



MEMOIR

# Confessions of a HILARIOUS MIND

Jenny Lawson, a.k.a. the Bloggess, takes a walk on the wild side in her new book



**LET'S PRETEND THIS NEVER HAPPENED (A MOSTLY TRUE MEMOIR)**, Jenny Lawson, \$28.

teenage misadventures, irritating things her husband does (emphatically conveyed to him through a series of Post-It notes)—and did we mention the dead animals? Almost everything Lawson writes about is laugh-out-loud funny. That's partly because of the sheer improbability of her experiences. A very short sampling: Her father made a puppet out of a dead squirrel to entertain his two young daughters, Lawson played doctor during a high school animal husbandry class, and she once told a room full of her husband's co-workers she'd been stabbed in the face by a serial killer (she hadn't).

Jenny Lawson is a blogger and also has a daughter, but she's not a mommy blogger. Irreverent, wildly funny, often inappropriate, she's one of a new breed of online diarists—like Heather B. Armstrong or Kelly Oxford—who are as likely to drop the F-bomb as boast about their offspring.

In this memoir, her first book, Lawson covers topics like dead animals (not her fault—dad was a professional taxidermist),

But it's Lawson's voice that makes this a risky choice for subway reading. She writes like a grown-up denizen of *Dawson's Creek*, if it had been on HBO—a generous helping of curse words, along with copious italics and charmingly rambling sentences.

It's that voice that carries the reader through the book's more serious moments. Lawson candidly talks about her first pregnancy, which resulted in a stillbirth, and the two subsequent miscarriages she had before she gave birth to her daughter, Hailey. She also details her struggles with depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and an anxiety disorder; she was also diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and talks about dealing with the chronic condition.

There's no sense of careful curating in Lawson's chapters; they're the very definition of lumps, warts and all. But that's kind of her style. Whether it's the hilarious, the mortifying or the deeply tragic, Lawson firmly believes that people are defined by how they handle the less than perfect, and that there's "joy in embracing the utter absurdity of life." Joy is definitely what you'll find in these pages. —Stacy Lee Kong

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## GAMBLING MAN

In a departure from his first book, *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures*, Vincent Lam mines his family background for his second novel. Percival Chen is the highly successful headmaster of an English school founded by his father, a Chinese immigrant to Vietnam. He is also an avid gambler. When his son runs afoul of Vietnamese authorities, Percival comes to realize that his carefully constructed world is as tenuous as a house of cards and that risk has been a mere game until this point in his life. **THE HEADMASTER'S WAGER**, Vincent Lam, \$30.—L.G.

## IMAGINING THINGS

Shortly after her mother commits suicide, a young woman named Maggie finds herself suddenly suffering from blackouts. Can a mysterious stranger who begins showing up help her understand what is happening to her? Or is his presence a further sign that something is desperately wrong? A haunting tale of loss and remembrance and a love letter to the streets and landscape of Toronto. **MAGNIFIED WORLD**, Grace O'Connell, \$23.—L.G.

## THE DIVIDING LINE

When a car crash leaves a couple as guardians of their best friends' toddler, they realize only one of them wants to be a parent—despite years of attempts to have a family of their own. Everyone will recognize the all too common yearnings and failings of two people trying to figure out what will make them happy and what's really important, against a shifting landscape of job loss, work pressure and family changes. **EVERYBODY HAS EVERYTHING**, Katrina Onstad, \$23.—V.M.