



## Liar: A Memoir

By Rob Roberge

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**An intense memoir about mental illness, memory and storytelling, from an acclaimed novelist.**

When Rob Roberge learns that he's likely to have developed a progressive memory-eroding disease from years of hard living and frequent concussions, he is terrified by the prospect of becoming a walking shadow. In a desperate attempt to preserve his identity, he sets out to (somewhat faithfully) record the most formative moments of his life—ranging from the brutal murder of his childhood girlfriend, to a diagnosis of rapid-cycling bipolar disorder, to opening for famed indie band Yo La Tengo at The Fillmore in San Francisco. But the process of trying to remember his past only exposes just how fragile the stories that lay at the heart of our self-conception really are.

As *Liar* twists and turns through Roberge's life, it turns the familiar story of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll on its head. Darkly funny and brutally frank, it offers a remarkable portrait of a down and out existence cobbled together across the country, from musicians' crashpads around Boston, to seedy bars popular with sideshow freaks in Florida, to a painful moment of reckoning in the scorched Wonder Valley desert of California. As Roberge struggles to keep addiction and mental illness from destroying the good life he has built in his better moments, he is forced to acknowledge the increasingly blurred line between the lies we tell others and the lies we tell ourselves.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## **Liar: A Memoir By Rob Roberge Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

Review

#### Praise for *Liar*

“I’ve never read a book more intimately devoted to articulating how tenuous our hold on identity is. Identity is made, unmade, remade by chasing memory, and memory is a series of emotional intensities we barely survive. We make up stories of ourselves to bear the weight of our actual lives. We live between those stories and events coming at us like catastrophic meteors. And yet, mercifully and sporadically, love comes. Read Rob Roberge’s memoir, *Liar*. Because life is what happens between truth and the fictions we make to withstand it.” —**Lidia Yuknavitch, author of *The Small Backs of Children* and *The Chronology of Water***

“Uncompromising and deeply affecting, *Liar* is a brilliantly fragmented, darkly humorous account of a lifelong struggle with addiction and mental illness that stands with Fred Exley’s *A Fan’s Notes*. Strip-mining his memories for veins of truth, Rob Roberge unearths a fractured, unholy, and undeniable work of brilliance.” —**J. Ryan Stradal, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Kitchens of the Great Midwest***

“Wow, what an amazing book. Blunt, brave, sad, funny, and full of heart, Rob Roberge’s jaw-dropping journey through life makes you feel all your feelings, some of which you didn’t even know you had.” —**Dan Marshall, author of *Home Is Burning***

“Rob Roberge’s *Liar* is an unforgettable story, but what sets this stunning memoir apart is the unforgettable voice. Roberge interrogates memory with an ardent desire to be good and to do right. A deeply moral and complicated book, it comes from the heart of a man who writes about love, loss, and addiction like no other writer. You’ll fall in love.” —**Emily Rapp, author of *The Still Point of the Turning World***

“Roberge’s memoir is [an] engrossing read....A fascinating book that will remain with readers for some time.” —**Booklist**

“In this absorbing memoir, novelist Roberge (*The Cost of Living*) shifts among memories of his youth, drug-fueled episodes from his young adulthood, and recent relapses into addiction that threaten his marriage and his work as a college professor...The sense of urgency in Roberge’s writing is increased by his effective use of the second person...The rapid back-and-forth mirrors to some degree the diagnosis of bipolar disorder with rapid cycling, which he first received in the 1980s. But it is also the way Roberge is best able to try and make sense of his world and his experiences.” —**Publishers Weekly**

#### Praise for Rob Roberge

“Roberge’s writing is both drop-dead gorgeous and mind-bendingly smart.” —**Cheryl Strayed, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Wild***

“Roberge is the bard of the rough road, singer of the long haul, both lyrical and ferociously realistic” —**Janet Fitch, author of *White Oleander***

“Roberge is a modern master of the down-and-out-that-just-got-worse. His stories are dark and thrilling. They take hold of the reader like some bad, bracing dope and don’t let go until you feel the full measure of your own humanity. Prose this carefully wrought and true puts him in the tradition of Bukowski, Hammett,

and Denis Johnson.” —**Steve Almond, New York Times bestselling author of *Against Football***

“Roberge’s words bring it all back to life for me—the sounds, the sights, the smells, and the tastes. And it’s not always a pretty ride. I like that Roberge never takes the easy way out.” —**Steve Wynn, *The Dream Syndicate***

About the Author

ROB ROBERGE is the author of four books of fiction, most recently *The Cost of Living* (2013). He teaches creative writing and his work has been widely anthologized. He also plays guitar and sings with the Los Angeles-based band the Urinals.

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**1977:** You have your first girlfriend and you are, as far as your ten-year old self knows, madly in love. You are Nicole’s “buddy” in science class—that’s how you meet, because she is a bright girl who has been advanced a grade and she needs an older student to help her fit in. And the principal—a man who knows you incredibly well from your frightening number of trips to his office—seems to have decided that it might be good for you to be responsible for once. To take care of someone and not get in trouble.

You and Nicole pass notes in class with questions like *Do you like me?* with “Yes” and “No” boxes. You hold hands in the coatroom. Instead of teaching her to behave, you teach her that the more you misbehave the less adult supervision you tend to have. Screw up and you are out back clapping erasers together. Screw up even worse and you get sent to the coatroom. Really screw up and you get to read books together in the library.

On your eleventh birthday, she is killed in the woods that back three or four neighborhood developments. Woods that you all played in.

You try to think about what she looked like, but you really have no memories this. You remember two long brown pigtails, but you could be getting those from her picture now on an Unsolved Murders in CT website, in her last school picture ever, taken the year she was killed. She wears a white and red print dress. She has brown eyes that match her hair, which is pulled into two shoulder-length pigtails. She has a posed, but happy smile. That photo has replaced your actual memory. You think of her now, you see that picture that everyone else can see.

In the woods, Nicole’s head was crushed with a large rock. “Bludgeoned” is the word the newspapers use, and you have to look up the word and it will remain your most vivid memory of finding a definition in a dictionary. You are old enough to realize none of this can be your fault, but you remember the principal telling you that your job is to take care of Nicole and the phrase will not leave your head no matter how much you want it to.

For years, you think (there were rumors, after all) she was raped and then *bludgeoned*. She was never raped, you find out much later. Though, for so many years in your head, she *was*—the facts, for years, were not the truth. You only learn she wasn’t raped when you try to research her case in your early 40’s—thinking, somehow, that it might help your life make sense if you could make some sense of her death.

From that day in 1977, you never—especially until you leave your hometown at 18—look at a man without thinking, *it could be him*. Every coach. Every teacher. Every strange man who ever walks by you. For years you’re horrified whenever you’re left alone with a man. Sometimes, without warning, you flush with rage

and want to hurt some guy you've never seen before. Your reaction to everything in the world starts to frighten you.

Her case remains unsolved thirty-five years later. It will never be resolved and it won't reduce itself to meaning. She has been gone from this earth nearly five times as long as the time she was here and sometimes—even though you have known hundreds of people better—you think that relationship may be the most formative one of your life. While many things happened before Nicole was killed, this is really where all the other things start and, to a certain degree, end.

**1974:** Your parents throw a party on a Saturday night. You sit on the top of the stairs listening to their music, their laughter and the clinking of bottles and ice in a bucket. Smell the cigarette smoke. They play Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash records all night long.

The next morning, while your parents are sleeping, you're in the basement looking at all the different colors of liquor in the different sized glasses. You drink them, one-by-one, a red one first because you tend to like red foods and red candy, so why not red drinks? It tastes fine. Not as good as, say, Hi-C, but a few minutes in, you feel better than you ever have in your life, except for that accidental overdose two years ago on some pill at the mental institution where your father works.

A beautiful new world floods through you. You smoke half-cigarettes from ashtrays. You know you have to feel like this again.

From this day forward, if you are not high, you are not happy.

**Fall 1985:** You and your girlfriend Sasha have broken up. No one understands the kind of pain you are in. Your pain and loneliness are undocumented in the history of human pain and loneliness.

All day and all night, you lay on your bed with your Walkman on your chest and Bob Dylan's *Blood on the Tracks* playing as loud as the machine can go into your headphones. Your eyes are closed. You don't move except to smoke cigarettes or drink beer. One side of the tape plays to the end and you open up the Walkman and flip the tape and listen to the other side.

You do this for weeks. Your life is over. You will never know love again—of that much you are sure. Friends try to get you to come out. To drink. To party. To talk. If you had enough money, you *might* go see the friends of yours who sell Percocet and morphine, but you don't have the money so why bother seeing those people?

You ignore them all and get wasted and smoke and listen to Bob Dylan because, really, only Bob Dylan has any idea of the amount of pain you are in.

Only you and Bob Dylan have ever known this kind of love and only you and Bob Dylan have ever known what it's like to lose this kind of love.

**Fall 1984:** You are diagnosed bi-polar with rapid cycling and occasional psychotic episodes. You've been up for almost a week and you don't remember any of what a friend later tells you that you said and did the last two or three days you were awake. It's like a drunken blackout, but longer and worse, since apparently you

were acting ?pretty full blown crazy,? according to your friend. He's a few years older than you and his ex-wife is a schizophrenic. He thinks you may be one too. He convinces you to see the college psychiatrist who sends you somewhere else and that doctor tells you that you have been self-medicating—for years, from what you say.

The good news is you are not schizophrenic. The bad news is you *are* pretty full blown crazy. From this point, for a decade or so, you will only tell people very close to you that it's possible they might have to take you to a hospital someday. That you won't want to let them and that they have to ignore whatever you say at those times. This makes even the people closest to you tense and nervous about what it means to love you. And you will hate yourself for it.

The doctor puts you on medicines you can't pronounce and tells you that, no matter what you do, you should not drink alcohol with them, you shouldn't do any other recreational drugs and, especially, that you should *never*, "with a brain like yours," take any hallucinogens like acid, mescaline, or mushrooms again. When you're released, you take his medicine, but you don't really stop taking your drugs. You *do* try to slow down. But only because you are afraid he's right and you could go fully insane. A week after the appointment, you drop acid and hang out in the Boston Commons playing your guitar for hours.

He's right. His medicine and your drugs don't go together at all. Your drugs make you feel better. The ones the doctor puts you on make you feel stupid and like someone packed your brain in icy gauze. Like someone has taken a cold wet mop and swirled it gray over your mind.

You no longer have weeks where you stay awake for days and feel great, like your brain is working several times faster than it normally does. You sleep all the time, but you never feel rested. Your feet shuffle—you don't lift them when you walk. You answer questions really slowly. You can barely play guitar. Friends ask you what's wrong.

Before the month is out, the doctor's medicine stays in your bathroom and you never refill the script. The people who move into the apartment after you will find these pills to be the only ones you left behind.

**August 20, 2009:** You are going to kill yourself. You're a year into your relapse, after nearly fifteen years clean, and you're a liar—you've lied to almost everyone you know. You are, yet again, the person you used to be. The man you despised. It's come down to two choices: you can either be a junkie, or you can clean up and be the person you were for fifteen years. Cleaning up seems impossible. The thought of walking into an AA meeting and taking a newcomer chip makes you sick with shame.

Which leaves being a junkie. And you've spent enough time in meetings to know where that ends:

- Jail
- Institutions
- Death

You're forty-three years old. You've been a college professor, a good husband, a good friend, an honest person. The disgrace of being arrested for heroin would burn even worse than taking a newcomer chip. Everyone would know. Shame is an endless white noise of pain in your head. You're confused and

overwhelmed and you are as alone as you have ever felt.

You can't go to rehab. You can't admit your weakness to anyone, even though you know, god you know—what addict doesn't?—that addiction's not about intelligence and it's not about strength. Your whole life has been a lesson in this: knowing something may make it a fact, but feeling something makes it a truth. And the truth is you are trapped. You have nowhere left to go that doesn't make you feel like your life has added up, in the end and despite some great moments, to you being a loser who just can't stay clean. Who can't keep people happy. Who can't function in this world. You're done. Defeated.

Too many days have shown themselves to be this. Your life from now on. No matter how many people may have once loved you, no matter how many you may once have loved, at the bottom is this: you are rotten at the core and you cannot be fixed. You will forever be broken.

You've tried living clean. Now you've just ended up worse than where you started.

So you decide to kill yourself. To exert the last control you have left. At least you will die loaded and it might feel good. You feel guilty for thinking this. You've been squirreling away oxycodone and Xanax for the last month, keeping yourself on a maintenance dose in an effort not to be sick. It's almost impossible to resist the temptation to get high, but you have a plan: once you have gathered more than enough pills for an overdose, you are going out to a shack in Wonder Valley and you're going to kill yourself there.

You're going to shred all your ID, you're going to take the plates off your car, toss them into the desert and park far away from the shack and hope that by the time someone finds your body rotting in the desert months or hopefully years later, there will be no way to tell who you were. Your wife will never have to know that you killed yourself. You've picked up the emotional messes of suicides before—nothing ever helps someone recover from that. Putting her through that is out of the question. You can't hang yourself for her to find. You can't eat a gun. You, for both your own chickenshit reasons of wanting to die happily loaded for one last time, and because you never want your wife Gayle discovering your body, have made different, elaborate plans.

Of course, you haven't *really* thought it through. You're exhausted at the thought of living another day, and you are in a fog of drugs. They could probably ID your body from all your broken bones or your dental records, even though you've only been to a dentist once in

seventeen years. Even if your body is totally decomposed and your fingerprints are gone. Plus, just disappearing on a person after fifteen years of marriage is not exactly a way to leave her without a wound that wouldn't heal. But you are not in your right mind.

At this point, you're having trouble getting high. Only a high enough dosage that brings you close to an OD anyway is good enough to catch a buzz. It takes about four hundred milligrams of opiates to get even a little high and about two hundred over the course of a day to stave off dopesickness. You have saved well over a thousand milligrams, plus almost thirty Xanax, and you figure this will do the job.

You get to the Wonder Valley shack. You love Wonder Valley—you own a cabin out there where you go to write and relax, or at least you used to. It's the quietest place you have ever known. You want to die somewhere beautiful. You've chosen an abandoned house you actually like, one you have history with. You once made a short film with a scene shot here. A friend who was in the movie is now dead from a lifetime of drug use and you think of him. You dreamed of him all the time after his death, almost every night for about six months, but you haven't for over a year now. You were still managing life then—something that seems



impossible now.

The shack has five rooms: what used to be someone's kitchen, a living room, three bedrooms. You sit in the living room, littered with years of pigeon shit and graffiti on whatever drywall is left. Almost every one of the hundreds of abandoned shacks in Wonder Valley are missing doors and the birds scatter as you walk into the shack. The ceiling is mostly gone—open to the rafters and wood and corrugated metal patches on the roof. Above you is a piece of what you figure has to be a bit of misspelled graffiti: JESUS LOVES AL. Unless it was written by some guy named Al. It reminds you of the misspelled tattoos you've known in life—a guy in a Florida drunk tank with "I Eat Pusy" on his arm. A guy—also in Florida, perhaps the state of misspelled tats—who meant to have "Unbridled" on his stomach, but had somehow managed "Unbirdled."

You sit, your back to the wall you can find with the fewest shit stains, though you wonder why it matters now. Wind blows through the sage brush and ground cover and pigeons slowly return and perch on the rafters. Only a few at first, then maybe thirty. You try counting them, but they move a lot and you keep losing track around the low twenties. You're feeling slightly manic and noises are starting to sound like murmuring voices. You wonder briefly if you're in the start of an episode, and that maybe this isn't the day to kill yourself. That you can't trust yourself in this state. But, even if it is an episode, you're not yet having any hallucinations. You're frighteningly clearheaded. You're certain you're ready to die. You listen to the wind. You have seventeen cigarettes left. A zip-lock baggy of pills bulging in your jeans. You have been here a half an hour. You have time. You're not debating anything with yourself. You just figure, what's the hurry? Pay some attention to the world. All this will be gone soon. You think about Gayle. You hear her saying that the only thing she would never forgive you for is killing yourself. She couldn't understand where you are and where you've been. You're sorry, but not sorry enough, really. It's your life. Plus, she said that before she had a junkie husband. She doesn't know what you are or who you are anymore. You smoke a cigarette down to the end and flick it out towards the front door—or where the front door would be if there was a door. You miss. It lands on an old phone book, and you hope it doesn't light the shack on fire and draw fast attention from any firefighters who might save you, but then you remember phone books don't easily burn, which you know from cleaning your compulsively hoarding grandmother's house after her death and you saw she'd tried to burn one in the fireplace for heat she could no longer afford.

**April 15, 1912:** The Titanic sinks on its maiden voyage. There are enough life boats for over half the people on board yet fewer than a third make it to them. Just over seven hundred people survive, making it one of the most witnessed disasters in history up to that point.

When asked later, over ninety percent of the surviving women reply that they were on the final lifeboat launched—an overwhelming statistical impossibility given that nearly four hundred women survived and the largest of the lifeboats held seventy people.

Both the U.S. and Great Britain hold massive inquiries into the disaster, relying on eyewitness testimony for many of their conclusions. At the British inquiry, each survivor is asked how many people were lowered into each lifeboat. The *minimum* estimates are then taken—some estimates being nearly twice as high as the lowest ones—and the testimony of the most conservative witnesses offered these numbers:

- Number of people lowered into lifeboats, by minimum estimates:

107 Crew, 43 men and 704 women and children. Total: 854

- Actual number of people lowered into lifeboats:

139 crew, 119 men and 393 women and children. Total: 651

Seventy percent more men and forty-five percent fewer women made it to safety than the most conservative eyewitnesses had testified. And twenty-five percent fewer people were on the boats—only 651 survivors actually boarded lifeboats. Very few of the eyewitness testimonies were much like any of the others in a wide range of small details, and some enormous details, such as the fact that witnesses were conflicted on whether or not the 882-foot ship broke entirely in half prior to sinking.

No one came to the inquiry to lie. No one intentionally avoided telling the truth. But if the initial fact is the true event, that initial truth then becomes like a sophisticated virus that adapts to each host, so that it is never quite identical to the original virus, nor to its manifestations in any other host.

**December 25, 2009:** Singer, songwriter Vic Chesnutt—a quadriplegic dating from a car accident while driving drunk at the age of 18—dies of an overdose of muscle relaxants at the age of 45. It is ruled a suicide. Prior to his death, in an interview with *Fresh Air* host Terry Gross, Chesnutt claims to have "attempted suicide three or four times...It didn't take." He says he guesses he was, those times, too chicken to go through with it.

**2009:** The doctors tell you you've had at least seven major concussions over the course of your life. Three or four when you were a basketball player in high school before drugs and a knee torn in three places brought what was left of your athletic career to a close.

A few more came in car accidents, one so bad it fractured your neck—a hairline, but apparently dangerous and close enough to the spinal cord that you are lucky you can walk or move your arms. You came, a doctor tells you years later—when you have insurance and get MRIs and the full workup for your years of blinding, debilitating migraines—incredibly close to being a quadriplegic when you were twenty-three.

"When did you break your neck?" the doctor says.

"I don't think I did."?

He points to the fracture and taps it with the end of his pen. You hear his pen make a ticking sound on the X-Ray and the glass behind it. "Another centimeter and you'd be answering me by blinking your eyes once for yes and two for no."

"So, does that explain my headaches?" you say.

The doctor tells you it explains some of the headaches and he sits you down and tells you about post-concussion syndrome and a possible condition known as CTE. A condition they cannot diagnose until they perform an autopsy, so whether or not you have it is a guess. He tells you about your possible risk for early dementia and the loss of the control of your frontal lobe and the loss of your memory. "To be clear," he tells you, "there's no guarantee you'll have dementia. It's just that your odds are a good deal higher than the average person."?

You are a writer. Hell, you are a human being. You *are* your memories. Take away a person's memories and they may as well be brain dead. This scares you more than anything. To slowly disappear in front of your wife's and your friends' eyes. To have come this far to be able to love and enjoy life and truly be worthy of

other people's love after so many years of trying to destroy yourself. To know that someone else is more important than you and that she would have to watch this—watch what makes you what and who you are slip away by degrees like the tide going out.

You will become someone who is Not You. You will forget when you met your wife. You will forget the look in her eyes and her smile where one eye closes more than the other, that beautiful asymmetry. You will forget the terror you felt seeing her fear when she went into emergency surgery and you thought it was the beginning of the end and you decided, calmly, that you would kill yourself if she died.

You will lose every bad and every beautiful moment of your life and you will cease to exist.

You will, you promise yourself—before you lose everything you remember—before you forget how much you love the people you love, kill yourself, which wouldn't be a suicide because you would never be yourself again anyway. This would just be dying on your own terms.

The worst part will not be the total loss at the end. It will be the start—when you still know who you are, and you know what, and who, you are losing.

Sometimes you aren't thinking about it and then it hits you. You make lists, you write down everything you can remember. You try not to think about the fact that all of these could be nothing other than stories you might read someday as if they happened to a stranger, because you might be that stranger someday. Your memories are already foggy and scrambled at times. And then, they may not even be there anymore.

This, you worry about. Always.

**July 28, 1841:** The body of "Beautiful Cigar Girl" Mary Rogers is found in the Hudson River. The murder remains unsolved and becomes a national news story, inspiring Poe's "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" a year later.

**Sometime in the 80's:** The last thing you remember, you are drinking at Father's Five—

a bar on Mass Ave in Boston, and you put Jason and the Scorchers' astounding cover of Dylan's "Absolutely Sweet Marie" on the jukebox. Then you wake up in an apartment in Montreal—a city where you know exactly no one, including the guy whose apartment you are in, and he looks at you the way you might look at a unfamiliar sweater that someone left on your floor after a party.

You take a beer from his fridge and drink it in the stairwell on your way down to the street. A normal person might freak out. *You* might have freaked out only a year or two before. Instead, you are only pissed off that you don't have enough money to get drunk right then and that you have to hitchhike back to Boston. Even your friends or girlfriends, tolerant as they are—more saints than you can count on both hands, actually—are not going to come pick you up hundreds of miles away. Some things are too much to ask, after all.

**1984:** You have a dorm room with your own bed, spring of your freshman year, but you end up sleeping with Melissa every night for a few months. Sleeping with—but not having sex. Melissa is a lesbian. But she's single. You start as a friend who helps her with her guitar. You're a better guitar player than she is, but she is

a much better songwriter and singer.

At night, the two of you drink and play guitar. She's a Beatles fanatic. You teach her all the early singles. You teach her the dual lead harmony parts on "And Your Bird Can Sing."

With the lights out, you drink and smoke cigarettes and hold each other while the rain patters down on the roof of your dorm. You are young—you know nothing—and you wonder sometimes if the power of pure love (because you're pretty sure that's what you're feeling) could make Melissa love you the way you love her. In the years to come, you'll sleep with people and next to people, but you will never again this often fall asleep holding onto someone and waking up still holding them the next morning.

You know the smell of her hair. The pace of her breathing. The way her right hand tremors for no known reason while she's deep in sleep. She lets you kiss her eyelids, but not her lips.

"We don't want to get confused here," she says. Too late, you think but don't say.

You play in a band called Junkyard—Junkyard sounds like every member in the band fell in love with the same Johnny Thunders' records, which is pretty much the case. Even your originals sound like covers. Melissa plays in a band of four women who all dress in black and pale makeup. They call themselves The Bell Jars. Their originals sound great and even their covers sound original. They are the real deal. Junkyard is not.

The Bell Jars have a show coming up at The Rat—a major club in Boston's Kenmore Square. Melissa is worried about her guitar skills.

"You should play guitar for us," she says.

You've thought of this. Her band is better than yours, but you could make their songs better with your guitar. You figure, without saying so, that the fact that the band is all-women could be an issue. "I wish I could," you say.

"Seriously," Melissa says. "Some small labels and some A&R clowns are supposed to be at the Rat and I want us to sound our best." She smiles. "You play the main guitar parts and I can front the band and focus on my singing."

You feel enormously flattered.

"You'd have to dress in drag, though," she says.

You're drunk. Not seeing any potential repercussions. Plus, it's for Melissa. You shrug, say, "What the hell."

"You'd play a set with us in drag?"

"Why not?"

The band goes for the idea. The night of the show, Melissa shaves what little facial hair you have. She sits on your lap while she does your lips and eyes and cheeks. She tells you what a pretty girl you are. You feel yourself blush. She gives you a wig of hers, black with severely cut bangs like the rest of The Bell Jars.

For your outfit, she picks a short black dress with black stockings and a black, one-piece girdle with garters for the black stockings. Your cock starts to get hard when she's dressing you but if she notices it, she doesn't say anything. You're five foot eight and a hundred and thirty pounds. You remember thinking you were fat.

You've played a few practices with the band—dressed like yourself, thankfully—and the sound is good. They probably are the one of the best bands in town, but you seem to make them even better. That night at The Rat, the show smokes. You feel weird, playing in heels, feeling the slip of the stockings in the shoes, the pull of the garters on the stockings, but it all seems to be going well and you have to admit, it's kind of sexy being all dressed up on stage next to Melissa, with whom you may or may not be madly in love.

After the show, you break down your gear and you have to piss. You pause for a moment between the Women's and the Men's room, and you choose the Men's room. You piss at a urinal—difficult around your girdle-styled garter belt, but you make it. As you start to walk out of the Men's room a huge skinhead punk looks down on you and says, "Faggot!" He punches you to the floor. The bathroom tiles are cold. You have passed out on these tiles before. The floor is covered with water and soap and piss and dirt and blood. You leave the wig there. You get up slowly, your nose bleeding.

That night, at Melissa's apartment, you are still dressed up while she gently puts ice on your broken nose. She buys more liquor than you would have needed on a normal night, but you are in pain. Your nose is broken. This is the fifth time—you know what a broken nose feels like and you have learned to fix them yourself in front of a mirror, which is what you do that night in her bathroom, your mascara raccooning around your eyes like Alice Cooper. After you straighten your nose, you nearly pass out. You start to wobble and you take off your heels. You can't breathe through the nose--it's too swollen to snort the blow that would numb the pain, but Melissa gives you her last three Percodans and she puts the ice on your nose and kisses your forehead several times, saying, "My poor, poor, pretty baby," over and over.

There is talk, among the band, of having you join The Bell Jars. But then there's a review of the show in one of the city's most important underground 'zines:

*Boston's The Bell Jars are the real thing, thanks mostly to frontwoman Melissa B's incredible charisma and vocals and her songs that bring to mind if Joni Mitchell rocked like Paul Westerberg. She's one-of-a-kind in a city of carbon-copy bands, and because of her, The Bell Jars may be Boston's NEXT BIG THING.*

*On the down side, it doesn't help this band that their best looking chick is the dude who plays guitar in Junkyard.*

This last line doesn't exactly smooth your way into the band. Melissa still wants you, but the rest of the band vetoes her. Talk of you joining The Bell Jars ends.

One night, holding hands in bed, listening to the rain outside and the Beatles on the stereo, you say, "I love you."?

She snuggles closer to you. You have slept together almost every night for the last 3 months except when one of you is on the road. There is a trust. A comfort you have never known. "I love you, too," she says.

"No," you say. "I mean I love you. Like in love."

Rain. Music quietly under the rain. You hear her take a couple of deep breaths. "You know who I am," she says. "What I am."

"I'm sorry," you say.

"Don't be sorry," she says. You are holding her but now she's turned away. "I love you more than I've loved anyone else. Can't that be enough?"

And you could say, no, that's not enough, because that's what you're feeling. But you feel like you've already stepped over some line. You lean your head into her shoulder blade. "That's enough," you say.

Not long after that, the Bell Jars break up and Melissa decides to take off for LA. She asks you if you want to come, but you're scared. You'd only know one person in LA, and that person would, you're sure, be a star in a year or so. You're afraid of moving to a city you've never seen. A big city where you might be alone. And she doesn't love you—at least not the way you love her. So, you stay.

One of the last things you do before she goes is teach her the Beatles' guitar part on "Her Majesty".?

Around six months later—this is before the internet, before cell phones and email—someone says to you, "Did you hear what happened to Melissa?"

You haven't. You expect to learn she signed a major label deal.

And he tells you that she was raped and murdered in an alley after playing a show in LA, not long after moving there. You find out six months after it happened. You don't know any of the details and never will. Who did it. Where it happened. What exactly happened. You can't believe she's been gone six months and you had no idea.

There is no funeral you can go to. This will bother you forever.

You still can't hear the Beatles for too long without thinking of her. You have to leave the room whenever "Her Majesty" comes on.

You live your life in music. People ask you all the time: Beatles or Stones? Who would you rather listen to? You tell them, Stones—no contest—but you never really tell them why.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Frank Hegarty:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled Liar: A Memoir. Try to make book Liar: A Memoir as your pal. It means that it can to be your friend when you experience alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated for yourself. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , we need to make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

#### **Deborah Browning:**

Are you kind of active person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are receiving problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your short space of time to read it because this all time you only find publication that need more time to be go through. Liar: A Memoir can be your answer because it can be read by you who have those short free time problems.

**Curt Stewart:**

You can spend your free time to read this book this book. This Liar: A Memoir is simple to develop you can read it in the playground, in the beach, train along with soon. If you did not get much space to bring the particular printed book, you can buy the particular e-book. It is make you better to read it. You can save often the book in your smart phone. And so there are a lot of benefits that you will get when one buys this book.

**Julie Gibson:**

What is your hobby? Have you heard this question when you got students? We believe that that problem was given by teacher to their students. Many kinds of hobby, Everybody has different hobby. So you know that little person including reading or as looking at become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important in addition to book as to be the issue. Book is important thing to include you knowledge, except your current teacher or lecturer. You find good news or update in relation to something by book. Many kinds of books that can you decide to try be your object. One of them is this Liar: A Memoir.

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