

# My Life as a Rug

Author: David Khazai

KHAZAI RUGS

RM INNOVATION



# My Life as a Rug

What Shah Abbas, the great, walked on

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## Dedicated to My Father : **Mozafar (Ata) Khazai**

I dedicate this work to my father - a man who ignited the passion I have for thinking ambitiously and having big dreams. Acting as a living example, he nurtured the virtues of discipline and hard work within me, which have led to my life's achievements and overall success. His unending generosity, courage, friendship, networking, and ability to live large will always leave me in awe.





### **About producer**

Producer David Khazai comes by his unparalleled experience and knowledge of fine rugs the old-fashioned way – his family has been in the business for decades. Directly involved for much of his life in every phase of the Oriental rug industry, from design to production, from distribution to wholesale and retail sales, David is recognized

nationally and internationally for his industry expertise in the Oriental rug business. Perhaps more importantly, he has brought new world thinking to an old world enterprise, through leveraging the use of technology. Throughout his career, the key to David's success has been an ability to anticipate new technological developments on both the operational and marketing sides of retail business. An avid and extensive reader, he pursues knowledge on the web as well, and stays on top of changing consumer and marketplace dynamics and how they affect the sales environment, and he uses this knowledge and information to develop and enhance his retail solutions. David's passion for the independent retailer led to the creation of his company, Innovations International, which provides technology solutions that allow independent rug retailers to thrive in an increasingly difficult environment. Nonetheless, along the way he has never lost touch with the history, culture, and yes, the magic of the handmade works of art that are the foundation of the business.









Life is like the design of Persian carpet which is beautiful but hard to understand

Aldous Huxley





I recall...

Though many days have passed and I lost their count. Days when I wasn't who I am now. I was a rain drop in a euphoric cloud, circling in the sky or the chanson of a nightingale that would sit on a flower each dawn and sang:

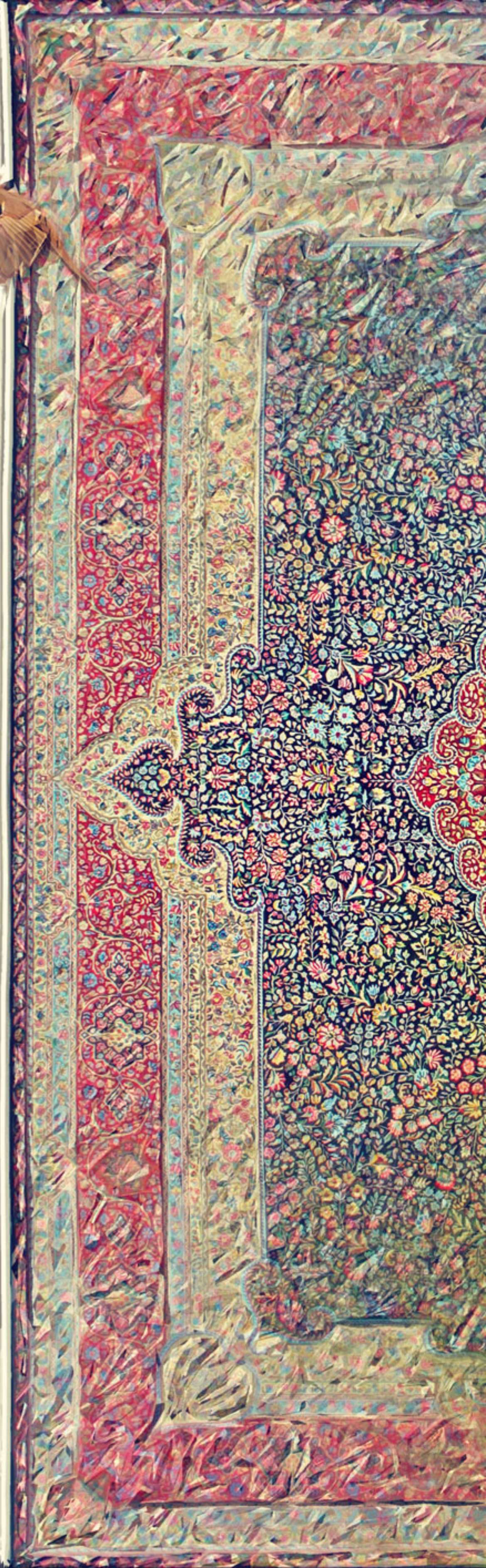
*I was a nightingale singing on a stalk of a floret*

*Universe calamity broke my heart*

*Lord! Give me wings so that I can fly again*

*Wings to fly over the gate of Kerman again*

God, what am I saying? I was warm milk in the breasts of a sheep that a lamb used to drink every day. I would penetrate to the body and soul of the lamb to empower her grazing the grasses of meadow.















No! Now I recall! First I was a magical plant seed that wind passed across the dry deserts and raging seas and brought to a vast plain. Then the wind dropped me on the terrain and covered me with soil. I fell into a deep dream and I remember dreaming of thousand years ahead; the dream of a rug which on its patterns thousand flowers and nightingales were looking at each other and were laughing.

Days have passed. Finally I woke up to the whisper of a lullaby. Someone was singing :

*Sleep well my sweetheart*

*The dark night has come*

*The bright moon is sitting on the roof*

*The dark night has come*

*And I suffer your absence*

*Sleep well my lily blossom*

*Give me my share of kisses*

*The fragrance of your lips*

*Reminds me of red roses*

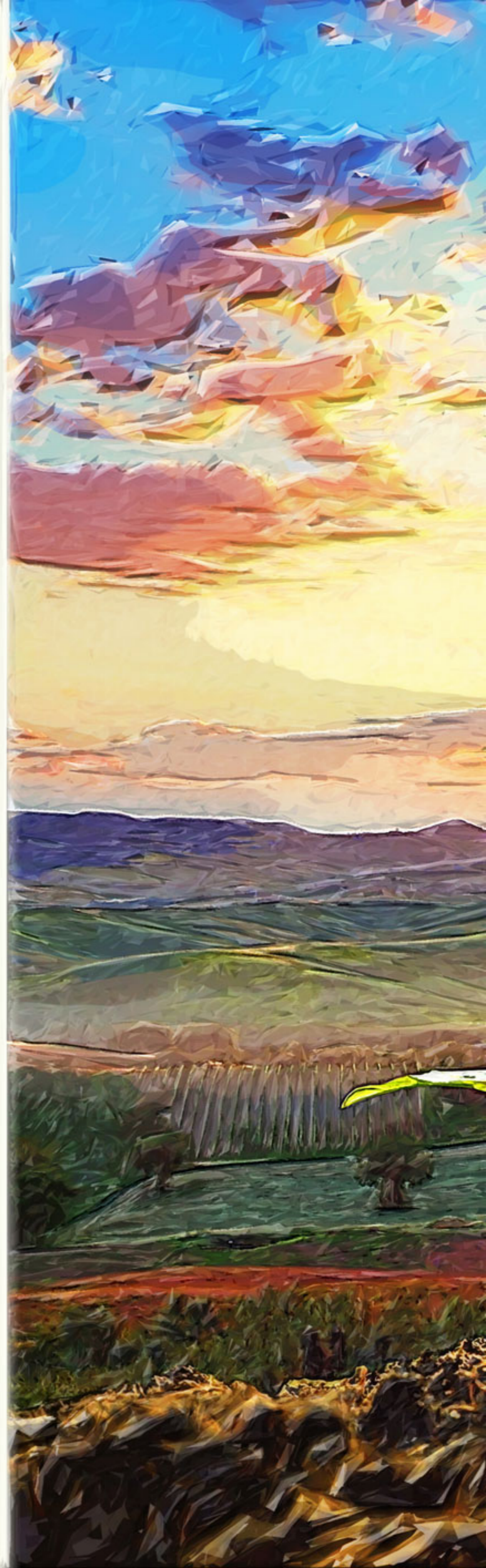




And I tore up the soil. I woke up in the plain where I have fallen asleep and I sprout from the ground. What scent of a grass! There was a light rain from the cloud I knew. A narrow ray of sunlight gently caressed my tender body. How green I was that day. As I was awakened I became a young grass and I have covered the terrain. The wind that has brought me here was blowing through my body and put the meadow to dance.

"Thousands of seed I have within me. Stay here until I spread them, I shall return and put you to dance" said the wind.

Then he went to the point where cypress trees were standing and guarding the meadow. There was also a spring with delectable water. I could hear the sound of water when it came to irrigate me.



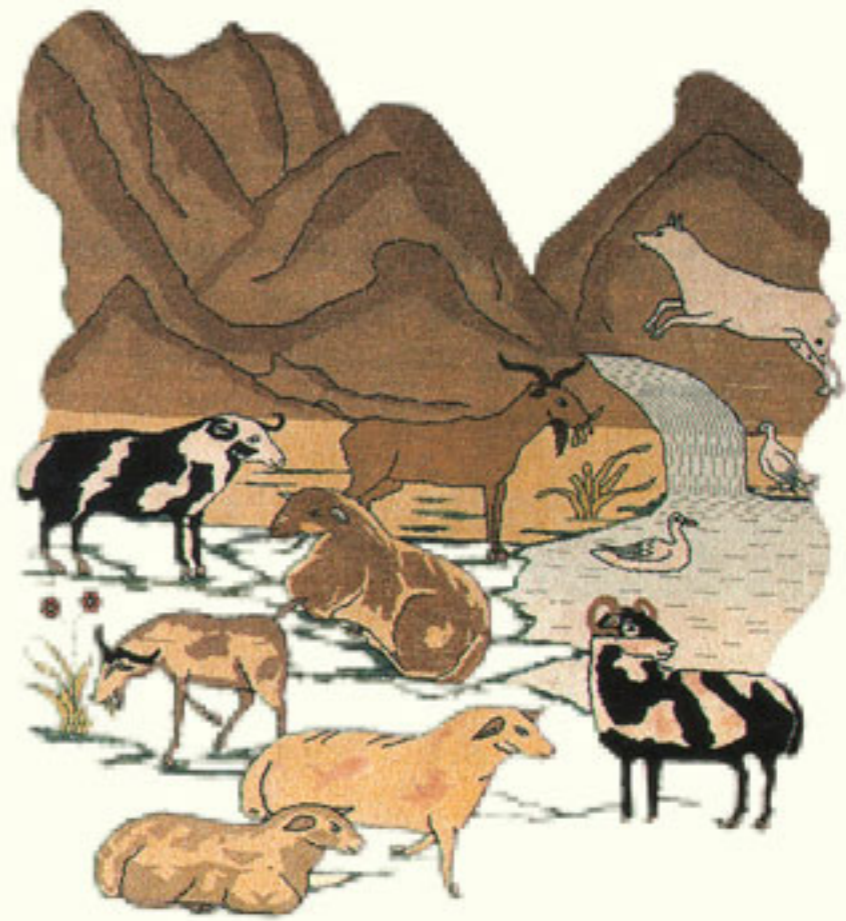












Days have passed and after times when the euphoric cloud passed above me, came a day when thrilled of my existence I was leaning to the grasses beside me, I suddenly heard a voice from beyond the horizon. It was not the sound of water. It was a profound sound pounding on the ground and there was a very strange voice I have not heard before: baa baa baa.

I tried to reach out for the voice but with my roots in the ground I could not see very well. Wind came to me howling and put me to dance but not as thrilling as before.

"What is happening?" I asked.

"A flock of sheep with their two shepherds are coming; an old man with a young boy." He responded.

"What is their aim?" I asked.

"They are coming to drink water from the spring." He responded and after a pause of hesitation, he added: "And, they are here for grazing you."

"What to do?" surprised I asked.

"To eat you!" he responded.

My stalk was filled with fear. I tried to move my roots but they were strongly stuck in the ground. I plead the wind to take me with him. "I am a breeze. I am not the thunder to dig you from the core of the terrain." He responded. I begged but it was ineffectual. Wind didn't take me with him, he promenaded in the plain and whispered in my ears: "Today is a new commencement for you."





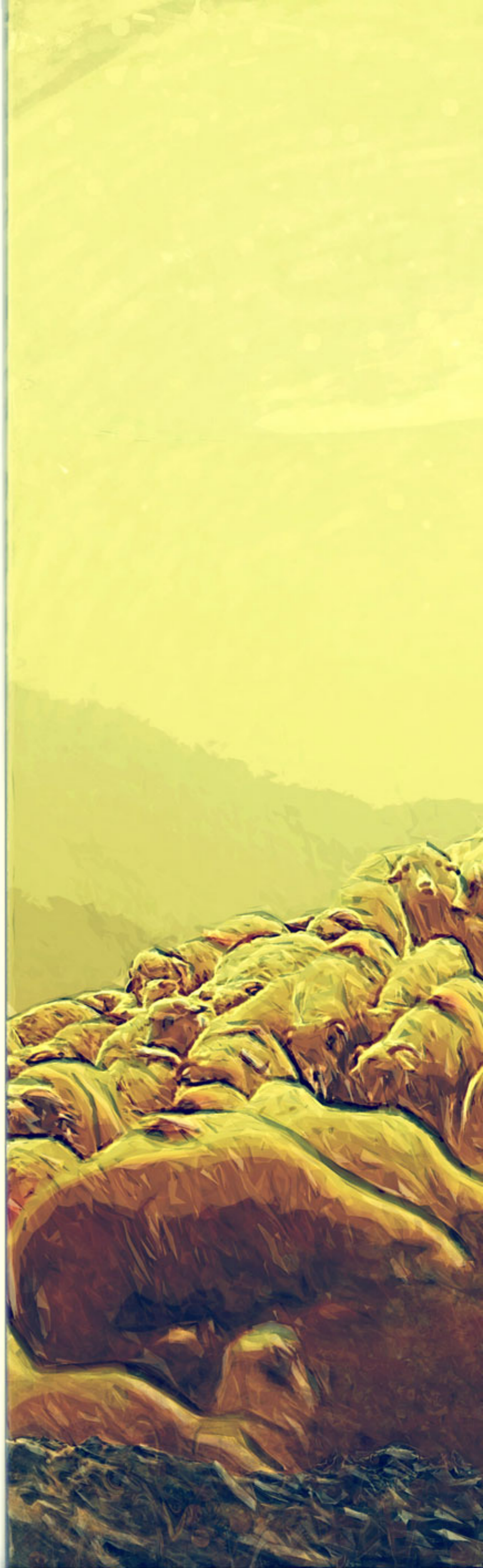
I could hear the sound of shepherd calling the flocks to the greenest part of the plain. Before I knew, there was a fat woolly sheep standing above me. He had a nice look on me so I felt relived.

"Hello to you my sweet fragile grass. Would you let me eat you?" he asked.

I looked at him, he looked at me. He approached his mouth to me. I heard a sound deep in him that was saying "baa". I did not follow what happened next. My roots stood in the ground but my fragile stalk was ripped off and I found myself in the mouth of the sheep. I slipped on his tongue and fell into a dark hall. There was nothing but darkness; though I still could hear the sounds of outside. Sound of the shepherd asking his son: "what is the thing that brings a lot of colors to our home?"

"Garden?" the little shepherd responded.

"No little child! Rug" shepherd said.















Rug? What a mysterious word! What is a rug? I was wondering about the word I just heard "rug" and I fall asleep. It seemed to me as if the sheep has fallen asleep because there was no sound. I did not reckon how long it passed before I heard a familiar voice: the sound of water that came close and closer and took me to a maze. I swirled and swirled until I felt warmth in me as the first time that I sprout from the ground and sun warmed me. I passed a long narrow maze and I stopped swirling then. Everything was so tranquil. I felt like I was merged with water of the spring. I did not have my stalk with me. As if I became like water myself; water of a spring.





A thin voice from the depth, maybe even outside of the sheep, came to my ears: "baa baa" and something took me towards itself. I became milk in the breasts of the sheep, warm white milk that a lamb was feeding from the depth of her mom's breast. And I entered the body of the lamb. An agile and mischievous lamb that climbed on the hills and jumping down the slopes. A spring, a summer, an autumn and a winter passed and came the next pleasant spring. Now the lamb became a sheep and I have moved slowly in his body; a deep journey into a sheep's body. I did not know where I have reached. Until the day when I woke up to the sound of the shepherd's son singing:

Come my darling my rose  
Come rest in my home  
Come rest barefoot on my rug  
Come give me your peace as a souvenir















Rug? That was the second time that I was hearing this word. "If I see the wind once again, I will ask him about the rug." I promised myself. But where would I ever see and talk to the wind again? Meanwhile I was thinking about this, I felt wind blow on my body and the same warmth of the sun again. Yes, I was not wrong. I was actually sensing all those feelings; feeling of the day when, I sprout from the ground. That euphoric cloud passed above me. I heard the thrilling laugh of the wind telling me: "welcome". I became wool on the body of the sheep; white bright wool same as the milk.





Now that I recalled all I'm ready to begin my story in the right way.  
The story of my life as a rug:

I am a rug; the wool of more than a hundred sheep, sheared unceremoniously from the backs of lambs raised on cold mountains, washed, graded, carded, spun on ancient wooden wheels, dyed by masters who ground the colors from plants and insects and boiled them in secret combinations with more kinds of matter than I care to recall much less confess.

I was pawed, massaged, and manipulated by dozens of people with faces I did not catalog and can no longer recall. I was dried in desert sunlight, then tied into more than a million knots by the feverishly working fingers of women who, for all the speed of their flying digits, took more than a year to finish tying, jerking, pulling, jamming and packing every fiber of my being into such tight rows of knots that I will rot before I unravel.

I have felt the icy slice of sharp sheers shaving away my excess strands until my nap stood on its ends in a smooth, even height, as hair is said to stand on a frightened boy. I could scream at the memory of it all.

Yet I have outlived the shepherds who tended the flocks whence came the very fiber of my being. I have outlived, as well, the shearers, the washers, the dyers, the designers, weavers and the trimmers who transmuted me. I have witnessed more than 100 years of history and sailed the ocean. I have survived two great wars and several lesser ones, the Great Depression, and generations of successive owners.

I have caressed young lovers basking naked in the glow of dying embers in the hearth behind me, and I have comforted old ones left with only memories of desire. I have served my owners well, without complaint, and I shall continue to serve them. Though their shod feet have trod upon me all my life, I am by no means downtrodden. I have not only endured, I have prevailed.

I am a Persian rug, and old one, yet still richly colored and regally patterned. This is the story of my life.

I first encountered humans when a part of me was merely a lamb grazing the sparse shrubs high on the slopes of a mountain in the land now called Iran.















No need to hide it from you, being wool is better than being a grass. Every day I walked down the valleys and climbed up the hills with the sheep. I found shelter by the bushes on the mountain and I spoke to the wind. And the word I totally forgot about was "rug". That agile sheep would walk around curiously; happily played with other sheep and sometimes he disobeyed the orders of shepherds. He went to places he was not supposed to go. Once he was almost ripped by a wolf but fortunately the sheepdog rescued us. At night when we went back to the sheepfold I was as tired as I would fall asleep directly.

One of the shepherds who tended the flock from which I was so promptly shorn (without my permission and at a very tender age) was an old man, whose name has long escaped me. But I still recall his hoary whiskers, withered face and rheumy eyes. He said little and sang with himself more. He seemed bereft of all emotion, perhaps, other than an unspoken awareness that he would soon be granted eternal respite from the harshness of his life and the burden of his years. Perhaps he longed for it.

He was a wise man and sang with himself:  
And strange to tell, among that Earthen Lot  
Some could articulate, while others not;  
And suddenly one more impatient cried  
"Who is the Potter, and who the Pot?"





Sometimes a young shepherd relieved or accompanied the old man. He was a lad in the bloom of youth, full of mischief and song. He was no David composing psalms proclaiming he would fear no evil in the valley of the shadow of death. He shunned valleys for the shoulder of the mountain and seemed to fear nothing, but spent his noisy hours singing of love and the girl who waited for him somewhere beyond the horizon. He vowed he would return to her when the snows of winter began to fall. I had scarcely seen a winter or a snow not even plains or mountains again and I no longer even speak his language. But I remember the substance of the boy's songs, though I do not know his fate or whether his dreams of love and happiness were fulfilled, for I was not long in this world before I was parted from the sheep.















I was satisfied with my new life and I thought I would always be wool on the sheep's body. But one day it became the catastrophe. Little shepherd gathered the flock beside the river. Oh God, what was I witnessing?

Shepherd took one of the sheep from the flock and prostrated him. He had a blade shears in his hand. He tied up the limbs and started shearing. There became a deep silence among the flock. He fleeced the first sheep and the silence turned to the noise of anarchy and calamity. The fleeced sheep then ran towards the river and put himself into the water.

The wind blew euphorically. "What is going on today?" I asked the wind.

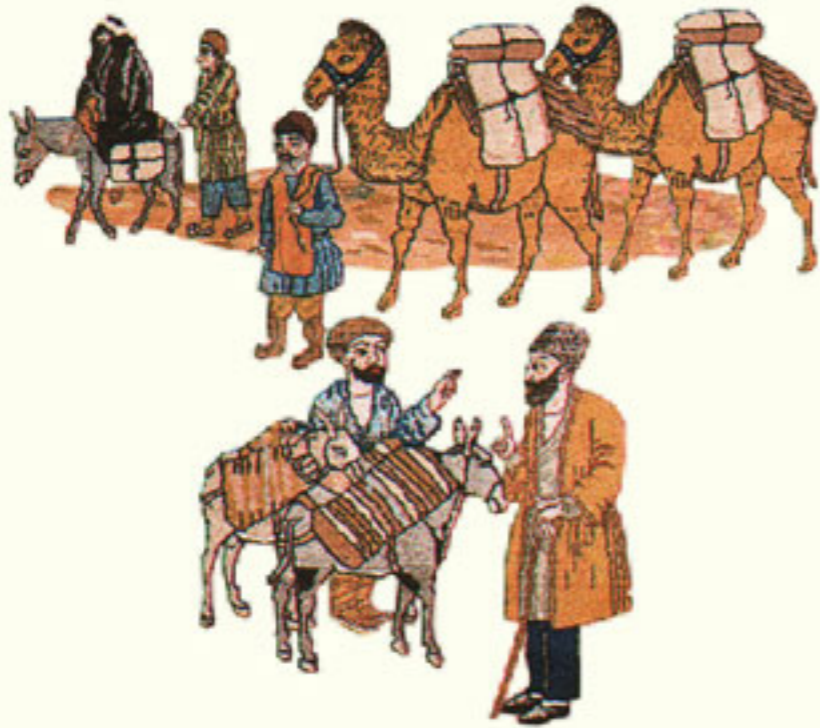
"The shepherd is shearing the spring wools." He responded and swirled up to the sky to the point where I could not hear him anymore. Then he came down and whispered in my ears: "Today is a new commencement for you."

When the shepherd fleeced me, with satisfaction he exclaimed:

"This is fine, soft kurk wool, thigh and warm, because those lambs have grazed on the cold shoulder of the mountain. It will fetch a fine price."

Perhaps I did fetch a fine price, but I shall never know it because no one bothered to compensate the sheep and certainly no one bothered to compensate me. I began as a fleece that was fleeced, so to speak, though I am confident, the old shepherd, my master profited from my sale.





I soon found myself tossed in with my fellow fleeces – if that is the plural – and being weighed and washed by weighers and washers who appeared to me to be more in need of washing than I, though hardly in need of weighing, for there was not a plump one in the bunch. They were men with lined faces, harried eyes and hungry bellies. They gather us together and some others came to help the shepherd and the boy to wash us beside the river. But they had the courtesy to spread me and my fellow fleeces in a courtyard to dry beneath the warm desert sun. Indeed, the enchanted wind played an effective role on drying us. Afterward someone came and weighed us on his scale and bought us. He put us on a horse and a donkey. He passed us above the stars and across the trails until we arrived to the city. He kept us in the yard of a specious Caravanserai. We were tangled as I could not distinguish myself from other sheep. Early morning I heard the man, who bought us from the shepherd, was negotiating with someone else about our price. After an instant they made an arrangement.















The buyer then put us in a wain and drove us across the huge and beautiful city of Kerman; a real diamond in the desert. I still recall its starry sky. We traversed the covered Bazar of Kerman. There was the sound of hammer on the copper from one side and fragrance of Iranian spices from the other side. Finally we arrived to a place where hundreds of women gathered in various groups and each group was busy working on wools.





I and my bundle of fellow fleeces soon found ourselves in a veritable chamber of horrors. Fierce women wielding sharp combs tortured us. Harpies, I say they were, having learned that word in the conversations of older gentlemen who retreated, for brandy and cigars, to the paneled library in which I was later confined, though actually I have since learned these Harpies were more properly called “carders,” in the language my adopted land.

Harpies, carders, whatever, they clawed us horribly with their combs, never even altering the direction of their strokes to afford relief for even a fraction of a second. We were stretched as straight and thin as if we had been put to the rack. But our sufferings were far from over. We were next tortured on the wheel, our fibers, already taxed taunt, were twisted and spun into strands that rendered one fleece indistinguishable from another and stretched every fiber of our being more than we imagined was possible.

“If we survive this, we’ll certainly be stronger for the experience,” a wiser fleece than I cried out in his final anguish before he lost his individuality to the strand and could say no more. I remembered the speech of the wind saying: “Today is a new commencement for you” and suddenly I went to the wheel.

We did, indeed, emerge from that nightmare stronger collectively. Perhaps our ordeal was a bit like marine boot camp. It turned a few good fibers into one strong, cohesive unit fit for the struggle to come for testing our mettle beyond our collective imaginations.

When the day gone by both women and us were exhausted. Women were joking and laughing with each other and left us alone. I looked at the luminous sky full of stars and then I saw myself; a long white massive skein.































Next morning, there started a new struggle. Big steaming vats were flaming on the fire.

We were taken to a large room with steaming vats of myriad colors: red, purple, gold, navy blue, paler blues, rose, pink, green, and rust, to name a few. The odor was awful. But I listened quite carefully as the dye master outlined broadly for a curious visitor how the colors were created, though he carefully kept his own counsel concerning the precise formulas for a specific color. I recall references to indigo, insects and alum and other substances, which I do not care to recall or to confess an association with.

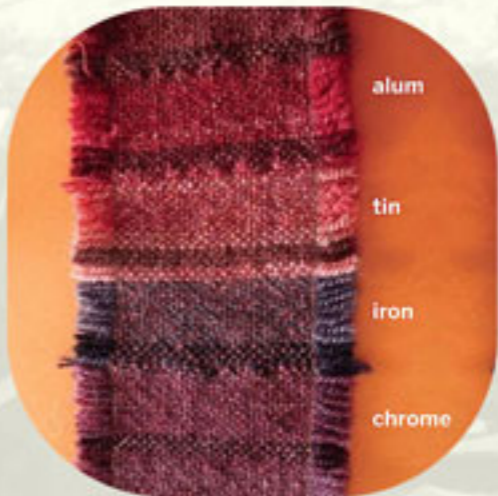


# Natural dye used in rug

Madder



Cochineal, Kermes



Indigo



Euphorbia





# Natural dye used in rug

Weld, Mignonette



Pomegranate skins



Walnut husks



Onion skins



















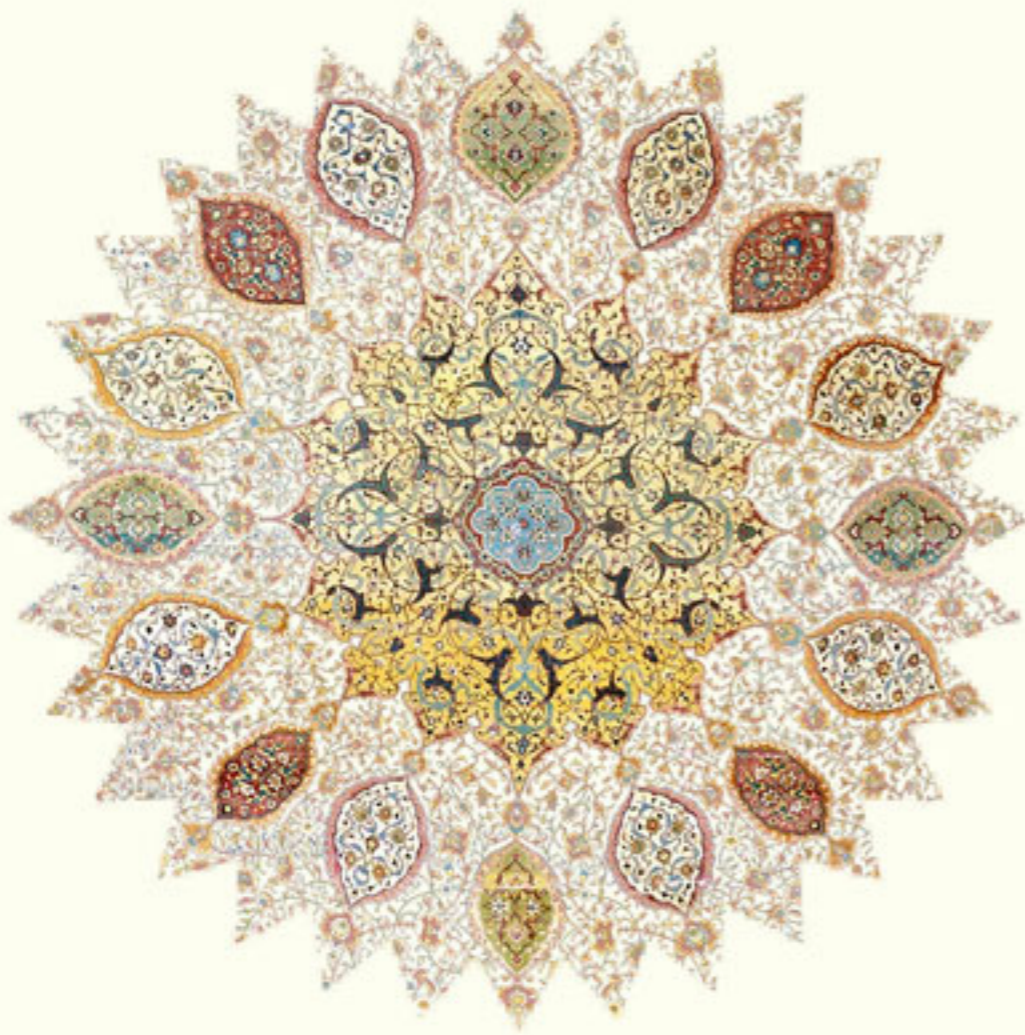
As I watched my fellow skeins of yarn – for that is what we now were: yarn – being dipped into one vat or another, I quite reconciled myself to another round of torture, akin to being boiled in oil. I was hoping that I would at least find myself in a nice vat of indigo. That, at least, was a harmless mineral and not too disgusted to contemplate. But it was not to be. I found myself becoming a bright red by being dipped into a dye whose primary ingredient was the dried, ground bodies of cochineals, rather loathsome little insects.

Quite scarlet with embarrassment and dye, I resigned myself to my fate. But my journey was in its infancy, younger than the lamb from which I was shorn, younger still than the infant crawling over me now in my current form, mewling and sometimes drooling upon my face. We stayed in that hall for one night and a day. Nobody came for us. Maybe it was a holiday; but nothing could stop the enchanted wind so he blew inside from the sash windows. When he saw me he said: “How beautiful you are! What a color! Bright red! I knew I would see you here one day.” I was embarrassed a little. He continued: “Here is where people weave rugs and wools dream to become a rug one day.”

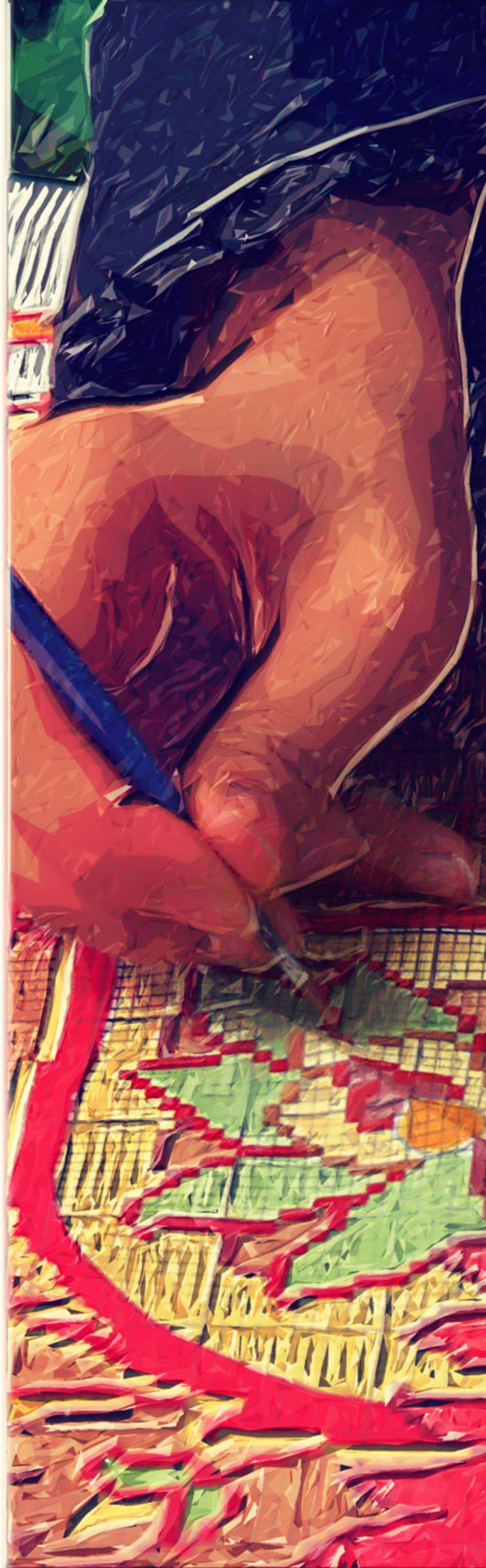
To my eyes, wind was exaggerating. Foremost, I did not know what was “rug”, so I could not dream about an unknown. First I heard this word from the shepherd and now I was curious to know what the rug is. So I asked: “what is the rug?”

“Today you will find out and tomorrow and the day afterward.” Wind responded laughing. And he went out from the window he blew in. The enchanted wind was always mysterious.





Next morning the sun was not quite risen when a beautiful girl opened the door and came in. she sat at the table that was covered with a long sheet of paper. She took a pen and started drawing. From the window reflection I looked at the paper she was drawing on. I saw a huge garden full of flowers and it reminded me of the green plain where I came from. She was a real artist. She was drawing trees, flowers, leafs and birds at the maximum accuracy of beauty.























An old man entered the room and studied her drawing precisely. He gave her some advice for developing the pattern. Later I found out that he was maestro of the carpeting atelier and his name was maestro Karvar. He was an expert and he knew everything about rugs; wool, colors, patterns and weaving.

First time that Maestro Karvar took me between his thumb and index fingers to evaluate my quality, he smiled and said with admiration: "What a wool! What a color." I was deeply thrilled and satisfied.





Little by little other men and women arrived and sat by the loom. Two men started wrapping the loom under maestro Karvar supervision. To wrap the loom, strings of a white skein were carefully strung to the horizontal columns of the loom .when they finished their work, loom became completely white; like a gracious bride waiting for her groom. Now was the turn for weavers. They took me to the loom.

There were more baths and more drying in the warm sun, then I and my compatriots of many colors were delivered into a room in a crumbling building in which a large loom had been erected; at the loom where a group of garrulous women of various ages.

I watched rather anxiously as strings of strong thread were strung vertically on the giant loom. Then the women began weaving horizontal strands of yarn across the bottom of the vertical threads. Soon they began taking bits of the colored yarn and looping around the vertical strands, following the rhythmic commands of a woman who seemed to be supervising the operation. "Three red, now six navy," she might call to the other women as she studies a large sheet of paper on which the pattern of the rug appeared to be drawn by the girl. So fast were the women working that their fingers seemed to be flying.



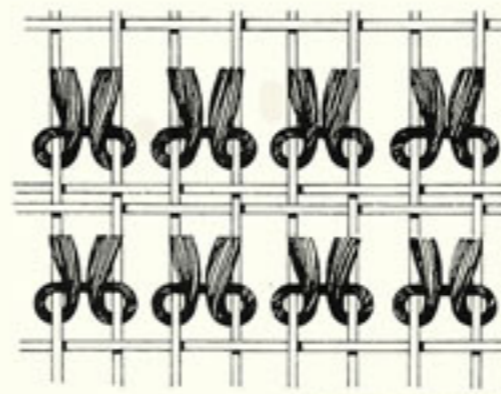




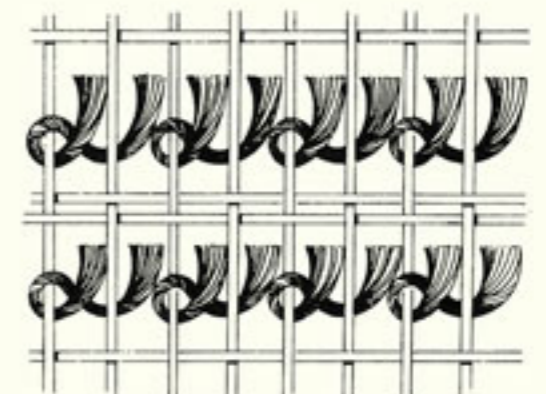








Symmetric knot  
Turkish knot



Asymmetric knot  
Persian knot



Women wove the rug and sang:

A green I tie

And another; blue

Red, yellow, brown

Botteh Golabi I tie

With my wrap of life

Kerman rug I tie

To let my beloved man

Walk upon me

Its pattern is my life's pattern

Its colors is my beloved man's color

A green I tie

And another; blue

Red, yellow, brown

Botteh Golabi I tie

When will his journey be over?

When will this bitter waiting be over?

When will he be here to look at me?

When will he see the pattern of my soul woven for him?

A green I tie

And another; blue

Red, yellow, brown

Botteh Golabi I tie

With my wrap of life

Kerman rug I tie

To let my beloved man

Walk upon me

Its pattern is my life's pattern

Its colors is my beloved man's color



















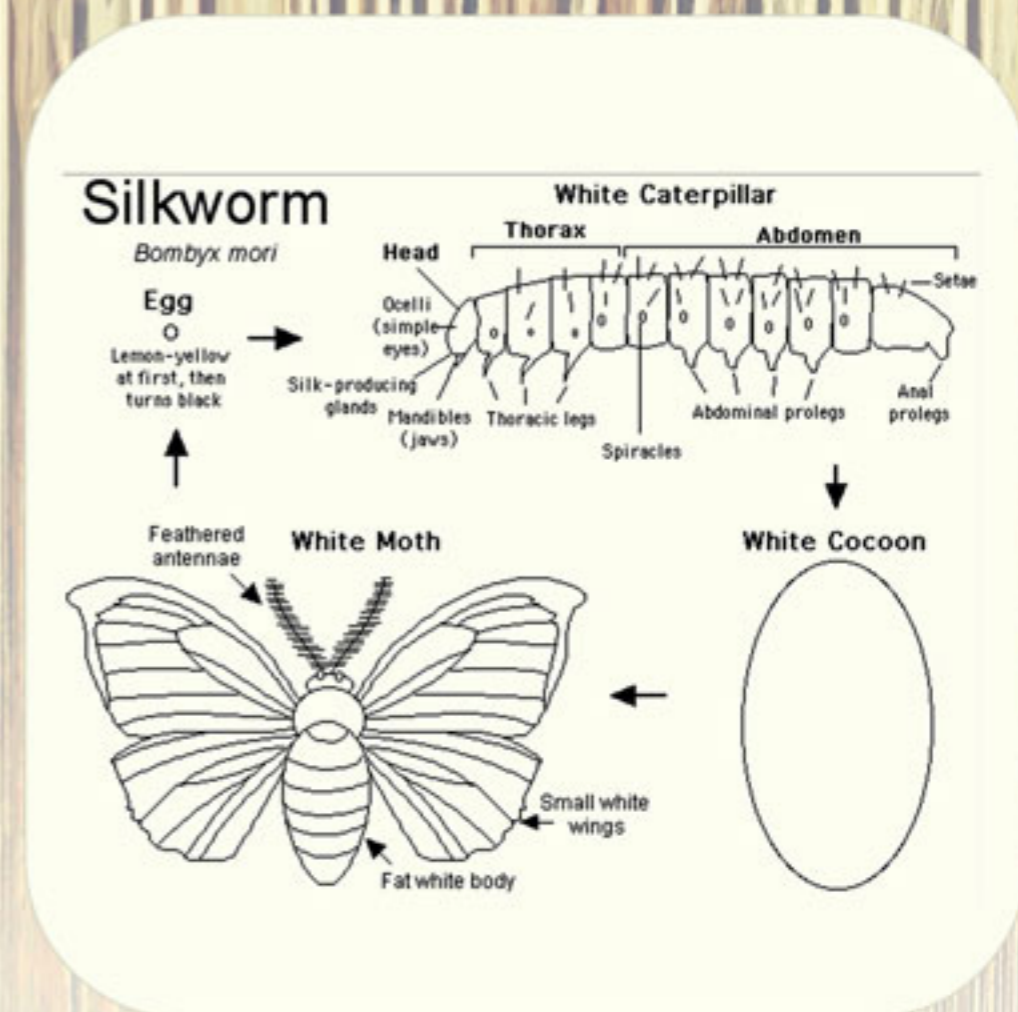
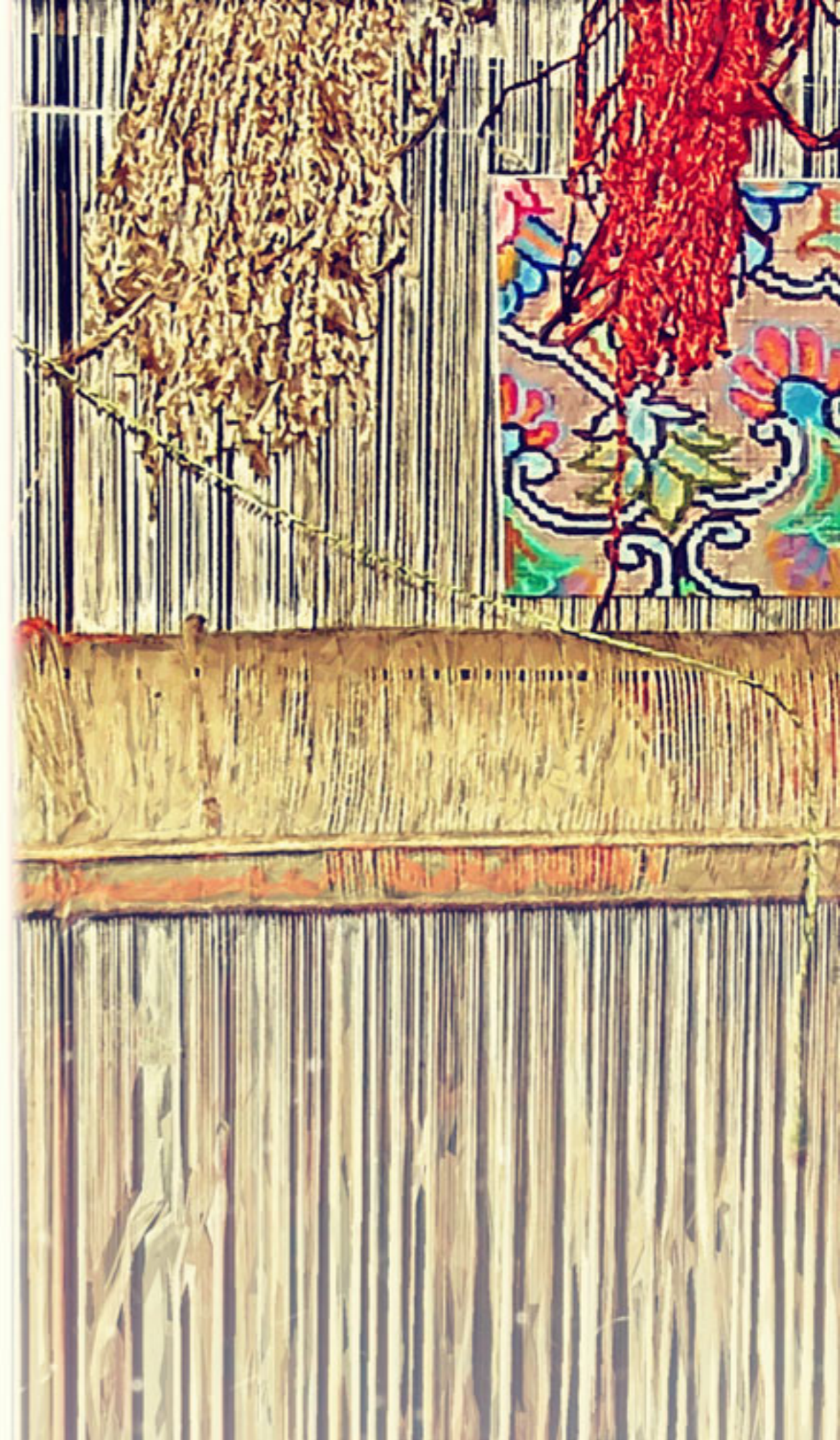


I was listening to the chanson and waiting for my fate, when I felt for the first time that fire-burning feeling, called love.

There, stood someone next to me. She was a yarn too, but not at all, in the way I was. She was out of this world. Such a delicacy I had never seen before; such a luxury, such a gravity, such a luminosity, such a tenderness, such a mystery... even now could make me spellbound.

"Who are you?" I asked. And after a moment of hesitation, her magical voice made my whole existence trembled.

"Silk," she said with her low musical voice, "silk is my name." She had her own story. She was not associated with sheep at all, but with butterflies! In a way I could not understand. So deep was my love that my intellect was not able to work anymore. She talked about mulberry trees, caterpillars and cocoons, about her troubles in hot steam and boiling water, about fly dreamers who had been sacrificed at the Temple of Beauty.













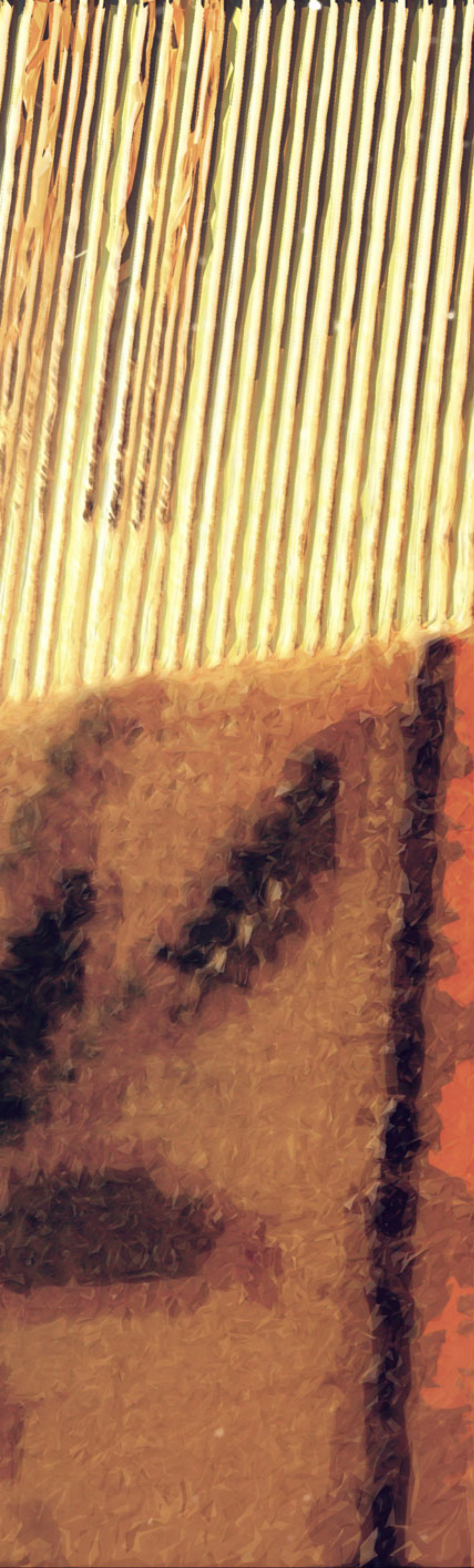


Silk Medallion persian Carpet, mid-16th century









I was thrilled and spellbound with love, when suddenly snippets of the red yarn to which I belonged soon found themselves in the women's fingers, being looped around the vertical strands, and then packed tightly into place with a comb. As I found myself being woven into the rug, a wonderful transformation began to take place. I no longer felt or thought as a single fleece or even as a single red-faced thread of yarn, but as a part of the whole of the great rug that was slowly taking shape, rising toward the rafters. And then my beloved silk transformed into a flower on my heart. Now, she and I made together a new being, a new 'I'.

I felt and thought in harmony with all my variegated neighbors as part of a wondrous whole taking shape all around us. Though it took more than a year for the women to turn us into the harmonious and wondrous whole that I am today, the transformation was magical, and it made all that my compatriots and I had suffered and endured worthwhile. We were at last, all of a harmonious whole, a thing of beauty that brought expressions of admiration from all who saw us, even the women who wove us. And though we were of many colors and of many strands, we had come to feel and think and speak as one – as I am speaking now.

I, in turn, grew in admiration and respect for that group of chatting women who transformed me. They worked long hours at that loom, their deft fingers looping the yarn around the warp strands as fast as they could fly. Yet these were happy women who chatted about their families and their children, as people everywhere chat. They worked with pride and went home at the end of each long day weary but satisfied that they had done a fine job, that they were creating an intricate work of art of great beauty and harmony.





I could not see into their homes and know firsthand the truth of their lives, for I was bound at this time to the loom. But I shall always remember these women, some very young and pretty, others old and wise. They shared a camaraderie and esprit de corps I have rarely seen since in any group. They took pride and pleasure in their work, as painful and tedious and tiring as it was. They are all long gone now, but surely their daughters and granddaughters and great granddaughters have followed in their footsteps, and are still working with the skill and pride that these women lavished upon me.

They polished me and then washed me. They put me beneath the desert sun. All those days, when I was being dried beneath the sun, the enchanted wind would come to me exclaiming: "patterns of flower and nightingale on you are smiling."



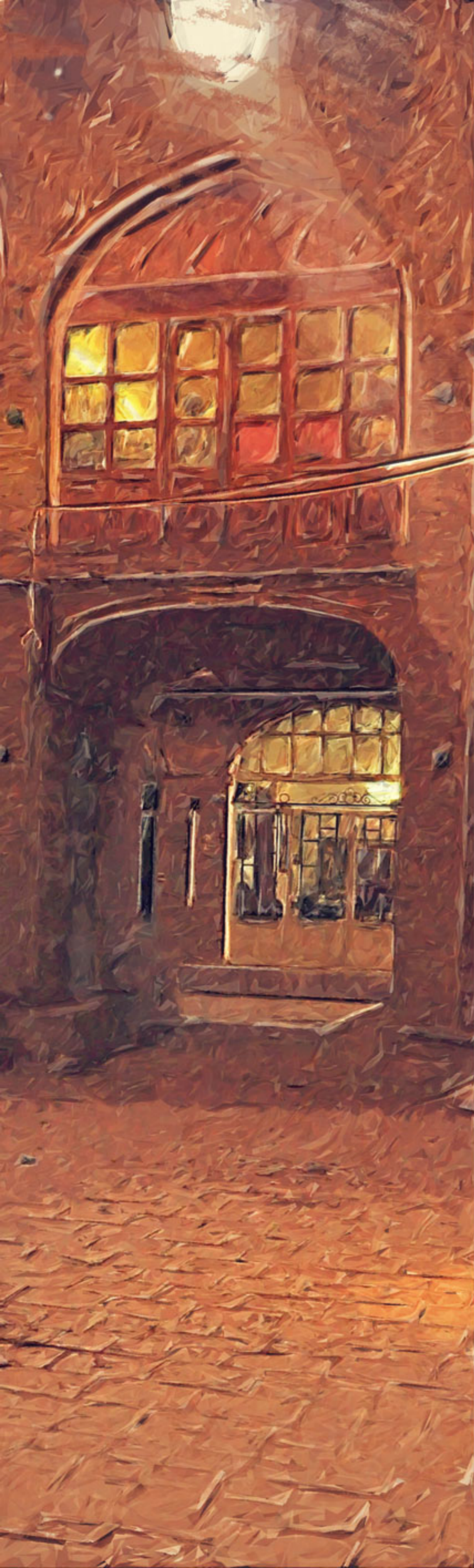












When I was dried, they took me to a chamber in the bazar. Grand bazar was busy doing commerce and business with various jobs. I was content with my fate, for I knew that whatever befell me henceforth, I was part of a great, beautiful prized and harmonious whole. The pain and suffering of my previous existence had transformed me into something stronger and more durable that I would ever have been if I had lived out my life warming the rumps of sheep on cold mountainsides and plains in old Persia.

One day a young couple came to the carpet chamber. They looked around and found me. They whispered with each other and the man, pointed at me, said: "I want to see that rug."

The salesman took me out from other rugs and displayed me. I knew I was beautiful. I saw a bright spark in their eyes. I looked at them with pride. I liked them too. They seemed cognoscente.

"Best quality of Kerman's rug. It's done in maestro Karvar atelier" Said the salesman.

"A real beauty" Man added. I saw the lady squeezed his man's hand gently to mention she likes to buy me.

Man whispered to his lady: "We have to spend all our saving."

"This rug is the worthiest wealth". The lady responded.

I do not know my price but I never felt the joy of that day in whole my life again. My first owners, my first house, my first life!





That was a small house yet so beautiful and peaceful. There was a small pool full of gold fishes and some cypress trees and a weeping willow in the yard. The landlord had a small son and a daughter. Landlady gave birth to her daughter lying on me. They put some thick cloths on me, the lady screamed for a moment and the baby girl was born. Then Midwife took the baby's ankle and picked the baby up. The baby cried and by looking at my colorful pattern she suddenly calmed down. On summer time kids used to play in the yard and when the winter came they played on me because I was warm and friendly. They liked me as a friend and they have named the accents on my patterns.

I lay for some years on the stone floor of a Persian home, whose owner treated me quite solicitously, never treading upon me with heavily shod feet. He and his family always wore soft slippers when they walked upon me.

Still, I was but one among the many rugs in his household, though it was hardly the wealthiest home in old Persia.















One day, in the waning years of the 19th century, a foreigner came to see me; actually he came to visit my master. I could see they had a good relationship. He was a Briton, one of those Orientalists of the Victorian era who immersed themselves in some chosen backwater of Eastern lore for their own enlightenment and profit. All of a sudden, I came to the attention of the Briton. The landlady came in with a tray of tea and when she figured out that the Briton has aimed to buy me, she said: "No! I will not sell this one."

"My dear, I know how much you admire this rug, but I promise to buy an identical rug for you soon." My master quoted.

I became upset thinking that an identical rug would replace me soon. And the lady was forced to accept.

My master scarcely bothered to haggle over the first offer of the Briton, so munificent it must have seemed to him, but sold me to this admirer, for a pittance – certainly by the standards of today if not then, for such rugs as I were plentiful in Persia, even in my humble household, while Persia itself was in dire need of foreign capital.





This buyer, I soon learned had scant interest in me for myself, but bundled me into a bale with kindred rugs and had me loaded aboard a ship. We were sailing over the Persian Gulf when the enchanted wind came to meet me. He moved the sails and recognized me among all the rolled up rugs and said: "Maybe we will not meet again. Have a nice journey beautiful rug."

"Come with me" I said.

"My house is from Caspian sea to the Persian Gulf. Anywhere else I go I will not be pleased." He replied. He said this and moved my fringes. He made me a farewell and blew back to Kerman or maybe to the green plain where I came from.

The ship was sailing to the United States, where I was promptly sold for a profit to an American wholesaler of rugs in New York, who in turn sold me for a profit to a merchant in the city in which I still reside. In time, a prosperous young banker in this city acquired me and placed me upon the floor of his paneled library in a handsome house of the Italianate style in what was then a new suburb, a short ride by street-car from the heart of this city.















When he introduced me to his young bride in the flickering yellow light of a fire blazing behind the screen in a fireplace at the end of his library, they became so excited that they promptly shed their rather voluminous clothing and, much to my embarrassment fell upon me in a passionate embrace. I am somewhat embarrassed to say that this behavior was repeated with greater regularity than I care to disclose for a number of years. It became quite apparent from their heightened passion that the caress of my sleek, soft surface had a quite stimulating effect upon them.

As they grew older, the frequency of such conduct slackened, but there never came a time when they did not regard me with admiration and affection. And in their later years, when the lady of the house would join her husband in the quiet confines of the library for a quiet evening of reading and reflection, they would sometimes glance upon my blushing face then exchanged fond looks with each other, their eyes quite aglitter with the memory of their youthful passion.

I was quite saddened with their passing, but quietly and perhaps a bit smugly, I must confess, I was pleased to have survived them none the worse for wear.

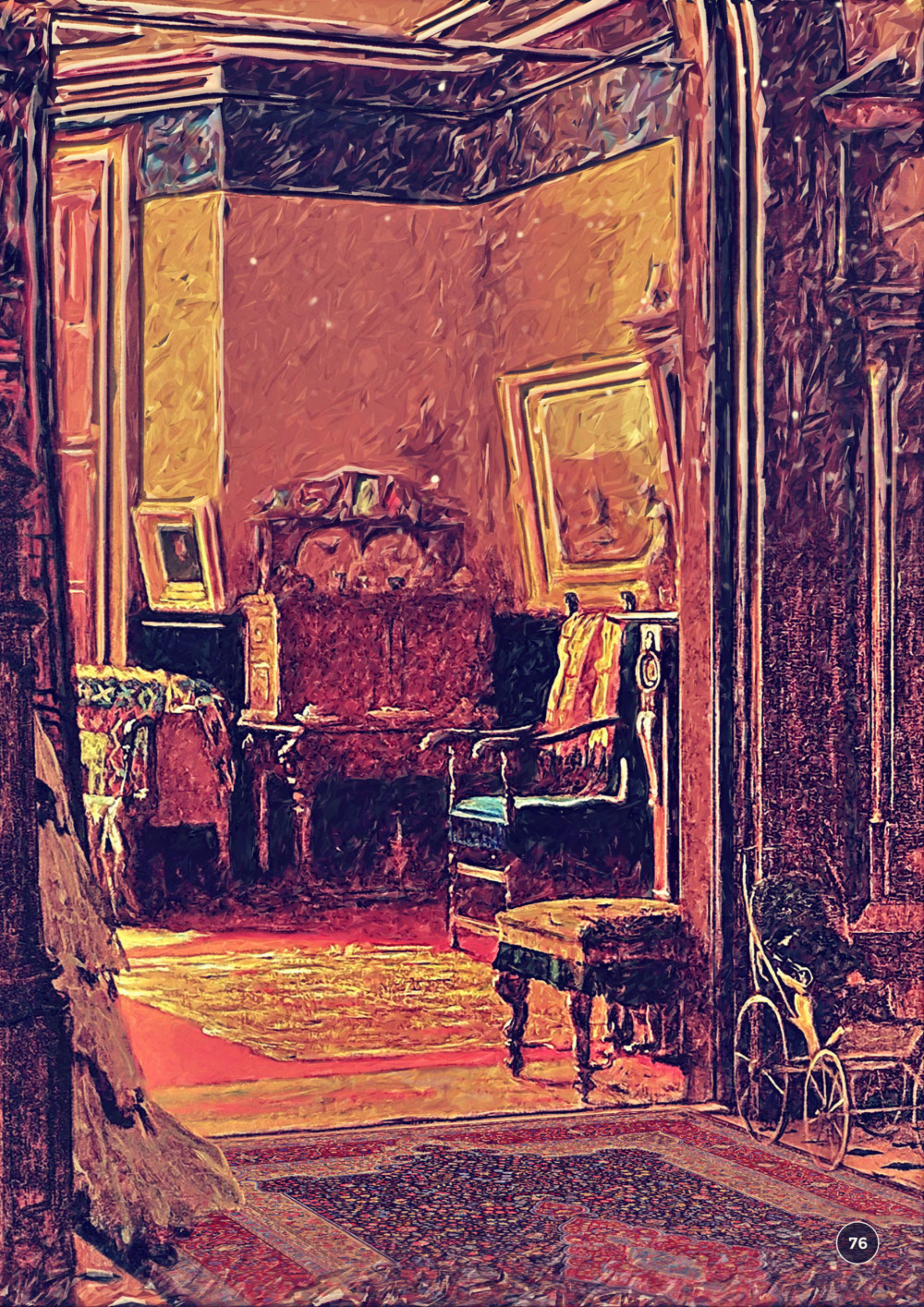




I was bequeathed to their daughter, a woman of no great wit, grace or charm, but a well-meaning soul who unfortunately did not marry well. I was moved into the rather more modest but still spacious and comfortable Craftsman-style home that she and her husband occupied a bit farther from the heart of the city. There I lay upon the living room floor for a number of years, competently cared for if not admired as greatly or put to such stimulating use. They walked upon me with their filthy shoes despite my Iranian master and the young banker who treated me quite solicitously, they were very suave and used to wear soft slipper when walked upon me. Time passed and the inconsiderate banker and his wife passed away.















Then I was bequeathed to the somewhat feckless son of this couple and placed upon the floor of the modest ranch-style home that he shared with his wife in a suburb still farther from the hub of the city. I regret to say that the wife of this young man had little appreciation for my beauty, and after several years wearied of me, rolled me up, covered me with unbleached muslin and placed me in the company of several compatriots in the rather cramped attic of their house. They gave my place upon their nice hardwood floors to a rather drab green manufactured carpet that filled the room from wall to wall. Such Philistines! Such tasteless barbarians!

I lay quietly in the dark attic for more years than I can recall, content to have found a peaceful respite rather than to be subjected to the dirty shoes of people so lacking in taste, refinement and discernment that they could not appreciate my steely durability and harmonious beauty. They did not have a clue about how to use my colors and pattern to transform their drab tract house into an interior garden of earthly delights.





Therefore I slumbered and dreamed of the days when I was a liberated seed floating with the wind and a drop of milk in the breasts of a sheep, blood in a lamb's vein and wool on the sheep's body. I recalled many years ago when I first dreamed about becoming a rug. I dreamed about a rug which on its pattern, thousand flowers and nightingales were looking at each other and were laughing. That euphoric cloud was in my dream too, telling me about Shazdeh Garden of Kerman to the turquoise domes in Isfahan, from the columns of Persepolis to the grasses covered the tomb of Omar Khayyam Nishapuri. I was in the middle of the speech with the wind that I was awakened with a jolt, though how much latter I do not know precisely, by rough hands lowering me clumsily from the attic and exclaiming, "Wonder what this could be all rolled up like this."

They soon found out, and their cry became, "You reckon this old rug is worth anything?" Old rug, indeed. Worth anything, indeed. How insulting. Pearls before swine, I think is the apt expression.

They – and I – soon learned my worth. And I must say that I was quite as pleasantly surprised as they were. The price the appraiser quoted them was more than the original price of the fine Italianate mansion whose library floor I first graced in the city. It was enough to enable my finders to pay off the mortgage on the modest ranch they had acquired from the heir of my original American owner. Is this a great country or what?











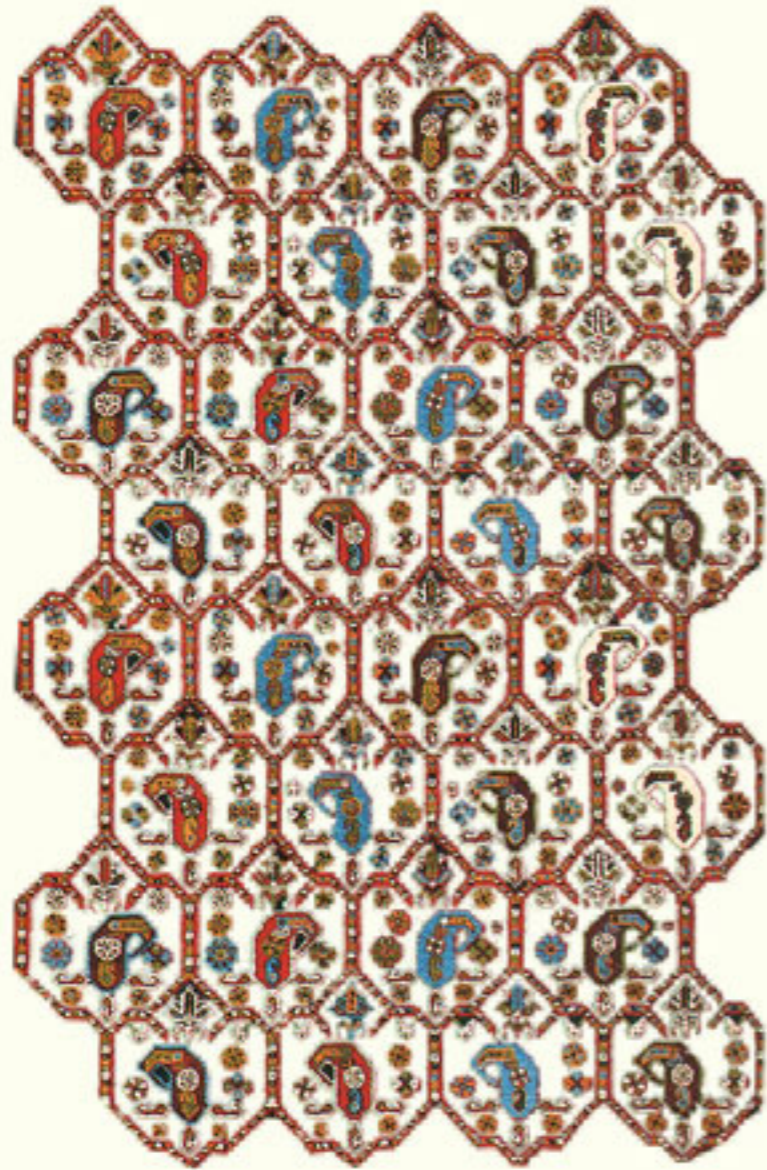




I was displayed next in the warehouse of a dealer in Persian rugs. The dealer was an expert. Soon as he took a glance on me he said: "This one is the Kerman rug and as it appears, it must be done by maestro Karvar atelier. God bless him!"

There, one day, a young man admiring me where I was displayed, luxuriant and resplendent even on the concrete floor. "Why that looks just like the rug my great granddad and great grandmother had on their library floor!" I glanced up and beheld the spitting image of my original American owner. It was enough to make me believe in reincarnation.





Well, to make a long story short, to cut to the chase, or whatever the appropriate idiom is in this troublesome American tongue – remember, it is my second language – that is how I came to be lying upon the family-room floor in the large airy suburban home. For, indeed, the young man who admired me even on the cold concrete floor was the great grandson of my first American owner, a descendant of a more distinguished and discerning scion of that fine gentleman and his lovely wife than the daughter to whom I had been bequeathed.

And here I am today, appreciated and pampered with care, for all that I am trod upon by my owners and crawled upon by this mewling but mercifully not puking infant.

And, indeed, as I said at the outset, I have not only endured, I have prevailed. For now I am far too precious to be abused, and my current owners are knowledgeable people of impeccable tastes who appreciate me for the utility and my beauty as well as for my value.



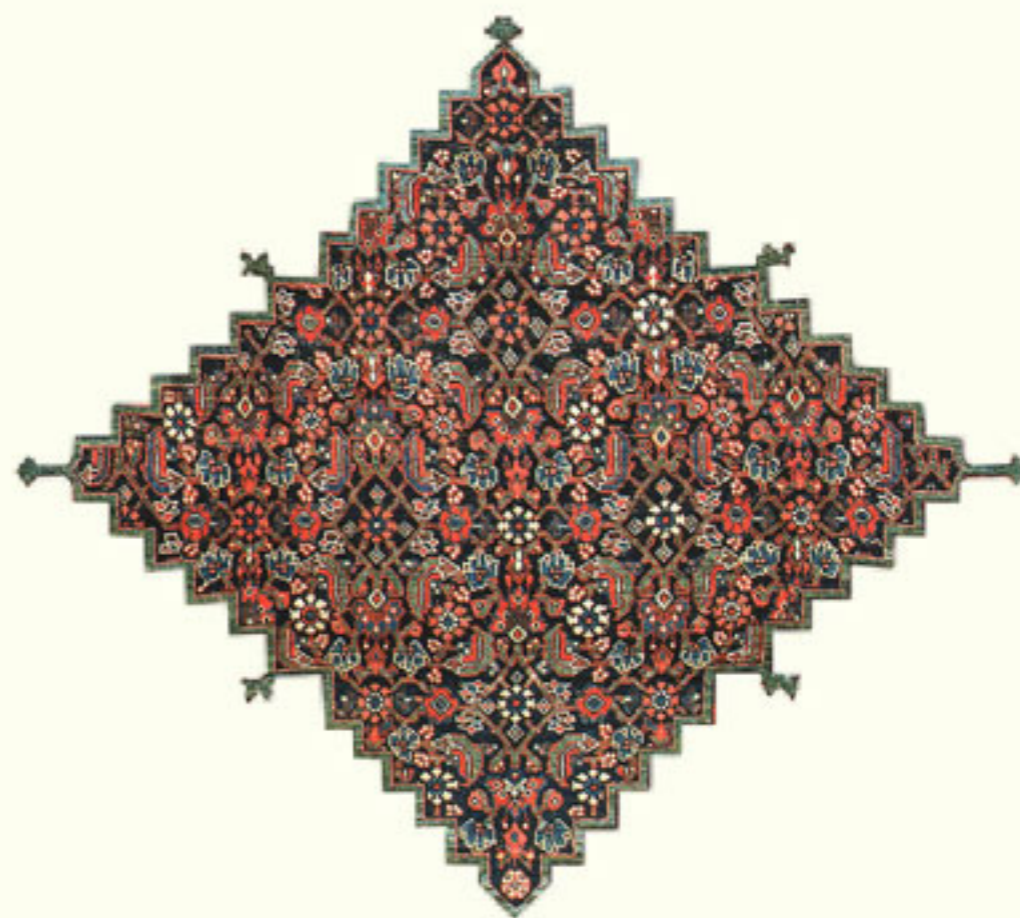












As I lie here now on the floor of their house in a suburb of a great American city beside a mighty river, the worst I must endure is the crawling infant.

And that is no ordeal at all, but a pleasure. I feel a ticklish joy when he tries to lift my cartouches from me, only to be startled and befuddled to find that they are not discrete objects but are woven into my very being. I delight as he follows the intricate arabesques for my very heart, which infuses the colorful flowers, fruit and leaves of my meandering vines with figurative but ever-flowing sustenance.

What does the crawling infant make of the deep, rich reds, dark navy, softer blues, and golden yellows in the almost sensuous surface beneath his belly? Does he notice, close beneath his eyes, the subtle shades of green, rose, rust and pink melded harmoniously into my dominant hues? Does my elegant medallion speak to him in some secret language of his own devising? Can he comprehend the cartouches in my border, itself a marvel of geometry, harmony and scale? Do they suggest meaning to him?

I cannot say. But surely I am a feast for the infant's senses, a source of awe and wonder. Surely I am a great mystery, intriguing and baffling, yet full of delight and a joy for the crawling child to explore, to touch and to try to claim my elusive essence as his own. He babbles and coos his delight and cries his frustration with the strange figures that, for all from a Botteh, but perhaps he has already acquired a fledgling fascination with my ancient, anonymous artistry.





The infant will grow up, perhaps, with a greater appreciation if not a full understanding of the attainments of a culture other than his own. He may become a devotee of fine rugs, growing to crave and seek that surge of excitement that sends his spirit soaring with the unfolding of some fine rugs he has never seen before.

For I – and every fine oriental rug – am unique, yet comfortably familiar within the conventions of pattern, colors and style, the origin and meaning of which even adults may not pause to ponder. These origins and meaning, in any event, are mostly lost in antiquity or shrouded in myth, and even I do not know them all.

But the conventions that the artists and weavers followed in fashioning me paradoxically allow variations and permutations in patterns, colors and style in an array that can trap devotees of rugs on the horns not of just one dilemma but of myriad dilemmas. They can dangle the devotees in a feverish dance of indecision between desire and attainment: Which rug to buy and own? Each freshly unfolded rug excites them a bit more, creating an exquisite pain of indecision, which they crave and savor.

My life as a rug has been rewarding despite my humble, painful beginnings. I have become, I confess, a bit of a preening peacock basking in the excitement that I can incite in my many admirers. I am a bit of a tease, and I suppose I must sound rather narcissistic, but I am rather proud of what I have become. For with self-awareness has come the power of knowing my hold on people and the magic I have wrought and still can work in so many and such varied surroundings.











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