

On Foreign Shores: England-Iran-U.S.A.

Ingeborg Ghadimi

AuthorHouse

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Ingeborg Ghadimi's fascinating life story has all the ingredients for the three volume epic memoir that it is. The first volume, *Caught in the Storm*, chronicles her tumultuous early life in Germany before, during, and after WWII. *On Foreign Shores*, the second, opens when Ghadimi boards a train for England and ends more than ten years later when she and her Iranian husband, Hossein, move to the USA with three young children in tow. If the prequel, and the yet-to-be-released sequel to *On Foreign Shores* are even half as enjoyable as this middle volume, the memoir world is thrice blessed.

Ghadimi writes with a preternatural ease. Readers are lulled into an authentic understanding of the fears and hopes of a shy but determined teenage girl thrown into the alien environment of postwar England. In this new country she finds friendly people, a difficult but rewarding job as a housekeeper, and other experiences that help her develop charm and courageousness. For example, during her week off from an exhausting work schedule, Ghadimi borrows a bicycle and travels from Liverpool to Scotland alone, spending her nights in youth hostels.

After a year in Liverpool, she moved to London and took another more pleasant housekeeping job with the family of a Spanish diplomat. After a short and bittersweet visit home to visit her family in their dingy apartment, she returns to London to begin nursing school. Ghadimi quickly shot to the top of her class and thrived in the fast paced environment of a busy teaching hospital. While on a double date with a girlfriend, Ghadimi met Hossein, an Iranian pediatrician, and they soon fell in love. Courtship flowed into an engagement, and Hossein returned to Iran to live and prepare the way for her. Excited and confident that she was doing the right thing, Ghadimi was nevertheless quickly inundated with warnings about the dangers of marrying an Iranian. Unperturbed, she moved to Iran where the couple was married by an Islamic mullah who openly despised her decision not to convert to Islam. Hossein was a secular Bahai, and their religious differences played only a peripheral role in the marriage.

Ingeborg Ghadimi took to life in Iran with an indefatigable effortlessness. The newlyweds led an active social life; Ghadimi created a comfortable home under often trying circumstances, and helped her husband with his work doctoring in primitive villages. Soon she bore a son, Rahim, and ten months later a daughter, Roya.

Iran's political situation in the 1950s was volatile and Ghadimi does an exemplary job conveying the multifaceted and sometimes personally dangerous aspects of life under an oil rich Middle Eastern monarchy.

When the opportunity to relocate to the United States and practice medicine in Boston was offered to Hossein, the young couple was thrilled by the prospect of raising their, now three, young children in a free country. After several weeks of minor chaos, Ghadimi and the children flew to the USA to join Hossein, who'd gone ahead.

The only faults in this exceptional memoir are an amateurish cover with a blatant misspelling, a few other typos, and a somewhat abrupt ending.

PATTY SUTHERLAND (July 29, 2011)

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