Memoir/Biography (K-Z by Author)

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Prozac Nation

Books



Lit: A Memoir
by Mary Karr
The Liars' Club brought to vivid, indelible life Mary Karr's hardscrabble Texas childhood. Cherry, her account of her adolescence, "continued to set the literary standard for making the personal universal" (Entertainment Weekly). Now Lit follows the self-professed blackbelt sinner's descent into the inferno of alcoholism and madness—and to her astonishing resurrection.
Karr's longing for a solid family seems secure when her marriage to a handsome, Shakespeare-quoting blueblood poet produces a son they adore. But she can't outrun her apocalyptic past. She drinks herself into the same numbness that nearly devoured her charismatic but troubled mother, reaching the brink of suicide. A hair-raising stint in "The Mental Marriott," with an oddball tribe of gurus and saviors, awakens her to the possibility of joy and leads her to an unlikely faith. Not since Saint Augustine cried, "Give me chastity, Lord—but not yet!" has a conversion story rung with such dark hilarity.
Lit is about getting drunk and getting sober; becoming a mother by letting go of a mother; learning to write by learning to live. Written with Karr's relentless honesty, unflinching self-scrutiny, and irreverent, lacerating humor, it is a truly electrifying story of how to grow up—as only Mary Karr can tell it.



The Liars Club: A Memoir
by Mary Karr
When it was published in 1995, Mary Karr's The Liars' Club took the world by storm and raised the art of the memoir to an entirely new level, as well as bringing about a dramatic revival of the form. Karr's comic childhood in an east Texas oil town brings us characters as darkly hilarious as any of J. D. Salinger's—a hard-drinking daddy, a sister who can talk down the sheriff at twelve, and an oft-married mother whose accumulated secrets threaten to destroy them all. Now with a new introduction that discusses her memoir's impact on her family, this unsentimental and profoundly moving account of an apocalyptic childhood is as "funny, lively, and un-put-downable" (USA Today) today as it ever was.



Life Inside: A Memoir
by Mindy Lewis
In 1967, three months before her sixteenth birthday, Mindy Lewis was sent to a state psychiatric hospital by court order. She had been skipping school, smoking pot, and listening to too much Dylan. Her mother, at a loss for what else to do, decided that Mindy remain in state custody until she turned eighteen and became a legal, law-abiding, "healthy" adult.
Life Inside is Mindy's story about her coming-of-age during those tumultuous years. In honest, unflinching prose, she paints a richly textured portrait of her stay on a psychiatric ward — the close bonds and rivalries among adolescent patients, the politics and routines of institutional life, the extensive use of medication, and the prevalence of life-altering misdiagnoses. But this memoir also takes readers on a journey of recovery as Lewis describes her emergence into adulthood and her struggle to transcend the stigma of institutionalization. Bracingly told, and often terrifying in its truths, Life Inside is a life-affirming memoir that informs as it inspires.



Girl Interrupted
by Lisa Loomer
In 1967, after a session with a psychiatrist she'd never seen before, eighteen-year-old Susanna Kaysen was put in a taxi and sent to McLean Hospital. She spent most of the next two years on the ward for teenage girls in a psychiatric hospital as renowned for its famous clientele--Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, James Taylor, and Ray Charles--as for its progressive methods of treating those who could afford its sanctuary.
Kaysen's memoir encompasses horror and razor-edged perception while providing vivid portraits of her fellow patients and their keepers. It is a brilliant evocation of a "parallel universe" set within the kaleidoscopically shifting landscape of the late sixties. Girl, Interrupted is a clear-sighted, unflinching documnet that gives lasting and specific dimension to our definitions of sane and insane, mental illness and recovery.



Scattershot: My Bipolar Family
by David Lovelace
Scattershot is David Lovelace's poignant, humorous, and vivid account of bipolar disorder's effects on his family, and his gripping exploits as he spent his life running from-and finally learning to embrace-the madness imprinted on his genes. Four out of five people in David Lovelace's immediate family have experienced bipolar disorder- including David himself. In 1986, his father, his brother, and David himself were all committed in quick succession. Only his sister has escaped the disease. A coming-of-age story punctuated by truly harrowing experiences, this devastating and empathetic portrait of the Lovelace family strips away the shame associated with bipolar disorder-a disease that affects approximately 5.7 million adult Americans-and celebrates the profound creative gifts that come with it.



In the Jaws of the Black Dogs
by John Bentley Mays
Weaving intimate recollections with excerpts from the diaries he kept for thirty years, Mays illuminates the struggle that leads to breakdown and the uneasy truce achieved through psychotherapy. Along the way, he offers provocative commentary on the allure of cure, the cultural scripts of normality, and the distorting mirror of clinical language.. "In the Jaws of the Black Dogs is not an objective analysis composed from the safety of hindsight. It is a writer's attempt to evoke the silent and distorting malignancy - as well as the moments of reprieve - of the only life he has ever known. Above all, he offers readers hope.

The Boy From Bothell (Bipolar*Vietnam Veteran) A Memoir
by Gene Olson
Gene Olson was born in Seattle, WA 1945 by a Swedish father and a Norwegian mother. Bothell, WA is his hometown. He has traveled extensively in Europe, mostly Eastern Europe. He currently resides in Vancouver, WA. He loves the Columbia River. Every morning he can see Mt. St. Helen's if it's not cloudy.

No image available

I was drafted Army and released to the Navy. I served in Vietnam 1965-1967 in the Amphibious Force onboard the LST Tioga County, making beachings along the coast, cruising up Saigon River to Saigon and operations in Mekong Delta. One night in Okiawa loading up tanks for Saigon, a gay shipmate wanted sex. Thus started an investigation with ONI, Office of Naval Intelligence.

Three years back from Vietnam the Seattle VA Hospital diagnosed me as paranoid-schizophrenic. Six years later, 1976, at American Lake VA Medical Center, Tacoma, WA I was properly disgnosed as manic-depressive or now bipolar. God has given me the gift of lithium for 36 years! And what a gift it is.

I believe bipolars and Vietnam Veterans will benefit by reading my memoir.



Skywriting: A Life Out of the Blue
by Jane Pauley
"Truth arrives in microscopic increments, and when enough has accumulated-in a moment of recognition, you just know. You know because the truth fits. I was the only member of my family to lack the gene for numbers, but I do need things to add up. Approaching midlife, I became aware of a darkening feeling-was it something heavy on my heart, or was something missing? Grateful as I am for the opportunities I've had, and especially for the people who came into my life as a result, I couldn't ignore this feeling. I had the impulse to begin a conversation with myself, through writing, as if to see if my fingers could get to the bottom of it. It was a Saturday morning eight or ten years ago when I began following this impulse to find the answers to unformed questions. Skywriting is what I call my personal process of discovery."
And so begins this beautiful and surprising memoir, in which beloved broadcast journalist Jane Pauley tells a remarkable story of self-discovery and an extraordinary life, from her childhood in the American heartland to her three decades in television.
Encompassing her beginnings at the local Indianapolis station and her bright debut–at age twenty-five on NBC's Today and later on Dateline–Pauley forthrightly delves into the ups and downs of a fantastic career. But there is much more to Jane Pauley than just the famous face on TVs. In this memoir, she reveals herself to be a brilliant woman with singular insights. She explores her roots growing up in Indiana and discusses the resiliency of the American family, and addresses with humor and depth a subject very close to her heart: discovering yourself and redefining your strengths at midlife. Striking, moving, candid, and unique, Skywriting explores firsthand the difficulty and the rewards of self-reinvention.



The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath
by Sylvia Plath
Sylvia Plath's journals were originally published in 1982 in a heavily abridged version authorized by Plath's husband, Ted Hughes. This new edition is an exact and complete transcription of the diaries Plath kept during the last twelve years of her life. Sixty percent of the book is material that has never before been made public, more fully revealing the intensity of the poet's personal and literary struggles, and providing fresh insight into both her frequent desperation and the bravery with which she faced down her demons. The complete Journals of Sylvia Plath is essential reading for all who have been moved and fascinated by Plath's life and work.



The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness
by Elyn R. Saks
Elyn Saks is a success by any measure: she's an endowed professor at the prestigious University of Southern California Gould School of Law. She has managed to achieve this in spite of being diagnosed as schizophrenic and given a "grave" prognosis -- and suffering the effects of her illness throughout her life.
Saks was only eight, and living an otherwise idyllic childhood in sunny 1960s Miami, when her first symptoms appeared in the form of obsessions and night terrors. But it was not until she reached Oxford University as a Marshall Scholar that her first full-blown episode, complete with voices in her head and terrifying suicidal fantasies, forced her into a psychiatric hospital.
Saks would later attend Yale Law School where one night, during her first term, she had a breakdown that left her singing on the roof of the law school library at midnight. She was taken to the emergency room, force-fed antipsychotic medication, and tied hand-and-foot to the cold metal of a hospital bed. She spent the next five months in a psychiatric ward.
So began Saks's long war with her own internal demons and the equally powerful forces of stigma. Today she is a chaired professor of law who researches and writes about the rights of the mentally ill. She is married to a wonderful man.
In The Center Cannot Hold, Elyn Saks discusses frankly and movingly the paranoia, the inability to tell imaginary fears from real ones, and the voices in her head insisting she do terrible things, as well as the many obstacles she overcame to become the woman she is today. It is destined to become a classic in the genre.



The Quiet Room: A Journey Out of the Torment of Madness
by Lori Schiller
Schiller's gripping, heart-rending and ultimately triumphant story of her journey into madness and back to reality is told through the voices of Lori and her family, friends and doctor, and captures a rare, astoundingly vivid view into the inner life of a schizophrenic. "A stunning story of courage, persistence, and hope."



Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression
by Brooke Shields
When Brooke Shields welcomed her newborn daughter, Rowan Francis, into the world, something unexpected followed-a crippling depression. Now, for the first time ever, in Down Came the Rain, Brooke talks about the trials, tribulations, and finally the triumphs that occurred before, during, and after the birth of her daughter.



Detour: My Bipolar Road Trip in 4-D
by Lizzie Simon
A finely wrought memoir of mental health, Detour takes a genre explored by Susanna Kaysen and Kay Redfield Jamison and propels it in a revelatory and rebellious new direction. Detour is the extraordinary first book by Lizzie Simon, a twenty-three-year-old woman with bipolar disorder.



Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness
by William Styron
A work of great personal courage and a literary tour de force, this bestseller is Styron's true account of his descent into a crippling and almost suicidal depression. Styron is perhaps the first writer to convey the full terror of depression's psychic landscape, as well as the illuminating path to recovery.



Sugar & Salt: My Life with Bipolar Disorder
by Jane Thompson
Sugar & Salt: My Life with Bipolar Disorder is the story of an ordinary person who lived with and ultimately overcame bipolar disorder (manic-depression.). She was not diagnosed until she was 37. She describes what it is like to be raised in a family overshadowed by the illness, and to try to fit in in school and to function at work with the undiagnosed disorder. The failure of a marriage and relationships are detailed, and she struggles to understand why her life is so different and so difficult, until she has a sudden revelation that something is wrong with her and that she needs help. Then comes the long fight to get treatment as she tries medication after medication after being misdiagnosed as psychotic. For five years she seeks knowledge and understanding of the disorder that makes her suffer. In a dramatic turn, Jane realizes she must enter a mental hospital to get the treatment she needs. She describes life in a locked ward, and how her doctor finally finds the medication her disorder responds to. She feels she has been given the key that lets her out of the hell the mood disorder has kept her in all her life, and for the first time, she feels "normal." After the hospital, Jane has to face the world again and start a new life. She is able to work for years without her employers discovering her secret. However, after ten years, she develops an allergy to the medication that has served her so well and must start the process over again. During this process, she loses her dream job and falls back into depression. A story of ultimate triumph over bipolar disorder; find out how she did it and how you, too, can manage the disorder through medication and therapy.



The Beast: A Journey Through Depression
by Tracy Thompson
Her inner turmoil, battling major depressive episodes to become a successful career woman, but always hostage to a hidden fear that the Beast would prove more powerful than she was. The Beast gives voice to the brain's dysfunction with eloquence and unflinching honesty, and is a survivor's courageous inquiry into the source and cure of an illness.



Devil in the Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood
by Jennifer Traig
When her father found the washing machine crammed with everything from her sneakers to her barrettes, 12-year-old Jennifer Traig had a simple explanation: theyd been tainted by the pork fumes emanating from the kitchen and had to be cleansed. The same fumes compelled Jennifer to meticulously wash her hands for 30 minutes before dinner: all scrubbed in for your big casserolectomy, Dr. Traig? her mother asked. It wasnt long before her family's exasperation made Jennifer realize that her behavior had gone beyond fastidious--in her own eyes, shed gone from quirky girl to raving lunatic.
Jennifer's childhood mania was the result of her undiagnosed Obsessive Compulsive Disorder joining forces with her Hebrew studies. While preparing for her bat mitzvah, she was introduced to an entire set of arcane laws and quickly made it her mission to follow them perfectly. Her parents nipped her religious obsession in the bud early on, but as her teen years went by, her natural tendency toward the extreme led her down different paths of adolescent agony and mortification.
Years later, Jennifer remembers these scenes with candor and humor. What emerges is a portrait of a well-meaning girl and her good-natured parents, and a very funny, very sharp look back at growing up.



Voluntary Madness: Lost and Found in the Mental Healthcare System
by Norah Vincent
Revelatory, deeply personal, and utterly relevant, Voluntary Madness is a controversial work that unveils the state of mental healthcare in the United States from the inside out. At the conclusion of her celebrated first book—Self-Made Man, in which she soent eighteen months disguised as a man-Norah Vincent found herself emotionally drained and severely depressed.
Determined but uncertain about maintaining her own equilibrium, she boldly committed herself to three different facilities-a big-city hospital, a private clinic in the Midwest, and finally an upscale retreat in the South. Voluntary Madness is the chronicle of Vincent's journey through the world of the mentally ill as she struggles to find her own health and happiness.



The Glass Castle: A Memoir
by Jeannette Walls
Jeannette Walls grew up with parents whose ideals and stubborn nonconformity were both their curse and their salvation. Rex and Rose Mary Walls had four children. In the beginning, they lived like nomads, moving among Southwest desert towns, camping in the mountains. Rex was a charismatic, brilliant man who, when sober, captured his children's imagination, teaching them physics, geology, and above all, how to embrace life fearlessly. Rose Mary, who painted and wrote and couldn't stand the responsibility of providing for her family, called herself an "excitement addict." Cooking a meal that would be consumed in fifteen minutes had no appeal when she could make a painting that might last forever.
Later, when the money ran out, or the romance of the wandering life faded, the Walls retreated to the dismal West Virginia mining town — and the family — Rex Walls had done everything he could to escape. He drank. He stole the grocery money and disappeared for days. As the dysfunction of the family escalated, Jeannette and her brother and sisters had to fend for themselves, supporting one another as they weathered their parents' betrayals and, finally, found the resources and will to leave home.
What is so astonishing about Jeannette Walls is not just that she had the guts and tenacity and intelligence to get out, but that she describes her parents with such deep affection and generosity. Hers is a story of triumph against all odds, but also a tender, moving tale of unconditional love in a family that despite its profound flaws gave her the fiery determination to carve out a successful life on her own terms.



Mad In America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and The Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill
by Robert Whitaker
A riveting social and medical history of madness in America, from the 17th century to today.



Prozac Nation
by Elizabeth Wurtzel
Full of promise is how anyone would have described Elizabeth Wurtzel at age ten, a bright-eyed little girl who painted, wrote stories, and excelled in every way. By twelve she was cutting her legs in the girls' bathroom and listening to scratchy recordings of the Velvet Underground. College was marked by a series of breakdowns, suicide attempts, and hospitalizations before she was finally given Prozac in combination with other psychoactive drugs, all of which have worked sporadically as Elizabeth's mood swings rise and fall like the lines of a sad ballad. This memoir, both harrowing and hilarious, gives voice to the high incidence of depression - especially among America's youth. Prozac Nation is a collective cry for help, a generational status report on today's young people, who have come of age fully entrenched in the culture of divorce, economic instability, and AIDS. "This private world of loony bins and weird people which I always felt I occupied and hid in," writes Elizabeth, "had suddenly turned inside out so that it seemed like this was one big Prozac Nation, one big mess of malaise. Perhaps the next time half a million people gather for a protest march on the White House green it will not be for abortion rights or gay liberation, but because we're all so bummed out." Writing with a vengeance (Nirvana, Joni Mitchell, and Dorothy Parker all rolled into one), Elizabeth Wurtzel will not go gentle into that good night. She wants off medication, she wants a family, and most definitely, a life worth living.

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