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Mrs.

Weber

*Persepolis*

Period

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The revolution began when I was ten years old. I was separated from my female friends in school, and I did not know why. My parents often attended demonstrations against the rule of an Islamic Republic. At the start of the revolution, I sought to emulate figures such as Fidel Castro and Leon Trotsky. I wanted to fight to bring the Marxist ideals that I had read about into my country. I wanted to join my parents in going to demonstrations, I wanted to prove that I would be a brave man and that I would fight for a better Iran. They thought that it was too dangerous, but I did not listen. I snuck off to join the rallies, wanting to prove my fearlessness. That courageousness began to waver when I learned of the torture and brutal murders that other brave men were subjected to by the Savak. My friend's father, Mohsed, was arrested. He told us that the Savak were trained by the C.I.A. and that they knew exactly where to hit. I thought that he was a hero for his sacrifices, but I was also afraid that his stories were a warning for my future.

One night, my mother was verbally attacked for not wearing her veil. She was told that she deserved to be assaulted. I did not understand. My mother was just as kind, just as loving,

and just as worthy of happiness as women who wore the veil. Her assailants, however, called her garbage. To this day I cannot comprehend what difference there is between a devout Muslim woman who covers her head and one who leaves her head bare. Soon after this altercation, it was declared mandatory for women to wear the veil. It was said that this was to protect women from rapists. My father and I were furious. We knew that all women deserved to be respected with or without the veil. My father said that they must think all men were perverts. My mother said that all men were. That statement drove my desire to be the kind of man who would never make a woman feel this way. I did not want my presence to be viewed as a danger.

When the war with Iraq began, the dream of being a Marxist warrior that I had developed earlier in my childhood began to fade. I was fearful that, soon, I would have to face war for real. Many of my friends' parents began to rush them out of the country, shipping them to European countries or the United States. Beating our chests for the martyrs of the war became a daily ritual in school. I was told by many that I should want to be like the virgin martyrs for whom they had built nuptial chambers. I was too ashamed to tell them that I was afraid to die. My thirteenth birthday was drawing near. My cousin Shahab told my mother and I of the poorly trained child soldiers in battle. They were sent to certain death with plastic keys to heaven around their necks. I was terrified throughout the entire story. My mother was afraid as well. It was not long before the day that I returned home to find my parents sitting on our sofa with solemn looks on their

faces. Somehow, I already knew what my fate would be. They told me that they were going to send me to Vienna for a better education, but I knew that it was a lie. I was being sent to Vienna so that they knew I would survive, so that they would never have to hear that their son had died at war. That was not the hardest lie to hear, however. What made leaving Iran the most difficult was knowing that my parents had made an empty promise in saying that they would see me soon. I just hoped that I would see them again some day.





