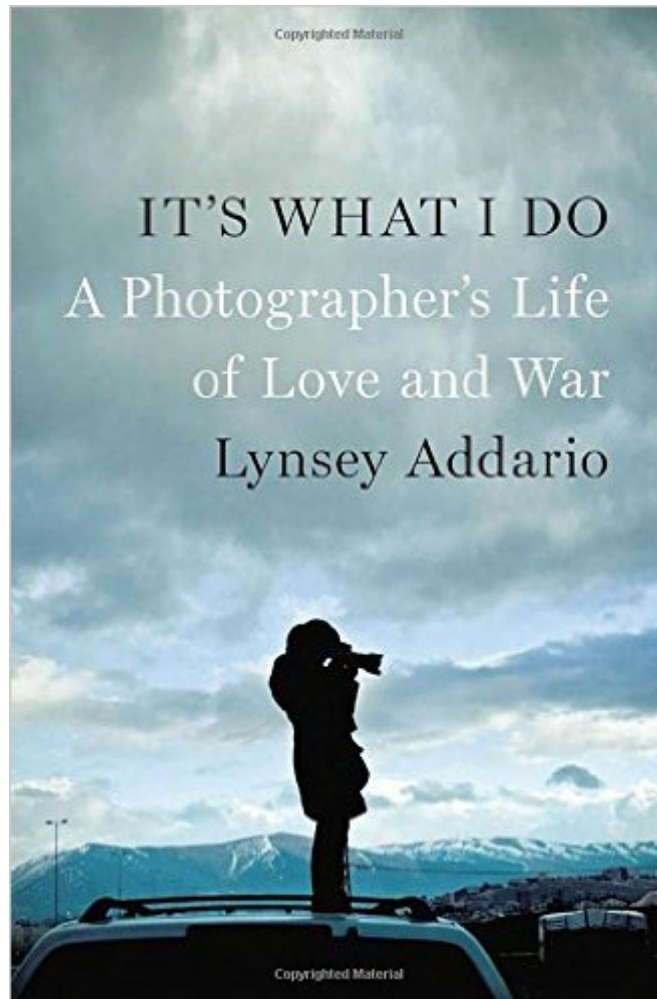


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# It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life Of Love And War



## Synopsis

"A brutally real and unrelentingly raw memoir."--Kirkus (starred review) War photographer Lynsey Addario's memoir *What I Do* is the story of how the relentless pursuit of truth, in virtually every major theater of war in the twenty-first century, has shaped her life. What she does, with clarity, beauty, and candor, is to document, often in their most extreme moments, the complex lives of others. It's her work, but it's much more than that: it's her singular calling. Lynsey Addario was just finding her way as a young photographer when September 11 changed the world. One of the few photojournalists with experience in Afghanistan, she gets the call to return and cover the American invasion. She makes a decision she would often find herself making: "not to stay home, not to lead a quiet or predictable life, but to set out across the world, face the chaos of crisis, and make a name for herself. Addario finds a way to travel with a purpose. She photographs the Afghan people before and after the Taliban reign, the civilian casualties and misunderstood insurgents of the Iraq War, as well as the burned villages and countless dead in Darfur. She exposes a culture of violence against women in the Congo and tells the riveting story of her headline-making kidnapping by pro-Qaddafi forces in the Libyan civil war. Addario takes bravery for granted but she is not fearless. She uses her fear and it creates empathy; it is that feeling, that empathy, that is essential to her work. We see this clearly on display as she interviews rape victims in the Congo, or photographs a fallen soldier with whom she had been embedded in Iraq, or documents the tragic lives of starving Somali children. Lynsey takes us there and we begin to understand how getting to the hard truth trumps fear. As a woman photojournalist determined to be taken as seriously as her male peers, Addario fights her way into a boys' club of a profession. Rather than choose between her personal life and her career, Addario learns to strike a necessary balance. In the man who will become her husband, she finds at last a real love to complement her work, not take away from it, and as a new mother, she gains an all the more intensely personal understanding of the fragility of life. Watching uprisings unfold and people fight to the death for their freedom, Addario understands she is documenting not only news but also the fate of society. It's *What I Do* is more than just a snapshot of life on the front lines; it is witness to the human cost of war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A picture is worth a thousand words" and in this case, Ms. Addario has given us millions of words throughout her illustrious career as a photojournalist, which she has built by her unabating chase of raw unvarnished footage of humanity at war; and on the way earning a Pulitzer prize, a Getty Images grant and a Macarthur fellowship grant. Addario's book is a more of a diary and travelogue than an in-depth analysis of the subjects she encounters. She eschews technical jargon, cultural bias and gratuitous pontification. She is witness, through her unblinking camera lens, to man's cruelty, violence and brutality; and as such, places herself near the action and is often in jeopardy. The book, opens with her harrowing kidnapping in Libya, and goes on to describe her experiences from the Congo, Darfur, Afghanistan and everything in between, where her unerring eye captures the lives of her subjects, usually in their most perilous and trying times. She is their witness. She keeps their stories alive, not to be ignored or forgotten. The following quote summarizes Addario's philosophy, "I was still trying to figure out how to take pictures of them without compromising their dignity ... my role was always the same: Tread lightly, be respectful, get into the story as deeply as I could without making the subject feel uncomfortable or objectified." This is mainly the story of Addario's professional growth, personal sacrifices and vulnerabilities, and breaking into what is mostly a boy's club of wartime photojournalists.

Having reported from Iraq as a freelance photojournalist, I brought a lot of preconceived notions as I read this excellent book. I found an abiding honesty and straightforward truth-telling about a job I think many 2015 readers take for granted, without thinking too much about how the pictures accompanying many stories are actually created. Addario's experiences date back over a decade, including the harshest conditions of human rights violations and warfare. Someone asked me

recently if journalists can have PTSD, and it's funny because the question shows that people think journalists somehow separate themselves completely from the subject. Addario's never comes out and says it, but by focusing much of her book's opening and closing on her brutal captivity in Libya, I think it shows fairly clearly she's still working out her issues. So the answer to the question is yes, obviously. To be a photojournalist of Addario's caliber means never slowing down. She can't take a break between assignments, or even pick and choose. It doesn't take long for skills to atrophy, or even the lure of the job to fade. And if she stops too long, she'll surely wonder why she's doing this job at all. Her frustration at the relentless of the violence and a picture's inability to truly force any sort of change comes across quite clear. She can document, and provide the images - but it's up to a society to do something with the information. For all her reporting from war zones, it was her description of human rights abuses in central Africa that were most haunting - women kidnapped, brutalized, abandoned by their families - and for what? Pure madness and depravity.

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