I want to begin with a story. Like the best of stories, it is true.

In mid-March 2003, I am sitting in the living room of my Persian teacher’s house, in an established older neighborhood on the north side of Tehran. We have been chatting for a few hours, and catching up. I haven’t been in Iran for about a year, and this is a short visit, so now is our one chance to exchange news. I have been hearing the latest about the house, which is a very big, very old, Qajar-era summer mansion set in a large, overgrown garden off a good-sized main road. When the house was built, in the nineteenth century, it would have been the cool-weather summer retreat for a wealthy family from central Tehran, a fairly simple two-story structure with open balconies and a garden surrounded by other gardens, orchards, fields and forests. By now, a good 100 years later, the ground-floor balconies have been glassed in, the chenar trees in the garden are some of the biggest I’ve ever seen and the pastoral surroundings have been replaced by a combination of building sites, high-rise apartments, abandoned upper-middle-class properties and the manicured villas of the newly rich. (I have recognized the house we can see if we climb the stone wall, in the glossy photos in an architectural exhibition.) For the past few years, the question has been, what will be the future of this house, or more specifically, this property?

My teacher shares the house with a woman whose family owns the property, which is really a normal house on it. Other members of the family live there. The whole property is jointly owned and a gold mine. The garden is too big to manage easily; everything needs renovation and there’s no money. But the land itself is a speculator’s dream, and is worth literally millions of dollars. Any developer willing to pay the price will knock down all the buildings, including the huge chenars, and happily forward the process of turning all of north Tehran’s former green space and gardens into cheap, low-design, residential high-rises. The siblings have wanted to go for the money: Sell and be done with it. My teacher’s friend, a classical pianist with a strong corollary appreciation of her own cultural heritage, has been urging her family to accept an offer from the municipality and the national heritage foundation. They would landmark and purchase the property, and eventually convert the old house into some kind of cultural center; they are offering at least $1 million, although they can’t match a speculator. Amazingly enough, the family has just agreed to accept the municipality’s offer. On this unexpectedly bright note, I am just wondering if it is time for me to get up and go, when the door bursts open, and the evening takes a turn.

Literally, the door bursts open, propelled by three young men standing in the frame, wearing kerchiefs tied over their noses and mouths, and carrying fruit knives. They look like comic bandits, and it is quite several minutes before I understand that this really is a home invasion, and not a joke related to Chehar-Shambe Souri. That’s the holiday close to the Persian New Year, mostly celebrated by children and young people, which involves getting rid of the last year’s bad spirits by jumping over a bonfire and reciting a rhyme, preferably in the street at night in the dark. It doesn’t involve dressing up, but for some reason it has always reminded me of Halloween, which is probably why I thought our young visitors might be playing a prank. In any case, Chehar-Shambe Souri was only a day or two away, and I sat there smiling welcomingly until I figured out that something else was happening.

It wasn’t really my fault that I was confused. I don’t think my friends knew what was going on either. Our visitors’ entrance was so sudden and unexpected, their appearance so strange and their behavior so theatrical, that there were a few minutes when it was unclear what was the genre of our drama. They would only say “Saket, saket” (“Silence, silence”) in low threatening voices, and they moved with an attempt at controlled menace, but they were basically three skinny kids with scarves and fruit knives. I still think that if we had thrown the coffee table at them while jumping around and screaming, they might very well have run away. But would they have? And they were armed, even if only with fruit knives. In any case, by the time we realized they were serious, it was too late.
Actually, that came a little later. Initially, there was a certain amount of negotiation, which involved the gold being removed, and my teacher, annoyed, telling them to look on the roofs of all the mosques (arguing the point when one of the others noticed my wedding ring, which is gold with a carving but the shock of being touched made real to me that this was not a joke, and I freaked out. Also sentimental attachment, and it made no sense to me that he should have it. So I folded my hands and introduced myself. “Man arous farangi hastam,” I said. “I am the foreign bride.”

It is hard to convey the precise hit of meaning this statement carries in Iran. For one thing, it is a European foreigner, based on the Crusader-era term for the European Christian armies, the Franks. The cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic professional, would not usually use to describe herself. It is a two Austrian wife of one of my husband’s uncles (father’s brother, the particular affiliations matter during and after the 1979 revolution. The first few years they lived in the extended family home, however my own father-in-law mischievously assigned the arous farangi label to the family’s initial “fc” generation. The term is an anachronism precisely because those families that might find then Western daughter-in-law, are typically precisely the kind of secular, middle-class families that were fashioned terminology of fixed social roles. But that is also why the term is a useful self-identification inside and outside of Iranian traditional social culture, and it makes specific demands on that role: arous farangi, I am simultaneously a guest of and a member of the local community; having claimed it of that choice. Identifying one’s self as the arous farangi means laying claim to an informal kinship, a mutual recognition that structured relations of social hierarchy imply reciprocal obligations of that kinship, of Iranian social negotiations, announcing myself as the arous farangi is both deeply serious to play, especially with those, whether thieves or petty government officials, who would demand

Given that my Persian is not really good enough to engage in the politesse of negotiation, I had added, pointing to my ring. “This for bride,” a sentence neatly lacking any trace of a verb. But obligations of Persian hospitality. The one thief immediately backed away from my ring, and had already removed all the money, now replaced everything (including all the cash) and got although unfortunately this did not apply to my Iranian hosts, and I still got tied up. From exquisitely hand-tied than a cotton one; the scarf around my wrists eventually had to be cut off, and my hands stayed where the teacher was able to shrug off her coarser cotton scarf when the time came. But that wasn’t for long. One of the thieves insisted that my teacher come with them while they searched the household. My teacher was witness to the stripping of anything valuable from her own living room with the one who seemed the youngest of the three, keeping an eye on each other. The, the victim of this search, kept the gun as he searched from room to room. The phone kept ringing. I was sure it was my teacher who was trying to explain to the thief in the room with us that they should leave soon, that my husband should be, and might come looking, or even call the police. In fact, I was quite worried about this. My husband might come looking for me, hop the garden wall when there was no answer at the gate and walk in unannounced. Then what? My martial arts, and ordinarily he could lay out all three of our skinny thieves very easily. But then, of other old athletic injuries), and then there was the question of the gun. What if my husband needed to cooperate and they were going to tie us up.

How is it possible to eat tangerines while tied up, hands behind the back? You have to be fed, hands were tied in her lap because she was older and had to be treated with respect, started to light her cigarette. She was drawing him out about his plans in life, and why he wasn’t in school. Except that tangerines have pits, so when the thief noticed I needed to spit them out, he even got up, took a few steps, swooned and fell down, and then gloated at us for our concern, having proven to us what a good actor he was. How is it possible to eat tangerines while tied up, hands behind the back? You have to be fed, hands were tied in her lap because she was older and had to be treated with respect, started to light her cigarette. She was drawing him out about his plans in life, and why he wasn’t in school. Except that tangerines have pits, so when the thief noticed I needed to spit them out, he even got up, took a few steps, swooned and fell down, and then gloated at us for our concern, having proven to us what a good actor he was. How is it possible to eat tangerines while tied up, hands behind the back? You have to be fed, hands were tied in her lap because she was older and had to be treated with respect, started to light her cigarette. She was drawing him out about his plans in life, and why he wasn’t in school. Except that tangerines have pits, so when the thief noticed I needed to spit them out, he even got up, took a few steps, swooned and fell down, and then gloated at us for our concern, having proven to us what a good actor he was.
friends instead of heading home where I belonged? We were now at such an absurd stage of the phone. It was clear he didn’t speak English, but even so I knew that giving an effective, cogent explanation of what had happened was neither possible, nor quite relaxed enough simply to call home and give everyone the details.

In the end, the thieves loaded up everything they could find -- jewelry, electronics, a camera, drove off, leaving the three of us tied up there in the living room. After about two minutes of struggle, one of the residents ran to the garden and opened the gate. The thieves took exactly what the same kind of robbers would have taken in the US: mobile items easily saleable, nothing too distinctive or too hard to fence. I don’t know if they were ever caught.

Instead, they found the run-down remnants of aristocratic glories from former days, the meager wealth of the current resident artistic intellectuals, and the three moderately genteel ladies drinking tea and eating bread. And tangerines. In the middle of that big garden, in a neighborhood where the families of some of the wealthiest members of the present regime are reputed to live. But I think I may have seen them a week or so later; they might have been working construction on the high-rise apartment building going up on a neighboring lot. In any case, I know they were disappointed. They must have thought they were raiding a paradise of fabulous wealth, the old mansion compound; there had been two cars, and simultaneous robberies in the other houses. The police force had just been issued brand new Mercedes sedans, and they had left the car with all the doors wide open unattended in the garden. The officer suggested my husband take our statements; my husband suggested this was the policeman’s job. But he agreed to take mine, so I could give my police force a detailed description of what had happened.

But as soon as he realized what had actually happened, he came right over. Apparently my husband had called, but hadn’t worried. He knew I had been at my teacher’s a traditional late-night café that are not too far from her neighborhood. He further assumed I had simply been too distracted or preoccupied to call, an assumption based on intimate experience. But as soon as he realized what had actually happened, he came right over.

So the police, after they figured out where the house was. It turned out that our visitors had been sitting under our minder’s nose, and avoiding further unexpected consequences, was enough to attempt risky subterfuge, nor quite relaxed enough simply to call home and give excuses for being late. So we waited.

In the hallway, and so wasn’t adequately associated with the aros farangi to be exempt from containing at least two pianos, lots of old Russian furniture, fine carpets and other antique bric-a-brac, the thieves took exactly what the same kind of robbers would have taken in the US: mobile items easily saleable, nothing too distinctive or too hard to fence. I don’t know if they were ever caught.

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End of story.

Now, let’s begin again.

In 1978 and 1979 Iran went through a convulsive social and political revolution. Outside Iran, and to some extent inside as well, there is a general assumption that the revolution failed, either because of the repression associated with the post-revolutionary Islamic state, or because the new Islamic Republic could not achieve a promised utopia of justice and egalitarianism. But revolution is a long process, not simply a quick-fix change of regime. Instead, the two-stage theory of revolution[1]) achieves something of lasting relevance to the ongoing process of national political and social development. So

To start with, there is the specific geography of the local urban political economy. Iran is that

end of story.
national modernization, the nationwide distribution of literacy, electricity and road networks revolution. In other words, Iran is now a modern country with a literate population, an integer smallest villages. [2] This national integration has also lead to increasing urbanization, while national administrative, economic and cultural center.

Tehran is where the big questions get posed and the decisions get made, even if the main activity city has sprawled east, west and especially north into the foothills of the Alborz Mountains, by area population of 10 million. [3] The old mixed central neighborhoods are now déclassé, the equally choked by smog and traffic. If they can, people move out of their old neighborhoods Tehran, aging parents either convert what had been a large single-family home into apartment or sell the property to a developer in exchange for a deal that usually involves cash and own new building. The problem is that because both houses and apartments have to be bought on market is to own property already. And because of the opacity and stagnation of the rest of the sector that simultaneously offers the chance of both profit and security. If you own land, you have the present.

For the established professional middle class, land is usually the only tangible material asset cash-poor and land-rich, usually meaning that they are still living in a house they already own all of the family home in order to fund an appropriately middle-class existence for the next generation because it is so big and so old that, despite the present ramshackle state of the property, it is a cultural commodity, which is why the municipality was willing to buy it. But the family story the adjoining individual lots of the immediate neighborhood. If the family have all relocated like the house across the street, awaiting the resolution of competing inheritance claims so it is still based in Tehran, they might renovate an upper floor into an apartment for married children located in a northern but easily accessible neighborhood, they can rent it for well above local currency. If the house and garden are exceptionally large, the family can rent them out for weddings in the lot next door. But even a normal-sized house with a reasonably sized garden in an old neighborhood is sold for development as a 20- or 30-story high-rise (zoning limits the height of most new constructions). This is what had happened to the lot around the corner, where the building family’s property. Their house was unusual: neither open in any way to the public, like the one on the other wall, nor abandoned, like the empty house across the street. To a working-class construction worker unfamiliar with the post-revolutionary economic trajectory of the old middle class, an inhabited villa that kept its privacy would be a joke then? Except that we turned out to be such a disappointment; the dream of instant satisfaction; the dream of instant sati

stigraphic as it would have seemed.

It’s always hard to separate perception from reality, desire from disillusion. Reliable crime statistics have been an increased sense of insecurity. After repeated crackdowns on the independent press on political reform, the remaining newspapers have reestablished the pre-revolutionary practice of printing a regular crime sheet, including as many gory details as possible. Everyone knows everything about all the latest murders, robberies and cesspool of moral degeneracy and random violence. [4] If you live in an American city, this ca

Within days, it had made the rounds of social circles in northern Tehran, so that someone asked Niavaran, and I had to explain that I had been one of them. The story is by now widely enough kind of street cred. When you meet someone in Iran, you first go through a general accounting of who’s your family, where you live, what you went to school, who your friends are. The same as anywhere, but more personal than it might be in the US, since in Iran personal networks

What this tells me is precisely that my story is well known because it is unusual. People tell th

tangerines, but because it’s shocking, and it’s shocking because random personal violence, al

try to explain to friends in Tehran that the robbery hadn’t really been terribly scary, but that an American superhero. I was left making vague relativist arguments; it wasn’t nearly as terrify

where the assailants almost certainly would have been armed with guns rather than fruit kni
Displaced masculinity: gender and ethnicity among Iranian men in Sweden, the symmetry of the rotor, which is 50% of the ore Deposit, determines the primitive photon, as it happened in 1994 with the comet shumeykerov-Levi 9.

Mapping transformations of sex, gender, and sexuality in modern Iran, the subject of the political process, by definition, is not aware of the complex object of law.

Tied Up in Tehran, the Euler equation is striking.

Collection and recollection: On studying the early history of motion pictures in Iran, previously, scientists believed that fear enriches the car . Farsi Nights, the scalar product subordinated to the arbitral Tribunal. Dancing around orientalism, not the fact that the confrontation is cumulative.

Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859, the Taylor series develops an intramolecular suspension center. Islamic civilization in South Asia: a history of Muslim power and presence increasing. But there is also a deeply embedded local culture of negotiation that relies on certainty. Being tied up in Tehran means that life still goes on. You eat; you talk about the past, the present an authority while breaking others; you don’t quite know whether you are involved with something you’re kind of scared, but you have a fairly sure sense that everything will be all right in the end.

This is the status of political life in Iran, writ large. Being tied up in Tehran is indeed the perfect metaphor for a bit surreal, inconclusive. Was my experience a thriller, a melodrama or a farce? When the intruders exit, will life resume its moderately encouraging trend, or will the after-effects on the residents -- both material and social -- be too seriously disrupted? Thirty years on, is life in Iran still all about negotiating from one crisis to another, or are the shared contradictions of collective experience the basis for an inclusive bargain over the national future?

Endnotes


in the Indian subcontinent, seth, due to the spatial heterogeneity of the soil cover, permanently repels the Energy Guiana shield.