

A Country Called the World



Literary & Translation Agency

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Mahdi Seifi Kebriya



Mehdi Seifi Kebriai (1994/Babol-Iran) is the writer who got his degree majoring in English-language translation. He became interested in writing as a teenager. His first work which was published was titled "The Most Beautiful Fear in the Universe." His favorite subject is writing novels or short stories of realism or magical realism and comedy. In his works, Seifi tries to convey the worldly realms of his fantasy in the narrative of the story to others. He lives in the lush city of his birthplace and is currently working on his new book titled as "A Country Called the World" is his second book.

About the book:

The book consists of 32 short stories, the main character of which in half of the books is a woman and in the other half is a man. The stories take place in 32 different countries: Iran, France, Germany, Turkey, the USA, Costa Rica, Greece, and Chile

The titles of the book stories include:

-*Under the Carpet, Iran:* A widow lives with her eight-year-old daughter. She receives a romantic letter the handwriting of which is no different from her daughter's.

-*The Sound of Silence, the United States:* A disabled old man who used to be a member of the Army during his youth, narrates to his brother's grandson his story in which he reveals the odd reason for (his joining the army and) going to war.

-*At School, Saudi Arabia:* There are several graves in the elementary school courtyard, which causes the schoolmaster to take advantage of (abuse) the pupils.

-*A Terrible Cover, Chile:* four old women decide to flee from death due to aging.

-*The Distinctive Team, Italy:* There is a Mafia gang who, without committing any murder, have managed to meet their demands. Until one day a cook refuses to do what the head of the gang orders him to do.

-*The Sound of Death, Costa Rica:* a young boy plans to discover the sound of death.

-*This life, The Czech Republic:* Several athletes in the field of sailing by canoe and yacht get fired from their team. They decide to pretend that they are insane and continue to live their lives like that for good.

-*Escape from Science, England:* A high IQ young man, who despite his intelligence, is scared of science and lives a poor life.

-*Black, Denmark:* The little daughter of King Christian IV, King of Denmark, once sees a bird hunted down in the hands of her father, which greatly disturbs her from

the psychological point of view. Afterward, once she sees a bird's shadow on the ground. While daydreaming she creates in her imagination a bird and continues to live with that imagination.

-The last drop of credit, Afghanistan: An intellectual man in a poor financial situation who is starving decides to take a hamburger package somehow from his friend who is a shopkeeper. It has been a few months since he owed him money for what he bought on credit. So he cannot afford to buy anything anymore.

-A Rural Lifestyle does not Suit her, Germany: A girl breaks up with her boyfriend while under stress (in order to get over it) gets a few days off from her job to stay with her aunt in a village. But when she sees the house, she recollects memories that make her condition worse.

-Normal, Just Like Everybody Else, the Netherland: The story is about two twin sisters: One can only be awake during the night but the other can only be awake during daytime. They never get to see each other awake. They have managed to cope with this weird situation. But their lives are not like the life of other people. One day one of the sisters who is fed up with (tired of) the status quo makes up her mind and through an evil incidence decides (to change her life) and live a normal life like other people.

-Fear of Dark, Canada: A young boy, who is suffering from Nyctophobia ,while playing with his friends suddenly there is a blackout (power-cut). Everybody is afraid and screams. Then in the darkness, this child gets kissed by someone. A few days later, after this adventure, he, who likes other friends, is afraid of the darkness, decides not to be afraid of darkness anymore.

-A Distant Past, Croatia : A middle-aged couple divorces after experiencing bitterness in life, but after the divorce, their memories get refreshed of their terrible past, it is about when are still single and have not seen each other. The terrible memories bother them to the extent that they come back together and get married again.

Expert of the Book:

The United States of America

The Sound of Silence

Richard was one of the few soldiers who survived the last battalion of American soldiers arriving in Italy. When he returned from the war, he was mostly into himself, and although he was maimed, suffered shell shock, and occasionally a lot of noise twirled in his head, but he never regretted going to war. Unlike him, his comrades who returned from the war, talked about their memories to everyone, both to their family and relatives and strangers and even to each other. Memories that seemed endless and each time they were narrated, they were still fresh and even with the passage of time, when there were less eager ears to hear them, no exaggeration was involved in their retelling. Of course, the speaker, not willing to hurt anyone, but just because the events that he witnessed in the war were so horrible that the mind was unable to imagine and he felt they seemed immensely weird to a person who had not experienced them; described what he had seen in full detail. Richard was not interested in speaking about what he had experienced in the war, neither in his youth nor at old age, unlike many old men who in their gatherings, directed the discussion in a way that they would be the only speaker in the meeting, so they could talk about their memories.

However, a few years passed since he was maimed, and then, he was a 70-year-old man who spent his days in his humble home in California with two arms amputated from the elbow. He returned all of his medals and military uniforms to the organization shortly after recovery. He did not attend any ceremonies related to him or other military personnel, and even after he was discharged from the hospital, every month he transferred sixty percent of the pension that they had allocated to him to a charity account.

It was the early days of the spring. Richard was rocking to and fro next to the window on an old rocking chair whose cracks under its legs looked like the cracks on his soles and enjoyed the landscape. The sunlight cast right over his face, but it did not hurt the old man.

With a smile on his lip that made his face look sadder, he told his sitter that it would be better to turn off the phonograph so that the house atmosphere would be filled solely with the sound of sparrows on the tree. The sparrows on the tree were so numerous that they looked like its produce and fruits. It was a long time that the sitter had become indifferent to the old man's cheerfulness and his happy hours, because she had realized Richard was usually happy like idiots, and the soft nature sounds or the construction workers' noise had no impact on him at all. As usual, he had been waiting for William, his brother's grandson, to arrive and shave his face. Richard was particularly interested in him. The sitter put the shaver, shaving crème, towel, and mirror at hand. When Richard glanced at the watch for the second time on that morning, William entered the house and put down his backpack and after a military salute to Richard, immediately picked up the shaving crème and started his job. He was in a hurry because he had to report to the garrison at nine thirty. Richard replied his military salute with a grim face and looked at him as a captive.

William raised his head vigorously and said, "What is your opinion about private William Clooney, the ace of the US Army?!"

Richard impatiently glanced at the shaving crème.

Brian said, "Yes, sir!" and after turning the phonograph on, started to rhythmically apply the crème to Richard's face. When the shaving was nearly over, Richard murmured sarcastically, "So, you finally got yourself into the military!"

William, "I have been a military man since childhood! Last night, I was looking at the signatures that I used to put under my books and notebooks at the age of nine,

‘Colonel William Clooney!’ Oh! I have to hurry. I must report to the garrison within half an hour, otherwise, my name goes into the list of cowards!”

Richard, “What is so wonderful in a war that attracts you?”

William, “I do not get the satisfaction I feel in this uniform elsewhere. What in the world is better than fighting for the homeland? No one can serve his country as a military man serves his country.”

The young sitter glanced hatefully at William's backpack and asked Richard for a one-hour leave to take her child who had caught a cold to the doctor. Richard permitted her to go and told her to get him a newspaper on the way back.

Richard, “You never asked me why I signed up in the army. Why did I go to war?”

William replied immediately, “It is crystal clear to me that you entered the army for the love of your homeland.”

He wiped Richard’s face with the towel and held the mirror in front of him.

Richard checked himself and said, “I’m getting old!” and sent a kiss to himself which made William laugh.

William took a few steps back and saluted again and picked up his bag and said, “I will never allow the right to be trampled. I will capture Giáp¹ all on my own! Farewell!”

Richard said with a serious tone, “Wait, William. There is still time. I will not waste too much of your time. You do not know anything about me except for my age, my position on the front, the battalion in which I was serving, and how I lost my arms? Do you?”

¹ Võ Nguyên Giáp (1911-2013). Vietnam military minister and chief of staff.

William, “Well, is there any other important thing that was not said besides this?”

Richard, “The reason for my going to war! I never told you the reason for my departure. I was not supposed to say it either. But now, when I see the veins of your neck are so thunderously swelled for the homeland, I have to tell you the reason for my going to war. I did not go to war for the love of my homeland.”

William let go of the door handle, and his desperate look at Richard told him that he was eager to hear what he had to say. Were there any more sacred and obvious reasons to go to war than to serve the homeland? He encouraged himself that perhaps Richard had a reason superior to what he had seen in himself up to that moment, but the possibility that the grandfather had gone to war because of ambition, to attain high positions and being respected, easily swallowed his optimism.

Richard said after a brief pause, “Up to twenty-nine days before I went to the army, I had a mistress by the name Stephanie, a skinny and beautiful girl who never let us listen to music when we were alone.

“The first time she came to our home and we were supposed to have dinner together, I wanted to turn on the gramophone, but she disagreed and said, “Music will make the moments between us eternal. It is not good at all if there is a day that we have to part for any reason, we remember each other by listening to that song and suffer a lot. Let’s not get rid of the silence!” So, we never listened to music whenever we were alone. Indeed, the climax of our happy moments was when we spent time in silence.

On a November night, when the gypsy carnival set up its tent in our village, I and she walked there slowly, hand in hand. Clearly, the music was forbidden only in a place where nobody was present except us, and this law did not apply to parties. Wow, what a feast and celebration! A fire eater swallowed fire, a clown did

amazing bicycle tricks, another one walked the rope blindfolded, and a young lady dancer entertained everyone. Everything was awesome, but to me, it was not so attractive. I longed to be alone with Stephanie ASAP. Indeed, nothing was sweeter than the silence that Stephanie had established between us. She was well aware of my interest in that kind of silence. The cold weather began to pour gradually. When the rain became more intense, the gypsies wound up their acts and the people rushed home. But we were happy, and the rainy weather did not have any impact on us. Under the rain, I ran toward home following her. Before we reach the house, I was constantly reaching for her and she laughed and escaped my grasp. Oh! We were near home when the lightning struck and she screamed and turned to me to take refuge in me, but at that time, I escaped from her. The next day, when I went to their home, her mother was sitting sadly in her room. Stephanie's face was pale and she had a high fever. Her mother, before she gave me a dirty look and go out of the room, said that the doctor had been there a few minutes ago and warned her never let her daughter go outdoors in cold weather. A deep silence prevailed in the house and no sound was heard except the barking of a dog in the distance. I was sure nobody could hear the barking other than me. I felt that I needed to hear a sound because the silence was terribly annoying. So, I did not know whether I was really hearing the dog's barking or it was just my imagination. Stephanie was asleep. I saw their housekeeper and asked whether Stephanie's situation had gotten worse just in the previous night. She said, "Yes, but if her mother did not notice she was going down, nobody could figure out that she was ill. Even the slightest moan was not heard from Stephanie's throat." I thought to myself maybe she was worried about her family noticing it and put the blame on me, so, she had tried to hide her illness from everyone. Stephanie! (Richard called out her name with a long sigh and stopped talking for a few moments).

“She died two weeks later. No matter how I tried to convince myself that the silence that engulfed my loneliness after her death was different than the silence I had

experienced with Stephanie, I could not do it. A terrible silence! You cannot imagine the torment I suffered from the sound of silence after Stephanie's death. I was teetering at the edge of madness. I could feel her every time I was alone. I saw her in front of me. I felt she was waiting for me somewhere near me. Once, when I was alone at home, sitting in my room, I felt that she was in the living room, and when I got up and went to the living room, I felt that she was standing in the hall, and so on from the hall to the kitchen, to my parents' room and other rooms, in the yard, and then I returned to my room! It was both scary and tortuous. I used to sleepwalk quite a few times because her whisper was calling me and I went out of the house. If my parents did not notice, it was not clear where I would end up. Believe me, I talked to her many times and even patted her hair! And when I realized that she was not real but living in my imagination and I was actually talking to myself, I panicked and looked around lest someone could see me. One day, I noticed that I had been addicted deeply to my daydreaming and it had been a while that I was living with her in paranoia, and that was why I was deserted and alone; and also I realized that everyone doubted my sanity. Afterward, I could not keep her away from me, no matter how hard I tried. Whenever I was in silence, she began to talk, 'It seems that you do not like me anymore! I am alive! You are seeing me! Why do not you believe me!' That was her! She was there! It was a force that, even if I wanted to, would not allow me to leave my privacy and mingle with the crowd and spend good times with my friends like before. But one day I finally managed to go to a party of a friend of mine. In that place, she did not come to me anymore! I no longer saw her and I did not hear her voice as well. After that party, I always escaped silence; I turned on the gramophone when I was alone, I was mostly in the crowd, I was usually drunk, and even slept with the sound of the gramophone. However, silence found a way to come to me.

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