

Dolls & Demons tells the story of one day in my life before I began the first grade. I was a creative and imaginative boy who liked to play with dolls or make dolls that looked beautiful to me and ugly to everyone else. They called my dolls Divs (demon-like creatures). I was considered weird since I preferred to play with my monsters than being around people. My mother and one of my cousins were exceptions.

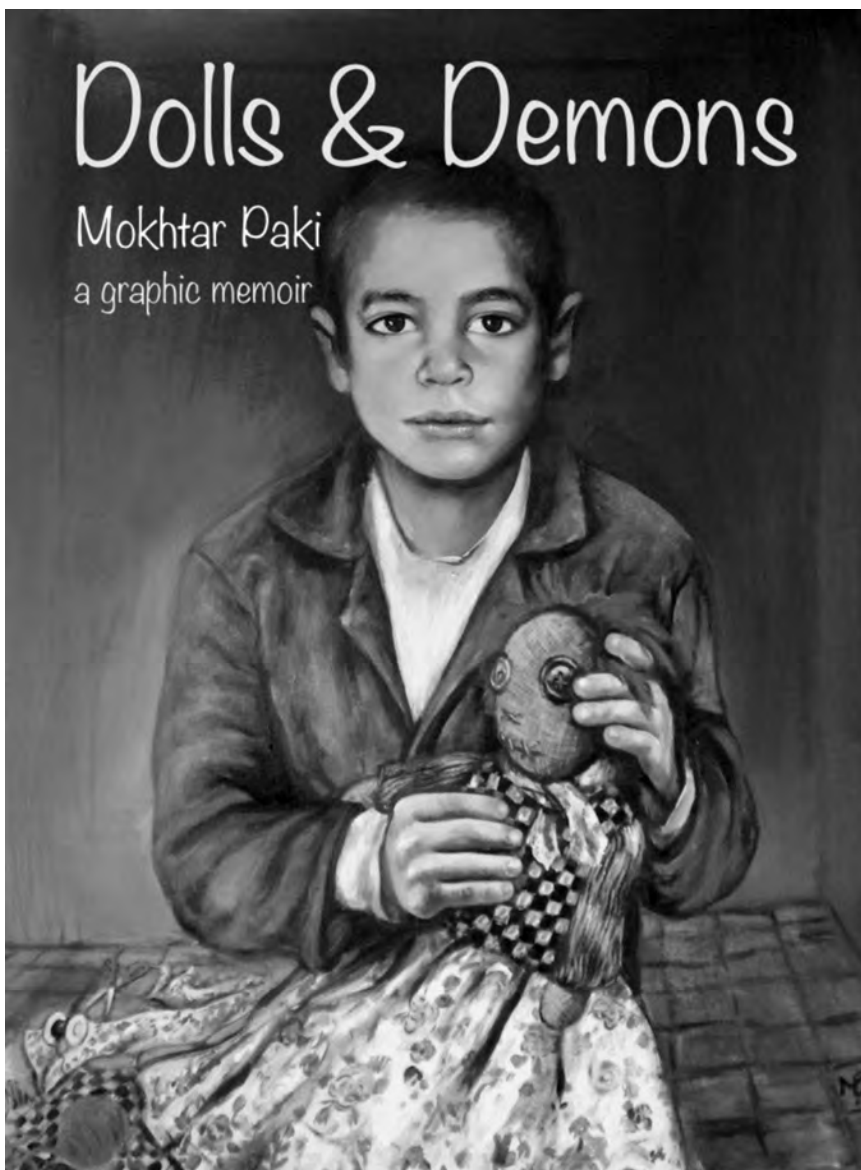
That day my mother secretly took our beloved small rug, a significant old antic with the image of a div, to the bazaar and sold it. Later that day I let my sister Narges find out what my mother did. I immediately regretted what I did, since Narges made a huge scene and my embarrassed mother walked away

—Mokhtar Paki

Dolls & Demons

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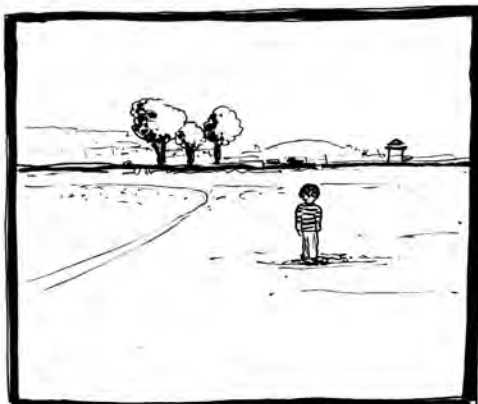
a graphic memoir



I was angry as Narges was and sad as my mother.



I returned to the field. My mother was gone. I saw Farhad my nephew there.





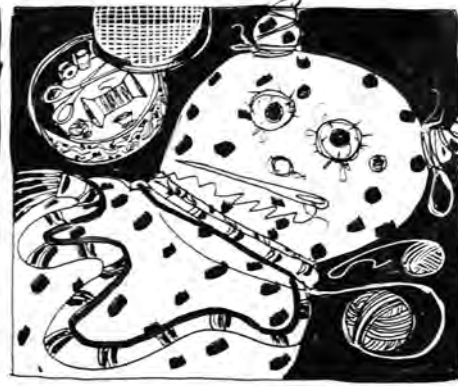
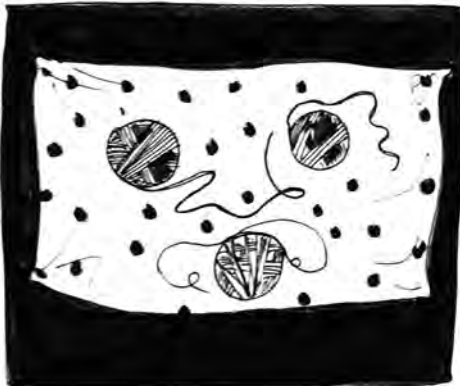
I returned home. There was a quarrel between the tenants, and the courtyard was crowded and noisy. Nobody noticed me. I entered our room.



Nobody was in our room. I took my pillow and walked into the closet at the corner of the room. We kept our bedding and clothes and some other stuff in the closet. I could easily hide myself in the dark amongst the stuff.



I soon began to work. What I needed was a needle
and some thread, yarn and my pillow.



I just brought Deevak to life in the closet. I tried to make him look like the image of the div on our old rug. To create Divak, I used my pillow with my mother's favorite fabrics. I also used the wool yarn that Mr. Samad gave me.



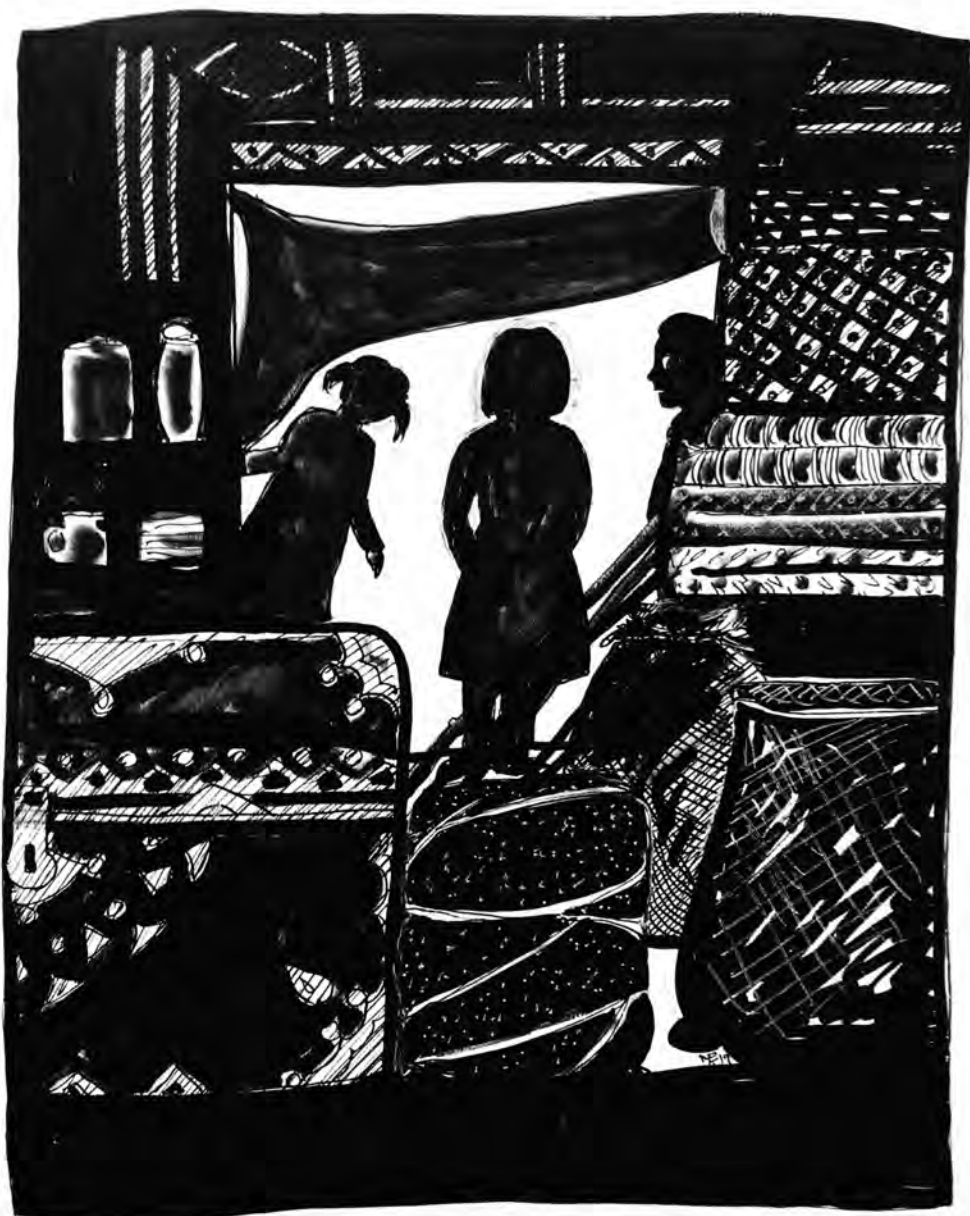
It was 2pm. I didn't have lunch with my siblings.
I didn't feel hungry. I was just sad.



Nobody could find us in the closet, not even if they came inside.



Finally I heard my name. Narge was the first person who appeared at the closet entrance. As usual, Kobra and Maryam my nieces followed her.



Narges was twice my age. She took care of cleaning and cooking when my mother was out. She thought she was the boss. Not for me.



"I know you are here. I know you are sad because of mom. She will be back."



"OK, be like that. No lunch for you then!"



They left.



I knew they would be back. So, I decided to relax and wait.



"Kbra and Maryam came back.



"We know you are here."



"We will find you".



"What is that?"

"Who is that?"



The lamp was turned off



"Nosy girls!"



Gone!



Thank you Hedy Lamarr!



*The cutout face picture of
Hedy Lamarr on a magazine
cover nailed to a wood stick
dressed with my mother's
chador. A beautiful tall woman.
I wonder how could anybody be
afraid of Hedy Lamarr?.*

I rode Deevak, flying above the town looking for my mother. The city was so huge and the people were so small and so many.



"Let's go outside and play."



I was happy to see Farhad.



I finally walked out of
my hiding place.



"Why do you always
hide in this closet?"

"Everything we
have is here."



"But my mother sells them one by one."



"Today, she sold our old rug."



The house was still crowded and loud. We decided to get out and play outside.



"I miss my mother."

"Don't you want to play?"



"Let's go and find her."



We walked towards the downtown.



On the way, I stopped at Samad's workshop.

"Did you see my mom?"



"Go to the Shrine of Saint Shahcheragh."



"You talked with Samad Ghatmeh?"



"Why were you hiding?"

"My mom says we should avoid Samad..."



"... because he is scandalous."



"He is weird, but my mother calls him Mr. Samad."

"Everybody calls him bad name."



"He said my mom must be here in the shrine."



But she was happy to see us.



"I'm sure they are worried sick at home about you guys."



"Let's go home, guys."



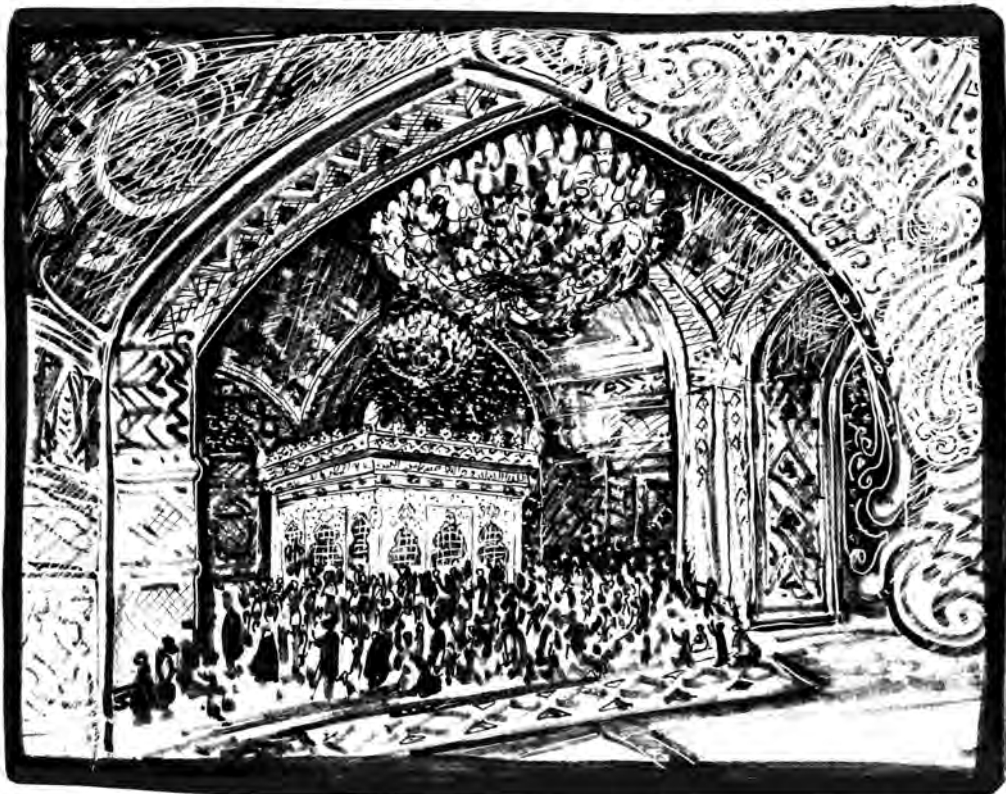
"But first things first. Let's all have Faloodeh ice cream."



It was dark when we got to our neighborhood.



Shahcheragh was filled with rosewater scent and sobbing sounds.



I saw my mother sitting by the silver tomb.



She looked tired and sad.



Narges was at the front door, waiting for us. She hugged my mother and cried.



Like every summer night, all the families were having dinner in the courtyard.



Narges had made lentuos polo, the most delicious rice and veggie dish.



My mother was always happy when we were together.



My mother and Dachi smoked waterpipe after dinner.
I loved looking at the smoke, listening to
the bubbling water and watching the
small plastic dolls floating
in the crystal jar.

