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Louise: Amended



Synopsis

"A massive brain trauma robbed fashionable young Louise of the shallow currency she'd banked on all her life, and the resulting struggle is a page-turner in which a person's very soul deepens before your eyes. Louise: Amended rewards a reader's time; a must read."—Mary Karr

A beautiful young woman from Kansas is about to embark on the life of her dreams; California! Glossy journalism! French boyfriend!—only to suffer a brain bleed that collapses the right side of her body, leaving her with double vision, facial paralysis, and a dragging foot. An unflinching, wise, and darkly funny portrait of sudden disability and painstaking recovery, the memoir presents not only Louise's perspective, but also the reaction of her loved ones; we see, in fictional interludes, what it must have been like for Louise's boyfriend to bathe her, or for her mother to apply lipstick to her nearly immobile mouth. Challenging the notion that one person's tragedy is a single person's story, Louise: Amended depicts a dismantling; and rebirth; of an entire family.

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Customer Reviews

"The narrative is skillfully written, it hovers disjointedly between the active and passive voices, so we get to live snapshots of moments in time. (...) This form of writing makes the book an easy as well as a compulsive read, the reader's interest is held till the end."--Book Pleasures

"My face may no longer be classically symmetrical, but I still have the feeling of beauty. The feeling of beauty has nothing to do with perfection. It is about self-respect. It is about caring for oneself. I try to be a little less careless now. Being careless never felt right."--excerpt from author guest post in the Huffington

Post."I started to realise that even though it often doesn't show on the outside, we all have experiences in our lives that damage us and threaten to hold us back. Mine just happen to be visible."--excerpt from op-ed in The Guardian

"In this memoir, the author recounts the life-threatening brain trauma that severely disabled her at age 22. Her fight for recovery is inspirational. Today, Krug is a wife, mother, teacher and Ph.D. candidate."--Sacramento Bee

Named Best Book of 2012 by Publishers Weekly

"Having just graduated from college, Krug and her dreamy French boyfriend, Claude (a man given to wearing his button-down shirts buttoned halfway up), leave the flatlands of Kansas for Santa Barbara, California; there, Krug finds a reporting job covering high society 'gardens, weddings, and pets,' and Claude gets a gig with a local paper. Young, in love, gainfully employed, and living close to the coast, post-collegiate life couldn't be better; day after day '[t]hey drink Mexican beer and wear bathing suits indoors. They do drugs and wander through organic markets, spotting celebrities.' But just weeks after settling in, Krug suffers a "severe" cavernous angioma in her brain. She gets dizzy, she can't walk, and it soon becomes clear that brain surgery is inevitable, and life will never be the same. In gracefully stark prose, Krug narrates in the third person the implosion of what should've been her gilded life, the sad and prolonged dissolution of her relationship with Claude, and her transformation from 'the kind of girl other girls only pretended to like' to a wife, mother, and PhD candidate back in Kansas. Interspersed throughout are fictional imaginings of the perspectives of her loved ones as she endures numerous surgeries and years of physically and emotionally excruciating rehab. Supplemented with facsimiles of the 'Illustrated Facial Exercises' she used to work damaged muscles, as well as other medical documents, Krug's story is an immediate, unsparing, and beautifully rendered account of loss and recovery. Publishers Weekly, starred review

"A massive brain trauma robbed fashionable young Louise of the shallow currency she'd banked on all her life, and the resulting struggle is a page-turner in which a person's very soul deepens before your eyes. Louise: Amended rewards a reader's time--a must read."

Mary Karr

"This story of shattered hope, gigantic challenge, unlikely courage, slow revelation will have you gripping the pages and rooting from the sidelines. Louise reinvents the memoir, makes it bolder, stronger, stranger, more honest, and; in every possible way; wildly inspiring."

Deb Olin Unferth

"Krug, who is 29 now; and married with a new baby; didn't consult her ex-boyfriend about his feelings at the time. But if the adoption of his voice seems unfair at first, it grows apparent that Krug isn't taking aim at Claude or anyone else. Louise is the target."

Kansas City Star

"In this memoir, the author recounts the life-threatening brain trauma that severely disabled her at age 22. Her fight for recovery is inspirational. Today, Krug is a wife, mother, teacher and Ph.D.

Louise: Amendedby Louise KrugPart One: The Incident Chapter OneTwo weeks before it happened, my boyfriend, Claude, hooked me up with the West Coast editor of Us Magazine. The editor said she might have some work for me. Britney Spears and her husband, Kevin Federline, were rumored to be on their way to Santa Barbara. Could I meet a reporter from the magazine, Evan, at the Four Seasons resort in one hour?I wore a red dress. Iâ™d coated my long, blond hair with a silicon sheen, and worn the heels everyone was wearing that year: pointy, naked on the sides, ankle straps. Evan said Wow when I walked up to him in the lobby. He gave me my mission as we sat at the hotel bar: Follow Britney around for two days, gather any information I could, and donâ™t get caught. I would be paid \$300 a day, \$500 a day on weekends, to answer a list of questions. Was she pregnant? Did she smoke? What did she eat? Any cellulite? Etc. Evan had been covering Britney for years and couldnâ™t get too close without being recognized. I was a pretty girl with an unknown face—not unusual for the Four Seasons resort in Santa Barbara. I would not stand out. Evan and I stood on the lawn beneath the lit window of Britneyâ™s suite. We could see the blue light from a TV.“Theyâ™re probably fucking. See you tomorrow,â • he said.Early the next morning I was back at the hotel with everything Evan had told me to bring: a few changes of clothes to minimize recognition; sunglasses and a bikini; a notepad and pen. I was more nervous than Iâ™d ever been. I coached myself during the drive there. I wanted to hear it said out loud, that this was really happening. That I had gotten this chance.I was twenty-two. Iâ™d just moved to Santa Barbara from Kansas. This opportunity was as big as Iâ™d known how to dream at the time.I went to the salon where Britney had received a pedicure the afternoon before. I got one too, and pretended to be a star-struck fan. I pumped the manicurist for insights. Instead I got talked into an expensive eyebrow wax.I overheard someone say that Britney was at a nearby wig shop, so I ran there, slowed down at the door, and walked casually inside. She was trying a few on: a red bob with bangs; a black Elvira wig that went halfway down her back. Later I found myself sneaking into the resort pool and stretching out on a towel several cabanas away. She was tanning and, I noted, fanning herself with a little red Kabbalah book. My triumph was to be seated one table over at lunch. I watched her eat a salad with ranch dressing, smoke many cigarettes, and drink six lemonades. I watched a waiter ask her to please put a shirt over her bikini top. I watched her talk on the phone and belch loudly. Evan ran back and forth across the street on the sidewalk giving me a thumbâ™s up.I had Claude meet me at the Four Seasonsâ™ restaurant for a \$200 dinner we couldnâ™t afford, hoping Britney would show up. She didnâ™t. The next morning I sat on a bench and

watched the bell boys load up her white Lexus, telling myself to ask a question, any question, to run up and tug on her ponytail to see if it came off. I couldn't speak or move. That afternoon I typed up all of my notes and emailed them to the magazine editor. I never got paid but my name is there, in the February 7, 2005 edition of Us Magazine, tiny, practically invisible, at the end. If I believed in God, I might say that what happened next saved me from a trivial life of empty goals and frivolous dreams. But I don't believe in God, so there goes that.

Chapter Two

A nurse calls my name from the waiting list. My right leg is completely numb. Claude has to help me out of my chair. I shakily tell her my symptoms, even though she can plainly see what is wrong:--leg drags behind me--hand cannot lift a cup to my lips--eyes won't look at the same thing at the same time. While recounting these problems I begin to cry and cannot stop, even after she cradles me for a second, after she lifts me onto a bed to wait for the doctor. This isn't supposed to be happening, I think. I've only been in California for two months. Right now I'm supposed to be at my first day of work, as a reporter for a local paper, my first job out of college. For the interview I'd bought a form-fitting striped pantsuit and crocodile stilettos. On the way to the interview I'd stopped for a latte and a business magazine and felt smart and adult. My answers had come out of my mouth like someone had pressed a button. The editor had sports analogies for me. He wanted a reporter who would hit home runs and catch fly balls with the sun shining in their eyes. I said I could. I'd spent a hundred dollars on makeup and learned how to apply it on a department store stool and it had obviously been worth it. Obviously. The doctor starts giving me reflex tests, tapping my knees with a little hammer. I can see that my right side is not reacting as it should. He tells the nurse to order an MRI. I tell myself I will soon be out of this emergency room and on my way to work. After all, it is a sunny Monday in California. Nothing bad can happen here, the weather is too good, the people, too rich.

Chapter Three

The night before it happens they are at a movie premiere. Claude is a reporter for a local paper and has been assigned to cover the Santa Barbara Film Festival. Louise has a reporting job as well; she will cover gardens, weddings, and pets for another publication; but her job doesn't start until the next day. The theater is outdoors with roaming spotlights and palm trees. Louise is tall with long, blond hair and big eyes. Claude wears gel in his hair and leaves his shirt mostly unbuttoned. People look at them. They like to be photographed together. Their refrigerator is covered with pictures that fall down every time someone walks by. The movie ends and as they walk up the aisle, Louise falls on a woman behind her. Claude helps Louise out of the way so the annoyed woman can get by. Louise takes off a spiky shoe and stares at her toes. She has bought a new outfit for the occasion, tight black pants and a sleeveless, lacy top. "I can't feel anything," she says. On the way to the parking garage

Louise drags her right foot as if a child were hanging on her leg. People stare. Claude thinks it is a bit much. They agree that she must have sat the wrong way during the movie. Claude needs to write his review of the premiere and file before dawn. They drive back to their apartment, eat a frozen pizza, and try not to think too much. In the morning Louise is too dizzy to stand. The noise of the shower is so loud against the plastic curtain she cannot go inside. She hangs on the towel rack, and Claude tries to hold her up so the rod doesn't snap. On the way to the emergency room Louise is crying that the sound of horns and tires against pavement is killing her, but the windows are already rolled up. He pulls her against his chest, and covers her ear with one hand as he drives. Claude is anxious. He is anxious about Louise and anxious about work. He writes for the Montecito paper, covering neighborhood-watch programs, charity functions and clubhouse rules. His boss, who used to be in the pornography business, is his best friend's father. He trusts Claude to tell him which letters-to-the-editor are worthy of a response. Most concern the lack of good security guards in the village. Montecito is a tiny village near Santa Barbara where only the very rich can afford to live. It is on the coast with gated mansions and golf carts. The inventor of Beanie Babies lives there, as do Oprah and Michael Douglas. Couples sit in restaurant gardens with their big dogs and drink tequila served on beds of ice. Personal chefs and nutritionists keep their insides clean. The women wear gold, ropey jewelry with giant stones that absorb the sun. The paper is free, available in metal containers around the town, by the bakery or gelato shop. They have been sitting in the ER for hours with no word. Louise keeps telling him to go. His boss is waiting. It is a good job, she says. My Uncle Charlie is here. He lives close by, and the rest of my family is a plane ride away. The nurses had said the MRI results would take hours, so I told Claude he could go to work, that I'd feel more carefree without him here. I didn't think he'd believe me. My uncle is wearing a dove-colored suit. His smooth blue tie is cool to the touch. He covers his nose at the smell of the hospital, at the odor coming from the other side of the curtain where someone is screaming. Let's get out of here, he says, looking around for an exit. We are called into the doctor's office. The doctor turns off the lights and shows us the MRI results on a lit screen. He points to a marble-sized white spot at the base of my brain, near the neck. The white spot is blood, he says. This is sounding familiar. When I was nine a blood vessel burst in the pons region of my brainstem, but there had been few side effects, and the blood had reabsorbed after a couple of months. The doctor says it has happened again, and this time, it is more severe. The blood is putting pressure on the pons, which controls functions like breathing and swallowing. The reason I have not died is that the cavernous angioma has only bled a little bit. Not enough to stop my functions totally. Everything may reabsorb again, he says. Who knows, I could wake up tomorrow

and feel all better. He refers me to a team of doctors in a Los Angeles hospital, which is more equipped to deal with this kind of thing. For now, he says, I should just go home. He gives me some painkillers from his pocket. Uncle Charlie and I go to the hospital cafeteria before we leave. We make fun of the doctor. We eat sticky carrot salad and turkey on whole wheat. My uncle calls my father, and I call my mother, who says she will board the first plane. I tell her not to worry, but she says she is my mother, of course she is coming. My uncle drives me home in his elegant car and I feel calm. From the pills, mostly.

*Claude is stuck in late-morning traffic on the highway. He watches the ocean and thinks about how much he likes Louise, and how much he hopes that whateverâ€™s wrong with her isnâ€™t serious, because he has never helped anyone through anything, not really. Most people havenâ€™t, he guesses. He wonders if he will know what to do when time comes, and if it will be enough.

*The next day everything is worse. I try to get ready for work in a white skirt and a silky top that glows like lava, but the numbness has spread to my right hand and I can't button anything. I go back to bed and lie down. Claude is still sleeping. I cannot miss another day of work. I cannot spend another day at the ER when Iâ€™m supposed to be outside on the sand with a tape recorder, covering Japanese teenagers out surfing for the first time. Or in the farmerâ€™s market, trailing Spaniards and Germans, asking them what they think of American hot dogs. Delicious, yes? We are all Californians now!

An ambulance takes me to Los Angeles.

*This has been manageable until the ambulance. It was manageable yesterday with my uncle in the cafeteria, and at home, with Claude. But now a man puts a tube in my nose and tells me to breathe in. Now I know it is serious. Now I know something very wrong is going on. I donâ€™t want to tell the nurses in L.A. about the double vision because this makes my case sound much worse than I want it to be. I pretend my left eye has not turned inward. I pretend the right side of my body does not feel full of sand. I pretend this is not me, that this is happening to someone else, and it almost works. When a nurse inserts a needle into my right arm I almost donâ€™t feel it. The doctor sweeps into the room. He says the cavernous angioma must be cut out of my brain immediately. The operation, called a craniotomy, is very dangerous, but the lesion cannot be shrunk by radiation, or the pons will suffer. It cannot be cut out by a gamma knife, because the slightest error could kill me. And it cannot be left alone because chances are it will bleed again—no one knows how much or when. Another bleed could be fatal. Surgery is the only option. The neurosurgeon will be back in town in two days. I must wait, here, in the hospital. I become hysterical. The nurse injects me with a tranquilizer that makes me claw at my skin, and I try to leave the room, dragging all of my tubes along. Nurses hold me down. My mother arrives and gets into bed with me, smelling like plane. She is small and fits well. Her name is Janet and she lives in Kansas. She wears practical clothes, leather sandals with socks,

jeans, and t-shirts. She is the publisher of the town newspaper and is the boss of some people. When I was growing up, she was one of the best players on our town's tennis team. She has a boyfriend. She leaves the hot, dim room to find a wet washcloth for my face. By the time Claude arrives it has been dark for a long time. It is an hour and a half from Montecito to Los Angeles. He apologizes. The newspaper, he explains. The traffic. He's so sorry. *For two days my mother and I watch the mounted hospital TV. Finally, the neurosurgeon we've been waiting for returns from a conference in Sweden. He says he cannot perform the craniotomy, at least not right away. He wants to consult some other specialists. Mom and I think he's stalling, covering his ass, afraid of lawsuits. I am told to wait for a phone call. It will take about a week. Claude picks us up outside the hospital and waits with the engine running. I am in a wheelchair. Claude has brought sunglasses because the bright sunlight hurts my eyes and face. The engine sounds like a drill inside my skull so my mother puts soundproof headphones over my ears. I do not know if my mother and Claude talk or not. They have only met a few times. I don't know much of anything right now, only that we are driving out of Los Angeles and along the coast back to our apartment in Santa Barbara, and that every minute is getting worse.

I enjoyed the book very much! I recommend reading this book to anyone that gets the opportunity! It is a true story and the strength that this young lady had was so inspiring. I learned that we all can make choices in our lives regardless of what the circumstances are which can make us or break us. Read the book and find out all the choices and challenges Louise had to go through.

Quick shipment. I enjoyed this book. Quick read.

If you read this book and don't feel all the feelings, it's because you are a soulless shell of a person.

This was a good story....and true. I enjoyed reading Louise's story and I admire her courage and perseverance. :)The book was shipped quickly.

Despite the subject matter, this book was a short easy read. It didn't focus primarily on the medical aspects of the author's experience. It gives a look at her personal trials and how she finally came to terms with her new self.

The book was of interest to me because I know the subject at hand. The story is one of coming

through a life changing experience. The writing style was that of a diary format. Sometimes that can be good or bad. Good meaning it's an easy and good read. The bad is that there can be much redundancy through out the story. You have to keep in mind what she is going through and understanding that writing for good style and what not isn't important at this time. It's learning what she went through and how she almost lost her life and yet how it changed and I think for a very good reason. I recommend reading this book.

This book was very sobering and tough. It was a very difficult story line of a young woman. I would not recommend it to anyone.

What happens when an attractive, twenty two year old woman who is blessed with very loving parents, a caring and attentive boyfriend, gets afflicted with a debilitating condition that renders her right side unusable, on the very first day of her glamour filled, well paying job? This is what happened to Louise Krug on the morning of the first day after her job assignment, of doing a story on Britney Spears. As Louise Krug herself puts it, "If I believed in God, I might say that what happened next saved me from a trivial life of empty goals and frivolous dreams. But I don't believe in God." Howsoever frivolous Louise might have been before her malady, this book of hers rebuts any such conclusion. This book is an account of her spiritual journey through a very traumatic physical condition. We begin with the incident, how it took place, how her parents and boyfriend Claude pitched in to help, the doctors' reactions, the surgeries and follow up treatment she received and finally, her journey to recovery and a life as normal as possible within the existing physical constraints. We get to see intimate details of Louise's life, to meet her separated parents and their respective partners, her brother, Tom and his girlfriend and her now ex boyfriend Claude, among others, and other meaningful events of her life that have a bearing on this intensely demanding journey. The narrative is skillfully written, it hovers disjointedly between the active and passive voices, so we get to live snapshots of moments in time. The active voice is Louise's take on the issue at the moment, presenting more details of her version of the situation, it has been written in the first person. The passive voice describes what the other members of the care giving team were going through, it is written with Louise, in the third person. This form of narration renders to this book, an other worldly holographic quality, we get the entire picture in well chosen bits and pieces, leaving the rest of the details to our imagination. Some of these moments, especially those in the early part of the book, appear uncannily real, because each small fragment is recorded, as usually happens when navigating through challenging events. This form of writing makes the book an easy

as well as a compulsive read, the reader's interest is held till the end. All in all, an interesting and very readable book which would appeal to anyone going through trying times. Even though there are no mystical epiphanies recorded, it does not seem as if they are needed to make the book more of a page turner. A book that can be read by all, young and old. Strongly recommended.

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