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Eighty Lashes

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Eighty Lashes

Legend

Informant: Sepanta Dor's is a good friend of mine. We were introduced to each other when I took over a contract for a room. Over the year I lived with Sepanta I got to know the man well. Sepanta was accepted to do his civil engineer PhD with Utah State University. This led Sepanta to immigrating to the United States from the country Iran. Living with Sepanta meant that I got to learn about a lot of Persian customs.

Context: I interviewed Sepanta in his home in Logan, Utah on October 27, 2018. We were sitting on the couch in his front room. The weather was warm despite being late October. Sepanta enjoys to responsibly drink to unwind for the day. This is something Sepanta was not able to legally do at home. In the country Iran, the government is ruled by an Islamic theocracy. Drinking is forbidden in Islamic teachings. As a result, it is illegal in Iran, and is punished brutally. Receiving eighty lashes is the default punishment for drinking in Iran. When Sepanta was sixteen, he got caught drinking alcohol. This resulted in him going to prison for a couple of days. Sepanta's parents were forced to hand over the deed to their house as collateral. Once Sepanta was nineteen, the government notified Sepanta that he had to appear at court to receive his lashings. Failure to appear at court would result in his parents losing their home. Not wanting his parents to lose everything, Sepanta bought a twelve-hour bus ticket to journey to the court house. This all happened the day before his midterms for school. Sepanta explains that the judge did not go easy on him. Guards were ordered to whip Sepanta harder because he was not crying out. The whip was designed to tear flesh and caused havoc on Sepanta's back. After his lashings, Sepanta got back on a bus where he had sat through eight hours of pain. Despite this whole ordeal, Sepanta still aced his midterms.

Text: If you get caught drinking alcohol, you receive eighty lashes. It is an Islamic rule. It is in Sharia law basically. The punishment depends on the judge usually they... I guess it is getting easier these days. They aren't as crazy as what they use to be. Right after the revolution, they were really strict. I guess as time goes on everybody gets softer. It still is not surprising to get lashes for drinking... if you get caught. When you get lashes, they tie your hands on a post in the court room basement. They tie your hands, there is an executioner, and the judge is there also. And uh... they have a... I think is made of maybe leather. They just lash you on the back eighty times. They hit your legs too, but most of it is on the back. I was caught when I was sixteen, I did not get lashes until I was nineteen. At first, they put me in detention, and then prison for a few

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days. We had our house deed used as a guarantee that I would come back to get my eighty lashes. We tried hiring a lawyer to fight back. My mom gave them our house deed to bail me out of prison. They had our house for three years, but then they threatened to evict my parents if I didn't come get my lashes. During this time, I was doing my undergraduate in another city. It was during my midterms the next day, and my mom was calling me asking me to come back. Yeah, I came back and got my eighty lashes. The same night I got on the bus to make it back for my midterms. They were not gently on me. I was trying not to cry out in front of my mom, so the judge ordered the executioner to whip me harder. The judge was saying to the executioner "Go harder! Go harder! You will go to jail if you don't whip him harder!". The executioner was about my age. He was doing his military service working at the court house. The military is mandatory in Iran, you have no choice. The last twenty or thirty of them were just... really hard. The bus ride was horrible. It was a twelve-hour trip. I remember sitting like a crazy person in pain and agony. I was just... not a good night. Even my tee-shirt on my back would hurt. I just wanted to take my shirt off. I aced my midterms the next day though.

Texture: Sepanta did not want this information causing him any issues in the future. He had me promise to keep his identify confidential. This experience sounds like a traumatizing experience. However, while telling this story, Sepanta was very relaxed. The experience will probably always haunt Sepanta. However, Sepanta has refused to let it eat at him. Sepanta is happy to be in the United States where he does not run the risk of lashings.

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