



Den of Lions: A Startling Memoir of Survival and Triumph

Terry A. Anderson

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"Belongs on the shelf of classics about surviving degradation with dignity and even humor." Time
In March 1985, Terry Anderson was swept up in the violent conflict of a turbulent era. At the mercy of Shiite captors for nearly seven years, he lived in chains, wondering fearfully if each day would be his last. But his spirit soared beyond captivity, and he never gave up. Nor did those who loved him. And now, a free man again, he tells the harrowing and poignant story of a hostage's survival and final triumph.

From the Paperback edition.

Den of Lions: A Startling Memoir of Survival and Triumph Details

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Author : Terry A. Anderson

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From Reader Review Den of Lions: A Startling Memoir of Survival and Triumph for online ebook

Michelle says

I ordered this book from the library after reading a New Yorker article about the effects of solitary confinement on people. This book was really depressing, but it was also really interesting. I didn't read the whole thing, I kind of skipped around. Here are some of my favorite parts:

"It's surprising what you can remember when you have nothing to do but remember. At first, the mind is a blank. Jesus, I always thought I was smart. Where are all the things I learned, the books I read, the poems I memorized? There's nothing there, just a formless, grey-black misery. My mind's gone dead." (pg 66)

(after being put in solitary confinement)

"I've got to keep my mind disciplined. I've got to hold on. But it's hard. Already I slip frequently into deep depressions, lie for hours on the mattress, just wallowing in misery. This isolation is almost more than I can bear, and I don't know how long it will continue, or even why I was separated from Tom" (pg 184)

"I find myself trembling sometimes, for no reason, and occasionally crying silently, just sitting on the mattress. It doesn't seem to happen because of anything in particular I'm thinking about. Often my mind is just a blank, then I become aware that I'm shaking." (pg 187)

Roy says

Moving tale of a tough, courageous man's 2,454 days in captivity as a hostage in Lebanon. The book highlights the damaging effect of solitary confinement as well as the difficulty of coping even when blessed with the company of fellow hostages. Interesting to read about Hezbollah in the 1980s, and even Imad Mugniyeh gets mentioned. The book also makes one think of Gilad Shalit, held in solitary since June 25th 2006.

Don says

It's interesting how much of an impact people have on my choice of books. As some of you may recall, Nolan reviewed "Den of Lions," by Terry a. Anderson (DB 37321) some time ago. And, of course, he did so in such a way that I felt that I just had to download it even though it's probably not something I would have chosen to read myself. When I found it on my sD card early this week, I seriously considered deleting it. After all, I remembered the basic story from hearing it on the news, I really wasn't all that interested in all of the gory details, and I have lots and lots of other reading to occupy my time. I finally decided to start it and just see how things progressed.

well, that was a smart decision indeed.

In order to set the stage, here is the NLS annotation:

Former correspondent's account of 2,454 days held hostage by Hezbollah, an Islamic terrorist organization. Anderson, aided by his then-fiancee Madeleine Bassil, chronicles the ordeal from the day he was mistaken for a spy and captured in Beirut, Lebanon, until the day he was released. He describes his own physical and mental abuse as well as the conditions of his fellow hostages.

That is an accurate description of what you'll get should you decide to read this. But no short summary could ever capture just how compelling this book is.

for one thing, Anderson is an excellent writer. His journalism background is evident throughout the book since he writes with such immediacy that I felt that I was right there with him in that prison sharing all of the highs and lows he so carefully chronicles.

While there is some discussion of the politics involved, the book is really a very human chronicle of his experiences. That humanity shines through on each and every page.

Strange as it may sound, this is primarily a story of hope and faith which will leave you believing in the inherent goodness of humankind even though you will also see us at our very worst. Broadway lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II wrote an essay in which he argued -- convincingly, I think -- for the importance of optimism in our plays and books. One tenet of his argument is that both sides of the coin -- love and hate, joy and sorrow, etc. -- must exist in tandem in order for there to be any genuine meaning in the work. Perhaps it is that juxtaposition which gives this book its incredible power. Suffice it to say that it is well worth the time it takes to read it. It's one of those books that will stay with you long after you close the cover and move on to other, less memorable things.

Adrian says

Associated Press journalist's memoir of seven years in captivity in Lebanon at the hands of Islamic Jihad. Anderson shares space here with the reflections of his Lebanese wife Madelaine who was six months pregnant when TA was abducted in March 1985. Also included in this book is background into government attempts to free the hostages including Iran Contra. But the core of this book is the horror, deprivation, boredom and frustration of captivity. Anderson bore it better than most. He spent much time with other famous hostages- Tom Sutherland, Terry Waite, John McCarthy and Brian Keenan (whose harrowing book 'An Evil Cradling' is a classic of the genre). This is an extremely moving and well written book. Can be highly recommended.

Charlotta Norby says

I didn't finish this book. Somehow it just didn't grab me. I'd been wanting to read it for years, and I think my expectations had just grown too great. Maybe it had also been too long since the actual events, that it didn't seem real. The writing was choppy and sloppy. The writer often assumed too much back ground information by the reader, which at least in the case of this reader at this point in time, was not accurate.

I also didn't like the randomly interspersed chapters written by Anderson's wife. The alternate perspective was a good idea, but it didn't work well for me.,just added to the general confusion.

Dar says

I read this in 1994. I was fascinated by how each of the hostages responded to their captivity. In particular, Terry Anderson's experience was dramatically different from Terry Waite's (*Taken on Trust*, 1993). This was not all because of their captors or conditions, but due to their choices about how to live. During times when they were housed with others, Terry Anderson actively engaged with his fellow captives by being as social as possible, while Terry Waite (after 4 years in solitary confinement) still withdrew into himself and wrote his autobiography in his mind. Both did what they had to do to survive. Following up on how they reintegrated after their captivity, the differences are equally striking: while both are humanitarians, Terry A immediately went out into the world, while Terry W spent years recovering by focusing on his writing. I admire both men and I like to think I know how I would respond to such an ordeal.

Michael says

My mother bought me this book for Christmas about the time it came out. The author, who grew up outside of Buffalo, was in town for a signing. His sister was everywhere in the period of his captivity, so I have recollections of these events, particularly her seeking his release.

I liked the book. I've always been interested in the Lebanese civil war and the rise of Hezbollah. I've not read enough books on the history but have read several articles. While the point of the book is to relay one hostage's experience, it does a good job of providing context for the events and history of the players and events.

This give a good sense of what it must have been like to be a hostage, but there is no way we can ever understand it in its entire context. I can imagine being chained. I can imagine being in a small room. I can imagine not knowing my fate. But I cannot put it all together in context – to be unsure of your fate, while being tired, hot, in claustrophobic conditions, missing those you love, etc. Mr. Anderson does a great job of letting you know how these things feel but it will never be enough and hopefully no one else finds out. He is very honest in here, as is his fiancé. There are items in here that I'm surprised they put in (taking care of his "manly" needs in captivity, his personal reflections, her conflict with his sister). Sure they occurred, but they did not have to put them in. I applaud them for their honesty with themselves – the good and the bad.

I'm hesitant to criticize a book like this – who am I who has not lived through it given the right to tell someone who lived through it how they should write their book. Nonetheless, I feel compelled to do so, as this is a book review. Of course these critiques are my personal biases: I could have used less of the poetry. I know he is proud of it but it did not do anything for me. Maybe cut it down to three or four of them. Perhaps I don't like people sharing their feelings all that much, but it got a little over the top –especially his fiancé. I also didn't need so much god-talk. I realize this is a very important part of his life and story but I remain unconvinced that it was anything more than "opiate of the masses." When we have no control over our lives, we imagine appealing to a higher power that we believe will lift us from the injustice and lack of control we face. I would probably do the same thing. Do I think he is not genuine? No. I just think that it works for him. Do I have the strength to go through what he went through? Not even close. I wouldn't last a month as a hostage. But just because he experienced this, does not mean anything religiously. And I think reading this, he is not trying to convince you, only to relay what it meant to him and his struggle. But in the end his god is a thing that provides strength to those who endure pain – not to limit or stop pain. This god has nothing to do with justice but is all about self-help (although it is not self to them, it is the deity). "Lord, let me be the best

person I can be"-type stuff. But is that what Jesus and Christianity is about?

That he kept it together for all that time is a testament to his character and that he could write this book, warts and all, is further testament. I can't imagine it was easy to try to remember and re-live this.

Steve says

This is the story of American journalist Terry Anderson who was kidnapped by Islamic militants while working the Beirut bureau of the Associated Press in 1985. He spent almost seven years in captivity, at times joined by other hostages and at times alone. It is a harrowing and incredible story that forces the reader to contemplate what he/she would do in the same situation. It also shows how Anderson kept his wits and his hopes throughout his ordeal, and places a human face (that of the hostages and their captors) on the Middle Eastern conflict during the 80's and early 90's.

Lara Deppe says

This book is the memoirs of Terry Anderson while he was a prisoner for 7 years. It was very fascinating! He kept what journals and poetry he could during that time and had to keep them hidden from the guards. I find myself taking this book off the shelf and reading parts of it over and over again. I think his experience and survival our tributes to the human spirit and its endurance.

Christian Engler says

Terry Anderson's Den of Lions is a den of insights into the radical bi-polar terrorist mentality in which he was trapped for over seven years. His descriptions of the bombings, shootings and random daily violence that permeated around the non-citizens and the citizens of Lebanon, make this a classic Middle East hostage survivor's story. Anderson's poems of his cruel incarceration are filled with searing depth that transport you to the various scummy basement cells which he shared with other Westerners. Den of Lions and Hostage by David Jacobson go hand in hand and are important contributions in the collection of Middle East books that help those of us citizens who were not there or too young to remember, the horror that Beirut was during the eighties and early ninties. Very highly recommended!

Emily says

Seven years ago, I graduated from high school. It seems like yesterday, but also a different lifetime. I cannot even begin to imagine what it would be like to be chained to a wall in the dirt and blindfolded, eating garbage and wearing the same outfit for that *entire* time. Whoa.

I couldn't get enough of Anderson's descriptions of his habitat and daily routines. Even though it was more or less the same thing for him every day for the seven years he was hostage, each time he explained it he blew my mind. I just. can't. imagine.

I was born the year he was kidnapped, so I don't remember the war in Lebanon or the surrounding areas. I don't have much (any) desire to learn more about that conflict, so the parts detailing who/why and politics were a little dry and hard to follow. I understand the need for Madeline's sections, and I think they definitely were needed, but I found myself trying to speed through all those italics.

Anderson now teaches at a college in Kentucky; if I went there I would take his class just for the reason that he lets students ask him whatever they want about his kidnapping the whole last day of class. I am curious to know how he coped after he was released and what problems he faced adjusting to the free world. But I suppose that would be a whole other book.

Overall: Interesting and thought-provoking. A welcome departure from what I normally leisure-read.

Chana says

I hope that I am not the only person around who has actually bothered to read this book. I think that this is a very important book and deeply affecting. I remember the hostages, the long years of hostages in the middle east, the Iran-Contra scandal (although I really didn't understand what that was when it was happening). This book is Terry Anderson's story of his 7 years of captivity in Lebanon, held by Hezbollah, kidnapped while he was Chief Middle East Correspondent of the Associated Press to force the release of Islamic terrorists who were serving sentences in a Kuwaiti jail. It is also the story of his fiance and their child, born 3 months after his kidnapping.

First it should be said that this is a very readable book; Terry's explanations are clear, his poetry is beautiful, his descriptions put you in the moment. It is also very real; I mean Terry lets us know who he is, and really he was not that likable a guy in my opinion, at least before his captivity. But he was a strong man, intelligent and able to withstand pressures that made other men sick and unable to maintain their sanity or health. He tells us about trying to get along with other captives, trying to get along with guards, how to deal with the years of boredom, with physical pain and with fear, with the rollercoaster of emotion that came with every rumor of release, and every disappointment. It really is an amazing book and I can tell you that I was very affected. When I first started reading it I was getting a bit of an anti-Israel slant off of it, which made me not trust him too much. But as I read further I began to trust him more. He did seem to have a bias against Israel in general, but let's face it, it wasn't Israel who kept him chained to a wall for 7 years, that would be Hezbollah who did that and was constantly spouting hatred of Israel and the United States. By the end I think Terry was pretty sick of all the politics, the violence and hatred. He seems a much humbler man, a man who just wants to surround himself with his family and have a chance to live his life. I wonder what happened to him after his release. I hope that all went well for him and he found peace with his family.

I have not stopped thinking about this book at all in the 24 hours since I finished it. I wanted to put Terry's opening poem in this review:

Seven years in chains
while love lies barren,
while children grow;
one lost, one not known,
and others left unseeded
now will never be.
Grim, terrible years
in subterranean cells,

a pawn of evil hypocrites;
passed from hand to hand
across the Muslim archipelago,
taped and bagged like
some dead meat, despised;
inedible, but useful in a trade.
Harsh and painful years
of darkness, damp, and dirt,
humiliations heaped in myriads,
hatred and contempt received, returned.
Wasted, empty years? Not quite.
No years are empty in a life;
and wasted--that depends on
what is made of them, and after.

Beautiful isn't it? Also, I googled Terry Anderson and it looks like he has used his years after captivity for teaching, humanitarian aid and running for political office.

Suzie Quint says

I happened to catch the live broadcast of Terry Anderson's first press conference after his release. I was so impressed with how high his spirits were and how functional he seemed after so long in captivity (for those who don't know, he was kidnapped in Beirut in 1985 and held hostage for 7 years.) While the book doesn't quite capture the spirit he showed in that press conference, it is still well worth reading, and forces the question "how would I do in such circumstances?"

Natalie says

(3.5) Required read for my journalism class. Very sad and long, the hostage doesn't escape til the very last page, but it was still interesting.

Mona says

Just read Terry Anderson's book Den of Lions. Learned a lot about the hostage crisis. Plus, he was very candid - it was as though I was reading his diary. I was upset at the ending when he didn't mention his sister.
