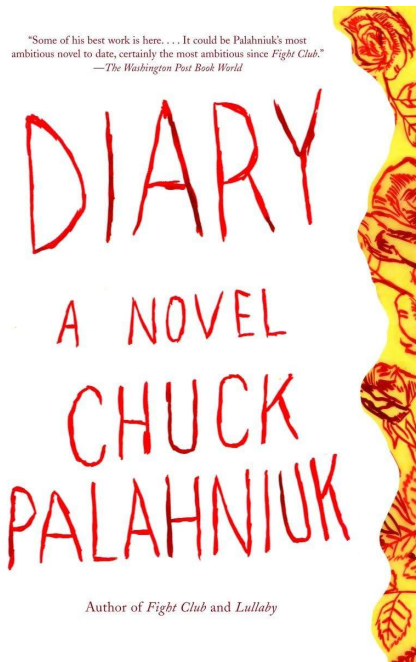


Diary: A Novel



Book Summary

A psychological horror/satire novel that takes the form of a "coma diary" written by a struggling artist. As she sits by her comatose husband's bedside, she uncovers a dark conspiracy orchestrated by the secretive island community she now inhabits.

Summary of Concerns

This book contains; alcohol/addiction, alternate gender/sexual ideologies, anxiety, blackmail, body horror, controversial cultural, gender, religious and social commentary, dark content, death/grief, deception, derogatory terms, depression, deviant content, divination, drugs, dubious consent, emotional abuse, mental illness/madness, murder, oppression, psychological manipulation, potential patently offensive content, profanity, poisoning, sexual activities/nudity, smoking, suicide (implied), toxic relationships, and violence.

New Adult

By Chuck Palahniuk

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CONTENT WARNING

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Adults Only

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52	<p>And Peter shook his head a little bit, grinning at the floor. He chewed his bottom lip. He looked around at the few people left in the gallery, his eyes narrow, and he looked at Misty and said, "You promise you won't be grossed out if I show you something?" She looked back over her shoulder at her friends; they were off by a picture across the room, but they were watching. And Peter whispered, his butt still against the wall, he leaned forward toward her and whispered, "You'll need to suffer to make any real art." Just for the record, Peter once asked Misty if she knew why she liked the art she liked. Why is it a terrible battle scene like Picasso's Guernica can be beautiful, while a painting of two unicorns kissing in a flower garden can look like crap. Does anybody really know why they like anything? Why people do anything? There in the gallery, with her friends spying, one of the paintings had to be Peter's, so Misty said, "Yeah. Show me some real art." And Peter chugged some of his beer and handed her the plastic mug. He said, "Remember. You promised." With both hands, he grabbed the ragged hem of his sweater and pulled it up. A theater curtain lifting. An unveiling. The sweater showed his skinny belly with a little hair going up the middle. Then his navel. The hair spread out sideways around two pink nipples starting to show. The sweater stopped, Peter's face hidden behind it, and one nipple lifted up in a long point off his chest, red and scabbed, sticking to the inside of the old sweater. "Look," Peter's voice said from behind, "the brooch pins through my</p>
53	<p>nipple." Somebody let out a little scream, and Misty spun around to look at her friends. The plastic mug dropped out of her hands, hitting the floor with an explosion of beer. Peter dropped his sweater and said, "You promised." It was her. The rusted pin was sunk in under one edge of the nipple, jabbed all the way under and coming out the other edge. The skin around it, smeared with blood. The hair pasted down flat with dried blood. It was Misty. She screamed. "I make a different hole every day," Peter said, and he stooped to pick up the mug. He said, "It's so every day I feel new pain." Looking now, the sweater around the brooch was crusted stiff and darker with bloodstain. Still, this was art school. She'd seen worse. Maybe she hadn't. "You," Misty said, "you're crazy." For no reason, maybe shock, she laughed and said, "I mean it. You are vile." Her feet in sandals, sticky and splashed with beer. Who knows why we like what we like? And Peter said, "You ever hear of the painter Maura Kincaid?" He twisted the brooch, pinned through his chest, to make it glitter in the white gallery light. To make it bleed. "Or the Waytansea school of painters?" he said. Why do we do what we do? Misty looked back at her friends, and they looked at her, their eyebrows raised, ready to come to the rescue. And she looked at Peter and said, "My name's Misty," and she held out her hand. And slow, Peter's eyes still on hers, he reached up and opened the clasp behind the brooch. His face winced, every muscle pulled tight for a second. His eyes sewed shut with wrinkles, he pulled the long pin out of his sweater. Out of his chest.</p>
72	<p>Here's Francisco Goya, poisoned by the lead in his bright paints. Colors he applied with his fingers and thumbs, scooping them out of tubs until he suffered from lead encephalopathy, leading to deafness, depression, and insanity. Here on the page is a painting of the god Saturn eating his children— a murky mix of black around a bug-eyed giant biting the arms off a headless body. In the white margin of the page, someone's written: "If you've found this, you can still save yourself."</p>
117	<p>The stomach cramps hit, and Misty was sweating. Her head spiked in pain with every heartbeat. Her guts shifted, and she couldn't drop her underwear fast enough. The mess splashed around her shoes and against her legs. The smell gagged her, and Misty pitched forward, her open hands against the warm grass, the little flowers. Black flies found her from miles away, crawling up and down her legs. Her chin dropped to her chest, and a double handful of pink vomit heaved out on the ground</p>

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140	<p>Angel's snapping pictures while Misty opens the portfolio on the sofa. When she takes out her pill bottle, her hand's shaking so much you can hear the capsules rattle inside. Pinching a capsule out of the bottle, she tells Angel, "Green algae. It's for headaches." Misty puts the capsule in her mouth and says, "Come look at some pictures and tell me what you think." Across the sofa, Peter's spray-painted something. His black words scrawl across framed family photos on the wall. Across needlepoint pillows. Silk lampshades. He's pulled the pleated drapes shut and spray-painted his words across the inside of them. You have. Angel takes the bottle of pills out of her hand and holds it up to light from the window. He shakes the bottle, the capsules inside. He says, "These are huge." The gelatin capsule in her mouth is getting soft, and inside you can taste salt and tinfoil, the taste of blood. Angel hands her the flask of gin from his camera bag, and Misty gulps her bitter mouthful. Just for the record, she drank his booze. What you learn in art school is there's an etiquette to drugs. You have to share. Misty says, "Help yourself. Take one." And Angel pops the bottle open and shakes out two. He slips one in his pocket, saying, "For later." He swallows the other with gin and makes a terrible gagging face, leaning forward with his red and white tongue stuck out. His eyes squeezed shut.</p>
154	<p>The curtain is pulled shut around Peter's bed. Inside it, you can hear the rushing sound of the respirator pumping air. You can hear the soft blip of his heart monitor. You can hear the faint tinkle of something Mozart from his earphones. Misty throws back the curtain around the bed. An unveiling. An opening night. And Misty says, "Be my guest. Ask him anything."</p>
155	<p>In the middle of the bed, a skeleton's curled on its side, papier-mâché in waxy skin. Mummified in blue-white with dark lightning bolts of veins branching just under the surface. The knees are pulled up to the chest. The back arches so the head almost touches the withered buttocks. The feet point, sharp as whittled sticks. The toenails long and dark yellow. The hands knot under so tight the fingernails cut into bandages wrapped to protect each wrist. The thin knit blanket is pushed to the bottom of the mattress. Tubes of clear and yellow loop to and from the arms, the belly, the dark wilted penis, the skull. So little muscle is left that the knees and elbows, the bony feet and hands look huge.</p>
173	<p>For lunch, Paulette brings up more food Misty doesn't eat. Already the leg cast feels loose from all the weight she's lost. Too much solid food would mean a trip to the toilet. It would mean a break in her work. Almost no white is left on the cast, Tabbi has covered it with so many flowers and birds. The fabric of her smock is stiff with slopped paint. Stiff and sticking to her arms and breasts. Her hands are crusted with dried paint. Poisoned. Her shoulders ache and pop, and her wrist grinds inside. Her fingers are numb around a charcoal pencil. Her neck spasms, cramping up along each side of her spine. Her neck feels the way Peter's neck looks, arched back and touching his butt. Her wrists feel the way Peter's look, twisted and knotted. Her eyes taped shut, her face is relaxed so it won't fight the two strips of masking tape that run from her forehead down across each eye, down her cheeks to her jaw, then down to her neck. The tape keeps the orbicularis oculi muscle around her eye, the zygomatic major at the corner of her mouth, it keeps all her facial muscles relaxed. With the tape, Misty can open her lips just a sliver. She can only talk in a whisper.</p>
184	<p>The Essenes, Dr. Touchet says, lived away from the regular world. They trained themselves by enduring sickness and torture. They abandoned their families and property. They suffered in the belief that immortal souls from heaven were baited to come down and take a physical form in order to have sex, drink, take drugs, overeat. Essenes taught the young Jesus Christ. They taught John the Baptist. They called themselves healers and performed all of Christ's miracles— curing the sick, reviving the dead, casting out demons—for centuries before Lazarus. The Jains turned water into wine centuries before the Essenes, who did it centuries before Jesus. "You can repeat the same miracles over and over as long as no one remembers the last time," the doctor says. "You remember that." The same way Christ called himself a stone rejected by masons, the Jain hermits had called themselves logs rejected by all carpenters.</p>

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192	Misty was still talking, talking, talking, but this was days later, in gallery after gallery. This was in a museum, with her painting of a tall stone church pasted to the wall between a Monet and a Renoir. With Misty sitting on the cold floor straddling Peter between her legs. It was late afternoon, and the museum was deserted. Peter's perfect head of black hair pressed hard on the floor, he was reaching up, both his hands inside her sweater, thumbing her nipples. Both your hands. Behavioral psychologists say that humans copulate face-to-face because of breasts. Females with larger breasts attracted more partners, who insisted on breast play during intercourse. More sex bred more females, who inherited the larger breasts. That begat more face-to-face sex. Now, here on the floor, Peter's hands, his breast play, his erection sliding around inside his pants, Misty's thighs spread above him, she said how when William Turner painted his masterpiece of Hannibal crossing the Alps to
193	slaughter the Salassian army, Turner based it on a hike he took in the Yorkshire countryside. Another example of everything being a self-portrait. Misty told Peter what you learn in art history. That Rembrandt slopped his paint on so thick that people joked you could lift each portrait by its nose. Her hair hung heavy with sweat down over her face. Her chubby legs trembled, exhausted but still holding her up. Dry-humping the lump in his pants. Peter's fingers clutched her breasts tighter. His hips pushed up, and his face, his orbicularis oculi, squeezed his eyes shut. His triangularis pulled the corners of his mouth down so his bottom teeth showed. His coffee-yellowed teeth bit at the air. A hot wetness pulsed out of Misty, and Peter's erection was pulsing inside his pants, and everything else stopped. They both stopped breathing for one, two, three, four, five, six, seven long moments.
213	With the steak knife, Misty starts hacking again. Hacking and half asleep, she stabs her calf muscle. The blood floods out, dark red against her white, white skin, her leg sealed inside too long. Misty hacks again and stabs her shin, the blade going through thin skin, stuck into the bone. Still hacking, the knife throws blood and splinters of fiberglass. Fragments of Tabbi's flowers and birds. Bits of her hair and skin. With both hands, Misty grabs the edge on each side of the split. She pries the cast open until her leg is half out. The ragged edges pinch her, biting into the hacked skin, the needles of fiberglass digging.
222	Somebody drugged him and left him in the car with the engine running, shut in the garage for Misty to find. Somebody didn't know about the suitcase, packed and ready in the trunk for his getaway. They didn't know the gas tank was half empty.

Profanity & Sexual or Derogatory Terms	Count
Ass / Jackass / Asshole etc.	13
Bitch	5
Breast / Tit	19
Dick	1
Fuck, Fucked, Fucking etc.	44
Penis	3
Piss	16
Shit / Bullshit etc.	32
Slut	1
Sacrilegious & other offensive language usage	Count
Damn	1
God / God damn etc.	19
Hell	7
Christ	2