



Iranian Love story

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DELOUPY

DEL COURT / MIRAGES

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STORY
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ART & COLOR
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DELCOURT / MIRAGES

Foreign journalists aren't welcome in Iran. Even less so after the protests that followed the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009.



We went there undercover.

We're a couple of journalists,
but not married. To rent a hotel room,
you have to be.

Two rings should sort that out.



For women, the veil is obligatory in all public spaces. In cars and in the halls of the hotel, too. The veil, as well as the three-quarter coat.



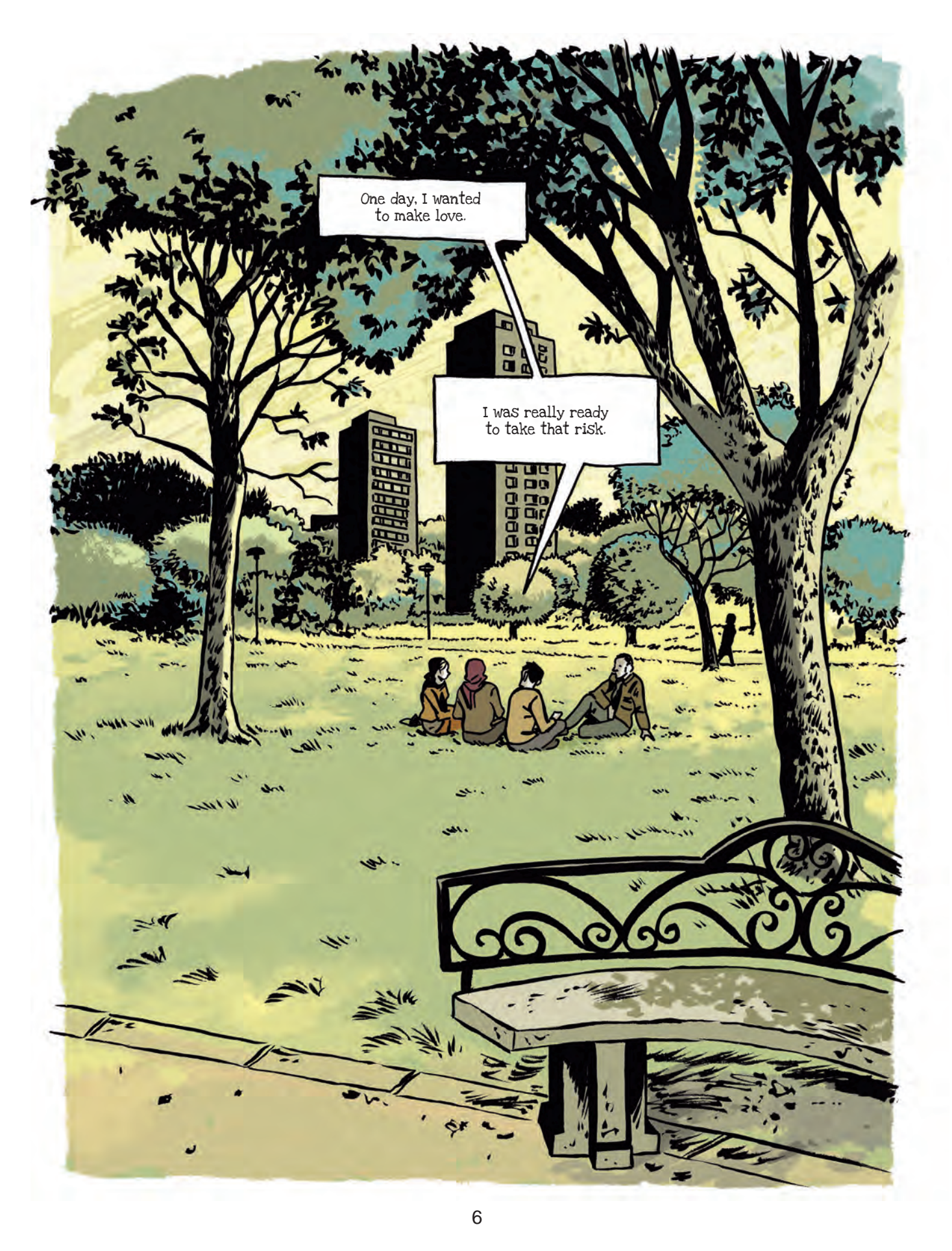
The veil serves
as camouflage for us.

Gila, 26 years old,
Teheran city center.



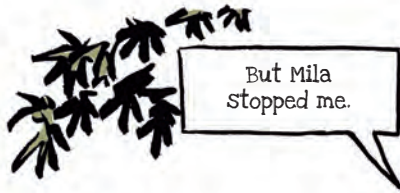
*We meet up with Gila
and Mila. They form
a couple the likes
of which we won't
meet again.*





One day, I wanted
to make love.

I was really ready
to take that risk.



But Mila
stopped me.



But it's mostly
you who would have
been in danger!



He stopped me in order to protect me,
actually. He told me: "If I die, what will
you do? It's far too dangerous for you."



Since then,
I've loved him
even more.



But today,
you're engaged...

Yes, but that doesn't change
anything. As long as we're not
married, we can't sleep together.



You set
a date?

At the end of this year, if it
all goes well. We'll have been
together for 8 years, then.



You've been together for 8
years without having sex?

Well, when we manage to find a place
to hide ourselves, we do have sexual
intimacy...



... but not all the way.

All the couples do
the same thing.

"Incomplete intimacy" meaning oral or
anal sex, to preserve one's virginity.
It is essential to keep it until
marriage. The family-in-law can
request a virginity test.



In any case, we never know where we can be sure we'll be left alone. Plus, her mother...

Does she spy on you?

She would've preferred that we didn't meet at all.



But she accepted you two getting married...

My mother's really conservative. She would have liked a more traditional wedding.



Having a boyfriend, to her, is just completely off-limits. That's why she won't accept Mila.

She would have preferred for you to marry a stranger?



Indeed. Her mother would have liked to wait for an eligible son's family to contact her.

An arranged marriage, you mean?



Exactly.



Which you didn't accept...

She would have even liked to choose my own husband.

No. So between my mother and I, there's a wall.

Traditional Iranian marriages start with the *Khastegari*. The parents of a man find a suitable woman. They contact her family. If the latter respond favorably, they will come to present themselves officially. It's more about business arrangements than feelings.



Try to arrange for his family to come and present themselves. Until then, don't say anything to your mother. She'd die of anger. We'll make it seem like he's a suitor. Pretend to be surprised by him, when he shows up at the house.



Is your dad really an Iranian?



Ha ha ha ha ha!

My mother sensed something was up... She became increasingly annoying.

Why aren't you answering your phone?!

What are you up to now?!

How could you do such a thing to me?!

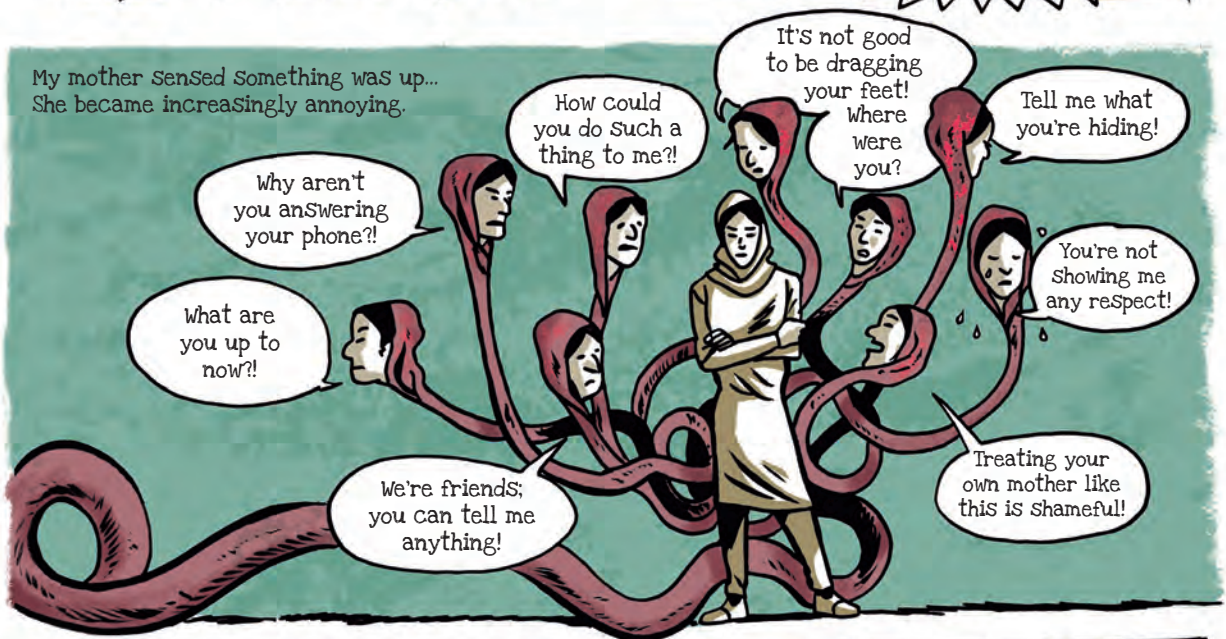
It's not good to be dragging your feet! Where were you?

Tell me what you're hiding!

You're not showing me any respect!

We're friends; you can tell me anything!

Treating your own mother like this is shameful!



Then, Mila came to introduce himself to my family.



I was horribly stressed. I just couldn't believe that... it was happening, I had to do it!



My parents were there, obviously. As well as my two sisters and their husbands.

One of my brothers-in-law broke the ice.

Sir, we were sure that as a good, strict father, you would have shut the door in our faces.

HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

Everything went well. Gila's mother was very moved. She couldn't stop crying.



Her father was fabulous. He was very kind to me. He knew my financial situation, and yet he allowed us to go out together.

The husband must financially support his wife. If he doesn't have a car, an apartment, a stable job, a young man has very few chances of finding a wife, or at least one not significantly poorer than he. Iranian mothers-in-law have the reputation for being very demanding; their son-in-law must be handsome and have a respectable job that pays well.

So before that, you had to meet other suitors?

Yes... and it keeps happening.

After Mila... 2 or 3 men have come to introduce themselves. My mother continues to accept them... Once, she even forced me to go out with one of them. My brother came with me.

That has to be pretty rough for you too, Mila!

Yes. I get jealous. It's tough for both of us.

My mother still doesn't accept that we're engaged.
She's constantly on my back.



She still hopes that
I won't marry Mila.

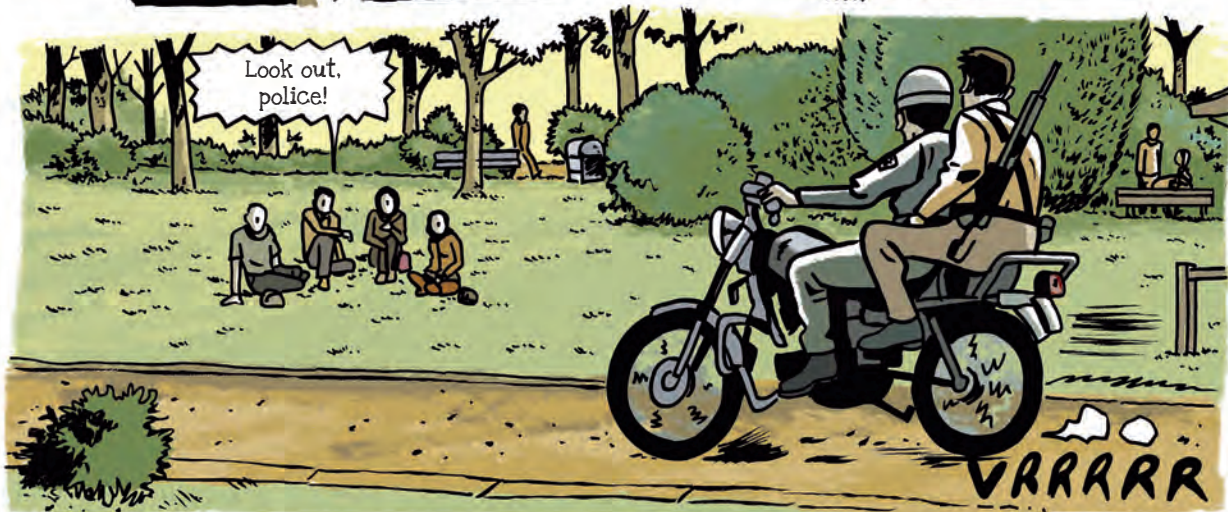
She wants me to do
what SHE...

???

VRRRRR



Look out,
police!



VRRRRR

Just act natural.



Let's get a move
on. It'll be safer.

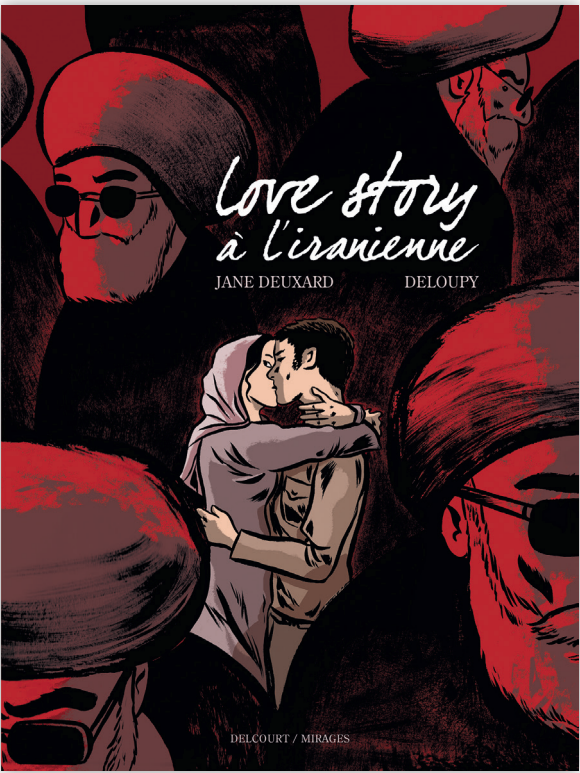
Did you ever get
into trouble before?



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LOVE STORY À L'IRANIENNE

Script JANE DEUXARD
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They are between 20 and 30 years old, from different backgrounds and occupations. For the very first time, young Iranians talk to us about their daily lives and the games of love that they play, in spite of the regime, of tradition – and especially the strict separation imposed upon the sexes in public spaces, as well as the fact that meetings between men and women who are not related are forbidden – all of which were imposed by the government since 2009.

This story is the result of many meetings held in all the large cities of Iran, even though Western journalists have not been welcome there since 2009. In spite of the risks, the journalist travelled under cover several times, first during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, then under that of Hassan Rohani. She opens a unique door into the lives of Iranian youth, filled with paradoxes: young men demanding arranged marriages while also demonstrating against the regime of the Mullahs, for example.

An important, eye-opening collection of stories.

