

High School and Nosha

Before she knew it, she was eleven and finished with elementary school. She had dreaded this day. Already at age eleven she was as tall as her mother and there were proposals coming from many men in the city. She was afraid of being forced to get married. Unlike all the other girls in town who dreamed about their marriage from a very young age, Nosha wanted something else. She had inherited the love of reading from her father. Her father was subscribing all the available magazines. And with Pahlavi's rule, all these magazines were promoting modernity and education. She wanted to become a doctor or a writer. She certainly did not want to be like all these women who were stupid and talked behind their husbands' backs constantly. But could she become a doctor, though? Had her aunt Olya not told her friends when she stopped going to school that her sister had prevented her from continuing her education and that it would be the same for Nosha? Nosha knew first-hand that it was true. In Pasargad, she could not even find one boy who went to college—forget about a girl becoming a doctor. Most girls were done with school when they finished elementary school if they were lucky. Parivash and Olya were direct examples. Her heart grew sad at these thoughts, and she promised herself that she would try her best to achieve her goals. She knew that now was at the crossroad of either pursuing her dream or becoming a slave of tradition. She knew very well that she did not have a strong personality. She was very sensitive and shy. She could not even ask her parents for little things she needed. Pursuing her dream would be harder than anything in that town, she thought. What if they prevent me from going to school? She loved school, and each summer she would wait impatiently to go back. When her father bought her new books, she would hold them as if they were the most expensive jewels, and would sleep in happy anticipation the night before school opened. When she was in fifth grade, her life and happy school days were

214 • Persian Dreams shattered by an illness. She had fevers and chills almost every day. Most of that year she was home sleeping in her bed. All three doctors in town came and saw her. They did not know what was wrong. Her father tried his best to make her feel better and was grasping for anything that might cure these mysterious fevers. She would get better, go to school, and the next day she would have a fever again. Nosha carried bad memories of those times with her as one of the sore points in her childhood. She remembered the pain that ached all over her body, and how it hurt so much that it was so hard not to scream. But she did not, since there was no one to answer even her groans when her father was not home. Once she told her mother how much she was hurting all over her body, and was angrily told, "Oh stop this nonsense; I have so much pain all the times and do not complain." Nosha stopped saying a word about her chills and her body aches. If her mother was suffering from so much pain that it was worse than her fever of 104 degrees, then she had to be in hell and Nosha felt bad about complaining. After several months of having fever and staying home, the doctors recognized the cause of her illness. She had malaria. The diagnosis proved to be true and after she was treated for it, she got better and was able to go to school again. She loved her house and the orchard, but she preferred to be away from it during the day. By age eleven, she was tired of hearing all the sad stories of her mother's life. She also did not want to hear about her immanent marriage. She could see and hear her aunt Olya admit one day that Laiya started all those fights. Yes, Nosha's father was spending lots of his free time entertaining his friends, playing cards, or giving gifts to his nieces or nephews, but this was his personality. He was kind to the servants, his friends, and his children. Why could not Laiya accept his personality and live happily? Nosha could not find the answer, but she preferred to be away when her father was home alone with her mother. Their fights were intolerable for her to deal with. • And finally, the day she was dreading arrived. She finished elementary school and she knew there was a long and winding road of trouble ahead of her. The next six years of her life were so stormy. Her mother told her

Book III: Nosha • 215 that her father had prohibited her from going to school. The world became dark for her and she started to cry, the only way she knew how to express her feelings. Her goal was so high, but she felt like she could not even pass the first step. In her town there were two high schools. One was for boys where almost all the high-school-age males went (a six year program which was combination of junior high and high school). The other one was the female high school (this one was called high school while it was in fact junior high), in which only a few lucky ones, the way Nosha saw it, attended. It was so strange to Nosha that her modern father, who had forbidden them to go to the mosque and had never liked any of the superstitions ways, would impede her from achieving her dream! In reality, why should Babak, who was so upset when her brother-in-law did not let

him go pursue his higher education, want to prevent his daughter from going to (junior) high school? Nosha was shy and never asked her father why. Years later she realized that it might have been a lie. The idea probably had come from her mother, but she told her it was her father's idea knowing that she loved her father very much and would not dare question it. But her father did not say anything to change the decision. Was it because he had come to believe that women did not want to advance in their lives? Or was he so easily influenced that even his young superstitious wife could persuade him of this fallacy? He certainly had not said a word when Laiya was trying to convince him about the danger of school to Olya's personality! And with his own daughter, should he promote destroying her morals? Nosha was searching in her little head to separate the facts from fiction. There were horrible stories where her mother told them about the cruelty of her father. And now she was being told that her modern father did not want her to go to school. Nosha believed her. Years later, when Laiya was swearing that she sometimes had not had anything to eat when Nosha was young, Nosha realized that there was something disturbed about her mother. Things did not add up. She knew how much food had been cooked in their house, and she witnessed so many days that her mother filled several plates of food and sent them to some needy people in their neighborhood. If she was hungry, why did she not eat from one of those plates? Who would prevent her from going to the orchard and picking the fruit that sweetly ripened in the orchard each season? Who would prevent her from eating the

216 • Persian Dreams cookies she always baked? It was then that she started to doubt all the terrible stories her mother told her in the past and in the future. Her relationship with her mother changed dramatically. There were fierce fights between them. On one occasion, Laiya was cutting a piece of meat. Nosha was sitting by her, close to the charcoal heater, which was placed in the middle of the room, and all the children were sitting around it. Nosha said something that was not to her mother's liking. She raised her hand with the knife still in it and went to hit Nosha with it. Nosha, seeing the knife, pulled herself away and blocked it with her hand. Of course, her hand was cut and blood spread everywhere. Laiya started screaming, "Oh my God!" Did she realize this time that she was abusing her children or was she afraid of people finding out her problem? Nosha wondered to herself. Her hand was washed and Nanah went and brought a doctor. "Nosha has cut herself and we want to know what we can do?" Laiya told the doctor. Babak was on a hunting trip and when he came back, he just saw the bandage. "Did you hurt yourself again?" he asked her and Nosha simply answered, "Yes." Even as a child, Nosha constantly read all the magazines that Babak brought home. She was reading so much that Babak decided to keep the magazines at his office so she would not have a chance to read. He thought she could do better in school if she did not have so much to distract her. The magazines also were for grown-ups, not for pre-teens, he believed. But a few months after he stopped the magazine's delivery to his house he received a letter from one of the magazines that stated that Nosha had entered a contest and had won, so they were sending two years of free subscription to her. He was amazed. She was only eleven yet she had won a contest? When he got home, he asked her about the contest and she replied that the contest was about books and their writers. There were fifty books, for which she wrote their writers' names. "Which books were they?" Babak asked. "They were mostly books from around the globe, which were translated into Farsi," she answered. Babak felt deeply that she was not just any normal eleven-year-old. She was much more mature and she deserved to have what she

Book III: Nosha • 217 enjoyed. From that day on, he asked that the magazines be delivered to his house. Yet Nosha continued to cry every day. This did not remain hidden from Babak's eyes. One day he looked at her and said, "Do you know how dirty that school is?" Nosha looked at him with red eyes and asked, "Which school?" "The high school downtown; it is the worst possible place for children to be." Nosha said quietly, "But I want to study; I do not care about where the school is." "Well in that case, why not do home study?" Nosha suddenly felt a little better. A ray of hope shined down on her. The next day she got all the books she needed to do the home study. But who would teach her? Her father was busy working at his office, taking care of orchards, and taking his frequent hunting trips. Her mother barely could read! So the sadness inched into her chest again. There were a couple of female teachers at the local high school, but they did not do any tutoring. There was a poor girl who came to their house and knit sweaters for pay. She had finished the middle school and had enough time to teach, so Babak asked her to teach Nosha for a couple of hours a day. "What subject?" she asked. Nosha was good in most of the subjects, but was intimidated by English, one of the required courses which she did not know anything about. She told her that she needed help in English. So she tried to teach her what she knew, but unfortunately, she did not know how to teach. Then there was another problem. She had a cousin named Hamid, who was two years older than her. He had been giving her some English lessons before this new teacher began working

with Nosha, but one day he abruptly stopped his tutoring. When her new teacher started tutoring Nosha, he started telling Nosha that her teacher did not know much about English and she was teaching her wrong. Nosha was a smart girl; she knew the reason behind Hamid's bad-talk was jealousy. But deep inside she also knew she did not learn much from her new teacher. She wished that Hamid had not quit and she could continue to learn from him. So she told her father that this teacher was not teaching her much

218 • Persian Dreams and she could not learn from her. Her other cousin Aria, who was teaching at the local high school, volunteered to teach her. He was tall and very handsome, and was rumored to be one of her suitors. That rumor was enough for Nosha to refuse his offer. She had been hearing this rumor since she was maybe five or six. She remembered the day very well. It was spring and per tradition, on the thirteenth day of spring, she went with her entire family to picnic. A big orchard full of almond and apple trees was selected for their big picnic. They were gathered under several big maple trees, which were big enough to give them their much needed shade in the summer. It was impossible to stay under the sun for more than a few minutes during Pasargad's summer. The first thing they did in those picnics was to make a couple of swings with the strong ropes they had with them, using the strong maple branches. This way all the children would stay busy with the swings and would not bother them. Nosha got into one of the swings and started to swing. Aria, twelve years her senior, stood behind the swing and started to push her. The weather was pleasant. The orange blossoms filled the air with their perfume. Aria was pushing the swing so hard that it made Nosha feel like she was flying, which gave her a sense of euphoria. All of the sudden she heard the servants, who were standing nearby, watching them. They all started to sing the song that was well known in the wedding ceremonies, with smiles on their faces like it was Nosha's wedding. But Nosha was not smiling. She got angry. She did not want to swing anymore. So she tried to get out of the swing. If Aria had not noticed, probably she would have had a bloody face or some sort of serious injury. Aria held the swing and told her, "You should have told me to stop the swing before jumping out." Nosha did not answer him. She ran away and went where the grown-ups were sitting. From that day on, she always tried not to sit close to her older cousin, though this was the opposite of Aria's actions. He always was trying to sit as close to her as he could. And now Nosha knew that he was the one who prevented Hamid from teaching her. If Nosha were like any of her friends, she would have been pleased with the possibility of Aria's offer. He was the most handsome man in town and fun to be around. He had inherited his mother's joyous attitude. He was not only happy himself, but made everyone around him laugh with his jokes and his uplifting behavior. Maybe that was the reason Laiya liked him so much. Aria could make her laugh. Nosha was

Book III: Nosha • 219 quite frightened by the fact that her mother liked Aria, because she was scared to death of being married off at an early age. Fortunately, Babak did not like the rumors and frowned whenever he heard about Aria's desire to marry his daughter. So, with no teacher to teach her and the foreign language which frightened her so, she was back to crying again. Fortunately, the school moved to a new neighborhood, and she was sent back to school.

It was such a happy day for her when she went back to school and saw her friends, and more importantly, was able to study! But so many of her friends were missing in her classroom, and she knew they were married or were staying home waiting for a suitor. She was studying hard, which paid off, and she was announced the first in her class. Now she felt wonderful and did not see anything keeping her from her goals of a higher education. Her second year in middle school was a little bit shaky for her. There was a plan to transfer the middle school to another place, since it was currently at a rental property. When her mother heard about it, she told her that if that happened, she would not be able to go to school any longer, since the new school was going to be far away. Nosha was so frightened that she went to her principal, Mrs. Nera. This woman was the only lady in their small town with a higher education, and the reason was that she was born and raised in Tehran, but was in Pasargad because of her husband, who was the head of the education department. Her principal did not see her frightened face or her terrible feelings, though. She laughed and told another teacher sitting by her that she thought the reason her mother had told her this was that Nosha was going to get married soon. Did Mrs. Nera know something she did not know? Mrs. Nera, like so many other government officials, was a friend of her parents and visited their house often. It was not strange for her to think she was going to get married. There were three prominent men wishing to have her hand in marriage. The first was a tall handsome town doctor, who had been her father's best friend for the last few years and who spent most of his free time with Babak. The second was the city judge, who was a tall but ugly individual, and third an engineer from Shiraz. Why do all these grown-up men want my love? I am only thirteen

years old, and they all are more than thirty! she would ask herself. But was her father not twenty years her mother's senior? Hadn't her cousin gotten

220 • Persian Dreams married to a man nineteen years older than her? Look around and see if you can find a woman who is not younger than her husband, she thought. What should I do? She was wondering. Were all these rumors right? Did these men want to marry her? If so, why was her mother not pushing her? These thoughts went through her little head and she could not find any answer to any of her questions. She went home that day feeling terrible. And as the days came and went, the school moved to the new location, which was now a ten-minute walk from her house instead of the three minutes she was accustomed to. She continued to go to the new school without any objection from her father. It was strange since her mother had told her earlier, "Your father will not let you go to school if the school moves to a new location." Why did she scare her like this? That school year coincided with major changes in the socioeconomic picture of Persia. The Shah was proposing to divide the lands among those who worked the land, destroying the land system as it had existed until that day. The two houses of representatives did not approve the desired law, so he proposed the referendum. During those days, the magazines and newspapers were filled with stories about the proposed land reform. This was very popular with the intellectuals. Being a neighbor to the Soviet Union, Persia was bombarded with leftist propaganda, and most intellectuals who wanted a reform in the socioeconomic status of the mass population felt that the landlords were not helping. The fact was that neither the landlords nor clerics wanted this reform. They would lose their income and their influence. Yet the Shah was proposing to buy the lands from the landlords and sell them to the peasants who worked on the land but got only a fraction of what was produced. There was no other way to improve their lives since more often than not, the landlords prevented them from any activity in which they could become independent. The land reform was not the only question on the referendum. The referendum was based on several proposals: land reform, and the establishment of literacy, health, and advanced development armies. Young soldiers were assigned to go to the distant villages and, according to their education, work in these three new invented armies to improve life in their developing country. There were more than sixty-five thousand villagers who had no

Book III: Noshah • 221 school or any teachers. The Shah felt that young soldiers could go to these remote places during the two years of their drafting to teach the children after a few months of military and educational training. But the new armies and the land reform were not the only issues in the referendum; there were other things within it that Noshah did not understand. But what she could see was the movement in the society. Everyone went to the polls to vote and strangely enough, the women were asked to vote. The land reform and all the other reforms proposed were all too good for the intellectuals to reject them. For the poor and uneducated peasants, there was a reward of owning the land they worked for so many years, so they welcomed the reform. The other groups in the country, too, did not see any problem with the peasants owning their own land and the children getting an education, and new roads being built by their young engineers instead of going to war and being killed—they also joined the crowd. So in one day, millions of people went to the polls and voted on what later was called the White Revolution, and won, in spite of the religious establishment that outlawed the referendum by ordering the devotees to reject the proposed land reform, stating that the lands owned by the landlords were religiously prohibited from being sold against their will. After the referendum was passed, the land reform began. There was opposition from both landlords and the clerics, and Noshah read in the newspapers about a protest in Qom, "the city of religious establishment," by someone named Khomeini, in which a few people were killed. The report was not clear enough to say why they were killed. Then there was another piece of news, in which one of the engineers who went to one of the villages to divide the land was killed. The reason and the killers were named clearly this time. Locally in one of the villages, a young man who was one of the property owner's sons, killed several of his peasants with a gun, and was arrested. One thing in the White Revolution pleased Noshah, and that was the promise of a better life for women. In the referendum, the women were allowed to vote for or against the referendum. Noshah was talking to a boy her age in a family gathering and she said on the seventeenth of Dey (December) women got rid of their veil and on seventh of Bahman (February), they gained the right to vote. He said, "There is no law for women's vote yet."

222 • Persian Dreams "There will be soon," Noshah replied, and for sure, one of the White Revolution's laws was the right of women to vote. In the days that followed gradually the excitement calmed down. There was no more talk between her friends and classmates or the teachers about how much land their family had lost, and there was no new news in the papers and

magazines about the land reforms, but there were many articles about the new branches of the White Revolution. Soon the first group of young soldiers went to the villages to teach, and had the opportunity to be hired by government if they wished as elementary school teachers after their two-year draft. Ironically, most of these young men were landlords who went back to these villages to teach their peasants' children how to read and write. They still had some pieces of their land there. They also started to use the money from the sale of their lands to invest in other things, including, but not limited to, their children's higher education. Meanwhile Aria, Afshin's son, was fiercely building an orchard on a piece of land his father had given him. He also had a dream of building a big beautiful building in this orchard. One day he brought a building plan and explained to Laiya and Nosha where each room was going to be located and how many rooms were supposed to be in the building. This plan is too big for Pasargad! Nosha thought that day. But his father, Afshin, was rich, and Aria was living with his parents and could use all of his salary to build his dream house. Besides that, there was a rumor that Aria, like his father, loaned his money with high interest to people, which made him richer. This was true—with the lack of lending banks, most often the borrower could not repay the money but only the interest. One day, there was a discussion between Babak and Laiya, which was overheard by Nosha. He said, "So with all the differences between you and your brother, Aria wants to know: what should he do?" "I said there is nothing he can do; he should continue his life away from us!" Nosha could understand the conversation to some degree. Apparently, Aria was talking about his life and his dream of marrying her and was disturbed about the brothers' problems. So she was not surprised when Aria came to their house to say goodbye. He said he was transferring to Tehran so he could pursue his dream of being a physician. Did he really want to study medicine or is he saying that because my

Book III: Nosha • 223 father suggested it before becoming a teacher? Nosha asked herself. Then with a sigh of relief she thought, well, at least its one less suitor! That year Nosha experienced her first great loss in life. Her grandmother, who she adored, moved out of their house and into her uncle's house. She would go and visit her there almost every day. The steps of passing time were beginning to show on her face now. She was not as joyful as she used to be, she was suffering from high blood pressure and had recently had a stroke, which prevented her from talking clearly. For Nosha, who had admired her all her life, she remained an idol. She did not even think that she was ready to die. Before her stroke, she remembered so many times her grandma was talking about her own death, but at those times Nosha thought that those were just a reminder of what they had to do in case she died—not her actual death. But one day when she went to visit her, she found her old grandmother lying down. She looked like she was sleeping, breathing with no other movement. She was told that her grandma had had another stroke and that she was in a coma. Nosha did not mind seeing her in a coma, for at least she was breathing and Nosha held onto the hope that one day she would wake up and smile again. But two days later, a woman who Nosha detested came to her uncle's house and started chatting with the grown-ups. Her name was Razi, and she was one of her parents' cousins, but Nosha did not like her because she saw her telling her mother things that made her upset and more depressed. That day, she left in a hurry but came back ten minutes later. Nosha had to go to school so she left her grandmother. When she came back, she was startled to hear the news that her grandmother passed away. But what really surprised her was what she heard later. Apparently, Razi had come and told all the women that they could not sit and wait until Talah woke up, but that they had to ask God whether she should live or die. If she were supposed to live she would wake up; otherwise, she would die. The way that they asked God was the source of trouble for Nosha. There was a tomb in Pasargad that the locals believed was one of the Prophet Mohammad's grandsons. There were many such tombs

224 • Persian Dreams all over Persia. The bigger the town the prettier the tomb was, as well as the building over it. Most had a dome on the top that was covered with ceramic tiles. In the bigger cities, these tiles were more ornate, and in a few of them, the dome was covered with gold. Inside the domes were the tombs, which were surrounded by an iron cage with a lock on it. People would throw their money inside, hoping for their wishes to be granted, and the lock was there to prevent thieves from stealing this money. Babak always believed they were not really Prophet Mohammad's grandsons, and he told his children, "It is wrong to go to these places and ask a dead man to grant your wishes, especially since we do not know for sure who they are." He never went to the Emamzadeh in Pasargad and did not let his children visit there while they were young, unlike many others in town. So, when Razi visited, she told the women gathered around her that if they poured water on the lock in Emamzadeh and gave that water to Talah, she would be either cured or die quickly. They all agreed that was good advice and she left to get the water. Since Talah was unconscious, they poured the water in her mouth by force. When sure enough, she died, they became excited, amazed

that Razi's trick worked so fast. But when Nosha found out, she was outraged. She could not believe the degree of their stupidity! She was only thirteen years old but knew that the lock in question was touched by hundreds of people every day. And she knew that not all those hands were clean. Understanding what had happened only made her more upset, especially at her mother. "You killed her! That lock is exposed to all kinds of bacteria and microbes; even if you gave that water to a strong, healthy young man, the least damage would be his sickness!" she screamed at her mother. Laiya just looked at her young daughter and said nothing. Nosha looked back at her mother in disbelief. What was she thinking? But her mother had not been the only one that approved of Razi's proposal. All her aunts approved of it too. They were happy that God had answered their prayer so fast and that she was not suffering any longer. Nosha was glad that her grandmother was not suffering any longer as well, but the act of giving dirty water from a few-hundred years-old lock that so many people, sick or healthy, had touched, was stupid to her. She looked at her mother, feeling bad for accusing her of murdering her grandma, but Laiya was only quiet; this was her way. Some

Book III: Nosha • 225 times she was not bothered with anything you said to her, and sometimes she would complain for nothing and create a big fight; then she would scream and cry until she fainted. Nosha loved her as any child loves their mother, even though she did not get any attention or love from her. She did not remember her mother ever kissing or hugging her, and could not help but wish that she would, like she did her two young sons, Navid and Nozar. Nosha loved her two little beautiful brothers. Navid, with his lush green eyes and his golden hair, was the darling of anyone who saw him. He was so bright that most people were amazed by his comments and actions as early as age two or three. He was also so hyperactive that he could not sit still for very long at all. He used anything he saw as his toys, and his favorites were the plates, which he would use as a car steering wheel and run around the yard as if he were driving a car. And one-year-old Nozar, with his light blue eyes and golden hair and his incredibly beautiful smile. She would spend most of her free time playing with them, which pleased her mother and kept her from bothering Nosha so much. The end of junior high was near; they were taking the last of their exams. But Nosha was very disturbed. What am I going to do now? She asked herself. She had reached the highest educational level any girl could have in that city, a city that was only the size of country of Lebanon! What is this entire struggle really for? She wondered, trying to keep her heart strong. But it was difficult not to be worried about the future ahead. She was about to finish her junior high school and unless she moved out of her city she would not be able to pursue her education any longer. But there was no way of moving away. Her father was retired and tending to his orchards which was enough to cover the expenses of his five children and the elaborate parties he enjoyed so much. She knew that it would be impossible. One day a classmate named Javaher noticed her depression and asked, "Why are you so unhappy?" She said, "Well this is the end of my dream, I want to study more and I cannot." Her friend replied, "Why not?"

226 • Persian Dreams She said in a sad voice "Well there is no more school here you know, and I do not think my parents will send me anywhere else to pursue my education." Javaher replied laughing, "Wow you are lucky. What if we change our parents? They want me to become a doctor or something. Can you imagine me studying like that?!" Nosha could understand her friend. Javaher was the daughter of a landlord who was living in the villages where their farms were, but they left her in Pasargad to go to school. However, she resented going to school and studying. Her grades were the lowest in their class and was very upset that her father did not agree for her to get married. The thought crossed her mind that she did wish she was their daughter, how much easier it would be for her to become a doctor. But she was not and she needed to do something about it. So she called all her classmates together and suggested that they go to the office of education and training to see the director. "What for?" Javaher asked. "To ask him to open a high school for us," Nosha replied. "Not me," Javaher replied. "I am happy that I do not need to come to school next year!" Altogether, Nosha was able to gather seven girls who agreed to go with her. After their final exams they all went to the education department and asked to see Mr. Sahel, the director of education. As Mr. Sahel accepted them in, he looked at Nosha, asking, "What can I do for you?" He was one of Babak's friends and wondered what she was doing in his office. "We are here to ask you a big favor sir; we would like to have a high school for girls. We do not think it is fair that the boys in town have a high school and we do not." Mr. Sahel looked at Nosha with amusement and said "How many are you? Eight? I cannot open a high school for just eight students!" Nosha, feeling very disappointed said, "But sir, we can be more, not all the students came with me. There are at least twelve of us." But Mr. Sahel shook his head and said, "Bring me twenty students and I will open one for you." They all left the education department very disappointed. She well knew that there were only twelve ninth graders in her class altogether

Book III: Nosha • 227 and that many of them really did prefer the married life that was expected of them. The next three years were the hardest for Nosha. Her father agreed to hire two tutors for her two hours a week, each. There were a few educated men who started teaching them when she was in the second year of junior high which included the hard subjects of English, Math, Physics and chemistry. She asked for Math and English teacher for her first year. But studying everything else on her own was very hard. She would try spend time in their backyard orchard studying, but was constantly drawn in her teenage imagination the temptation of going back into the house to talk to people who were there, or instead sitting and reading the magazines and newspapers. It was so hard discipline herself to study. Soon she realized that Physics and Chemistry were much harder than English, so she started to visit her old junior high school so she could ask questions of Mr. Abdi, who was teaching chemistry there. The school officials were fond of her and let her come and go freely and Mr. Abdi answered any questions she had during his breaks. However, soon she realized that there is a rumor circulating that Mr. Abdi was in love with her. Frightened at the possibility of scandal, she quit going to school. But without asking question she could not understand her Physics and Chemistry problems. Then she realized that she could not even take her exams in their local high school; instead she had to travel to another city to take the final tests. Babak told her not to worry, that he would take her, and they went to Shiraz to take her final exams. It was a good time for her there since they stayed in her best friend Mahnaz's house. When she started her sophomore year, her English teacher moved from Pasargad and she decided to hire a tutor for Physics. But because of the rumors she decided not to ask Mr. Abdi but another young man named Moheb who was teaching Physics in the boy's high school. He was a tall but not so good looking man. But after only a few months of tutoring, Nosha felt that Mr. Moheb has a crush on her. She tried very hard not to be alone with him. She would desperately beg her sister or her brothers to stay in the room while he was

228 • Persian Dreams teaching. But that did not work, for they would get tired of sitting still listening to him talk of subjects that they had no interest in. Then inevitably one day when her siblings were not in the room, he suddenly asked her to marry him. She was stunned. She did not know what to say. She paused a little and then said, "Look, I am going to the right and you want me to change my path entirely and go left. I have told you that I would like to become a medical doctor and I do not want to get married at this point in my life." Mr. Moheb looked at her with disappointment and said, "OK, thanks." But from that day on he was not into teaching that much. He would refuse to go forward, instead telling her to solve the problems while he was there. This would take time and at this slow pace they hardly could finish even half of the book. Nevertheless she had no other choice, since Mr. Abdi had also moved out of Pasargad and Mr. Moheb was the only one who could teach her. When, in her senior year her math teacher moved from Pasargad, the Mayor's wife introduced her to Mohammad. He was a medical student and was coming to Pasargad to teach part time. In the two days he was in Pasargad he would come in the evenings and teach her English, but this time he told her to talk instead of reading the grammar and doing exercises. His class was fun and they talked about everything. He told her what was expected of her to be able to get into the college of her choice. She concentrated so hard to study and was determined to not only get her high school diploma but to also enter the university. Meanwhile, she was disturbed by all the proposals from different young men in the city, and one particular which her mother was pushing her to accept. But with her father's help she was able to deter them and then finally the big day arrived. The entrance tests were being administered at each university, million were taking the test and only a select few would be getting accepted. Since she did not want to risk her chance at being accepted, she registered at Tehran University, Pahlavi University and Tabriz University. Her father took the long trips to Tehran and Tabriz with her. They had so much fun together. He was always smiling, and was good person to take a trip with. The tests though were not multiple choices that year and with her bad hand writing she knew she would not get accepted. She was so disappointed after each exam. The last test was

Book III: Nosha • 229 in Shiraz, to which her whole family accompanied her. Her mother did not feel good and with the summer month vacation her father decided to rent a house for two month and stay until her exam was done and her mother got her treatment. With her disappointment in the other exams she was very anxious about taking this last one, but was not so hopeful of passing it. They arrived in Shiraz two weeks before the test and she started going to an English class. When coming home every day, she heard a warm voice calling "Fariborz: please call me at 3324." She never looked up but she strongly suspected that the

man with warm voice wanted her to call him, otherwise why should he repeat the number to the same person every day? Is he not getting tired of standing in front of our house every day giving his number? She asked herself. Finally the big day arrived and she sat on a chair to look at the papers which would make or break her faith. But to her surprise, the questions seemed so easy and she checked one after the other. Finally the day was done and she was relieved. This time she had higher hopes about being accepted, but still would not let herself hope too much. Well, she thought, I have done everything I could do. I will just have to wait and see.