

A Fort of Nine Towers: An Afghan Family Story

By Qais Akbar Omar

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Twenty-three years ago?after the Soviets left and before the Taliban came to power?Kabul was a garden where seven-year-old Qais Akbar Omar flew kites from the roof of his grandfather's house. Then came the hollow sounds of rocket fire as the Mujahedin, self-proclaimed holy warriors, took over Afghanistan, and the country erupted in civil war. Omar's family fled, leaving everything behind to take shelter in an old fort. But after a narrow escape from death, his father decided that the family must leave the country.

Yet the journey proved more difficult than anticipated, and in this stunning coming-of-age memoir, Omar offers a moving recollection of these events?a story of daily hardships, relieved by moments of joy and immense beauty. Inflected with folktales and steeped in poetry, *A Fort of Nine Towers* is a life-affirming triumph.

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
Starred Review Omar’s Afghan childhood encompassed the love of an extended family and the violent tyranny of warlords and the Taliban, and he renders every facet with the glorious precision and rich palette of the exquisite carpets that provided a livelihood for his grandfather, father, and, eventually, himself. Kabul in the 1980s was a lush garden, where young Omar flew kites, excelled at school, and played with a band of cousins. The Mujahedin rapidly destroyed this verdant world, and Omar and his family fled the city for the Fort of Nine Towers, an old outpost filled with flowers, fruit trees, deer, peacocks, even a leopard. But war came to this paradise, too, precipitating his family’s death-defying cross-country quest for sanctuary. They joined nomadic relatives on a caravan and lived in the caves behind one of the towering Buddhas of Bamiyan, which the Taliban later destroyed. Though he is as modest as he is entrancing, Omar clearly was a preternaturally attentive, sensitive boy with a gift for languages and an artistic eye, who embraced the diversity, beauty, and wisdom of Afghan life. He also suffered the soul-scarring horrors of looting, bombs, snipers, homelessness, atrocities, incarceration, and torture. Omar tells this staggering true story of a life and a land of radiance and terror with magnificent humility, grace, and power. --Donna Seaman

Review

“Poetic, powerful, and unforgettable.” ?*Khaled Hosseini, New York Times bestselling author of The Kite Runner and And the Mountains Echoed*

“Mind-boggling yet matter-of-fact...A riveting story of war as seen through a child's eyes and summoned from an adult's memory.” ?*The New York Times Book Review*

“*A Fort of Nine Towers* captures a time and a place unknown to most Americans….Exceptional.” ?*The Boston Globe*

“An extraordinary memoir...Even more haunting than The Kite Runner.” ?*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Beautifully written, with the pacing and suspense of a novel...[*A Fort of Nine Towers*] is deeply fulfilling, remarkable not least because Omar lived to tell the tale.” ?*The Washington Post*

“A classic autobiography of universal resonance...Tender and hopeful against all odds.” ?*Newsweek*

“From squatting inside a cave in the head of a Bamyan Buddha to escaping torture at the teeth of a dog and his master, Qais Akbar Omar's tale of one family's journey during the Afghan civil war is inscriptional: its images carve themselves into the reader's mind. Unlike most accounts of life in exile, *A Fort of Nine Towers* never leaves Afghanistan, as a boy and his family remain trapped within the nation's borders by familial ties and by war. This book is essential reading for anyone eager to learn what more than three decades of war have cost the Afghan people.” ?*Eliza Griswold, author of the New York Times bestseller The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam*

“At a time when Afghanistan threatens to recede into a bloody and debased footnote, Qais Akbar Omar reminds us of the honor and courage of his people. A remarkable feat of memory and imagination.” ?*Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya, author of The Watch and The Storyteller of Marrakesh*

“In this stark, unflinching memoir, Qais Akbar Omar illuminates the beauty and tragedy of a country pushed to the brink by war. *A Fort of Nine Towers* gives voice to the unbreakable spirit of the Afghan people.” ?*G. Willow Wilson, author of Alif the Unseen*

“As lyrical as it is haunting, this mesmerizing, not-to-be-missed debut memoir is also a loving evocation of a misunderstood land and people....A gorgeously rich tapestry of an amazing life and culture.” ?*Kirkus, Starred Review*

“Omar's prose is deliciously forthright, extravagant, and somewhere mischievous, and very Afghan in its sense of long-suffering endurance and also reconciliation.” ?*Publishers Weekly*

“I know of no other book in which the complex realities of life--and death--in contemporary Afghanistan are so starkly and intimately portrayed. This brave memoir, rich in tough humor and insight, recounts an insider's view into both the suffering and the integrity of an uncompromisingly proud and courageous people. Above all, it is a powerful reminder of the extraordinary tenacity of a culture that foreigners have repeatedly and fatally misjudged.” ?*Jason Elliot, author of An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan*

“This is a book for those who love Afghanistan, for those who want to understand it, or simply for those who value deeply the best in the human spirit. It is a tale that deserves to rank with *The Kite Runner*.” ?*Ronal d E. Neumann, former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and president of the American Academy of Diplomacy*

“If you read only one book this summer, make it this one....Astonishing.” ?*Jeanette Winterson, O, The Oprah Magazine*

About the Author
Qais Akbar Omar (whose first name is pronounced "Kice") manages his family's carpet business and writes books. In 2007, he was a visiting scholar at the University of Colorado. He has studied business at Brandeis University and now lives in Boston, where he is pursuing an MFA in creative writing at Boston University. Omar has lectured on Afghan carpets in Afghanistan, Europe, and the United States. He is the coauthor, with Stephen Landrigan, of *Shakespeare in Kabul*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sadie McBride:

A lot of people always spent their free time to vacation or perhaps go to the outside with them family or their friend. Did you know? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, as well as playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity honestly, that is look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent the entire day to reading a publication. The book A Fort of Nine Towers: An Afghan Family Story it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of those who recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space bringing this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore simply to read this book out of your smart phone. The price is not to fund but this book has high quality.

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