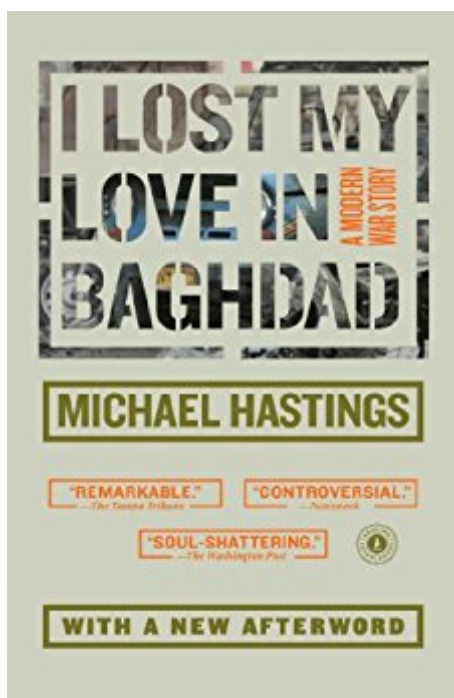


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I Lost My Love In Baghdad: A Modern War Story



Synopsis

The *Unflinching* (Rachel Maddow, >) first book by acclaimed journalist Michael Hastings (1980-2013), whose unflinching > article *Runaway General* ended the military career of General Stanley A. McChrystal. At age twenty-five, Michael Hastings arrived in Baghdad to cover the war in Iraq for Newsweek. He had at his disposal a little Hemingway romanticism and all the apparatus of a twenty-first-century reporter -- cell phones, high-speed Internet access, digital video cameras, fixers, drivers, guards, translators. In startling detail, he describes the chaos, the violence, the never-ending threats of bomb and mortar attacks, the front lines that can be a half mile from the Green Zone, that can be anywhere. This is a new kind of war: private security companies follow their own rules or lack thereof; soldiers in combat get instant messages from their girlfriends and families; members of the Louisiana National Guard watch Katrina's decimation of their city on a TV in the barracks. Back in New York, Hastings had fallen in love with Andi Parhamovich, a young idealist who worked for Air America. A year into their courtship, Andi followed Michael to Iraq, taking a job with the National Democratic Institute. Their war-zone romance is another window into life in Baghdad. They call each other pet names; they make plans for the future; they fight, usually because each is fearful for the other's safety; and they try to figure out how to get together, when it means putting bodyguards and drivers in jeopardy. Then Andi goes on a dangerous mission for her new employer -- a meeting at the Iraqi Islamic Party headquarters that ends in catastrophe. Searing, unflinching, and revelatory, *I Lost My Love in Baghdad* is both a raw, brave, brilliantly observed account of the war and a heartbreaking story of one life lost to it.

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Customer Reviews

I knew Mike Hastings and considered him a friend, but I'm not giving this five stars out of a nepotistic star bumping scheme for my late friend. I finally read this book after avoiding it and many other Iraq memoirs for the better part of the last decade. I served in Iraq in 2004-5 and then in 2006-7. When not there, I worked on Iraq policy in the Pentagon or State Department. For personal reasons I haven't had much of a desire to read about our great tragedy in Iraq, but last month I picked Mike's book up off of my shelf and began it. First, Mike's details are spot on. His first initial experiences entering a Baghdad at war, his acclimatization to "normality" at war, and then his struggle with the dissonance between life in America and life at war are not just exacting and illustrative, but touching and sincere. To be short, his reporting of both the war and life at home during war, or America in exception to war, is excellent. But, on top of outstanding war reporting, and what is lost, I believe, in so much of our discussion and understanding of war, is the personal story. War is above all else a human experience. The larger, macro examination and discussion of Iraq in its common form as geo-political, DC Beltway pundit banter is meaningless when compared with the millions upon millions of individual stories of men, women and children, most of them tales of suffering and grief, too many of them snuffed out and no longer continuing. Mike's story is intimate, genuine, heartbreaking, and, as great writing does, transcends the immediate environment of the story to be understood as a universal truism that others can share in. While Mike's war reporting will explain and describe the events of that war to allow someone inexperienced with its madness, his personal story, of his love and relationship, will be readily identifiable by any of us who have loved and lost.

This is an intensely personal account of the Iraq War and a turbulent love affair between two young Americans that is well worth reading. It gives an unvarnished picture of the unraveling fabric of Iraqi society and the escalating sectarian violence that continues as of this writing in the summer of 2014. The book is equally honest about the fits, starts and fleeting precious moments in a relationship

strained by distance and personal insecurities. What makes the book all the more poignant is the chain of events that have succeeded its publication. Neither the subject of the title of this book - Hastings' girlfriend Andi - nor the author himself, are still alive today. No doubt some of the American soldiers and many of the Iraqi civilians mentioned in the book have died in the past few years as well. And the fact that the group claiming responsibility for Andi's death - the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) - has grown tremendously in strength and geographic influence as of 2014, serves as an eerie foreshadowing of events that Hastings' couldn't have foreseen. I would recommend this book for anyone looking for insight into Iraq's political troubles or anyone interested in a personal perspective on current affairs in the Middle East.

Too sad for many probably. A story of young love and all of its foibles, trip-wires and nonsense and the horrible grief that comes when a person you love is taken without warning way too young. Surrounded by the worsening state of Iraq, the horrors and indignities our soldiers take for precious little thanks. And the inconceivable reality of death even in the midst of war when it is your love taken.

I always appreciated Michael Hastings' perspective and knowledge about the politics of the military industrial complex and the human suffering of innocents of the Iraq and Afghan wars. He was a frequent contributor on cable news and in print. He was direct and no-holds barred, e.g. when he revealed in his Rolling Stone piece Gen. Stanley McChrystal's opinions of the President and his administration. Because of Hastings' report, McChrystal was asked to resign. I had no idea of Hastings' his heartbreaking personal experience when he was assigned to cover Iraq for the first time for Newsweek. However, Hastings' recent tragic death, at the tender age of 33, moved me to read his books. His war reporting in this book was excellent, adding more to what I had known about the folly of how the US began that regrettable war. The other personal story is the one that stirred my heart. It makes all of his reporting that I had seen so frequently in his television appearances even more meaningful. This is one book I couldn't put down.

I've been trying to learn about the different factions fighting in Iraq as I've followed the news the past few days, had no idea this book would be so pertinent! War correspondent Michael Hastings documented the fighting in Iraq in 2007, describing situations that inevitably took us to today-- the end result of a cynical, criminal grab for power and American taxpayer dollars perpetrated by the Masters of War. Hastings account of his romance with Andi Parhamovich rings true, their

interactions and emotions are easy to identify with. Sadly, his Andi ended up in Iraq where it was fatal to be naive and idealistic. The entire book is excellent journalism but Hasting's description of his own actions and his journey home following Andi's death are classic anti war literature. The reader sees what the American public is not supposed to see.

I've read some previous reviews which complained about romanticism and machismo and an apparent "air" put upon by the (now deceased) author. As someone who was in Baghdad at the times that Michael Hastings was there, and more specifically, experiencing many of the same emotions he experienced, I can tell you those reviews are at best ignorant, and at worst, vapid. This story is so true it hurts. The emotions expressed here...all of them...are 100% real, and as raw as they get. Unfortunately, I fear only those of us who were there will know how true this story really is. Thank you, Micheal, for telling this story. May you and Andi both rest in peace.

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