



Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq

Jackie Spinner

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When she arrived in Iraq in May 2004 as the most junior member of the "Washington Post" bureau staff, Jackie Spinner entered a war zone where traditional reporting had become impossible. Bombs were a daily occurrence and kidnapping an ever-present threat for American journalists. Yet "the longer I stayed, the more Iraq felt like my home," she writes. "Tell Them I Didn't Cry" is Jackie's vivid and intensely personal story of being a journalist in Iraq -- where for nine months she covered the war from its center in Baghdad, Fallujah, Kurdistan, and Abu Ghraib -- and of being transformed, eventually, from a rookie correspondent into a seasoned foreign reporter.

As she grew accustomed to the realities of living and reporting in Iraq, Jackie found that there was as much to love as there was to fear. The frenetic and grueling pace was an exhilarating challenge, and she discovered a powerful sense of purpose in delivering the story of Iraq. Soon, the Iraqi translators, drivers, and bodyguards that the Post staff relied on to be their eyes and ears, and, more important, to keep them safe, became not only her colleagues, but also her close friends and tightly knit family. Still, security rapidly deteriorated and Jackie describes with chilling simplicity narrowly surviving a kidnapping attempt and writing her name and blood type on her flak jacket before covering the battle in Fallujah.

By turns lighthearted, grave, vulnerable, and fiery, Jackie recounts the difficulties of being a woman in a country where women are marginalized and a journalist where the press are no longer safe. She eloquently chronicles what occurred behind her headlines as she struggled to preserve her sanity, and sometimes her life, while also doing the one job in which she had found true meaning.

Jackie's account is punctuated by brief vignettes written by her identical twin sister, Jenny, who watched as Jackie was drawn further and further into a world increasingly fraught with danger. Every morning she looked for Jackie's byline in the "Post," knowing only then that her sister had survived another day.

Through it all -- the violence and fear as well as the moments of humor, camaraderie, and warmth -- Jackie Spinner brings home with brilliant intensity and candor what it is like to report on a war under exceptional circumstances.

Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq **Details**

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Author : Jackie Spinner

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From Reader Review Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq for online ebook

Angie says

An interesting book to compare/contrast with Eat Pray Love, recounting the 2004/2005 escalating violence in Iraq as seen from the eyes of a young, female Washington Post reporter.

Stephanie says

If you have gotten so wrapped up in the economy that you have forgotten about the Iraq War you should read this as we are still there.

Margaret says

This book was hardly what you might expect when you learn that it's a journalist's account of her time reporting in Iraq. Jackie is hardworking, down to earth young woman raised in the Midwest and educated at Berkeley, someone who attends church regularly but is also routinely criticized by conservative bloggers for being too liberal in her reporting. First and foremost, though, she's someone dedicated to her vocation and who finds her place in the world in a war zone. I loved that her twin sister wrote passages that gave readers a window into her experience of being "back home" while her sister reported on the war. Great, great book! Jackie rules.

Francine Uenuma says

This book is chick lit meets war stories. It's life in a battle zone from a female perspective, and she's pretty honest about how hard it was. I enjoyed reading it, although I was partially biased because some of what kept me reading was getting the skinny on people from work in the book.

Jill Koren says

My cousin Chris recommended this book to me. I really liked it because it gave me a perspective on Iraq that I wouldn't have otherwise. I feel like Spinner (well, both Spinners) were earnest and tough (though I didn't enjoy Jenny's as much as I did Jackie's; they took me out of the narrative a little too much, and how could they not be melodramatic?). The writing had its flaws (a lot of repetition of how the staff felt like family) and the voice seemed young, but I wasn't too put off by the flaws. The story and the earnestness of the narrator motivated me to finish the book. And I am glad I did. I want to email her and thank her for writing it.

David Gallianetti says

As much as this is a behind the scenes of life as a war correspondent, it's a very personal story by an author who falls in love with her surroundings and the new people in her life. We get to know the people who run the Post bureau in Iraq as the author gives us a series of short feature stories. The book reminds you how much we in America take what we have for granted and how easy it is to tune out what's happening globally and unfortunately on the political talking heads for our perspective.

Francesca Favila says

I give this book a 3.5. I loved the rawness with which she portrayed her own insecurities and fears throughout her time in Iraq. I was captivated throughout, but I felt like the ending was unresolved and I really just wanted more. I want more dealt and more time spent describing the staff and the field missions that she went on. I felt there was so much more material that she could of drawn from. However, I think my largest critique would have been the sense of time. She flitted back and forth between moments in time that I felt that I never knew where she was chronologically; it felt jumbled. It may have been her choose to create that sense of disjointness; as is common with victims of ptsd.

Sheena says

A heart-wrenching account of a woman's struggles as she tries to survive in a male dominated job while in a male-dominated country. Truly humanizing story of those in Iraq, from all sides and perspectives.

Katy says

My sister gave me this book for Christmas because she had read it and loved it. I, too, read and loved it. It's about a young journalist who's covering the Iraq war for a newspaper (can't remember which one). It's a true story which makes it call the more compelling.

The book is not political at all. It's simply her experiences and thoughts about what SHE went through while over there. She talks about feeling hungry, missing family during holidays, becoming family with her translator and other Iraqi team members, almost being kidnapped, almost being blown up, and how she changed.

I found myself in her shoes as a young, determined and ambitious writer who wants to see things outside of their comfort zone.

Amazing.

Jordan says

This was one of the worst war correspondence books I have ever read. Its dispassionate style and frankly boring structure made it hard to get through. It is hard to make something like the Iraq War seem trivial in light of 'the love of two sisters', but the Spinner twins managed to do just that. That is not a compliment.

Andrea says

The benefit of reading this book is the culture in a country that we hear so much about. Ms. Spinner wrote wonderfully about the side of this country I wondered about and now understand why Americans are so widely misunderstood and resented.

Stacey says

This is the thing about journalism and writing about it --- most of the time it's ego in the way, or standing in the shadows of it.

The parts where her sister writes of her worries is awfully sappy each and every time.

I would've liked less of Spinner and more of her Iraqi coworkers...they at least are truly interesting.

Mary Snedden says

Jackie Skinner was in Iraq recently and was escorted by my daughter in Baghdad so I was curious to read her book. The book was written in 2004 and really I was impressed that it seems more dangerous there now than it was in that year. Jackie's relationships with the translators and fellow Iraq reporters is an intimate human relations portrait. I couldn't help but note that both she and Anderson Cooper, in his book, *Dispatches from the Edge* get "hooked" on the war environment and returning to the war zone is not understandable to even them.

Kimberly Boenig says

For some reason I expected this book to be more exciting. Sometimes it would pick up, but those times were often abruptly ended. Honestly, this book could have been half as long with the content of has, and everything meanders. Overall, this book felt unstructured.

Mervat Eissa says

[illegible]