



A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan

Nelofer Pazira

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Written with compassion, intelligence and insight, *A Bed of Red Flowers* is a profoundly moving portrait of life under occupation and the unforgettable story of a family, a people and a country.

"The picnic of the red flower" is a traditional time of celebration for Afghans. One of Nelofer Pazira's earliest memories is of people gathering in the countryside to admire the tulips and poppies carpeting the landscape. It is the mid-1970s, and her parents are building a future for themselves and their young children in the city of Kabul.

But when Nelofer is just five the Communists take power and her father, a respected doctor, is imprisoned along with thousands of other Afghans. The following year, the Russians invade Afghanistan, which becomes a police state and the center of a bloody conflict between the Soviet army and American-backed mujahidin fighters. A climate of violence and fear reigns.

For Nelofer, there is no choice but to grow up fast. At eleven, she and her friends throw stones at the Russian tanks that stir up dust and animosity in the streets of Kabul. As a teenager she joins a resistance group, hiding her gun from her parents. Her emotional refuge is her friendship with her classmate Dyana, with whom she shares a passion for poetry, dreams and a better life.

After a decade of war, Nelofer's family escapes across the mountains to Pakistan and later to Canada, where she continues to write to Dyana. When her friend suddenly stops writing, Nelofer fears for Dyana's life. With lyrical, narrative prose, *A Bed of Red Flowers* movingly tells Pazira's haunting story, as well as Afghanistan's story as a nation.

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