Mehrdad Bekhrad, the author's uncle, in a suit made of Winston cigarette cartons.
The photograph was taken before a costume party in Bandar-e Mahshahr in southern Iran in 1965.

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

بچه های انقلاب

by

JOOBIN BEKHRAD

Since time immemorial, Iranian youth – male and female alike – have been at the forefront of social and political movements and upheavals. From the lion-hearted heroes of the *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings) and freedom fighters such as Babak Khorramdin, to the scores of young men and women who took to the streets in the Revolution, the child martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War, and the waves of protesters in the wake of the 2009 elections, Iran's youth have long been known for being eager to take matters in their own hands. The following story, though only dealing with events that have taken place between the 60s and the present, is a tribute to the undying spirit of all the noble youth who have fought, bled, and died in the name of Iran.

I tried to remember, but I couldn't. It was one of those moments when, provoked by a melody, smell, or dream he'd had the previous night, and plunged into contemplation by some distraction – the inching away of a moist cigar in the sun, transient clouds of *ghalyan*[1] smoke obscuring the sight of the Persian Gulf in the distance, the warmth afforded by a singeing tumbler of cognac – my father would recall someone, something, someplace. To be more precise, it was the eve of the vernal equinox, the night of *Norooz*[2], when, after all the fires have been lit, winter is bade farewell, and spring is welcomed with the blast of the cannon and the serpentine whine of the zorna. But there hadn't been any bonfires, and not a sound was to be heard on the lonely streets outside.

He was sitting before me, glassy-eyed, while around us resonated the metallic jangle of Farhad's steel-string guitar; what a man, that Farhad. My father used to tell me stories of how he and his brother were amongst the few that Farhad would allow to sit at his table at the Koochini club where he sang – perhaps owing to their friendship with the club's main man, Jalal (a.k.a. 'Jimi'). There, with his bushy hair and moustache, cleaved button-down shirt revealing a tangle of chest hair and shimmering pendants, and his eyes ever closed, he would sing of bloody Fridays, fallen sparrows, and lonely hearts. It was only from afar, though, that his husky voice resounded, rolling 'r's and all. *With these, do I bring winter to an end; with these, do I weariness forfend.* With what, Farhad? I have sung your song a thousand times, like a child, on sleepy London streets after the rain, but it feels as distant as a dream yet. Still, every now and then, do I have to ask my father about those lanterns, those banging spoons, those little, wooden sticks. *What days we had*, said my father, fighting against the lump in his throat; *what sweet Norooz memories. Everyone's gone.* I was there, watching my parents wipe away tears from their stinging eyes, listening to Farhad and his guitar, at once knowing and dumbfounded. I wished I could imagine the sights and sounds whirling around in their heads, or at least, a story to call my own. But I – a gangly Hyrcanian a million miles away from home – couldn't. God knows I tried to remember, but I just couldn't.

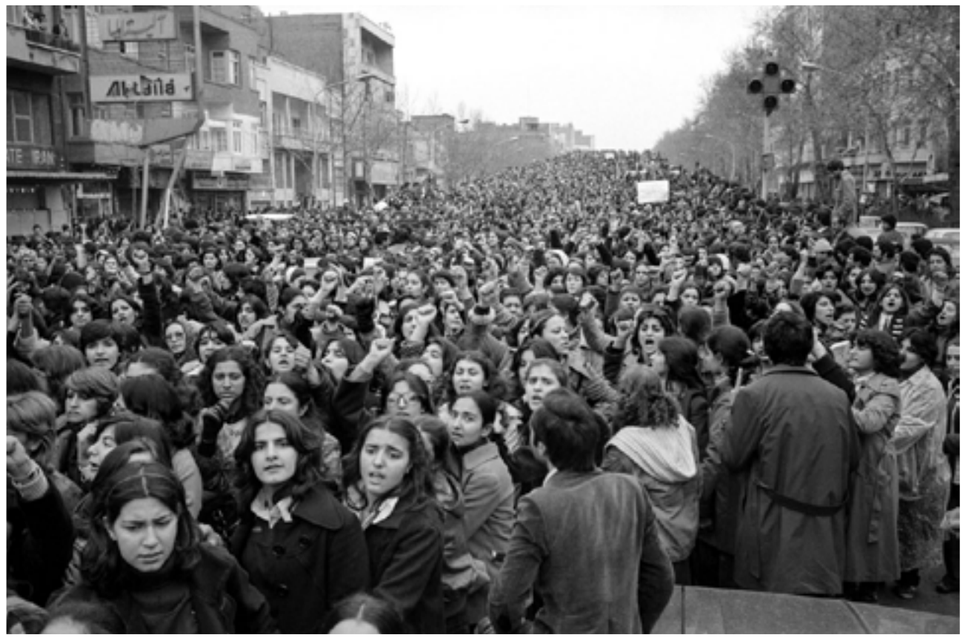
He sees him every night, in his dreams, behind veils of white satin. He knows he's gone, but they banter and bicker nonetheless, as if nothing's changed. Perhaps he isn't really gone, just as Farhad isn't, or grandma and grandpa. Yes, if you close your eyes and think hard enough, you can imagine Maman Aziz sweeping the house at five in the morning, Baba Nosrat reading the paper, cursing clerics under his breath, and *Amoo* Mehrdad wiping the sweat from his brow in Bandar Mahshahr. We'll see them all again soon; just think as if there aren't any telephone lines. 'You would have loved to hang out with your dad and uncle, wouldn't you?' my mother asked me. All I could do was nod with a faint smile; for all I have are my father's stories, and a handful of photographs. One in particular has always been my favourite. My uncle Mehrdad, 14, has plastered Winston cigarette cartons on his otherwise run-of-the-mill suit, just before a costume party, at which there'll be Stones records, booze, and pretty girls aplenty. There's a playful look in his eyes, as if he can perfectly imagine, down to the last detail, the escapades to come. My father always tells me that I remind him of his brother – my body, attitude, and love of certain things bearing an uncanny resemblance to his. I'll have to take his word for it; my uncle passed away when I was only 10 years old. I never got the chance to see him.

I often find myself lying on my bed and looking at that photograph, trying to imagine not only the adventures of my uncle and father in Tehran in the 70s, but also the stories of others like them, during those hot and heady days. For as long as I can remember, my parents have been telling me that they left

Iran for my sake, and that I should always be thankful I never grew up there, but rather, in Canada: the 'greatest country in the world.' Whenever I'd get bored, I'd quickly be reminded of the other kids in Iran who had 'nothing to do.' An image soon formed in my mind of little tin shacks in a rainy wasteland, where ragamuffins played with pebbles and stones. As a child, Iran meant little to me; it was merely the name of a godforsaken country my parents and I were originally from. I was a Parsi school dropout, and proud of it. Who had time for stories of villagers and talking birds when there was the usual drudgery of homework to be done, cartoons to be watched, and rock and roll songs to be played on an old tennis racquet? Only years later, when the flames of love had been kindled and those of ignorance snuffed out, would I realise what a fool I'd been, and yearn for what I'd never had. Alright – Canada was 'heaven on earth'; but I couldn't stop thinking, alone in my bedroom, what life would have been like had I grown up in my beloved Iran, shoulder to shoulder with my brethren, my kith and kin, the children of the Revolution.

Who were they, these children of the Revolution? As when I think of my uncle and grandparents, I rest my head on my pillow, close my eyes, and wander in the whorls of my imagination. They were children, dressed like Farhad and my uncle, who loved rock and roll and wanted to be like Behrouz Vossoughi. Angry young men and women with blood-stained palms and placards fighting in the streets. Little boys with nothing but faith and their bare hands, who lunged at tanks and willingly walked on mines, in the name of Iran. Children who arose to the sound of sirens, and came of age feeling, somehow, that they'd been ripped off; children who waved bloodied shirts as banners and painted their faces green – in anger, desperation, and above all, unflinching hope. They'd been burned, but at least had their stories to tell. I had none.

One afternoon, at precisely a quarter to three in the afternoon on the 13th of Mordad, Saeed fell in love with Leyli[3]. My father and uncle, on the other hand, were roaming around Pahlavi Avenue with Oshnos[4] dangling from their supple lips, eyeing doe-eyed belles in miniskirts. Ebi and Shahram Shabpareh would be singing with the Black Cats at the Koochini club, but the brothers knew that the evening would most probably degenerate into a drunken revel, during which Ebi and Shahram would start singing nonsense for the hell of it, and a bucket of ice would come pouring down on the head of Raj, the brawny doorman. Abadan, the Anglicised Persian Gulf city where they'd grown up, had been fun, but Tehran was something else; it was, after all, *the capital of Iran*[5]; and what a throbbing, sordid, and sleazy hotpot of a capital it was. You could drink (or smoke) whatever you wanted, screw whomever caught your fancy, and top things off with a soft-core French flick at the local cinema and a round of genuflexions at the mosque. Live and let live was the rule all and sundry swore by; as long as you didn't step beyond your rug, as the saying goes. The Shah – the Light of the Aryans, God's Shadow on Earth – was a hoary-haired prophet who enjoyed skiing in the Alps and living it up in Monaco; placed on the Peacock Throne by the Americans and the Brits (who later helped him give the nationalist Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, a fine thrashing), he was unquestionable, unerring, and beyond



Hengameh Golestan, *Untitled (Witness '79 series)*, courtesy Hengameh Golestan. Women protesting the forced Hijab in Iran, days after the 1979 Revolution.
Opposite page: the iconic Iranian singer, Googoosh, in the 60s.

reproach in every way. Indeed, he was the very *ensan-e kamel*[6] so lauded by the likes of Rumi and the great medieval Persian mystics. Indeed, the land of the noble was ruled by one man, and one man alone, who, through the only permissible political party – the *Rastakhiz* (Resurrection) – held it in the same iron grip by which his father before him had snatched Iran away from the debauched Qajars. Not only the Shah, but anything having even the remotest connection to him and the Pahlavi government was off-limits. With the SAVAK's[7] notoriety on the rise, and the Shah's vision of a secular, highly-Westernised Iran echoing the glory days of Cyrus the Great and the Achaemenids becoming increasingly detached from reality, many felt wronged, betrayed, and outright humiliated – particularly those unlucky enough to have been born far from Tehran's swanky northern suburbs in the grittier south, or worse, outside Tehran altogether in 'the sticks.'

The lavish, over-the-top celebrations for the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great in 1971, many have said, sounded the death knell for the Pahlavis. There, amongst the mighty ruins of what was once the capital of the world, the Shah saw himself as Cyrus' heir, the sole individual keeping Iran together as a unified whole, on whom Iranians looked towards and depended. Beyond the circles of the elite by the foothills of the Alborz mountains, Iran – much like it was during the dark days of the Qajars – was for the most part a wretched nation mired in poverty, illiteracy, and social inequality, amongst other malaises, although the bourgeoisie and aristocracy seldom deigned to admit it. But, however dim the light of Mithras and Mazda then seemed, the children of the Revolution – the brood of Cyrus and Zoroaster, with fire in their hearts and dust on their sunburned faces – felt as if they were on the brink of a new dawn and era, emboldened by words that smelled of blood and the sight of a full moon.

They dropped their guitars, tossed on a pair of threadbare blue bellbottoms, and took to the streets. While the Shah reclined in breezy Niavaran, surrounded by sycophants and yes-men in ignorant bliss, the children were out in the streets calling for the downfall of the King of Kings. They shouted till they thought their little lungs would burst, hurled the biggest stones their tiny hands could clutch, and raised their placards high. Bowie had sung of a starman in the sky who'd blow everyone's minds; and, to the children, that starman had a name: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Just as their destinies had been scrawled upon their foreheads, still smooth and taut, so had Khomeini's face been hacked onto that of the moon above. *It had all been written* – or so they thought.

The Shah's time, at least in the colourful world of these children, had come to an end. Everywhere, Khomeini's name was being whispered – in classrooms, in clubs, in clandestine meetings reeking of *Eau Sauvage*. On the surface, the heroes of these children sang songs about flowers, pilgrims, and lovers; but everyone knew that something had changed in those voices. It wasn't the same Googoosh, the same Farhad, the same Dariush the kids were hearing; they too, along with the small circle of poets who penned their songs, were sticking it to the Shah, albeit in their own way. Each song and each word began to take on a new meaning. Everything was interpreted as an act of resistance and protest, and even if the songs were as innocent as poor old *Mash Ghasem*[8], the children wanted to *believe* they were laden with innuendo. In the pictures, too, could one see images of foreboding. Parviz Sayyad had lampooned the Shah's 71 celebrations as a massive cock-up (literally), and it seemed there was only a matter of time before they'd see him grimacing above the title, *Samad be Shah Bilakh Migooyad*[9]. Sure, *Agha* Behrouz could still give a handful of pimps and thugs a run for their money; but the children never forgot for a moment that badass Behrouz was on their side too. Ah, if only Gheysar and Shir Mammad[10] had been with them on those bloodied streets, giving the Shah's cronies a taste of their rusty knives – that would have shown 'em! Jubilant, they would have clapped their hands, shining in the most brilliant hues of red beneath the beating sun, and shaken their scrawny hips to that ominous chant and groove: *marg bar Shah, marg bar Shah, marg bar Shaaah!*[11]

When not out fighting on the streets, they sat with burning ears pressed against transistor radios, waiting with bated breath for news from the palaces. Before long, the day the children and their heroes had long been waiting for arrived: on January 16, 1979, the Shah – the King of Kings, the Light of the Aryans, God's Shadow on Earth – left Iran, never to return. How the children poured into the streets, honking their horns, gyrating on motorbikes, and grinning like madmen, all the while waving around newspapers with those two words, in big, bold letters, that would burn themselves in their brains, never to be forgotten: *Shah raft! The Shah left!* And, soon enough, the starman came down from the sky, to blow the children's minds and give them all a surprise.

They didn't know where it had all gone wrong. Perhaps it really *had* been too good to be true. So much for the oil money and free electricity. So much for Googoosh and the good times they'd taken for granted. Where was *Khanum* Googoosh now? In the streets, darts were being thrown at pictures of Hayedeh, and it was later rumoured that Ramesh, the curly-haired queen of funk, had died.

The children's hair stood on their ends as they recalled Dariush's vision of a bleak millennium, which it seemed had already arrived: *the year of dead-ends, of clawing at walls in vain, of spirituality's demise*. Like the wind, they yearned for the breeze of the East to change its course; but they knew it was too late, and though they cursed themselves, their tears fell unheeded, their cries on deaf ears.

No, the sun did not shine above their heads, of the likes of my father and uncle. The wretched, the forgotten, the downtrodden, the broken would now have their moment. Golden locks, forlorn and pallid, were veiled beneath swarthy swathes; in vain had they taken to the streets, marching in their skirts and heels, their hair billowing over their supple shoulders. Like the shroud of the Empire, on which only a faint outline of the Lion and Sun could be made out amidst rags and tatters in deepest red, the children – daughters, sisters, mothers – were wrapped and bound in black. The field of tulips[12] lay barren, its bulbs that once glowed atop promenading playboys and belles cracked and shattered. There would be no more dirty French matinées, no more coffeehouse romps, and no more childhood heroes that burst into all the colours of the rainbow on the television. Filth! Sleaze! Blasphemy!

Uncle Mehrdad was leaning outside his balcony in Tehran, playing with a half-burnt cigarette between his fingers. He remembered how, only months ago, he could hear the sound of schoolgirls laughing on their way home and 6/8 rhythms blasting from orange-coloured taxicabs. Now, he only saw black – *everywhere, black* – and visions of hellfire sparked by ominous-sounding words incanted in an alien tongue. He didn't know that before too long, from beyond the Khuzestan of childhood days and nights, would rush forth hordes crying, screaming, and howling in that very tongue. Taking a drag on his cigarette, he looked out into the sky, blanketed in clouds, cursing the sun and moon alike.

He could see the faint outlines of the tanks in the distance. Beneath the hot, throbbing sun lay the mangled remains of his friends and comrades; he couldn't tell who was who; some had been burnt to a cinder, while the faces of others had been cleaved to bits in a burning hailstorm of shrapnel and lead. There, on the other side, Ezrail himself was waiting to take him away from that damned wasteland to the black void of death and nothingness, which he thirsted for now more than ever. Sweat dripped from his crimson headband, on which had been written the hallowed name of Hossein, the King of Martyrs. He rubbed his little fingers against it, kissed them, and pressed them to his forehead, invoking the fallen saint of Karbala all the while. He noticed blood on his fingers, but it wasn't his. He wished everyone would stop screaming; he wanted to bury his head in the scorched earth, fill his ears with sand, and think of his mother, his little house with melons floating in the pool outside, and the way Goli, their neighbour's daughter, always blushed when she passed by him in the alley. He could have buried himself alive, just as they'd done to his friends. He envied Peyman, who, the day before, had sacrificed himself to detonate a landmine; he wasn't there to see what he would forever be unable to unsee, at least. *Saddam, you son of a bitch!*

Iran was in shambles, and the bastard of Baghdad had struck while the iron was hot. He'd always had his eyes on Khuzestan, and he now had his chance. Together with the other petty dictators of the Arab world, who had all grovelled before the Shah (you used to have such fun water-skiing with him, King Hussein), and blessed with all the weapons he could ask for by the Americans and European powers, Saddam Hussein vowed to show the *Majus* another Qadissiya.[13] He would make those haughty *Ajams*[14] kneel before his might, and revive the humiliation of the 7th century amongst them and their saturnine saviour. It all seemed too easy; Saddam had the world on his side – how could he lose to a ragtag, beggarly bunch of rabble-rousers with a mullah for their leader?

Mammad had wanted to fight for Iran alongside the big boys, ever since Khomeini first called upon all those able to join the 'imposed' struggle. He didn't care whether he lived to tell the tale or not – that was beside the point; he was only too fain to give his life for Iran and the will of the Imam. Whenever he felt his legs giving in or his tiny heart about to explode, he looked at the picture of Khomeini he always carried in his shirt pocket, recalled the plight of Imam Hossein, and imagined Iran, herself, standing proudly before him: no, he wouldn't let her be fucked by those Iraqis and left for dead, her children forgetting the tongue of lovers, of Paradise.

I have to attack those tanks, he thought to himself. He tightened his headband between his sweaty palms, and joined the throng of scruffy children, their faces roughened by clouds of sand, their eyes wide open, their smooth, small hands ready to grasp and claw at whatever they could catch. They jumped over bushes of fire and light, although how different were they than the ones of their childhood, the ones Farhad had sung about! They fell in droves, gunned down by those seemingly invincible Iraqi tanks, those razor-toothed monsters of iron and smoke; but Mammad didn't look back, not even for a second. All he could hear were animal-like wails of *Khoda!*[15] and the harrowing trumpet of Ezrail, the Angel of Death. Yes, it was he, all right – there was no mistaking him. He swore by God and the blood of Imam Hossein that he would reach that tank, as if his all his blackened days had culminated in that very moment, his hour of truth. His chest was aching, and he feared the ball in his chest would stop pounding before he'd be able to get to it. *Ya Khoda!* he cried, *Ya Hossein!* as he stretched out his bare hands, the hell before him erupting into a blinding, numbing sheet of light.

Alas, Mammad! They later lamented. *You weren't there to see how we reclaimed our city! Our blood was not spilled in vain!*[16] Goli wept when she saw the two soldiers knock on his mother's door in their dusty little alley. They looked at the ground, as she dug her nails into her face. *Accept our congratulations and condolences* were the only words they could say. Her little boy had become a martyr.

Eight years. Eight goddamn years. Khomeini had drunk from the poisoned chalice[17] and called for an end to a war that had seen the Iraqis run back home with their tails between their legs. Saddam had underestimated the children of the Revolution, they who had nothing but love and faith; but the bloodshed had to end somewhere. Had the Americans no shame, knowingly bombing a civilian aeroplane full of women and children and not even bothering to apologise? Were Iranian children the only ones they could pick on? The Iranians were advancing well into Iraq, but withdrew at the will of the Imam. Iran was free again, and all throughout the land of the noble, the children wept tears of joy and sorrow for their fallen brothers and sisters, from whose blood sprouted tulips, and under whose shadows they walked the city streets.

«HEIRS OF THE DAYS OF BLOOD AND FIRE, THE SEEDLINGS OF A NEW GENERATION HAD BLOSSOMED ALONG WITH THE TULIPS OF THE PURE.»

The war was over, and in less than a year, only the memory of Khomeini would remain. It seemed the children had seen it all, and been through the worst: revolution, civil strife, war, isolation, economic turmoil. They thought things couldn't get any worse under the rule of the Shah, yet they *had* gotten worse – *much* worse. How would they pick up the pieces? Where was their place in society? Where were the heroes and idols of yesteryear – Khomeini, Behrouz, the Shah? No, they didn't even have a Shah to hit them in the heads and show them the way, right or wrong. How could they be fathers and mothers when they themselves didn't know what was happening around them? Many had stayed, but many had gone long before, to the land of the Franks and of milk and honey; and, though the war had ended, the spirit of the dead haunted the children yet. The names of the streets, the murals on the walls, the images on the television, the hazy studio pictures with black bands and newly-sprouted moustaches – everything in Iran served as a mirror for those fallen cherubs, the living dead.

It was a time for the departed, but also the living. Heirs of the days of blood and fire, the seedlings of a new generation had blossomed along with the tulips of the pure. The faces of the Shah and Farah had been effaced from their schoolbooks, now adorned with flowers and youth brimming with revolutionary zeal chanting *Independence! Freedom! The Islamic Republic!* Daddy was still baking bread, and Sa'di still delivering his sermons; but the floodgates had opened, and the saints come marching in. The children were taught to be like Kobra, Zaynab, and other models of Islamic piety and righteousness who bit their tongues on bended knee. They read not about Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, but Zahhak, the demon-king himself, who with the twain serpents slithering atop his shoulders, fed on the brains of men. The Revolution, after all, had to be defended; and the new generation – its children – were seen as the future *pasdars*[18] of all the Imam had deemed holy.

Like their parents, the children led double lives in public and behind closed doors. They too, were bearing the brunt of sanctions and damnation on their tiny shoulders, and with their imagination and undaunted spirits, had to create something out of nothing in their own private Iran. But the times, they were a-changin'; soon came a smiling chap named Khatami, and new-fangled things called *mahvareh*[19] and *Eenternet*. Slowly, as if they were discovering other planets, the children began to realise that they weren't alone. There were leggy blondes in America with strawberry highlights, prettier than even Fatemeh Mo'tamed-Arya; there were European art house films, new and old, to be gorged upon and

Kaveh Golestan, *Untitled (Revolution 1978–79 series)*; courtesy Kaveh Golestan Estate. A protester holding a placard in memory of a fallen friend in Tehran in 1979.

understood; there was a world outside of Iran, and they wanted, with all their hearts, to be a part of it. Freedom, the children soon learned, tasted good; at long last, the little ones now had a reason to fight! Ali Kuchulu[20] was all grown up, and now they would fight, just as their parents and the fallen ones had – for freedom, *sweet freedom*, and what they thought was rightfully theirs. Again, those bloodied palms, those banners stained red, those black bands. Over and over would the sound of gunshots and slogans echo down the back alleys of Pahlavi – nay, *Vali-ye Asr* – Avenue, and the blood of children stream down the streets, following the course of the cool water from the towering mountains beyond. They would daub their hands and faces in red and green, and like Mister Jimi, wave their freak flags high. They would be cut down, crushed beneath black leather boots, and branded as thuggish enemies of the state; but always, from side-streets and mountain crevices alike, would there resound a cry familiar to one and all: the cry of they, the children of the Revolution.

«AGAIN, THOSE BLOODIED PALMS, THOSE BANNERS STAINED RED, THOSE BLACK BANDS.»

They tried to rob them of their language, culture, and very identity. They tried to efface their glory from the annals of history, and bury it along with their ruins beneath the stained earth of Khorasan and the plains of Persepolis. They tried to revive amongst them the memory of Qadissiya, and make widowers of their women and bastards of their sons. They tried to silence their voices, quash their desires, and, blacken their names. But throughout the centuries, throughout incendiary days of embers and tulips dripping with the tears of the bereaved and the dew of dawn, there was one thing they could not – and *cannot* – snatch away from their scarred, young hands: hope, the purest hope, draped in red, white, and green, shining as brightly as the sun.

The ticking of the clock, the scent of hyacinths, the thought of those gone, and those who will soon be. Uncle Mehrdad in his cigarette carton suit, Farhad strumming his steel-string guitar with closed eyes, Maman Aziz sweeping the house in the ungodly hours of the morning, and the faces…a million different faces, of those above and below the cool earth, and their pure blood…the blood of flowers, the blood of the noble. I hadn't been there, and had no memories to call my own; there was only a story to read, a million miles away, of Iran and her glorious children, *whose blood has not been spilled in vain.*

Because of you, children of the Revolution, has our winter come to an end.

In memory of Mehrdad Bekhrad (1951–1997)
and the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988).

1. *Ghalyan*: water pipe.
2. *Norooz*: The Iranian New Year (lit. "New Day").
3. A reference to the opening lines of Iraj Pezeshkzad's iconic novel, *Daei Jan Napelon* ("My Uncle Napoleon").
4. Oshnos: a cigarette brand.
5. A reference to the title of Kamran Shirdel's documentary, filmed between 1966 and 1979.
6. *Ensan-e kamel*: "The Perfect Man" in Perso-Arabic.
7. SAVAK: The secret police (Sazeman-e Etela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar).
8. Mash Ghasem: a character from Pezeshkzad's Daei Jan Napelon.
9. *Samad be Shah Bilakh Migooyad*: Lit. "Samad Tells the Shah, 'Up Yours'".
10. Gheysar and Shir Mammad: characters played by Behrouz Vossoughi in the films *Gheysar* (1969) and *Tangsir* (1973).
11. *Marg bar Shah*: "Death to the Shah".
12. A reference to *Lalehzar* ("Tulip Field"), Tehran's entertainment district before the Revolution.
13. Saddam Hussein vowed to show the *Majus* another Qadissiya: a decisive battle won by the Muslim Arab armies in 636 A.D. against the Sassanid Persians in Qadissiya, Iraq. Majus is a derogatory term used pri-marily by Arabs towards Iranians, being a corruption of the Old Persian mogh (lit. 'magus,' denoting a member of the Zo-roastrian clergy, from which the English word, 'magic', derives).
14. Ajams: a derogatory word used by Arabs particularly towards Iranians. The word in Arabic denotes non-Arabs and non-Arabic speakers.
15. *Khoda*: "God".
16. The chorus of Koveitipoor's popular war song, *Mammad Naboodi* (Mammad, You Weren't There), sung in tribute to Commander Mohammad (Mammad) Jahanara and the heroes of the liberation of Khorramshahr in 1982. The Mammad in this particular story is fictional.
17. Khomeini had drunk from the poisoned chalice: Khomeini likened his begrudging call to end the war to drinking from a "chalice of poison."
18. *pasdars*: "Defenders".
19. *Mahvareh*: "Satellite television".
20. Ali Kuchulu: Little Ali, a character of an eponymous 80's television programme.

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