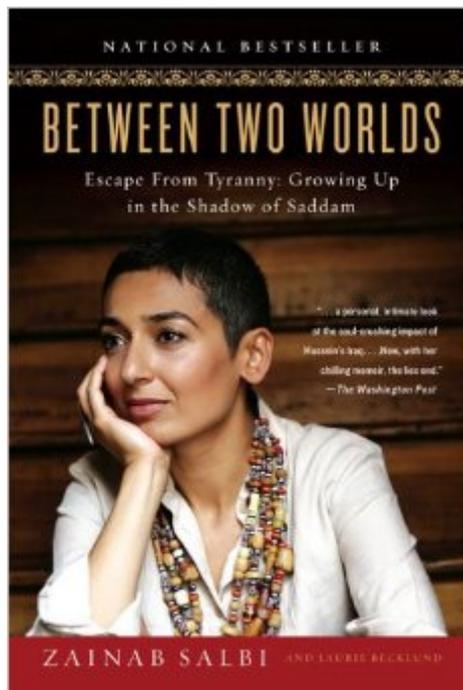


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Between Two Worlds: Escape From Tyranny: Growing Up In The Shadow Of Saddam



Synopsis

Zainab Salbi was eleven years old when her father was chosen to be Saddam Hussein's personal pilot and her family's life was grafted onto his. Her mother, the beautiful Alia, taught her daughter the skills she needed to survive. A plastic smile. Saying yes. Burying in boxes in her mind the horrors she glimpsed around her. "Learn to erase your memories," she instructed. "He can read eyes." In this richly visual memoir, Salbi describes tyranny as she saw it - through the eyes of a privileged child, a rebellious teenager, a violated wife, and ultimately a public figure fighting to overcome the skill that once kept her alive: silence. *Between Two Worlds* is a riveting quest for truth that deepens our understanding of the universal themes of power, fear, sexual subjugation, and the question one generation asks the one before it: How could you have let this happen to us?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Zainab Salbi --- founder and president of Women for Women International, a non-profit organization created in 1993 to provide female survivors of war and genocide with the tools and resources necessary to move forward with their lives --- has written an engrossing memoir about growing up in Baghdad beneath Saddam Hussein's watchful eye. With her mother's journals as her guide and the help of Los Angeles Times reporter Laurie Becklund, Salbi painstakingly chronicles the humiliating subjugation that she and her family endured (both in Iraq and later in America) and provides a unique inside perspective into a conflict that is sadly still going on to this day. From the time she was a child, Salbi and her family lived in constant fear of Saddam Hussein. In 1969, when she was 11 years old, her father was appointed to be his personal pilot. Because of this prestigious promotion,

Saddam's presence in their home became increasingly commonplace, so much so that she and her family were instructed to call him "Amo," the Iraqi word for "Uncle." They were invited to parties at Saddam's palace and, in some of his more "merciful moments," were given lavish gifts, including a house on the palace grounds where they could spend their weekends. "But [Salbi] came to understand that these moments would be followed by months of excruciating, often mystifying punishment." Their movements were monitored. Their freedom to travel and pray was severely limited. Any difference in opinion from what Saddam believed was strictly forbidden. Although they looked to outsiders as though they were living in the lap of luxury, she and her family were trapped in an oppressive, highly controlled lifestyle with no likely means of escape.

Zainab Salbi is the founder and CEO of Women for Women International, a Washington-based organization that has, since 1993, helped more than 22,000 women in war-ravaged countries start their own businesses and jumpstart their lives. Zainab Salbi is also the daughter of a 747 captain who was, in the early 1980s, Saddam Hussein's personal pilot. The connection between these identities --- fearless champion of oppressed women, terrified child in an oppressed nation --- is the story of "Between Two Worlds." It isn't the easiest book to read; "searing" is not too strong to describe the experience. What keeps you going --- indeed, what keeps you reading as fast as you can --- is how brilliantly Salbi and her collaborator, Laurie Berklund, show you what it was like to grow up "privileged" in Iraq: 24/7 scared, silenced, and, inevitably, victimized. And you stay through the horror because you know how it ends: a young woman in her 20s, with her back against the wall, will face down every demon, and, through her tears, come out slugging. The first thing to understand about Salbi's connection to Saddam is that it was a curse. As a child, she never used Saddam's name; he was "Amo," an uncle. Why the silence? Because everyone he befriended knew Saddam was a psychopath: charming, unpredictable, deadly. He would drop by her parents' Baghdad home at all hours, usually clutching a bottle of Chivas Regal. And then he would talk about killing friends who betrayed him. Her mother did her best to shelter her daughter: "I learned that men were born with power and women obtained it through sharpness of intellect and good acts. If you were kind, wise and did good works, you could wind up being the princess who had it all.

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