze fixed on the glittering Tehran skyline.**

**SHAH** (Muttering to himself)

Uneasy silence... perhaps she disapproves of our strategy.

**He turns back to Zahedi, a steely glint in his eyes.**

**SHAH** (Sharply)

Regardless. We proceed. Zahedi, I want a full report on Khomeini's past misdeeds, financial dealings, and anything that tarnishes his image. We flood the media with this information.

**ZAHEDI** (Nods eagerly)

Consider it done, Your Majesty. Khomeini's reputation will be in tatters.

**SHAH** (Raises his glass in a toast)

To a new year, free from the clutches of religious fanatics!

**Zahedi hesitates, then clinks his glass against the Shah's. A sense of unease lingers in the air as they both drink.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOUSE - TEHRAN - DAY (A FEW DAYS LATER)**

Sunlight streams through a window, illuminating a cluttered but cozy living room. SIMIN (30s), a concerned woman, sits on the floor, reading a newspaper. NESHAT (40s), her friend, enters carrying a basket of groceries.

**NESHAT** (Smiling)

Fresh bread and feta cheese! Just in time for breakfast.

Simin lowers the newspaper, her brow furrowed.

**SIMIN**

Neshat, have you seen what they've written about Khomeini in the morning paper?

**NESHAT** (Sets down the groceries, takes a seat)

These accusations? Witchcraft? Relations with young boys?

**SIMIN** (Nods, voice tight)

Disgusting lies!

**NESHAT** (Sighs)

The Shah is playing a dangerous game. Suppressing dissent is one thing, but this... this will only backfire.

**SIMIN** (Angrily)

Exactly! He doesn't understand. It's not just about Khomeini anymore. The Shah is making him a martyr, a symbol of resistance!

**NESHAT** (Worried)

Especially amongst the younger generation who don't remember the Shah's early years. They only see this religious leader being persecuted.

**SIMIN** (Shakes her head)

And what about his existing followers? This will only inflame their anger.

**NESHAT** (Stands)

I fear you're right, Simin. This could have serious consequences.

**MARYAM** peeks into the room, her eyes wide.

**MARYAM**

Mama, what's wrong? Why are you sad?

**Simin** forces a smile kneels down, and pulls Maryam close.

**SIMIN** (Softly)

Everything will be alright, Maryam. Just some grown-up worries.

**NESHAT** (Kneels beside them)

Yes, come help us prepare lunch. Let's keep the worries at bay for a while.

**MARYAM** nods, smiling. The women share a worried glance.

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**EXT. QOM CITY SQUARE - DAY (A FEW DAYS LATER)**

A bustling marketplace fills the frame. People barter for goods; children weave through the crowd. A low murmur of discontent hangs in the air.

**ONE MULLAH (60s), standing atop a makeshift platform.**

He gestures dramatically, his voice ringing out.

**MULLAH** (In Farsi - subtitles translate)

My brothers and sisters! Have you seen the lies peddled by the Shah's dogs in their filthy newspapers? Accusations of witchcraft against the Ayatollah Khomeini? Shameful fabrications!

The crowd stirs, a wave of angry shouts rippling through them.

**MULLAH** (Cont.)

They think they can silence dissent with lies! They think they can break our faith!

**CROWD** (Chanting)

"Down with the Shah! Long live Khomeini!"

The crowd surges forward, their chants growing louder. A young **MAN** (20s) throws a rock at a nearby **SAVAK** (secret police) officer. The officer retaliates, firing his pistol into the air.

**PANIC ERUPTS.** People run for cover; screams pierce the air.

**SOLDIERS (20s-30s)** emerge from side streets, batons drawn. They charge into the crowd, shoving people back, striking any who resist.

A young **WOMAN (20s)** trips and falls. A soldier raises his baton to strike her down.

**Suddenly, an OLD MAN (70s)** throws himself on the woman, shielding her with his body. The soldier hesitates momentarily, then slams the baton down on the old man's back.

**The crowd gasps in horror.** The woman scrambles to her feet, tears streaming down her face. She helps the old man up.

**The soldiers continue their brutal crackdown, pushing back the crowd. Cries of pain and fear have replaced the chants.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**EXT. JHALEH SQUARE, TEHRAN - DAY (40 DAYS LATER)**

Forty days have passed since the Qom massacre. Jhaleh Square is a sea of humanity. People from all walks of life—students, workers, religious scholars—stand shoulder to shoulder. Banners and portraits of those killed in Qom are held high.

**A young WOMAN (20s), ZAHRA**, stands with her friend, ALI (20s). They are both dressed in black, their eyes burning with grief and defiance.

**ZAHRA** (Quietly)

Can you believe it's been forty days? Forty days since they gunned down innocent people in Qom.

**ALI** (Nods solemnly)

Their blood will not be in vain, Zahra. This will not stand.

A hush falls over the crowd as a MULLAH (60s) steps onto a makeshift platform. He raises his hands for silence.

**MULLAH** (In Farsi - subtitles translate)

My brothers and sisters! We gather here today to honor those martyred in Qom! Their cry for justice has echoed throughout Iran!

The crowd erupts in a wave of shouts and chants.

**CROWD** (Chanting)

"Shohada nemimiran!" (The martyrs never die!) "Down with the Shah!"

**Suddenly, a commotion erupts on the edges of the square.**

**SOLDIERS** appear, pushing their way through the crowd. They are met with resistance. People start throwing rocks and debris.

**The soldiers open fire.**

**Chaos erupts.** People scream and run for cover. Zahra and Ali get separated in the pandemonium.

**Zahra trips and falls. A soldier raises his gun, aiming at her.**

**A young boy, FARHAD (12), throws himself in front of Zahra, pushing her out of the way.**

**A gunshot rings out.** Farhad crumples to the ground.

**Zahra lets out a bloodcurdling scream. She crawls toward Farhad, tears streaming down her face.**

**Ali fights his way through the crowd, reaching Zahra's side.**

**ALI** (Grabbing Zahra's arm)

Zahra, we have to go!

**Zahra looks at Farhad's lifeless body, her grief turning into a burning rage.**

**ZAHRA** (Sobbing)

No! We will not be silenced! We will fight back!

**Ali pulls her up, and they disappear into the throng of fleeing people. Gunshots crackle around. The chants of the crowd, now mixed with cries of pain, rise above the din.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**INT. MARYAM'S HOUSE - TEHRAN - NIGHT (LATER THE SAME DAY)**

The once cozy living room is now drenched in darkness. The only light comes from a flickering candle on the table. Simin (50s) sits huddled beside a worried Neshat (40s). A radio crackles softly in the background.

**SIMIN** (Voice barely a whisper)

Did you hear that, Neshat? Martial Law in eight major cities.

**NESHAT** (Nods grimly)

I told you that article about Khomeini was a terrible idea. It's only fueled the fire.

**SIMIN** (Tears welling up in her eyes)

What have we done?

**NESHAT** (Places a comforting hand on Simin's arm)

We did what we thought was right, Simin. There was not anything we could do to stop this.

**RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)** (In Farsi - subtitles translate)

Shah has assigned a new prime minister to establish order. If the new prime minister could not, there is no other way than having a military prime minister,

**Simin flinches at the sound of the airstrikes.**

**NESHAT** (Cont.)

This is only the beginning, Simin. I fear much worse is to come.

**SIMIN** (Voice trembling)

And what about us, Neshat? What about the Baha'is? If these Islamic fundamentalists seize power...

**Neshat lets out a sigh, her face etched with worry.**

**NESHAT**

They have no tolerance for those who differ in faith. Life will become very difficult for us.

**A long, heavy silence erupts in the room. The women huddle closer as the radio reports blare in the background**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**INT. SHAH'S STUDY - NIAVARAN PALACE - TEHRAN - DAY (A FEW WEEKS LATER)**

A somber mood hangs heavy in the air. The Shah (60s) sits behind his desk with worry. Queen Farah (40s) sits beside him, her hand resting on his.

Across from them sit Ashraf Pahlavi (Shah's Twin Sister, 60s), PARVIZ SABETI (Director of SAVAK, 50s), AMIR HOSSEIN RABII (Chief of the Imperial Iranian Air Force, 50s), and WILLIAM SULLIVAN (U.S. Ambassador to Iran, 60s).

**SHAH** (Heavy sigh)

As you all know, the unrest in Iran continues. These demonstrations led by Khomeini grow bolder with each passing day. We need a solution.

**ASHRAF** (Leans forward, voice cold)

A simple one, brother. Eliminate the source. A single day of decisive action... half a million "dissidents" dealt with, and order will be restored.

**Rabii nods in agreement, a callous glint in his eyes.**

**RABII**

Your Majesty, her highness speaks the truth. A million happy citizens are better than four million unhappy ones.

**The Shah recoils, disgust etched on his face.**

**SHAH** (Slams his fist on the desk)

A tyrant might resort to such measures, but not a king! I will not have my throne built on a foundation of blood!

**Farah reaches out and squeezes his hand, offering silent support.**

**FARAH** (Turns to Ambassador Sullivan)

Ambassador, what is the position of the United States in this matter?

**Sullivan leans back in his chair, a thoughtful frown on his face.**

**SULLIVAN**

There are two schools of thought within the US government. The first advocates for restoring order at all costs, even if it means significant bloodshed. This faction believes in a swift crackdown followed by gradual reforms.

**He pauses, letting his words sink in.**

**SULLIVAN** (Cont.) The second group, however, advises a different approach. They urge Your Majesty to consider concessions, allowing for more freedoms and potentially even early elections. They believe appeasement might quell the unrest before it escalates further.

**Farah raises an eyebrow, a flicker of hope sparking in her eyes.**

**FARAH**

And if the Shah chooses this path...

**ASHRAF (Scoffs)**

Weakness! This will only encourage the mullahs!

**Farah shoots her sister-in-law a withering glance.**

**The Shah steeples his fingers, his brow furrowed.**

**FADE IN**

**INT. SHAH'S PALACE - DAY**

The SHAH stands alone in a grand room. He stares at a television set.

**SOUND:** A murmur of voices grows louder.

The camera pans to the television. A news broadcast shows a tumultuous crowd chanting.

**CUT TO: INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY**

The Shah stands behind a podium, a resolute expression on his face. He speaks in Farsi.

**SHAH (SUBTITLED)**

I also heard the message of your revolution, people of Iran...

**(beat)**

**SHAH (SUBTITLED)**

...I guarantee that the future government of Iran will be based on social justice and rule away from oppression, tyranny, and corruption.

**CUT TO: INT. SIMIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

A few days later. Simin holds a newspaper, worried. Neshat sits across from her, sipping tea.

**SIMIN**

Neshat, did you read the paper? The Shah imprisoned five hundred of his supporters! Ministers from his previous cabinets...Hovyda, Nasiri...

**NESHAT**

This is terrible! First, he comes on TV and sends that humiliating message to his people. Now this? He expects loyalty but can't offer it in return.

**SIMIN**

But look... He has ordered the release of all political prisoners.

**NESHAT (scoffs)**

Shah is going mad! He doesn't know what he's doing. Those prisoners will join the demonstrators and try to overthrow him.

**NARRATOR (V.O.)**

The Shah attempted to restore order without bloodshed but failed.

**CUT TO: INT. AIRPORT – DAY**

A sleek airplane sits on the tarmac. A group of high-ranking officials stand before it, faces grim.

**GENERAL (to the Shah)**

Your Highness, I beg you to stay.

The Shah, tears welling in his eyes, takes a small box from his pocket. Inside, Iranian soil. He glances at Queen Farah, who holds his hand tightly.

With a final look back, the Shah turns and climbs the airplane stairs.

Shah and Farah leave the country.

**FADE OUT.**

**12 DAYS LATER**

**EXT. TEHRAN AIRPORT - DAY**

A large crowd roars with cheers. The Ayatollah Khomeini steps off a plane, a triumphant smile on his face. He returns to Iran from exile.

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**INT. SHAH'S STUDY—Ghabe Palace Cairo Egypt, FEBRUARY 1979.**

The once opulent study is a picture of disarray. Papers are strewn across the desk, and a sense of defeat hangs heavy in the air. The Shah (gaunt and aged) sits slumped in his chair, staring blankly out the window. Queen Farah (eyes red-rimmed) paces the room with worry.

**FARAH** (Voice trembling)

They've announced it, my Shah. Khomeini has declared an Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Shah turns slowly, a hollow look in his eyes.

**SHAH** (Voice raspy)

So it has come to this.

**Farah rushes to his side, kneeling beside him.**

**FARAH** (Tears welling up)

We can still leave. The Americans have offered asylum.

**The Shah shakes his head, a bitter smile twisting his lips.**

**SHAH**

It's too late, Farah. My decision to appease... to avoid bloodshed... it backfired.

**A montage flashes on screen - protestors chanting slogans, soldiers firing into crowds, scenes of jubilation as Khomeini returns to Iran.**

**VOICEOVER (KHOMEINI)** (In Farsi - subtitles translate)

The Shah's tyranny has crumbled! The people have spoken! Iran is free!

**The montage ends, returning to the Shah and Farah.**

**FARAH** (Sobbing)

Do you remember the last message you sent to the people?

The message... it wasn't weakness, it was mercy!

**SHAH** (Reaches out and takes her hand)

They saw it as humiliation, a sign of my waning power.

**A long silence stretches between them.**

**FADE OUT.**

\*\*\*

**FADE IN**

**EXT. CAIRO VILLA—DAY, 27 July, 1980**

The Egyptian sun beats down on a luxurious villa. Palm trees sway gently in the breeze. Inside, we see a glimpse of opulent furnishings through a window.

**INT. SHAH'S BEDROOM - DAY**

The once powerful Shah lies pale and gaunt in a large bed, surrounded by expensive medical equipment. Queen Farah sits beside him, worried. A young doctor with a concerned expression checks the Shah's vitals.

**FARAH** (Whispering)

How is he, Doctor?

DOCTOR (Shakes head sadly)

I'm afraid... his condition has worsened considerably in the last few hours.

Farah takes the Shah's hand. The Shah's eyes flutter open, weak and hazy.

**SHAH** (Voice barely a whisper)

Farah...

Farah leans close, tears welling up in her eyes.

**FARAH**

I'm here...

The Shah manages a faint smile.

SHAH Forgive me... for failing Iran.

Farah squeezes his hand tightly.

**FARAH:** There is nothing to forgive. You did what you thought was best.

The Shah closes his eyes, his breathing becoming shallow. A long, heavy silence hangs in the air. Farah watches as the faint rise and fall of his chest slows and finally stops.

A single tear rolls down Farah's cheek. She lets out a choked sob, burying her face in the covers beside her husband.

**FADE OUT**

**TEXT ON SCREEN: SHAH MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI 1919 - 1980**

