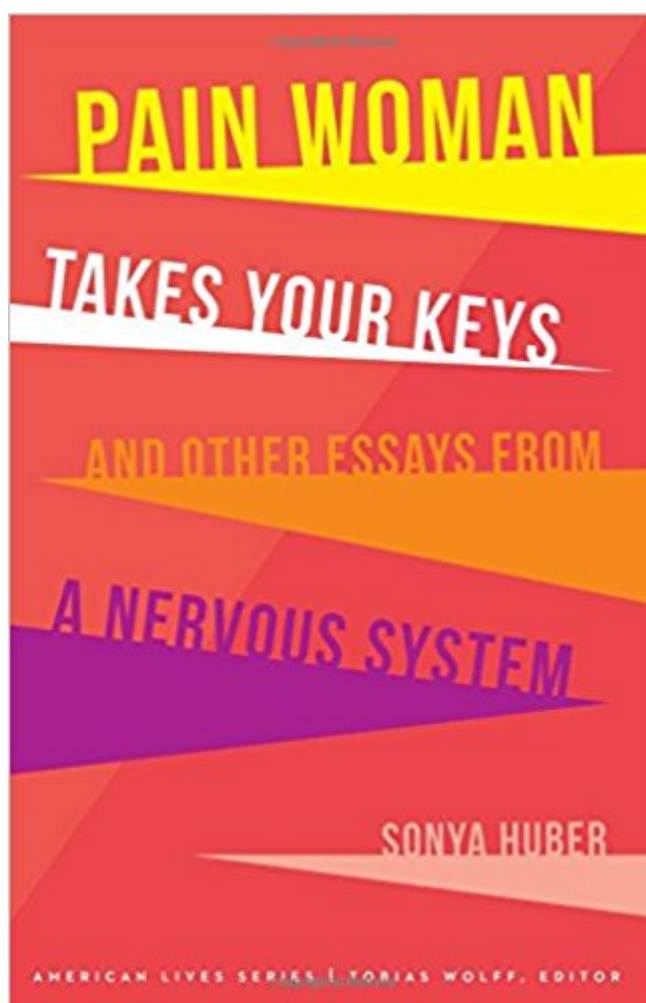


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# Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, And Other Essays From A Nervous System (American Lives)



## Synopsis

Rate your pain on a scale of one to ten. What about on a scale of spicy to citrus? Is it more like a lava lamp or a mosaic? Pain, though a universal element of human experience, is dimly understood and sometimes barely managed. *Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, and Other Essays from a Nervous System* is a collection of literary and experimental essays about living with chronic pain. Sonya Huber moves away from a linear narrative to step through the doorway into pain itself, into that strange, unbounded reality. Although the essays are personal in nature, this collection is not a record of the author's specific condition but an exploration that transcends pain's airless and constraining world and focuses on its edges from wild and widely ranging angles. Huber addresses the nature and experience of invisible disability, including the challenges of gender bias in our health care system, the search for effective treatment options, and the difficulty of articulating chronic pain. She makes pain a lens of inquiry and lyricism, finds its humor and complexity, describes its irascible character, and explores its temperature, taste, and even its beauty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The theorist Elaine Scarry, in her magnum opus *The Body in Pain*, writes, 'The utter rigidity of pain itself is that its resistance to language is not simply one of its incidental or accidental tributes but is essential to what it is.'" One can see Sonya Huber's *Pain Woman Takes*

Your Keys, and Other Essays from a Nervous System” as a glorious refusal of what Scarry puts forth. With ardor and valor, Huber renders the lived experience of chronic pain and all that attends it in a language all her own, written--as she so wonderfully phrases it--using ‘pain’s alphabet.’ These essays make imprecision their enemy as they comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” Pain Woman” further establishes Sonya Huber as one of the most exciting voices writing creative nonfiction today.” --Vincent Scarpa, Electric Literature” “Huber uses pain as a lens through which she examines” disability, gender bias, motherhood, and the very basic condition of living in a body....The lyricism and poetry-prose hybrid continues throughout the book, interspersed with narrative reported pieces, humorous anecdotes, and sharp social commentary. [An] honest, wise, and droll book.”-Gila Lyons, Bitch Media, Jan. 25, 2017”Meditative, intimate essays consider the experience of suffering....Frank, thoughtful reflections that should resonate with the 47 percent of Americans reported to be living with chronic pain.” Kirkus, Nov. 21, 2016”If this isn’t the book that we in the pain community need in 2017, I don’t know what is.” •Matt Mendenhall, Pain-Free Living Magazine (Matt Mendenhall Pain-Free Living Magazine)”The theorist Elaine Scarry, in her magnum opus The Body in Pain, writes, ‘The utter rigidity of pain itself is that its resistance to language is not simply one of its incidental or accidental tributes but is essential to what it is.’ One can see Sonya Huber’s Pain Woman Takes Your Keys, and Other Essays from a Nervous System as a glorious refusal of what Scarry puts forth. With ardor and valor, Huber renders the lived experience of chronic pain and all that attends it in a language all her own, written—as she so wonderfully phrases it—as using ‘pain’s alphabet.’ These essays make imprecision their enemy as they comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Pain Woman further establishes Sonya Huber as one of the most exciting voices writing creative nonfiction today.” •Vincent Scarpa, Electric Literature” (Vincent Scarpa Electric Literature)”“Sonya Huber works magic by articulating the indescribable. With her” lyrically written and witty account, she better describes her own pain experience than a patient rating scale of 1 to 10 ever could.” •Paula Kamen, author of All in My Head” (Paula Kamen 2016-09-08)”“This is an important book, a necessary book, a book that, in the right hands, could change how our medical establishment deals with pain. These essays are at once vulnerable and fierce, funny and smart, unflinching and dappled with stunning metaphor.” •Gayle Brandeis, author of Fruitflesh” (Gayle Brandeis 2016-09-08)”“Huber has captured what it is to be a woman who lives with chronic pain in all its nuanced complexity.” •Sarah Einstein, author of Mot: A Memoir (Sarah Einstein 2016-09-08)

Sonya Huber is an associate professor of English at Fairfield University. She is the author of *Opa Nobody* (Nebraska, 2008), *Cover Me: A Health Insurance Memoir* (Nebraska, 2010), and *The Evolution of Hillary Rodham Clinton*.

I discovered Sonya Huber when she initiated plans for the virtual Disability March in January. When I found an advanced reader copy of her book of essays called *Pain Woman Takes Your Keys* on Netgalley, I didn't hesitate. I sent a request to receive one. That was one of the best decisions I've made in a while. Sonya's work is on a whole other playing field. Her writing is visceral, yet tender. She says early on that she hopes that the book isn't depressing since she had so much fun writing it. I felt a lot of emotions as I read the book. Not one of them came anywhere close to depression! These are all previously published, but I thought the unique structure added to the power of each individual essay. Not only do we get the power of her experience, she is well-read in the field of pain. I added several books to my to-be-read list to explore others' experiences with pain more deeply. One of the ways she lives in the midst of pain is called "pain selfies" to help her love her self in pain. I love the way she talks about buying and using her cane. I felt similar emotions when I started walking with my cane and can relate to her feelings of vulnerability when her cane spoke silently of "all they [others] cannot see." I thought asking people to send her stickers to make her cane "a joyful explosion of adhesives that draws more attention and brings more joy than an anonymous metal pole." My favorite part of the book is when she tells us about herself as a writer and how pain affects her writing voice. "Pain Woman has stuff to tell you, and she has one minute to do so before she's too tired." She talks about how we need to listen to ourselves as we swim in our multiple voices. We have to wrestle with what we hear, which might not match our idealized versions of ourselves. There's more that she describes as part of her experience as a writer who experiences pain, but I want you to read it for yourself. This book was everything I expected it to be and even more. Read it. You won't be disappointed.

The night my copy arrived, I stayed up so late reading Sonya Huber's new book *PAIN WOMAN TAKES YOUR KEYS*, and oh god, it's gorgeous. Whether you've experienced daily or weekly or almost no pain, this book is about everything: humanity, love, joy, expectation, loss. Read it. To quote, "welcome and blessings. welcome and blessings."

I love this book by Sonya Huber. It is sexy and witty and wise. I spent a cold March Friday night

reading this book, and I loved every minute of it. If you think you know pain, you don't. If you think you know humanness, you don't. Read this book!!

I always love Sonya Huber's writing--poetic, witty, sardonic, wise. With this book, she's your Virgil as she takes takes you into the nine (or more) circles of chronic pain. As the back cover copy advises, this is not simply a personal memoir of pain, but an exploration of pain as a medical experience, as a feminist issue, as a family member, as a poem, as a political act. It should be read by patients, doctors, and....everyone else.

what an amazing book and an incredibly talented writer!! I am so glad to discover her and her wonderful books!! This book has already given me so much comfort and hope just knowing someone else shares my experience and can articulate it so beautifully!! Highly recommended!

"Pain Woman has stuff to tell you, and she has one minute to do so before she's too tired." I hate that the writer is in pain, but Pain Woman has a line on the truth we need to hear and doesn't let go. An honest and wonderfully varied collection of personal essays.

I loved this book so much. I want to read more similar to it, but haven't been able to find any. As someone with chronic pain, it was refreshing to read something that I could relate to. It was funny and emotional. I would love to read even more. Will definitely be reading parts of it again and again when I need something to relate to. Pain personified as a strange being with its own wants and needs was an interesting aspect of the book.

I don't usually take the time to write many reviews, even though I read a lot of books, and a lot of health/pain related ones. This collection by Sonya Huber blows everything else out of the water - beautiful writing, not a pity party by any means but a honest fresh look at what it means to live in chronic pain and function as a woman/worker/mother. So pleased to have found a collection like this; I will be recommending it to other fellow pain sufferers.

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