New Year’s Gift

Our Bitter and Sweet Life Experiences Abroad

A Collection of Short Stories

Abbas P. Grammy

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I was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1952. Four years after high school graduation, I received a baccalaureate degree from the Tehran College of Insurance. After serving in the Imperial Iranian Air Force for two years, I came to the United States to complete my higher education in 1976. I received a master’s degree in economics from the University of Denver in spring 1978 and returned home. In the summer of that year, I came back to the United State with my wife to study at the University of Colorado, Boulder. I graduated with a doctoral degree in economics in 1982 and accepted a job as an assistant professor at the university’s Economics Institute. Since January 1989, I have been teaching and doing research at California State University, Bakersfield. My research focuses on the relationship between political democracy and economic development in the Third World. So far, I have published two books and several book chapters and refereed journal articles as a result of this research agenda.

I have been fascinated with the Persian literature since childhood. My beloved high school history teacher, the late Hasan Pasta, introduced me to the works of contemporary poets and writers. I then began to write poems and short-stories. I greatly enjoy the poems of Mehdi Akhavan Salas and the short-stories of Dr. Gholam.Hossain Saadi.
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Preface

This book is an attempt to make a contribution to the rich collection of contemporary Persian short stories, which consists of the work of many internationally renowned writers. My contribution is to tell stories about the Iranian community in exile since the dramatic political, economic, cultural, and social changes of the 1979 revolution. This period of time has brought both tragedy and triumph to this vibrant community in exile, which has added much valuable human and financial capital to the host nations.

I am experimenting with three distinct story telling formats: concise essays (less than 600 words), short essays (less than 1,200 words), and detailed essays (less than 2,500 words). A concise essay is a snapshot of an immigrant’s life. A short story pictures the clash of the Western and Iranian-Islamic cultures, while a detailed essay shows how the immigrants try to reconcile the Western and Iranian values and create a dualistic culture. My favorite writing style, I confess, is the concise essay, where as much is to be read between the lines as it is in the story itself.

My target audience is the Farsi-speaking immigrants. I am trying to communicate with us by telling the sweet and bitter stories of two generations living abroad. The first generation consists of people who continue to reflect on the memories of the past and are encumbered by the national-religious value system. While struggling to manage the ups and downs of the immigrant life, they still make new year wishes for a safe return home. The second generation includes those who are acquiring knowledge and culture in order to make a better life in the adopted homeland. While the first generation insists on speaking the sweet language of Farsi, the second generation is more fluent in English.

Hence, I am providing this book in two languages. Farsi is, of course, my mother tongue, which I used solely for the first twenty-three years of my life before I came to the United States for further education. This beloved language has enabled me to enjoy and learn from one of the richest collections of classical and contemporary literary work of the world. English, my primary medium of communication for the past twenty-six years, has opened a window to another rich collection of literary works. In writing these stories, I felt more comfortable writing concise
essays and short essays in Farsi and translating them to English, while I composed detailed essays in English and translated them to Farsi. Of course, you will be the judge of my commend of each language.

I have paid all expenses of publishing this book and reserve the rights to individual stories and the entire content of the book. As such, none of the stories should be republished without my written permission. I am indebted to Dr. Michael Flachmann for editing the English version of the book and to Mr. Sean Grammy for publishing the electronic version of the book on the World Wide Web. All errors are, of course, mine.

Abbas P. Grammy
Summer 2002
Rain


I arrive home, soaking wet, yet cheerful from walking in the rain. Sisters, frightened, seek comfort from the mother. She whispers a prayer and blows on them. The sky's rage intensifies, as if the goddess of rain is whipping the clouds and making them cry from pain. Mother stands to say *Namaz*³. Sisters look at her frightened. Father lights a cigarette and listens to the news:

Anchorman: “Tonight, the sky will be clear with patchy clouds and dusty winds!”

The image jitters badly. Father turns the television off. Mother goes to *Rokou*². Sisters stand to say *Namaz*. I search in my memory for school lessons:

Teacher: “Clouds are formed from evaporation and condensation of seawater. Raindrops are formed inside the clouds when the temperature drops. Clouds carry electricity. If clouds of different charges collide, lightning occurs. The sound of lightning is thunder.”

Mother finishes her *Namaz*. Sisters go to *Rokou*. Father, snoring, is sound asleep on the sofa. Rain pours even harder. A lightning bolt illuminates the sky. Mother says *salavat*.³ Sisters finish saying *Namaz*. Thunder strikes again. Rain continues to pour. I go to my room to change.

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¹ Islamic prayer said five times a day. A spacial Namaz is said in case of frightening events.

² Bending both knees during Namaz

³ A short prayer to praise Prophet Mohammed and his family.
Last News

Mother is feeling ill. Father is sitting by her bed. Mother, weak and awkward, keeps waiting for the evening newspaper. Father, sad and worried, keeps looking at the clock.

Only the hope of seeing Ardi has kept Mother alive. She dreams of hugging and kissing Ardi. Everywhere in the house Ardi's name and memories are seen.

The doorbell rings. The newspaper is delivered. Father, stunned, stares at the front page. A tear drop wets his wrinkled cheek. He enters the room, crawls over Mother's bed, and whispers into her ear:
“Darling, get up! Ardi is home again!”
Mother hurriedly opens her lusterless eyes and hastily asks:
“Where? Oh, where is my dear Ardi?”
She stares at the picture and headline of the page:

Ardeshir Famous Iranian Artist Murdered in Germany

Mother groans:
“So long, my dear son! I always love you!”
She lies down in bed.
Father mourns:
“Rest in peace my courageous son! You died for my freedom! So long my courageous son!”
Father breaks in tears.

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1 Abbreviation for Ardesir, meaning “courageous.”
Sweet Dreams

When *Pahlevan* Akbar and friends entered the *Zor-khaneh*, the sound of the drum and the bell along with welcoming remarks of the *Morshed* and the saying of *Salevat* echoed throughout the building. *Pahlevan* Akbar changed into the workout attire, asked for permission from the *Morshed*, entered the *Goud*, and threw a traditional kiss to the ground with his fingers. Once again, the sound of the drum and the bell and the saying of *Salevat* echoed throughout the building. Upon insistence by the participants, *Pahlevan* Akbar agreed to lead the workout. *Pahlevan* Akbar, a distinguished athlete, began a two-hour workout with incredible sportsmanship and ended it with well wishes for the *Morshed, Modier*, the participants, and the audience. He concluded the ceremonies in the name of Imam Ali While *Pahlevan* Akbar and friends were leaving the *Zor-khaneh*, they left sums of money in the *Morshed’s* bank. Again, the sound of the drum and the bell along with welcoming remarks of the *Morshed* echoed throughout the building.

*Pahlevan* Akbar had lunch with his wife, children, daughter-in-laws, son-in-laws, and grand children. He then rested in a quiet room for an hour. Later in the afternoon, he had tea with family members and discussed domestic matters. Shortly before sunset, he went to the neighborhood mosque to pray. After the congregational prayer, he spoke with the mosque

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1 Hero: A title given to a distinguished athlete in the traditional Iranian workout, varzesh-e bastani.

2 The house of power: a gymnasium for varzesh-e bastani.

3 The drum player and singer of epic songs during varzesh-e bastani.

4 A short prayer to praise Prophet Mohammed and his family.

5 A large circle or octagon shaped pit about three feet deep for the conduct of varzesh-e bastani.

6 The owner and manager of Zor-khaneh.

7 The Prophet’s first cousin and son-in-law and the 1st Imam of the Shii Muslim tradition.
manager about providing Jahyzie for a needy family, reviewed the lighting plan for the Sha’ban ceremony, and donated 70,000 Rails to the mosque. He then stopped by the neighborhood teashop to chat with friends.

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Pahlevan Akbar awoke as the front door squeaked open. He saw his son holding a small bag and walking toward him. His son said

“Did I wake you? Here, I have your medicine.”

Pahlevan replied:

“Thank you dear! God willing, I should feel better after taking the medicine. I wish you made me some soup. I haven’t had home-made food for three days!”

Pahlevan’s son, who was in his forties, replied in an eager voice:

“That’s okay! Please dress up to go to the shelter. Today, they serve a special turkey meal.”

Pahlevan replied in an uneasy voice:

“You may go by yourself and enjoy the turkey meal.”

Pahlevan’s son replied impudently:

“Why aren’t you going? Is it beneath you to eat there, Pahlevan?”

Pahlevan groaned:

“I don’t like to eat there any more.”

Pahlevan Akbar rested in his bed again, wishing for another sweet dream.

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Pahlevan Akbar and his wife were having dinner at the restaurant of the Tehran-Mashhad train when they met old family friends. Pahlevan Akbar invited them to a delicious meal of shish kebab.

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8 A collection of household items that a bride takes to her new home.

9 The birthday of the 12th Imam, Mehdi, the messiah for the Shii Jafari Muslim tradition.

10 Equal to $1,000.

11 Abbreviation of homeless shelter.
The Homesick

Mehrdad rests in a small bed at the corner of a tent in an internment camp. He feels cold. Although his mother has covered him with two blankets, he continues to shake. Mehrdad feels hungry too, but he has no appetite. He has neither eaten nor talked for three days.

Just a few minutes before noon, Mehrdad’s mother, Parvin, and her husband, Taymour, get ready to go to the dinning tent. Parvin kindly asks Mehrdad:
“Honey, do you want me to bring you any food?”
Mehrdad does not reply to his mother’s question. Parvin and Taymour walk away from Mehrdad’s bed. Mehrdad asks in a weak and curious voice:
“Mom, why have we come here? Wasn’t grandmother’s home better than this place?”
Parvin asks Taymour to go by himself. While cussing, Taymour walks toward the dinning tent.
Parvin sits on Mehrdad’s bed. She hugs and kisses her son. She tells Mehrdad:
“Oh dear, you are still shaking! You must see a doctor!”
Still day dreaming, Mehrdad continues:
“Mom, let us return to Iran! I really miss my dad!”
Parvin puts Mehrdad’s head on the pillow and replies in an angry voice:
“Damn your dad! He ruined our lives and made us wander around the globe!”
Parvin walks toward the dinning tent and continues to cuss. Merhdad, still shaking, pulls the blanket over his head.

While walking back to their tent, Parvin and Taymour notice the sound and light of an ambulance’s siren as it drives away. In the tent, a camp’s guard awaits their arrival. The guard has an order to take them to the camp administrator who wants to question them about Mehrdad’s illness. Parvin starts sobbing as she sees Mehrdad’s empty bed.
The Little Gold Fish

The Little Gold Fish was a few months old. He was living with his parents and other gold fish in a big pond. Once a day, the Fisherman fed them. The Little Gold Fish along with other fish would hungrily rush to the surface to get some food. But, he could never get enough to eat. He spent the day playing with his friends and the evening talking with his parents about life in the pond.

One day, the Fisherman brought another man to the pond. The Other Man began catching the fish with a small net and throwing them into a big bucket of water. The Little Gold Fish tried to hide behind his parents, but the Other Man finally caught him. Crying, the Little Gold Fish was taken from his parents.

The Other Man put the bucket at the back of his van and drove away. There was not enough room in the bucket for all the fish. One of them, who could not bear being apart from his parents, kept peeking out of the bucket. A sudden shift of the bucket threw the worried fish out of the water. He jumped up and down until he could not move any more. The Little Gold Fish, choking in tears, swam to the bottom of the bucket so he would not to be thrown out of the water.

The Other Man emptied the bucket into a big glass tank. He caught a couple of fish and threw them into a pitcher half filled with water and placed the pitcher on the counter and began chanting to attract customers:

goli mahi-e, mahi goli-e, male paay-e sofreh haft ceen, goli mahi-e, mahi goli-e ...
(Goldie, Goldie, Gold Fish, for the Haft Ceen Spread, Goldie, Goldie, Gold Fish ...)

While the Little Gold Fish was swimming around and day dreaming about the good times he had with his parents in the big pond, he was caught by the Other Man and thrown into a small pitcher along with another gold fish. The man began chanting again:

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1 A collection of seven items whose names begin with the letter ceen (c or s). They are nicely arranged in a spread along with a pitcher of gold fish, a holy book, lit candles, a mirror, and colored eggs. Family members sit around the spread at the exact time that winter turns into spring to kick-off 13 days of the new year celebration.
“goli mahi-e, mahi gol-e, male paay-e sofreh haft ceen, goli mahi-e, mahi gol-e ...”
(Goldie, Goldie, Gold Fish, for the Haft Ceen Spread, Goldie, Goldie, Gold Fish ...)

A man carrying a bag stopped and looked at the tank and pitchers. He put the bag down and began talking with the Other Man. The Man with a Bag then paid for the fish and pitcher. The Man with a Bag picked his bag, which had a small vase of the hyacinths in it, and said goodbye to the Other Man.

When the Man with the Bag arrived home, he put the vase and pitcher on the dinning table in the kitchen. He then called for his wife and son:
“Anybody home? Nancy, where are you?”
Ali jaan koja-e?”
(Dear Ali, where are you?)

A little kid, three or four years old, ran out of his room crying. He jumped into his dad’s arms and continued crying. The man hugged and kissed the kid. He then asked him:
“chee shodeh? chera geryeh mikoni?
(What happened? Why are you crying?)

Ali replied in broken Farsi:
“Nancy mano tou otagham zandoni kardeh!”
(Nancy has grounded me in my room!)

Meanwhile, a woman with short, red hair entered the kitchen. The Red Haired Woman immediately began cussing:
“Where the hell have you been?”
The man quickly replied:
“Watch your language! I went shopping for Noruz2”
The woman continued cussing loudly:
“I am sick and tired of the life you’ve made for me! I stayed home all day long to take care of your brat kid, and you went shopping for Noruz!?"
The Little Gold Fish, looking astonished at the Man with a Bag and the Red Haired Woman

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2 New Day: March 20th, when Iranians celebrate the commencement of a new year.
quarreling and Ali crying, had never seen his parents argue this badly. The woman looked at the vase and pitcher with anger as she left the kitchen.

The Little Gold Fish did not sleep that night. The other gold fish in the pitcher could hardly breathe, so the Little Gold Fish nursed her all night long. The Little Gold Fish was so tired that he fell asleep early in the morning. He suddenly woke up when the Man with a Bag walked into the kitchen. The Little Gold Fish saw his friend floating upside down. The man picked up a small container from the kitchen counter and poured water from the pitcher into the container until he caught the dead fish. He then rushed to the bathroom and dumped the fish into the toilet and flushed it. As he returned to the kitchen, the Little Gold Fish heard the frightening loud sound of a large sum of water dropping quickly. The man put the small container in the sink and left the kitchen.

An hour later, Ali walked into the kitchen to check on the fish. With much curiosity, he looked at the pitcher that had only one fish. While starring at the Little Gold Fish, he asked:
“What happened to the other gold fish?”
The Little Gold Fish was so happy seeing Ali that he began swimming around. Ali picked a flake of breakfast cereal from its box, cut it into smaller pieces, and threw them into the pitcher. He then plead to the fish:
“Please eat, I don’t want you to die, too!”
The Red Haired Woman, in her pajamas, walked into the kitchen. She looked at Ali and the pitcher and asked Ali in an angry voice:
“What are you doing with the fish?”
Without waiting for a reply, she began cussing:
“My life sucks! Another day home alone with his brat kid! I lost my freedom when I married Hassan and agreed to raise his son. I am sick and tired of them and their Noruz.”
She angrily took the pitcher and rushed out of the kitchen. Ali ran after her. Moving violently in the water, the Little Gold Fish gave the woman a begging look. She paid no attention to the fish. The woman emptied the pitcher into the toilet and flushed it. The Little Gold Fish quickly disappeared from Ali’s tearful eyes. The woman said in a satisfied voice:
“This one was for you and your Noruz, Hassan!”
Ali crying loudly, ran into his room.
The Persian Cat

Pishe was Miriam’s pink, fluffy, Persian cat. Pishe did not remember his parents. He was a kitten when Miriam’s dad, Hamed, bought him as a birthday gift for her. Pishe and Miriam were inseparable. After school, Pishe stayed in Miriam’s room while she was studying. After super, he sat on Miriam’s laps to watch television together. At night, Pishe rested in Miriam’s bed. Miriam told Pishe stories until they fell asleep.

But Pishe hardly saw Miriam after she graduated from high school. Miriam was completely changed. She was no longer a little girl whose mom combed her hair into a pony tail, or the daddy’s darling who took her to the park to play soccer. Ever since Miriam bought herself a car, she left home early without having breakfast and saying goodbye. She returned home late at night and went directly to her room. Miriam ignored her parents and had no time for Pishe. At night, Miriam’s mother, Haleh, stayed up to make sure her daughter returned home safely. Haleh questioned Miriam whenever she came home past her curfew. Pishe eavesdropped anxiously on their heated arguments.

Pishe made friends with Hamed. Whenever Hamed rested on the living room couch, Pishe laid on his laps to watch television with him. But Pishe liked Miriam better. He did not care for Hamed’s cigarette smell, especially now that he had become a chain smoker. Pishe liked Haleh a lot. She always made sure that Pishe ate well and on time. When they were home alone, Pishe sat on the kitchen counter to watch Laleh doing her daily chores. While ironing, Haleh hummed a sad song and quietly shed tears.

Pishe did not sleep all night. He stayed up along with Hamed and Haleh waiting for Miriam to come home. All night long, Haleh stared anxiously through the window waiting for Miriam to arrive, and Hamed walked angrily across the room, lighting one cigarette after another. But, Miriam did not come home. The next morning, Hamed did not go to work. Hamed and Haleh spent hours talking about their life and Miriam’s life style. Several times, Haleh broke into tears, and Hamed smoked. At noon, they snooped through Miriam’s room and found her journal, obscene photos and magazines, a bag of marijuana, and several condoms.

Miriam returned home late that afternoon. She rushed to her room and started packing.
Pishe followed her and stood by her while she packed. But Miriam paid no attention to Pishe.
When she left her room with a big suitcase, Haleh ran toward her and worriedly asked:
“Dear Miriam, where are you going?”
Carrying her suitcase in the hallway, Miriam ignored her mother.
Haleh asked again:
“Dear Miriam, why are you packed? Why are you leaving?”
While pulling her heavy suitcase on the living room’s carpet, Miriam reluctantly replied:
“I am moving out!”
Haleh questioned her in a caring voice:
“Oh, why, darling? Why are you moving out?”
Miriam replied in an indifferent voice:
“I can no longer live in this house.”
Haleh asked:
“Why? What have we done to make you move out?”
Miriam promptly replied:
“I want to be free and independent, just like my friends. Free and independent! Do you understand?”
Hamed walked toward Miriam and said in a begging voice:
“My dear daughter, my darling, we love you so very much! For twenty years, we’ve worked so hard in this country to raise you. We want you to be educated, successful, and happy. Let us talk! We haven’t talked in a long time!”
Haleh followed:
“We would pay all your college expenses. You really don’t need to work. Just attend college full time. We would support you as long as necessary. After all, we came to this country to make a better future for you. Please sit down and talk with us!”
Miriam replied in an angry voice:
“I wish you never left that ruined country of yours! I resent that place! I resent you and your funny accent! I resent your old fashioned culture and stupid rules!”
Hamed calmly reacted to Miriam’s outburst:
“Fine! Why don’t you stay home tonight? We’ll work things out!”

Miriam, who was totally agitated, yelled at her dad:

“You are not listening! I want to be free and independent, just like my friends. Free and independent! Do you understand? Now, get out of my way!”

Pishe, for the first time, saw Haleh raise her hand on Miriam. She slapped her hard. Miriam pulled her mother’s hair and cussed. Hamed pulled Miriam down. Haleh jumped on her and held her hands tightly. Hamed, whose neck veins were about to burst from anger, attacked Miriam. She screamed in a painful and agonizing voice. Pishe too screamed in a painful and agonizing voice.

The living room carpet was completely red. Haleh in blood-stained clothes was hugging Miriam’s head and humming eulogies for her young and beautiful daughter. Hamed with bloody hands was sitting stunned on his knees and sobbing. As soon as the police opened the front door, Pishe quickly ran out.
Puppy Number Two was three days old. She was resting in a large wooden box along with her mother and siblings. Whenever she felt hungry or cold, she moved closer to her mother to be fed or to get warm. The Woman of the House and her daughter moved the puppies into a smaller cardboard box and drove them to a neighborhood grocery store. Near the entrance to the store, they offered “Terrier Puppies for Free” to store customers and bystanders.

Mary Beth and Farhad, a newlywed couple, stopped to look at the puppies. Mary Beth said she always wanted a puppy. But Farhad had mixed feelings about her request. On one hand, he loved animals. On the other hand, he was prejudiced against dogs. As a child, he was told that dogs were najas. When Mary Beth insisted, Farhad reluctantly agreed. Farhad sat by the cardboard box looking at the puppies. In a split second, Farhad made eye contacts with Puppy Number Two. He felt affection for it. While Mary Beth was talking with the Woman of the House, Farhad picked up Puppy Number Two. Mary Beth asked Farhad if that were the puppy he wanted to adopt. Farhad hugged the puppy and replied her name would be Hapoo, the alert dog.

Mary Beth and Farhad met at a university in Wyoming. Mary Beth studied sociology, and Farhad majored in computer science. They soon fell in love and decided to get married. Mary Beth loved Farhad because he was a handsome, bright, and talented young man. Farhad earned excellent grades in all his courses and became very adept at the use of personal computers. By his junior year, he was a popular computer troubleshooter, helping students, faculty, and staff with their hardware and software problems. The university administration rewarded his contributions by giving him a scholarship that covered his tuition and living expenses. Everyone who knew Farhad liked him and predicted a successful professional career for him. Farhad had a nice voice and was an excellent hunter and a martial arts student. Farhad performed popular songs in parties with friends and family members. Twice a year, Farhad and his best friend, Hamid, went hunting. Seldom they came home empty handed. Farhad owned a

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1 Anything touched by a dog gets so dirty that it must be washed seven times.
rifle and regularly practiced shooting. He had taken karate lessons since childhood, earning a black belt and winning several university tournaments.

Farhad loved Mary Beth because she was a beautiful, caring, and intelligent young woman. Farhad liked Mary Beth’s family, too. Her father was a top executive in an international oil company, and her mother was a high school librarian. Mary Beth’s older brother, Tom, was a successful criminal lawyer and became a close friend of Farhad. Mary Beth herself was born in Iran. For five years, her father helped manage a large oil field in southern Iran. Her parents learned to speak Farsi and liked many aspects of the Persian culture, including hospitality and respect for elders. They traveled across the country and had many family friends. Mary Beth and Farhad got married after they graduated from the university. They had wedding ceremonies in both the Christian and Muslim traditions. Farhad’s parents came from Iran, and his relatives arrived from California to attend his wedding ceremonies. Farhad became a permanent resident of the United States and accepted a high paying job offer as a computer analyst. Mary Beth was employed by the department of human services as a social worker.

Mary Beth and Farhad rented an apartment in a high-rise building and paid a premium for having a pet. Both Mary Beth and Farhad became very attached to Hapoo. Often, Farhad came home for lunch and to check on Hapoo. Every day before sunset, Farhad took Hapoo for a walk in a neighborhood park. On weekends, the three of them spent a lot of quality time together playing in the park and visiting family members. Hapoo grew up and became an alert, friendly, and faithful dog. She knew well that Farhad wanted her to keep the carpet clean and to behave herself when she met other dogs. However, Hapoo was not hesitant to let Farhad know if she felt anything unusual. She knew Farhad would pay attention to her feelings.

Tom warned Farhad and Mary Beth about the anti-Iranian sentiment immediately after the United States Embassy in Tehran was mobbed by Iranian students and Americans were taken hostage. Tom advised Farhad to be very cautious, not to argue with anyone about that situation, and to become more alert about his surrounding environment. The anti-Iranian sentiment kept growing larger was evident by a downtown billboard displaying Ayatollah Khomeini’s photo and implying that Iran was to blame for higher gasoline prices. The sign read:
“Fight Back . . . Drive 55!”

On his way back home from work, Farhad discovered that an automobile was following him. He noticed the car passengers were three teenagers. Farhad ignored them and went home. Hapoo woke Farhad in the middle of the night. Farhad looked outside and saw one of the teenagers walking by his apartment and the others waiting in the parking lot. He checked the locks of the front door and the sliding glass window and closed the curtains tightly. He loaded his rifle and put it under his bed, and went back to sleep. Farhad did not tell Mary Beth about the incident. He was concerned she would be frightened. The next day, Farhad left a phone message for Tom, taking about the teenagers following him and checking out his apartment.

The next midnight, Hapoo barked relentlessly to wake Farhad and Mary Beth. While they got up, a loud smashing sound broke the sliding glass window. Mary Beth was scared to death. She kept screaming. Farhad grabbed his rifle and rushed outside. Hapoo followed him. From the balcony, Farhad saw two men holding baseball bats and running downstairs, while a third man was waiting in a car with its engine running. Farhad fired two shots, hitting both men in the back. The third man drove away when the shots were fired.

The shooting incident was on the front page of every major newspaper and was the leading news item of all radio and television stations. Suddenly, Farhad became a household name in Wyoming and its neighboring states. The police charged Farhad with first degree murder of a seventeen-year-old and attempted murder of an eighteen-year-old. He pleaded not guilty, but was held without bond until his trail date. Tom paid a visit to Farhad. He told Farhad that Mary Beth had been hospitalized since the night of the attack and indicated that his law firm would defend him. Tom warned Farhad to be very careful as he might be harassed by some of the inmates.

Farhad was concerned about his safety as well. He realized that he must rely on his martial arts and friendship skills to survive in the prison. There was a group of prisoners known as the Red Neck Gang. They resented Farhad for what he had done and insulted him from the day he arrived. They called Frahad the Eye Ran (for Iran) Kid. Once in the prison yard, one of the Red Necks picked a fight with the Eye Ran Kid. Farhad did not pay attention to the obscene
remarks of the Red Neck, who was trying to provoke other inmates against him. Farhad’s silence made the Red Neck even more aggressive. As he threw a punch toward the Eye Ran Kid, Farhad moved away and kicked the Red Neck in the face. The Red Neck fell down unconscious. Two other Red Necks surrounded the Eye Ran Kid, cussing and throwing punches at him. Farhad knocked them down, too. When all the Red Necks surrounded Farhad, another group of inmates known as the Black Bears came to Farhad’s support. The Red Necks backed up and never bothered Farhad again. Farhad made friends with the Black Bears, forming a band with them whose lead singer was Farhad himself.

Mary Beth visited Farhad after she recovered from the shocking event of that dreadful night. She brought Hapoo along. Their visit was very emotional. While Mary Beth was crying, Farhad tried to calm her down by saying that he knew in his heart they would be together again. Hapoo was sad as well. While sitting on Mary Beth’s laps, she kept looking into Farhad’s eyes as if she were saying how much she was missing the good times they had together.

Upon Tom’s request and due to growing anti-Iranian sentiment, the case was moved to New Mexico to give Farhad a fair trail. Tom prepared his defense of Farhad based on two principles: premeditated attack and self defense. The jury selection was pretty time consuming as Tom tried to make sure that the jurors were selected from a pool of unbiased and open-minded individuals. Hamid testified that in spite of being a hunter, Farhad was a peaceful and friendly individual. Farhad’s classmates and coworkers and members of the university testified that he was a kind person and a contributing member of the community. Mary Beth took the stand to describe Farhad as a loving husband and a caring friend, who expressed his disapproval of the hostage crisis. She mentioned that although Farhad adored the Persian culture, he planned to eventually become a United States citizen. Farhad took the stand himself. He apologized to the parents of the teenagers for what had happened. He indicated that the only reason he shot the teenagers was that he truly felt that his and Mary Beth’s lives were in danger. Finally, Farhad mentioned that the main reasons he had decided to immigrate to this country were to study computer science and to dodge the draft.

In his closing argument, the prosecutor tried to provoke the patriotic sentiment of the jurors during the emotional time of the hostage crisis. He portrayed Farhad as a ruthless hunter
and killer who shed the blood of two innocent young Americans. Tom emphasized that he had proven beyond reasonable doubt that Farhad had no intention of killing the boys and just reacted to a life-threatening situation in a premeditated, violent attack. Tom played the tape of Farhad’s phone message in which Farhad informed Tom about three teenagers following him home two days prior to the attack and checking out his apartment the night before the attack. He said he truly believed that if it were not for the barking of Farhad’s alert dog, the boys could have entered the apartment to harm both Mary Beth and Farhad. Tom claimed that Farhad himself was a victim of a far away political situation that had nothing to do with him.

After three days of nerve racking deliberation, the jury found Farhad not guilty. Immediately after the verdict was read, Farhad shook hands with Tom and Hamid. Farhad and Mary Beth hugged and cried after the ending of a terrible year of suffering and separation. Farhad then hugged and kissed his alert and faithful dog. Hapoo licked Farhad on the cheek.
Ziba\textsuperscript{1} was a beautiful and intelligent young woman. She had every reason to be happy: a handsome and well to do husband, a successful career, and a nice suburban home. Ziba came to the United States right after high school graduation. In five years, she received two bachelors degrees in political science and communications and a masters degree in journalism from a prestigious university. Upon graduation, she was employed by an international news agency as a Middle East correspondent. While residing in New York, Ziba traveled across the world to file reports and tell stories. Her hard work and conscientious approach gained her much respect and a large salary.

Ziba married Iraj, an educated and talented artist, whose award-winning paintings were exhibited in major art centers and museums. They had a big wedding in Tehran, entertaining family members, relatives, and friends. They also had a reception for friends and colleagues in New York.

Ziba and Iraj both had demanding jobs. Ziba’s required traveling around the world, whereas Iraj’s required long hours of exhausting work. Yet, they managed to spend much time together. Whenever Iraj had an overseas exhibition, Ziba rearranged her schedule for them to be together. Once again, Ziba and Iraj went back to Iran. Ziba reported on changes in the economy and the polity of the country, and Iraj exhibited his paintings. They traveled across the country and visited relatives and friends. Ziba spent much time with Pari,\textsuperscript{2} her first cousin and best childhood friend. Ziba and Pari grew up together and went to the same primary and secondary schools. After they graduated from high school, Ziba came to the United States, while Pari stayed home. Pari went to college and got married with one of her classmates. Pari and her husband threw a big goodbye party for Ziba and Iraj the night before they left Tehran.

While they were in Iran, Ziba’s mother was curious about Ziba not having children. She

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\textsuperscript{1} Beautiful in Farsi

\textsuperscript{2} Angel in Farsi
advised her daughter to have children while she was young and warned Ziba about the health risks of pregnancy at an older age. She advised Ziba to plan on having children in order to solidify her marriage. As a matter of fact, both Ziba and Iraj wanted children. But Ziba’s career was not particularly conducive to bearing and rearing children. She asked Iraj to wait until she transferred from international to national news reporting assignments so that she could spend more time at home.

A couple of years later, Pari called Ziba to say that she had divorced her husband and lost custody of her son. Pari said she was coming to New York to obtain permanent residency and asked Ziba if she could stay with her for a few months. Ziba was excited about hosting her cousin and best friend. Iraj did not mind Pari staying with them. He said he respected Pari because she was knowledgeable and appreciative of the fine arts. Ziba, however, was surprised when her mother called to express concerns about Pari’s staying in Ziba’s house. Her mother asked Ziba to tell Pari that she could not stay with her. Ziba did not understand why her mother was so concerned. After their lengthy telephone conversation, Ziba decided not ask Pari to move out.

Ziba and Iraj picked up Pari from the airport and drove her home. They had her stay in the guest room. Ziba took a few days off work to show Pari around and threw a party to introduce Pari to her close friends. On several occasions, Ziba and Iraj took Pari out to the movies, art galleries, and restaurants. They had a great time together as Pari was very sociable and funny. Ziba was hesitant to ask Pari about the length of her stay and the possibility of moving to a place of her own. Pari was very thankful and apologetic for her imposition. She told Ziba that as soon as she transferred enough money from Tehran, she would be renting an apartment. Ziba was glad she could help her cousin get established in the United States.

Ziba received an assignment to investigate the conditions of women in war-torn countries. This challenging, month long assignment would take her to several locations in the Middle East. Ziba told Iraj that she was feeling guilty for leaving him for such a long period of time. Iraj, showing much love and affection, replied that he perfectly understood the demand of her profession and assured her that he would take good care of himself while Ziba was gone. Pari said she admired both Ziba and Iraj as they were making sacrifices for a better future. Ziba reluctantly left New York.
In her investigative reporting, Ziba met many families who had lost children in the war. In the West Bank, Ziba got to know Fatima, better known as Um al-Shohada (Mother of the Martyrs), a fifty-five-year-old widow whose five sons were killed in the Palestinian youth uprising. Fatima expressed no regret for losing her sons as she believed it was a price to pay for establishing an independent and free homeland. In Tel Aviv, Ziba met Golda, a forty-three year old woman, whose daughter and son-in-law were killed in a sniper attack. She was raising her grand children. Golda believed that the government should not trade land for peace. In Baghdad, Ziba reported on Kobra, a twenty-seven year old woman whose husband was crippled in the Iran-Iraq war, and her three year old daughter died from Hepatitis B. Kobra told Ziba that she blamed the United States embargo against Iraq for the lack of medicine which could have cured her daughter’s illness. In Shiraz, Ziba reported on the activities of Layla, a thirty-nine year old psychiatrist who lost her only child in the Iran-Iraq War. She managed a clinic that helped runaway and battered women regain health and self-respect.

Ziba was overwhelmed with the experience of getting to know such strong women and devoted mothers. On her way back home, Ziba made an important decision. She decided to take a year leave of absence to try to have children. While on her leave of absence, Ziba would file a request to transfer from international to national reporting assignments. Her plan was to ask her mother to come and help take care of the baby until she got transferred. Ziba felt she had been depriving Iraj of the enjoyment and responsibility of fatherhood. Ziba was anxious to get back home to inform Iraj of her decision.

Ziba took a taxi home to surprise Iraj. She did not find him home. Pari was not there either. Ziba took a shower, changed into comfortable clothes, and waited for Iraj in the living room. Iraj and Pari came home together late in the evening. Both Pari and Iraj were surprised to see Ziba home. Iraj quickly explained that he took Pari to an art exhibition and as it got late they had a bite to eat on the way back home. Ziba retired early. She did not feel good about Iraj and Pari spending time together. Also, she did not feel like reveling her decision to Iraj under such conditions.

The following day, Ziba called Iraj to have lunch together, but he said he was busy working on an unfinished painting. When Ziba went home, she shared some of her assignment
stories with Pari. Pari talked about the time that Ziba was away, explaining that she hardly saw Iraj as he spent his entire time in the workshop. She said it was the only time they went out together. When Ziba asked Pari about her plans, Pari replied that she had transferred some money already and was in the process of getting some more. Iraj came home very late that night while Ziba was asleep and left early before she woke up. Ziba called Iraj again the next day, but he was unavailable. Again, Iraj came home late and left early. Ziba had a feeling that Iraj was avoiding her.

Ziba was delighted when Iraj called her at work to invite her to lunch. Iraj and Ziba went to a quiet Italian restaurant. With much enthusiasm, Ziba told Iraj all about her assignment stories and the women she had met. Ziba then told Iraj about the decision she had made: to take time off work to have children. Iraj was not listening and seemed unexcited! When Ziba inquired about his indifference, Iraj said that things had changed since she left for the assignment. Ziba asked what was Iraj talking about. Iraj replied that he did not know how to explain it. He said that he had gotten involved with another woman! Ziba did not know how to react. She felt a sharp pain running through her heart as Iraj broke this horrifying news. She was completely taken by surprise! She could not believe that another woman had taken advantage of her absence to ruin her marriage. She instantly recalled the telephone conversation she had with her mother before Pari came. The other woman could not be Pari, she thought. Ziba finally broke the silence and asked who? Iraj replied she was someone Ziba knew well! Ziba asked if she were Pari. Iraj did not reply. Ziba could not take it any more. She quickly picked up her purse and left.
Education Abroad

Amir graduated with excellent grades from a prestigious private high school known for its rigorous curriculum and placing graduates at top domestic and foreign universities. Amir was proficient in English. His score on a standard foreign language test was high enough to gain him admission to universities where English was the medium of instruction. His parents wanted him to be educated in the United States. They had earned advanced degrees from a university in Colorado, where they met and fell in love. After returning home, they got married, became successful professionals, and earned enviable incomes. Amir’s dad took over his father’s manufacturing factory, and Amir’s mom established an academy for the instruction of English as a second language. They hired a full-time nurse to help raise their only child and provided Amir with all the necessities and a lot of luxuries.

Upon receiving admission to his parents’ alma mater, Amir left Iran for the United States. He flew from Mashhad to Tehran to New York to Denver. Amir’s parents asked one of their old friends, John, to help Amir and to monitor his progress. John met Amir in the airport, drove him to the university, and helped him check into the residence hall. Amir’s goal was to graduate with honors. Amir did very well in his courses. Every day, he rode his bike all over the campus: from the dormitory to his classes, the cafeteria, the library, the athletic center, and the student union. He swam an hour a day and studied several hours a night. Amir had no financial worries as his parents paid his annual tuition and fees and living expenses in advance. They promised him a new automobile after he completed his freshman year with excellent grades. Over the summer, Amir paid a visit to Iran and came back rejuvenated after seeing his parents, relatives, and friends.

Amir was achieving all of his goals until he met Lisa at the university’s Halloween party. Lisa and Amir were introduced by a mutual friend. They talked and danced for hours and agreed to meet again the next day. Amir was so excited that he hardly slept that night. He enjoyed spending time with Lisa. Soon, Amir felt he liked her. Lisa seemed interested in Amir as well. Amir asked Lisa to help him choose an automobile. He bought himself a brand new, top of the line BMW. Amir and Lisa fell in love and spent as much time together as possible. Lisa invited
Amir to spend Christmas holidays with her family. Amir felt right at home with the hospitality he received from Lisa’s family. He had a lot of fun watching football, playing board games, exchanging gifts, and having conversations. Lisa’s parents were very impressed with this well mannered, charming, and handsome young man.

After the holidays, Amir and Lisa became inseparable. At a party thrown by a mutual friend, Amir found Lisa smoking marijuana with her friends. Lisa asked Amir to join them and invited him to smoke. Amir had to quickly make his mind. But, he did not want to smoke because his parents had warned him about the destructive effects of drugs. On the other hand, he did not want Lisa to feel he was different, especially in front of her friends. Feeling Amir’s reluctance, Lisa insisted. Amir could not resist the pressure and smoked. He felt relaxed and started joking and laughing with Lisa and her friends. After the party, Amir and Lisa spent the night in a nearby motel. They both felt the marijuana added much pleasure to making love.

Amir finished his sophomore year with average grades. When John inquired about his falling GPA, Amir reasoned that he had taken general education courses which did not interest him. He assured John that he would bring his GPA up the following year since he would be taking courses in his major. The truth of the matter was that Amir spent a lot less time studying and a lot more time partying with Lisa and their friends. By the end of the year, smoking grass and drinking beer were habits he acquired without thinking about their consequences.

Amir’s parents advised him against going home that summer since political conditions of the country were deteriorating. They asked him to find a job to keep busy or take additional courses. Instead of taking their advice, Amir moved into Lisa’s apartment and spent his college funds on their expensive drug habit, which now included cocaine. Their routine was to get up mid afternoon, get something to eat, listen to rock music, and smoke grass and drink beer. They would then have a few friends over to party. Later at night, they took cocaine. Amir and Lisa concluded the night by making love repeatedly.

Amir’s mother called just before registration of his junior year to inform him of a terrible news. His dad’s factory was burnt to the ground by striking workers. She informed Amir that she had made arrangements to pay his tuition and fees, but he must get a job to pay for his living expenses. Amir assured his mom that he would do well in school this year and could pay his
living expenses. As arranged, John had Amir register for a full load of courses and paid for tuition and fees for the first semester. John told Amir that he would do the same for the second semester should Amir complete all his courses with good grades. Amir appreciated John’s assistance and assured him that he would study hard and make good grades.

Amir was devastated with the prospects of getting no money from his parents. He found a work-study job at the university’s library to pay his share of rent. However, he had no money to pay for his expensive drug habit. He began borrowing money from friends and acquaintances. He had to sell his car to pay his debts and buy drugs. He quit attending classes and fell behind on his monthly rent. Still, bad news kept coming from Iran. Amir’s mother informed him that her foreign language academy was closed, and the family had no source of income. With no money and greater need for drugs, Amir’s relationship with Lisa rapidly deteriorated. They eventually broke up, and Lisa left. Amir lost his job and was evicted from his apartment.

Amir asked John for help. John, who was aware of Amir’s miseries, offered help only if he entered a drug rehabilitation facility, kicked his addiction, and returned to school. Amir denied adamantly that he had a drug addiction. John challenged Amir to take a drug test to prove he was sober. When Amir refused, John told him that the situation was more desperate than he thought. John broke the news that Amir’s father had been detained because of a dispute with his striking factory workers. John told Amir that he had no one to ask for help. Amir broke into tears. While John was consoling him, Amir promised to do whatever John wanted him to do.

Amir entered a rehabilitation facility. But, the treatment was too harsh for him to bear. So, one early morning he left without permission. He managed to find a college acquaintance and begged for drugs. All day long, they smoked grass and drank liquor. Late at night, Amir’s friend talked him into taking heroin. Amir welcomed the challenge.

A week later, John reluctantly called Amir’s mother to inform her of Amir’s death from a drug overdose. He asked her what she wanted him to do with Amir’s body.
The Commencement

Afshin was fifteen years old when his parents moved to the United States. They left Tehran for Ankara and stayed there for two months to obtain immigrant visas. Then they flew to New York and New Orleans. Afshin’s father, Mahdi, had found work with an international oil company as a reservoir engineer. They stayed in a hotel for two weeks before moving to a rental home near Mahdi’s place of work. Lalah, Afshin’s mother, had a hard time to adjusting to the new environment. She felt financially insecure and urged everybody to economize and save. Afshin had mixed emotions about the move. He was excited for coming to this country, but sad about leaving friends and relatives. He especially missed his grandparents.

Mahdi took Afshin to the neighborhood high school to register. The registrar wanted Afshin to enroll in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program before taking a full load of classes. Mahdi explained to the registrar that, although Afshin was not fluent in speaking, he was proficient in reading, grammar, and writing. Afshin presented a certificate of completion from an English language program and requested a full load of regular classes. The registrar dismissed his request on the grounds that all foreign students must enroll in the ESL program first. They argued until the principal interfered. The registrar finally agreed to give Afshin a language proficiency test. Mahdi then requested that Afshin to be given credit for the geometry and algebra requirements since he has already taken such courses and studied additional math at home. The registrar, who was by then agitated with Mahdi, referred him to the principal again. Afshin volunteered to take a math proficiency test as well. At the end of the day, Afshin was enrolled in a full load of regular classes including pre-calculus.

In his senior year, Afshin became the shining star of the school’s graduating class. He had completed the calculus sequence and honors classes in English literature, French, history, chemistry, biology, and physics. His GPA exceeded 4.0, while his combined SAT score was over 1500. While at high school, Afshin concurrently enrolled at a nearby community college. He played varsity tennis and led his school’s Mock Trail team to the state championship. His forte,
however, was forensics. He dominated local debate competitions and won several awards in state and national speech events.

Afshin enrolled with sophomore status at a prestigious California university which offered him a lucrative merit scholarship. He majored in biology as a pre-medical student and minored in Persian literature. At college, he became active in student government. His popularity as a charming, intelligent young man and his ability to debate and deliver prepared and spontaneous speeches helped him get elected. By his senior year, he was vice president of the Persian Club and president of the Student Association.

Afshin had many friends. He utilized his multicultural orientation as an asset. He could be an Iranian man bragging his opponent to the brink of frustration in a game of backgammon, a carefree young American having fun playing beach volleyball, and a French speaking gentleman ordering the best wine and most expensive entree. His weak point was his relationship with girls. His expectations of girls were too high. They had to be good looking, intelligent, athletic, and multicultural. His friends picked on him for not being able to sustain relationships.

Afshin was graduating with honors. He scored high on the MCAT and gained admission to a prestigious medical school. Mahdi and Lalah were so proud of him. To get Mahdi—normally a quiet and reserved man—excited, one could only ask, “How is Afshin doing?” The subject of Lalah’s overseas telephone conversation with her parents was mostly Afshin and his accomplishments. Now that the family has made it here with Mahdi, an internationally renowned reservoir engineer, and Lalah, a successful human resource consultant, they invited their parents to visit the United States for Afshin’s graduation.

The university administration and student association were delighted when the U.S. President confirmed his commitment to deliver the commencement speech. While somewhat apprehensive, the administration agreed the U.S. President to be introduced by the Student Association President. The rumor around the campus was that a powerful dean expressed apprehension that an outspoken “Iranian” student would share the spotlight with the “American” President in wake of the on-going hostility between the two countries. Having had a chance to get to know Afshin and his parents, the University President dismissed the dean’s remarks. While offendated by the rumor, Afshin informed his parents of this great honor.
The University Provost introduced the Student Association President. Afshin, sitting next to the U.S. President, took the podium. Quickly, Afshin’s eyes located his parents and grandparents in the crowd. After introducing himself, Afshin said he was proud of his Persian heritage. Afshin spoke of Cyrus the Great as “the jewel of humanity,” because he implemented the very first deceleration of human rights and treated all people under his rule with justice and liberty. Afshin added that he was also proud to be an American: the son of an immigrant man, who guided him to excellence without pushing him, and the son of an immigrant woman, who taught him right from wrong. While choking in tears, Afshin said he loved America, the land of free and opportunity. “Nowhere in the world, but in America, could you find an immigrant from an apparently hostile nation sharing the stage with the country’s president,” he proclaimed.

Afshin added that one must make a distinction between the “people” and the “governments” as, in many instances, government policies do not necessarily reflect the desire of the citizens. Afshin encouraged the audience to gain a greater understanding of the Iranian cultural heritage. The audience gave him a standing ovation. Afshin then invited the U.S. President to the podium.

As the President reached the podium, Afshin offered a hand shake. Instead, the President gave him a big hug! The President said how moved he was with Afshin’s remarks and how proud he was of this university graduating so many first generation Americans like Afshin. He said that such an accomplishment was made possible by the university faculty, staff, and especially the parents. He invited Afshin’s parents to the stage for introduction and appreciation. As people were giving way to Mahdi and Lalal to reach the stage, Afshin had tears of joy in his eyes.
Aarash was born in the United States. His parents came to this country for higher education. Aarash’s mother, Simeen, graduated with a degree in economics and became a successful banker. She was in charge of family finances. She purchased a spacious and well-decorated house in the suburbs and established a college fund for her son. Aarash’s father, Bahman, was a member of the national volleyball team before leaving Iran. Bahman had a scholarship to study physical education and play volleyball for a major university in southern California. He graduated with a master degree and helped his university win several regional and national championships. Upon graduation, Bahman found a job as an assistant coach of the men’s team at a university in northern California. When the university initiated a women’s program, Bahman was asked to coach the team. His team became very successful, winning several regional titles.

Bahman and Simeen raised Aarash bilingual and bicultural. They taught Aarash the best of the two cultures. One summer, they went to Iran to visit their families and friends and toured the country. Another summer, they rented a motor home to tour the United States. Bahman and Aarash spent a great deal of quality time together. They played volleyball in the back yard and wrestled in the living room.

Often, Bahman told Aarash his childhood memories, especially when he accompanied his dad and uncle to the Zor-khaneh on Friday mornings. At the Zor-khaneh, Bahman felt very proud since his dad and uncle were received with high honor and respect. His uncle led the workout with spectacular showmanship and sportsmanship. To conclude the work out, his dad said prayers and best wishes to all and thanks to the gym’s management. Bahman told Aarash that his dad and uncle followed the tradition of javanmardi (chivalry), which enabled them to live with honor and dignity.

Bahman also told Aarash Persian tales and epic stories. Aarash’s favorite tale was the legend of Pourya Vali, who was the grand champion of wrestling in Iran. Pourya traveled to

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1 The house of power: a gymnasium for the traditional Iranian workout.
neighboring countries to wrestle other grand champions. Once in India, he went to a mosque to pray before his next day match. He heard an old woman whispering very desperately. When Pourya kindly inquired, the woman said her son, the country’s grand champion, was to wrestle the Great Pourya Vali in the city’s auditorium with the king in the audience. She said her son had no chance as Pourya had defeated many grand champions. She was praying for her son to put up a good fight and not to be embarrassed in public. Pourya assured the woman that, God willing, she would not be disappointed tomorrow. Pourya himself asked God to give him strength for what he decided to do. When the match began, Pourya felt he could easily defeat the Indian champion. Pourya prolonged the contest to have him showcase his skills. Finally, Pourya let the Indian champion take him down for an unprecedented victory. After the match, the old woman, who recognized Pourya from their conversation in the mosque, approached him. She tried to kiss Pourya’s hand for his unbelievable act of chivalry. Pourya told the woman that she must thank God for answering her prayers.

Aarash had a great deal of admiration for Pourya, but his role model was a more contemporary wrestler named Reza Takhti, whom the Iranian people nicknamed Jahan Pahlevan (The Grand Hero). Bahman told many stories about Takhti’s rivalry with powerful Turkish and Soviet opponents, and his numerous acts of chivalry. Once, Takhti was to wrestle his nemesis, the powerful and skilled Soviet in Tehran. In the morning of the match, the Soviet wrestler injured his fingers in a car accident. Nevertheless, he decided to wrestle that night. At the outset of the match, Takhti realized that his opponent was vulnerable and could be easily defeated. Takhti decided not to attack his rival’s weakness, but to give him an opportunity to lose with grace. Instead of pinning his nemesis, Takhti managed to win with a slim margin. He left the mat with a standing ovation and received a great deal of admiration from the Soviet wrestlers and coaches. Another time, Takhti initiated a fund raising event to help residents of nearby villages who lost their homes and belongings to a devastating earthquake. Takhti and his teammates collected huge sums of money and truck loads of food and blankets for these needy people. An older lady approached Takhti wanting to donate her veil. She said she had nothing else to give. Takhti thanked the women and admired her willingness to donate the only worthy item she possessed. “Please keep your veil, mother! God may reward your affection and generosity!”
Takhti said. Years after his untimely death, the Iranian people adore the legend of *Jahan Pahlevan* Takhti.

Aarash grew up to become a strong, handsome, and bright individual. He excelled in academics as well as athletics. He earned perfect grades in his classes and was an all-star football player. His forte, however, was freestyle wrestling. Twice, he became the state champion in his weight class. While finishing high school, he was offered a wrestling scholarship to attend a university in Iowa. Aarash double majored in economics and political science to prepare for law school. As expected of him, he did very well in his classes and trained hard. He won the NCAA championship in his junior and senior years. Bahman and Simeen came to Iowa to attend Aarash’s graduation. But they had much more to celebrate. Aarash got admitted to a prestigious law school in Minnesota and was invited to the national team’s wrestling trial in Oklahoma. They went home to celebrate Aarash’s accomplishments with relatives and friends.

Bahman and Simeen accompanied Aarash to Oklahoma. Aarash was the favorite to make the national team for the world championship tournament held in Turkey. He easily defeated his opponents to reach the final. To make the team, Aarash had to win a best of three contest against his NCAA nemesis, Mike. Aarash won the first match 3-1. The second match was scheduled in the morning and the last match, if necessary, in the afternoon of the next day. Two hours before his second match, Aarash went to the training facility to get ready. While entering the hallway, he noticed members of Mike’s family sitting in a circle, holding hands, closing eyes, and praying. Aarash paused for a minute to listen. In a whisper like sound, Mike’s mother was praying to God for Mike to win his matches and make the national team. She sounded so sincere and faithful.

When the second match began, Aarash felt he could win again since Mike had lost confidence. Aarash, however, was not as aggressive as usual. Mike gradually gained confidence and took Aarash down to win 1-0. Mike’s family celebrated his victory. But, Mike was not satisfied. He confronted Aarash in the locker room and asked why Aarash did not show intensity. Aarash said he was not feeling well. Mike did not buy that explanation. He pleaded with Aarash to tell the truth. Aarash told Mike about the praying session he witnessed in the hallway. He said he could not see Mike’s mother disappointed. Mike hugged Aarash and made him promise to wrestle for real in their final match. They shook hands on it. Mike and Aarash put a wrestling
exhibition together. They brought out the best in each other. At the end of the regulation, they were tied 7-7. In overtime, Aarash took Mike down and rolled him over to win the match 10-7. The fans appreciated the exciting contest between two great rivals. Mike and Aarash hugged each other. Mike said he expected Aarash to bring home a gold medal from Turkey. Aarash walked to Mike’s mother and apologized for preventing him from making the national team. She kissed Aarash on the cheek and wished him success.

In Turkey, Aarash found the competition very tough. He was so anxious in his first international experience that he barely defeated an opponent from Pakistan. His coach and parents tried to calm him down and have him focus on bigger challenges ahead. Aarash found another source of support and encouragement. There was a large and lively group of Iranians who came to Ankara to support their national team. Some of them came directly from Iran. Others were residents of Turkey and various European countries. They cheered Aarash when they realized he was Iranian-American. Aarash truly appreciated the support he was receiving from both American and Iranian fans. With more confidence, Aarash dominated his rivals and made it to the finals. To win the gold medal, he had to defeat the reigning world champion, Reza, from Iran. Aarash realized that this was the biggest match of his life. He had a strange feeling about it as well. Being raised bilingual and bicultural and supported by the Iranian fans, he felt strong ties with the people of the country. Being born, raised, and educated in the United States, his loyalty was with the country he was representing. Aarash had to attend a training session the day before the finals. When Aarash and his parents entered the auditorium, they saw a gathering of Iranian fans in the hallway. The Iranians were conducting a praying ceremony for their team to win the championship trophy and for their finalists to capture gold medals. Aarash and his parents paused for a minute to listen. Bahman suggested that they keep on going.

Simeen and Bahman felt that Aarash was emotionally vulnerable. They knew from the experience he had with Mike that strong feelings could overtake him at such a critical time. They decided to talk with him. Bahman, Simeen, and Jack, the team’s head coach, took Aarash to a nearby teashop. Aarash said he was curious how the Iranian fans would receive him in the championship match against Reza. “Would they boo or cheer me? Aarash wondered.” Simeen said she understood perfectly how Aarash was feeling. She herself had mixed feelings about it?
But all she wanted was for Aarash to compete. Jack agreed. He said he would understand should Aarash thought forfeiting was the right decision, or if he felt he had to give it his best shot. He advised Aarash to wrestle with his usual intensity and not to worry about the outcome. Knowing from experience, he assured Aarash that the Iranian fans would appreciate him as long as he fought for victory. Bahman added to what Jack said and advised his son to take advantage of the situation to become a world champion. He asserted that an intense and intelligent contest would win Aarash the heart of everyone in attendance.

Bahman asked Aarash if he knew whom he was named after. Aarash said he did not. Bahman replied that Aarash The Archer was an Iranian epic hero who sacrificed his life for his country. Once, Iran had a border dispute with its powerful neighbor. The two countries staged a big battle to resolve the dispute. Aarash, a high ranking Iranian commander, could not see the loss of life over a land dispute. He proposed a peaceful solution which both sides accepted. Before the break of dawn, Aarash climbed Mount Damavand. At the summit, he prayed to God to give him strength. He then drew his bow and shot an arrow toward the disputed landscape. The arrow traveled over the rivers, peaks, valleys, and forests for three days and three nights and finally hit a tree. According to the peace accord, the tree determined the border line between the two countries. Thanks to the strength of Aarash, Iran maintained control over the disputed area. To celebrate this peaceful victory, soldiers climbed the summit to accompany Aarash down to the camp. But, they could not find him. Legend has it that Aarash let his soul fly with the arrow! Like the self-sacrifice of Pourya Vali and the chivalry of Reza Takhti, the bravery of Aarash The Archer had such a profound effect on Aarash. He felt mentally prepared to challenge the reigning world champion.

In the match, Reza patiently waited for Aarash to make mistakes. But, Aarash was very alert. Aarash took Reza down and rolled him over to get three points. Aarash did not quit then. He went for a single-leg take down, but Reza reversed the hold, taking Aarash down and rolling him over to tie the score. The Iranian fans, waving little flags, exploded with cheers. The match went to overtime. Reza reverted to a defensive mode, waiting for Aarash to make another

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2 The tallest mountain of the country, located north of Tehran.
mistake. Aarash knew well that there was no margin for error in the overtime. He surprised Reza by going for a double-leg take down. Reza had no choice but to give Aarash one point. Aarash won the championship match 4-3. Reza was first to congratulate Aarash. They hugged and shook hands. The crowd cheered both champions. Everyone was delighted to witness such an exciting match. While leaving the mat, Aarash was greeted by his parents and coaches. His teammates carried him on their shoulders to the locker room.

At the closing ceremonies, Aarash received his gold medal, saluted the American flag, and sang along with the national anthem. He then waved two small flags: one of the United States and the other of Iran. The fans responded with roaring cheers. For a minute, the TV camera zoomed on Aarash’s face. He had tears of happiness in his eyes.
New Year’s Gift

Saman (Sam for short) was raised in an affluent family. His dad was a successful businessman who liked to throw lavish parties, and his mother was a homemaker who enjoyed spending money on expensive clothing and jewelry. Sam’s parents sent their oldest son, Siamac (Sia for short), to the United States to study. With all annual college fees and living expenses paid in advance and a generous monthly allowance, Sia took advantage of the opportunity to receive a baccalaureate degree in civil engineering. Sia’s dad celebrated his homecoming with a reception where relatives, friends, and neighbors enjoyed good food and entertainment. Sia accepted a lucrative job offer from a large construction company and married a beautiful and educated woman.

Sam was expected to follow his brother’s footsteps. But, he was not as academically prepared as Sia. Sam graduated from high school with average grades. It took him three long years to make a qualifying score in a standard test of English as a second language and to gain admission to a community college in California. In the meantime, Sam had a good time. He partied hard with his friends. They listened to popular music, drank beer, smoked cigarettes, and played card games. Sam particularly enjoyed playing cards and became very good at it. Once a month, he got together with friends to play twenty-one (a variation of the blackjack) and poker.

Sia advised his parents against sending Sam abroad. He argued that Sam was attracted to extra curricular activities which would derail him from college work. He told them stories of international students in the United States who, for one reason or another, did not succeed. He gave examples of students he knew who paid a high price for failure. Sam was outraged when he heard that his own brother did not want him to study abroad. He was so angry of Sia that he quarreled with him. Sam then plead his case with his parents and promised he would finish college on time and return home to start a career and family.

Sam’s parents threw a lavish goodbye party to send him to Los Angeles to attend college. Jamshid (Jim for short), Sam’s best high school friend, picked Sam up from the airport and took him to his apartment. Jim helped Sam register at the college and shared his apartment with him.
Sam quickly adjusted to the new environment. He passed the driving test and bought a brand new sports car. Sam made new friends and began to party with them. But Jim had no time for such activities. He asked Sam to be a more considerate roommate and advised him to concentrate on his college work instead. Sam did not care to listen. Jim had no choice but to ask Sam to move out of his apartment. While accusing Jim of betrayal, Sam roomed with one of his new friends.

Sam liked his new roommate better. Every weekend, they got together with friends to party. Soon, Sam found a steady girlfriend. For his twenty-first birthday, Sam’s roommate and girlfriend threw a party for him. All night long, they drank, smoked, and danced. In the morning, Sam and his friends headed to Las Vegas. To stay awake, they used cocaine. Sam was very impressed with the gambling machinery of Vegas. He spent hours playing blackjack, winning more than enough to pay for his trip. As soon as they got back to L.A., Sam formed a five-person gambling ring. Every Saturday night, they played card games while consuming large sums of alcohol and drugs. Sam also made frequent visits to Vegas, managing to win most of the time. Sam did not find blackjack challenging anymore. So, he picked up poker and became very good at it. Sam taught himself how and when to bluff and take chances. While Sam prospered in gambling, his grades suffered. He made Cs and Ds the first semester, but completely dropped his classes the second semester.

Early that summer, Sia came to visit his brother. Sam offered Sia a cold reception and accused him of being on a spying mission. Sia did not deny that he had come to check on Sam. Sia talked with Sam’s college advisor and received a copy of his transcript. He visited with Jim and talked with Sam’s friends to learn about his lifestyle. Sia then confronted Sam and asked him to return home together. Sam refused the offer and told Sia that what he was doing was his own business. Their parents asked Sam to return home for the summer break. When Sam refused, they threatened that they would stop supporting him. Sam shamelessly replied that he no longer wanted any money from them.

Sam began to wait tables at an upscale restaurant in Beverly Hills. He started networking with the customers. Sam was making a good income, largely from generous tips he collected. He spent a great deal on clothing to look fashionable. He slowly penetrated into the circle of the
rich and famous, attending their lavish gatherings. When playing poker he pretended he was an amateur, winning by sheer luck. Soon, he realized that he was not playing with college students. He found several worthy opponents who had enough money to take risks and stay in the game for a long time. Sam learned not to try to win every single night. But, he made sure that he won more money than he lost. On a lucky night, Sam won a big sum of money. But, he was clever enough to realize that he could easily lose it all.

Sam began to trade in the stock market. He learned the dos and don’ts of investing in the market. On days after the market had fallen, he shopped for bargain buys. He held the shares just long enough to sell for profit. Sam became a talented day trader, taking high risks for big returns. He invested some of his money in a three-bedroom house and upgraded his computer equipment. He also participated in several investment seminars to learn how to research market trends and make profitable trades. Sam was confident that if he had a large sum of money to invest, he could make it big. He believed he had finally found his niche.

Sam looked around to raise money for his investment business. He found one of his customers at the restaurant interested in the stock market. Mr. Lotfi was a fifty-year-old man who recently immigrated to the United States with his wife and two children and their lifetime savings. He was a master setter of precious stones. Mr. and Mrs. Lotfi planned to make a down payment on a house and invest the rest in a jewelry making business. Their plan was to buy precious stones for Mr. Lotfi to mount on gold rings and necklaces and sell them to jewelers. Sam talked Mr. Lotfi into investing his money in the market in order to increase his savings. Despite his fears, Mr. Lotfi invested some money in the market. The investment was profitable. Sam and Mr. Lotfi shared the profits. Gradually, Mr. Lotfi increased his investments. Eventually, he invested his lifetime savings, waiting to sell out for profit. But, that day never came!

On a Thursday afternoon in late October, Sam called Mr. Lotfi to give him a horrible news. The market had crashed and nearly whipped out Mr. Lotfi’s investment. The stocks that Sam himself owned had lost quite a lot of their value, too. Mr. Lotfi rushed to Sam’s house to learn the shocking reality of that black day. It was as if a devastating earthquake had demolished his house and everything in it. He felt helpless and hopeless. Mr. Lotfi, however, did not blame
Sam. He blamed himself for playing with his lifetime savings. Mr. Lotfi decided to cut his losses and sell the next day. The cashout amount he received was not even enough for a house down payment, much less for an investment in a jewelry business.

Mr. Lotfi began to struggle. He found a job at a jewelry workshop. He worked long hours to make just enough income to pay for his family’s living expenses. Mrs. Lotfi could not bear the loss of their lifetime savings. She blamed her husband for falling into Sam’s trap. The family dispute worsened to the extent that Mr. Lotfi had to leave the house. He had no place to go! Sam invited Mr. Lotfi to stay with him. Mr. Lotfi became chronically depressed when his wife and children returned to Iran. He began to drink heavily. As a result, his work performance deteriorated so rapidly that he was fired.

Sam was stressed out as well. He felt responsible for Mr. Lotfi’s miseries. A friend took Sam to a motivation seminar. The speaker based the entire seminar on the teachings of a mystic Persian poet, Rumi. Although Sam felt proud of being an Iranian, he had no background in Persian literature, in general, and Rumi, in particular. He was introduced to Sufism: the experimentation and actualization of the truth by means of love and devotion. The path to the truth required, above all, the enlightenment of the inner self by rectifying one’s thoughts, desires, and fears. The speaker recited one of Rumi’s well-known stories of men in search of the elephant.

One night, they arrived at a place where there was an elephant. In complete darkness, each man touched the animal. One who touched her leg imagined the elephant to be a pillar. The man who felt her ear believed the elephant to be a fan, and so on. Each man’s description of the elephant with respect to the part he had touched made sense. However, as far as describing the whole, their assertions were inaccurate. If the men had lit a candle to illuminate the darkness, the light would have revealed the elephant as a whole being.

After the seminar, Sam participated in Sufi gatherings on a regular basis. He gained a new perspective on life. One of Rumi’s poems made Sam think about what he had done to Mr. Lotfi:
Beloved reached desired glow
And so we say, may it be so
All doubts toward faith did grow
And so we say, may it be so

The devil’s plot caused perturbation
And the nation faced agitation:
Once again was Solomon’s nation
And so we say, may it be so

Beloved who put my heart in pain
Closed doors on my face once again
Friends would console and entertain
And so we say, may it be so

You drank wine on your own
Lusted after all, alone
Now lead the drunk upon a throne
And so we say, may it be so

From your majestic bright face
The flame lighting my place
Each corner, a well-lit space
And so we say, may it be so

From your fake anger rage
And the sweet turning of the page
The world is a sugary stage
And so we say, may it be so

Night replaced by the morrow
Joy has conquered every sorrow
Sun light, pervasive and thorough
And so we say, may it be so

From mendicant generosity
And lovers’ pertinacity
Revival and vivacity
And so we say, may it be so

Celebrate this festivity

1 Translation by Shahriar Shahriari, see www.rumionfire.com
Sam decided to make it up to Mr. Lotfi. He mapped out an elaborate plan. Sam found a job for Mr. Lotfi in the same restaurant where he had worked. He took Mr. Lotfi to Sufi gatherings to help him gain the self-respect he so badly needed and advised him to stop drinking. It took Sam a couple of months to sell his house for profit. He moved into a two bedroom apartment with Mr. Lotfi. Sam began to trade again in the stock market. He made daily trips to Vegas and returned to the Beverly Hills gatherings. Cautiously and gradually, Sam accumulated a large sum of money.

In early March, Sam informed Mr. Lotfi that he was traveling to England. He asked Mr. Lotfi to accompany him, all expenses paid. Mr. Lotfi did not want to go, but Sam insisted. He said that both of them were under so much stress lately and must get away for a short while. Sam added that he obtained two free tickets from the air traveling milage he had accumulated. Finally, Mr. Lotfi agreed. They left on March seventeenth and arrived in London the next day. In the airport, Sam informed Mr. Lotfi that their final destination was Tehran. Mr. Lotfi, who was taken by surprise, expressed mixed feelings about traveling to Tehran. He was dying to see his wife and children after two years, but felt ashamed of what had happened to them in Los Angeles. Sam assured him that everything would be all right.

They arrived in Tehran the day before Noruz\(^2\) and stayed in a hotel. The next day, Mr. Lotfi took Sam to the house of his father-in-law where his family was staying. Mr. Lotfi’s children were ecstatic upon seeing their dad after such a long time. Mrs. Lotfi was not as happy, especially seeing Sam accompany her husband. Mr. Lotfi’s in-laws received Mr. Lotfi with affection and Sam with respect. They invited them inside. Soon after the exchange of greetings, Sam asked permission to talk with Mrs. Lotfi and her children. He apologized for the pain and suffering he caused them. He then presented a big envelope to Mrs. Lotfi and begged her to accept it. Sam said the envelope contained the exact amount of money that Mr. Lotfi had lost in

\(^{2}\) New Day: March 20\(^{th}\) when Iranians celebrate the commencement of a new year.
the stock market. Mr. Lotfi could not believe his own eyes. Mrs. Lotfi broke into tears. Sam asked permission to leave. While saying goodbye, Mr. Lotfi gave him a big hug and began to cry. Mrs. Lotfi thanked Sam and said that her husband’s returning home was the best New Year’s gift her family could have ever asked. Sam left the house while choking in tears.

Sam rang the door bell. A young and beautiful girl opened the door and asked what he wanted. Sam asked for her grandparents. As soon as Sam’s mother saw him, she screamed his name and fainted. Sam’s dad rushed to greet his son. While hugging his parents, Sam broke into tears. Sia and his wife entered the family room to welcome Sam and introduce him to their daughter.

Sam and Sia spent a lot of quality time together as they went on a tour of the country. Sam talked about his experiences with gambling and told Sia the story of Mr. Lotfi. Sia talked about his family life and professional challenges and opportunities. After getting to know Sam all over again, Sia encouraged Sam to return to the United States to finish his studies. Sia offered Sam financial support so he could attend college full time. Sam felt he was ready for the challenge. He accepted his brother’s offer and returned to the United States.

Sam found his old friend Jim working on his doctoral degree at a prestigious university in the mid-west. Sam paid a visit to Jim to apologize for his unfriendly behavior. Jim said he loved Sam as a brother and could not bear to watch him destroy himself. Jim confessed that he was the one who had asked Sia to come and check on Sam. Jim too apologized to Sam for asking him to move out of his apartment. Jim asked Sam to apply for admission to his university. Sam entered the university as the oldest freshman of the class. Whenever Sam was offered to drink, gamble, or use drugs, he replied he had done enough of that already and quickly added he was there to study.