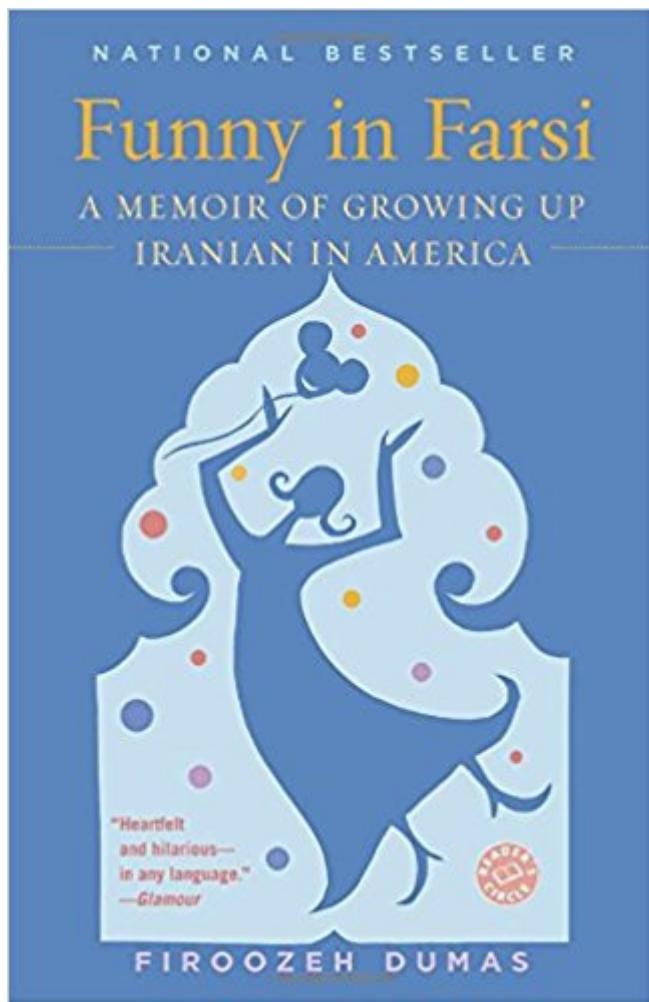


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# Funny In Farsi: A Memoir Of Growing Up Iranian In America



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • Finalist for the PEN/USA Award in Creative Nonfiction, the Thurber Prize for American Humor, and the Audie Award in Biography/Memoir This Random House Reader's Circle edition includes a reading group guide and a conversation between Firoozeh Dumas and Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner*! • Remarkable . . . told with wry humor shorn of sentimentality . . . In the end, what sticks with the reader is an exuberant immigrant embrace of America. • "San Francisco Chronicle" In 1972, when she was seven, Firoozeh Dumas and her family moved from Iran to Southern California, arriving with no firsthand knowledge of this country beyond her father's glowing memories of his graduate school years here. More family soon followed, and the clan has been here ever since. Funny in Farsi chronicles the American journey of Dumas's wonderfully engaging family: her engineer father, a sweetly quixotic dreamer who first sought riches on *Bowling for Dollars* and in Las Vegas, and later lost his job during the Iranian revolution; her elegant mother, who never fully mastered English (nor cared to); her uncle, who combated the effects of American fast food with an army of miraculous American weight-loss gadgets; and Firoozeh herself, who as a girl changed her name to Julie, and who encountered a second wave of culture shock when she met and married a Frenchman, becoming part of a one-couple melting pot. In a series of deftly drawn scenes, we watch the family grapple with American English (hot dogs and hush puppies? • a complete mystery), American traditions (Thanksgiving turkey? • an even greater mystery, since it tastes like nothing), and American culture (Firoozeh's parents laugh uproariously at Bob Hope on television, although they don't get the jokes even when she translates them into Farsi). Above all, this is an unforgettable story of identity, discovery, and the power of family love. It is a book that will leave us all laughing • without an accent. Praise for *Funny in Farsi* • "Heartfelt and hilarious" in any language. • "Glamour" • "A joyful success." • "Newsday" • "What's charming beyond the humor of this memoir is that it remains affectionate even in the weakest, most tenuous moments for the culture. It's the brilliance of true sophistication at work." • "Los Angeles Times Book Review" • "Often hilarious, always interesting . . . Like the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, this book describes with humor the intersection and overlapping of two cultures." • "The Providence Journal" • "A humorous and introspective chronicle of a life filled with love • of family, country, and heritage." • "Jimmy Carter" • "Delightfully refreshing." • "Milwaukee Journal Sentinel" • "[Funny in Farsi] brings us closer to discovering what it means to be an American." • "San Jose Mercury News"

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

This lighthearted memoir chronicles the author's move from Iran to America in 1971 at age seven, the antics of her extended family and her eventual marriage to a Frenchman. The best parts will make readers laugh out loud, as when she arrives in Newport Beach, Calif., "a place where one's tan is a legitimate topic of conversation." She is particularly good making gentle fun of her father, who loves Disneyland and once competed on the game show *Bowling for Dollars*. Many of the book's jokes, though, are groan inducing, as in, "the only culture that my father was interested in was the kind in yogurt." And the book is off-kilter structurally. After beginning with a string of amusing anecdotes from her family's first years stateside, one five-page chapter lurches from seventh grade in California to an ever so brief mention of the Iranian revolution, and then back to California, college and meeting her husband. In addition, while politics are understandably not Dumas's topic, the way she skates over the subject can seem disingenuous. Following the revolution, did her father really turn down the jobs offered to him in Iran only because "none were within his field of interest"? Despite unevenness, Dumas's first book remains a warm, witty and sometimes poignant look at cross-cultural misunderstanding and family life. Immigrants from anywhere are likely to identify with her chronicle of adapting to America. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Adult/High School-Dumas first came to the U.S. from Iran in the early '70s when her father was sent to California on a two-year contract from the National Iranian Oil Company. Her family soon discovered that his presumed skill in English was basically limited to "vectors, surface tension and

fluid mechanics." In short, humorous vignettes, the author recounts their resulting difficulties and Americans' almost total ignorance of Iran, illustrating the kindness of people and her father's absolute love of this country. After a brief return to Iran, they came back. This time, however, they were mistrusted and vilified, as a result of the Iranian hostage crisis. Her father lost his job and was forced to sell most of their possessions. Even this harsh treatment didn't diminish his love for the U.S., and they later reestablished themselves, though with a lower standard of living. Throughout, Dumas writes with a light touch, even when, after having been flown to DC by the state department to welcome the shah, they faced death threats and had to leave town. Her descriptions of American culture and her experiences with school, TV, and language (she was once called "Fritzy DumbAss" by a receptionist) could be the observations of anyone new to this country, and her humor allows natives and nonnatives alike to look at America with new insight. Susan H. Woodcock, Fairfax County Public Library, Chantilly, VA

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I've now read all three of her books and loved them all. She has a gentle way of observing her life that's also absolutely hilarious. I think every American should read her books, especially with the suspicions toward foreign-born raging in our country right now. Meeting people from other countries is so important, and making friends with them will lead to peace. It was great to 'meet' Firoozeh through her books. Keep writing! We are a better - and safer country - because she and her family are here!

This was a very funny and relatable book. We all know someone who is old fashioned, or doesn't speak the language well and is trying to fit in. This is Firoozeh's family, and the simplest things require a slight shifting of the brain to accommodate them. The complex things turn out needing to be seen from a different angle completely. The author herself came to America as a child, and so has one foot in each culture. Aside from that, she has a good way with words, and knows how to write, bringing humor to those times we all have that seem funny only in retrospect.

Laugh out loud funny in places. Offers a unique insight into a family from an Iranian culture into an American culture. Living as an US expat in a foreign country, I can truly appreciate the challenges of new foods, new slang terms, new ways of behaving in public. Loved their close knit family ties that bound them together and supported them during their "assimilation" into the American lifestyles. Highly recommend this book. Well written, honest, insightful. I felt enlightened by Ms. Dumas'

honesty and entertaining writing style, and was, quite honestly, wishing the book hadn't ended.

Laughed out loud reading this while very ill and experiencing many simultaneous crises so it's gotta be funny. The ability to laugh instead of rage is a delightful trait of comedians and Firoozeh Dumas has the humility, the wit, the eye and the vocabulary to paint comedy from life challenges. Her skewed perspective is funny beyond belief. She can simultaneously describe the strange behaviors of her father while obviously loving, admiring, and respecting him. Isn't that the best of family? To see family's quirks as adorable is to forgive in advance and to save the shreds of dignity left to each. In a fraught time to be able to laugh at the divine comedy of refugees experiencing the fish-out-of-water changes is a laudable feat. Her writing skill is superb, her eye is for comedy is raucous, and her self-deprecating humor is empathetic while being sharp. Too funny for words!

My beautiful daughter-in-law is Persian, so I was curious about this book. I loved it so much, I bought several other copies, for her, her mother, and even gave a copy to my dentist, who loved it. I learned why my daughter-in-law was so reluctant to allow me to send invitations to people who I knew would not come, but would love to hear about the wedding. I was touched by the relationship that the author had with her father. And, I laughed through much of it.

I ADORED this book! I had already read "Laughing Without an Accent" and loved that book, and knew that if ever another book by Firoozeh ever came up, I would devour it, and certainly this one was devoured by me. She is a person I would love to know personally. I know we would just get along so well. I love her sense of humor, and we would just laugh until we cry...We all have similar things in our lives if we look at them. This is one of those books where you begin to read more slowly because you know it is going to end, and you don't want it to. I will even go back to re-read, Laughing Without an Accent because it has GREATNESS in it, especially what she told those graduates at the end. I will never forget that part. She has a great deal of wisdom to impart amidst her great humor. I actually LOVE Firoozeh, and I so wish she was my personal friend. We all NEED a Firoozeh in our lives.....at least I do.

I truly enjoyed this book and it was just what I had been looking for. Some books are good but they are serious. This one was just plain fun to read and she has a wonderful knack in the way she makes comparisons. She also talks about her parents and their idiosyncrasies but at the same time you know she really loves them. They come to the States before the Iran contra crisis but later on

also after that crisis and she shows how they are treated differently. Any immigrant walks a line between their past in their native country and the new country. Hopefully this will help some people understand that when moving to a new country you lose some things from your old country and gain new things from the new country.

I never laughed as much as I did while reading this book. I thoroughly enjoyed the author's writing style and I can't wait to read another of her books! I nearly didn't buy it after reading a reviewer's comment that she felt the author was disrespectful to her parents because of their naivety and heavily accented speech. It didn't seem like that at all to me, I felt the author's warmth and love for her extended family throughout the book. It was a delightful reading experience!

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