



# Nine and a Half Weeks: A Memoir of a Love Affair

*Elizabeth McNeill*

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## **Nine and a Half Weeks: A Memoir of a Love Affair** Elizabeth McNeill

The powerfully erotic memoir that inspired the legendary film with a forward by bestselling novelist Francine Prose. *Nine and a Half Weeks* is a true story so unusual, so passionate, and so extreme in its psychology and sexuality that it will take your breath away.

Elizabeth McNeill was an executive for a large corporation when she began an affair with a man she met casually. Their sexual excitement depended on a pattern of domination and humiliation, and as their relationship progressed they played out ever more dangerous and elaborate variations on that pattern of sadomasochism. By the end, Elizabeth had relinquished all control over her body — and her mind.

With a cool detachment that makes the experiences and sensations she describes all the more frightening in their intensity, Elizabeth McNeill deftly unfolds her story and invites you into the mesmerizing and dangerous world of *Nine and a Half Weeks* — a world you won't soon forget.

## **Nine and a Half Weeks: A Memoir of a Love Affair Details**

Date : Published January 4th 2005 by Harper Perennial (first published 1978)

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Author : Elizabeth McNeill

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# **From Reader Review Nine and a Half Weeks: A Memoir of a Love Affair for online ebook**

**boogenhagen says**

This one is interesting. The story of a "New Woman" in the 1970's having an extreme power exchange affair that breaks a lot of social and moral limits.

Some parts of it are brutal, but the woman is clearly enjoying herself and enjoying the release she gets from not having to live up to what she built for herself in the 'real world'.

I get that, this lady was super successful in her job in a time when women were still being told to go to college to get a MRS not a MBA.

As all things that start with a conflagration do, this one ended when the lady ended up not being able to keep her fantasy love affair and her real life compartmentalized.

The lady has a nervous breakdown and we are told her lover drops her off at the hospital, where she undergoes treatment and that is the end of the affair and the story.

What is more interesting to me, besides the power dynamics the lady is so entranced with, is how many people assume her lover abandoned her at the end of the book.

I don't think he did. I think she was the one who ended the affair, probably based on the fact that any psychologist would have diagnosed the woman as having a mental illness at that time period and that probably caused her to conclude that to keep her 'real life' going, she would have to give her big love up.

To me the book reads like an eulogy to a deeply regretted choice, the choice to give up what really made her happy to satisfy the outward appearance demands of a world that clearly wouldn't condone what really made her feel free and fulfilled.

I do believe she had regrets, but the regret was she bowed to convention and society and therefore lost what probably was the best experience of her life.

Given that the author of this book committed suicide several years later and wrote under a pseudonym so her daughter wouldn't suffer any backlash, I feel a deep sense of sadness for the lady who was so clearly devastated by the after effects of her affair.

I also wonder what would have happened had her whole experience taken place today, in a much more tolerant society where S/m devotees aren't written off as psychologically ill deviants and there is more information about safe, sane and consensual relations, as well as there being a lot less stigma about being in that type of relationship.

It has been many years since I read this one, but this book has made a lasting impression as a reminder that there is always different strokes for different folks and just because something isn't your cuppa, it doesn't mean you should judge others for their particular brand of tea.

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## Loederkoningin says

A potent antidote to the straightforward romances I've been reading lately. What is this madness! I vow that from now on I'll intersperse my junk food with layered, intense, thought-provoking lit from authors that are comfortable enough to leave interpreting their story to their readers.

I immersed myself in *Nine and a Half Weeks* with the same reckless abandon the narrator threw herself in a brief but all-consuming affair thirty years earlier. A word of caution first: both Francine Prose and the publisher apparently have no notion of what a foreword entails. You're not supposed to grossly spoiler the upcoming story for your unsuspecting reader in your, although excellent, musings. Shameful.

With her *sisters'* hard-won battle for equality fresh in mind, "Elizabeth" (a pseudonym for Ingeborg Day, whose real identity wasn't disclosed until much later) published this brutally honest memoir of her sadomasochistic affair with an unnamed man. A heady experience at first, cathartic even, before becoming increasingly intense and destructive. It must have been a slap in the face for some to read a woman describe *"the nighttime rules decreed that I was helpless, dependent, totally taken care of. No decisions were expected of me, I had no responsibilities. I had no choice. I loved it. I loved it, I loved it, I loved it, I loved it"*.

An avalanche of BDSM romances hadn't yet flooded the market at the time. FSOG didn't exist yet (those were the days!). And although I suppose you can sense the echoes of Anais Nin's work (and I now wonder if Annie Ernaux' *Simple Passion* was inspired by this, she uses similar style elements, though her story is tame and, dare I say, bland, in comparison), never before had a successful middle-class, but above all, a woman written so frankly about sexual obsession. She caused a sensation.

There are, of course, multiple ways to perceive *Nine and a Half Weeks*. You can choose to think of this as a plain and simple story of abuse, a school example of violence against women even. You can write off her partner in obsession as a perverted fuck, or her as a troubled lady with a, no doubt, murky childhood. Personally, I like to view their affair as a disturbingly fascinating once in your lifetime experience. The author wasn't one of those people who stare longingly at their temptations from afar and, when offered a chance at adventure, shy away from the heat and live to regret it. To hell with it!, this woman thought. She danced, leaped, right into that all-consuming fire. And the outside world ceased to be.

*"The reality of my days was replaced by surface equanimity and a blandness to the core. My lunches bland, going past me unnoticed, mingling bland and friendly talk with bland and friendly people (...) The nights were palpable and fierce, razors, outlined so clearly as to be luminous. A different country, its landscape and currency plain: heat, fear, cold, pleasure, hunger, glut, pain, desire, overwhelming lust."*

Beautiful.

I think it's important to take the backdrop against which *Nine and a Half Weeks* was written into account. That being said, Elizabeth's memoir has lost none of its intensity over the years. I adored the author's ability to reveal and confess without unpeeling all the layers of the story. Her time spent with *him*, forever a mystery, she describes in elegant, at times poetic, prose that manages to be both tantalizing and detached. More than anything, I loved how she offers no explanations, no excuses for what transpired. She must have heard the judging voices of her future readers in her head, yet she refuses to acknowledge them or be self-conscious about her memories, instead delivering her *Nine and a Half Weeks* in 120 pages that are devoid of

justifications.

Forgive me for rambling on about this! This story made me realize how often writers spell out how you are supposed to perceive their work, leaving little to the imagination. I'm tired of being manipulated into reaching the conclusions authors want me to reach.

Ingeborg Day committed suicide in 2011 after having been ill for several years. Her main motivation for publishing *Nine and Half Weeks* under the pseudonym Elizabeth McNeill was not the content of her memoir, but the fact that she had a young daughter. She didn't want to drag her with her into the expected ensuing controversy and excitement.

I have questions, yes! I'd love to be able to discuss these things with other readers. If only more than two of my friends had read this book!:p

No matter how shiny, do not click the spoiler if you haven't read the book yet.

Warning: confused 2 AM ramblings.

(view spoiler)

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**Karlyflower \*The Vampire Ninja, Luminescent Monster & Wendigo Nerd Goddess of Canada (according to The Hulk)\* says**

Buddy-read with the lovely Heather coming up ~~approximately September 23 (depending on the Canadian postal services)~~ Monday, September 15 :)

## **Review**

*A conscious new power: vulnerability, perverse if only because it is total, natural as grass nonetheless, or asphalt in New York*

**There is an art to surrender...**

And it isn't always pretty or simple.

The prose of *Nine and a Half Weeks: A Memoir of a Love Affair* is shocking in its bluntness. It is almost as though McNeill removed herself to write it. Her words are like drops of wax on the page, finite and absolute. This is not a story one soon forgets.

I admit, I find myself vexed that it found its way into print in 1978!

This memoir is as different as it gets from feel good "Mommy Porn" like FSoG - which I am reading shortly to formulate a cohesive opinion of. Although, I would encourage any person seeking to explore that sexual world to first read this memoir, if only to come to terms with how simple it is to get lost in your own surrender.

It is so easy for the scales in pain/humiliation play to topple over. In fact, I would argue that it is almost a natural course of events. One that has to be fought and controlled to maintain balance.

*the difference between pain and pleasure became obscured in a way that turned them into two sides of a single coin*

**However**, it can be exceedingly erotic in controlled doses. Pain is grounding whilst pleasure is non-sensical, in this way a measure of pain intermingled with a sexual act can become like a railroad tie centering you into reality.

One quick note: **DO NOT** read Francis Prose's foreword **BEFORE** the memoir it is full to the brim with spoilers!!!

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## Licha says

3.5 stars

Not my usual stuff to read but I love the movie. I had no idea this was a book, much less that this was a memoir written in the 70's under a pen name.

The book was very hard to put down. I was up until four in the morning reading this knowing I had to get up by seven. I definitely felt like I needed a cold shower after this one. It was hard not picture (the young) Mickey Rourke ~~and myself~~ as I read this. But somewhere down the line, this relationship started to feel a little uncomfortable. The author was losing complete control of herself and the choices she made. It was sexy to a point, but when this man requires you to be handcuffed every night to the table, to the bedpost, to the sink...when is it overkill? He starts requiring her to steal something from a store but when he scoffs her for the wimpy way she stole the item he pushes her to assault and rob someone in an elevator. I would imagine a relationship like this would get boring real soon and the players would have to up the ante every time. This is what ends up happening. The stakes start getting higher, the demands more humiliating. What more can this relationship be based on after that?

The book was written in a very detached way that added to the tension felt throughout the book. I thought it was the perfect style for this story. The reader is like a spectator, not there to make judgement, but to question themselves how far they would let this relationship go if they were in the author's place.

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**Allison ♥?Will Never Conquer Her TBR♥? says**

**DNF at 12%**

Picked this up as a .99 sale. I classic written in 1978. Just not capturing their connection. Really struggling here!

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**Rag says**

**No rating**

This book was not what I expected. Don't get me wrong I knew this was a memoir, but when it finally set in that this actually happened to somebody, I felt uncomfortable. I couldn't enjoy it nor dislike it, I just wanted to finish it and get it over with. I was confused as shit half of the time, and the writing wasn't all that great either. It was long and had some unnecessary things. It also took me long to finish because I wasn't looking forward. It also made me question,

Why do we read books?

And the answer to that was to escape life's bitchness. To have at least a couple hours in dreamland. And because this was actually someone's life and problems....

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**warhawke says**

**Genre:** Erotic Memoir

**Type:** Standalone

**POV:** First Person - Female

**Rating:**

Elizabeth McNeil was a professional career woman who had a mundane sex life until he met a man who forced her to breach her own hard limits. He seduced her into the world of sadomasochism and made her

begged for more. But how far is too far in her quest of sexual revelation?

I first came across this book when it was mentioned as depressing type of book. I've never watched the movie version of this so I didn't know what to expect. And this was also the first memoir I've read.

***On my knees, my head on my arms, sounds from my throat that I can't interpret: neither fear nor longing but the inability to distinguish between the two.***

Elizabeth (real life Ingeborg Day) quickly learned that she enjoyed being in an anonymous relationship and exploring the darker side of sex. Every day she allowed him to push her more and more outside her comfort zone, making her drunk with the thrills.

He, who was not named, was an enigma. One moment he was sweet (in his own way) and incredibly attentive to her wants and need, the next moment he was a cruel, impassive sadist.

***My body had nothing to do with me. It was a decoy, to be used whichever way he decided, toward the end of exciting us both.***

Their relationship was mutually beneficial for the most part. I love seeing his cruelty, some which was probably done simply for his sick amusement. And it was fascinating watching her submission.

However, I had a hard time trying to decide how I like this book or not. When I think of it as a memoir, this book was impactful as these things actually happened to a real person. I could only imagine how she allowed herself to be treated.

But when I think of it in term of general appeal and its "entertainment value", it was lacking. I had hard time getting into the feel. It took me almost to the last 30% for it to really grab my attention.

Partly it was due to technical issues. The sentences were long, ran on and disjointed. The paragraphs were also very long. And the formatting was distracting (like for the dialogues). When I read a book, I like them to be "clean".

Also, the writing was very clinical while some parts were unnecessarily detailed. There were minimal descriptions of the characters and their background, making me had a hard time feeling for them. As a reader, I want to feel for the characters; no matter they're real or fictional.

So basically, in term of the underlying story, this book has substance but it's lacking emotions. It could have been something that would blow me away if only they were merged better.

Nine and a Half Weeks chronicled the ups and down of a real woman's life during the period of her BDSM affair and the impact it left after it was over. It was raw look into the lifestyle when fairytale is taken out of the equation.

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## mark monday says

woman as wind-up toy, lalalalalala not listening.  
passion as cold-blooded ritual, lalalalalala not listening.  
upscale lifestyle detail porn, lalalalalala not listening.  
let's go shopping, lalalalalala not listening.  
a sexy abusive relationship, lalalalalala not listening.  
gorgeous prose, lalalalalala not listening.

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## DoctorM says

I first read "Nine and a Half Weeks" long ago--- long before the film with Kim Basinger and Mickey Rourke. I was a brand-new undergraduate, and the first part of the book was excerpted in Playboy. I sat in my rooms at university stunned and amazed. I'd already read "Story of O"; I knew that s/m existed and knew about its allure. This was...different. It was darker than "O.", far more obsessive and intense, far less distanced and measured. I knew I had to go out and get a copy of the full book.

All these years later, I still know nothing about the author, or about how seriously we're to take the claim that this is a memoir. But I do know that as soon as I read the first line--- "The first time we were in bed together he held my hands pinned down above my head. I liked it." ---that I was entranced. The prose is spare, crisp, hard. The mood is of course one of deepening obsession. In some ways it's about a self-destructive affair that engulfs both McNeill and her nameless lover, but in other ways...it's deeply, shatteringly romantic and enticing.

Yes, I know--- the film. Easy enough to laugh at these days, though John Taylor's song on the soundtrack is excellent, and the young Kim Basinger was seriously hot when stripdancing to Randy Newman. The film takes away from the book, from the darkness and obsessiveness. But there was a time in the mid-'80s when every girl I knew was left wet-and-breathless by some of the scenes.

I love moments in the book--- McNeill going through her lover's closet, analysing him from his clothes; the first time her lover slaps her during sex; McNeill dressing up as a boy for her lover and mugging a stranger at knifepoint to prove her own abandon and courage. There's a moment where her lover takes her to an English riding shop and shocks the saleswoman by trying out a riding crop on McNeill's bare thigh (right--- like *that* would ever be unusual in a high-end riding gear shop in NYC!) that's just...incredible. Let's just say that the riding crop scene prompted phone calls from girls and feverish checking out the Yellow Pages under

"equestrian"... And that the scene where McNeill dresses up as a boy for her lover (suit and fedora) prompted trips to Goodwill with leggy co-eds. Yes, then: let's just say that the book is incredibly hot. Let's make a note of that.

The book itself is originally from 1978. A different world now. For all that we're so "open" about sex, for all the mainstreaming of s/m imagery, we'd be far less able to see a book like this published now. This is a DSM-IV world, a gender studies world. Obsession and compulsion have been stripped of any glamour, even dark glamour. That a successful, thirty-ish professional might lose herself in an affair like this would now be something for therapists to moralise over and for feminists to become angry about. Oh, I can hear all the arguments about consent and "self-respect" and violence and "subjectivity". I can hear all of that. I can hear the voices saying that McNeill needed help, that she'd obviously suffered from some childhood trauma and been brought up in a society where "rape culture" is normal, yadda yadda yadda.

But let's also say that this is one of the Hot Reads I've kept with me in different editions all through the years. It's a fine read, and romantic in more ways than I can say. Go find it. Read it. Yes--- it's about as hot (coldly intellectually hot as well as pure-raw-sex hot) as it gets...

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## JaHy?Hold the Fairy Dust says

\*\*\*\*\* 4 "I want 9 more weeks " STARS\*\*\*\*\*

...and this is one of those times.

This book.. O.M. G. THIS MEMOIR !! . If you think you know Ingeborg Day's story because you've seen the movie; YOU DON'T. Nine and a Half Weeks the novel is **I-N-S-T-E-N-S-E**. Right from the start I found myself saying "WTF, I don't remember that being a scene in the film." I almost gave up on the damn book because it was tarnishing the image of my beloved Mickey Rourke... **No**, not the botox, botched face lift, hair plugs Mickey Rourke of today..

This guy-->

.... anyway, as I was saying.. The 9 1/2 lustful weeks between **Elizabeth and John** on paper does NOT sugar coat, romanticize, nor gloss over their sordid love affair. My emotions were all over the place while reading. One minute I'd be internally screaming to Elizabeth "Run you stupid cow !" Then 2 minutes later I'd be talking under my breath " You lucky heifer." I wanted to kick John in the balls at the start of the book, BUT a few pages later the ~~Mickey~~ charming, doting, oh so tempting John I remembered from the movie appeared ( and then some ) and I wanted to **\*\* add verb here\*\*** said nuts.

If were to ask me which I prefer, I honestly couldn't answer you. 9 x's out of 10 the book is clearly the winner but in this case they both left me sad and in need of a stiff..... drink !

*\*\*if you haven't seen the movie here's a "R rated" sneaky peeky... <http://youtu.be/XqGjzBQ5RKo> <--- contains nudity . \*\**

~ Aloha!

## Robin says

I could say I read this book because I'm curious about literary erotica (earlier this year I read Anais Nin's *Delta of Venus*, now I'm reading Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*), but if I'm going to be honest, it's all because of him:

Oh baby. Mickey Rourke in the 80s, that's what it's all about. And before you interrupt, *yes, I know what he looks like now*. It's one of the great tragedies of the 20th century. But shhhhhh, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about this:

Mickey Rourke in *9 1/2 Weeks* and David Bowie in *Labyrinth*, they taught 90s me so much. But I'm getting a wee bit off topic here... this is supposed to be a book review, after all.

When this book arrived in the mail, it was extra exiting to see it was shrink-wrapped, just like my copy of *American Psycho*. I thought, gee, there must be some hot stuff in these pages, if publishers have to protect innocent eyes with a layer of plastic. I prepared for my cheeks to burn, my pupils to dilate, for returning again and again to dog-eared pages and delightfully naughty passages.

*My body had nothing to do with me. It was a decoy, to be used whichever way he decided, toward the end of exciting us both.*

But, weirdly, none of that happened for me. The novella, which is close enough plot-wise to the Adrian Lyne film version (minus the food sex scene and cheesy Joe Cocker striptease), is told in such a flat voice. It felt dead. The author tells the story of her doomed romance with an unnamed man - a romance which is based on their ever-intensifying sadomasochistic relationship. She becomes more and more his object, and they get up to some violent, strange stuff. Edgy, provocative. But it's detached, almost clinical in its description. I found myself thinking, yes, yes, bondage, yes, yes, abdication of power, but when is it gonna get *sexy*?

What I liked about it is the intelligence behind the writing. This ain't no *Fifty Shades*, friends. The author depicts the pain and claustrophobia of the relationship so well. It makes one think about how any relationship can become obsessive. How dangerous it can be when the fine line between giving yourself and losing yourself is crossed.

I also liked that it is a woman's account. Written 40 years ago, it continues to stand out as a female confessional, where *her* boundaries are the ones analysed, and her lover's identity is so unimportant he could almost be any man. So, that is cool too. Too bad it failed to light flames in this reader. It's tougher than you'd think, to compete with 80s Mickey Rourke.

(I think I'm still learning about what "literary erotica" means. So far, it's been a baffling, elusive animal. Still, a fascinating chase.)

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### **Stylo Fantome says**

[It is SO DIFFERENT from the movie. The movie always hinted at there being heavier BDSM happening in their relationship, but you never reall

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### **Lala says**

I love this book so much. It's so depressing and sexy and foul and totally engrossing. I rarely read books and go, "Goddamn, why can't I meet someone who will dress me in boys underpants, make me pack a cock and then bitchslap me around?" I guess I'm probably missing the point of this nuanced look at a self destructive romance.

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### **Delee says**

Sexy book alert!!!

Anyone who knows me, knows I am frigid and heartless. ;)

I am NOT an erotic novel fan- I like sex outside my reading materials- and I lack a fantasy reading life. Barf to Outlander...Double barf to 50 Shades of Grey type books- but this...this is something I can sink my teeth into. Thank you Karly!

Sooooooooooooooooo very long ago- when I was crushing on the whooooooole Diner cast- I came across the movie- 9 and 1/2 weeks. It is Mickey Rourke at his most delicious- and Kim Basinger as her most natural and beautiful self (for all those horny lads out there). I had no idea it was a book. A book based on real life. Karly let me know this existed as a novel...and as soon as I found out that little tidbit- I was alllllllll over it. Because THIS was the movie I thought of as sexy in my younger days. Nothing has held a candle to it since. For all you hard core porn lovers- step aside. I like my sexy more subtle.

...even though I reeeeeeeeaally enjoyed the novel NINE AND A HALF WEEKS- I have to say, I found reading the written version much more depressing and frustrating...and less masturbation worthy. The truth is usually so- The main character under the spell of an abusive male- was less spell-binding than the Mickey Rourke fantasy...but still worth the read.

Woman meets the man of her dreams. Successful, handsome, and strong. He is what is going to make her life

complete. A successful strong woman herself- she easily gives over to him all her power after 5 pm. Welcomes it really. He takes care of her...brushes her hair, picks her clothes...and handcuffs her to a chair and feeds her nightly- providing her with the best sex of her life afterwards.

In return he asks her for what he thinks is coming to him. All her power...and the complete lack of being able to question anything he asks of her. Is that much to ask? YES...yes it is. So this relationship will last only for a very short period of time...only for...

Nine

and a Half

Weeks.

This was the one case where I actually liked the movie better than I liked the book- The movie was much more joyful and sexy...the book much more sad and dark. But even after saying that- NINE AND A HALF WEEKS is soooooo worth the read- and the back story of the author absolutely riveting. Highly recommended!

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### **Tiffany Reisz says**

Now THIS was real D/s, real S&M. It seemed so familiar. When kink reads as banal or playful or entirely natural you know the author knows what he or she is talking about. The lack of angst makes it more real, not less. This story is a memoir of events from the 70s. In 2013 would she have felt safe enough to stay with him. She's muted after she leaves him. Her psyche is out of whack. If she'd stayed with him, could it have worked?

Amazing memior of a real BDSM affair.

A favorite passage:

Sometimes I wondered abstractly how it was possible that pain could be this exciting. Once during that time I stubbed my toe...and couldn't concentrate on work for the next fifteen minutes because the slight but incessant throbbing distracted and annoyed me. But when he was the one inflicting pain, the difference between pain and pleasure became obscured in a way that turned them into two sides of a single coin: sensations different in quality but equal in in result, equally intense, one stimulus as powerfully able as the next to arouse me. Since pain always came as a prelude and only then--sometimes hours earlier but always eventually leading to orgasm--it became as longed for, as sensuous, as integral to lovemaking as having my breasts caressed.

