

10 Questions

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Addario with her son Lukas and her mother Camille



Photojournalist **Lynsey Addario** lays out the risks, rewards and heartbreak of reporting from war zones

Why did you call your book *It's What I Do*?

Because so many people asked me, Why do you do this job? Why risk your life? Why subject yourself to these scenes of brutality? I've realized that it's not just how I make a living but it's what I do.

Do female photojournalists shoot war differently?

On the front lines it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman, so long as you keep up. But I think that in the Muslim world, where I work a lot, I have better access to women and children because the society is segregated by gender.

Can you remember when you were most afraid?

Definitely in Libya. We stopped at a checkpoint, and Gaddafi's troops were full of hatred and adrenaline and so amped up at having caught Western journalists. They made us lie down, and they put guns to our heads and were about to execute us. I remember being more terrified than I'd ever been.

What did you think about?

It was a series of almost non sequiturs: What am I doing here? Do I really care about Libya? Why do I do this job? Will I see my parents again? Will I see my husband again? What will my Italian grandmothers think? Will I get my cameras back?

You survived, but people died

as a result of working with you. How do you live with that?

It's very difficult. I think it's very important to take ownership. Especially in the case of Libya, it was definitely our fault. Our driver wanted to leave, and we were slow in deciding. But anyone who works with journalists in a war zone understands the risks.

While captive in Libya, you decided to have a baby after not wanting one. What clicked?

It seemed like the most logical response. At that point in my life I had escaped death several times. I thought, Maybe it's time I start a life rather than spending my life documenting death.

Does having a son make it harder to leave home?

Of course. I try to limit my assignments to two weeks. I don't necessarily work on the front line anymore. I try to cover refugees or the civilian toll.

Have you had to tone down your adrenaline-junkie side?

I don't have the adrenaline-junkie side. People who do this for a living don't do it for the rush, or I don't. I do it because I believe the work is important. So much of this job is lonely, grueling and difficult.

Has seeing so much war made you more hawkish or dovish?

Neither. It has made me more realistic and pragmatic about what goes into a war and what comes out on the back end of a war. And who the victims are. Generally not the combatants.

Were you surprised at the negative response to your decision to keep working when you were pregnant?

I fully expected to be criticized. But in order to discuss these issues, someone has to be honest about them. And I think women are often ambivalent about being pregnant and what will happen to our lives. Also, I worked in places where there are women getting pregnant and giving birth every single day. If people are so up in arms about the conditions for pregnant women in Somalia, they should do something about it.

Your two grandmothers are 97 and 101. Is it because you think you have a lot of time left that you can tolerate danger?

I don't live the lives that my grandmothers lived. I'd be surprised if I live to 80. I've seen so many people die, and I've lost a lot of friends and colleagues. It's important to take advantage of the time that we each have. —BELINDA LUSCOMBE



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