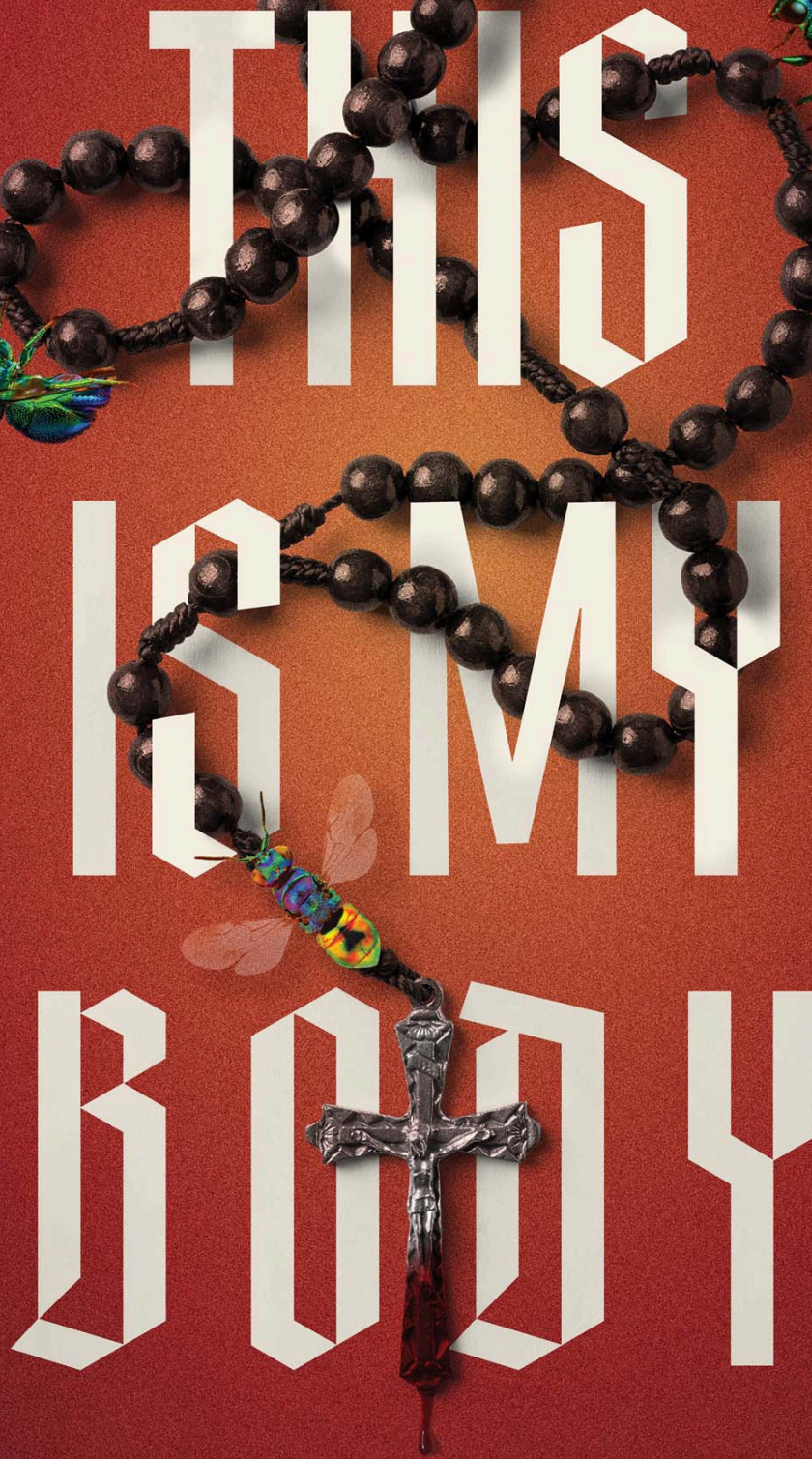


BOOK CLUB KIT



THIS IS MY BODY

LINDSAY KING-MILLER

"This Is My Body is simply one of the finest works of familial horror I have ever encountered. This book is hideously satisfying."

—Sarah Gailey, author of *Just Like Home*



THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A COMEDY.

I had the idea while watching some low-budget exorcism movie a few years ago. Wouldn't it be funny if the parent in one of those flicks was a gay lapsed Catholic (it's me, hi), and in order to help her possessed child, she had to seek help from her devout family? There could be wacky intergenerational squabbles, a grumpy but lovable priest, some heartwarming reconciliation.

After kicking the idea around for a while in my head, I decided it was time to take a swing at it. Except, as I started to plan the story in earnest, I saw some flaws in my initial concept. If the grumpy but lovable priest succeeded in exorcising the child, wouldn't that prove the Catholic family was correct all along? And would the heartwarming reconciliation mean my black sheep protagonist willingly rejoined the fold? I wasn't comfortable with that takeaway. As much as I love my Catholic family—my protagonist Brigid's childhood is not inspired by my own—I can't condone or defend the Church as an institution.

So how would I tell the story? The exorcism horror subgenre was essentially created by William Peter Blatty and is still shaped by his Catholic faith to this day. In these stories, priests are agents of good, and demons are agents of the Christian devil. I wondered if it was possible to write about possession without reifying Catholic dogma.

Stories about exorcism are usually stories about faith, about accepting the existence of higher powers and unknowable truths. The parents and loved ones of the possessed must determine whether an exorcism is the right course of action. In most stories, the answer is finally and clearly yes. In mine, it couldn't be that simple. Brigid would have to struggle her way through as all parents do: beset on all sides by well-intentioned (and sometimes ill-intentioned) advice, knowing the consequences of an error would be devastating.

When I realized that I was writing about the terror of parenting, the story—and Brigid—came into focus. Parents wield a fearsome power, and can do horrific damage with the best of intentions. Brigid's dilemma is one faced by every parent in large and small ways: What if your attempts to help your child actually hurt them?

So it didn't end up being very funny, after all. I went deeper into my fears and insecurities as a parent than I ever expected to, and came out with a story that has nothing to do with my Catholic childhood and everything to do with my own children.

Thank you for reading *This Is My Body*.

—**Lindsay King-Miller**





MENU

Fettuccine alfredo with your ex

Macaroni and cheese for your ex

Chicken and spinach salad with a side of teenage possession

Coffee that tastes like being buried alive

Pistachio gelato with your ex (in flashback)



PLAYLIST

Listen to the *This Is My Body* playlist, curated by Lindsay King-Miller, at <https://bit.ly/3GFduji> or use these tracks as a starting point for your own playlist!

Kesha, Big Freedia – “Raising Hell (feat. Big Freedia)”

Dorothy – “Raise Hell”

Hayley Kiyoko – “Demons”

Adia Victoria – “Devil Is A Lie”

Sad13 – “Devil In U”

chloe moriondo – “I Eat Boys”

Lera Lynn, Shovels & Rope – “Wolf Like Me ft. Shovels & Rope”

Rina Sawayama – “Dynasty”

PJ Harvey – “Rid Of Me”

Lady Pills – “Eat Them”

Sleater-Kinney – “ANIMAL”

Sleater-Kinney – “Fangless”

LUNA AURA – “TALKING TO ME”

Pom Pom Squad – “Shame Reactions”



For the full *This Is My Body* playlist, listen over on Spotify!

DISCUSS *THIS IS MY BODY*

Review the following questions to start the conversation about *This Is My Body*.

- 1.** Queer horror like *This Is My Body* is becoming more and more popular. Why do you think queer people are attracted to the horror genre?
- 2.** The book explores religious trauma and shame. Why do you think these themes lend themselves to horror novels?
- 3.** The book opens with an exorcism scene in a flashback. How did this prime you for the rest of the book? How did this scene make you feel?
- 4.** What were your first impressions of the protagonist, Brigid, and her daughter, Dylan? Did their character arcs surprise you in any way?
- 5.** There are a lot of big, shocking moments in this book. Were there any that you felt more emotionally impacted by? What were they, and why do you think they affected you the way they did?
- 6.** *This Is My Body* explores bodily autonomy in multiple ways through possession and exorcisms. Have you encountered other possession or exorcism stories? How is the symbolism of possession different here?
- 7.** Against the backdrop of saving her daughter, Brigid is reunited with her ex-girlfriend, Zandy. How did this subplot help raise the stakes of the other events of the book?
- 8.** Were you surprised by the final twist at the end of the book?

