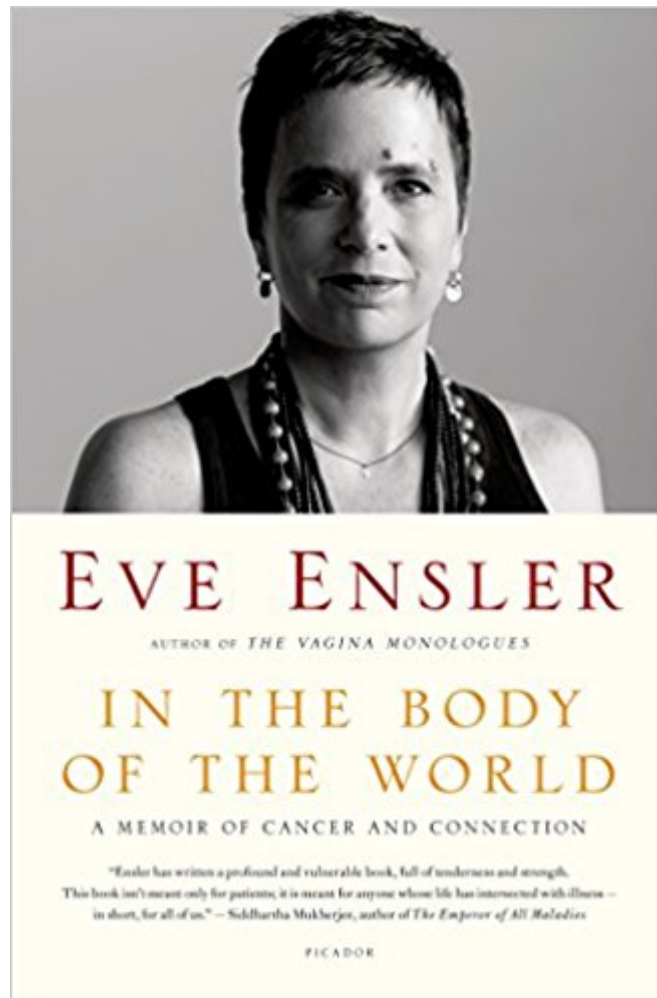


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# In The Body Of The World: A Memoir Of Cancer And Connection



## Synopsis

Playwright, author, and activist Eve Ensler has devoted her life to the female body—how to talk about it, how to protect and value it. Yet she spent much of her life disassociated from her own body—a disconnection brought on by her father's sexual abuse and her mother's remoteness. "Because I did not, could not inhabit my body or the Earth," she writes, "I could not feel or know their pain." But Ensler is shocked out of her distance. While working in the Congo, she is shattered to encounter the horrific rape and violence inflicted on the women there. Soon after, she is diagnosed with uterine cancer, and through months of harrowing treatment, she is forced to become first and foremost a body—pricked, punctured, cut, scanned. It is then that all distance is erased. As she connects her own illness to the devastation of the earth, her life force to the resilience of humanity, she is finally, fully—and gratefully—joined to the body of the world. Unflinching, generous, and inspiring, Ensler's *In the Body of the World* calls on us all to embody our connection to and responsibility for the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** After traveling to 60 countries and talking to women who "had experienced violence and suffering," internationally renowned writer and activist Ensler thought she had heard it all, but nothing prepared her for the brutality of the Congo. The prolonged war over copper, gold, and coltan—minerals used in computers and cell phones—has claimed eight million lives and led to the rape and torture of hundreds of thousands of women. Ensler's

philanthropic organization, V-Day, was beginning to build an urgently needed women's center there when she was diagnosed with uterine cancer. In a series of medical nightmares, she sustains the same harrowing wounds as Congolese women who were gang-raped and is flooded by memories of her father's sexual assaults. As Ensler charts her horrific struggle, she aligns her body with the earth, pairing cancer with the pillaging of the Congo and BP's poisoning of the Gulf of Mexico. As explicit as her blood-and-pain chronicles are, this is a ravishing book of revelation and healing, lashing truths and deep emotion, courage and perseverance, compassion and generosity. Warm, funny, furious, and astute, as well as poetic, passionate, and heroic, Ensler harnesses all that she lost and learned to articulate a galvanizing vision of the essence of life:

“The only salvation is kindness.”

• HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: A national tour and high-profile promotion campaign will launch this scorching and enlightening memoir by the best-selling author of *The Vagina Monologues* (1998). --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Unforgettable...A story of stark, inspiring, often confrontational honesty. Ensler's message is clear: We can face the worst life has in store for us and create, even in the face of terror, a life of meaning and joy.”

• The New York Times Book Review “An intense, riveting memoir...not an easy book to read, but a necessary book to read for its fierce, passionate commitment to making the world a safe place for women.”

• The Boston Globe “Without a sliver of exaggeration, *In the Body of the World* is a soul-stretching, life-changing read.”

• Maria Popova, *Brainpickings* “Astonishing.”

• Mary Oliver “A masterpiece. Ensler has accomplished the impossible: weaving together huge, bold, world-changing ideas with beautiful writing, amazing metaphors, and original structure. Truly one of the most courageous and original works of our time.”

• Naomi Klein “Ensler has written a profound and vulnerable book, full of tenderness and strength. I was amazed by the clarity of her vision and the power of her message about the body and self. This book isn't meant only for patients; it is meant for anyone whose life has intersected with illness--in short, for all of us.”

• Siddhartha Mukherjee “This book is a ride, a river ride through rapids and depths and shallows, dried-up eddies, whirlpools and torrents, crystal-clear pools and the vast ocean at the end. What a thrill and what a spear through the heart. I am astounded by the honesty and clarity of each word.”

• Elizabeth Lesser “I dare anyone to read *In the Body of the World* without crying, without crying out, without getting up and rising to this beautiful broken world with awe and gratitude. There is no pity here, only the raw

force of courage in the face of fear and violence, and the healing grace of honesty. — Terry Tempest Williams — “Eve Ensler incarnates the pain of the women in the Congo, victims of rape and torture; and of the Earth, victim of so much desecration. Her heart and body are broken, her anger is like fire, and the passion of her writing rattles your soul. This is true literature and true activism. — Isabel Allende — “Eve Ensler’s memoir is not only wild and raw and incredibly important, it’s also that rarest of achievements—a compulsively readable, stunningly rendered work of art that delivers hope and truth, challenge and solace, sometimes simultaneously. — Alexandra Fuller

Not for the squeamish or the fainthearted. Not for the indifferent or the complacent. Eve Ensler, famous for her play, *The Vagina Monologues*, has written an impassioned memoir which uses her personal story of enduring treatment for a huge, Stage IV uterine tumor, as a metaphor for our destruction of our planet and for our toleration of the atrocity of gang rape as a weapon of war. Again and again, Ensler shows us the links between her own ordeal and the ordeal of a suffering planet, especially its women. Ensler became absorbed in the stories of these women, especially in Congo, who had been so savagely raped that they developed fistulae (a fistula is a tear in the vaginal wall), which made them permanently incontinent. Ensler was so horrified by their ordeals that she vowed to create, for these women, a refuge where they could heal, physically and emotionally. She pays tribute to a brilliant and selfless, heroic doctor, Dr. Mukwege, who has performed surgery on these damaged women, and to the women who, even if they cannot walk, still sing and dance, and who, in turn, help others like themselves. Ensler began fund-raising for a place, called City of Joy, where women could receive surgery to heal their bodies AND, at the same time, rescue their souls. Given her own history, Ensler was shocked to discover the irony of a tumor the size of a grapefruit in her uterus. Although aware that something was wrong, she ignored the tumor until it had spread throughout her reproductive system, threatening her, at 57, with disfigurement and death. She shows us the links between her own personal denial and our collective denial of phenomena like global warming, the destruction of species, and the use of rape as a weapon of war. Fully aware of this irony, she, who had written so compellingly about these women, developed the same sort of fistula as they, although she was lucky enough to have insurance and access to skilled care. For me, the story of Ensler’s own ordeal was, the most compelling aspect of the book; I sometimes got a bit tired of her belaboring the correspondences between her own story and that of our damaged planet. I know that, for her, these correspondences are all-important, but even feminist environmentalist pacifists may tire of her incessant pontificating. Still, *In the Body of the World*, is a

bold, engrossing, impassioned plea for all of us to wake up to the damage we are doing ourselves, others, and our planet. Although this book is graphic, uncompromising and terrifying, it is ultimately a testament to survival, and to joy. Four stars.

Eve Ensler's memoir is the most extraordinary, powerful book I have read in years. Her writing style is close to poetic, yet her material is so painful and raw. It is a story, despite the topic (incest, uterine cancer treatment, the brutalities that are taking place in the Congo against female etc.) needs to be told and heard. She holds nothing back in her honest portrayal of her life experiences and I am in awe of her courage, her vision and that someone as giving and caring as Ms. Ensler's not only turns her horrific experiences into something good, but that she offers us this exceptional memoir to share her views and work to date. Truly a gift that shall remain with me.

While this was in no way a happy book, there is nothing happy about cancer. As a near death cancer survivor, without a support system of other "possible survivors". (the medical standard of survival is five years.) If cancer comes back and kills you after five years, you're still a survivor. Statistics are created to feed the medical machine (in my opinion, experience and understanding of information from doctor friends). Eve doesn't care to address this issue. Her mission is different. I found myself journaling, perhaps even more than I was reading. It helped me and I have been in need of this help for many years. Cancer doesn't begin the day we're diagnosed. My own had been a confusing fifteen years prior to that event. Eve's story, juxtaposed against a background of murder and rape as a war tool in the Congo, and what is happening to women around the globe is jolting for anyone, male or female, who is brave enough to deal with these impossible issues. Sometimes, as in Ann's and my case it's necessary in order to "heal". We never completely heal from either assault. Eve Ensler is brave, brilliant and not self-indulgent as she takes on this monumental task. Bravo, Eve. And Bravo to any man or woman who will read this beautifully written expose'/memoir; with or without a cancer experience (or a Congo experience).

What I love about Eve Ensler is that she admits that she is who she is. Sometimes it comes across as self-centered or egotistical, but we all are. She tells about herself while reminding us each about how we are. I wondered how it might be to go into Eve's world of cancer. Dramatic? Sure, but isn't cancer treatment really quite dramatic? Isn't what's going on in the world around us dramatic? Of course. Both her telling of herself and some spoken word artsy fartsy stuff thrown in you can't escape the world of Eve. Because she is who she is, this probably wouldn't read very good as just a

novel. I feel like it's probably best as an audiobook (read by Eve herself) so you really get her flavor. If you already love Eve - this will be the same. Don't be fooled by a boring looking cover or it being about cancer. This is still the Eve you know and love and wish you were sometimes.

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