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Crank Call From Tabriz

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Khaled Mattawa

Crank Call From Tabriz

All day short of nails,
dying from dawn's poisoned mist.
Desert shack, shrunken tin sheets,
a scribe's table, no ink.

The donkey shits on the fire
to put out the heat.
They'll skin its hide
if I default on my loan.

I never got a crank call from Tabriz.
No one will come see me today.

Will you buy something if I grow my hair?
Just rest awhile
and watch the snowballs fall
and the sand dunes lap them down.

Never doubt a man
shivering in the cold.
Never wave a taxi with a driver
that's got no head.

Friday's a hymn. Thursday's a ball.
Those days weren't so bad.

If you see me at the mullah's
pretend I'm your son.

I'll wear the turban he made me,
and the socks he took off to keep me warm.

I'll take my needle
and patch up my quilt.
Maybe you'll get a postcard from Mecca.
Maybe a lizard will die at your door.