



Marjan Satrapi, author of the best-selling, enchanting Persepolis books, brings her trademark humor, insight, generosity, and drawings in this poignant tale of life and death. CHICKEN WITH PLUMS (Pantheon book/ April 14, 2009/ \$12.95) is the story of her great-uncle, a celebrated Iranian musician who gave up his life for music and love.

The year is 1958, the place Tehran. Nasser Ali Kan, one of Iran's most revered tar player, finds his beloved instrument damaged beyond repair. Heartbroken, he takes to his bed, renouncing the world and all of its pleasures, giving himself eight days to live. CHICKEN WITH PLUMS is the story of those last eight days.

PANTHEON BOOKS

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Chicken With Plums

By Marjan Satrapi



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Trial of minutes...

"Milani said a second theory is that Tehran is trying to increase its leverage ahead of possible negotiations with Washington. Saeed Leylaz, a political analyst in Iran, agreed. Leylaz said he believed Tehran wanted to use Saberi in negotiations with Washington, but would not keep her long because it would further stain Iran's already poor human rights record. A third theory is that Iran is using Saberi as a bargaining chip with the hopes of trading her for the release of three Iranian officials detained by the United States in Iraq January 2007. The men, who Iran claims are diplomats but who the United States says are Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards), were arrested at Iran's consulate in northern Iraq. That same argument, however, was used when Iranian American scholar Haleh Esfandiari was arrested in May 2007. Esfandiari's initial interrogations and questioning, however, began in December 2006, before the Iranians were detained in Iraq, and Esfandiari was later released without Tehran attempting to use her to secure the release of the Iranians. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi this week also rejected any connection between the arrest of Saberi and the abduction of the three Iranian diplomats. Saberi was arrested January 31. She told her family she was arrested for buying wine. Later, the charge was changed to reporting without a press license. Still later, officials said the charge was spying for the United States. The wine charge and the charge of reporting without a license have apparently just fallen by the wayside. Judiciary spokesman Ali-Reza Jamshidi said, "Saberi has appealed and I hope that the appeals court will change the verdict." It was another odd statement as press spokesmen do not usually utter personal opinions on cases, even in Iran. Saberi's Iranian-born father, Reza, who flew from Fargo, North Dakota, to Tehran with his Japanese-American wife, Aikiko, earlier this month, said Sunday that neither Saberi nor her lawyer were informed that the trial was taking place until 15 minutes into the trial. "The lawyer was only told to meet Roxana last Monday [April 13]," Reza said in a telephone interview with The Washington Post. "No one knew that they were trying her. Roxana found out 15 minutes into the session that she was being tried. None of them, neither Roxana nor the lawyer, were ready to defend her," Reza said, adding that the closed-door trial took less than an hour. Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of the

Middle East and North Africa Division of Human Rights Watch (HRW), told the Iran Times, "No one can really predict what will happen in her appeal, but the fact that Ahmadi-nejad has publicly weighed in, and that the Justice Ministry is calling on the appeals court to carefully review the merits of the case, is a positive sign that there will be space for the government to reconsider its prosecution of Saberi. "She is, of course, one of so many journalists and writers prosecuted in Iran for no good reason, really, but her American citizenship no doubt adds to the hostility against her and plays into the tense relations between the U.S. and Iran. "It's hard to imagine that the Iranian government would do something as crude as use her imprisonment as a 'bargaining chip,' but there are a lot of things that the Iranian government does that are hard to square with good reason or basic standards of justice and fairness," Whitson told the Iran Times. Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi and Abdolfattah Soltani both signed on to the case as defense attorneys. Soltani said justice officials didn't allow them to sign papers Monday confirming the addition of lawyers to her defense team. "It's very saddening that even though the president deems it necessary to write a letter stressing Roxana's rights to defend herself, the prison authorities did not allow our representative to meet her," Soltani, who in 2006 was convicted of spying but then acquitted months later, told The Washington Post. Many Americans have also called for Saberi's quick release. Earlier this month, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for Saberi's "speedy release and return to her family," and the Reverend Jesse Jackson said he was interested in traveling to Iran to personally appeal for Saberi's release. During a recent Summit of the Americas conference in Trinidad, President Obama told reporters, "She [Saberi] is an American citizen and I have complete confidence that she was not engaging in any sort of espionage. She was an Iranian-American who was interested in the country which her family came from, and it is appropriate for her to be treated as such and to be released." But Iran does not recognize Saberi as American despite the fact that she was born on American soil. Intelligence Minister Gholam-Hossain Mohseni-Ejazi stated very firmly that Saberi was only an Iranian. He said she entered Iran on an Iranian passport six years ago, holds an Iranian ID card and did not protest that she was a foreigner when she was arrested. Japan, the native country of Saberi's mother, expressed disappointment Monday after the trial, but said it would "wait to see what the United States and Iran will do."

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Iran is now...

mated at between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion, with the 1 million tons bought from the United States since last July worth \$356 million. Iran views the grain as a strategic commodity for its population of 70 million, for whom bread is the main staple. The country reported it achieved self-sufficiency in wheat in 2004, but a devastating drought and news that the virulent Ug99 wheat rust disease had spread to some Iranian provinces has forced the country to look abroad. The situation is so dire that Tehran seems unconcerned with whom it is importing from. Last year was the first in 26 years that Iran bought wheat from the United States. But Iranian Minister of Agriculture Mohammad-Reza Eskandari has pledged to regain self-sufficiency in wheat by producing 15 million tons this coming season. Traders, how-

ever, remain skeptical—pointing out that Tehran continues its large-scale imports from the international market for delivery later this year. Issa Kalantari, the head of Iran's national farmers' union and agriculture minister under President Khatami, is doubtful of the country's ability to maintain wheat self-sufficiency. "Since there is a severe shortage of investment in the agricultural sector, the question of self-sufficiency is meaningless," said Kalantari. While the regime claims the record volume of agricultural imports—worth an estimated \$12 billion—is solely due to the drought, critics argue the imports also result from government mismanagement. But Iran isn't the only country in the region suffering from a food production problem; other North African and Middle Eastern countries are also trying to secure additional food supplies. Wealthy Persian Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia are currently in search of farmland overseas to grow crops.

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Chador Making...

Arabic style. According to figures from Iranian domestic news agencies, 17,000 national chadors had been sold by 2007. However, Jenabi admits that women aged between 30 and 45 have been less keen to adopt her design. "One of the main reasons is that it is difficult for these women to let go of the habit of holding the chador with their hands," she said. Before the Islamic Revolution, when wearing the hijab was not compulsory, many Iranian mothers and grandmothers in religious families used to wear the traditional or "baggy" chador. Whether a woman wears a chador in Iran often depends more on her age and educational status than on her social status. Usually, older women in smaller towns wear a chador, while in larger cities younger women have for many years opted for a scarf and a long dress instead. But it is not only poorer women who wear a chador—wealthy women in Tehran also wear one at religious ceremonies and family funerals. Now that the chador is making a comeback as a fashion item, girls might be more enthusiastic about Islamic dress. However, looking at how some girls in Tehran wear the national chador, it is clear they have not chosen it because of their strict beliefs. As well as a tight-fitting chador, these girls might wear colored scarves, shorter dresses or jeans. The idea is to give the impression that they have become less accessible—and therefore more attractive. Monireh Moin al-Islam, the manager of a women's cultural center, worries about this, saying the national chador does not cover women's body properly—despite what its supporters might

claim. "In practice it reveals all the curves of the body and has turned into a tight dress with sleeves. These garments emphasize beauty—under the pretext of Islamic hijab—and this is against what is in the Quran," she said. However, Fatemeh Sadeghi, a researcher on women's issues, believes the national chador should be welcomed in Iran. "The traditional chador had a sort of solemnity about it. It told the observer not to mess around with a woman wearing one, not to make indecent proposals, not to flirt. No one could even tease these women. You had to observe certain limits," she explained. "The national chador, despite being a chador, does not have that solemn, detached and desexualized—or, as I believe, anti-feminist—identity that the black chadors had about them." The national chador, she hopes, represents a response to the needs of a society that is fast evolving. "There is no doubt that [traditional chadors] are no longer desirable either for the Islamic regime or for today's young girls who are tired of hiding themselves. There is no doubt that they are all after beauty. And what is wrong with that?" she said. When the focus on beauty and sexual attraction is so great, simply suppressing "indecent dress" or "bad hijab" will not work, she explained. "The Islamic Republic has come to the conclusion in recent years that it has not done enough ... The solution is to invent a new fashion, which is compatible with religion and can incorporate aesthetics within traditional patriarchal norms. "When society is, on the whole, trying to embrace and develop fashion, this is a rare opportunity for the state to support it. Wouldn't it be better for Iranian women to express and satisfy themselves at the same time as respecting religious norms?"

برای درج آگهی در

ماهنامه پژواک

با ما تماس بگیرید و از مزایای استثنایی بهره ببرید.

(۴۰۸)۶۱۵-۱۰۳۰

"First thing to do is let everyone know you are in the game. It's like when you get into a kid's swimming pool. You have to make a splash. The bigger the splash, the more people will want to know about what you are doing and the more successful you will be." Max Markson