



## A Brief Note on Forugh Farrukhzad's Life

by

**Iraj Bashiri**

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Forugh Farrukhzad was born in 1935, in Tehran, to a middle class family. She received an incomplete early education; she abandoned formal learning after she finished the first 3 years of high school and never received a high school diploma. Later on, for a brief period, she attended the Banovan Technical School to study painting and sewing. That, too, apparently, did not amount to much. Forugh's forte was writing poetry, something that she began in her mid-teens. By the time she was sixteen, she was composing ghazals in the tradition of the old masters.

Several factors shape the social life of Forugh Farrukhzad. The first is her marriage to a government employee called Parviz Shapur, later on a critic and caricaturist. After their first child, a boy named Kamyar, was born in 1954, the family moved to Ahwaz. A daring, petite, and attractive young woman--the first to wear tight-fitting clothes in Ahwaz--Forugh could not endure long as a wife in a provincial town. The marriage ended in a divorce in the same year. Kamyar's custody went to his father.

Another factor is the scandal that centered on Forugh's close friendships with her male companions. For a while (1955 to mid-1967) she befriended the famed poet Nadir Naderpur who, later on, recognized the relationship as a love relationship. In 1958, the novelist Sadeq Chubak, introduced Farrukhzad whom he knew well to Ibrahim Gulistan, a cinematographer. Later on Farrukhzad became a close associate of Gulistan. She attended parties with the cinematographer and his wife as Gulistan's assistant. Otherwise, she lived in an apartment in northern Tehran which was paid for by Gulistan. This relationship lasted until the death of the poetess in 1967 in a car crash.

Still a third, and perhaps the most important factor, was Forugh's open discussion of her emotions in her verses, discussions that for centuries had been suppressed by religious authorities, community watchdogs, and conservative literati. The fact that Iranian audiences of the time identified the voice of the character in a piece with that of the poet did not help matters much. The efforts of benevolent critics who tried to sort out Forugh's personal views of morality from the freshness of her ideas, images, and approach to versification also fell by the way side.

Had Forugh lived longer, we would have a better understanding of her reasons for the outrage at Iranian society of her time. If her latter poems are an indication, she foresaw much that happened to Iran during the decade that followed her death, much that was beyond any one person's ability

to set right. Nevertheless, she voiced her opinion. A brief chronology of Forugh's main activities between 1955 and 1967 follows:

## Forugh Farrukhzad's Life: A Chronology

by

**Iraj Bashiri**

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### **1935**

Born in Tehran, one of five children of a middle class family

### **1948**

Finished elementary school; began writing ghazals

### **1951**

Finished high school; married Parviz Shapur

### **1953**

Her son, Kamyar, was born; the family moved to Ahwaz

### **1954**

Her marriage to Shapur is dissolved; Kamyar is placed in Shapur 's custody; Forugh is devastated

### **1955**

*Asir* (the captive), her first collection of poems is published in Tehran

### **1956**

*Divar* (the wall), is published. The volume is dedicated to her ex-husband, Shapur; travels to Europe for the first time and gains a new view of the world and of herself

### **1957**

*'Esiyan* (Rebellion) is published; becomes an assistant to filmmaker Ebrahim Gulistan, although their association and friendship becomes controversial, they work together until the end of Forugh's life.

### **1959**

Travels to England to study the art of the film. *Tavallodi Digar* (Another Birth) is completed. The volume, published posthumously, is dedicated to Ebrahim Gulistan who had helped the poetess enormously during their nine years of association. In this same year, Forugh begins editing the film *A Fire*

### **1960**

Played a role and assisted in the production of the film *Courtship* dealing with Iranian courtship customs

### **1961**

Co-Produced the film *Water and Heat* as well as made a commercial for the Kayhan newspaper

### **1962**

Played a role in and assisted with the production of an unfinished film to be called *The Sea*. The theme of the film is based on Sadeq Chubak's short story entitled, "Why Did the Sea Become Stormy?" Also worked on a film about a leper colony in Tabriz. The film was called *The House of Black*

### **1963**

Received grand prize for "The House of Black " at Oberhausen Film festival in Germany.

**1964**

First anthology of her verse is published.

**1965**

Her life is subject of a 15-minute film documentary produced by the UNESCO

**1967**

Visits Italy. Plans to play in the stage production of Bernard Shaw's St. Joan in Tehran; is killed in a car accident (February), at the age of 32.

**1974**

A posthumous collection of her poems was published.

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## The Wedding Band

**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

translated  
by  
Iraj Bashiri

Giggling, the little girl said,  
Talk to me about this band,  
about the secret of this band which  
embraces my finger so tightly.  
Tell me the secret of this brilliant, this bright band.

Astounded, the man replied:  
This ring. This is the ring of happiness, the ring of life

In unison, all those present said:  
"May it be auspicious!"  
The girl sighed:  
"Only if I did not have my doubts."

One night, years later,

An unhappy woman viewed the golden band and  
in its brilliant design,  
she saw the death of her own days  
days she had waited for her husband's loyalty.

Distressed, the woman lamented  
This band, still so bright, so brilliant  
is really a collar  
a collar of bondage, of slavery.

## Rebellion

**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

translated  
by  
Iraj Bashiri

Seal not my lips, nor silence me,  
let me relate my untold tale  
take this chain, which weighs  
so heavily on my heart,  
off my feet.

O man, you self-centered creature  
come forth  
open the door of this cage  
wherein you hold me prisoner for life  
allow me a breath of freedom.

I am the bird that has  
for an eternity thought  
of soaring to the heights  
but whose songs have turned into laments  
and whose life has turned into a shell of desires.

Seal not my lips, nor silence me  
I have to relate my tale  
I must relate to the entire world  
my burning tale, my fiery echo.

Come forth and release me  
to the clear, pristine heights of poetry  
should you allow me this flight  
my rose will adorn the garden of poetry.

I readily give my lip and its sweet kiss,  
my body and its sweet fragrance,  
my look and its hidden flames, even  
my heart and its blood-filled laments.

To you, O self-centered creature  
not to malign my poetry, not to call it infamy  
do you know how confining this cage is  
for the liberal at heart? It is confining, it is.

Rather than telling me my poem is sinful throughout  
pass me a gobletful of sin and infamy  
keep your paradise, your houris, and the Kawthar  
but grant me a hut in the depths of hell.

Allow me a book of poetry, some respite, some silence  
Allow me my drunkenness and stupor  
keep me out of your paradise, I don't care  
I have an eternal paradise within me.

At night, when the moon dances  
amid the foreboding sky  
when I am drunk with desire and you with asleep  
I embrace the moonlight.

The zephyr kisses me a thousand times  
and a thousand times I kiss the sun  
one night, in the very prison you keep me  
a kiss shakes my entire existence.

Away with good name and fame,  
welcome astonishingly delicious infamy  
God who endowed poets with desirous hearts  
forgives my sins, I am sure.

Come forth and release me  
to the clear, pristine heights of poetry  
should you allow me this flight  
my rose will adorn the garden of poetry.

## Captive

by  
**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

translated  
by  
Iraj Bashiri

I desire you although I know  
I shall never embrace you  
You embody the bright blue sky  
I remain a mere caged bird.

Full of desire,  
from behind cold bars, I look at you,  
and hope one day a hand would  
set me free to fly to you.

A neglectful moment can occur  
when I fly out of this silent cell  
laugh at the watchful eyes of the guard  
and begin a new life beside you.

This thought runs through my head  
even though I lack the will to leave this cage  
besides, even if the guard allows it  
I don't have the stamina to fly.

From behind the bars each morn  
a child greets me with a smile  
and when I begin my happy song  
her puckered lips reach for a kiss.

O Heaven! were I to desire to  
abandon this silent cell and fly to you  
what could I say to that tearful child?  
caged birds belong to cages.

Like a candle, my self-consuming being  
illuminates a nest  
If I shine no more,  
that nest will surely be destroyed.

## **I Feel Sad for the Garden**

by  
**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

translated  
by  
Anita Spertus

Nobody is thinking about flowers  
Nobody is thinking about the goldfish  
Nobody wants  
to believe that the flower garden is dying  
that the garden's heart has swollen under the sun  
that the garden's mind is being emptied  
of the memory of green  
that the garden's feeling is huddling  
in a corner, slowly rotting.

The yard of our house is lonely  
our yard is yawning in anticipation  
of a rain from some unknown cloud  
and the pond in our yard is empty.  
The small inexperienced stars  
are falling off the treetops  
and from the house of the goldfish, through their faded windows  
there come, at night, the sound of coughing.  
Our yard is lonely.

Father says:  
"It is too late for me  
I did my work  
I carried my load."  
He sits in his room  
from morning till sundown  
reading native epics and histories.  
Father says to mother:  
"To hell with any birds or fish  
what difference does it make after my death  
whether there is a garden  
or not  
my retirement pension will suffice."

All her life  
Mother has been standing  
before her prayer-spread  
at the threshold of the fear of hell.  
At the bottom of everything  
Mother looks for the footsteps of sin  
and thinks that it is the consequence of a plant's sin  
that has spread over the garden.  
Everyday she says prayers  
and breathes them to all the flowers  
to all the goldfish  
to herself  
Mother is waiting for a second coming  
and the blessing which is to descend.  
My brother calls the garden a cemetery  
my brother laughs at the confusion of plants  
and takes statistics of the fish  
perishing under the sick skin of the water  
my brother is hooked on philosophy  
he thinks the garden will be saved  
by the destruction of the garden  
he gets drunk  
and punches the walls and windows  
and tries so hard to say  
that he is much pained, and talks of his ennui  
he takes his despair with himself wherever he goes  
along with his ID card, pocket calendar, lighter and ball-point pen.  
His despair is so little that it gets  
lost in the comings and goings  
of the beer joint.

And my sister who used to be the flowers' best friend  
and whenever Mother beat her  
She shared the secret of her heart  
with the quiet gathering of geraniums  
and sometimes she even invited the family of the goldfish  
for a party of the sun and candies-  
now she lives on the other side of town  
and in her artificial house  
along with her artificial goldfish  
beside her artificial husband  
she sings artificial songs  
and makes natural babies  
whenever she comes to see us  
and the hems of her dress touch  
the poverty of the garden

she takes a cologne bath  
every times she comes to see us  
she is pregnant

The yard of our house is lonely  
the yard of our house is lonely  
everyday, behind the door, there comes the sound of  
people being killed  
and the sound of explosions  
our neighbors are planting in place of flowers  
shells and grenades. . . .  
the little children have filled  
their briefcase with little bombs.  
The yard of our house is lost.

\* \* \* \*

I am afraid of the times  
when I have lost my heart  
I am afraid of thinking  
about the futility of so many hands  
the alienness of so many faces.

Like a little student who loves madly  
his geometry assignment  
I am alone  
thinking that it is possible to take the garden  
to the hospital  
thinking  
thinking  
and the garden's heart has swollen under the sun  
and slowly, slowly, the garden's mind is emptied  
of the memory of green.

## Another Birth

by  
**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

translated by Karim Emami

My whole being is a dark chant  
that will carry you perpetuating you  
to the dawn of eternal growths and blossomings  
in the chant I sighed you, oh  
in this chant  
I grafted you to the tree, to the water, to the fire

\*\*\*\*\*

Life is perhaps  
a long street through which a woman holding a basket passes  
every day  
life is perhaps  
a rope with which a man hangs himself from a branch  
life is perhaps a child returning home from school.  
Life is perhaps lighting up a cigarette in the narcotic repose  
between  
two love-makings  
or the absent gaze of a passerby  
who takes off his hat to another passerby  
with a meaningless smile and a good morning.  
Life is perhaps that enclosed moment  
when my gaze destroys itself in the pupils of your eyes  
and it is in the feeling  
that I will put into the Moon's perception and the Night's  
impression.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a room as big as loneliness  
my heart  
which is as big as love  
looks at the simple pretexts of its happiness  
at the beautiful decay of flowers in the vase  
at the saplings you planted in our garden



and the song of canaries  
that sing to the size of a window

\*\*\*\*\*

Ah  
this is my lot  
this is my lot  
my lot is  
a sky that is taken away at the drop of a curtain  
my lot is going down a flight of disused stairs  
to regain something amid putrefaction and nostalgia  
my lot is a sad promenade in the garden of memories  
and dying in the grief of a voice that tells me:  
I love  
your hands.

\*\*\*\*\*

I will plant my hands in the garden  
I will grow. I know. I know. I know  
and swallows will lay eggs  
in the hollow of my ink-stained hands.  
I shall wear twin cherries  
as earrings  
and I shall put dahlia petals on my fingernails

\*\*\*\*\*

There is an alley  
where the boys who were in love with me still  
loiter with the same unkempt hair, thin necks and bony legs  
and think of the innocent smiles of a little girl who one night  
was blown away by the wind.  
There is an alley that my heart has stolen  
from the streets of my childhood.

\*\*\*\*\*

The journey of a form along the line of time  
and inseminating the line of time with the form

a form conscious of an image  
returning from a feast in the mirror.  
And it is in this way  
that someone dies  
and someone lives on.

\*\*\*\*\*

No fisherman shall ever find a pearl in a small brook  
that empties into a pool

\*\*\*\*\*

I know a sad little fairy  
who lives in an ocean  
and ever so softly  
plays her heart into a magic flute  
a sad little fairy  
who dies with one kiss each night  
and is reborn with one kiss each dawn.

## **The Wind Will Carry Us Away**

by  
**Forough Farrukhzad**  
(1935-1967)

In my small night, alas  
the wind has a rendezvous with the leaves of trees  
In my small night rests the fear of ruin

Listen...  
Do you hear the blowing of the darkness?  
I look at this good luck like a stranger  
I am accustomed to my hopelessness  
Listen...  
Do you hear the blowing of the darkness?

In the night now something is happening:  
the moon is red and disturbed  
and above this roof, which at any moment might fall,  
the clouds like the crowds of mourners  
seem to await the moment of rain

A moment  
and after that-nothing.  
Behind this window the night is trembling,  
and the earth  
stands still in its course  
Vague things lie behind this window,  
you and I, uneasy

O you are green all over,  
put your hands like a burning memory in my loving hands  
and entrust your lips like a warm sense of life  
to the caresses of loving lips  
The wind will carry us away with it  
The wind will carry us away.

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[Top of the page](#)

[Home](#)