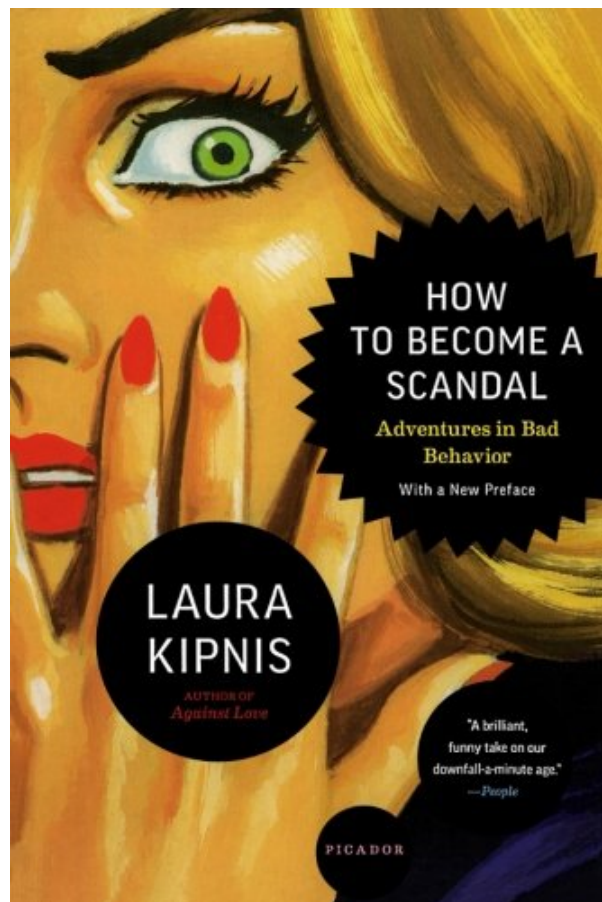
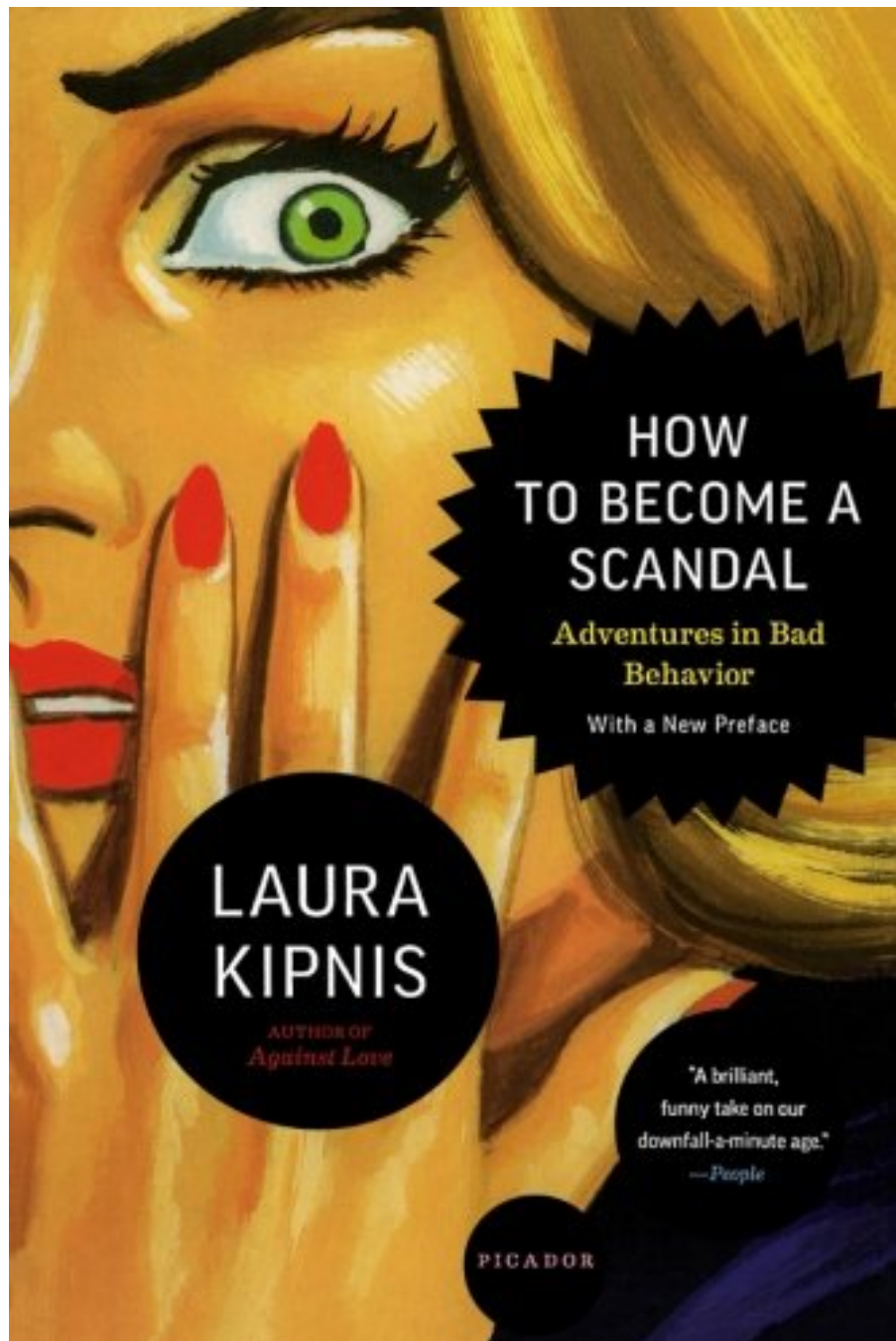


HOW TO BECOME A SCANDAL: ADVENTURES IN BAD BEHAVIOR BY LAURA KIPNIS



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A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice

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surprisingly boring

By Ladybug

I have read and enjoyed some of Laura Kipnis' other work, including *Against Love* and *The Female Thing*. I was excited to read *How to Become a Scandal*. I am surprised to say, though, that the book was actually very boring. There were definitely funny moments, but, for the most part, Kipnis was not able to contribute anything new, insightful, or even interesting to the four well-known, already overly talked about scandals she addresses. Kipnis may have benefited from a bit more editing, but, as it is, the book felt sprawling, aimless, and just plain disappointing.

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Not What I Was Looking For. . .

By D. Matlack

I live in a small community and the most startling aspect is how common increasingly bad and general shocking behavior occurs. It is as tho' negative attention is truly better than no attention at all and this actually has me curious.

"How to Become a Scandal" is filed under sociology and psychology which is misleading. Laura Kipnis is actually a professor of Radio/TV/Film and tho' she often references the likes of Freud and she is quite honest and upfront in her angles. She is discussing topics that capture 'her' attention and interest, not because they offer in significant solutions, credibility, or intellectual stimulation in the field of irregular mental behaviors. Nope! Ms. Kipnis is very honest and upfront in her true intentions: She just wants to dish.

The entire book is based on her own conjecture and speculations as to why these four very specific individuals were motivated to do what they did. It is not a particularly educated treatise or even based on actual psychological analysis so I really didn't find out what I was hoping to learn. In fact I wound up getting so depressed over Ms. Kipnis ongoing salacious flagellation of these, admittedly warped souls I was unable to finish.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An often insightful look at the tragi-comedy of scandal

By Elizabeth A. Root

I am assuming that the reader of the review can read the description of the book, so I won't spend too much time on that. The main subjects of the book are four: Lisa Kowak, the astronaut famous for her confrontation with a romantic rival; Sol Wachtler, former Chief Justice of the New York State Court of Appeals who harassed a former lover; Linda Tripp who manipulated Monica Lewinsky and revealed her affair; and James Frey, fantasist memoir writer.

I don't think this quite deserves blurber Jacob Weisberg's description as cultural criticism of the highest order, but with one caveat, I enjoyed the book and found it thought-provoking. Reading about the self-destruction of most of the people cited herein, I couldn't help thinking about my own self-destructive and foolish impulses, one's inability to see oneself as others see us, and the fragility of self-insight. The scandals are explored in some detail, which is much more satisfying than reading about bits and pieces, especially since some of these unfolded over a fairly lengthy period of time. The information is also sourced, which raises the reliability above the scandal magazines, or someone just trying to throw together a quickie book that sells. Kipnis makes some interesting points along the way, she is witty, insightful, and sometimes compassionate. I personally love this sort of tragi-comedy, which is not going to be to everyone's taste. Someone who enjoys it might also like Jennifer Wright's *It Ended Badly: Thirteen of the Worst Breakups in History*

Criticism tends to get longer than praise, so I don't want the following to detract too much from my praise of

the book. I thought Kipnis got a bit off-track with her section on James Frey and Oprah Winfrey. Let me say that I have a bit of a soft spot for Winfrey since I remember her from when she was on WJZ, so I've always been happy that she did well. I wouldn't consider myself to be a fan, since I've seen her show perhaps three times and we don't exactly share a world-view. I tend to assume that if Oprah recommends a book, I am NOT going to enjoy it, though I admire her for promoting reading. Hence I never read James Frey's so-called memoir until it became a scandal and I wondered what the shouting was about. And if I had read it before, I wouldn't have understood what was so redemptive about an addicted obnoxious jerk becoming, at least briefly and quite possibly temporarily, a clean obnoxious jerk.

In this section of the book, Kipnis mostly abandons her stance as observer to become an advocate: "I may be the only American who felt bad for him ..." Well, no, as comments on *The Smoking Gun* and Amazon show, but the "everybody's doing it" schtick that runs through the chapter is a feeble justification. I don't think that the use of literary techniques in writing it is a sufficient tipoff either. I will accept that even conversations in quotes are reconstructions, but the author is walking a fine line and needs to be careful about putting words in other people's mouths. If something is billed as a memoir, I will be suspicious that there are may be self-serving omissions, but I don't accept outright lies. After reading it, and reading about it, I am inclined to think that it isn't 95% true as Frey claims, but more like 5% true. If he got away with behaving anything like he claims at the rehab center, it can't be a well-run place, in addition to all the lies that *The Smoking Gun* found.

Other people write "memoirs," but admit that they have novelized the material, and I don't have a problem with that if they have a disclaimer. Jacob Tomsky's (Thomas Jacobs's) *Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hustles, and So-Called Hospitality* includes the disclaimer:

"To protect the guilty and the innocent alike, I have deconstructed all hotels and rebuilt them into personal properties, changed all names, and shredded all personalities and reattached them to shreds from other personalities, creating a book of amalgams that, working together, establish, essentially a world of truth. I mean, damn, I even change my own name."

I feel like I learned a lot more about the hotel business from Tomsky than I learned about anything from Frey.

Kipnis's reluctance to hold Frey responsible for his deceptions gives me pause about her own work, although it least she has some documentation, and it sure makes me wonder about Nan Talese's operation. It brings up a point that I don't think Kipnis considers in her work: sure, you can do what you want and break the rules, but at your own risk. If you decide that you don't take into consideration what other people think, don't be surprised if they decide that they don't think well of you.

To counter the criticism of Frey, Kipnis presents Oprah as another "self-mythologizer," but I think it misfires. Winfrey, as far as I know doesn't present actual lies about herself, and if Kipnis knows any different, she doesn't say so. She is funny when she describes Oprah, in her second encounter with Frey on her show, as a wrathful demi-goddess, but her discussion of Oprah's weight issues really doesn't work as a counterpart to Frey's fictitious memoir. That isn't a real scandal, although the scandal rags that claim that Jennifer Anniston has been pregnant multiple times or that George W. Bush was going to leave his wife for Condoleezza Rice may try to make it one. Even if one disapproves of Oprah's talk show, indiscreet confessions aren't the same as lying.

I thought the whole approach is represented by Kipnis's discussion of Oprah's first name, which was supposed to be Orpah. She has a footnote telling us that Orpah was an obscure Old Testament character,

sister of Ruth, daughter-in-law to Naomi, mother to Goliath, promiscuous woman, etc. What sort of parents would saddle their child with such a name? What were they thinking? she asks. Wait a minute, I thought. I remember the Ruth and Naomi part, but I certainly couldn't remember the rest of the wild tale. That's because it's not in the Bible, it's in rabbinic literature, which I doubt Oprah's parents were familiar with, so that whole analysis is silly.

As I said, the criticism got a bit long, but I really did enjoy the book as a whole, and it is interesting to think about the points Kipnis made, so I recommend it to readers who find such things interesting.

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With "pointed daggers of prose" (*The New Yorker*), Laura Kipnis examines contemporary downfall sagas to lay bare the American psyche: what we desire, what we punish, and what we disavow. She delivers virtuoso analyses of four paradigmatic cases: a lovelorn astronaut, an unhinged judge, a venomous whistleblower, and an over-imaginative memoirist. The motifs are classic—revenge, betrayal, ambition, madness—though the pitfalls are ones we all negotiate daily. After all, every one of us is a potential scandal in the making: failed self-knowledge and colossal self-deception—the necessary ingredients—are our collective plight. In *How to Become a Scandal*, bad behavior is the entry point for a brilliant cultural romp as well as an anti-civics lesson. "Shove your rules," says scandal, and no doubt every upright citizen, deep within, cheers the transgression—as long as it's someone else's head on the block.

Amazon Exclusive: Tina Brown, Editor-in-Chief of *The Daily Beast*, Reviews *How to Become a Scandal*

A brilliant curtain-raiser on exactly why it's so delicious to watch self-destruction, *How to Become a Scandal* is a must-read for anyone unable to look away from another's fall from grace. Laura Kipnis argues that it takes two to make a scandal and cuts through the tangled relationship between the scandalized victims and us as the voyeurs, noting that the audience is equally to blame for whipping up such frenzy. A thoughtful and juicy take on familiar targets (Linda Tripp and the NASA love triangle among them), Kipnis sees what we all do: some scandals are just thinly veiled self-sabotage. And the best stories aren't self-contained; they're far-reaching, full-blooded dramas, complete with a cast of characters who overtake the global stage. Of course, scandal's an all-inclusive monster, but a bigger star and more disturbing details make for an even better flameout. Kipnis astutely points out that the ceremonial shunning of whistleblowers, plagiarists, and cheaters is cathartic and neatly packages something amorphous: why America jumps on the wagon all over again each time someone violates social mores with lust and betrayal and jealousy. Reading her clever book is like sitting in a front-row seat at *Scandal Theory 101*—and serves as a cautionary tale for those tiptoeing on the edges of indignity. Revisiting the denouements of James Frey, Sol Wachtler et al is a strangely elegant

exercise in how to crash, burn, and ultimately survive. *How to Become a Scandal* is as transfixing and engrossing as the tremendously chaotic tales she recounts with exacting detail.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Two very public downfalls and two very public uproars guide us through the contemporary infernal regions of scandal: the downfall of the lovelorn astronaut, Lisa Nowak, and an unreasonable judge, Sol Wachter, and the uproar set off by Linda Tripp and James Frey. Familiar as they may be, Kipnis (*Against Love*) freshly illuminates her subjects' plights, while scrutinizing the public delight in their misfortune, wearing her learning so lightly that the reader is easily seduced by her quick wit and her camouflaged erudition. Kipnis ties psychoanalysis and reality TV, detectives and literary critics, talk show hosts and sociologists, along with the scandalizers and the scandalized into a persuasive bundle: Scandals aren't just fiascoes other people get themselves embroiled in while the rest of us go innocently about our business, she argues. e all have crucial roles to play. A deliciously flippant tone serves the reader the juicy details we savor so about scandal, while tossing in some timeless questions and speculations about the deeper meaning of it all (free will, moral luck, the stranglehold of desire, the difference between right and wrong) as though they were mere garniture. This is a dead serious book that's an utter lark to read.

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Review

"Scandal has never had it so good. . . In *How to Become a Scandal*, Laura Kipnis delivers consumers of high and low culture that rare twofer, taking material that self-respecting people are supposed to resist and treating it with such smarts that the reader feels nothing short of enlightened. Her book is filled with sensational subjects, but Kipnis delivers all the thrills." ?The New York Times Book Review

"A brilliant, funny take on our downfall-a-minute age." ?People

"Informative and extremely witty." ?Chicago Tribune

"Kipnis expertly rebuilds the tension of each case, unraveling the details of her subjects' downfalls so methodically that I held my breath....She treats her subjects with great humanity and an empathetic there-but-for-the-grace-of-God reverence." ?The Washington Post

"A must-read for anyone unable to look away from another's fall from grace. . . . Reading her clever book is like sitting in a front-row seat at Scandal Theory 101--and serves as a cautionary tale for those tiptoeing on the edges of indignity. . . . *How to Become a Scandal* is as transfixing and engrossing as the tremendously chaotic tales she recounts with exacting detail." ?Tina Brown, *The Daily Beast*

"Thrilling. . . Hypocrisy, hubris, and self-delusion are delightful intellectual tangles in Kipnis's hands." ?Bookforum

"Thought-provoking examination of scandals past and present. . . with the benefit of this provocative book, we can now understand why [scandals] will continue as long as human society exists." ?The Buffalo News

"Highly entertaining and wickedly smart." ?The Oregonian (Portland)

"A deliciously flippant tone serves the reader the juicy details we savor so about scandal, while tossing in some timeless questions and speculations about the deeper meaning of it all. This is a dead serious book

that's an utter lark to read." ?Publishers Weekly, starred review

"Those who think they are playing to an unseen audience often find that they are abruptly on stage without a stitch. Why do they need this validation and why do we so much enjoy providing it? In *How to Become a Scandal* Laura Kipnis investigates the dirty habits of the heart and illuminates the secret places of the psyche, speculating brilliantly and amusingly about the trouble to which people will go to get themselves exposed." ?Christopher Hitchens, author of *Hitch-22*

"Laura Kipnis is scarily smart and enviably funny, and with *How to Become a Scandal* she emerges as a Tocqueville for the age of Gawker. You'll never read Page Six in the same way again." ?Rebecca Mead, author of *One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding*

"Read Laura Kipnis's new book if you're hoping to become the object of a media feeding frenzy. Read it if you're hoping to avoid one. This is cultural criticism of a high order." ?Jacob Weisberg, author of *The Bush Tragedy*

"An extremely smart, funny, acid, and beautifully written meditation on a scary truth that we all try desperately to ignore: we are deeply divided animals, and we are drawn to the creation of our own demise." ?David Shields, author of *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*

"Excruciatingly fascinating and as fun to read as all the tabloid fodder we pretend we're not following, *How to Become a Scandal* deftly reveals our halls of infamy to be halls of mirrors. Laura Kipnis has written another fabulously intelligent book." ?Rivka Galchen, author of *Atmospheric Disturbances*

"In the future, historians will have to read *How to Become a Scandal* if they want to understand this bizarre century. Laura Kipnis writes about the central conflicts in our society, the great comedies of manners, with the profound wit and broad sympathy that we used to find only in ambitious novels." ?Michael Tolkin, author *The Return of the Player*

"Laura Kipnis has the rare ability to keep her wits about her even as she treads into areas where most nice people would not go. As Kipnis so astutely observes, each epoch gets the scandals it most needs, but at their root is just the inexorable, inexpungible, humiliating fact of being human." ?Keith Gessen, author of *All the Sad Young Literary Men*

"A brilliant original analysis of our culture's addiction to scandal. Kipnis illuminates her subjects with such wit and perception that she raises the art of critical writing to new heights. Brava." ?Patricia Bosworth, author of *Marlon Brando*

The means to obtain this publication *How To Become A Scandal: Adventures In Bad Behavior By Laura Kipnis* is really easy. You could not go for some locations and also invest the time to only locate guide *How To Become A Scandal: Adventures In Bad Behavior By Laura Kipnis* As a matter of fact, you could not constantly get the book as you're willing. But below, only by search and discover *How To Become A Scandal: Adventures In Bad Behavior By Laura Kipnis*, you can get the lists of the books that you actually anticipate. In some cases, there are many books that are showed. Those books obviously will astonish you as this *How To Become A Scandal: Adventures In Bad Behavior By Laura Kipnis* compilation.