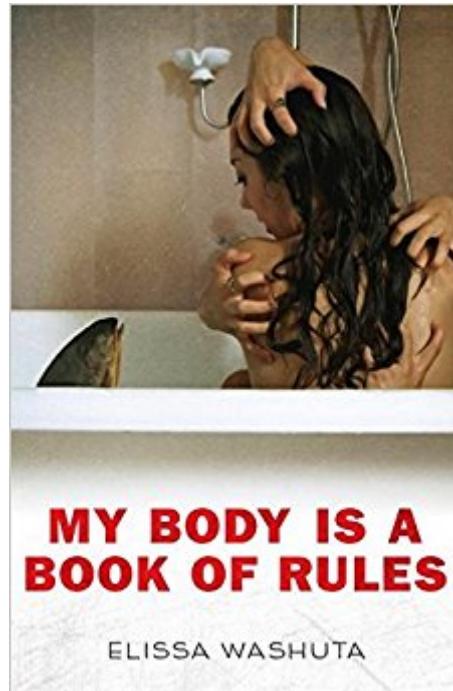




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My Body Is A Book Of Rules



Synopsis

As Elissa Washuta makes the transition from college kid to independent adult, she finds herself overwhelmed by the calamities piling up in her brain. When her mood-stabilizing medications aren't threatening her life, they're shoving her from depression to mania and back in the space of an hour. Her crisis of American Indian identity bleeds into other areas of self-doubt; mental illness, sexual trauma, ethnic identity, and independence become intertwined. Sifting through the scraps of her past in seventeen formally inventive chapters, Washuta aligns the strictures of her Catholic school education with Cosmopolitan's mandates for womanhood, views memories through the distorting lens of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and contrasts her bipolar highs and lows with those of Britney Spears and Kurt Cobain. Built on the bones of fundamental identity questions as contorted by a distressed brain, *My Body Is a Book of Rules* pulls no punches in its self-deprecating and ferocious look at human fallibility.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“You should have [*My Body Is a Book of Rules*] on your radar now. . . . Washuta's story is . . . an ultra-modern take on contemporary femininity, mental illness, and identity.”

“Cosmopolitan, *12 Memoirs by Women That Will Get You Through Anything*”

“In a reliably honest, original and frank fashion, Washuta's ruminations lift the veil of her chronic (and highly medicated) bouts of mental illness to reveal the confused, frenetic and often traumatic reality of living with overwhelming bouts of depression and mania.” —Kirkus

Review ¶ Although Washuta's story is not an easy read, the fact that Washuta has been able to build a life for herself is a credit to her fierce strength. It's one that parents, educators, mental health providers, and young women will find immensely valuable. • ¶ Publishers Weekly ¶ Elissa Washuta is an extraordinarily original and gifted writer, and *My Body Is a Book of Rules* is an extraordinarily original and often brilliant book. Its formal innovations are in the service of a sustained and powerful investigation of body in relation to mind, and body in relation to culture. • ¶ David Shields ¶ ¶ My Body Is a Book of Rules chronicles the Chutes and Ladders-style descent into the body and ascent out through the head that is our present coming-of-age myth. A sweet soul will spill out; they just do. We're lucky that every now and then, someone as thoughtful as Elissa Washuta takes the time to record what this feels like. • ¶ Kristin Hersh of the band Throwing Muses and author of the memoir *Rat Girl* ¶ Bodies are us. And not. How do we figure out which is which? Elissa Washuta takes you on a fearless ride of sex, drugs, mood disorders, self-improvement, dieting, internet dating, ethnic identity, and why she isn't Catholic anymore. *My Body Is a Book of Rules* is a funny, scary, unpredictable book; it reads like the inside of your own head. • ¶ Sallie Tisdale ¶ ¶ A genre-bending ode to the bi-polar brain, Washuta's venomous, lyrical chapters link to form a memoir that's daring, vulnerable, caustic, and raw. Reading this book, you find yourself in a staring contest with a writer who won't look away ¶ not from her devastating betrayals of body and brain, nor the chronic search for a chemical cure. She explores the nuances of blood quantum, Cosmo, catechism, psychotherapy, promiscuity, fencing, and *Law & Order SVU* in a voice that embraces its self-deprecating, self-destructive, humorous, bedazzled contradictions. • ¶ Nicole Hardy ¶

Elissa Washuta, a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, is the author of *My Body Is a Book of Rules* and *Starvation Mode*. Her work has appeared in *Salon*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Weeklings*, *Filter Literary Journal*, and *Third Coast*. She serves as adviser for the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Washington and nonfiction faculty for the MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

This is an incredible memoir, and as another review wrote, it's not for the faint of heart. What is it then? An incredible insight into the blessing and, at times, the curse, of having a brain with fragile wiring. As someone who struggles with similar fragile wiring, I was so impressed by her creativity, her wit and wisdom, and her raw honesty. The manner in which she dances between topics and plays with structure was brilliant in that (I felt) it replicates what it feels like to have a mental illness.

The structure itself felt truly comforting because it lacked the traditional linear or chronological flow. This memoir is both heartbreaking and hopeful. I am grateful to have met Washuta, and equally grateful that she dares to write such a beautiful book.

Excellent memoir about navigating young adulthood and depression/anxiety/bipolar/mania.

Amazing author, amazing book.

I've been reading many memoirs of people with mental illness, so I added this one to my list. I expected more description of her struggles with bipolar disorder. That's fine - most books turn out different than our first impressions. The book started in an AMAZING way... Washuta is gifted in painting us a dark picture of her college life consumed by alcohol, sex, and meds. I had two problems with the book that were so major, it ruined the enjoyment of it for me. One: she had three central ideas that never weaved together, but should have (Native American Identity, her rape, and being bipolar). I felt like she was leading to this big conclusion with all three tied together, but she never got there. Something was missing and I was left wondering, "What the heck was the point of this memoir? Where was she going with it?" I only saw her wallowing in her problems and then in the last chapter she attempted to be optimistic, but it fell flat. Two: oh boy, was she ever repetitive! Three times, I read about the same pills, the same reactions to said pills, and the same reactions health "professionals" gave to her "sad" stories. Tell me once. I got the point. Going along with her repetitiveness, I read the same story of her wallowing in self pity about her rape over and over in different formats! It was so bad I almost gave up, but she's so creative in her formatting I wanted to see if she would redeem herself. I'm glad I kept going because at p. 130 it finally started to get better as she dug deep into her bipolar struggles. The pages before that could have been summed up into two tiny chapters: "psychiatrists and meds in college" and "he raped me". If you are willing to put in the work reading a torturous 130 pages before it gets semi-good, go for it. If not, move on.

Amazing. Very explicit, but very moving. Interesting structure. Feels like a novel, not a memoir.

I have a hard time writing a review because there aren't enough feelings and emotions to adequately describe what Elissa gives us in this book. For me, this book is the heart wrenching, gut turning story of identity. We see Elissa wrestle with identity in so many ways: what it is to be American Indian and how to represent and project that; a woman seeking physical and emotional

nourishment; a story of new beginnings and old habits and how to reconcile the two. This is an intense read. You will read intimate details of the inner workings of Elissa's world. You will want to put the book down, pretend it doesn't exist. You will pick it up and read it. This book is an addiction, one that you have to ride out to the end. I'm scared to read it again. I know I will, but I don't know when I will be ready. I think part of the reason a reader can voraciously consume this book is because of the unconventional layout in which the words are presented. If you are expecting something conventional, you should turn away right now. This is smart, poignant, hard-hitting, straight-talking, and above all else, uncompromising.

Loved this book. Washuta really connects the reader to the personal struggles she is having from her bipolar disorder to other more troubling events. Is a must read!

Honest and raw. Amazing non-fiction narrative.

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