

[PDF] A House In The Sky: A Memoir

Sara Corbett, Amanda Lindhout - pdf download free book

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Description:

Amanda Lindhout's story starts as a breathless travelogue, inspired by National Geographic: as a kid in rural Alberta, Lindhout scavenged bottles to buy thrift store copies of the magazine, escaping through its pages from a violent home into a vast, vibrant world. In her twenties, she sought out every amazing place she'd always wanted to see, then kept going, loving the rush of pushing beyond the next border. Travel became her education, and a desire to make it her vocation as a freelance journalist draws her to Afghanistan, Iraq, and finally Somalia, where a hungry young reporter with guts might make a name for herself. Lindhout's hubris can be frustrating: intellectually, she knows Somalia is the "most dangerous country on earth," but she still talks her former lover, freelance photojournalist Nigel Brennan, into coming along. By this time, both of them have moved through so many unpredictable places unscathed that the possibility of real peril is a hazy abstraction, and their

abduction by armed extremists comes as a shock. As their captors hold out for a ransom of \$1.5 million, Lindhout and Brennan defensively convert to Islam and try to remain sane through covert communication, but after a botched escape, Lindhout endures severe torture and repeated rape--and survival means drawing on her every reserve. Written with uncommon sensitivity (by Lindhout and cowriter Sara Corbett), *A House in the Sky* becomes a moving testament to her ability to cultivate resilience and a kind of spiritual transcendence, even in profound darkness. Witnessing her experience left profoundly grateful for everything I have, more sharply aware of how I choose to react to circumstances beyond my control. Most of us will never live a day like the 460 Lindhout spent in captivity, but we all have our trials, and we can cultivate our own resilience. --

Guest Review of A House in the Sky

By Susan Casey, author of

Growing up in the small town of Red Deer, Alberta, Amanda Lindhout dreamed big. She was a young girl with a curious streak the size of the Rockies, and though her wrong-side-of-the-tracks provenance seemed to promise only a flatline future, Lindhout decided to change her own fate. Out there, she knew, beyond a horizon dotted with oil rigs and trailer parks, magic awaited, a vast map filled with all things "lost or unexplored, mystical or wild."

How did Lindhout know this? *National Geographic*. Paging through worn copies of the magazine, she was transported to every spectacular place she'd never been: "The world arrived in waves and flashes, as a silvery tide sweeping over a promenade in Havana or the glinting snowfields of Annapurna. The world was a tribe of pygmy archers in the Congo and the green geometry of Kyoto's tea gardens. It was a yellow-sailed catamaran in a choppy Arctic Sea."

And so, fueled by waitressing wages and determination, Lindhout's travels begin, at first in idyllic ways, then accelerating and acquiring a degree of difficulty that would daunt any seasoned explorer. In short order, Lindhout—working as a freelance journalist—ventures into places like Kabul and Baghdad, Addis Ababa, the back alleys of Cairo, and then, finally, Somalia, where the stakes become nothing less than life or death.

Lindhout's story is exhilarating and harrowing and several other brands of extreme, and it would be riveting however it was told. But in *A House in the Sky*, readers will find a rare and beautiful alchemy: writer Sara Corbett captures Lindhout's voice and spirit with utter mastery on the page, and a kind of ferocious grace that I found breathtaking.

I know that's a strange phrase, ferocious grace. Lindhout's desire—her need, even—to live on all cylinders burns bright in this book, but Corbett deftly reminds us that even when chipping away at cement, "covered in grit and cobwebs," while attempting a desperate escape from her prison, Lindhout is still that unassuming and hopeful girl from Red Deer, Alberta. The one who wrote to her mother from India, "I am going to Jodhpur. It is a city in the desert, called the Blue City, as all the buildings are painted blue! I am having the BEST TIME EVER!"

In fact, it's Lindhout's contradictions that make her such a rich character. She can be naïve and driven, generous and opportunistic, ambitious and fitful, sometimes all at once. At the same time she's heading for danger, she's making friends. And even after she is taken hostage by an extremist group, and her situation descends into darkness, she finds small measures of beauty and even optimism in her captivity. And within that simple, brutal paradox, Lindhout manages to stay alive.

What Lindhout endured during her 460 days in captivity is difficult to absorb, but Corbett is brilliant

with the telling detail, and her writing is so strong that she can paint readers a vivid picture with only a few brush strokes.

A House in the Sky is a true story of a young woman's radical adventures. It is absorbing and inspiring and textured. It is terrifying. It illuminates. It is the best book I have read in a very long time.

From *Starred Review* Lindhout, with coauthor Corbett, recounts her 15 months in captivity at the hands of Somalian kidnappers in this harrowing memoir. Growing up in Alberta, Canada, Lindhout used her spending money to purchase old issues of National Geographic. As a young woman, she yearned to venture to the exotic places she saw on its pages and soon found she could save up enough money waitressing to fund months' worth of travel. Starting with Venezuela at age 19, she eventually journeyed to India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Deciding to pursue a career as a journalist, she ventured first into Iraq and then convinced Nigel, a former lover turned friend, to join her in Somalia. Four days into their visit, they were taken hostage by Somali bandits, most of whom were young teens. The kidnappers demanded outrageous ransoms from their parents, and began to treat Lindhout, far more than her male counterpart, with increasing brutality. Writing with immediacy and urgency, Lindhout and Corbett recount the horrific ordeal in crisp, frank, evocative prose. But what readers will walk away with is an admiration for Lindhout's deep reserves of courage under unimaginable circumstances. --Kristine Huntley

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