



My Father's Notebook: A Novel of Iran

By Kader Abdolah

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When he was a boy, Aga Akbar, the deaf-mute illegitimate son of a Persian nobleman, traveled with his uncle to a cave on nearby Saffron Mountain. Once there, he was to copy a three-thousand-year-old cuneiform inscription—an order of the first king of Persia—as a means of freeing himself from his emotional confinement. For the remainder of his life, Aga Akbar used these cuneiform characters to fill a notebook with writings only he could understand. Years later, his son, Ishmael—a political dissident in exile—is attempting to translate the notebook . . . and in the process tells his father's story, his own, and the story of twentieth-century Iran.

A stunning and ambitious novel by a singular literary talent, *My Father's Notebook* is at once a masterful chronicle of a culture's troubled voyage into modernity and the poignant, timeless tale of a son's enduring love.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The history of Iran in the 20th century glints through the fractured lens of the enigmatic notebook of the deaf-mute carpet mender Aga Akbar in this deeply felt tale. Born to the concubine of a Persian nobleman, Aga Akbar invents a cuneiform language inspired by that of an ancient Persian king in an effort to express himself. Aga Akbar marries the brave but bitter Tina, fathers four children and moves from tiny Saffron Village to the big city. There he finds his carpet-mender's craft replaced by mechanized drudgery, and participates in the religious fervor preceding the revolution led by the imams. Years later, Aga Akbar's son, Ishmael, who narrates most of the novel, partially translates the notebook his father filled with his cuneiform script. Ishmael, who like the author is a political exile in the Netherlands, tries to understand his father, whom he served as translator and guide almost from the day he was born. Though Ishmael feels like an extension of his father, his leftist politics and university education inevitably separate them, emotionally and physically. The narrative is sometimes choppy and overpacked, but Ishmael's complex love for his father and his country and his struggle to do what is right for both proves moving and illuminating

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From [Booklist](#)

In Abdolah's unusual novel, Iranian political exile Ishmael attempts to decipher the rudimentary writings of his virtually illiterate father, who was born in the early twentieth century to a *segi*h, or temporary wife, of a Persian nobleman. Under Shiite law, Aga Akbar wasn't considered an heir, so after his mother died, her brother Kazem Khan took the nine-year-old under his wing. Sensing that the deaf and mute boy yearned to express himself in more than makeshift sign language, his uncle gave him a notebook and instructed him to copy an ancient cuneiform message carved on a cave wall by the first Persian king. As Akbar grew, he learned a craft, married, and had a family. All the while, he kept a record in his own idiosyncratic code of his innermost thoughts and feelings and noted how Iran's industrialization and tumultuous political dramas touched the lives of him and his family. That story, told from Akbar's very speculatively translated perspective as supplemented by Ishmael and an omniscient narrator, proves enlightening and moving. *Donna Chavez*

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Review

"A field guide to present day Iran... MY FATHER'S NOTEBOOK is a winning, courtly tale of Persian culture." (Buffalo News)

"Wonderful... Blends contemporary realism with Persian folklore, mirroring Iran's... history through the eyes of a father and his son." (Houston Chronicle)

"MY FATHER'S NOTEBOOK, a lovely novel, has the cadence of a fairy tale and the clarity of truth ." (Wall Street Journal)

"A storyteller of utmost subtlety and natural ease." (Times Literary Supplement)

"Moving and illuminating . . . The history of Iran in the 20th century glints through." (Publishers Weekly)

"An intimate portrait... Abdolah's prose... is clean and lyrical... A sweeping novel that chronicles the tumultuous modern history of [Iran]." (Kirkus Reviews)

“Myth and unlovely reality meet and mingle... Conveys the heartache of an exile who cannot help but feel a traitor.” (Christian Science Monitor)

“Beautiful and poetic.” (Library Journal)

“Remarkable . . . Moving, dreamlike . . . Scenes are beautifully rendered.” (Providence Journal)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bertha Greene:

This My Father's Notebook: A Novel of Iran are usually reliable for you who want to be considered a successful person, why. The explanation of this My Father's Notebook: A Novel of Iran can be among the great books you must have is usually giving you more than just simple studying food but feed an individual with information that might be will shock your prior knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed versions. Beside that this My Father's Notebook: A Novel of Iran giving you an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you trial run of critical thinking that we realize it useful in your day exercise. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

Frank Godwin:

Reading a book can be one of a lot of pastime that everyone in the world loves. Do you like reading book so. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a reserve will give you a lot of new information. When you read a book you will get new information mainly because book is one of a number of ways to share the information or even their idea. Second, examining a book will make you actually more imaginative. When you studying a book especially tale fantasy book the author will bring you to imagine the story how the people do it anything. Third, you could share your knowledge to other people. When you read this My Father's Notebook: A Novel of Iran, you are able to tells your family, friends along with soon about yours e-book. Your knowledge can inspire others, make them reading a publication.

Ernestine Pagan:

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