

Biography

Nasrin is a writer. She arrived in Britain in 1993, following 8 years in prison in Iran. Last year she received a degree in Psychology and is currently studying for a Masters in International Relations. She wrote *The Gatekeeper* in the Writers Group run by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

Nasrin has drafted a book about her experience in prison, which she has written in both in Farsi and English.

The Gate Keeper by Nasrin Parvaz

He is pushing me towards the corridor. 'Go back to your country,' he says, "We don't want refugees.' I feel frustrated, I don't know what to do. I was told to claim asylum when I saw an Immigration officer. But he is pushing me away, saying 'Go to Iran Air, and go back home.' I'm frightened. If they send me back, I'll be arrested. Now I'm back near the corridor I just came from and he is still pushing me back towards it. I shouldn't have spoken to him. I should have gone to one of the desks. I take another look at him. He is serious about not letting me in. I look around. Now I'm back in the corridor. I suddenly dodge away from him and run and run back to the hall and towards the desks and he is running after me. I reach the desks and go up to one where a woman is sitting. She is black and I think she might treat me better than him. I give her my passport and say; 'I'm a refugee.' I look round, still trying to catch my breath. The Immigration Officer turns back and goes away. The woman behind the desk realises that I'm frightened and out of breath. 'It's OK.' she says, "Sit over there. Don't worry." I sit and I think about the past. I take the stone out of my pocket and touch it. I read the poem which I carved on it and I feel it gives me strength. I made it in prison.

I'm dreaming when suddenly a voice from behind me says in Farsi: "Can you come with me to Iran Air? We will deal with your claim and we will solve your problem." I look up and I'm disgusted. The man has a beard, just like the interrogators and the guards in prison. I tell him to get lost. I swear at him and he looks at the officers and shrugs his shoulders at them to show that I am not listening to him. I realise that the airport staff must have called him. I see another bearded man, looking like an Iranian

Hezbollah, coming towards me, staring. His eyes strip my body before he sucks my face in with his gaze. I lose my temper and go up to the desk and say angrily: 'I don't feel safe here. I don't want to go back to prison and I don't trust anybody here.' The woman looks at me and asks me to go with her. I'm scared and I don't trust her. I don't move. "Where are you taking me?" I ask. She says, "Somewhere that is safe for you." I follow her without any trust. She opens a door and asks me to enter. As soon as I look inside I feel it must be OK, because there are about ten people here from all over the world. They all are waiting to enter the UK as refugees like me. I feel safe among them. There is a phone here but I don't have any change. A man gives me change to call. I call my sister but she is not there, her friend is and says: 'Your sister is there, talking to Immigration officers to take you home.'