

[lion:]

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the iran poems

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Cover design by Michael Zand, incorporating a photograph of an
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for Carrie

[lion:]

the iran poems

five photographs:

the hunting party	15
our house at delaraam	25
the bridge	37
in a restaurant	55
young men as soldiers	75

(the moment of youth)

in a tehran park

a small boy
in red tracksuit
stands

straight
for the first time
fixed

ready
scans the flat
the scape

sees him
in the far blink . of a
blink

boro!

and maman says
run my darling run

don't catch it cold
but have a heart
a hopeful beat

you see . he is

gripping the pen . hard
and running

run and keeps
keeps it for us

Iran. Let me begin with the photographs.

When I was a child, I found them in a large brown envelope in my father's study. The envelope had a symbol printed on the front. It was the old national symbol of Iran, the lion.

Five faded photographs. To each, I give a story. To each, there's a connection to another way of life. A way of life that, having left Iran when I was three years old, I've never been part of.

My father rarely spoke of photographs. But that doesn't matter. They trigger something in me. Like folk memories, a strange world of rituals and myths. I want them to trigger something in you.

Five faded photographs. But it would be too easy to show them, so let me tell them instead. Let me take you to a different kind of Iran. Let me take you to the Iran of the mind.

the hunting party

“The first thing you will notice is that there are no photographs. They do not actually exist. In truth, what we call photographs are deceptions. Reproductions to infinity of events that occurred only once, some time in the past. This is what separates us from them.”

(#1)

unwrap . faded sepia . coarse paper

background . dense woodland

foreground . three hunters . closely bunched

left. a man round . mid-cured . lined fur lined

right. an elder in a turban . whiskers

in the middle . skinny young javaan . outsized suit

in front . a sapling of a tree . a sapling of a tree

shoulder to shoulder . with shovels

my eyes keep moving to the tree

(tree voice)

rooted howls))

“i am older nower . barkened

outside there are these men with guns
branchless . with dogs . they bootpress and mash
our mud . the smell of moist . the breath of the
against the earth . harden . den spirit . no real
in this . the ground steams . an ear twitcheses . taken
out of nothing . not earthnothing
nothinnothinnothin

; here !

in sight in . a wolf
she found . (she deaded)

three men with dogs and guns have coldened . blood
barely shows against

beneath my hollow . dull ache strains
(time

wait for empty . wait for branchlessness
drag she . speak old prewords . hide the face
from godworld

turn . revolt . revoltion . return

ç are she not this mud . this ghel
beshoor . ghel ra
tameez . z . z .

i really was a lion . then

where were you ?

i had to pay . to

what piece can I take with me

nothing . my son

nothing comes of nothing