



My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan

By Hiner Saleem

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This beautiful, spare, autobiographical narrative tells of the life of a Kurd named Azad as he grows to manhood in Iraq during the 1960s and 1970s. Azad is born into a vibrant village culture that hopes for a free Kurdish future. He loves his mother's orchard, his cousin's stunt pigeons, his father's old Czech rifle, his brother who is fighting in the mountains. But before he is even of school age, Azad has seen friends and neighbors assassinated, and his own family driven to starvation.

After being forced into a refugee camp in Iran for years, his family realizes, on their return, that the Baathist regime is destroying the autonomy it had promised their people. *My Father's Rifle* ends with Azad's heartbreaking departure from his parents and flight across the Syrian border to freedom.

Stunning in its unadorned intensity, *My Father's Rifle* is a moving portrait of a boy who embraces the land and culture he loves, even as he leaves them.

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My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan By Hiner Saleem Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1617859 in Books
- Published on: 2006-01-24
- Released on: 2006-01-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .1" w x 5.50" l, .35 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 112 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Using a child's unsparing, detailed eye, this boyhood chronicle of life in embattled 1960s and '70s Kurdistan portrays a time of soaring nationalist pride, family tragedy and government betrayal. With stirring lyricism, Saleem writes of his oppressed Iraqi homeland, his mother's fruit-laden orchard, his cousin's stunt pigeons, his father's ancient Czech rifle and his own place in a unified village community where every man would fight for the Kurdish way of life. Saleem and his family join those Kurds who, leery of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party's promises of peace, flee to the mountains, where they put up fierce resistance and are finally forced across the Iranian border into refugee camps. After the Iraqi government eventually prompts the Kurds to return to their villages, Hussein then moves hundreds of Arabs to their territories to establish homes and businesses, transforming much of Kurdistan into a haven for true believers in the Baath Party, although the Kurdish *peshmerga* (volunteer fighters) continue to battle for their homeland. Saleem's family goes home, but the Baath pressure forces the author and his brothers to settle in Europe; his sister remains in a concentration camp (and thus is not able to attend their father's funeral). Saleem, who's now a filmmaker in Paris, offers a haunting, sympathetic account of a young life amid the horrors of a war zone.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Saleem, the son of a Kurdish guerrilla, narrates his harrowing memoir of his family's experiences in Iraq during the nineteen-sixties and seventies from the naïve perspective of his childhood self. At one point, the family, demoralized by the murder of relatives and the destruction of their home by collaborators, flee to Iran. Later, faced with a choice between repatriation or extermination, they return and are officially labelled *aïdoun*—meaning "fallen back into line." At school, Saleem attends classes taught in a language he doesn't understand (Arabic) and witnesses his young niece die when a doctor refuses to treat a "terrorist's daughter." At eighteen, Saleem concludes that war will never advance the Kurdish cause, and he leaves his family and the country he loves.

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From [Booklist](#)

At the opening of this slim, potent memoir, Saleem chronicles his coming-of-age as an Iraqi Kurd whose family fought to reestablish an independent Kurdistan. The political and military horrors are here: Saddam Hussein rises to power, concentration camps are built, Kurds who speak against the regime disappear. Saleem, now a filmmaker living in France, shows with cinematic precision how these larger events affect his family members--the enormous, private sacrifices of home, security, love, and identity that they are forced to make. And he creates a poignant sense of what it's like to work through archetypal adolescent challenges during such terrifying upheaval. The narrative doesn't always transition smoothly between scenes, but Saleem writes with searing imagery about the landscape, the politics, and the small moments and gestures that reveal the largest emotions and truths. An enlightening memoir of struggle about a region on the forefront of most Americans' minds. Suggest also Christiane Bird's *A Thousand Sighs, a Thousand Revolts* [BKL My 15 04] for more background about Iraqi Kurds. *Gillian Engberg*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Terry Kopp:

Do you considered one of people who can't read gratifying if the sentence chained in the straightway, hold on guys this specific aren't like that. This My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan book is readable by simply you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the details here are arrange for enjoyable examining experience without leaving perhaps decrease the knowledge that want to offer to you. The writer involving My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan content conveys thinking easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different available as it. So , do you even now thinking My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

Richard Rhone:

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