



Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir

By Jasmin Singer

Download now

Read Online →

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer

One woman's journey to find herself through juicing, veganism, and love, as she went from fat to thin and from feeding her emotions to feeding her soul.

From the extra pounds and unrelenting bullies that left her eating lunch alone in a bathroom stall at school to the low self-esteem that left her both physically and emotionally vulnerable to abuse, Jasmin Singer's struggle with weight defined her life.

Most people think there's no such thing as a fat vegan. Most people don't realize that deep-fried tofu tastes amazing and that Oreos are, in fact, vegan. So, even after Jasmin embraced a vegan lifestyle, having discovered her passion in advocating for the rights of animals, she defied any "skinny vegan" stereotypes by getting even heavier.

More importantly, she realized that her compassion for animals didn't extend to her own body, and that her low self-esteem was affecting her health. She needed a change. By committing to monthly juice fasts and a diet of whole, unprocessed foods, Jasmin lost almost a hundred pounds, gained an understanding of her destructive relationship with food, and finally realized what it means to be truly full.

Told with humble humor and heartbreaking honesty, this is Jasmin's story of how she went from finding solace in a box of cheese crackers to finding peace within herself.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

↓ [Download Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir ...pdf](#)

📄 [Read Online Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir ...pdf](#)

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir

By Jasmin Singer

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer

One woman's journey to find herself through juicing, veganism, and love, as she went from fat to thin and from feeding her emotions to feeding her soul.

From the extra pounds and unrelenting bullies that left her eating lunch alone in a bathroom stall at school to the low self-esteem that left her both physically and emotionally vulnerable to abuse, Jasmin Singer's struggle with weight defined her life.

Most people think there's no such thing as a fat vegan. Most people don't realize that deep-fried tofu tastes amazing and that Oreos are, in fact, vegan. So, even after Jasmin embraced a vegan lifestyle, having discovered her passion in advocating for the rights of animals, she defied any "skinny vegan" stereotypes by getting even heavier.

More importantly, she realized that her compassion for animals didn't extend to her own body, and that her low self-esteem was affecting her health. She needed a change. By committing to monthly juice fasts and a diet of whole, unprocessed foods, Jasmin lost almost a hundred pounds, gained an understanding of her destructive relationship with food, and finally realized what it means to be truly full.

Told with humble humor and heartbreaking honesty, this is Jasmin's story of how she went from finding solace in a box of cheese crackers to finding peace within herself.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #170659 in eBooks
- Published on: 2016-02-02
- Released on: 2016-02-02
- Format: Kindle eBook

 [Download Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir ...pdf](#)

Editorial Review

Review

“Relentlessly honest...I couldn't put it down.” (Jane Velez-Mitchell, New York Times best)

“You will read this treasure and be so much richer from it.” (Kathy Freston, New York Times bestsellin)

About the Author

Jasmin Singer is the executive director of Our Hen House, a non-profit organization aiming to change the world for animals. She produces a weekly television show of the same name, hosts a Webby-recognized weekly podcast, has written for numerous online publications, including the Huffington Post and Mind Body Green, and has appeared on The Dr. Oz Show and Huff Po Live, and in the award-winning documentaries Vegucated and The Ghosts in Our Machine.

Jasmin Singer is the executive director of Our Hen House, a non-profit organization aiming to change the world for animals. She produces a weekly television show of the same name, hosts a Webby-recognized weekly podcast, has written for numerous online publications, including the Huffington Post and Mind Body Green, and has appeared on The Dr. Oz Show and Huff Po Live, and in the award-winning documentaries Vegucated and The Ghosts in Our Machine.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

I

what i lost

ONE

let's do this

That bathroom stall was ridiculously small. I wriggled my way around, trying to wedge both me and my stupid, gigantic purse into the cramped rectangle. I shimmied, did a tiny pirouette, and finally edged my pants down. It was like *Swan Lake* in there, and all so that I could successfully maneuver my 221-pound, five-foot-four self into proper peeing position.

“This is like a goddamn gestation crate,” I said to no one in particular, finally finding a suitable stance, but only after banging my funny bone on the sanitary napkin disposal.

A few minutes later, as small beads of sweat collected on my forehead, I washed my hands, thinking, “Why is soap in public bathrooms always hot pink?”

I was winded. I decided to take a moment to catch my breath. My dining mates could wait. They were probably in a tabbouleh daze by now anyway, busy working their way through the fava bean appetizer.

Oh, how I loved the food in San Francisco! Even in comparison to my own gritty city, New York—which

was just bursting with flavors and cuisines vibrant and diverse enough to keep any foodie busy (including a vegan one, like me)—there was something about this town that made me hungry to try everything. On that night, my partner, Mariann, and I had met up with a couple of friends who knew the ins and outs of the restaurant scene in the City by the Bay. They'd chosen a slightly gaudy, but nonetheless mouthwatering, Mediterranean restaurant in the Tenderloin district—ironic, because we were there for its scrumptious vegan menu. The only tenderloins in our lives were made out of wheat gluten.

Just before I excused myself to go to the bathroom, my friends John and Cassie had been telling Mariann and me (but mainly me) about a new documentary, *Fat, Sick & Nearly Dead*, set to be released the following spring. John and Cassie worked in magazine publishing and had been given an advance press copy.

They told us that the film was about a man who juice fasted for sixty days in an effort to get his health back. As he flooded his body with fruits and vegetables, he lost a tremendous amount of weight, got off all his medications, and cured a debilitating autoimmune disease that had plagued him for years. “You really should borrow it, Jasmin,” John told me, a bit too adamantly for my taste. “Seriously, you’ve got to see it.”

I fake smiled. “You know what?” I announced. “Nature calls . . .”

The truth is, when John—a naturally excited guy—shared his enthusiasm with me, I took it personally. Was his exuberance a way of calling me fat? Was he comparing me to the man in the film? When I was a kid, I had been accused of making everything about me, and perhaps there was legitimacy in that still. But this hit pretty close to home.

There I was, hiding away in the maroon and turquoise bathroom instead of sitting beside my girlfriend enjoying the company of my good buddies and eating incredible food. I suddenly felt a twinge in my right shoulder. “Dang purse,” I mumbled, shaking off the pain. What the hell was I carrying with me, anyway? I opened it up and instantly spotted the culprit: my new shoes.

And by new, I mean old. I had picked up those adorable green and white hemp sneakers at my favorite thrift store in the Mission District earlier that day. I'd forgotten putting them in my bag. Satisfied that I wasn't suddenly suffering from brittle bones, I fished out a lip gloss.

And then, unthinkingly—before having the foresight to prepare myself—I foolishly looked at myself in the mirror.

It's amazing, really, how easy it is to master the art of looking in the mirror without actually looking at yourself—in a way that doesn't make you want to step in front of a bus, that is. I knew all the tricks: how to hang mirrors a few inches too high so my view of myself was always from the way-more-flattering angle above; how to suck in my cheeks just a little bit to give myself fake cheekbones, widening my eyes at the same time to add to the effect; and, finally, how to look at only one part of my body at a time—my eyes if I was putting on shadow, the crown of my head if I was brushing my hair.

Even a simple act like walking down the street with a friend was like a real-life video game. The challenge? To keep the conversation going while avoiding, at all costs, catching a glimpse of my reflection in a window—an image that echoed the truth in ways I was not prepared to handle. And so, rather than take the chance of spotting my silhouette, I would maintain unrelenting eye contact with my hapless companion, who was no doubt wondering why I seemed to be trying to peer into his or her soul. Anything to avert my eyes from the truth, to remain in the dark.

It had been a good number of years, in fact, since I had looked at myself, head-on, in full, with no preparation—with no absurd rationalization of what I was about to see, of *who* I was about to see.

Except, this time, I acted too quickly and, as I stared at myself in the bathroom mirror, I accidentally saw it all: my three chins, my blazer that didn't close, and my Humpty Dumpty figure. Just like that, there I was, without my mirror-face on to protect me.

I was alone in the bathroom, with only myself and my cracked veneer, and yet I was self-conscious, somehow feeling as if I were being watched. My stomach ached, and not because of the numerous triangles of perfectly browned pita bread I'd just eaten. I needed an escape, fast. Just as it started to dawn on me that the intensity I was feeling was my own DIY wall of denial beginning to crumble, I randomly spotted a plastic earring on the floor that someone must have dropped. That one-eared person was clearly my angel, because in that moment, that plastic earring saved my life—or at least my evening—giving me the distraction I needed to pull myself together.

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself,” I quietly commanded. Self-pity was simply not an option. Wallowing should be reserved for people who were truly without. I had no right to be upset just because I was *fat*.

“Focus on what you've got right,” I whispered. Like my thick-framed blue and white glasses, which I had bought at Fabulous Fanny's in the East Village, or the two dozen glittery barrettes that decorated my spiky black and pink hair. I had “a look”—that was what people had told me my whole life—and as my weight stepped up, so did my many ornaments. I had always assumed that my eyeliner diverted attention from my bulbous belly and that my nose hoop distracted from my self-consciousness.

And yet, in spite of the temporary respite provided by the lost earring and my standard pep talk, all my warts were still right there, smack in front of me, staring back. At that moment, a familiar, happy thought occurred to me: I was fairly certain that the overwhelming sense of despair that was always lying dormant in me, and that was starting to bubble up right at that instant in the ostentatious bathroom in the Tenderloin, would be effectively cured by spinach pie.

So I put on lip gloss without watching and headed back to my booth, where the all-knowing Mariann shot me the “is everything okay?” look, and I smiled another fake smile—all the while knowing she wouldn't buy the bullshit and we'd have to hash it out later. She was, after all, one of the realest parts of my life—the part that grounded me when the whole world seemed out of control.

“There was a wait,” I lied, a little too exuberantly.

And then—Jesus Christ!—it was as though my dining mates had paused the clock and stared into space while I was in the bathroom, counting the seconds until I returned to the booth just to pick up the conversation exactly where we had left off. My abrupt exit had been dramatic only *to me*. Next time I'd have to try harder.

“So, as I was saying,” John said as he wiped a dollop of hummus from the right corner of his lip. “You've gotta see this movie, Jazz.”

Cassie agreed. “You've gotta. It's a game changer.”

A game changer.

When I stepped onstage for the first time in first grade and realized that I could be anyone in the world up there, and maybe I'd be accepted, because I was good at it, and I could be *someone else* while I was center stage—that was a game changer. When I slept with a woman for the first time, at nineteen, that had been a game changer (especially for my then boyfriend). When I learned, at twenty-four, that the food industry was lying to me, and I went vegan—a decision that shaped me, gave me the kind of fulfillment that many people

my age only dreamed of having, and added deep and profound purpose to my life—a game changer indeed. When, at twenty-seven, I met Mariann, and together we decided to try to change the world—*game changer*.

I knew a thing or two about changing the game.

I held my breath, wanting so badly to talk about anything besides a man who was fat and sick and nearly dead. A man to whom my friends were obviously comparing me.

Sometimes change comes merely as a result of hearing something at exactly the right moment. Sometimes, like a pair of perfect hemp sneakers at a secondhand store, you have no idea what's about to enter your life.

Given the conversation about the documentary that my friends insisted I “really had to see,” it seemed a remarkable coincidence that I had just read an article about juice fasting and, much to my surprise, had found myself intrigued.

The waiter placed my dish in front of me. “The spinach pie, miss.”

My belief that spinach pie would distract me from the thoughts that kept bubbling up proved wrong. In spite of the deliciousness that sat right there in front of me, I could no longer refuse to notice the lingering back and shoulder pain that I felt every morning, the rashes I got on my thighs from flesh rubbing against flesh, the deeply buried sadness and anger that hid behind my days. There were only so many glittery barrettes.

My shoulder twinged again—I was used to being achy. Even though I was only thirty, it was difficult for me to go up a flight of stairs without stopping halfway to rest. Sometimes I stopped in the middle, pretending I needed to adjust the cuff of my jeans, or check a pretend text, just to buy some time before finishing the exhausting trek. Why did I feel like shit all the time? I was young, vegan, and even had a master's in health and healing. And yet, I was digging myself an early grave. It was embarrassing.

Even though I rationalized my weight by saying that my life of abundance—decadent food on a consistent basis, several soy lattes a day, wine each night—was a way to repay myself for the hard work I did, the truth was that I knew I was hurting myself. The even deeper truth was that I was *addicted*, and rationalization is the oldest tool of the addict. Even when the results from my physical came in and I was told, point-blank, that my weight and cholesterol were issues that I needed to pay attention to, I *still* rationalized. They weren't big concerns *yet*, I said, and I'd deal with them if and when they became issues.

As I stared down at my spinach pie, I couldn't help but wonder when exactly that moment would come and I would begin to take responsibility for my health.

Cassie, true to form, was now animatedly discussing the newest cashew cheese to hit the market. It's difficult to find more passionate foodies than a group of vegans. My dining mates and I had seen the dark, early days of bad vegan cheese, so we felt we were allowed a little over-the-top excitement on the matter.

I interrupted. “Hey, you guys?” I said, suddenly self-conscious, yet trying—as always—to seem unflappable. “I think I'll borrow that movie you mentioned, if that's cool. The one about being fat and sick?”

“Yeah, sure!” John beamed. “Pick it up from my office tomorrow.”

After I picked up the movie and went back to my hotel room and watched it—immediately, on my laptop, with Mariann beside me—everything came to a head. All of it—the lies, the sadness, the rationalization, the heavy heart, the sometimes misdirected anger at the world and at myself—it all culminated in one

surprisingly simple, subtle shrug.

“Let’s do this,” I said.

In retrospect, I am not sure precisely what I meant by “let’s do this.” It seems to me I was trying to say, “Let’s do a juice fast. Let’s lose weight. Let’s get healthy.”

But by “doing this,” I wound up committing to a whole lot more than I’d be able to grasp for years to come, and in some ways am still trying to grasp, and maybe always will be. It took losing nearly one hundred pounds for me to start to understand what I was, in fact, “doing.” And perhaps more importantly, what the world was doing to me.

The world was, I would later find out, interested in my size to a much greater degree than had ever occurred to me. Because it was only when I lost the weight and my body suddenly seemed to suit the narrow definition of “acceptable”—*slim, svelte, slight*—that I started to experience what it felt like to be propelled upward by the same society that had previously seemed to prefer that I just disappear.

Prior to that proclamation, “Let’s do this,” I would have told you that I already had a meaningful understanding of the food I ate and the way it affected me and the way it affected the world. I would have theorized that the reason I had always felt as if I was going up the down staircase was because I was offbeat, or because I was an individual thinker, not because I was fat and therefore deemed unworthy by society; not because I was a food addict who was battling shame issues as steadily as I was battling bullies. I ate and lived in a way that was in harmony with my worldview, and I loved that. That had been good enough for me, until suddenly it wasn’t. And when it wasn’t anymore, that was when something permanently shifted. That was when it became abundantly clear to me that simply eating in a way that avoided hurting others was never going to be enough if my eating habits were still hurting me.

So when I started shedding the weight and reclaiming my health, it was quite a shock to learn that, in order to truly live genuinely, I had to confront how I had been betrayed by a food industry that relied on my willful ignorance and by a society that relied on my undiscerning willingness to buy into its arbitrary notions of self-worth and beauty.

I see now that it was that dinner with my friends that was the turning point. It was the warm decadence and safe reassurance of the spinach pie—that suddenly didn’t seem so safe. It was John’s persistent vehemence that I just had to watch that documentary. It was Mariann gently squeezing my knee under the table, reminding me that I wasn’t alone, that she was beside me. That this was real. That I was real.

It was standing in a bathroom stall, unable to turn around because the walls were closing in on me. It was accidentally catching a glimpse of myself in that bathroom mirror, witnessing in real time my own vulnerability, my desperation, my heaviness. It was knowing in that moment that outside of the bathroom of that restaurant in that city was an entire universe—and in that universe, sure, there was suffering, there was betrayal, but there was also the possibility of so much more.

This was the game changer. This was my story, about to begin. Let’s do this.

TWO

a private affair

Long before I digested just how deeply food had betrayed me (and, chances are, betrayed you), I considered

it a friend. And not just a friend—but a soul companion, a trusted confidant. It wooed me, then saved me. (Or so I told myself.)

But then food ruined me. I began to obsessively lust after it, following it, against my better judgment, into dark alleyways and seedy corners. It was the stuff horror movies were made of: the unsuspecting, hungry dame (me) and the ill-intentioned, charming villain (my lunch).

Food was my guru, my lover, my sage. It seduced and defined me. And, ultimately, it deceived me.

There was a time, however, when it simply fed me.

—

I was completely ordinary, for the first and final time, when I was a little tiny kid living in the circle-shaped condo development known as Pumptown Corners, nestled in a small Anytown, U.S.A., called Edison, New Jersey. What I wore, who I loved, and what I ate were about as normal as blueberry pie.

Every activity in which I partook, every hobby I embraced, every passion I fostered, and every Slurpee I slurped was exactly what you'd imagine a middle-class suburban girl in the 1980s would spend her time obsessing about. On the weekends, I would wake up to the sweet smell of not-so-homemade Bisquick pancakes—my favorite—with margarine and without the gooey syrup I couldn't stand. I'd carefully cut my two perfectly circular and lightly browned pancakes into small, soft triangles, and, as I dangled my bare feet beneath me and hummed the theme to *General Hospital*, I'd take a few satisfying bites, then quickly throw on my tutu just in time to rush to the ballet class I took at the nearby university. My mother, a stunningly beautiful, svelte artist with a fervent love of fashion and a talent for preparing prepackaged food that had me thinking she was the next Chef Boyardee, would drop me off for my little kid lessons in how to plié.

My brother, Jeremy—four years my senior—was obsessed with the New York Mets (the eighties was a good time for that), and everything in his bedroom was blue and orange. We argued incessantly, eighties-style: I wanted to watch *My Little Pony* and he wanted to watch *Knight Rider*. I wanted to play Candy Land and he wanted to play Connect Four. I wanted elbow macaroni with margarine for dinner and he wanted pasta with cheese. Still, despite our sibling rivalry, Jeremy and I bonded over Twix bars, Nok Hockey, self-recorded radio shows, and watching the brand-new TV station known to the rad kids as MTV. Much of the music played on it was too old for me, but I longed for my brother's maturity and the "big kid" attention it got him, so I sat beside him while he sang all the words to videos like Tom Petty's "Don't Come Around Here No More." I was fascinated by the giant, life-sized Alice in Wonderland cake memorialized in the video and often dreamed of Mom making one for a special occasion. Surely there was a cake mix for that. I wholeheartedly believed in Mom's mixing skills.

The place we hung our Mets hats was forty-five minutes and a whole world away from New York, home to big fat pretzels with thick pebbles of salt just waiting to be licked off; we always picked these up first thing whenever we'd drive in to see a Broadway show, the absolute highlight of my rather idyllic existence.

In Pumptown, my best friend, Tamika, lived only a short bike ride away. When I stayed over at her house, her much older and wiser sister let us stay up to watch *Saturday Night Live*. The humor of it went completely above our heads, but we felt so cool being awake at eleven thirty that it didn't matter. We designated her parents' walk-in closet as our "clubhouse," and we'd hold important meetings that consisted solely of eating entire rows of crunchy Chips Ahoy.

Everything was charmingly normal. I was a freckle-faced brunette with crooked bangs and a side ponytail that sat sloppily atop my head. Punky Brewster was my style icon (admittedly, she might still be . . .) and my

self-chosen wardrobe consisted of what were to me thoroughly fashion-forward outfits ranging from a well-worn Strawberry Shortcake dress that Mom scored at a garage sale to bright fluorescent, purposefully paint-splattered T-shirts paired with shiny, hot pink spandex leggings.

Most weekends, Grandma and Grandpa would come over—an event I looked forward to with a monomaniacal intensity that surpassed even my deep fascination with Dr. Brown’s celery soda, Grandma’s go-to soft drink. I was certain that the highlight of Grandma and Grandpa’s week was seeing me, too, because when they walked in the door (six-pack of celery soda in hand), their eyes lit up, and they were instantly dying to know everything new about our worlds. I felt it was my duty not to leave any detail unreported, so I would sit on Grandpa’s lap or cuddle in Grandma’s warm, soft arms, and update them on what had happened that week on *Family Ties*, or the latest knock-knock joke I had learned from my ever-growing collection of joke books. They listened intently, asking the right questions, nodding at the right moments, and laughing with the perfect pitch of enthusiasm.

Grandma and I, in particular, had a deep connection that convinced me that soul mates are not reserved solely for romance. My very first memory is with Grandma—just sitting with her on a sunny day, on the back porch—and the overarching theme of that memory, and of all my memories with her, is that of safety. Her warm arms were safe. Her pastel house was safe. Talking to her was safe, free of judgment and mental clutter. Her love was dependable. It remained that way until the very end, and somehow—even though she died when I was thirty-four, leaving a gaping hole in my heart and my life—her love still gives me a sense of sanctuary. I clung to that as a child, when the whole world felt broken and upside down, and I still cling to it.

Grandpa, always the jolly, soft-spoken do-gooder, briefly had a volunteer job taking low-income people who didn’t drive to their jobs, and so he had access to this enormous van—the perfect vehicle to take my entire family out for ice cream sundaes in style. I’d get chocolate everything—chocolate ice cream, chocolate sprinkles, chocolate syrup—always in a cup, never a messy, breakable, undependable cone. I’d savor tiny bites and imagine that this was probably how Duran Duran felt all the time as I gazed out the window at my impressive wheels—and then I’d glance at my vanilla-mouthed grandpa, the chauffeur, who knew exactly how to make a four-year-old feel like the most special girl in the world.

My mother and father had gotten divorced, after being married for seven grueling years, when I was a year old and Jeremy was five. Their divorce was ugly and complicated, and now, thirty-five years later, it still is. My father was a charismatic and emotional man—a talented musician who insisted on being the center of attention whether he was at a small family get-together or a large-scale party. With him, everything was black or white, one extreme or the other, including people’s opinions of him.

Though my parents’ divorce was hostile, and tension from it ran like a low-lying electrical current throughout my childhood, even as a kid I knew that I was somehow lucky not to remember what it was like when they were a couple, as my brother did. We were often thrust into the middle of ongoing battles that my parents should have worked out in private, but the stories that circulated in my family about their screaming fights were haunting. I am sure that my brother’s firsthand recollections of them, as a young child, were scarring, and quite possibly the reason why he went through school with frequent suspensions and detentions. He was always getting into trouble.

I, on the other hand, at least in those early, idyllic years, was a well-behaved, easygoing child. After the divorce, we lived with Grandma and Grandpa for a while until my mother met Brock, my first stepfather. Brock represented everything that Dad did not: patience, even-temperedness, and gentleness. Brock—a

divorced man himself, with a daughter just older than Jeremy—was an English professor, banjo player, and train trivia expert. Mom and Brock had only been dating briefly when they decided to get married—an impulsive decision Mom probably made in hopes that Brock would provide the emotional stability that my father didn't, and that my and Jeremy's childhood frequently lacked.

That is when we moved to Pumptown—my flailing mother in search of consistency, my Mets-obsessed brother in search of home base, and me innocently in search of red Skittles. For a very brief time, we all found what we needed. Pumptown was normal; our life was easy. Mom promptly commemorated our new beginning by painting an enormous wall that ran beside our split-level stairs with a colorful and bold sunrise.

Brock was a caring and fun-loving stepfather. My early childhood memories of him are all tender and sweet. He and Mom had a nightly ritual of interlocking their hands, chairlike, and carrying me to my room, where they'd swing me onto my bed as I giggled uncontrollably and begged them to do it again. In Pumptown, my ballet lessons kept me busy, my Bisquick kept me fed, and my family kept me happy.

Sadly for me, their marriage, lackluster and passionless, lasted less than two years. From my point of view, their marriage couldn't have been better: Brock made an excellent stepfather. I was comfortable around him and often found solace simply sharing space in the room with him while we each busied ourselves with our own activities. He would sit cross-legged on the armchair and read the paper and I would sprawl nearby on the floor and play with my My Little Pony collection, my Legos, or my M&M's. It was a six-year-old's dream.

We were both at the kitchen table—me propped up a little by the phone book booster seat and Brock beside me—when I taught myself how to multiply by strategically placing my M&M's in rows. “Brock, is three times three nine?” I asked, wide-eyed, as I stared at my multicolored chocolate-shelled masterpiece. Brock was wildly impressed by my findings, and his exuberant validation resulted in an ear-to-ear smile that I could not shake for days. (I always knew that M&M's were magical.)

When Mom and Brock decided to call it a day, Mom couldn't stomach the task of breaking my heart, and so it was Brock who was saddled with the thankless job of telling me that their marriage had fallen apart. He sat me down on the big brown corduroy armchair in their bedroom—a resilient chair that later followed me to each of my many Manhattan apartments throughout my twenties.

He knelt down and I could see the big hairless circle on top of his head. “Your mom and I are splitting up, Jazz,” he whisper-said, and I remember feeling like I was kicked in the stomach, then promptly reminding myself that *breaking up is just what adults do*. I didn't protest; I simply hung my head in defeat and stared down at my lap, bit my lower lip, clutched at the material of my Strawberry Shortcake dress, and let sadness and confusion dull my fluorescence. Turned out that corduroy chair was more resilient than I was.

Just like that, Brock was gone, and Mom was single again. Pumptown Corners lost some of its sparkle, and a new emptiness seeped its way into my days.

—

Still, despite the rockiness of her relationships with men, my mother's love for Jeremy and me was consistent and all encompassing. Though it was my grandmother who provided me with steadiness, taught me about unconditional adoration in the very special way that only grandmas can perfect, and allowed me to eat all the chocolate-covered jelly rings I could manage, Mom was a solid force. She did not always have it easy—and yet she constantly put us ahead of everything else. Perhaps she did so to a flawed degree, but she was wild about us and always made sure to provide us with support and compassion.

When she was newly divorced from Brock, Mom took Jeremy and me on vacation. In my memory, we were living it up in the lap of luxury—playing board games, going hiking, eating American cheese sandwiches on soft bread, acting out funny characters that Mom constantly created in order to keep us entertained. I was an adult before I found out Mom’s version of that trip: that the only thing she could afford was to take us to stay at a rustic cabin at a Boy Scout camp, off-season, and the whole place was filthy, bug infested, and nonfunctional. She later told me about how she carried me on her back up the barn ladder that led to the sleeping area, then draped clean blankets all over the muddy, splintery floor. I didn’t remember any of that—I only remembered being absolutely ecstatic about having my mom and brother all to myself, in this mystical place that was apparently falling to pieces around me without me noticing.

Perhaps there’s validity to my memory of this trip being better than it actually was—I had my family to myself, which was all that mattered to me at the time—while my struggling mother remembers it as much worse. Someplace in the middle of those two memories is the truth, suspended somewhere in the mid-1980s like Punky Brewster’s messy pigtails, never to be untangled.

When we returned from our luxury vacation, I felt the absence of Brock, and of life-as-I-knew-it. In school, I longed for my moody second-grade teacher, Mrs. Poppet, to take notice and ask me what was wrong. I certainly wouldn’t have known how to answer, but I craved the question. Moodiness aside, she was, after all, a mother herself, so didn’t that make her a parental figure by default? I wanted an adult, maternal or not, to simply acknowledge my reality, that things had shifted for me in a big way.

One day, I convinced myself that if I scribbled nonsensically on my assignment, Mrs. Poppet would remove her permanent frown long enough to become concerned with my uncharacteristic gibberish, and she’d gently pull me over to the side to say, “Honey, is everything okay?”

Of course, that was not at all what happened. Instead, I got reprimanded for not following the rules and for “ruining a perfectly nice ditto.” I was given a second chance at the assignment. Sure that if I scribbled on it yet again Mrs. Poppet would get the hint, I tried the same trick a second time. This time, she became thoroughly exasperated, and so I was taken out of my class altogether and permanently placed in another one, where a different teacher could be saddled with my rebellious ways. So much for manipulation tactics. I forgot about my sadness and my need for attention when, on the first day in my new class, we made homemade butter and then promptly consumed it on crunchy French bread. It seemed I had struck gold. Two points for manipulation tactics.

I recently recounted this story to my mother, since, even in its retelling now, it seems to be missing a piece. What teacher would simply switch a seven-year-old student to another class for acting out in this relatively benign way? “I remember you switched classes,” Mom responded, when I brought it up to her, “but I don’t remember anything about scribbling on the report. The class change was, as I recall, due to a personality conflict between you and your teacher.”

Which begs the question: Why did anyone, least of all my mother, think it was normal for a teacher to have a “personality conflict” with a second grader? Changing classrooms changed my entire life in drastic ways, and yet the adults just didn’t seem to notice that I might be perplexed and even infuriated. So I did what kids everywhere do when their lives turn upside down: I sucked it up and mindlessly swallowed the new normal. With that, and just as mindlessly, I swallowed the bites of bread and butter that my new teacher, Mrs. Jones, foisted upon me with a smile and a wink. That wink seemed to say, “This will make it better.” And, like magic, it did.

There were a few other wrinkles that needed smoothing over as well. My mother and father were in a constant court battle for child support (Dad was consistently late with payments, sometimes not paying

altogether), and neither of them shielded my brother and me from their explanations of exactly why he or she was right, and why the other was a despicable human being who was unworthy of our devotion. Alternate weekends with my father were tense for me. There was never a comfortable accommodation for us in his house, and my mother and father differed so drastically in terms of parenting techniques that the excessive freedom I was given when I was with him (compared to the limits set by my overprotective mother) was jarring.

During one weekend trip to an amusement park town, Wildwood, my father let me and Jeremy go off by ourselves and told us to meet him back at the hotel later that night. The fact was he was probably going off to get a drink—or, more likely, several. Jeremy, annoyed by his pestering little sister, left me so that he could go ride some big-kid roller coasters. I somehow found my way back to the hotel and to our room, but then stayed up all night literally shaking with fear. I got through the night by closing my eyes tight and imagining my grandmother's arms wrapped around me.

Meanwhile, Mom moved on again. By the time she met Wayne, a quiet and tolerant engineer with a PhD that he never mentioned, who didn't own one pair of jeans (until my mother took him shopping), "divorce" and "remarriage" were becoming two very common words in my vocabulary.

Dad was also busy expanding my ever-growing roster of parents. He had recently gotten remarried to Muriel, a fiery and smart woman who zealously loved cats. Every present she gave me throughout the few years of their marriage was somehow feline themed—books about kittens, cat stuffed animals, sweatshirts with kitty ear patterns. She even baked cat-shaped sugar cookies, which I ate exuberantly. Muriel often told me she thought I was the cat's meow.

I guess I thought that having multiple parents was simply part of growing up, as common as Cabbage Patch dolls (mine was named Casey and had red hair to match Grandma's). The day Jeremy and I waited to meet Wayne, who would become our permanent stepfather, though we didn't know it yet, we busied ourselves playing Nok Hockey in the finished basement at Pumptown Corners. "I'm nervous," I told him. I was seven.

Jeremy sneered. "Why? It's just another one of Mom's dumb boyfriends." He then aggressively scored a goal while I was lost in thought—busy contemplating whether I should change into my Strawberry Shortcake dress, by now slightly too small for me but which I had already worn three times that week anyway. I decided against it, instead stopping our game early in order to grab a fistful of buttered popcorn that Jeremy had just microwaved—the perfect salty distraction.

A half hour and second bag of microwaved popcorn later, a tall, handsome-in-a-nerdy-way man, with a beard and mustache that hid his mouth almost completely, descended the basement stairs—and immediately demonstrated his good sense by presenting me with a ceramic clown doll, which to this day sits on my windowsill.

It was decided soon after that Mom and Wayne would get married and we would leave Pumptown Corners for yet another fresh start. I took one last look at my bedroom with the rainbow decal plastered onto the pink wall, and I cried inconsolably. Tears streaming, I rode my bike to Tamika's house for the final time and told her I'd see her around. We ate cookies in silence and sadness. It was our Last Supper. We decided to memorialize the moment by giving ourselves tiny cuts on our fingers and rubbing the wounds together—"Blood sisters for life," we whispered—and we agreed to continue to stay up late, even by ourselves, and watch *Saturday Night Live*.

I left Tamika's with a stinging cut on my finger and a gnawing sense that the safety of Pumptown would

never be replicated anywhere else. When I returned home with a puffy face, I found Mom and Wayne busy rolling white paint all over our beloved sunrise mural that decorated the big wall by the stairs, an image that just a few years prior had been symbolic of our fresh, sunny beginning. I secretly stood at the foot of the stairs and watched as the vibrant orange sun and its bright yellow rays disappeared. The wall was a grayish white now. It didn't belong to us anymore. Pumptown was slipping away, just as Brock had. The sun was gone and, though I didn't know it at the time, the chill I felt should have warned me that for whatever reason, my brief fling with feeling "normal" was over, too. I wouldn't get it back for a long time.

The following week, we moved to Anna Lane, to a yellow house with white shutters, on a freshly paved cul-de-sac, in a different part of Edison, with a different school. On the day we moved in, the four of us sat around a sturdy cardboard box in our new kitchen—we hadn't yet located the table—and brought in an extra-large double cheese pizza. It had been a long day of moving, and we were all hungry. As I sat dangle-legged on a flimsy folding chair, surrounded by a new iteration of my family, I rubbed my thumb over the spot on my pointer finger that I had pricked when Tamika and I became blood sisters just the week before. The spot was completely healed, which saddened me.

I could practically taste the absence of Tamika, and of the rest of my life that I had known so well. Suddenly, I became panic-stricken that I wouldn't fit in anymore—a fear that wound up coming true, in spades. The safety of Pumptown was gone, I had officially outgrown my beloved Strawberry Shortcake dress, and even though I wasn't yet eight years old, the newly formed chip on my shoulder made it clear that I was no longer a little kid.

My family all stared at me as I grabbed a third, and then a fourth piece of pizza.

I was, I realized then, absolutely ravenous.

It's amazing how clearly I remember that hot and crunchy pizza from thirty years ago. I see now that food, and the comfort it carried, had been slowly inching its way up in value for me, culminating in that piece of pie—and in the many other bites that began to etch the lines of my days. Food, up until around that point, had simply been what I ate. It did not yet define me. It did not yet provide me with the close companionship that I desperately craved. It did not yet give me the solace I required after a long day of being the new kid at school. It did not yet provide the relief I needed from gradually coming to feel that I was a circular-shaped peg trying to stuff myself into a tiny square hole. It was not yet my constant distraction, my unconditional source of love, my trusted confidant. Up until our move, food was just food.

That all changed—quickly and furiously—when we drove across town and landed on Anna Lane.

New kid. The very words have the ring of childhood misery. Being one, in the middle of the year in third grade, was not the kind of challenge I was ready for. Cliques had already been formed, the totem pole order of the class established. Looking at the situation from an adult sociological point of view, I suppose that having someone jump into a social group made up of children who are just reaching the age where group dynamics matter and bullying seems like a viable strategy is disorienting, not only for the newcomer, but for the other kids, too, who don't quite know how to make sense of this new variable that's suddenly in their way, taking up their space.

I was not the type of kid who could successfully negotiate this new social setting. I had suddenly become painfully shy, a new trait of mine that manifested when we moved. The other kids thought I was "retarded" because my eyes were so heavy lidded and because I didn't say a word, not to anyone—not even a simple "this is so totally rad" on the much-anticipated "J Day," when we were learning how to write *J* in cursive and

everybody had to practice by writing *Jasmin*. I was lonesome, and I longed for my old bedroom with the rainbow decal, the condo with the bright mural on the wall. I ached for familiar comfort.

Thankfully, there was one very obvious place I knew of where I could find that. And so it went that, during a time when I was feeling forlorn and disoriented—years before I deemed it my enemy—food became my new best friend.

The friendship had been forged that first day in the new house with the pizza, when I calmed my stomach and mood with the melty cheese, the thick, crunchy crust, and the feeling of security that can only come from fullness to the point of bursting. In one swift meal, full became my new normal, and I sought it with a fierce fervor. Fullness was reliable, I realized then. I could control it, and each time thereafter that my stomach ached from carrying too much food for one little girl's body, a sense of security and accomplishment spread to my limbs and heart, tingling and satisfying, blanketing me with a staggering sense of order.

Changes at school were simultaneous with big shifts at home, and there were bumpy times there as well. My mother decided that since they were getting married, it made sense for me and Jeremy to start to call Wayne "Dad," even though, of course, we already had one of those (even if she preferred to believe otherwise). I can now see that in her own way, her proclamation that Wayne was now "Dad" was emblematic that she, too, was desperately grasping for a sense of normalcy. But for me, that didn't work. I had to live in my world, not hers, and that world already had a "Dad."

For a while I acquiesced—figuring that Mom knew the rules of having a new family better than most, so calling your stepfather "Dad" surely must be an appropriate gesture. But when Jeremy began to protest Wayne's new label, I followed his lead, feeling what had become a very familiar sensation regardless of which of my angry and very vocal parents I happened to be with: that I somehow needed to come to the alternate parent's defense.

"But we already have a dad!" Jeremy yelled—and I echo-shouted, "Yeah! We already have a dad!" with my little arms crossed and my brow furrowed, proving that I meant business. Mom and Wayne just stared back at us blankly, knowing this was a sinking ship with no life preservers for them.

From that day on, we called Wayne "Wayne." The whole episode left me very uneasy, though, and Wayne became the victim of my angst. Such, I suppose, is the lot of stepparents. Projecting all my problems onto Wayne and acting like a spoiled brat probably started when I sensed Jeremy's frustration with him—a frustration that, in hindsight, I can see was almost certainly unfounded. So I, too, took out my angst and anger on Wayne, rather than on my parents or my classmates, and proceeded to spend the next decade doing everything I could to make him feel like scum.

I was the worst possible stepdaughter you could imagine. I would mumble choice insults at him just loudly enough for him to hear and just quietly enough for nobody else to. I would steal money from his drawer to buy Hershey's bars at the drugstore down the street, mimic him behind his back, and—in what I liked to think of as a unique and creative form of acting out—eat dinner with him at the table only if I was surrounded by a fort of cereal boxes, simply so that I could avoid looking at him and watching him eat. When my mother finally put her foot down and told me that I was no longer allowed to shield my spot with the cereal boxes, I covered my left eye, as if my hand were a visor, and stuck my thumb in my ear, because the last thing in the world I wanted was to hear or see Wayne consume food. That's not to say Wayne was a gross eater; I simply didn't want to share that space with him and resented that I was being forced to. So, unfortunately for Wayne, I became the rudest and brattiest possible dining companion. Wayne sat on my left, so—even though I'm left-handed—I taught myself how to eat with my right. Anything to keep my dinner a

private affair.

My anger at Wayne was unwarranted and unfair—he was, after all, an innocuous guy. More than that, he was good to me—always driving me to my playdates, making sure I had what I needed, and even taking the day off work to join Grandma and watch me in the school spelling bee (he even didn't seem to mind that I was the very first one out, adding an extra *l* to *deliver*). Still, looking back, it doesn't even remotely surprise me that I was desperately seeking a scapegoat—and an escape. I didn't know I was being unfair—I only knew how I felt. And it doesn't surprise me that these feelings reached their apex at the dinner table. For me, the act of eating was deeply intimate and personal—something that remained my own even when nothing else seemed to be—and I had no interest in sharing that activity with someone I had decided to hate. Mealtimes became joyless for my whole family, thanks to me—a time to manage my petulance and frustration.

Yet, through all my acting out, and when practically everyone else felt like my enemy, food replaced Tamika as my best friend for life. It was food and me against the rest of the world, and the rest of the world started with my family.

I found solace not only in being a complete bitch to Wayne, but also in something equally bad for my heart: eating cheese. Lots and lots and lots of cheese. We kept a breadbox stashed with crackers in the hallway between the front door and the kitchen—the perfect place for me to grab a box of Cheez-Its or saltines without anyone noticing so I could bring them upstairs to my pink, troll-infested bedroom and consume the entire box in blissful peace while watching *Growing Pains* or listening to *A Chorus Line*. If I was really lucky, and my mother was busy placing a phone order with QVC, as was her daily habit, I could sneak into the kitchen and quickly snag the Easy Cheese to create the most delicious, cute little swirl for my perfect cracker square.

As the year went on and I slowly started to recognize that my family's makeup was indeed atypical—a reality that slapped me across the face when my father and Muriel split up, and I knew I'd never get a worthy cat tchotchke again—I took a step back and tried to honestly assess my family.

I suppose that becoming more objective about your family is some kind of normal developmental step. But for me at the time, that assessment simply revealed the obvious fact that I had an unusual number of parents. Another fact that I had never before noticed suddenly became crystal clear to me: My mother was remarkably beautiful. I began to wonder if I would ever forgive her for it.

I had always suspected that she was elegant. But, after the first parent-teacher meeting at my new school, when my fourth-grade teacher mentioned to me how gorgeous my mother was, I realized that my hunch was correct. She was not only ravishing, she had a killer figure, too—and as my teacher's frequent comments about “what an attractive mother I had” proved, she was a real head-turner. The great lengths she took to get there should have tipped me off.

Mom's morning routine mystified me. I would often sit on the corner of her bed and watch as she delicately applied her makeup—slightly bronzed cheeks with emphasis to the upper cheekbones; forest green eye shadow with tiny little chestnut brown wings penciled on just above her lash line; rosy lips, precisely lined and filled in like the work of a true artist, which Mom was. She would gently lift and tease her short, stylish auburn hair, and I would silently observe—taking in her precise technique, while mindlessly snacking on a sleeve of saltines as I watched the show unfold before my eyes.

I licked the salty top of a crisp cracker as Mom widened her eyes and applied a dark coat of mascara. I delicately nibbled while Mom just as delicately degunked a corner of her eye. My new grown-up teeth chipped away at the rest of the cracker, going clockwise, while Mom strategically dabbed her grown-up perfume on her pulse points. My cracker was gone, as were Mom's skin blotches—magic!

I didn't know whether I should be proud of my gorgeous mother or ashamed that my own looks paled in comparison. And perhaps most confusing to me was how separated Mom seemed to be from her beauty. She was always unhappy with her reflection, always striving for a perfection she couldn't seem to find. This was especially true when it came to her body, even though to look at her, there was no denying that her figure was what the world considered ideal, the perfect shape to display the most form-fitting fashions.

In a fascinating illustration of simple physics, as Mom—or, as I liked to refer to her, my “TM,” for “Thin Mother”—dieted, I ate more. And as Mom criticized her body, her perfect shape, I began to notice my own imperfect one. I didn't yet hold the deep-seated hatred of my body that would manifest in just a few years, but even as a little girl, I started to wonder why hers was hard and mine soft, her stomach flat and mine lumpy. I didn't understand why she was seemingly satisfied eating a tiny, cardboard-encased diet TV dinner, while my robust blackened cheeseburger with steak fries, and canned peas with margarine (to get my veggies in), was never nearly enough. Add to that my inability to share a normal meal with Wayne, and, in retrospect, I can see the emergence of my convoluted relationship with food and my body. Eating became a private affair for me, as often as I could manage.

—

That was about the time that I began eating my bagged lunches in the privacy of a bathroom stall at school.

My TM always packed me little notes telling me she loved me and encouraging me to do well that day. And so my reassuring notes and I sat on the toilet lid while I ate our sandwich, which was generally filled with bologna as well as my beloved cheese. Many years later I learned that bologna is a product that the USDA insists must be “comminuted,” or reduced to minute particles, so that you can't recognize the flecks of lard in it. You might as well call it “lard paste” and save the term “baloney” for the marketing that convinced my mom that this so-called food would give kids a healthy, compact meal when in fact it probably would have been nutritionally preferable to eat actual paste. But at the time, it was welcome company, comminuted or not.

As I became less the new kid and more just the different one, and my classmates reacted to my presence with a mix of acceptance (not to be confused with approval) and perplexity, I slowly left my shyness behind. By fourth grade, I spoke up when I had things to say. When a newer, younger girl was being teased on the playground, I screamed at the perpetrators and defiantly hung out with the new kid. She appreciated my effort to stand up for her, but soon enough realized that I was a pariah—not the girl you wanted to form your social circle around.

Once uncool, always uncool, and it seemed my reputation preceded me. I was already considered unworthy and unattractive. Damned was the dodgeball team that got me on it—I was their wart, and the other team brought attention to that fact whenever possible.

Food was my salvation and my companion. It was the piece of me that came along when I left Pumptown Corners for Anna Lane. It was an intimate extension of my thoughts, my moods, even my body—Smarties were commonly stuffed into the pockets of my bright orange Windbreaker, Twinkies in the small pocket of my backpack, Twizzlers slipped up my sleeves. Food was safely situated in the cabinets of my father's house when I would sneak into the kitchen late at night. It was scrupulously stocked in the breadbox of my house on Anna Lane, where I could easily and quietly take my share, or more than my share. Food knew me, and

knew it had a hold on me.

And in spite of everything else that I was unsure of—my burgeoning body, my unfamiliar family, my unseemly father, my damaged reputation—I knew food.

Oh, how preciously and precisely *I knew food*.

THREE

there are no small parts, only fat actors

I was seriously going to pee in my pants. *Why did I have that extra Coke at lunch?* Something had to be done, or my classmates would have an actual reason to make fun of me. I hesitantly raised my hand, asked to please be excused, then braced myself for the worst eight seconds of my day—the exact amount of time it took for me to walk from my desk to the classroom door.

I stood up, and the first of what would coincidentally be eight insults (one for each second it took me to get to the front) was hurled.

By Margaret. I should have known. Margaret was your classic definition of beautiful—a fact not lost on her, or on any other of my fifteen-year-old classmates. That day, it was she who started the coughing fit—a ritual my classmates reserved just for me—complete with a crescendo of fake throat-clearings that hid inside of them words and phrases like “Fatso,” “Fatty,” and “Fuck you.” Lizzie, Melinda, and Stacey quickly joined in, poorly disguising their insults (cough, cough, *whale* . . . cough, cough, *pig*). Everyone seemed to be in on it—except the teacher, that is, who ignored their taunting, which was easier for him than dealing with it. He kept his head down and his mouth shut as he reviewed the imminent homework assignment—and as I began my walk of shame to the front of the room to grab the bathroom key.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Vance Malik:

Reading a book being new life style in this yr; every people loves to examine a book. When you study a book you can get a large amount of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, since book has a lot of information onto it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your review, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself look for a fiction books, this sort of us novel, comics, as well as soon. The *Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir* provide you with new experience in reading through a book.

Marian Perkins:

Many people spending their time frame by playing outside together with friends, fun activity having family or just watching TV all day long. You can have new activity to shell out your whole day by reading a book. Ugh, you think reading a book can actually hard because you have to take the book everywhere? It ok you

can have the e-book, taking everywhere you want in your Smart phone. Like Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir which is finding the e-book version. So , try out this book? Let's observe.

Lisa Knight:

Do you like reading a e-book? Confuse to looking for your best book? Or your book ended up being rare? Why so many concern for the book? But almost any people feel that they enjoy regarding reading. Some people likes examining, not only science book and also novel and Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir or even others sources were given knowledge for you. After you know how the good a book, you feel want to read more and more. Science reserve was created for teacher or even students especially. Those publications are helping them to include their knowledge. In additional case, beside science book, any other book likes Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir to make your spare time much more colorful. Many types of book like here.

Adrienne Helms:

Many people said that they feel weary when they reading a publication. They are directly felt it when they get a half regions of the book. You can choose the particular book Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir to make your current reading is interesting. Your skill of reading skill is developing when you like reading. Try to choose very simple book to make you enjoy to study it and mingle the impression about book and reading through especially. It is to be very first opinion for you to like to open up a book and learn it. Beside that the book Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir can to be your friend when you're feel alone and confuse with the information must you're doing of these time.

**Download and Read Online Always Too Much and Never Enough:
A Memoir By Jasmin Singer #1EFG0NSZQJU**

Read Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer for online ebook

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer books to read online.

Online Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer ebook PDF download

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer Doc

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer Mobipocket

Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer EPub

1EFG0NSZQJU: Always Too Much and Never Enough: A Memoir By Jasmin Singer