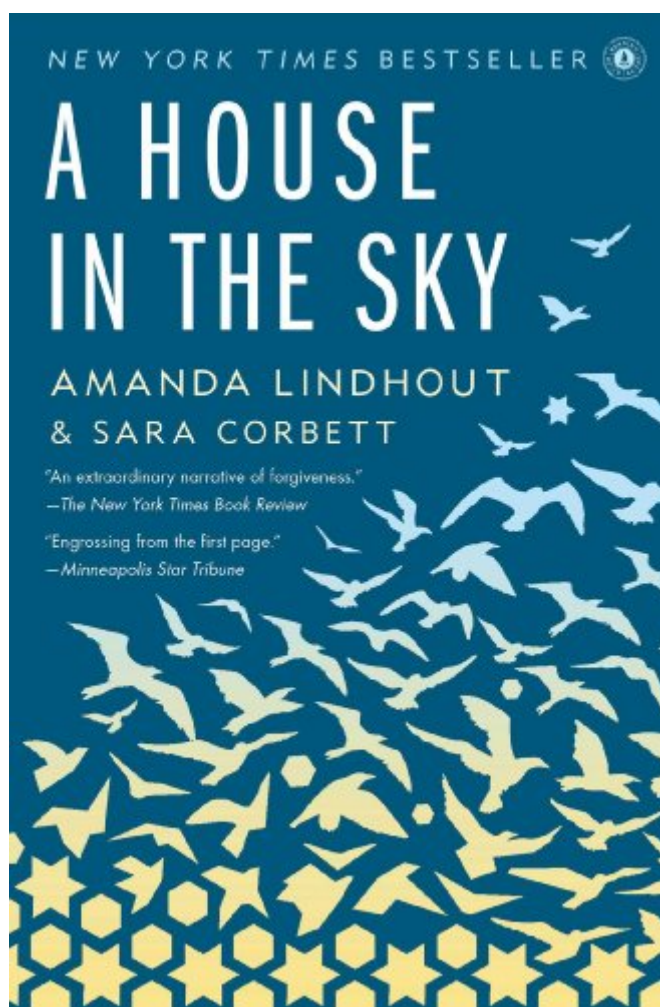


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A House In The Sky: A Memoir



Synopsis

BREAKING NEWS: Amanda Lindhout's lead kidnapper, Ali Omar Ader, has been caught. Amanda Lindhout wrote about her fifteen month abduction in Somalia in *A House in the Sky*. It is the New York Times bestselling memoir of a woman whose curiosity led her to the world's most remote places and then into captivity: "Exquisitely told" [A young woman's harrowing coming-of-age story and an extraordinary narrative of forgiveness and spiritual triumph] • (The New York Times Book Review). As a child, Amanda Lindhout escaped a violent household by paging through issues of National Geographic and imagining herself visiting its exotic locales. At the age of nineteen, working as a cocktail waitress, she began saving her tips so she could travel the globe. Aspiring to understand the world and live a significant life, she backpacked through Latin America, Laos, Bangladesh, and India, and emboldened by each adventure, went on to Sudan, Syria, and Pakistan. In war-ridden Afghanistan and Iraq she carved out a fledgling career as a television reporter. And then, in August 2008, she traveled to Somalia "the most dangerous place on earth." On her fourth day, she was abducted by a group of masked men along a dusty road. Held hostage for 460 days, Amanda survives on memory "every lush detail of the world she experienced in her life before captivity" and on strategy, fortitude, and hope. When she is most desperate, she visits a house in the sky, high above the woman kept in chains, in the dark. Vivid and suspenseful, as artfully written as the finest novel, *A House in the Sky* is "a searingly unsentimental account. Ultimately it is compassion" for her naïve younger self, for her kidnappers "that becomes the key to Lindhout's survival" • (O, The Oprah Magazine).

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Customer Reviews

If you only read one memoir this year, make it *A House in the Sky* by Amanda Lindhout and Sara Corbett. Amanda Lindhout is from Alberta, Canada. As a young child living in a turbulent household, she collected and cashed in bottles. And what did she spend her money on? Old National Geographic magazines. Amanda escaped into the pages, dreaming of one day visiting the exotic places pictured. At nineteen she has saved enough money from waitressing to make those dreams a reality. Her first trip abroad is to Venezuela. "I had seen this place in the magazine, and now we were here, lost in it. It was a small truth affirmed. And it was all I needed to keep going." Lindhout repeats the cycle, earning, then travelling. She visits most of Latin America, India, Burma, Ethiopia, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan and dozens more. Her joy in exploring and experiencing new places and people is tangible. But, each trip she takes is a little further off the beaten path. And finally, she's travelling to some of the most war torn countries in the world. In Kabul, Afghanistan she begins a career as a fledgling freelance /journalist/photojournalist - with no formal training, associations or contacts. With some success under her belt, she heads next to Baghdad, Iraq to work as a reporter for Iran's Press TV. Moving on from there she decides to head to Mogadishu, Somalia in 2008 - bigger stories might help her career take off faster. She wonders if an old flame, Nigel Brennan, an Aussie photographer wants to join her. He does.....and four days after their arrival in Somalia, they are kidnapped by insurgents from an Islamic fundamentalist group. And, they are held.... for 460 days.

What a stunning book! Not just beautifully wrought, but physically arresting. Like finish-the-book-and-walk-around-in-a-daze kind of stunning. Amanda Lindhout and Sara Corbett tell this harrowing story with such acuity, and attention to detail, that you feel you are right there with Ms. Lindhout in her many travels, and hardships. And, as such, for the last 20 pages i found myself with tears steadily rolling down my cheeks. It made me at once ashamed to be a man, to be connected in any way to the perpetrators of such evil, and also to be buoyed as a part of the human crowd who do such amazing, heartfelt work, who give of themselves, who love unconditionally. Who literally save people. The book is crafted so incredibly well that I was compelled to keep turning

pages... It was a very hard book to put down. Which is saying something, since it takes some fortitude to pick it up... this is not a light story. Brutal at times, excruciating, but shot through with light in the most unusual places. And what light! Just glorious. Going in, I knew the basic story. On top of hearing about it in the news, I read the book jacket, and beyond that, the prologue. There is even a reproduction (in the hardcover edition) of notes written by Ms. Lindhout to her mother while in captivity. So, I knew that Ms. Lindhout was captured in Somalia, knew the length of her captivity, and knew that she made it out alive (the book in my hands being living proof). But as is so often the case, what I thought I knew, I really didn't KNOW. And this is just one of the stunning feats of this book: despite knowing the major points of the story, I was continually surprised, and pulled into this book.

I had been following the story of Amanda since the initial kidnapping in Somalia many years ago and the ordeals she was forced to undergo as dimly reported in national newspapers. It was horrifyingly fascinating due to, what we must admit to straightaway, the great physical beauty of Amanda, and the desolation of being captive in Somalia, said to be the most dangerous place on earth, which even aid groups like medecins sans frontiers had abandoned. Equally shocking was the idea that ordinary folks (her family) would have to raise a million dollars as ransom without the help of government or she would be killed. So I definitely jumped on the book when I saw it was finally out because I wanted to hear 'her side' of this big news story, especially the big question: why be so foolish to travel into Somalia? And how bad did it get, really? The book does a great job of explaining her motivations, based on her free-spirited backpacker days obsessed with travel and seeing the world (and in fact these early chapters are really beautiful for those who like me are highly interested in travel too), thereafter the appeal of freelance journalism arises to fund her travels, which, due to its lack of success in for ex. Baghdad, led to the idea of venturing into Somalia which was underrepresented in journalism for obvious reasons. Equally powerful is the understanding she brings both to her situation, her self-awareness of the mistake she had made, the situation inside Somalia, and the islamism of her captors combined with their immaturity (mostly teenagers) and the absolutely soul-breaking experience of being captive for 15 months, thinking so often that death was a minute away. What was a pleasant surprise to me was how beautifully well-written the book was.

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