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## To see is to believe

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Thanks for visiting my fundraising page. This March I'm walking 10,000 steps a day throughout the month to help beat cancer sooner. Help me Walk All Over Cancer and fund life-saving research by sponsoring me. January 22, 2016 6 min read Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own. I spent the last seven days worrying over
an upcoming client phone call in which -- I was convinced -- the client was going to say "Thank you . . . and goodbye." I worried about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out in my head the conversation I expected to take place (and replayed it, stressed about it, played out it, played o
lost sleep. Ultimately I allowed these worries to take the shine off my days. I'm sure I'm not alone in this. In fact, I know I'm not alone, given the many leaders who have shared with me the worries and things that "keep them awake at night." What do we worry about? In my book, Cultivate. The Power of Winning Relationships, I've dedicated a whole
chapter to exploring how our internal self-talk and worry can undermine our success. Reportedly, the average human being has around 50,000 thoughts a day (which explains why my "brain" is rarely quiet)! All this silent chatter and self-talk can be powerful in its ability to build self-confidence, overcome barriers to success and get us out of
danger. However, unhealthy self-talk and worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience. We worry about the future: what might happen, what potential pitfalls we may experience when the future is the futu
worrying about what others think of us. In fact, we "should have" and "if only" ourselves into a frenzy of hypothetical outcomes, as we attempt to rewrite history. Sometimes, the insights we gain from this self-talk are helpful. But other times, it's conducted without deliberate thought or intent to learn, and it tends to knock us down
and wear us out. Especially when things have gone wrong and we are experiencing a tough time. What's interesting is that when things don't go as planned, most of the doubt. Don't believe me? Imagine you've been working hard on a
project for the last few months and have prepared an executive team has canceled your meeting. What's going through your mind? A colleague who has missed past deadlines is due to submit a document to you by close of
business today. Your phone rings and the caller ID displays this person's name. What are you thinking as you answer the phone? Colleague continually interrupts you in meetings. What are you telling yourself about this person's motives and how they regard you? Related: 2 Things Entrepreneurs Should Not Worry About Experience has shown that
your mind will assume the worst: The executives don't know what they are doing; your project isn't important; your colleague is about to let you down again and not have the work done on time; your project isn't important; your colleague is about to let you down again and not have the work done on time; your project isn't important; your colleague is about to let you down again and not have the work done on time; your project isn't important; your colleague is arrogant and doesn't respect you. Only a small percentage of stories, if any, will provide a best-case scenario. For example, "The executives
have confidence in me and are focused on another priority." "My colleague is calling to say the project is finished early." "My colleague is excited about what I just said and wants to go deeper. "In my case, I worried about the possibility of my client saying "goodbye," even though I had no reason to, no facts to lead me to this conclusion. In fact, it
turned out quite the opposite -- we had made progress in the p
But just because something might happen doesn't mean it will. The requisite rule, then, may not be easy, but it's simple: You don't have to believe everything you think. Get off the trash-talk roller-coaster." It goes like this: This is awesome! This is harder than I expected. This is
awful!I am awful.This is barely okay.This is awesome!What I realized (and why I refer to this list every day) is that it neatly sums up my thought process on a daily, hourly and minute-by-minute basis. And the really scary thing? It can take me nano-seconds to go from number 1 to number 4. It can then take considerably longer to get from 4 to 6.Even
after all the time I've spent relating these principles, debilitating moments of self-doubt still creep in. Being able to translate limiting self-talk into something more positive, and to reach out to an ally for an empathetic ear, or a quick kick in the pants, can be so critical. In the case of that dreaded client call, one of my colleagues gave me a pep talk,
exploring the triggers behind my worry and providing suggestions for the upcoming conversation. I power posed, listened to some powerful music, prepared and pictured a positive outcome. Ultimately, I chose to wait and see what the call? The
client wanted to discuss the next program. My worry had all been for nothing. How do you get off your own version of the trash-talk rollercoaster? Share your insights in the comments below. I'd love to hear from you. Related: 4 TED Talks to Help You Deal With Stress and Anxiety Sadeq was to go with me from Tehran to the Holy city of Qom, a
hundred miles to the south. I hadn't met Sadeq's name had been arranged on the telephone. I needed an Iranian interpreter, and Sadeq's name had been given to me by someone from an embassy. Sadeq was free because, like many Iranians since the revolution, he had found himself out of a job. He had a car. When we spoke on the telephone he
said it would be better for us to drive to Qom in his car; Iranian buses were dreadful and could be driven at frightening speeds by people who didn't really care. We fixed a price for his car, his driving, his interpretation; and what he asked for was reasonable. He said we should start as soon as possible the next morning, to avoid the heat of the August
day. He would take his wife to her office—she still had a job—and come straight on to the hotel. I should be ready at 7:30. He came some minutes before eight. He was in his late twenties, small and carefully dressed, handsome, with a great
sneering pride, deferential but resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful, not liking himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful himself for what he was doing. He was the kind of man who, without political doctrine, with only resentful himself for what he was doing at the was doi
was smiling, but he had bad news for me. He didn't think his car could make it to Qom.I didn't believe him. I thought he had simply changed his mind.I said, "The car was your idea. I wanted to go by the bus. What happened between last night and now?""The car broke down.""Why didn't you telephone me before you left home? If you had telephoned,
we could have caught the eight o'clock bus. Now we've missed that.""The car broke down after I took my wife to work. Do you really want to go to Qom we can take a chance with it. Once it starts it's all right. The trouble is to get it started. "We went to look at the car. It was
suspiciously well parked at the side of the road not far from the hotel gate. Sadeq sat in the driver's seat. He called out to a passing man, one of the many idle workmen of Tehran, and the man and I began to push. A young man with a briefcase, possibly an office worker on his way to work, came and helped without being asked. The road was dug-up
and dusty; the car was very dusty. It was hot; the exhausts of passing cars and trucks made it hotter. We pushed now with the flow of the traffic, now against it; and all the time Sadeq sat serenely at the steering wheel. People from the pavement came and helped for a little, then went about their business. It occurred to me that I should also be going
about mine. This—pushing Sadeq's car back and forth—wasn't the way to get to Qom; what had begun so unpromisingly wasn't going to end well. So, without telling anybody anything then or afterward, I left Sadeq and his car and his volunteer pushers and walked back to the hotel. I telephoned Behzad. Behzad had also been recommended to me as an
interpreter. But there had been some trouble in finding him—he was a student footloose in the great city of Tehran; and when the previous evening he had telephoned me, I had already closed with Sadeq. I told Behzad now that my plans had fallen through. He made no difficulties—and I liked him for that. He said he was still-free, and would be with
me in an hour. He didn't think we should take a car to Qom. The bus was cheaper, and I would see more of the Iranian people. He also said that I should eat something substantial before leaving. It was Ramadan, the month when Moslems fast from sunrise to sunset; and in Qom, the city of mullahs and ayatollahs, it wasn't going to be possible to eat or
drink. In some parts of the country—with the general Islamic excitement—people had been whipped for breaking the fast. Behzad's approach, even on the telephone, was different from Sadeq's. Sadeq, a small man on the rise, and perhaps only a step or two above being a peasant, had tried to suggest that he was above the general Iranian level. But he
wasn't, really; there was a lot of the Iranian hysteria and confusion locked up in his smiling eyes. Behzad, explaining his country, claiming it all, managed to sound more objective. When, at the time he had said, we met in the lobby of the hotel, I at once felt at ease with him. He was younger, taller, darker than Sadeq. He was more educated; there was
nothing of the dandy about him, nothing of Sadeq's nervousness and raw pride. We went by line taxi—a city taxi operating along fixed routes—to the brown hills, hills that faded in the daytime haze—was the elegant part of the city; that was where the parks and gardens were, the
planelined boulevards, the expensive apartment blocks, the hotels and the crowd in from the countryside; and the crowd in from the countryside; and the crowd in from the dusty, littered yard of the bus station was like a country crowd. Somebody in a grimy little office told
 Behzad that there was a bus for Qom in half an hour. The bus in bundles on the roof, no patient peasants waiting outside or stewing inside. That bus looked parked for the day. I didn't believe it was going to leave in half an hour; neither did Behzad. There was another bus service from Tehran, though, one that offered air-conditioned buses and
reserved seats. Behzad looked for a telephone, found coins, telephoned, got no reply. The August heat had built up; the air was full of dust. A line taxi took us to the other terminal, which was in central Tehran. Boards above a long counter gave the names of remote Iranian towns; there was even a daily service, through Turkey, to Europe. But the
morning bus to Qom had gone; there wouldn't be another for many hours. It was now near noon. There was nothing for us to do but to go back to the hotel and think again. We walked; the line taxis had no room. There was nothing for us to do but to go back to the hotel and think again. We walked; the line taxis had no room. There was nothing for us to do but to go back to the hotel and think again. We walked; the line taxis had no room. There was nothing for us to do but to go back to the hotel and think again. We walked; the line taxis had no room. There was nothing for us to do but to go back to the hotel and think again. We walked; the line taxis had no room. The traffic was heavy.
projects abandoned, so many unmoving cranes on the tops of unfinished buildings—could give an impression of desperate busyness. The desperation was suggested by the way the Iranians drove. They drove as they walked; and a stream of Tehran traffic, jumpy with individual stops and swerves,
with no clear lanes, was like a jostling pavement crowd. This manner of driving didn't go with any special Tehran luck. The door or fender of every other car was bashed in, or bashed in and mended. An item in a local paper (blaming the Shah for not having given the city a more modern road system) had said that traffic accidents were the greatest
single cause of deaths in Tehran; two thousand people were killed or injured every month. We came to an intersection. And there I lost Behzad. I was waiting for the traffic to stop. But Behzad didn't wait with me. He simply began to cross, dealing with each approaching car in turn, now stopping, now hurrying, now altering the angle of his path, and,
like a man crossing a forest gorge by a slender fallen tree trunk, never looking back. He did so only when he got to the other side. He waved me over, but I couldn't move. Traffic lights had failed higher up, and the cars didn't stop. He understood my helplessness. He came back through the traffic to me, and then—like a moorhen leading its chick
across the swift current of a stream—he led me through dangers that at every moment seemed about to sweep me away. He led me by the hand; and, just as the moorhen places herself a little downstream from the chick, breaking the force of the current, which would otherwise sweep the little thing away forever, so Behzad kept me in his lee, walking
a little ahead of me and a little to one side, so that he would have been hit first. And when we were across the road he said, "You must always give your hand to me. "It was, in effect, what I had already begun to do. Without Behzad, without the access to the language that he gave me, I had been like a half-blind man in Tehran. And it had been especially
frustrating to be without the language in these streets, scrawled and counter-scrawled with aerosol slogans in many colors in the flowing Persian script, and plastered with revolutionary posters and cartoons with an emphasis on blood. Now, with Behzad, the walls spoke; many other things took on meaning; and the city changed. Behzad had at first
seemed neutral in his comments, and I had thought that this was part of his correctness, his wish not to go beyond his function as a translator. But Behzad was neutral because he was confused. He was a revolutionary and he welcomed the overthrow of the Shah; but the religious revolution that had come to Iran was not the revolution that Behzad
wanted. Behzad was without religious faith. How had that happened? How, in a country like Iran, and growing up in a provincial town, had he learned to do without religion? It was simple, Behzad said. He hadn't been instructed in the faith by his parents; he hadn't been sent to the mosque. Islam was a complicated religion. It wasn't philosophical or
speculative. It was a revealed religion, with a Prophet and a complete set of rules. To believe, it was necessary to know a lot about the Arabian origins of the religion, and to take this knowledge to heart. Islam in Iran was even more complicated. It was a divergence from the main belief; and this divergence had its roots in the political-racial dispute
 about the succession to the Prophet, who died in 632 A.D. Islam, almost from the start, had been an imperialism as well as a religion, with an early history remarkably like a speeded—up version of the history of Rome, developing from city state to peninsular overlord to empire, with corresponding stresses at every stage. The Iranian divergence had
become doctrinal, and there had been divergences within the divergences within the divergence within the divergence within the fourth Imam, had hived off; another group had their own ideas about the seventh. Only one Imam, the eighth (poisoned, like the fourth), was buried in
Iran; and his tomb, in Mashhad, not far from the Russian border, was an object of pilgrimage." A lot of those people were killed or poisoned," Behzad said, as though explaining his lack of belief. Islam in Iran, Shia Islam, was an intricate business. To keep alive ancient animosities, to hold on to the idea of personal revenge even after a thousand years,
to have a special list of heroes and martyrs and villains, it was necessary to be instructed. And Behzad hadn't been instructed in disbelief by his father, who was a communist. It was of the poor rather than of the saints that Behzad's father had spoken. The memory that Behzad preserved
with special piety was of the first day his father had spoken to him about poverty—his own poverty, and the poverty of others. On the pavement outside the Turkish embassy two turbanned, sunburned medicine men in Tehran and had thought of
them as Iranian equivalents of the homeopathic medicine men of India. But the names these Iranians were invoking as medical authorities—as Behzad told me, after listening to their sales talk to a peasant group—were Avicenna, Galen, and "Hippocrat." Avicenna! To me only a name, someone from the European Middle Ages: it had never occurred to
me that he was a Persian. In this dusty pavement medical stock was a reminder of the Arab glory of a thousand years before, when the Arab glory of a thousand was less awed than I was. He didn't care for that
Moslem past; and he didn't believe in pavement medicines. He didn't care for the Shah's architecture, either: the antiquity of the monarchy was only part of the Shah's vainglory. He looked at the
bank, at the bronze and the marble, and said without passion, "That means nothing to me." We turned once more, as we walked, to the revolution. There were two posters I had seen in many parts of the city. They were of the same size, done in the same style, and clearly made a pair. One showed a small peasant group working in a field, using a
barrow or a plough—it wasn't clear which, from the drawing. The other showed, in silhouette, a crowd raising rifles and machine guns as if in salute. They were like the posters of a people's revolution: an awakened, victorious people, a new dignity of labor. But what was the Persian legend at the top?Behzad translated: "'Twelfth Imam, we are waiting
for you.""What does that mean?""It means they are waiting for the Twelfth Imam. "The Twelfth Imam was the last of the Iranian line of succession to the Prophet. That line had ended over eleven hundred years ago. But the Twelfth Imam was the last of the Iranian line of succession to the Prophet. That line had ended over eleven hundred years ago. But the Twelfth Imam was the last of the Iranian line of succession to the Prophet.
revolution was an offering to him. Behzad couldn't help me more; he could only lay out the facts. Behzad was without belief, but he was surrounded by belief and he could understand its emotional charge. For him it was enough to say—as he did say, without satirical intention—that the Twelfth Imam was
the Twelfth Imam.Later on my Islamic journey, as difficult facts of history and genealogy became more familiar, became more familiar
hidden messiah that Iranians had written on the walls of London and other foreign cities before the revolution. They had written—in English—about terture by the Shah's secret police; about torture 
me, going only by the graffiti of Iranians abroad, that religious leader, who had been in exile for many years. The Ayatollah Khomeini, I felt, had been revealed slowly. As the revolution developed, his sanctity and authority appeared to
grow and at the end were seen to have been absolute all along. Fully disclosed, the Ayatollah had turned out to be nothing less than the interpreter, for Iranians, of God's will. By his emergence he annulled, or made trivial, all previous protests about the "fascism" of the Shah. And he accepted his role. And it was as the interpreter of God's will, the final
judge of what was Islamic and what was not Islamic, that Khomeini ruled Iran. Some days after I arrived in Tehran, this was what he said on the radio: "I must tell you that during the previous dictatorial regime strikes and sit-ins pleased God. But now, when the government is a Moslem and a national one, the enemy is busy plotting against us. And
therefore staging strikes and sit-ins is religiously forbidden because they are against the principles of Islam. "This was familiar to me, and intellectually manageable, even after a few days in Tehran: the special authority of the man who ruled both as political head and as voice of God. But the idea of the revolution as something more, as an offering to
the Twelfth Imam, the man who had vanished in 873 A.D. and remained "in occultation," was harder to seize. And the mimicry of the revolutionary motifs of the Revolutionary Guards—made it more unsettling. Behzad translated;
the walls spoke; Tehran felt strange. And North Tehran—an expensive piece of Europe expensively set down in the sand and rock of the hills, the creation of the Shah and the large middle class that had been brought into being by the uncreated wealth of oil—felt like a fantasy. There were skyscrapers, international hotels, shops displaying expensive
goods with international brand names; but this great city had been grafted onto South Tehran. South Tehran was the community out of which the North had too quickly evolved. And South Tehran, obedient to the will of God and the Twelfth Imam, had laid it low. Moslems were part of the small Indian community of Trinidad, which was the community
into which I was born; and it could be said that I had known Moslems all my life. But I knew little of their religion. My own background was Hindu, and I grew up with the knowledge that Moslems, though ancestrally of India and therefore like ourselves in many ways, were different. I was never instructed in the religious details, and perhaps no one in
my family really knew. The difference between Hindus and Moslems was more a matter of group feeling, and mysterious: the animosities our Hindu and Moslem grandfathers had brought from India had softened into a kind of folk wisdom about the unreliability and treachery of the other side. I was without religious faith myself. I barely understood
the rituals and ceremonies I grew up with. In Trinidad, with its many races, my Hinduism was really an attachment to my own difference; and I imagined that among Moslems and others there were similar attachments and privacies. What I knew about Islam was what was known to everyone on the outside.
They had a Prophet and a Book; they believed in one God and disliked images; they had an idea of heaven and hell—always a difficult idea for me. Islam, going by what I saw of it from the outside, was less metaphysical and more direct than Hinduism. In this religion of fear and reward, oddly compounded with war and worldly grief, there was much
that reminded me of Christianity—more visible and "official" in Trinidad; and it was possible for me to feel that I knew about it. Its doctrine, or what I thought was its doc
this religion were in the remote past; it had generated nothing like a Renaissance. Moslem countries, where not colonized, were despotisms; and nearly all, before oil, were poor. The idea of traveling to certain Moslem countries had come to me the previous winter, during the Iranian revolution. I was in Connecticut, and on some evenings I watched
the television news. As interesting to me as the events in Iran were the Iranians in the United States who were interviewed on some of the programs. There was a man in a tweed jacket who spoke the pure language of Marxism, but was more complicated than his language suggested. He was a bit of a dandy, and proud of his ability to handle the jargon
he had picked up; he was like a man displaying an idiomatic command of a foreign language. He was proud of his Iranian revolution—it gave him glamour. But at the same time he understood that the religious side of the revolution—it gave him glamour. But at the same time he understood that the religious side of the revolution—it gave him glamour. But at the same time he understood that the religious side of the revolution would appear less than glamour. But at the same time he understood that the religious side of the revolution would appear less than glamorous to his audience; and so he was trying—with the help of his tweed jacket, his idiomatic
language, his manner—to present himself as sophisticated as any man who watched, and sophisticated in the same way. Another evening, on another program, an Iranian woman came on with her head covered to tell us that Islam protected women and gave them dignity. Fourteen hundred years ago in Arabia, she said, girl children were buried alive;
it was Islam that put a stop to that. Well, we didn't all live in Arabia (not even the woman with the covered head); and many things had happened since the special protection that Islam gave them? Did they need the veil? Did they need to be banned
Fierce enough already, she flared up at that; and with her chador-encircled face she looked like an angry nun, full of reprimand. It was a mistake many people made, she said; but Saudi Arabia was not an Islamic state of Iran was going to
be quite different. (It was only in Iran that I understood the point the woman with the chador had made about Saudi Arabia. It was a sectarian point and might have been thought too involved for a television audience: the Arabians and there is historical bad
blood between them.) It was of the beauty of Islamic law that I heard a third Iranian speak. But what was he doing studying law in an American university? What had attracted these Iranians to the United States and the civilization it represented? Couldn't they say? The attraction existed; it was more than a need for education and skills. But the
of person she had become; she was denying some of her own gifts. All these Iranians on American television were conscious of their American audience, and they gave the impression of saying less than they meant. Perhaps they preferred not to say. IN August of 1979, six
months after the overthrow of the Shah, the news from Iran was still of executions. The official Iranian news agency kept count, and regularly gave a new grand total. The most recent executions had been of prostitutes and brothel-managers; the Islamic revolution had taken that wicked turn. The Ayatollah Khomeini was reported to have outlawed
wasn't so. The Iran Air flight that day had been canceled, and there was a crowd for the British Airways plane to Tehran. Most of the passengers—the international mishmash of the airport concourse sifting and sifting itself, through gates and channels, into more or less ethnic flight pens—were Iranians; and they didn't look like people running away
from an Islamic revolution or going back to one. There wasn't a veil or a head-cover among the women, one or two of whom were guite stylish. They had all done a lot of shopping, and carried the variously designed plastic bags of London stores—Lillywhites, Marks & Spencer, Austin Reed. We made a technical stop at Kuwait, to refuel; no one left the
plane. It was dark, but dawn was not far off. The light began to come; the night vanished. And we saw that the airport—such a pattern of electric lights from above—had been built on sand. The air that came through the ventilators was going to
be cooler, the steward said. It was an hour's flight to the northeast: more desert, oblongs of pale vegetation here and there, and here and there are the arrival hall was like a
big shed. Blank rectangular patches edged with reddish dust—ghost pictures in ghostly frames—showed where, no doubt, there had been photographs of the Shah and his family or his monuments. Revolutionary leaflets and caricatures were taped down on walls and pillars; and—also taped down: sticky paper and handwritten notices giving a curious
informality to great events—there were colored photographs of the Ayatollah Khomeini, as hard-eyed and sensual and unreliable and roguish-looking as any enemy might have portrayed him. The airport branch of the Melli Bank—rough tables, three clerks, a lot of paper, a littered floor—was like an Indian bazaar stall. A handwritten notice on the
counter said: Dear Guests. God is the Greatest. Welcome to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Bits of sticky brown paper did away with the liquor allowance; it was part of the Islamic welcome. The luggage track that should have been rolling out our luggage
didn't move for a long time. And the Iranian passengers, with their London shopping bags, seemed to become different people from the fairyland of oil and money, spenders; now, in the shabby arrival hall, patient in their own setting and among their own kind, they looked like country folk who had gone to
town. The customs man had a little black brush moustache. He asked, "Whiskey?" His pronunciation of the word, and his smile, seemed to turn the guery into a joke. When I said no he took my word and smilingly waved me out into the summer brightness, to face the post-revolutionary rapaciousness of the airport taximen, who after six months were
more than ever animated by memories of the old days, when the world's salesmen came to Tehran, there were never enough hotel rooms, and no driver pined for a fare. The colors of the city were as dusty and pale as they had appeared from the air. Dust blew about the road, coated the trees, dimmed the colors of cars. Bricks and plaster were the
lawn with shrubs and trees. It was in better order than I had imagined; there were even a few cars. But the building we had gone to was closed. It was the older building of the hotel; during the boom they had built a new block
and now it was only that block that was open. A number of young men—the hotel taxi drivers, to whom the cars outside belonged—were sitting idly together in one corner of the lobby, near the desk. Away from that corner the lobby was empty. In the middle of the floor there was a very large patterned carpet; the chairs arranged about it appeared to
await a crowd. There were glass walls on two sides. On one side was the courtyard, with the dusty shrubs and pines and the parked hotel taxis; on the other side, going up to the hotel wall, was a small paved pool area, untenanted, glaring in the light, with metal chairs stacked up below an open shed. The room to which I was taken up was of a good
size, with sturdy wooden furniture, and with wood paneling three or four feet up the side walls. The glass wall at the end faced North Tehran; a glass door opened on to a balcony. But the air-conditioning duct was leaking through its exhaust grille, and the blue carpet tiling in the vestibule was sodden and stained. The hotel man—it was hard, in the
idleness of the hotel, to attach the professional status of "boy" to him, though he wore the uniform—smiled and pointed to the floor above and said, "Bathroom," as though explanation were all that was required. The man he sent up spoke about condensation; he made the drips seem normal, even necessary. And then—explanations abruptly abandoned
—I was given another room. It was furnished like the first and had the same view. On the television set here, though, there was a white card, folded down the middle and standing upright. It gave the week's programs on the "international," English-language service of Iranian television. The service had long been suspended. The card was six months
old. It was not only Ramadan, the Moslem fasting month; it was Friday, the sabbath; and it was an election day. Tehran was unusually quiet, but I didn't know that; and when in the afternoon I went walking I felt I was in a city where a calamity had occurred. The shops in the main streets were closed and protected by steel gates. Signs on every floor
shrieked the names of imported things: Seiko, Citizen, Rolex, Mary Quant of Chelsea, Aiwa; and on that closed afternoon they were like names from Tehran's past. The pavements were broken or had lost some of their raised letters. Dust and grime were so general, and on illuminated signs looked so much like the effect
of smoke, that buildings that had been burned out in old fires did not immediately catch the eye. Building work seemed to have been suspended; rubble heaps and gravel heaps looked old, settled. In the pavement kiosks there were magazines of the revolution. The cover of one had a composite photograph of the Shah as a bathing beauty: the head of
the Shah attached to the body of a woman in a bikini—but the bikini had been brushed over with a broad stroke of black, not to offend modesty. In another caricature the Shah, jacketed, his tie slackened, sat on a lavatory seat with his trousers down, and with a tommy gun in his hand. A suitcase beside him was labeled To Israel and Bahama; an open
canvas bag showed a bottle of whiskey and a copy of Time magazine. Young men in tight, open-necked shirts dawdled on the broken pavements. They were handsome men of a clear racial type, small, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted. They were handsome men of a clear racial type, small, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted.
afternoon: they must have been keyed up by the communal Friday prayers. In their clothes, and especially their shirts, there was that touch of flashiness that—going by what I had seen in India—I associated with people who had just emerged from traditional ways and now possessed the idea that, in clothes as in other things, they could choose for
themselves. The afternoon cars and motorcycles went by, driven in the Iranian way. I saw two collisions. One shop had changed its name. It was now "Our Fried Chicken," no longer the chicken of Kentucky, and the figure of the southern colonel had been fudged into something quite meaningless (except to those who remembered the colonel)
Revolutionary Guards, young men with guns, soon ceased to be surprising; they were part of the revolutionary sabbath scene. There were crowds outside the cinemas; and, Ramadan though it was, people were buying pistachio nuts and sweets from the confiseries—so called—that were open. Far to the north, at the end of a long avenue of plane trees
an avenue laid out by the Shah's father, was the Royal Tehran Hilton. It was "royal" no longer. The word had been taken off the main roadside sign and hacked away from the entrance; but inside the hotel the word survived like a rooted weed, popping up fresh and clean on napkins, bills, menus, crockery. The lounge was nearly empty; the silence
there, among waiters and scattered patrons, was like the silence of embarrassment. Iranian samovars were part of the decor. (There had been some foreign trade in these samovars as decorative ethnic objects; two years or so before, I had seen a number of them in the London stores, converted into lampstands.) Alcohol could no longer be served; but
for the smart (and non-Christian) who needed to sip a nonalcoholic drink in style, there was Orange Blossom or Virgin Mary or Swinger. The pool at the great concrete shell next door, the planned extension to the Royal Tehran Hilton, had been abandoned, with all the
building materials on the site and the cranes. There were no "passengers" now, a waiter told me, and the contractors had left the country. From the Hilton you could look across to the other hills of North Tehran and see other unfinished, hollow buildings that looked just as abandoned. The revolution had caught the "international" city of North Tehran
in mid-creation. Technology was evil. E. F. Schumacher of SMALL Is Beantiful had said so: The Message of Peace, an English-language magazine published in the holy city of Qom, quoted him a lot, lashing the West with its own words. But technology surrounded us in Tehran, and some of it had been so Islamized or put to such good Islamic use that its
these things were considered neutral; they were not associated with any particular faith or civilization; they were thought of some great universal bazaar. Money alone bought these things. And money, in Iran, had become the true gift of God, the reward for virtue. Whether Tehran worked or not, $70 million went every day to the
country's external accounts, to be drawn off as required: foreign currencies, secured by foreign laws and institutions, to keep the Islamic revolution going. But some people were scratchy in empty restaurants that didn't have the food their oldtime menus offered. They needed customers, but they couldn't help hating those who
she would wash my clothes. She did. When I came back in the afternoon I saw my damp clothes displayed in the doorknobs of unoccupied rooms.) Nicholas, a young British journalist, came to see me one evening and began to quarrel with the man at the desk about the hotel taxi charges. The quarrel developed fast in
the empty lobby. Nicholas, tall and thin and with a little beard, was jumpy from overwork: the long hours he kept as a foreign correspondent, the "disinformation" he said he had constantly to sift through, the sheer number of words he had to send back every day. He had also begun to be irritated by the events he was reporting. The man at the desk
the hotel."I took the car at the stated price, to calm them both down. Nicholas leaned on the desk, but looked away. The man at the desk began to write out the taxi requisition slip. In spite of his appearance, he was a man from the countryside. He had spent a fair amount of money to send his mother on the pilgrimage to Mecca; he was anxious about
money and the future, and worried about the education of his children. During the boom an American university education had seemed possible for the boy, but now he had to think of other ways. Nicholas was closed to pity. He remembered the boom too, when hotels had no rooms, and he and many others had slept on camp beds in the ballroom of a
and he asked for seventy dollars. Behzad said it was too much; he knew someone who would do it for less. We waited a long time for Behzad's driver, and then we found that between our negotiations on the telephone and his arrival at the hotel his charges had gone up. He was a small, knotty man, and he said he wasn't a Moslem. He didn't mean that
He meant only that he wasn't a Shia or a Persian. He was a "tribesman," a Lur, from Luristan, in the west. Qom had a famous shrine, the tomb of the eighth Shia Imam; for a thousand years it had been a place of pilgrimage. It also had a number of theological schools. Khomeini had taught and lectured at Qom; and on his return to Iran
after the fall of the Shah he had made Qom his headquarters. He was surrounded there by ayatollahs, people of distinction in their own right, and it was one of these attendant figures, Ayatollah Khalkhalli, whom I was hoping to see. Khomeini received and preached and blessed; Khalkhalli hanged. He was Khomeini's hanging judge. It was Khalkhalli, whom I was hoping to see. Khomeini received and blessed; Khalkhalli hanged. He was Khomeini's hanging judge. It was Khalkhalli hanged.
who had conducted many of those swift Islamic trials that had ended in executions, with official before-and-after photographs: men shown before they were killed, and then shown dead, naked on the sliding mortuary slabs. Khalkhalli had recently been giving interviews, emphasizing his activities as judge, and a story in Tehran was that he had fallen
out of favor and was trying through these interviews to keep his reputation alive. He told the Tehran Times that he had "probably" sentenced four hundred people to death in Tehran: "On some nights, he said, bodies of 30 or more people would be sent out in trucks from the prison. He claimed he had also signed the death warrants of a large number
of people in Khuzistan Province." Khuzistan Province." Khuzistan was the Arab province in the south Korean Embassy—to rescue Hoveyda, the Shah's prime minister, and other important people from the Tehran jail. As soon as he, Khalkhalli, had heard of this plot he had
decided—to deal a blow to the CIA and Zionism—to bring forward the cases in one night and had them face the firing squad." He told the Tehran Times how Hoveyda had died. The first bullet hit Hoveyda in the neck; it didn't kill him. Hoveyda was then ordered by his executioner—a priest—to hold his head up; the second
bullet hit him in the head and killed him. "Would this man see me?" I had asked an agency correspondent, when we were talking about Khalkhalli. "He would telephone Khalkhalli's secretary when we got to Qom. The telephone, the secretary: the modern apparatus seemed
strange. But Khalkhalli saw himself as a man of the age. "He said" (this was from the Tehran Times)"the religious leaders were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in Iran. During the days of the Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in Iran. During the days of the Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in Iran. During the days of the Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in Iran. During the days of the Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet Mohammed in Iran. During the days of the Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Holy Prophet swords were trying to enforce the rule of the Rul
foreign science, but as international as swords, part of the great world bazaar, and rendered Islamic by purchase. There was a confusion of this sort in Behzad's mind as well. Behzad'
Iran; but Behzad, employing all the dialectic he had learned, was forcing himself to see, in the religious fervor of Khomeini's revolution, the outline of what could be said to be true. And as we drove south through Tehran—at first like a bazaar, and then increasingly like a settlement in a polluted desert—it was the city of proletarian revolt that he was
anxious to show me.Low brick buildings were the color of dust; walls looked unfinished; bright interiors seemed as impermanent as their paint. Tehran, in the flatland to the south, had been added to by people coming in from the countryside; and clusters of traditional square clay-brick houses with flat roofs were like villages. We passed a
great factory shed. Some kind of beige fur had adhered to the walls below every window. Behzad told me it was a cloth factory and had been a center of the revolution. The army had gone in, and many workers had been killed. After the oil refinery, puffing out flame from its chimney, we were in the true desert. There were no trees now, and the views
left, the salt lake marked on the map. It looked small and white, as though it was about to cake into salt; and the white had a fringe of pale green. Behzad said that sometimes it all looked blue. Many bodies had been dumped there by the Shah's secret police, from helicopters. And the lake was bigger than it looked. It was a desolation when we began
to pass it; the green water that fringed the white was very far away. The land after that became more broken. Hills were less rounded, their outlines sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally there were roadside sharper against the sky. It was desert, but the road was busy; and occasionally the road was busy as a supplication of the road was busy as a sup
that gave almost no shade, was sleeping on his arms. We woke him up and bought a melon, and he lent a knife and forks. Behzad halved the melon asked—squatted round the melon, eating as it were from the same dish. Behzad, I could see, liked the moment of serving and
sharing. It could be said that it was a Moslem moment; it was the kind of sharing Moslems practiced—and the driver was a worker; Behzad was sharing food with someone of the people, and he was imposing his own ritual on this moment in the desert. Two saplings had been planted on the platform
One was barked and dead; the other was half dead. Between them lay an old, sunburned, ill-looking woman in black, an inexplicable bit of human debris an hour away from Tehran. Scraps of newspaper from the stall blew about in the sand, and caught against the trunks of the trees. Across the road a lorry idled, its exhaust smoking; and traffic went
by all the time. We squatted in the sand and ate. The driver spat out the watermelon seeds onto the road. I did as the driver did; and Behzad—but more reverentially—did likewise. Abruptly, stabbing his fork into the melon, saying nothing, the square-headed little Lur jumped off the platform. He was finished; he had had enough of the melon. He
walked across the dingy desert yard to the cafe to look for a lavatory, and Behzad's moment was over. I had imagined that Qom, a holy city, would be built on hills: it would be full of cliff walls and shadows and narrow lanes cut into the rock, with cells or caves where pious men meditated. It was set flat in the desert, and the approach to it was like the
approach to any other desert town: shacks, gas stations. The road grew neater; shacks gave way to houses. A garden bloomed on a traffic roundabout—Persian gardens have this abrupt, enclosed, oasis-like quality. A dome gleamed in the distance between minarets. It was the dome of the famous shrine. Behzad said, "That dome is made of gold." It had
been gilded in the last century. But the city we began to enter had been enriched by oil; and it seemed like a reconstructed bazaar city, characterless except for the gold dome and its minarets. Behzad said, "How shall I introduce you? Correspondents." That isn't how I want to talk to him, though. I really just want to
chat with him. I want to understand how he became what he is.""I'll say you are a writer. Where shall I say you come from?"That was a problem. England would be misleading. South America was a possibility, but the associations were wrong."Can you say I am from the
Americas? Would that make sense in Persian?"Behzad said, "I will say that you come from American. "We made for the dome and stopped in a parking area outside the shrine. It was midafternoon, and it was hotter in the town than in the desert; the gilded dome looked hot. The Lur driver, in spite of our sacramental
watermelon feast, was mumbling about food. Ramadan or not, he wanted to take the car and go out of Qom to look for something to eat; and he wanted to know what our plans were. Across the road, near a watermelon stall at the gateway to the shrine, there was a glass-walled telephone booth of German design. Behzad went to telephone Khalkhalli's
of the Eighth Imam was buried. Access to heaven, rejection of nondivine rule, was the purpose of the "republic" proclaimed here. Behzad, opening the door of the telephone booth, the telephone in his hand, waved me over. When I went to him he said, "The secretary says that Khalkhalli is praying. He will see you at nine this evening, after he has
broken his fast."It was 3:30. We had told the driver we would be only three or four hours in Qom.Behzad said, "What do you want me to tell the secretary?""Tell him we'll come. "Then we went to break the bad news to the impatient Lur—or the good news: he was charging by the hour. He said something that Behzad didn't translate. And he drove off to
look for food, leaving Behzad and me to think of ways of spending five and a half hours in the torpid, baking city, where nothing could be eaten or drunk for the next five hours. THE shops opposite the shrine sold souvenirs—plates with Khomeini's face on them, cheap earthenware vases—and sweets: flat round cakes, brown, soft, very sweet-looking,
breaking up at the edges. Food could be sold to travelers during Ramadan, Behzad said; but it wasn't worth the trouble. Not many people were about. A crippled old woman, a pilgrim no doubt, was wheeling herself slowly past the shops. We surprised a plump boy in a booth taking a nibble at a brown cake, part of his stock; but he judged us harmless
tablets, touched sacred soil. High on the shrine wall, in glazed blue and white tiles, there was, as I supposed, a Koranic quotation. Behzad couldn't have surprised me, but it did. Because with one corner of my mind I approached Iran through classical history and
felt awe for its antiquity: the conqueror of Egypt, the rival of Greece, undefeated by Rome; and with another corner of my mind I approached it through India, where, at least in the northwest, the idea of Persia is still an idea of the highest civilization—as much as France used to be for the rest of Europe—in its language, its poetry, its carpets, its food.
In Kashmir, Farsi khanna, Persian food, is the supreme cuisine; and of the chenar, the transplanted plane tree, or sycamore, of Persia (so prominent in both Persian and Indian Moghul painting) it is even said that its shade is medicinal. In Qom these ideas had to be discarded. Here they looked to spartan Arabia as to the fount. Behzad suggested that
we should visit the shrine. If anyone asked, I was a Moslem. I said I wouldn't be able to carry it off. I wouldn't know how to behave. Was it the Sunnis who, during their ablutions, let the water run down their arms to their
fingers? Did the Shias, contrariwise, run the water down from their hands to their elbows? And what were the gestures of obeisance or reverence? There were too many traps. Even if I followed Behzad and did what he did, it wouldn't look convincing. Behzad said, "You wouldn't be able to follow me. I don't know what to do either. I don't go to
mosques. "But we could go into the courtyard, and to do that we didn't have to take off our shoes. The courtyard was wide and very bright. At one side was a clock tower, with an austere modern clock that had no numerals. On the other side was the entrance to the shrine. It was high and recessed and it glittered as with silver, like a silver cave, like a
silver-vaulted dome cut down the middle. But what looked like silver was only glass, thousands of pieces catching light at different angles. And here at last were the pilgrims, sunburned peasants, whole families, who had come from far. They camped in the open cells along the courtyard wall (each cell the burial place of a famous or royal person), and
they were of various racial types: an older Persia, a confusion of tribal and transcontinental movements. One Mongoloid group was Turkoman, Behzad said. I hardly knew the word. In the 1824 English novel Haddi Baba (which I had bought at the hotel in a pirated offset of the Oxford World's Classics edition), there were Turkoman bandits. I had once,
in a London saleroom, seen a seventeenth-century Indian drawing of a yoked Turkoman prisoner, his hands shackled to a block of wood at the back of his neck. So the Turkomans were men of Central Asia who were once feared. How they fitted into Persian history I didn't know; and their past of war and banditry seemed far from these depressed
campers at the shrine. Small, sunburned, ragged, they were like debris at the edge of a civilization that had itself for a long time been on the edge of the world. Near the mosque was the two-story yellow brick building where Khomeini had taught and lectured. It was neutral, nondescript; and nothing was going on there now. Behzad and I walked in the
bazaar. For most of the stallkeepers it was siesta time. In one bread stall, stacked high with flat perforated rounds of sweet bread, the man was stretched out on a shelf or counter on the side wall and seemed to be using part of his stock as a pillow. Behzad bought a paper. It was very hot; there was little to see; Qom's life remained hidden. We began
to look for shade, for a place to sit and wait. We came upon a small hotel. It was cramped inside, but newly furnished. The two men seated behind the desk pretended not to see us, and we sat in the little front lounge; nobody else was there. After some minutes one of the men from the desk came and told us to leave. The hotel was closed for Ramadan;
that was why, he added disarmingly, he and his friend hadn't stood up when we came in. We went out into the light and dust, past the souvenir shops again, with the brown cakes and the tablets of Arabian clay, and were permitted to sit in the empty cafe opposite the KHOMEINI IS OUR LEADER slogan. It was a big place, roughly designed and
furnished, but the pillars were faced with marble. There was nothing to drink—a bottled cola drink seemed only full of chemical danger—and the place was refreshing; and the relaxed exhaustion that presently came to me, while Behzad read his Persian paper, helped the minutes by. We
went out to telephone Khalkhalli's secretary again, to see whether the appointment couldn't be brought forward. It was about half past five, and a little cooler. There were more people in the street. Our driver had come back; he hadn't found anything to eat. Behzad telephone d. Then, coming out of the telephone booth, he got into conversation with two
bearded young men who were in mullah's costume. I hadn't seen them approach; I had been looking at Behzad. I had so far seen mullahs only on television, in black and white, and mainly heads and turbans. The formality of the costume in real life was a surprise to me. It made the two men stand out in the street: black turbans, white collarless tunics,
long, lapel-less, two-button gowns in pale green or pale blue, and the thin black cotton cloaks that were like the gowns of scholars and fellows at Oxford and Cambridge and St. Andrew's in Scotland. Here, without a doubt, was the origin of the cleric's garb of those universities, in medieval times centers of religious learning, as Qom still was. The
costume, perhaps always theatrical, a mark of quality, also gave physical dignity and stature, as I saw when Behzad brought the young men over. They were really quite small men, and younger than their beards suggested. Behzad added,
"Khalkhalli's secretary says we can come at eight." I felt sure we could have gone at any time, and had been kept waiting only for the sake of Khalkhalli's dignity. The two young men were from Pakistan. They wanted to know who I was, and when Behzad told them that I came from America but was not American, they seemed satisfied; and when
Behzad further told them that I was anxious to learn about Islam, they were immediately friendly. They said they had some books in English in their hostel which I would find useful. We should go there first, and then we would go to the college to meet students from many countries. Behzad arranged us in the car. He sat me next to the Lur driver, who
was a little awed by the turbans and gowns and beards; Behzad himself sat with the Pakistanis. They directed the driver to an unexpectedly pleasant residential street. But they couldn't find the books they wanted to give me, and so we went on, not to the college but to an administrative building opposite the college. And there, in the entrance, we
were checked by authority: a middle- aged man, dressed like the students, but with a black woolen cap instead of a turban. He was not as easily satisfied as the students, all now committed to their story, said, "But he's not American." The
man in the woolen cap said, "He doesn't have to talk to students. He can talk to me. I speak English. "He too was from Pakistan. He was thin, with the pinched face of Mr. Jinnah, the founder of that state. His cheeks were sunken, his lips parched and whitish from his fast. He said, "Here we publish books and magazines. They will give you all the
information you require. "He spoke in Persian or Urdu to one of the students, and the students, and the students, and the students went off and came back with a magazine. It was The Message of Peace, Vol. I, no. 1.So this was where they churned it out, the rage about the devils of the Western democracies, the hagingraphies of the Shia Imams. This was where they churned it out, the rage about the devils of the Western democracies, the hagingraphies of the Shia Imams.
Toynbee and used their words—about technology and ecology—to lash the West. I said to the man with the woolen cap, "But I know your magazine." He didn't seem to understand. "I bought it in Tehran." Grimly, he
beckoned us in. And we went up to his office after taking off our shoes. The terrazzo steps were wide, the corridors were spacious, with carpet tiling. The man in the woolen cap, the director, as I now took him to be, sat behind his new steel desk. One of the students sat on his left. Behzad and I and the other student sat in a line
on chairs against the far wall, facing the desk. And, as formally as we were seated, we began. The student on the director's left said that Islam was the only thing that made humans human. He spoke with tenderness and conviction, and to understand what he meant it was necessary to try to understand how, for him, a world without the Prophet and
revelation would be a world of chaos. The director picked at his nose, and seemed to approve. On his desk there were rubber stamps, a new globe, a stapler, a telephone of new design. On the shelves there were box files, the Oxford English Dictionary, and a Persian-English dictionary. There were 14,000 theological students in Qom, they told me. (And
yet, arriving at the worst time of the day, we had found the streets empty.) The shortest period of study was six years. "Six years!" The director smiled at my exclamation. "Six is nothing. Fifteen, twenty, thirty years some people can study for." What did they study in all that time? This wasn't a place of research and new learning. They were men of faith.
What was there in the subject that called for so much study? Well, there was Arabic itself; there was grammar in all its branches; there was logic and rhetoric; there was jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being another; there was Jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of study and the principles of jurisprudence being one course of stud
biographies and genealogies of the Prophet and his close companions, as well as "correlations" and traditions. I had expected something more casual, more personal: the teacher a holy man, the student a disciple. I hadn't expected something more casual, more personal: the teacher a holy man, the student a disciple. I hadn't expected something more casual, more personal: the teacher a holy man, the student a disciple. I hadn't expected something more casual, more personal: the teacher a holy man, the student a disciple is a support of the prophet and his close companions.
necessary. Faith still absolutely bounded the world here. And, as in medieval Europe, there was no end to theological scholarship. One of the great teachers at Qom, a man who still lectured and led prayers five times a day, had produced (or produced materials for) a twenty-five-volume commentary on a well-known work about the Shia idea of the
Imam. Seven of those volumes had been published. A whole corps of scholars—no doubt collating their lecture notes: the medieval method of book-transmission—were at work on the remaining eighteen volumes on various topics. That ordered
life of prayer and lecture, commentary and reinterpretation, had almost perished toward the end of the Shah's time. Khomeini had been harassed by the secret police. The student sitting on the director's left said, his voice falling, "If there had been no revolution
here, Islam would have been wiped out. "Both the students came from priestly families in country towns in the Punjab, and had always known that they were meant to be mullahs. They were doing only eight years in Qom. They were taking the two-year Arabic course, with logic and rhetoric (rhetoric being no more than the classical way of laying out
an argument); but they weren't doing literature. History was no part of their study, but they were free to read it privately. It was for Islamic philosophy that they had come to Qom. In no other university was the subject gone into so thoroughly; and their attendance at Qom, Khomeini's place, and Marashi's, and Shariatmadari's (all great teaching
ayatollahs), would make them respected among Shias when they got back to Pakistan. The student on Behzad's translation, "I compare this place to Berkeley and Yale. I said it, to make it clearer to you." I tried to find out, as we
left the room, about the fees and expenses of students. But I couldn't get a straight reply; and it was Behzad who told me directly, with an indication that I was to press no further, that it was the religious foundation at Qom that paid for the students, however long they stayed. In a room across the wide corridor a calligrapher was at work, writing out a
Koran. He was in his forties, in trousers and shirt, and he was sitting at a sloping desk. His hand was steady, unfree, without swash or elegance; but he was pleased to let us watch him plod on, dipping his broad-ribbed pen in the black ink. His face bore the marks of old stress; but he was at peace now, doing his newfound scribe's work in his safe,
modern cell. The director showed photographs of a meeting of Moslem university heads that had taken place in Qom two years before. And again, though it oughtn't to have been surprising, it was: this evidence of the existence of the existence of the existence of the existence of the subworld, or the parallel world, or th
rector of Al Azhar University in Cairo, the director said, had been so impressed by what he had declared that Qom students would be accepted without any downgrading by Al Azhar. We walked down the steps. Against one wall there were stacks of the center's publications—not only The Message of Peace but also two new
paperback books in Persian. One was an account of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, who had married the Prophet's cousin, Ali, the Shia hero; this book was called The Woman of Islam. The other book or booklet, with a sepia-colored cover, was written, the director said, by an Iranian who had spent an apparently shattering year in England. This book
was called The West Is Sick.Khalkhalli's house was the last in a dead end, a newish road with young trees on the pavement. It was near sunset; the desert sky was full of color. There were men with guns about, and we stopped a house or two away. Behzad went and talked to somebody and then called me. The house was new, of concrete, not big, and
it was set back from the pavement, with a little paved area in front. In the veranda, or gallery, we were given a body search by a short, thickly built young man in a tight blue jersey, who ran or slapped rough hands down our legs; and then we went into a small carpeted room. There were about six or eight people there, among them an African couple,
sitting erect and still on the floor. The man wore a dark—gray suit and was hard to place; but from the costume of the woman I judged them to be Somalis, people from the northeastern horn of Africa. I wasn't expecting this crowd—in fact, a little court. I was hoping for a more intimate conversation with a man who, I thought, had fallen from power
and might be feeling neglected. A hanging judge, a figure of revolutionary terror, dealing out Islamic justice to young and old, men and women: but the bearded little fellow, about five feet tall, who, preceded by a reverential petitioner, presently came out of an inner room—and was the man himself—was plump and jolly, with eyes merry behind his
glasses. He moved with stiff little steps. He was fair-skinned, with a white skullcap, no turban or clerical cloak or gown; and he looked a bit of a mess, with a crumpled, long-tailed tunic or shirt, brown-striped, covering a couple of cotton garments at the top and hanging out over slack white trousers. This disorder of clothes in one who might have
assumed the high clerical style was perhaps something Khalkhalli cultivated or was known for: the Iranians in the room began to smile as soon as he appeared. The African man fixed glittering eyes of awe on him, and Khalkhalli was rough with Behzad
and me. The change in his manner was abrupt, willful, a piece of acting: it was the clown wishing to show his other side. It didn't disturb me; it told me that having me in the room, another stranger who had come from far, was flattering to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephoned to him. He said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephone have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "I am busy. I have no time for interviews. Why didn't you telephone?" Behzad said, "We telephone have no time for interviews."
twice."Khalkhalli didn't reply. He took another petitioner to the inner room with him. Behzad said, "He's making up his mind. "But I knew that he had already made up his mind, that the idea of the interview was too much for him to resist. When he came out—and before he led someone else in to his room—he said, with the same unconvincing
roughness, "Write out your questions." It was another piece of picked-up style, but it was hard for me. I had been hoping for conversation. I couldn't say what questions I wanted to put to him until he had begun to talk. But I had to do
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as he asked: the Iranians and the Africans were waiting to see me carry out his instructions. How could I get this half-clown, with his medieval learning, to illuminate his passion? I could think of nothing extraordinary; I decided to be direct. On a sheet of hotel paper, which I

had brought with me, I wrote: Where were you born? What made you decide to take up religious studies? What did you first preach? How did you first preach? How did you first preach? How did you first preach? Where did you first preach? Where did you first preach? What was your happiest day? He was pleased, when he finally came out, to see Behzad with the list of questions, and he sat crosslegged in front of us. Our knees almost touched. He answered simply at first. He was a shepherd when I was a s sheep's head." And the Iranians in the room—including some of his bodyguards—rocked with laughter. "I did every kind of job. Even selling. I know everything." But how did the shepherd boy become a mullah?" I studied for thirty-five years. "That was all. He could be prodded into no narrative, no story of struggle or rise. He had simply lived; experience wasn't something he had reflected on. And, vain as he was ("I am very clever, very intelligent"), the questions about his present power, or his closeness to power; and that was what, ignoring the remainder of the written questions, he began to do. He said, "I was taught by Ayatollah Khomeini, you know. And I was the teacher of the son of Ayatollah Khomeini." He thumped me on the shoulder and added archly, to the amusement of the Iranians, "So I cannot say I am very close to Ayatollah Khomeini." His mouth opened wide, stayed open, and soon he appeared to be choking with laughter, showing me his gums, his tongue, his gullet. When he recovered he said, with a short, swift wave of his right hand, "The mullahs are going to rule now. We are going to have ten thousand years of the Islamic Republic. The Marxists will go on with their Lenin. We will go on in the way of Khomeini. "He went silent. Crossing his legs neatly below him, fixing me with his eyes, becoming grave, appearing to look up at me through his glasses, he said, in the silence he had created, "I killed Hoveyda, you know."The straightness of his face was part of the joke for the Iranians. They—squatting on the carpet—threw themselves about his sentencing of the Shah's prime minister; and he wanted to tell the story again. I said, "You killed him yourself?" Behzad said, "No, he only gave the order. Hoveyda was killed by the son of a famous ayatollah."" But I have the gun," Khalkhalli said, as though it was the next best thing. Again the Iranians rolled about the carpet with laughter. And even the African, never taking his glittering eyes off Khalkhalli, began to smile Behzad said, "A Revolutionary Guard gave him the gun," I said, "Do you have it on you?" Khalkhalli said, "I have it in the next room, "So at the end he had forced me, in that room full of laughter, to be his straight man. It was fast-breaking time now, no time to dally, time for all visitors to leave, except the Africans. For some minutes young men had been placing food on the veranda floor. Khalkhalli, dismissing us, appeared to forget us. Even before we had put our shoes on and got to the gate, he and the African couple were sitting down to dinner. It was a big dinner; the clown ate seriously. And at last our Lur driver could eat, and Behzad could repeat the sacramental moment of food-sharing with him. We drove back to the center of the town, near the shrine, and they ate in the afternoon, in a smell of cooking mutton. They ate rice, mutton, and flat Persian bread. It was all that the cafe offered. I left them together, bought some nuts and dried fruit from a stall, and walked along the river, among families camping and eating on the river embankment in the dark. Across the road from the embankment electric lights shone on melons and other fruit in stalls: a refreshing night scene, after the glare and colorlessness of the day. When I was walking back to the cafe, and was on the other side of the river, I passed an illuminated shoe shop. It had a big calved photograph of Khomeini. I stopped to consider his unreliable face again: the eyebrows, the hard eyes, the sensual lips. In the light of the shop I looked at the handful of nuts and kishmish raisins I was about to put in my mouth. It contained a thumbtack. Without that pause in front of Khomeini's picture, I would have done damage to my mouth in ways I preferred not to think of; and my unbeliever's day in Khomeini's holy city of Qom would have ended with a nasty surprise. BEHZAD came from a provincial town, one of those famous old towns of Persia. His father was a teacher of Persian literature. About his mother Behzad had nothing to say-he spoke of her only as his mother—and I imagined that her background was simpler. He had studied for some time at an American school and he spoke English well, with a neutral accent. Now, at twenty-four, he was a science student at an institute in Tehran. He had an easy, educated manner, and a Persian delicacy. He was tall, slender, athletic. He went skiing and mountain-walking, and he was a serious swimmer. The provincial background, possibly purely traditional on one side, the American school, the science institute in the capital, the athletic pursuits: it might have been said that for Behzad, living nearly all his life under the Shah, the world had opened up in ways unknown to his grandparents. But that was my vision. I was twice Behzad's age. I had been born in a static colonial time; and in Trinidad, where I spent my first eighteen years, I had known the poverty and spiritual limitations of an agricultural colony where, as was once computed, there were only eighty kinds of job. I therefore, in places like Iran, had an eye for change. It was different for Behzad. Born in Iran in 1955, he took the expansion of his society for granted; he had an eye only for what was still unjust in that society. I saw him as emerged, even privileged. He saw himself as poor, and as proof he said he didn't own a jacket; in winter he wore only a pullover. The idea of poverty had been imprisoned for some time during the Shah's rule. And that idea of poverty was far from mine in Trinidad twenty—five years before. When he was a child—it would have been in the mid-sixties—Behzad had one day asked his father, "Why don't we have a car? Why don't we have a car? Why don't we have a refrigerator?" That was when his father had told him about poverty and injustice, and had begun to induct him into the idea of revolution. In Behzad's house revolution had replaced religion as an animating idea. To Behzad it was even touched, like religion, with the notion of filial piety. And Behzad, in his own faith, was as rigid as any mullah in Qom in his. He judged men and countries by their revolutionary writers or writers he considered revolutionary, and I wasn't sure that he could put dates to them: Sholokhov, Steinbeck, Jack London. He had never been tempted to stray. He told me, as we were walking about central Tehran two days after our trip to Qom, that there was no true freedom in the West. The workers were oppressed, exchanging their labor for the barest necessities. True freedom had existed only once in the world, in Russia, between 1917 and 1953. I said, "But there was a lot of suffering. A lot of people were jailed and killed."He pounced on that. "What sort of people?"He had no religious faith. But he had grown up in Shia Iran, and his idea of justice for the pure and the suffering was inseparable from the idea of punishment for the wicked. His dream of the reign of Stalin was a version of the dream of the rule of Ali—the Prophet's true successor. I said, "Have some of your friends changed sides now and decided that they are Moslems?""A few. But they don't know what they are Moslems?"

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""" stained street), the Shah's soldiers had taken up their positions. They had fired on demonstrators. And here, in this doorway, a man had died. After six months the blood was barely visible: just dark specks on the dirty concrete. In two places someone had written, with a black felt pen, in Persian characters of a size that might have been used for a private note: This is the blood of a martyr. "Martyr" was a precise religious word; but Behzad could also read it politically. On Revolution Avenue, formerly Shah Reza, opposite the big iron- railed block of Tehran University, were the publishers (mingled with men's shops) and the pavement book-sellers and cassette-sellers and print-sellers. The cassettes were of speeches by Khomeini and other ayatollahs; they were also—in spite of Khomeini's ban on music—of popular Persian about the revolution, its ideologues and its martyrs. Some had solider piles of communist literature—Persian paperbacks, and hardback sets of Lenin or Marx in English, from Russia. One revolution appeared to flow into the other. And there were photographs of the uprising: blood in the streets, bodies in the morgues, with slogans daubed in blood on the white tiles; galleries of people executed after the revolution, and shown dead, page after page, corpse upon corpse was that of Hoveyda, the Shah's prime minister: the black bullet hole in Hoveyda's old man's neck was clear in the photograph. All the buildings in the university block—founded by the Shah's father—were disfigured with slogans. The university was the great meeting place of Tehran, and even on a day like this, a day without any scheduled event, it was full of discussion groups. Behzad said, "It goes on all the time." What did they talk about? He said, "The same things. Islam, communism, the revolution." It looked a pacific campus scene; it was hard to associate these young men in jeans and pretty shirts with the bloodiness celebrated in the books and albums across the road. But violence was in the air, and just after we came out through the main gate we saw this incident. A student in a white shirt, small and with glasses, inexpertly and with some comic effort taped a leaflet onto the iron rails of the gate. The leaflet was a protest about the closing down of Ayandegan, the paper of the left. A workman near a food stall at the edge of the pavement walked slowly over, drew a red hammer and sickle on the leaflet, crossed the whole sheet with an X, slapped the student twice, in the middle of the pavement crowd; and then, without hurry, taped up the defaced leaflet more securely. The student had ducked to save his glasses and his eyes. No one moved to help him. Even Behzad did nothing. He only said, as though appealing to me for justice, "Did you see that? Did you see t true revolution of the people. But they were distinct. The previous weekend Behzad and some of his group had gone to a village to do "constructive" work. They had run into trouble with the Revolutionary Guards: every village had its komiteh, young men with guns who were now the law in parts of Iran. The Guards, Moslems, didn't want communists in the village. Who were these Moslem militants? Behzad said, "They're lumpen. Do you know the word?" The village Guards were lumpen, like the workman who had slapped the student. The doctrinal word helped Behzad; it enabled him to keep his faith in the people. I was going on to Pakistan. My first plan had been to go by bus, to drop down south and east in stages, through old towns with beautiful names; Isfahan, Yazd (important to Zoroastrians, Persians), Kerman, Zahedan. But Oom had given me enough of desert travel in midsummer; I didn't want now to run into komitehs in out of-theway places; and I could get no certain information about transport across the Pakistan border. I decided to go by air, straight to Karachi. There were not many flights. The one I chose left at 7:30 in the morning, and Pakistan International Airlines said it was necessary to check in three hours before. I was on time, and I thought I had done the right thing. I was quickly through, with my little Lark bag. Half an hour later, when dawn was breaking, the queue was long and moving very slowly. Just as, at Heathrow, the flight pen for Iran had been full of Pakistani migrant workers who had done their shopping in Iran. They were taking back a lot: boxes, trunks, big cardboard suitcases tied with rope, brown cartons stamped with famous names—Aiwa, Akai, Toshiba, National, names of the now universal bazaar, where goods were not associated with a particular kind of learning, effort, or civilization but were just goods, part of the world's natural bounty. The plane that was to leave at 7:30 didn't arrive until ten. We began to taxi off at 11:25 but then were halted for a further hour, while American-made Phantoms of the Iranian Air Force took off. I thought they were training. They were in fact taking off on Khomeini's orders to attack the rebel Kurds in the west. Later, in Karachi, I learned that two Phantoms had crashed, and the news was curiously sickening; such trim and deadly aircraft, so vulnerable the inadequately trained men within, half victims, yet men that morning obedient to the will of God and the Twelfth Imam and full of murder. To Kurdistan, following the Phantoms, went Ayatollah Khalkhalli, as close to power as he had boasted only ten days before in Qom. In no time, moving swiftly from place to place in the August heat, he had sentenced forty-five people to death. He had studied for thirty-five years and was never at a loss for an Islamic judgment. When in one Kurdish town the family of a prisoner complained that three of the prisoner's teeth had been removed and his eyes gouged out, Khalkhalli ordered a similar punishment for the torturer. Three of the man's teeth were torn out on the spot. The aggreed family then relented, pardoned the offender, and let him keep his eyes. It was Islamic justice, swift, personal, satisfying; it met the simple needs of the faithful. But we hadn't, in the old days, been told of this Iranian need. This particular promise of the revolution had been blurred; and we had read, mostly, Down with fascist Shah. Only Iranians, and some foreign scholars, knew that when Khomeini was a child—while the Qajar kings still ruled in Iran—Khomeini's father had been killed by a government official; that the killer had been publicly hanged; that Khomeini had been taken by his mother to the hanging and told afterward, "Now be at peace. The wolf has attained the fruit of its evil deeds."In an advertisement in the New York Times in January of 1979, when he was still in exile in France, Khomeini had been taken by his mother to the hanging and told afterward, "Now be at peace. The wolf has attained the fruit of its evil deeds."In an advertisement in the New York Times in January of 1979, when he was still in exile in France, Khomeini had been taken by his mother to the hanging and told afterward, "Now be at peace. The wolf has attained the fruit of its evil deeds."In an advertisement in the New York Times in January of 1979, when he was still in exile in France, Khomeini had been taken by his mother to the hanging and told afterward, "Now be at peace." civilization. It was a different Khomeini who said in August, on Jerusalem Day (the day the Phantoms were sent against the Kurds): "The governments of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world."That couldn't have been said to the readers of the New York Times. Nor could this, spoken on the last Friday of Ramadan (and a good example of the medieval "logic and rhetoric" taught at Qom—certain key words repeated, used in varying combinations, and finally twisted): "When democrats talk about freedom they are inspired by the superpowers. They want to lead our youth to places of corruption . . . If that is what they want, then yes, we are reactionaries. You who want prostitution as freedom ... Those who want freedom want the freedom to have bars, brothels, casinos, opium. But we want our youth to carve out a new period in history. We do not want intellectuals. "It was his call to the faithful, the people Behzad had described as lumpen. He required only faith, But he also knew the value of Iran's oil to countries that lived by machines, and he could send the Phantoms and the tanks against the Kurds. Interpreter of God's will, leader of the faithful, the people Behzad had described as lumpen. He required only faith, But he also knew the value of Iran's oil to countries that lived by machines, and he could send the people Behzad had described as lumpen. he expressed all the confusion of his people and made it appear like glory, like the familiar faith: the confusion of a people of high medieval culture awakening to oil and money, a sense of power and violation, and a knowledge of a great new encircling civilization. That civilization couldn't be mastered. It was to be rejected; at the same time, it was to be depended on.

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