



# Shutterbabe: Adventures in Love and War

*Deborah Copaken Kogan*

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## **Shutterbabe: Adventures in Love and War** Deborah Copaken Kogan

What if the protagonist in that age-old tale—boy goes to war, comes back a man—were a female?

Shutterbabe, Deborah Copaken Kogan's remarkable debut, is just that: the story of a twenty-two-year-old girl from Potomac, Maryland, who goes off to photograph wars and comes back, four years and one too many adventures later, a woman.

In 1988, fresh out of Harvard, Kogan moved to Paris with a small backpack, a couple of cameras, the hubris of a superhero, and a strong thirst for danger. She wanted to see what a war would look like when seen from up close, to immerse herself in a world where the gun is God. Naïvely, she figured it would be easy to filter death through the prism of her wide-angle lens.

She was dead wrong.

Within weeks of arriving in Paris, after knocking on countless photo agency doors and begging to be sent where the action was, Kogan found herself on the back of a truck in Afghanistan, her tiny frame veiled from head to toe, the only woman — and the only journalis — in a convoy of rebel freedom fighters. Kogan had not actually planned on shooting the Afghan war alone. However, the beguiling French photographer she'd entrusted with both her itinerary and her heart turned out to be as dangerously unpredictable as, well, a war.

It is the saga of both her relationship with this French-man and her assignment in Afghanistan that fuels the first of Shutterbabe's six page-turning chapters, each covering a different corner of the globe and each ultimately linked to the man Kogan was involved with at the time. From Zim-babwe to Romania, from Russia to Haiti, Kogan takes her readers on a heartbreaking yet surprisingly hilarious journey through a mine-strewn decade, her personal battles against sexism, battery, and even rape blending seamlessly with the historical struggles of war, revolution, and unfathomable abuse it was her job to record.

In the end, what was once adventurous to the girl began to weigh heavily on the woman. Though her photographs were often splashed across the front pages of international newspapers and magazines, though she was finally accepted into photojournalism's macho fraternity, with each new assignment, with each new affair, Kogan began to feel there was something more she was after. Ultimately, what she discovered in herself was a person -- a woman — for whom life, not death, is the one true adventure to be cherished above all.

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