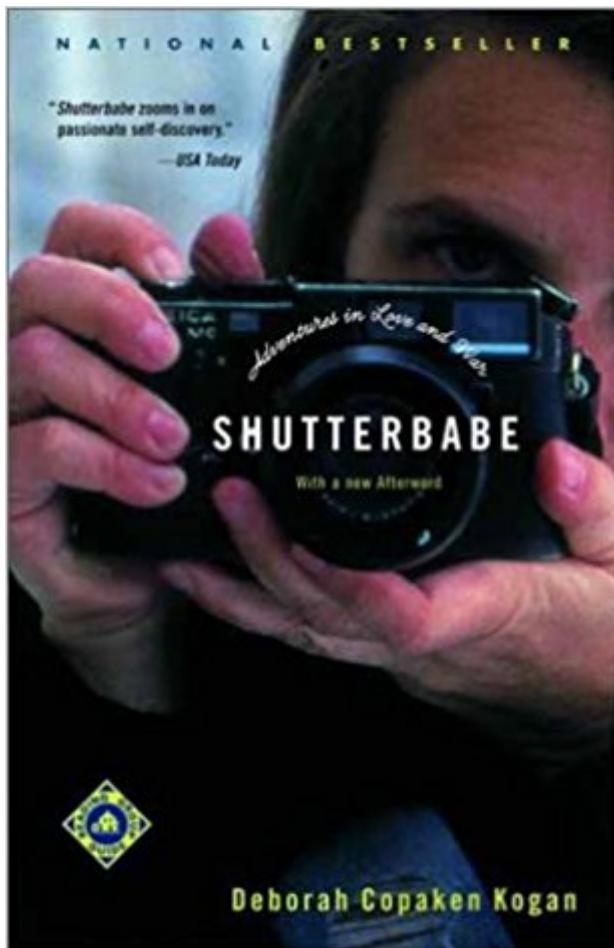


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# Shutterbabe: Adventures In Love And War



## Synopsis

Fresh out of college and passionate about photography, Deborah Copaken Kogan moved to Paris in 1988 and began knocking on photo agency doors, begging to be given a photojournalism assignment. Within weeks she was on the back of a truck in Afghanistan, the only woman—and the only journalist—in a convoy of mujahideen, the rebel freedom fighters at the time. She had traveled there with a handsome but dangerously unpredictable Frenchman, and the interwoven stories of their relationship and the assignment set the pace for *Shutterbabe*, six chapters, each covering a different corner of the globe, each linked to a man in Kogan's life at the time. From Zimbabwe to Romania, from Russia to Haiti, Kogan takes her readers on a heartbreakingly hilarious journey through a mine-strewn decade, seamlessly blending her personal battles—sexism, battery, life-threatening danger—with the historical ones—wars, revolution, unfathomable suffering—it was her job to record.

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## Customer Reviews

To pursue her dream to cover wars as a photojournalist, Kogan moved to Paris upon graduation from Harvard in 1988. Pretty and petite, with a sharp eye for good-looking, virile colleagues who, incidentally, could help her career, she embarked on a series of adventures that she breezily chronicles with a somewhat disingenuous naiveté. Although her publisher compares her to

Christiane Amanpour, readers may find more similarities with Candace Bushnell in these episodic vignettes describing both her far-flung assignments and intimate relationships with colleagues. She traveled with Pascal to Afghanistan and Pierre to Amsterdam; Julian helped her in Zimbabwe, but forbade further intimacies; Doru was with her in Romania. When she met Paul, her husband-to-be, Kogan's commitment to photojournalism waned: she blames her distaste on the wartime horrors she witnessed. Calling photojournalists vultures who feed on other people's misery, she conflates paparazzi with photojournalists, expressing disgust at their role in Princess Diana's fatal accident. Upon her return with Paul to the U.S., she began a new career as assistant producer for NBC's *Dateline*, which she eventually left to become a full-time mother. Kogan's swiftly paced story easily holds the reader's interest as she moves from her carefree days as an aspiring photojournalist to the responsibilities and dilemmas facing a working mother. First serial rights to *Talk* magazine in the February issue should boost interest in this sassy debut. First serial to *Talk*. Agent, Jennifer Rudolph Walsh at The Writers Shop. (Jan. 25) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Christiane Amanpour meets Melissa Banks! So says the publicist. Actually, Kogan is a top photojournalist who recounts her coverage of the world's hot spots while battling discrimination in the ranks. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I appreciated the honesty of Deborah Copagen Kogans biography of her early work as a photo journalist and her candor in describing her life and loves along the way. She seems to have a strong idea about who she is and takes the negative experiences in her life and unlike so many of us she learns and grows from them. I heard her interviewed on NPR about her latest book when she reference this book which led me to purchase it. Her views on how women are viewed in a male dominated field like war correspondence and photography echoed themes I had just read in Cheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In*. More people need to expose themselves as honestly as Deborah has here. I found it courageous.

I think I expected to much from this book. It seems like at least once a chapter she has to bring in some story about who she had sex with and why she was taken advantage of. Reminds me of my ex wife, while we were married.. Always the victim. I think I was expecting a lot of dramatic war photography stories, not love stories.

This is an intriguing look into the life of a professional photographer who went everywhere from the

caves of Afghanistan with the mujaheddin to the Red Square of Moscow when a coup attempted to oust Gorbachev. Her stories are as captivating as her photographs.

Shutterbabe: Adventures in Love and War Having read a good portion of the reviews listed, I am left pondering whether I read the same book, Shutterbabe, and whether another review would be helpful. I must because DC Kogan has, as an artist, provided me with very much needed insight into my marriage of 18 years, and a fellow photographer, Christian, demanded that I post it so that he might read it. I first heard of this book by the late Bill Jay in his column in *LensWork* magazine (Jan-Feb 2005 (56), p.84) . He highly recommended it, so I put it on my reading list, but never got around to actually procuring a copy. I think I was put off by the title. When I finally did so, the book agitated me to a point of insomnia and hyperactivity. An effect that Kierkegaard described and its therapy prescribed: stop everything until one sorts it out. Kogan is a highly intelligent and artistic woman. Her provenance is impressive: trained by Christopher James (see *The book of alternative photographic processes* 2nd ed, 2009; p.218) and mentored by Gilles Peress (he of Magnum fame). In her junior year at Harvard, she begins what is considered today traditional photography (film: developed, stop bathed, and fixed [by which she delineates the broad sections of her book]). Before graduating she makes portraits of boorish and offensive men who accost her with sexually-charged propositions ("Shooting back") and of ecdysiasts in a local strip club. She recognizes her camera as both a weapon and ticket for entry. As Helmut Newton suggests, a photographer who does not admit that he is a voyeur is a liar. But Kogan is more than this; she is an anthropologist trying to figure out the male gender (being the elder of four sisters) and a philosopher engaged in both epistemology and the pursuit of "ontological rootedness," to quote Simon May (*Love: a history*, 2011; p.6) in order "to find a home for our life and being." She is also a performance artist and her experiences make up this book which she categorizes as a "love poem" to her husband, Paul Kogan. To understand this book, I believe one must start here: a love poem, not a self-aggrandizing autobiography, as some of her harshest critics suggest. In her nascent sexuality, she discovers that men live in a different world and are motivated by different goals. This greatest of mysteries inspires repeated and ardent study. She learns, early on, that they speak the language of physical sexuality--in utero, a baby boy receives a jolt of testosterone that changes the verbal center of his brain for life. As the reader will learn that she is a polyglot, it should not surprise that she attempts to learn this language as well. But, there are dangerous misunderstandings and missteps--this can never be her mother tongue (see "Aidan" who rapes her and "Gabe" ["hero of God"] who fathers a child that she aborts but whom he wanted. She loved Gabe and also "Matthew" ["gift of God"], the

latter scorning her for a woman approved of by his family [this is also a foreshadowing of the husband she is yet to meet]). She enters into the world of men, as the majority of photojournalists, at least at the beginning of the end of the 20th century, are male. She states that women are cursed and in a surprising show of defiance demands that the Afghan mujahideen make her into a man. They do, at least on the outside, but her catamenia continues, of course, preventing successful deception. So too do the men who take advantage of her stature (5 feet two inches and a svelte 108 pounds) and unfortunate decisions. There is "Pascal" ["Easter child"] who beats her and "Sean" ["God is gracious"] who is a sadist. The next man she meets is the concierge of the hotel where "Sean" is staying. He is a self-righteous prick who offers her no comfort, in a time of great distress, even if, at least partly, her own doing. He and another unnamed man throw her out. As Sherlock Holmes observes in the Sign of Four, "while the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty."  $n^2-n+2=x$ , so simple, yet so complicated with an infinite number of variables, as she recognizes and yet, a "mathematical certainty." Her travels to disparate corners of the world, and their assigned time zones, leave her in a vertiginous state of homelessness and jet lag. Her life, like this, is not going to assist her in developing an "ontological rootedness." It was at this point that I had to deal with my own angst where words (both nouns and verbs) were failing me. Kogan is about three years younger than I am and while she was traveling around the world, I was working as an intern and resident in internal medicine. At one point, there was an obit page where half the names were all my patients who had succumbed despite intensive care (my care!) and a botched bone marrow biopsy that I endured without any anesthetic, as a research guinea pig. And many a failed relationship. The juiciest gossip about me surrounded an off the cuff comment from a fellow resident who questioned if I had slept on top; this was not an observation of sexual activity but rather of our sleeping arrangements as the call room contained a bunk bed and I gave her the bottom bunk, as she is short, but not much shorter than I. Shortly thereafter, I moved to another town and after an inauspicious introduction, met the woman who would become my wife. The marriage almost did not occur. The issues surrounded a deceit eventually disclosed and an obtuse inability to tell me her plans for a career. The small yet bitter seed of discontent was to be nurtured. Why had my wife married me? Why does DC Kogan marry Paul ["small or humble"]. For Kogan, the performance art, or experiment, is coming to an end. She has seen the good, or partial good, in some men, Doru and also "Ray" ["protecting hands"] who carried her into his tent, not for sexual gratification but for her comfort while Africa rained. She found him mostly wet the next morning. I was never a "Sean" but I sure could be a self-righteous prick. Now tell me, which is worse? It is when she meets Paul that she finds the right one at the right time

at the right place doing the right thing. She has her "ontological rootedness" and this performance is over ("Shutterbabe is dying"). I believe that she writes this book as a testimony to the completion of her overarching work: she has indeed found her "love and her savior" in her husband, as she testifies in the last line of the book (read the acknowledgments--it even helps sort out which names have been changed; nothing like having a baby and exploring the meanings of names to guide one in choosing names for names that must be changed, unless I read too much into it--and I probably have). I would trust that most, either men or women, would not be compelled to explore these questions to such an extreme and then present the findings in such a trenchant and comprehensive oeuvre. And as an infectious diseases physician who treats sexually transmitted diseases on a weekly basis, I can hardly condone her approach and technique (but was heartened to learn she escaped unscathed from an HIV scare and understands the importance of the condom for safety; of course an interval of six months, and not two years, is all that is necessary for HIV testing in her described situation. I trust too that she has been tested for Hepatitis C given her history of the use of cocaine). But I would offer my gratitude to this author who has helped me to understand in a profound way how my own woman views me: her love and savior; I conclude that the reticence of my wife was less deceit and more incomprehension--why keep working on the equation when the solution has been found after all? To be able to untie this Gordian knot after 18 years is joyous.

Q.E.D.DC Kogan shares her life with us and in so doing provides a definition for true love, from the perspective of a woman to her man, in an utterly convincing (as a philosophical argument) and elegant (as art) way. This is a book that describes a small time frame of great upheaval with expected suffering and unexpected commiseration, some of the issues that photojournalists faced prior to the ability to upload their images, and the life and events of one woman. But, it is, ultimately, a love poem, derived from her performance art, and so should be broadly appealing, especially given the quality of this work. Highly recommended, especially for men--perhaps a month before their anniversary--that they might truly appreciate the effort and decisions a woman must make to achieve "ontological rootedness" with a man.

Not a bad book! I bought the Kindle version and read it the same day. I was a photojournalist at about the same time and although our paths never crossed I know a lot of the people she talks about in the book. What do I like about it? She's honest. She's not writing what some stuffy ideologue would like her to write, she's not pandering to the expectations of college students whose heads have been stuffed full of nonsense by paleo-marxist professors. She tells us what happened. A lot of the other reviews lament the book's absence of redeeming social value. So what? Don't you

get enough preaching and moralizing from your reading? If you're thinking of heading off to Iraq or Syria with your iPad and GoPro keep in mind that it's a different world for photojournalists today. The idea of going to the airport and finding strangers who will carry film you risked your life to shoot to your agencyÃ¢Â¢Â¢ is that crazy? And yet it used to be so normal. As to all the raunchy sex I'd like to point out that Mother Nature is in the saddle. Shutterbabe ended up in the sack with these creeps because she was genetically predisposed to shag French guys who didn't care about her. Photojournalism attracts a lot of different personality types. Shutterbabe is not the only "chick in the zone," and she's hardly typical of female photographers I've worked with. But her story says a lot for young people headed out to take photos. Read the book!

As a photographer myself, this is a compelling look into the world of war photojournalism and the difficulties and dangers involved. A behind-the-scenes look not only of the actual shooting (guns and cameras), but of the business side of being a freelance photojournalist. As a man, it's an interesting look into how a woman sees the world and the men around her in a very male-centric environment. I found the recounting of her various relationships a comfortable counterbalance to the gritty in-your-face reality of the news she was reporting with her camera. All in all an informative and entertaining book that I thoroughly enjoyed.

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