

The Book of Dahlia: A Novel

By Elisa Albert

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The Book of Dahlia: A Novel By Elisa Albert

From the author of the critically acclaimed story collection *How This Night Is Different* comes a dark, arresting, fearlessly funny story of one young woman's terminal illness. In *The Book of Dahlia*, Elisa Albert walks a dazzling line between gravitas and irreverence, mining an exhilarating blend of skepticism and curiosity, compassion and candor, high and low culture.

Meet Dahlia Finger: twenty-nine, depressed, whip-smart, occasionally affable, bracingly honest, resolutely single, and perennially unemployed. She spends her days stoned in front of the TV, watching the same movies repeatedly, like "a form of prayer." But Dahlia's so-called life is upended by an aggressive, inoperable brain tumor.

Stunned and uncomprehending, Dahlia must work toward reluctant emotional reckoning with the aid of a questionable self-help guide. She obsessively revisits the myriad heartbreaks, disappointments, rages, and regrets that comprise the story of her life -- from her parents' haphazard Israeli courtship to her kibbutz conception; from the role of beloved daughter and little sister to that of abandoned, suicidal adolescent; from an affluent childhood in Los Angeles to an aimless existence in the gentrified wilds of Brooklyn; from a girl with "options" to a girl with none -- convinced that cancer struck because she herself is somehow at fault.

With her take-no-prisoners perspective, her depressive humor, and her extreme vulnerability, Dahlia Finger is an unforgettable anti-heroine. This staggering portrait of one young woman's life and death confirms Elisa Albert as a "witty, incisive" (*Variety*) and even "wonder-inducing" writer (*Time Out New York*).

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. When Dahlia Finger—a 29-year-old, pot-smoking, chronically underachieving Jewish-American princess—learns that she has brain cancer, the results are hilarious and heartbreaking in Albert's superb first novel (following the story collection *How This Night Is Different*). Opening in the Venice, Calif., cottage to which Dahlia has retreated, at her father's expense, after unsuccessfully trying to forge a life in New York, chapter one begins with the omniscient narrator's scathingly Edith Wharton–worthy catalogue of Dahlia's symptoms and ends with her first grand mal seizure. As Dahlia endures blistering radiation, sits numbly through her support group, smokes medical marijuana (with her crisis-reunited divorced parents) and carries a condescending book called *It's Up to You: Your Cancer To-Do List*, Albert masterfully interweaves Dahlia's battle with flashbacks, most tellingly involving her complexly overbearing Israeli mother, Margalit (who unceremoniously imploded the family decades earlier), and contemptuous older brother, against whom Dahlia has never learned to defend herself. Throughout, Albert delivers Dahlia's laissez-faire attitude toward other people (men especially) and lack of ambition with such exactness as to strip them of cliché and make them grimly vivid. Her brilliant style makes the novel's central question—should we mourn a wasted life?—shockingly poignant as Dahlia hurtles toward death. *(Mar.)*
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From The New Yorker
Dahlia Finger, the heroine of this début novel, is a sarcastic, self-absorbed Jewish American Princess, twenty-nine years old and living in a desirable bungalow in Venice, California, bought for her by her lawyer father. She’s also, thanks to Albert’s control of tone and timing, one of the most likable characters in recent fiction, as self-aware about her bad habits (smoking pot, wallowing in hopelessness, refusing to engage with her broken family) as she is incapable of changing them, even when diagnosed with a "level four" tumor in the left temporal lobe of her brain. Basing her chapters on a self-help book that Dahlia buys ("It’s Up to You: The Cancer To-Do List"), Albert writes with the black humor of Lorrie Moore and a pathos that is uniquely her own, all the more blistering for being slyly invoked.
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Review
"[H]ilarious and heartbreaking.... Albert's superb first novel...begins with the omniscient narrator's scathingly Edith Wharton-worthy catalogue of Dahlia's symptoms and ends with her first grand mal seizure.... Throughout, Albert delivers Dahlia's laissez-faire attitude toward other people and lack of ambition with such exactness as to strip them of cliche and make them grimly vivid. Her brilliant style makes the novel's central question -- should we mourn a wasted life? -- shockingly poignant." -- *Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"Elisa Albert has the unique gift of making bedmates out of humor and heartbreak. *The Book of Dahlia* is wonderful." -- Gary Shteyngart, author of *Absurdistan*

"*The Book of Dahlia* does not go gently into that good night -- each line howls with pain and rage and laughter. It takes an unflinching look at terminal illness in our culture of sunny denial and doesn't let readers off the hook, either -- this book will bring you to your knees. It's also the funniest thing I've read in years." -- Karen Russell, author of *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves*

"Never maudlin, occasionally harrowing, and often hilarious, *The Book of Dahlia* is a dark, surprising

wonder. Faced with her own imminent and unavoidable demise, Dahlia doesn't flinch -- but you will." -- Kelly Braffet, author of *Last Seen Leaving*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Randy Johnson:

Here thing why this specific The Book of Dahlia: A Novel are different and dependable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good nevertheless it depends in the content of computer which is the content is as delightful as food or not. The Book of Dahlia: A Novel giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no book that similar with The Book of Dahlia: A Novel. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your own eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your method home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of The Book of Dahlia: A Novel in e-book can be your choice.

Tom Seaman:

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David Earnest:

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Kelly Mays:

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