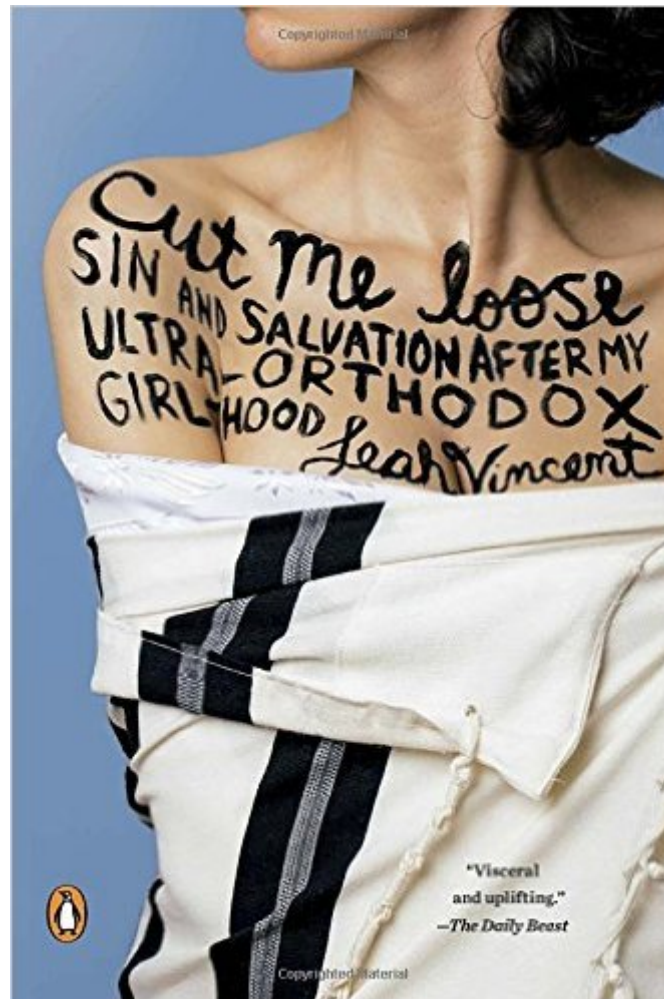


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Cut Me Loose: Sin And Salvation After My Ultra-Orthodox Girlhood



Synopsis

An electrifying memoir about a young woman's self-destructive spiral after being cast out by her ultra-Orthodox Jewish family. In the vein of *Prozac Nation* and *Girl, Interrupted*, this brutally honest memoir tells the story of one woman's struggle to define herself as an individual. Leah Vincent was born into the Yeshivish community, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect that shuns the modern world. When, at sixteen, Leah was caught exchanging letters with a boy—breaking a religious ban on contact between the sexes—her family cut all ties. Sent to live on her own in New York City, adrift and unprepared for the freedoms of secular life, Leah's desperate loneliness coupled with her stubborn loyalty to the dogma of her past pulled her into a vicious cycle of promiscuity and self-harm. It took a shocking state of despair to empower her to transform a life of tragedy into a tale of unexpected triumph, one that illuminates both the oppressive world of religious fundamentalism and the broader issues facing young women from all backgrounds as they grapple with sexuality and identity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After reading the negative reviews, I had to read this book and judge for myself. I am in general reluctant to share details of my own life online, but the misrepresentations of Ms Vincent as a liar and even that she is mentally unstable (from one reviewer who claims to know her family) are without foundation. I feel I must stand up for the truth as I see it. And Ms Vincent speaks the truth. I read the entire book in a single sitting - it is extremely well-written and it is fascinating, helping the reader understand the thinking of someone who has lost their family and identity undertaking

self-destructive behaviours. It became very painful to read - especially how she was taken advantage of by men and had no idea how to interact with them - because it is a deeply authentic account. How do I know? Because I had the same Yeshivish upbringing as Leah's. Everything from the small details and philosophy of her upbringing is true. There is no embellishment. With the important qualifier that in every community there is variation and that not all families are like Leah's, the fact is that many are. So while Leah's upbringing does not tar the entire ultra Orthodox community, it is also a valid account of her own experience for her own family and life, and her experience is representative of many ultra Orthodox people's experiences. Many ultra-Orthodox Jewish parents would have reacted with shunning at a female teenager's natural baby steps toward developing their own identity, like asserting things like wanting to go to college, and wearing a tight sweater. The slightest deviation from draconian modesty rules can make a girl the equivalent of a prostitute in this black and white world where there is only one path to God.

On the surface, this book is a memoir of a girl being raised in what some would refer to as an "ultra-orthodox" or Yeshivish community. While proclaiming she wants to keep her family anonymous, for those in the Jewish community, she certainly gives enough details in the book to deduce the identity of her family (or anybody good enough with Google who isn't Jewish). The surprising part of the story for many is that she is not writing of an insular community like Boro Park or New Square, but rather growing up in what the outside world might call a more modern seeming yeshivish family. According to the book, when she is caught writing letters to a boy, her parents take her out of high school to enroll her in a seminary for older women who are learning about their religion. She gets no high school education, and is then left on her own in New York with a child's understanding of the world. Leah writes with a raw and vivid style that is certainly compelling and will keep you drawn into the narrative. I read from start to finish and could not put it down. That being said, it was not the greatest work of its genre as I will explain. First, I was confused in comparing the book as written to her TV interviews. Some of the incidents from her Jamaican drug-dealer boyfriend to her encounter on Craigslist are described quite differently in the book than she describes them on TV. In her interviews she says she was abandoned by her parents, but the book describes them setting her up with a job in New York. Some of this might just be sensationalism for TV, so I won't fault it only in that I was confused while reading the book which incidents matched with the ones I heard her describe before.

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