

Note: what you are about to read is part of Louise Baghramian's prison memoir. Louise was a young leftist activist arrested by the Islamic Republic regime in Iran in the summer of 1981 as the regime unleashed its reactionary forces and waged an outright war on all social and political organizations in its way.

This part of Louise's memoir depicts her account of meeting Pari Roshani, a supporter of The Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas, who was also arrested by the regime. Louise Baghramian spent a few days with Pari Roshani before she was executed. This writing chronicles those few days.

Reading Baghramian's memoir, one may vividly see and sense the revolutionary vigour and determination in Pari Roshani's persona which was in fact characteristic of a generation that haunted the regime and its imperialist masters; a generation that had to be wiped out in order to maintain imperialist-dependent capitalism in Iran.

Louise Baghramian passed away in Berlin, Germany on April 1st, 2013.

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Four Days And Four Nights With Pari Roshani

The First Night:

The bottom of my feet and my whole body was hurting. The thought of being tortured again and them breaking me made me cry.

— shut up, be quiet, don't put on an act!

It was the prison guard shouting. A few minutes passed, I could hear the sound of her footsteps I moved and got the blindfold off of my eyes a

little bit. It was nightfall. I looked around. As far as the eye could see there were rows of various sized blankets on the floor. I looked carefully. It seemed there were human beings under those blankets. I looked up. I was right, there were stars shining in the sky. I pulled myself back towards the wall I was near so that I could protect myself from the cold. But the wall wasn't really a wall, it was a thick piece of rag partitioning that corner from the rest of courtyard. It was cold. It was the end of September kind of cold. I had a cramp. I wrapped myself with the blanket which was something both to sit on and cover myself with. I was in agony when I hear the guard:

— who gave you permission to remove your blindfold you wretched girl?! The blindfold must be on at all time! You don't remove it until I tell you to, do you understand you wretched girl?! This will be the last time I warn you!

She was talking, and I was crying. My stomach cramps were severe. I cried so much that I had no strength left to cry anymore. Suddenly a hand held my hand and a soft voice murmured in my ear:

— you were beaten a plenty, weren't you?

— yes.

— does it hurt a lot?

— yes, a lot.

She laughed.

— why are you laughing, I asked?

— you have an accent, where are you from? You say the word "yes" like the deli guy in my hometown.

— I'm from here. I'm an Armenian.

— aha, I understand. Then you must be a leftist!

— yes I am.

— Listen dear, here everyone will ask you where you are from, what do you do, what have you done, etc, but you shouldn't say much. Tell only as much as you have during the interrogation. It isn't a question of mistrusting the other cell mates, but rather the fact that the brutes won't

give up, and one of them might break under torture. By the way, my name is Pari. Tomorrow at breakfast time, you'll find me across from you. I am a supporter of Ashraf Dehghani's guerrillas. That's how these brutes put it. I was arrested for being a supporter of Ashraf Dehghani. By the way, the girl that is sleeping near the washroom is a snitch. She is a tall girl. They say she is supporter of ... but nobody knows. She was beaten up real bad.

— where is the washroom?

— at the end of the courtyard. Tomorrow morning you'll see her. She is exactly at the back of the building. You should eat whatever they give you for breakfast and lunch so that you will have the strength to go through torture. And laugh, laugh as much as you can! I must go to my corner now. The guard might notice. By the way, you didn't tell me your name!

— Louise.

— that's a foreign name!

She laughed and then crawled. I wanted to hold her hand in mine. I was afraid of not seeing her again.

The First Day

— get up! It's prayer time! Hurry! You can remove your blindfolds for 20 minutes. Whoever needs to go to the washroom, raise their hand.

I got up quickly. For a few moments I didn't know where I was. I removed my blindfold. My eyes came upon bright and beautiful eyes. How gorgeous this girl was! I looked at her. I recognized her. It was Pari. She winked at me and quietly said: Pari Roshani.

— in a few minutes they'll bring breakfast. Try to be the last one who goes to the washroom. Only twice a day you are allowed to go to the washroom.

— why is it better to go last?

— so that we can go together. I wash my hair in there. You can be on the look out if you are there.

— by the way, why are we kept in the courtyard? I was really cold last night.

— first of all, the cells are all full. They don't want to take us to the rooms because we might exchange information. Whereas here, talking to each other is almost impossible. You can see for yourself. Everyday they arrest hundreds. The rooms across from us are full of little kids and their mothers. Around noon you'll see the kids coming out for half an hour, they'll go to the washroom.

— what a big building! Quite possibly the other side of the partitioning rag is very huge too.

— yeh, that's what they say. This place used to be a Bahai Centre. When they take us for shower you'll see. From here to the showers takes at least five minutes. I'd like to know the acreage of this place. I know that behind the showers there is the mens' ward. Inside the shower I've made a hole and I make any excuse to go there to see what's going on in their ward. Use your menstrual cycle and go there as often as you can. It is some physical activity and it is also good for your feet.

As soon as the guard reached us, Pari stopped talking. The guard was giving breakfast to those who didn't go for prayer. A tiny piece of bread and a little cheese. I took a look at the breakfast and looked at Pari. She laughed.

— eat and laugh! Imagine as if there is some sunny side up and jam beside it. It'll be tastier! Sometimes we must try to live in our imagination. If you can, keep a little bit of it, it might be needed. Some of the girls they bring

here after torture, have been hungry for days. We should always have some bread in our stash.

— Pari, how much do you have to be beaten up for your mouth to be shut?!

Pari, however, didn't give in to the guard:

— not only my mouth but all my limbs are doing just fine. Even if you cut my tongue out, I'll find a way to speak!

I wanted to gaze at her all of the 20 minutes of breakfast time. She was wearing a grey head scarf. Her long hair was showing from underneath the scarf. She had wrapped her chador around her body. When we started heading to the washroom her body got exposed from under the chador. I asked her: aren't you cold?

— no.

She understood what I'd meant. Because as soon as we got to the washroom she removed her chador and showed me her leg. I got sick to my stomach. The flesh from her leg was taken off.

— how did they torture you?! With what?

— you'll see worse!

— does it hurt a lot?

— a great deal.

I had guessed. I knew that the pain must be unbearable. Nonetheless she tried to laugh and stay happy. The whole time we were washing our faces, I was secretly looking at her.

When eating breakfast too I couldn't stop looking at her. How voraciously she was eating. Subconsciously my face turned happy.

— why are you smiling? It's tasty, what can I do! You know, I really love eating.

— Pari, how old are you?

— I'm 18.

— are you from Esfahan?

— no, I'm from Abadan.

— are you still in school?

— no, our financial situation isn't so good. I had to work. Bastards! I had just found a job at a clothing store when they arrested me.

— "shut up Pari. If you talk any more we'll send you to the rooms!", the guard shouted.

I asked myself: what do they mean by "the rooms"? What kind of place are they? Probably a lot worse than here! I told myself that I'll crawl to Pari at nightfall and ask her my questions.

It was around 10pm when a male voice from behind the rag partition caught my attention. Right after, I heard the footsteps of the guard who went behind the rag and returned a few minutes later.

— remove your blindfolds but do not move! Stay quiet!

I looked at Pari. You could see worry in her eyes. Two men from behind the curtain entered our courtyard. One of them had a piece of paper in his hand. He unfolded the paper and began reading some names. All female names. When he read the twelfth one, he said:

— get ready very quickly!

— I looked at Pari. She read my mind and softly said:

— death sentence.

The man with the piece of paper whom I saw later on during interrogation, shouted:

— auntie Pari stop chattering! You understand the consequences, don't you!? Do you wish to try it again!?

— don't call me auntie Pari! I have my own family. I am an auntie to those sweet children. Don't consider yourself part of this family!

The interrogator smirked and addressed the others:

— ladies hurry up, it's getting late!

Twelve women got up. It was dark so their faces were not clearly visible. You could hear the sound of sobbing and words like:

— I haven't done anything other than doing my job. I am a nurse. What have I done to be executed? I don't want to die. You've got to tell me what crime I've committed!

One of them in front of the row turn towards the others and said:

— quiet! Don't cry. We must keep our heads high!

I was confused. I couldn't believe it. What kind of place is this? Executing twelve women?! The sound of sobbing subsided. But I heard one of them whispering:

— I'm scared, I'm scared, hold my hand!

I wished I could get up and hold her hand. To help her. To do something. But my legs were trembling. My jaws were locked. I remembered my childhood. I was eight. Once on the way to school, I saw a man standing and urinating out there a few meters away from me. I got scared. A fear that took over me in an instant. My legs started trembling. No matter how hard I tried to move, I couldn't. I was frozen. I wanted to scream but I couldn't. My jaws were locked. I just fainted and collapsed right there. Until the man finished urinating and left, I couldn't move. And right now, it was the same thing and more. I felt a bitter taste in my mouth. Was Pari's mouth bitter? Was she also getting nauseous? What a heavy silence! So they took them. How easy, how simply they murder people. It was nightfall. I turned my head towards Pari. Her eyes met mine. She was

crying. Tears were running down her face. But she was holding her chador in a way so that the guard wouldn't see her tears. Her face was full of sorrow, just as full as when she was joyful.

Time was passing very slowly; in silence, at a standstill. The sound of children crying in the rooms at the back too had stopped. No one was moving around, not even to go to the washroom. The blindfolds had all been removed and everybody had crept under the blankets. I had to stay awake. I wished I could go to Pari right then. Her eyes were gazing at a point, as if she had aged a few years. I wished she would look in my direction. I wished she would talk to me. I wished she would answer my unanswered questions. It was, however, pointless. She wasn't paying any attention to me. I lay down thinking to myself: I must wait for an opportunity so that I can crawl towards Pari.

I don't know how long it took until the guard got up and went a few meters away from me. Often around midnight she would take her chair to the middle of the courtyard in order to be able to monitor us better. She hadn't positioned herself yet when I got to Pari. I lay down beside her and held her hand. It was ice cold.

— Pari, is it really true that they took those twelve women for execution? What crime had they committed?

— their crime? Nothing. Their crime was that they worked at a Christian hospital. They were all nurses of the Christian hospital, the one behind Chahar-Bagh on previously known as Shahbaz St. During the June 20th clashes. Many of the wounded were taken there. And those nurses attended them without asking who they were or what they had done. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards found out so they raided the hospital and arrested many of the nurses and the personnel charging them with collaborating with anti-revolutionaries.

— were they affiliated with any political organization?

— no, didn't you see? None of them were political. The one who told the others not to cry was the youngest of all. I talked to her in the washroom. She said, "I was just doing my job. I would do the same if it happened again."

— Pari, what's going on? What will happen?

— Louise, you just got here and are beginning to understand the magnitude of this tragedy. Since I've gotten here, they have executed at least 200 women. If they've killed 200 people at this location only, god knows how many more innocent people they've killed in the whole city of Isfahan or in the whole country. Right and left, they take people away. I've memorized the names of all those killed here. Probably you want to say who knows if I myself will survive! I've thought of that too. I've written all of the names on the top niche in the washroom. Remember that! I've written the names in small letters, very small so the guards won't notice.

Eventually there will come a day to read those names and speak of those who gave up their lives for the freedom and dignity of their country.

— how can you remember all those names?

— how can one forget their eyes? You know Louise, I have to teach you Morse Code. This way, whenever you can't speak you'll know the names of the other inmates. This is very important. You know, they deny everything, so they will deny the massacre of all dissidents too. And then people too will forget. Because forgetting is lot easier.

— But Pari, I'm Armenian. My mother tongue isn't Farsi. It is very difficult for me to remember all those names. Besides, my organization always taught me not to remember the names and addresses of my comrades. I tried very hard not to remember anything. Now you tell me that I should remember.

— don't be so hard on yourself. Just know that whatever is important to you will stick in your mind.

— Pari! What is the story about the Room?

— behind this curtain there is a small room which is separate from the building. I don't know the reason why they made it. But whatever the reason was, it is now known as the execution room. Whoever is taken there their execution is certain. Most of those who resist under torture and whom the interrogators know they cannot make them talk through physical punishment, they take there so that they might break under emotional pressure. Well, and they have managed breaking a few also. You know, sometimes tolerating emotional torture is lot harder than physical torture. That room is the execution room where you wait for them to come and take you for execution. Everytime someone walks towards that room, your heart drops. At first it isn't so hard but after a while you experience severe anxiety and panic. The only way to deal with that is to not play the game and just think that you are in solitary not in death's waiting room. Otherwise, you'll fall apart from fear and distress, and then you'll surrender to them. It was in this that I survived that room. But I still don't know why I wasn't executed!

— by the way, why did your interrogator call you auntie Pari?

— It's funny isn't it? The day they raided my home, my niece was there. When they wanted to take me away she started to cry. Nonstop she was saying don't take my auntie Pari. My auntie Pari hasn't done anything. And the agent who had realized how attached that poor kid was to me took advantage and said to her: if you love auntie Pari and don't want us to take her then tell us where the guns are. But she knew what was going on so she kept saying my auntie Pari doesn't have anything, don't take my auntie Pari. Since then, the interrogator calles me auntie Pari.

— Pari, I'll go back to my spot, we cannot take chances, I don't want them to take you to the Room.

— ah, what are talking about! If I don't speak and laugh it would be like issuing my own death. Even if they take me to that room, I'll do whatever I do here. You know Louise, I'd like to stay alive only as long as I'm in control of myself, as long as I can decide for myself, that is, to speak

whenever I want to, to cry whenever I want to. Life won't be worth living if others decide for me... .

— Pari, but they'll kill you!

— you know, it's been a few years since I've decided to stand up against injustice. To live a few years on your own accord is a thousand times better than living in submission. Don't worry about me. I'm careful. As long as I can, I'll enjoy every moment of life.

— Pari, don't speak like that, I'm going to cry. I don't want them to harm you. You have no idea how beautifully you laugh.

— you yourself answered me. If they could do something to make me not laugh, then no laughter would remain to be beautiful.

What could I say! I had nothing to say. I turned silent for a moment. Oh how I wanted to smother her with kisses and hold her till dawn.

— Pari, what do you wish for?

— what do I wish for? I wish I could go to university. My marks weren't bad, but because our financial circumstances would'nt allow it, I had to work.

— what is your father's job?

— don't mention him. I don't like him. He left my mother and married someone else. Louise, I'd love to stay up all night and count the stars. For every person they take away from us, I add one to the stars. I speak to them. I speak to the stars about the stories that go down here. Let's find twelve stars together tonight. Until now, I've named 200 stars after them. But do you know what I'm afraid of? I'm afraid that no star will be left without a name.

— Pari, I'm going back to my spot. I cannot look at the sky. I'm afraid I'm going to burst into tears and the guard will hear me. I don't want them to change my spot.

In a blink I was back at my spot. I was suffocating. My mouth was bitter. I wanted to vomit. Pari was looking at the sky. I remembered her advice: "you must eat well, sleep well, laugh plenty...".

The Third Day, The Third Night

As soon as I opened my eyes, I saw Pari. When she saw me she turned to the female guard and said: Hey matron! Did you look at the sky last night? Did you see those big stars? There were twelve.

The guard suddenly looked up at the sky. Then Pari burst into laughter, a loud one. And then she said: you can't see anything? Rest assured, if you could see the stars and enjoy their beauty then you wouldn't be a prison guard.

The guard who realized she was trapped, angrily shouted: put on your blindfold and shut up!

I looked into her eyes. It seemed she had stayed up all night. But she seemed composed. She calmly answered the guard: I can see even with the blindfold. You should worry about yourself.

I'm not sure whether the guard heard her or not since she was heading towards the end of the courtyard to monitor the activities of those at the washroom. But when her voice came from afar, Pari raised her voice:

*The buds are dancing in the Spring breeze flow
The entire plain has been carpeted in a green glow
Hey you buds, your laughter raises an airglow...*

Louise, you must know this song. Viguen, your fellow Armenian singer, sang that song. The words are beautiful. He sang it really well. Memorize it and sing it every now and then. It is very charming.

— I said shut up Pari! I'm fed up with you!

It was the guard who had lost it. I was filled with fear. But Pari was not letting go: You see! Probably they resent buds too. They are the enemies of everything that signifies life and vitality. My dear, don't be upset. I'll die if I don't laugh. Don't worry about me.

She was facing me and talking to me. But why? Perhaps I looked pale and Pari had thought that I was fearful hearing the guard shouting. I looked at her. I wished I could tell her that I had passed the point of worrying and I was fearful. Fear, fear, fear of not being able to see that sweet face and hear that beautiful voice. I was hungry. For the first time, I was hungry.

— Pari, I'm hungry!

— atta girl! Now you are a good girl. I have a piece of bread, here take this til they bring breakfast. They are late today. You got it.

I wished I could hug and kiss her. I wished I could attend to her wounded feet. I got enlivened by the thought of hugging her. And because I didn't know whether I would laugh or cry at that moment, I started laughing to myself.

— your laughter isn't any less beautiful either Louise you know! What were you thinking about?

— nothing.

— then let's laugh together at nothing.

And we laughed, utterly laughed until they brought breakfast and the children came.

The children could come out at breakfast and lunch time and play freely in the courtyard. Most of them would go directly to Pari and ask her to sing to them or tell them stories, and Pari who knew by heart most cartoons had something for each and every child. Pink Panther for this one, the Little Bug for that one. The children would be submerged in that so much that they would forget about the wounds on Pari's feet and sit on them. And Pari wouldn't say anything despite the fact that her face would be filled with pain. That day, as soon as Maysam sat on Pari's lap and pain appeared on her face, I took it upon myself and started complaining: no children, auntie Pari's feet...

But the sharp look in Pari's eyes made me swallow my words. How joyful she'd become from playing with them. And what was strange was that unlike other days, the guard didn't bother Pari and the children either. Pari too was surprised.

— Louise, it seems something is going on because the guards aren't bothering us. I didn't even put my blindfold on but the guard didn't pay much attention and said nothing. I don't know what's going on. You know Louise, one of these days they'll take me away...

I shivered inside and abruptly jumped at her words.

— what are you talking about Pari! Why don't you think instead that they are fed up with you and tired of constantly warning you but getting nowhere!

— no Louise, I know what I'm talking about. My heart tells me that something is going on. I know them very well. Everything they do is well calculated. They do nothing without seeing it through. It's not without a reason that today they are so generous. They have something up their sleeve. We must take advantage of every opportunity we have to speak to each other. Take care of yourself. Try to stay healthy. Eat well. You cannot get weak. And don't forget to laugh. Work on your memory. Try to remember everything. Carve the names of our people in the washroom, in

the showers, on the trees, on the ground. Relay the news to others. If you get a visit, don't waste your time, tell them the stories of this place.

— Pari, please stop. I can't breathe!

I was really having a hard time breathing. I was dizzy. I wasn't feeling well, I was hot. I was burning. I lay down and closed my eyes. When I opened my eyes, it was night time. I reached with hand. Pari noticed my hand. We were a meter apart from each other. She instantly snuck beside me. She hugged me.

— Louise I'd like to tell you about the Pink Panther.

— why the Pink Panther?

— I don't know. I only know that every time I missed someone or I was sad, I watched cartoons, and every time I watched the Pink Panther it cheered me up.

You know, I can't get the face of that young nurse out of my mind, I told you I saw her in the showers a few days ago. You haven't gone to the showers yet. They take us in a group, a group of ten. And they give everyone not more than 15 minutes. But I can't really wash myself because of the pain. But I let them think that I can so that I have an excuse to move around and get to know others. I saw her in the shower. She was crying. She told me she missed her mom. Do you know what I told her and how I consoled her? I told her that I too missed my mother.

I held her and told myself: from the next day on, I'll be more cautious. I had to talk to her less. If I don't look her direction then she won't talk, or talk less. But the thought of not speaking to her and not laugh with her made me choke. I lost it and burst into tears. She hugged and kissed me and said in a gentle voice: you know Louise, I really like Armenian sandwiches. When we lived in Abadan, I had a lot of them. Every time you eat one, think of me! My mother would say 'one day, they'll forbid going to Armenian stores.

She went silent and then returned to her spot.

The Fourth Day

— move it! Hurry up! Auntie Pari what's the matter with you today?! Why don't you get up?!

It was the guard shouting. And she had every reason to be surprised. Pari was an early bird. She would get up before everyone else. Perhaps because of her night watching habit she was getting up late today. I was thinking about that when a voice was heard from behind the curtain and the guard left. I looked at Pari's eyes. She was smiling like always. The guard returned.

— Pari get ready, they are asking for you out there!

I looked at her. She worryingly winked at me. She calmly went out. What did they want from her? Especially this early. Before I got to ponder more, Pari came back.

— I have a hearing today. At eleven o'clock. I want to freshen up so that I look good. I have to hurry I don't have much time. Hey guard! I need a pair of scissors. Bring the scissors, I want to make myself pretty. Guys, I have a hearing.

Pari was talking out loud. The guard went out and quickly came back with the scissors.

— Atta girl! You get an A+. Now give me your chair also, we'll need it.

The guard took the chair and gave it to Pari. But I didn't move, I stayed where I was.

— Louise come! I want you to give me a haircut!

— I don't know how to cut hair. It's a shame to cut such beautiful hair short! Besides, I'm not allowed to move from my spot.

— I give you permission. Hey matron! She has permission to cut my hair, right!?

The guard nodded yes. I went closer and quietly told Pari: what are you doing Pari? Please don't be so extreme, at least for my sake. In the end, I'll die from sadness. Whatever they say, don't answer them. Be a bit logical.

— Louise, don't speak this way! Comb my hair. When someone brushes my hair I find it very calming. By the way, ladies, mothers, do any of you have some face cream? I want to look pretty. What a shame that I don't have fancy gown. Who goes to a trial like this! Louise, make me look pretty. Hey guard! Do you have a hand mirror? Just for a few minutes. I'll give it back.

The guard took out a small mirror from her purse and gave it to Pari. And Pari thanked her fleetingly.

— it would be great if you could tweeze my eyebrows. There is a wedding you know!

My hands were shaking. I was angry. Angrily and in an unhappy tone I said to Pari: don't do these things! Look at everyone. They are all worried about you. You are driving everybody crazy!

— very well. If you want, you can sit and I'll comb your hair.

— no there is no need. You sit, I'll comb yours.

And I was busy combing her hair when from behind the curtain we heard the interrogator's voice ring: is Pari Roshani ready?

She looked at me. I trembled.

— do I look pretty?

I looked at her. My mouth was dry. I nodded yes. She held my hand with both hands. I felt the warmth of her hands. Her eye laughing as always.

— think of the buds. I'll be back soon. Sooner than you think!

And then she followed the guard.

My legs started to shake. My vision went blurry. I was about to vomit.

— guard, washroom...

— shut up you idiot! No time for that! Sit down...!

I threw up and without the guard's permission I ran towards the washroom. The guard who could see the dire situation ran to the washroom and opened the door before I got there. I went in. Washed my face. Then burst into tears. Now crying had overtaken me. I couldn't breathe. I raised my head up so that I could take a deep breath. My eyes caught the roof of the washroom. I looked carefully. There were the names of our friends: Mahin, Tahereh, Azam, Mansooreh Omoomi, Taherh Samadi, Akram and her husband and so on... .

— hurry up you filthy animal! What a show she is putting up!

I came out and very slowly started to walk. When I got to my spot, I was so exhausted that I wanted to go to sleep. I was scared. A sentence which I

think I had read in the novel "Those Who Live"¹ passed through my mind: "Everyone can fear but one must try to overcome it." I had to try, but how?

Pari wasn't beside me anymore. I wanted to tear the blanket apart. But very quickly I got a hold of myself and said to myself: stay calm, Pari will be back, she wouldn't leave without a goodbye, never.

The thought of them having taken Pari for good was driving me crazy. The thought of not being able to see her laughter was making me mad. I was going through these thoughts when I heard Pari's footsteps and shortly after, her beautiful voice.

— take it easy! You'll grow up and forget all about it.

Subconsciously I had removed my blindfold. I wasn't afraid anymore, my mouth wasn't bitter either. My legs were no longer numb. I looked at her. She looked back at me. She laughed, so did I. In front of the guard she didn't show that much reaction.

— Louise, tonight they'll take me. Right this evening.

And then addressing the others, she repeated: hey friends, they'll take me tonight, right this evening. I'd like to take a good look at your faces; in the light.

And then she got up and gazed at everyone's faces. Then she went to the washroom and when upon returning, she sat beside me. I was confused as to why the guard didn't react to that. My distress increased. I said to myself: this is it, it's over! I had a lump in my throat. She hugged me and whispered in my ear: listen! I don't want you to cry. I'm with you! Do you hear me?!

¹ Ceux qui Vivent, Jean Lafitte.

And she rocked me. I was woozy. While kissing me and concerned, she whispered in my ear: my Armenian friend! What's the matter with you? Look, we don't have much time left. We must talk as much as we can. Laugh, laugh! Do you want me to sing you a song? I know a lot of Viguen's songs by heart.

— Pari, I want to cry.

— cry, cry as much as you wish, but under the blanket. They shouldn't see your tears. You can cry in the washroom and in the shower, but not here.

— tell me about the trial.

She chuckled and said: well, what can I say? A few people took me to a place a few hundred meters away from here. I think it is in the same complex. I had the blindfold on. Suddenly, someone said in a loud voice:
— here is the court.

He hadn't finished his words when I removed my blindfold and said to him:
— if this is a court then where are its personnel?

The mullah who was sitting in front of me began speaking:
— we'll make it short, just answer one question. "If right now you had a gun what would you do with it?"

And I said: "we don't have ifs."

He said: "don't divert, answer me! What would you do if you had a gun right now?"

I couldn't stop myself from laughing. I said: "this is a stupid question. Obviously I would finish you off, and the rest is my business."

You see, they had taken me there just to ask me this question. They first write your death sentence and then they start with this nonsense. They wanted me to give in at this last point so they could humiliate me.

— who were you saying to “take it easy, you’ll grow up and forget all about it”?

— to the one who was taking me there this morning. She said to me: “you don’t have the right to speak like that.”

— well, maybe if you had talked differently, things would have gone in another direction.

— let’s enjoy the last few hours left of my life. You know Louise, if I had said something other than what I said to them, then I wouldn’t have been myself, I would have negated myself. And if I had negated myself, it would have been their triumph. Of course, I don’t expect others to do the same. Everyone has to play their own part. But for me, negating myself meant my demise. Just as not laughing means death. You know, if all of us were supposed to give in, then it would be the end of humanity. If they can kill the laughter in us, then it is as if they have killed us all. When laughing is dead, everything is dead. The world will turn dark. The only beautiful thing I possess in this world is laughter. I won’t let anyone take that away from me.

I wanted to say: Pari, you are very beautiful, and so are your words. But nervousness prevented me. My mouth was once again bitter. I grabbed her hand. The look in her face changed.

— why are you giving me a hard time? Let me leave you without worrying about you. Let us say our goodbyes with laughter.

Oh, how I wanted to tell her with a smile: I can’t bear being without you. Without you, I’ll be terrified. Your laughter means the world to me. But the only words I could say were: Pari, I’m afraid.

— of what? Of them executing me? Just know that if I had done anything other than what I have, then you wouldn’t have loved me this much. Do you think I’m not scared? You’re mistaken. I am afraid too. Everybody can get scared. Do you know what I’m afraid of? Of them succeeding in instilling fear into us. They are fearful of our laughter. We must not forget

to laugh. We must learn to overcome our fear. Always, think of the buds and of laughing. Louise, when you are released, do not forget to tell everyone what was going on in here. Don't let these realities be forgotten. You know, a lot of people choose to forget so that they can go on living. But life is not worth it at that price. Try not to forget! Tell all our comrades, tell all the good people that Pari loved them. I love life so much, and that's why I'm willing to die in defence of life. Remember all the moments you spend in here.

— who knows if I'll be released?

— first of all, my heart tells me that. And my heart never lies to me. Secondly, you are an Armenian. And thirdly, they don't have anything against you. Don't let your guard down by speaking everywhere. You know, some of us must live on to tell the world about this tragedy. Because of the enormity of this tragedy, many may not believe it. But I'd like you to break it to those who don't want to listen.

It was getting dark. They brought dinner. I had no appetite. I told Pari. She said: you are starting again!? I'm really hungry. Come, let's eat together otherwise I'll eat yours too.

— Pari, if I survive and get to see your family, what should I tell them?

— tell them that I loved them. Tell them that my only crime was to laugh. Tell my niece that auntie Pari kept her promise and didn't let anyone force her into submission. Tell her that I missed the days we would watch cartoons together.

— lift your blindfolds! Sit right where you are! Keep it quiet!

The interrogator and someone else entered from behind the curtain. The interrogator said to Pari: Pari Roshani hurry up! Take your belongings. It is getting late.

— I've got nothing other than a few pieces of clothing. And I want to give them to my friends here.

She gave her grey handkerchief to me and the rest to others.

Please forgive me I have nothing better than this to give you.

I took the handkerchief. I hugged her. She hugged me back tightly. And then whispered in my ear: don't cry ok? I'm begging you! When everybody is asleep do what you want but not now! I'll miss you. Don't forget to laugh ok?! Stay healthy. And if you get sick, make a lot of noise so that they'll give you medicine!

And then she turned to the others and said: goodbye everyone. I love you all. Kiss the kids for me, especially Maysam!

At this point, the guard came towards her to put the blindfold on her eyes when she firmly said: I won't let any of you come near me. I want to die with open eyes, do you get it!?

Neither the interrogator nor the guard said a word. As if they had been scared off by Pari's commanding voice. They didn't come closer either. Pari started walking and her beautiful voice filled the courtyard:

*Arise ye workers from your slumbers
Arise ye prisoners of want...
And at last ends the age of cant.
Away with all your superstitions...*

They took her alone, only her. The whole time that I was there, I never saw them take anyone else alone except Pari. You could still hear her voice. I was wishing that they would bring her back. Then came the sound of a car starting. Pari's voice got weaker and weaker, and then dissipated away. They took her. I looked up at the sky until daybreak. I was searching for a

star to name Pari. I remembered that she had told me: Louise, the star that's right near the moon is very beautiful, especially when there is a crescent moon and the sky is clear. This star with the moon beside it, is really pretty.

Finally I found that star and named it Pari. Meanwhile the guard was replaced by another. And right away she asked: where is Pari?

— They took her.

I don't know why but she also looked at the sky. Before and after she sat down. But I was curled up under my blanket and distressed. I was missing Pari.

I heard a sound, the sound of sobbing.

— you were beaten a plenty, weren't you?

— yes.

— does it hurt a lot?

— yes, a lot.

— what is your name?

— Fariba.

— I'm Louise. Don't say much. Just repeat whatever you've told them already during interrogation. It's not about distrusting the others though. Eat well and laugh a lot. Tomorrow, you'll see me across from you. Are you hungry?

...

The End