

# BOOK THOUGHTS

BATCH 19  
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BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK  
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**BLUE = MEMOIR OR BIOGRAPHICAL**

**BLACK = FICTION**

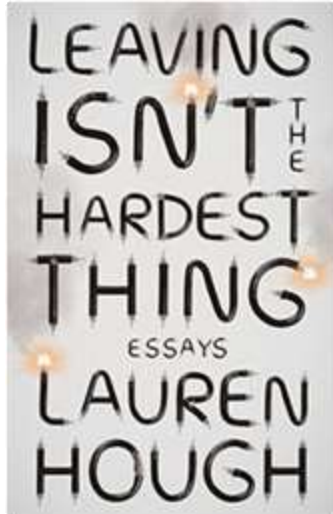
**DARK RED = EDUCATIONAL**

**PURPLE = ESSAY OR STORIES**

**ORANGE = POETRY**

# LEAVING ISN'T THE HARDEST THING

LAUREN HOUGH



*Beauty + laughter harvested from the depths of vulnerability + pain.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Magnificent. Superb. Splendid. Warm. Grateful.

Lauren grew up in a cult. She escaped the cult to join the cult of the Military only to be discarded into the cult of America?

Is America a cult?

Probably. If you're paying attention.

I live in Canada. Are we cultish?

Maybe. But at least, we'll say sorry for it.

*Leaving isn't the Hardest Thing* sprung to the top of my most loved books list.

Lauren is spectacularly vulnerable. Courageous really. She has endured much. Survived. Shared depression. Taught us how to keep battling. Back to the courageous, Lauren is fearless in her calling out the injustices thrust upon the margins of society by institutions + greed. She has this incredible capacity to love despite the boundless amount of *WTF* she has faced with an unfathomable ability to talk about her hardships in such a way her kindness toward those struggling, *many less than her*, many who haven't had the same luxury of being white. White talking about anyone else is a challenge. Lauren is a master.

It is a unique gift she's been given. Compassion. Empathy. Pain. And in the end, regardless of whatever cards thrown her way → as she navigates her way through life and depression → Lauren shares a noble trait → a sardonic wit layered in nuance to where I laughed so hard at a brilliance only found in pain, thinking maybe she wrote certain lines: Just for me!

*"... the worst bleeping song in the Family, was called "My Family. My Family." It's a love song about the Family." – AND – "But I'm not good with vodka. And I'm really not great with coke. Drugs affect me."*

I laughed and laughed and laughed.

Thank you, Lauren, for sharing beauty only found in vulnerability + pain. Your words have made the world a wee bit kinder!

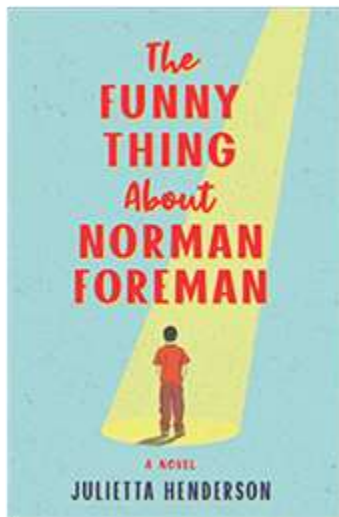
Near the end of the book, I felt like I was being punched in the gut. I was born in a place where unwanted children were born, only to be discarded and labelled as shameful. I guess I was part of a cult → another dark secret condoned by religion, not yet revealed because Catholicism is reeling from the Residential School crisis (there is no word, crisis is not enough). Religion is not prepared to deal with more injustices, yet.

I survived. Sort of. I write.

WRITTEN: 21 February 2022

# THE FUNNY THING ABOUT NORMAN FOREMAN

JULIETTA HENDERSON



A breathtaking lesson on unconditional.

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Fabulous. Review Complete.

I'll continue.

A single mom.

A twelve-year-old boy burdened by psoriasis.

A best friend dies just before he is to turn twelve.

“—one really and truly best friend is a hundred times better than a whole bunch that aren't quite sure—”

I'm prepared to have my heart eviscerated. The mom's name is Sadie. My last living sister (?) Sadie died in December. I don't know who my father is — I probably never will. A tear forms.

Sadie lived with my mother her entire life. I was a secret baby. Sadie held the last clue of who my father might be? Now she's gone.

This book is supposed to be light-hearted. It's hitting close to home. And then a funny thing happens. Norman wants to live up to his best friend Jax's 5-year-plan to perform stand-up. He asks his mom to help. He also asks her to help him find out who his father is — I'm shaking. But the funny thing, *The Funny Thing about Norman*, took me on a ride through the definition of unconditional. A master lesson — narrated through the lens of a young boy who understands better than most what matters, and a mother doing the best she can, who oozes love as her wonderful boy teaches all of us what it means to be alive.

Throw in an older gentleman losing his love to — countless laughs — and uplifting doesn't do this book justice.

Norman + Sadie, + Leonard etched their way into my heart and onto my all-time favourites list.

That's how the book made me feel.

WRITTEN: January 23, 2022

# GROWN UPS

## MARIAN KEYES



*A zillion issues packed into 500 (plus) pages.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

### READ

Characters growing into themselves. Life issues dropping → infidelity, excess, families in flux, bulimia, a need to flash success.

Kids running around; for no reason?

Not part of anything but to be used later as background → creepily hindering adult growth as the adults try to hold on to...?

Am I sitting in the room of a family television drama (A Million Little Pieces) where each chapter shocks me?

Another family event, lavish, unaffordable. A small business owner flips the bill → rudimentary math screams a small business owner couldn't flip the bill. So why would a family member feel the need to create such an illusion of success? I don't know.

White. It could only be white.

Introduce a refugee. Why?

The story stalls.

I no longer like this book.

The kids run around.

The refugee is saved.

White. It's okay to be → but when you need to use a refugee as a prop...?

Change the storyline: Bulimia → that's the ticket.

The men in the family are stunted. The women...?

The sole outsider is never fully accepted into the family → falling for one of the kids.

A drunk man (marketing genius) saves the day for the small...?

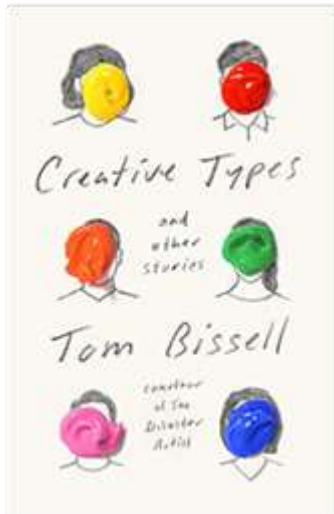
Bulimia leads to a crack on the head. The stunted me are gone → only to grow up and be allowed back, except for the outsider. She never belonged → she escaped.

The last line of the book saves the story. Love!

WRITTEN: 14 February 2022

# CREATIVE TYPES

TOM BISSELL



*Celebrities pay a heavy price → entertaining us.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Roger isn't a rockstar, movie star, internet star.

He's human, just like you and me.

Roger wants to dabble.

Dabble, he does, to feel special. Star worthy.

Every week, Rog hits the After Hour Club to pop Molly, swig water, shake his ass.

At closing time, Roger fears home.

A group is walking, passing by on the street. Rog gloms on → a newfound celebrity lifestyle is subtracting years from his life. The group heads indoors, to one of their apartments. Roger tags along. He wants → *wants* → as the chemicals fuel his desire. He watches a man and woman conversing a few feet in front of him. His hand brushes over his... as he sits on the couch. The man breaks free of the conversation, approaches Roger, and says, "I just got a call. There's a lineup to get in. You must go." The man wasn't on the phone. Roger leaves. He heads home in frustration.

Creativity is a young person's world. A big hit. Flush with cash. Lost. Alone. Quickly becoming irrelevant. TikTok. Superbowl ads now have teasers. The world is racing. A big creative hit turns into a life filled with destruction: Cocaine, lubricity, *the first time I typed lubricity, the second time I typed* → live fast, die young, broken, irrelevant, flush with cash as you are replaced by whatever is next.

Tom Bissell has a magic pen.

**Why?**

Because if he's writing from experience. TikTok. Flush with cash.

**Creative Types** is a captivating top of the list, read.

Thank You, Tom.

How's Roger?

It was merely a phase.

Roger isn't part of the book?

WRITTEN: 10 February 2022

# DADDY STORIES

EMMA CLINE



*A journey into the depths of destruction as simple humans destroy who they are.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Most humans are kind souls.

*I need to believe that.*

*I want to believe that.*

Darkness sells books; darkness causes the heart to race

Technically solid.

Have I been anywhere those in this book have been, figurately?

*Maybe? Yes?*

Sometimes the light doesn't dim, but the night turns black, as we can't escape thoughts that make our heart beat out of our chests.

What's this book about?

Are we all this damaged?

Am I asking too many questions?

Okay, one more: What makes a story stunning?

We journey into the depths of destruction as simple humans destroy who they are by chasing *want* or trying to escape what is →

We fall down, we need to get up.

I want to find the light.

My heart is pounding.

I'm not sure what's happening. I need to champion hope.

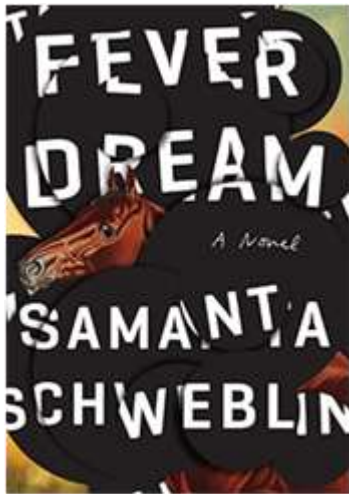
I laughed seven times; I think.

I may not be smart enough to understand.

*That's how this book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: 26 February 2022

**FEVER DREAM**  
**SAMANTHA SCHWEBLIN**



We're all living inside the same nightmare.

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

We're all living inside the same nightmare. I wake up sweating.

We need to keep those we love close, within rescue distance.

It doesn't exist?

It can't exist.

I must protect you.

But life is like living inside an active shooter event.

We're being poisoned by the invisibility of greed.

We are active participants in the human experiment.

Corporations are soulless – nonliving entities conditioning us with want. We can't quit, we need to eat, a roof over our heads, we need stuff – noise distracts us. A loved one becomes ill, is dying.

We scream out NO MORE.

We must stop the suffering.

We hop into our vehicles to escape.

We become part of the problem.

The fumes we leave in the wake of escape make someone else ill.

There is no salve to stop what we're all reaching for. One person dies. Two are born to replace.

There is no rescue distance until we are all gone.

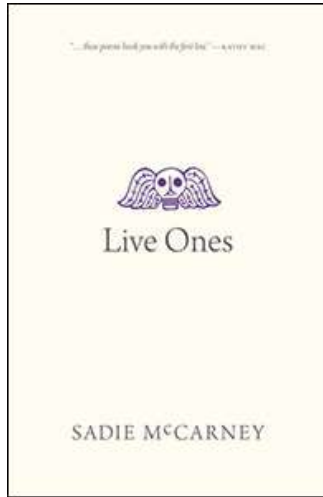
That's how the book made me feel.

WRITTEN: January 6, 2022



# LIVE ONES

## SADIE M<sup>C</sup>CARNEY



*"She spoon-feeds you gruel to nurse you back to – what?"*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

I walk into Costco. A few steps in, the person behind me rams their massive cart into the back of my legs.

It hurt.

I turn around, flashing my anguish.

He doesn't apologize.

I turn down an aisle, with my friend walking lockstep beside me. We can't proceed. A mother + father had plopped their four children down on the floor in front of a big-screen television – the kids are being babysat.

A man spots a free sample (pre-covid).

He turns his massive cart into mine.

He eats.

I read a poem about two people who lined up to get a number to be able to rush into a store, climbing over other people who'd lined up to get a number to buy crap they think will bring happiness to their lives. Little do they know; a wealthy man is laughing at the poor people gobbling up worthless crap.

I visit my dying father in the hospital 1,500 times. He's wasting away – less than one-hundred pounds. A nurse is saying he must eat to maintain his strength. To die?

I read a poem about *"You tell her she shoulda been a nurse and she laughs. (She tried, the same way she always tries – the same hope, same let-down.) Yours for now, she spoon-feeds you gruel to nurse you back to – what?"* My father.

How can someone navigate life: sexuality, and otherwise, when life is happening all around them?

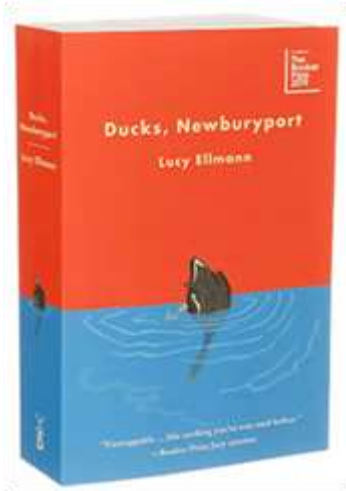
By writing what they see. A poem.

*That's how this book made me feel/think.*

WRITTEN: 28 January 2022

# DUCKS NEWBURYPORT

LUCY ELLMANN



*Exhausting.*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

The thing is, COVID is still around, I'm an anti-anti-masker-vaxxer, I hope I got that right, the thing is, China, Olympics, billions of dollars, the thing is, Paris Hilton + Lindsay Lohan are feuding, immaturely, now you know, I have a girls name, the thing is, a garbage human attacked a Muslim woman in Edmonton, throw him out with the trash, the thing is, we're supposed to take some time looking at spooky abandoned shopping malls, and care, the thing is, YouTube banned someone permanently, my construction friend got a lifetime ban from a pub, an accomplishment (?), the thing is, Sarah

Palin was seen dining outdoors only days after having COVID, we needed to know that, the thing is, desperate people sometimes commit crimes, probably far less than entitled people do, the creators of desperation, the thing is, they're still telling us to eat broccoli, apparently it's good for you, click bait, inform us, tell us what we need to know, the thing is, there is no playbook for how to reconnect with family after thirty years, no playbook, what's the goal (?), cry, cry, cry, traumatic –

The thing is, it took me 90 days to read this book, I read 11 other books in that time, heroic, the thing is, I liked 5 things about this book –

1. I read it.
2. Lucy Ellmann's tome of neurosis helped fend off insomnia.
3. "The fact that" was used one-zillion times and yet, on page 898 there was an error, "the face that."
4. " – the fact that he loves me, and that makes everything else bearable."
5. THE END!

The thing is, guns don't kill people, bullets do, if we banned bullets, it would make the world a safer place.

*That's how the book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: January 27, 2022

## BLACKBIRD SONG

RANDY LUNDY



*Words flow freely in beautiful poetic lyricism...*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

Our experiences are not the same.

I can't force mine on you. You can't force yours on me.

But we do, not you. Us.

Words flow freely in beautiful poetic lyricism, unleashing a flow of pain and suffering created by forcing WANT and WAY upon you, stripping away the beauty of innocence and purity from you.

I feel pain. Yours.

Speak up. You do.

*Can we hear you?*

Resist assimilation. You must.

We destroy culture, turning WANT into desperation.

A better, more in-tune life, erased, Noise takes away clarity.

We tell you; you can have more – it will never be allowed. We lie.

Look where it has gotten us. Today.

And even in our shame, we still dare to judge – to take away your purity, your innocence – creating unbearable pain.

*Sorry.*

It can never be enough.

*That's how the book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: January 26, 2022

## PITCHBLENDE

ELISE MARCELLA GODFREY



*When the water dies, we're –*

*How did the book make me feel/think?*

While reading these enthralling poems, a song by the Eagles sprung to mind: The Last Resort.

*"Some rich men came and raped the land, nobody caught 'em."*

We allow ourselves to be divided by the friggin' noise.

We have a propensity to demonize those amongst us who had acted as stewards of the land long before they (rich men) conditioned us to extract, destroy, and kill life. All life.

The brake pads of our conditioning are wearing out. We can't stop.

Dark?

Yes.

A protest tries to stop the destruction. The rich men raping the land win by telling us, the consumers, the protesters are professional. They protest everything.

The stewards of the land are few – strong – weary. *They care.* The rest of us are selfish.

We change the lightbulbs we use – thinking it will be enough. We pretend to care about the future – we don't – humans treat life like a sprint (life is short), and the pace of the race is incredibly unstable, leaving what we need for existence to be saved by the next generation. A generation we are stacking massive hurdles in front of. A generation addicted to TikTok.

As for our well-meaning politicians, many of them – can't see past the next election.

The water is sick. *When it dies, we're –*

I cheer for the stewards, but unfortunately, the odds are stacked against us.

Dark?

Yes.

*That's how the book made me feel.*

WRITTEN: January 23, 2022