

Iran reads:  
'Almond' by  
Sohn Won-pyung

### EXCLUSIVE

"Mom said everything was for my sake, calling it love. But to me, it seemed more like we were doing this out of her own desperation not to have a child that was different. Love, according to Mom's actions, was nothing more than nagging about every little thing, with teary eyes, about how one should act such and such in this and that situation."



One of Iran's bestsellers this week is the book 'Almond,' written by South Korean novelist and filmmaker, Sohn Won-pyung. Originally published in 2016, the coming-of-age novel was met with critical acclaim upon its publication, with its story revolving around Yun-jae, who suffers from alexithymia, a subclinical inability to identify and describe emotions, as he has a relatively small amygdala, whose etymological meaning is "almond." Its peculiar subject matter, paired with a suspenseful narrative and an emphasis on love as something that can turn everything around, has apparently struck a chord with readers everywhere, as is evident by the novel's high rating of 4.2 on Goodreads, and an astounding rating of 4.7 on Amazon.

Translated to Farsi and published in Iran less than a year ago, the novel has seen huge commercial success – so much so that there are currently four different translations of the book available to readers – and turned into one of the most talked-about books among Iranians on social media.

Many book bloggers on Instagram praised the well-written novel and strongly recommended it to their followers. One of the most followed, Maryam, rated the book a staggering 4.5 out of 5 and showered the novel with praise. Another one, Hamed, wrote, "Reading 'Almond' is like growing up together with Yun-jae. I especially enjoyed the way he describes his surroundings without speaking explicitly about emotions, and how he tries to explain his feelings, gradually building our understanding of his condition."

## Iranian scientist Rajabi develops world's strongest antifungal



● digidaru.com

● IRNA

A faculty member of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences (MUMS) in northeastern Iran has developed one of the strongest antifungal medications in the world.

According to producer, Dr. Omid Rajabi, the antifungal named fungizone removes the most resistant fungi from the skin surface within two-three days, IRNA reported.

He said that fungizone has been able to quickly treat the skin conditions of lifeguards exposed to moisture in indoor swimming pools for a long time.

The medication has been officially authorized and its production will begin next month with an initial capacity of 10,000 units per month, Rajabi said. The company that is producing fungizone has also produced a spray medication named 'ozoped' which kills head lice, their eggs, and even the embryo inside the eggs, robbing these insects of the opportunity to grow and infect scalp and hair.

Ozoped could also be used to treat surgical injuries, said the head of the Drug Control Department at the MUMS.

"After the surgery bandages of the patients were removed, ozoped was applied to quickly heal the wound with success," said Dr. Rajabi, adding that anti-lice medicine works by increasing the oxygen supply at the tissue level, preventing the growth of microorganisms, and fighting wound infections.

Ozoped will begin production with 3,000 units per month at the same time as fungizone, and 25-30 percent of its monthly production is already planned to be exported to Iraq and Tajikistan.

Fungizone and ozoped are the outcomes of research launched 22 years ago on the possible relationship between ozone and health care.

### PIC OF THE DAY



● MOHSEN NOFERESTI/IRNA

People of Dorokhsh village in South Khorasan Province, eastern Iran, engage in the traditional custom of *alam-bandan* ahead of Ashura (10th day of Muharram, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH)), which involves making 14 signs in honor of the 14 most revered figures in Shia Islam. The photo shows the villagers taking their signs to Dorokhsh Jaame' Mosque.

Thus spoke the artist:

## Abbas taught me what it means to be courageous

Special series  
on ta'zieh

### EXCLUSIVE

One of the bravest soldiers in the army of Imam Hussein, Abu Wahab, was a Christian not long before the Battle of Karbala. He converted to Islam, however, in order to be able to protect the grandson of the prophet of Islam, and observe the Arab codes of chivalry and gallantry, which dictate that one cannot leave the side of an isolated man surrounded by blood-thirsty enemies. Abu Wahab died a martyr in Karbala.

"One of the most emotive memories I have is from a *ta'zieh* on the day of Ashura in Damghan; the person who was enacting the role of Abu Wahab passed away as soon as his character's part in the performance came to its heroic end," said Danial Janqoli, the 17-year-old actor, who has shown signs of prowess in the dramatic art at an early age. He points out that no one in the audience suspected anything, until the actor's body was being carried away from the place. "This is an honor all of us who serve our Lord wish for, to die where we spent a lifetime commemorating his passions," he said.

Born to a religious family hailing from Tafresh in Markazi Province, central Iran, where *ta'zieh* is big, the 11th grader started to act in passion plays since he was six years old.

"One day, my mother decided to read the script of *ta'zieh* of Ruqqayeh with me, when I couldn't even read the words myself. But I memorized the whole script very quickly, and she knew then that I had a natural talent for this."

In a short while, Danial managed to memorize more than 20 scripts.

"Until I came of age, I played 40 different roles of the children in

Karbala, and could recite 3,000 lines by heart."

Impressive as that may be, it didn't come easy. Since child actors who could play in *ta'zieh* were in high demand, Danial was invited to act in different plays all year long, and therefore, he had to constantly revisit and practice the roles.

"But I enjoyed every bit of it, because *ta'zieh* has been, and will always be, my one and only passion," he said.

As it turns out, even before he could form meaningful words, he used to be cast in *ta'zieh*. He fondly talks of the first costume his mother had him wear for the occasion.

"I was just six months old. My grandmother had sewn the dress for me so I could wear it and play the role of Ali-Asghar." In the middle of the *ta'zieh*, the actor who played Imam Hussein put the microphone in front of the crying Danial, in order to impress the already grieving audience.

The teenage actor maintains that in order to be a successful *ta'zieh* actor, first and foremost, one has to love the descendants of Prophet Muhammad, and only then try to work on other aspects of the art, like having a trained voice, musical knowledge, and acting skills.

"Also, horse-riding. In Tehran, though, there are not many *ta'ziehs* in which you could see horses, but in Isfahan, it's a different story. You have to be able to ride horses."

*What has he learned from playing in ta'zieh all these years?*

"I learned courage from Abbas, patience from Zeinab, and love and sacrifice from Qasem and Abdullah."

"I also learned to disregard the earthly possessions from Hurr ibn-Yazid."

