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# On Two Feet And Wings



## Synopsis

He is in a foreign country, he is alone, and he is just a boy. Abbas Kazerooni is not yet ten, but he's suddenly forced to leave his parents, his friends, his entire world and flee Tehran. The Iran-Iraq war is at its bloodiest, and the Ayatollahs who rule Iran have reduced the recruitment age for the army. If Abbas doesn't escape, it's almost certain that he will be drafted and die fighting for a regime that has stripped his family of all they have. On his own in the strange, often frightening city of Istanbul, Abbas grows up fast with little more than his wits to guide him. He must conquer difficult things: how to live on his own, how to navigate a foreign city and culture when he doesn't speak the language, and, most importantly, how to judge who is a friend and who is an enemy. Facing the unexpected as well as the everyday challenges of life on his own, Abbas walks a tightrope of survival, yearning to please the demanding father he has left behind, yet relishing his new found independence. His quick thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, and the kindness of strangers allow him to make the best of his dire situation in surprising ways. Does he have what it takes to not only survive against these challenging odds but achieve his parents' ultimate dream for him: a visa to England, and the safety it represents? This compelling true story of one young boy's courage provides a powerful child's-eye view of war, political tumult, and survival. "Readers of Abbas Kazerooni's incredible memoir will be rooting for him from the very first pages and not be able to put this book down. His frank narrative is clear, compelling, and utterly endearing. An unforgettable story! I love this book!" Naomi Shihab Nye, winner of the 2013 NSK Neustadt Prize in Children's Literature "This heart-stopping memoir of a young boy who fled Iran on his own after the 1979 Revolution left me wondering whether adults could be so resilient. Enormously inspiring on many levels!" Suzanne Fisher Staples, author of *Shabanu*, a Newbery Honor Book "Abbas Kazerooni offers the world a remarkable memoir as he tells of his escape from revolutionary Iran when he was just a young boy. Faced with the prospect of never seeing his parents again, he struggles to find his way in Istanbul, where survival often depends on his skill in knowing who to trust and when to flee. This is a compelling story full of tension and heartbreak." Terry Farish, author of *The Good Braider*, Best Fiction for Young Adults 2013, the American Library Association

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up **When Kazerooni was nine years old, he was told he must leave his family and go to Istanbul. This is the only way he could avoid being conscripted into Iran's army, which has recently reduced the age of recruitment. Already frightened, Kazerooni was pushed beyond all reasonable limits when his mother was denied entry on the plane and he was forced to navigate the trip alone. Here he recalls how he learned to live on his own in a foreign city when he didn't speak the language. His quick thinking and the kindness of strangers allow him to make the best of his dire situation in surprising ways and this memoir is uplifting even when describing the dark times. Kazerooni has written about his trials in order to bring his experiences during the reign of the ayatollahs to many who have limited or no knowledge of that time. The author narrates, lending the story a lot of personality. VERDICT This memoir will make a valued addition to any middle school, high school, or public library collection.** —Elizabeth L. Kenyon, Merrillville High School, IN

**“Readers are often promised unforgettable protagonists—this memoir delivers one.” —Kirkus Review (Starred Review)** “Kazerooni’s memoir tells of both his astonishing luck and his determined resilience in this terrifying journey. With child immigrants so much in the news, Kazerooni’s unusual, compelling story is especially timely.” —Booklist **“Readers of Abbas Kazerooni’s incredible memoir will be rooting for him from the very first pages—and not be able to put this book down. His frank narrative is clear, compelling, and utterly endearing. An unforgettable story—I love this book!” —Naomi Shihab Nye, winner of the 2013 NSK Neustadt Prize in**

Children's Literature -- "This heart-stopping memoir of a young boy who fled Iran on his own after the 1979 Revolution left me wondering whether adults could be so resilient. Enormously inspiring on many levels!" -- Suzanne Fisher Staples, author of *Shabanu*, a Newbery Honor Book -- "Abbas Kazerooni offers the world a remarkable memoir as he tells of his escape from revolutionary Iran when he was just a young boy. Faced with the prospect of never seeing his parents again, he struggles to find his way in Istanbul, where survival often depends on his skill in knowing who to trust and when to flee. This is a compelling story full of tension and heartbreak." -- Terry Farish, author of *The Good Braider*, Best Fiction for Young Adults 2013, the American Library Association -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A very moving true story of survival against odds. A young boy is sent alone to foreign country by loving parents desperate for him to escape the fate of a child soldier. By the grace of God, the boy's intelligent nature, and kind fate, he is helped by strangers who come to respect and love him. His brave attitude, work ethic, and self-reliance makes him an admirable character. His experience is a worthwhile story more people would benefit from sharing!

One of the most moving books I have read lately. The author really captures the feelings of his boyhood in a way poignant, brave and touching. What courage! What intelligence and ingenuity! I am glad for the epilogue...but would love to know more. A second book to follow up, perhaps? How did his parents get along? How did he do in school? How was it to learn English? And how did he end up in America? This author is VERY talented. The story more than readable. The memory of his experience will last with me.

I enjoyed this book. The writing feels translated to me - a little choppy and doesn't totally flow. HOWEVER, the story is wonderful, and I was so impressed with the presence of mind the author showed when he was younger. The story is very suspenseful even though you know that it had to work out since the author is writing his own story, but he was able to keep the story very suspenseful anyway. I wanted to know what happened after this part - he mentions trouble in boarding school - but I wanted to know about his family and when he saw them again, etc.

This book started out great but quickly turned into a disappointment. By the time I was half way through it the writing turned terrible. It was as though second grader was narrating the book. It

would go something like this: 'I said hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. He said hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. He seemed very nice with kind eyes. So I trusted him.' That was fine once, twice, but this went on with that simple style of writing. I kept thinking it was done to give the thoughts of the child's perspective. But it became unreadable. Eventually I put the book down and didn't finish it.

Based on a true story this is one of the most compelling books I have read. Abbas Kazerooni tells his story when he was 9 years old and had to leave Iran due to the war between Iran and Iraq. He had to leave his parents, his family and everything he knew and loved. His determination and resilience helps him to overcome an almost impossible challenge for an otherwise 9 year old child. His story is breathtaking and inspiring and leaves you with the wish for a continuation of his biography after this book ended.

All I can say is thank you Abbas for a truly inspiring recapture of your amazing journey. I have a friend that is also from Iran and made it out about the same time and is now a successful doctor in the United States. This story will move many people and also inspire them to offer kindness to other people. What an unbelievably brave boy Abbas was. It's amazing what instincts Abbas had at that young age! The author's mother and father did the ultimate sacrifice letting him go. My heart broke for his mother. I know both of them were so proud of their young son. I hope the story continues! I read the whole book today on a rainy day! Great read for everyone.

This little kid is amazing. If this was a novel, you'd say, "No way! This is so unrealistic." But it's a true story. It's a good illustration of how horrible things were in Tehran during the Iran-Iraq war.

Always enjoy a good true story.

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