

Brief Chapter Outline of: **Tales From the Zirzameen**

Introduction **For Love of Persia**

This chapter explains how I came to love Persian culture and live in Iran and also explores some of the humorous effects of the differences between Persian and American culture from my personal experiences in Iran.

Chapter 1.) **A Mid Summer Night Dream Amid The Jasmine**

This chapter describes the absolute enchantment of the Iran I experienced on my first stay there at age 16 during the summer of 1966 and the charms of my Iranian host family.

Chapter 2.) **Berim Shomal Ba Radio Darya** (Let's head North with Sea Radio)

This chapter also covers the summer of 1966 when we went to the Caspian seaside resort town of what was then Bandar-e-Pahlavi. I also delve into the uglier side of Persian culture and some of its prejudice towards women and my continued experience of that when I lived there later in the '70's.

Chapter 3.) **The Misadventures of Kai Kavous: At the Chehel Setoon of Esfahan**

This chapter is the first of two, which describe the hilarious events of a filmmaking episode. It was a docu-drama based on the real diary of a nephew of the pope during Safavid Iran, who came to gain an audience with Shah Abbas to solicit his alliance against the Ottoman Turks. I played the role of an historic figure Sir Robert Shirley who modernized the Shah's army and married his daughter. The chapter delves into the pranks of the film director's nephew, the foibles of some of the actors and amusing incidents which took place when I was a stunt double for the lead actor. I also worked with several actors and actresses who went on to gain celebrity including Shohreh Agdashlou who was nominated for Oscar two years ago for her supporting role in Steven Spielberg's: "House of Sand and Fog."

Chapter 4.) **A Good Sport: Chehel Setoon of Qazvin with Daijan Napolon**

This chapter is a continuation of the hilarious events of the Iranian film making, the rivalries and jealousies of the crew, a vodka drinking contest I was subjected to in which I was pitted against the cameraman and then stories about the Iranian drug culture and opium in general that I experienced in Iran of the 70's.

Chapter 5.) **The Seven Sisters**

Here I go into the ostentatious displays of generosity, which are so much a part of Persian culture and character. The chapter focuses on a large garden party at a general's country estate who had seven gorgeous daughters. It also talks about unusual platonic

relationships I had with several beautiful Persian women and the extraordinary lengths that Persians will go to for their friends.

Chapter 6.) **The Man Who Would Be King**

This is the story of a friendship I developed with the Qajar pretender to the throne from the former dynasty, which was usurped by the Pahlavis. He was an avid butterfly collector, a wealthy financier and beloved by many ordinary Iranians. There was a mystique and a noblesse oblige about him and his family and at one point I even became engaged to marry his niece. It was interesting to see the love, which existed between this family and their old servants and retainers of multi generations of service.

Chapter 7.) **My Friend Touss: The Grand Master of Sobriquets**

This chapter is about childhood friendship in general and specifically about my first Persian friend whom I met in boarding school in Rome, Italy in 1961 at age 11. My love for Persian culture began with him and it is a funny recounting of the nicknames we used to make up for all our high school friends and acquaintances and the arrogance of youth.

Chapter 8.) **The Incredible Doctor G**

This chapter is also comical in a dark humor kind of way though it deals with the corruption and influence peddling side of Iranian culture and character as epitomized by the Coroner General of Tehran and my dealings with him in arranging for the remains of the American deceased from Bell Helicopter to be sent back to the USA. It also deals with some of the unsavory aspects and behaviors of the Americans living in Iran and their treatment of Iranians.

Chapter 9.) **The Gathering Clouds: The Summer of 1978**

This chapter deals with the first tell tale signs of the coming revolution.

Chapter 10.) **The End of Camelot**

This chapter describes my direct experience of the revolution; the massive protests marches and roof top chanting, the Black Friday Massacre I overheard, and the fighting; a secret viewing I had of the Shah and King Juan Carlos of Spain; the massive general strikes and martial law and curfew and what it was like living through it; some political analysis and foreshadowing of the events of the next chapter which is the climax of this book.

Chapter 11.) **Two Days In Tehran In 1979**

This chapter describes my first hand impressions of what Tehran was like the day the Shah left and then what it was like in Tehran the day Khomeini arrived.

Chapter 12.) **In Free Fall**

In this chapter I am taken hostage and it describes the incredible bravery exhibited by some outstanding individuals of both Iranian and American nationality and how we helped each other. It also describes the solidarity, enthusiasm and hope the revolution brought to the Iranian people and then the resulting chaos with the break down of civil authority and the eventual disillusionment when the world community ignored the revolution and the priests usurped it and the story ends on the eve of the “Silent War” with Iraq and my harrowing last four days escaping from Iran four months after the revolution at a time when there were only about 500 foreigners left in the whole country. A revolution is something that not many individuals have or ever will experience and I try to describe what it is like during the period that anarchy reigns.

In the end it is hard not to sympathize with the xenophobic down trodden Iranian people who have never enjoyed real democracy due to the real politiques of their oil rich region and whose intelligentsia, for the most part have become another Diaspora.