



## The Sky Detective

*Azadeh Tabazadeh*

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## **The Sky Detective** Azadeh Tabazadeh

When Azadeh was an eight-year-old girl growing up in Iran in March 1973, her uncle gave her a chemistry kit. That got her hooked on science early and provided an opportunity for her to find herself. In *The Sky Detective*, Azadeh shares her life story--one that includes an insider's look at life during the Islamic Revolution and Iraqi War and details how one little girl grew up to become a gifted scientist. Set inside Iran in the final years of the monarchy, the author narrates a true story of friendship between two girls growing up in the same household in Tehran: Azadeh, the daughter of an affluent engineer, and Najmeh, a child servant who arrives from a small village in northern Iran to live with Azadeh's family. When the girls are teenagers, political turmoil interrupts their lives, sending them down different paths. This memoir recalls friendship and faith, the bonds between parents and daughters in a paternalistic society, and the clash of values among relatives from different generations in a family. *The Sky Detective* describes the rich culture of a beautiful but deeply troubled land undergoing radical transformation. In spite of the hardship that comes along with the establishment of a theocratic regime, Azadeh shows her will and determination as a young woman to persevere and realize her childhood dream of becoming a world-renowned scientist.

## **The Sky Detective Details**

Date : Published April 30th 2015 by iUniverse

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Author : Azadeh Tabazadeh

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## From Reader Review The Sky Detective for online ebook

### Gretchen says

Sky is not the Limit; rather it is the Possibility

Loved the historical perspective of a time and place often shrouded from the news. I was moved by Azadeh's independent and tenacious streak. Not taking no for an answer is a most powerful trait. Clearly written. I want to know more about the intervening years...

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### Azadeh Tabazadeh says

Kirkus names "The Sky Detective" as one of best books of 2015.

#### KIRKUS REVIEW

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-re...>

A compelling debut memoir by an accomplished geophysical scientist that offers a vivid look at life in Tehran between 1973 and 1982, before and after the Iranian Revolution.

Tabazadeh was just a few days shy of her eighth birthday in 1973 when her beloved uncle Mahmood gave her a present that would profoundly influence her life: a chemistry set. Tabazadeh was a happy, bright child living the privileged life of a daughter of an affluent family. With the shah still in power, Tehran was primarily a secular city, free of the harsh religious restrictions imposed once the ayatollah came to power. Western music and American movies were popular, and clothing styles were modern with colorful Persian accents, all of which the author describes in fluid, engaging prose. It was a place where a young girl could dream of one day becoming a famous chemist. When the author's family brought an 11-year-old girl named Najmeh into the household to work as a servant, even a very young Tabazadeh began to see for the first time the stark contrasts between the educated upper class and the peasant class that made up the bulk of the population. A budding friendship between the two girls galvanized the author to take part in demonstrations against the shah. What she didn't anticipate were the violence and authoritarian law that replaced the old regime. Her beautiful city was streaked with blood, and Tabazadeh, then a young teenager, was forced to cover her head with a veil and ultimately to cover her whole body in black robes. As she approached her high school graduation, she realized she no longer had a future in Iran. In gripping detail, she describes her dangerous escape to the West, where she has been able to fulfill her aspirations. The narrative is written in the present tense, giving the child/teenager an unlikely adult voice, though the literary device does create a compelling dynamic immediacy. Filled with details of day-to-day life, this volume offers a unique perspective on a country and a people that remain shrouded in mystery for most Westerners.

An authentic firsthand account of troubled times in a tumultuous country.

Manhattan Book Review (November 16, 2015) - an independent professional review of my book: The Sky Detective (5-star review)

<http://manhattanbookreview.com/book-r...>

In 2001, Azadeh Tabazadeh receives the prestigious Macelwane Medal for her research on polar stratospheric clouds and the causes behind the degradation of the ozone layer. With every great achievement, there is a profound story. In the case of Azadeh, her account goes back to 1973 in Tehran to two life-changing experiences: receiving a chemistry kit from her uncle and developing a close relationship with Najmeh, the family's housekeeper. Azadeh's world suddenly turns upside down as her country succumbs to political struggles and calamity strikes her family. When she decides to escape in the hope of making it to America, Azadeh has no idea if she'll see her family ever again.

Azadeh Tabazadeh shares a powerful story of determination amid despair. Tabazadeh's first person narrative reflects the perspective of young Azadeh and her passion for learning. Falling in love with chemistry by the age of eight, Azadeh sets her educational sites on becoming a scientist. Tabazadeh not only portrays a child growing up in fun-filled and happy environment, but also a young girl who is slowly coming to terms with the world beyond her blissful bubble when she gets to know Najmeh—a girl from impoverished means.

Tabazadeh's plot shifts as she paints a drastic portrayal of life in the midst of highly turbulent times. While lacing her text with the driving emotional tension between Azadeh and family members, Tabazadeh's descriptions reflect a dark tone as Azadeh's short-lived contentment quickly shatters during the Iranian Revolution (1978), Ayatollah Khomeini's reign. His full-covering edict for females (ages nine and up), the American Hostage Crisis in Iran, and especially the Iran-Iraq War when Azadeh, her brother, and cousin eventually flee the country.

Engaging readers from chapter to chapter, Tabazadeh's deft storytelling carefully builds to Azadeh's harrowing journey to America. Tabazadeh's punctuates her plot with two aspects—a combination of Azadeh's pleasant flashbacks and determination to study—that become a means of survival for the seventeen-year-old who is striving for a better life. A stark, yet inspiring, presentation of hope in the midst of hopelessness, *The Sky Detective* is one gripping page-turner that is a definite must-read by all.

“Improvise, child. That’s what makes you become a leader later in life.”

Reviewed by Anita Lock

Want to get to know the author of *The Sky Detective*, Azadeh Tabazadeh? Read the interview between her and San Francisco Book Review here!

<http://www.sanfranciscobookreview.com...>

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**Mercy Hegland says**

**Captivating biographical account.**

I recommend the story of a young Iranian girl's experiences growing up in Iran during the Shah's reign, and his departure after the revolution.

The innocent yet introspective voice is that of Azadeh an eight year old Iranian girl born to a well to do family. It is possible to enjoy with her the tales of her pleasant childhood and feel part of her culture within the bosom of a loving family. It is possible to dream with Azadeh, a gifted girl, fun, land to feel her emotions

as she matures with fun, excitement, disappointments and successes. She brings alive the religious restrictions for all Muslims especially women.

Azadeh grows into a young idealist who hopes for a future she knows she can't achieve in Iran. Her hopes become your hopes. You cry, laugh and cheer with her as her life enfolds. It's a story of innocence, anguish and hope and many other human experiences that resonate with any reader of any culture and age throughout the book.

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## **John says**

### **Reviewed for San Francisco Book Review**

“I’m probably imagining the smell rather than inhaling it, because I know the smell of fresh blood comes from the oxidation of iron II (ferrous) to iron III (ferric) once it’s exposed to air.

As always, chemistry can take my mind off almost anything, even a gruesome scene like this.”

A well-respected scientist shares her story of life before and during the 70s Iranian revolution, her escape from the country, and her reception of a prestigious award.

In “The Sky Detective”, Azadeh Tabazadeh receives a chemistry kit from her favorite uncle, sparking a love of science that will eventually lead to her flight from her home country. Tabazadeh grew up in a time of prosperity with wealthy parents and a loving home. As most girls, she loves her family, spending time with friends, and has an infectious love of learning. Unfortunately, the shah is overthrown, and the new regime is violent and bloody. She loses the friendship of her friend, which masterfully highlights the difference in classes. Her schooling, despite some very dedicated teachers, soon falls apart as the new regime begins to oppress women. Tabazadeh is forced to wear the body-covering chador, which is the final straw. She is unable to learn, unable to spend time with her precious friends, and now she cannot be a happy and festive young woman. Her family agrees to let her accompany her brother and cousin as they flee military service. This leads to a tumultuous escape through stark landscapes and corrupt officials. Once free in America, Tabazadeh rises through the ranks to earn the respect of her peers and the recognition from the community at large, even President Clinton.

The main appeal of this memoir is Tabazadeh’s backward-looking narrative. She recounts the story through the POV of a child and young woman, but with the gravity and disappointment of an adult. While remaining firmly in the present moment of her past, “The Sky Detective” is engaging and captivating. Her journey highlights the nature of a society many Westerners are unfamiliar with, adding a layer of dimension that increases the readability of the memoir. The only downside is the lack of information after she lands in America. It would be fascinating to follow her through earning degrees and the respect of the scientific community. Her infectious curiosity and innate talent shines through the eyes of her younger self and captures readers’ intention for a truly amazing read.

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## **Karen Michener says**

This is an exciting memoir of the experiences of a rich upper class Iranian girl growing up in Tehran, the

capitol of Iran, during the end of the rein of the Shah of Iran, to the start of the Islamic Empire. Azadeh Tabazadeh shares her experiences from the time she is 8 years old, to the time she is 17 years old. Through her eyes we are able to experience the rich and ancient culture of Iran, and gain insight into its people. The section where the people's revolution against the King is hijacked by the Islamic Fundamentalists is especially thought-provoking. Tabazadeh gives us a fresh and human perspective to these events, and how they shaped the lives of the Iranian people. The fact that Tabazadeh was able to persevere and realize her childhood dream of becoming a scientist was very motivating. I think this novel will be very interesting to the students at RCHS, because the author is a teenager during the time most of the action takes place in the memoir, and that would make the novel easy to relate to and compelling to the young adult reader.

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### **Sonya Johnson says**

#### **YOU HAVE TO READ THIS BOOK!**

This is a wonderful little book. It reads like a novel, yet all of it is true. There are massive world forces at work, seen through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl who grows up in this memoir to become an accomplished scientist, a professor at Stanford. Because we get to see them through Azadeh's clear eyes, these world forces become real for us in a way they can never be when we hear about them on CNN. Beautifully written, full of detail, full of life (and often funny!), it makes Tehran and the Iranian Revolution of the 70's and early 80's seem but a heartbeat away.

This is the sort of book that we read for. This is the sort of book that can change things because it makes us understand how truly similar we are, that we all want the same things: family, a chance to work and love in peace. Azadeh is enfolded in a large, warm family: besides her siblings and parents, there are aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins. And yet she writes that she wrote this book for a little girl who came to her family as an unlettered housemaid, a girl she felt could have gone far and wide in the world if given the chances Azadeh had. Even though they spent only a few years together, Azadeh calls her "the guiding star" of her life. Strong words for an astro-geophysicist.

I hope parts of this book will be read in elementary schools: the parts where Azadeh is very young and falling in love with science. Some of the later parts are too scary for young ones, but it should be required reading in high schools. Please read this book, pass it on, give it as gifts. For although it will teach you a lot about Iranian culture, "The Sky Detective" is a very American story. It is the best of us.

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### **Melinda M says**

The Sky Detective by Azadeh Tabazadeh a biography with a lot of history. It is well written and holds your interest from page one to the end. Azadeh Tabazadeh writes about a girl growing up in Iran and living thru the revolution to her escape to Pakistan, thru Spain, and finally to the USA. It is also a tale of a girl who fell in love with science. She gives great details that show how events can affect a person. It is a personal count of a very important historical event. It was a fast read and left me wanting to know what happened after the end of this book. I recommend this book if you want to understand have an understanding of how lives were changed because of the revolution and how it was seen by a young girl and woman. A great read with a historical reference.

I received a copy thru Goodreads Giveaways.

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### **Michelle Byron says**

I enjoyed reading this story from a child's perspective and learned many things about the socio political environment in Iran before the ousting of the shah. I found the people courageous and enjoyed the story.

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### **Ariella says**

(Some spoilers!)

I read this book because a roommate of mine also escaped from Iran (however, in the 1990s, so the story is very different), and I wanted to learn more about the Islamic revolution and its aftermath. This book definitely helped me understand the situation better.

I liked that this book began with pre-revolution times. I enjoyed how Tabazadeh included her interest in science, her family relationships and her relationship with Najmeh, showing the normalcy in her life, though the inclusion of all the details did make the beginning of the book a little slow. I also liked that the author included the difficulties that political views had on her parents' marriage. It felt like an honest account of her overall situation. I loved that Tabazadeh's mother was a feminist in her own way, and that she raised a daughter to hold those same values, potentially without even realizing it.

The one thing that I wish the author had included was what happened to the rest of her family. I was left wondering if her parents or sister were able to flee Iran. Besides for that, I thought this was a wonderful book that taught me about the situation in Iran. Her early life was like my life, and her family was similar to my family- I relate to those in Iran more now that I have read this book. I recognize those in their situation could just as well be me, or anyone else.

Note to the author: Thanks for writing this memoir- I really appreciated hearing your story and seeing the life you lived through your eyes.

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### **Anita Lock says**

In 2001, Azadeh Tabazadeh receives the prestigious Macelwane Medal for her research on polar stratospheric clouds and the causes behind the degradation of the ozone layer. With every great achievement, there is a profound story. In the case of Azadeh, her account goes back to 1973 in Tehran to two life-changing experiences: receiving a chemistry kit from her uncle and developing a close relationship with Najmeh, the family's housekeeper. Azadeh's world suddenly turns upside down as her country succumbs to political struggles and calamity strikes her family. When she decides to escape in the hope of making it to America, Azadeh has no idea if she'll see her family ever again.

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Anita Lock, Book Reviewer

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