



## Black-Eyed Susan

**Elizabeth Leiknes**

Bancroft Press (Aug 1, 2017)

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*This is a vivid, spirited search for the self, full of creativity and whimsy.*

Lively and entertaining, Elizabeth Leiknes's *Black-Eyed Susan* provides great insight into the art of finding oneself.

Susan Specter is a bundle of eccentricities. Born in a leap year, she has the rarest blood type and is a colorblind synesthete. She is plagued by uncertainty, ambivalence, and a feeling of general malaise—until an unexpected, fatal lung-cancer diagnosis prompts her to embark on a quest to find her biological mother.

A messy hit-and-run proves to be quite the eventful start; its consequences follow Susan throughout the coming weeks. In Las Vegas, she befriends a dancer, Calliope, and after the creation of the bucket list to end all bucket lists, the two embark on an impromptu road trip.

They pick up an out-of-work actor as they wind their way across the country. As items are ticked off the list, Susan begins to understand more about herself, and about the nature of love and friendship.

Susan's quirks come through best in her own language as she provides insights into her decision. Some situations are so twee that they stretch patience, but strong writing saves the text from reveling in such moments for long.

From the slightly obscure to the easily recognizable, *Black-Eyed Susan* is rife with pop culture references. They provide a framework for Susan's curious yet apathetic state of mind. She was raised on a diet of music, movies, and television that drastically color the way that she sees the world. Ample allusions make for a fun game of identifying the many connections that the novel shares with other works.

A dynamic cover, colorful section breaks, and compelling in-text graphics help with the pert, almost manic succession of story.

Vivid imagery and a great spirit of fun set tones of intrigue and whimsy in Elizabeth Leiknes's *Black-Eyed Susan*.

AMANDA ADAMS (September/October 2017)

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