



My Life as a Traitor: An Iranian Memoir

Zarah Ghahramani, Robert Hillman

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At the age of twenty, an Iranian student named Zarah Ghahramani was swept off the streets of Tehran and taken to the notorious Evin prison, where criminals and political dissidents were held side by side in conditions of legendary brutality. Her crime, she asserts, was in wanting to slide back her headscarf to feel the sun on a few inches of her hair.

That modest desire led her to a political activism fueled by the fearless idealism of the young. Her parents begged her to be prudent, but even they could not have imagined the horrors she faced in prison. She underwent psychological and physical torture, hanging on to sanity by scratching messages to fellow prisoners on the latrine door. She fought despair by recalling her idyllic childhood in a sprawling and affectionate family that prized tolerance and freedom of thought. After a show trial, Ghahramani was driven deep into the desert outside Tehran, uncertain if she was to be executed or freed. There she was abandoned to begin the long walk back to reclaim herself. In prose of astonishing dignity and force, Ghahramani recounts the ways in which power seduces and deforms.

A richly textured memoir that celebrates a triumph of the individual over the state, *My Life as a Traitor* is an affecting addition to the literature of struggle and dissent.

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