

# BODY WEATHER

NOTES ON CHRONIC ILLNESS



IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

LORRAINE BOISSONEAULT

DISCUSSION GUIDE

  
BEACON  
PRESS

## ◇ FROM THE AUTHOR ◇

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Dear Reader,

I'm so thrilled to share *Body Weather* with you. When I started writing the book, I was trying to make sense of the twin catastrophes unfurling around me: the breakdown of my health and the breakdown of the planet. I wanted to tell a story to explain my experiences and my emotions around both.

What I found was a plethora of surprising connections. From strange creatures living in the soil to the way our hearts beat, this work helped me fall ever more in love with our beautiful, imperfect world—and with the changes and limitations in my body. Love, after all, is the engine of grief. We only mourn the losses of people, creatures, and things we care deeply about.

Yet even with all my research and writing, I still have plenty of questions about our health and our Earth. I hope my book inspires ongoing conversations between readers, because I think of it as the starting point for more inquiries, rather than the end.

Stay curious, whatever your weather may be.

—Lorraine

**LORRAINE BOISSONEAULT** is a writer and journalist covering science, history, travel, and current events. Author of *The Last Voyageurs*, Boissoneault has previously been a staff writer for *Smithsonian Magazine* and an editor for The Weather Channel. Her work has appeared in the *New Yorker*, *National Geographic*, *The Atlantic*, *Playboy*, *Catapult*, *Audubon*, *Slate*, and many other outlets.

Cover art by KYRIANNA ([www.kyrianna.art](http://www.kyrianna.art))  
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Author photo by Megan E. Donerty

## ◇ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ◇

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***Body Weather* wrestles with the meanings we attach to illness.**

What cultural narratives or personal assumptions have shaped the way you think about different diseases, and how has this book invited you to reconsider them?

**Denial is a throughline of this book—in medicine, in climate discourse, and within the self.** Where do you see denial operating in your own life or community, and how does it shape our collective ability to face difficult truths?

***Body Weather* presents the natural world—flora, fauna, meteorological phenomena—as a mirror for the human body.**

What insights or resonances did you find in these connections between our inner ecosystems and the planet's shifting climate?

**Boissoneault acknowledges the weight of climate anxiety—especially on young people—while also emphasizing the need to move through fear rather than be paralyzed by it.** What does facing and accepting this fear look like for you? How can you still take action even when you're afraid?

**This book speaks to how women's pain, wisdom, and lived experiences are so often minimized or disregarded.** Have you ever encountered a moment when being believed made a difference or when disbelief caused harm? What did it teach you about listening to yourself and to others?

## ◇ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ◇

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**In Boissoneault's stages of grief, anger can be both destructive and clarifying.** When has anger helped you better understand your values, set boundaries, or confront injustice?

***Body Weather* presents grief as ever evolving, something we grow alongside rather than “get over.”** What is your relationship with grief, and how do you make space for it when it arises?

**The ongoing legacies of eugenics and ableism reveal how societies arbitrarily define vulnerability and power.** How do our institutions determine whose bodies are valued and whose are expendable today? What might community care and resistance look like for you?

**For millennia, indigenous people around the world have used fire for cleansing and restorative practices.** The element has also been weaponized by colonists intent on removing and controlling these First Peoples. What does this overlap tell us about becoming better stewards of the land?

***Body Weather* concludes with an invitation of radical love: for people, for communities, and for the land itself.** What might radical love look like in your daily life, and how could it change the way you imagine the future?

## ◇ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ◇

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### ◇ BOOKS ◇

***The Quickening: Creation and Community at the Ends of the Earth***

by Elizabeth Rush

***Disabled Ecologies: Lessons from a Wounded Desert***

by Sunaura Taylor

***The Future Is Disabled: Prophecies, Love Notes and Mourning Songs***

by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

***We Are Electric: Inside the 200-Year Hunt for Our Body's Bioelectric Code, and What the Future Holds***

by Sally Adee

***Moving Mountains: Writing Nature through Illness and Disability***

edited by Leah Louise Kenward

***You Are Here: Poetry in the Natural World***

by Ada Limón

***Thin Skin: Essays***

by Jenn Shapland

***The Cancer Journals***

by Audre Lorde

***Ask Me About My Uterus: A Quest to Make Doctors Believe in Women's Pain***

by Abby Norman

***Body Horror: Capitalism, Fear, Misogyny, Jokes***

by Anne Elizabeth Moore

## ◇ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ◇

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***Golem Girl: A Memoir***

by Riva Lehrer

***Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure***

by Eli Clare

***Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change***

by Elizabeth Kolbert

***All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis***

edited by Katharine K. Wilkinson and Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

***Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge  
and the Teachings of Plants***

by Robin Wall Kimmerer

***The Invisible Kingdom: Reimagining Chronic Illness***

by Meghan O'Rourke

***Disability Intimacy: Essays on Love, Care, and Desire***

edited by Alice Wong

***Grief Sequence***

by Prageeta Sharma

## ◇ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ◇

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### ◇ PODCASTS ◇

**Death Panel**.....[www.DeathPanel.net](http://www.DeathPanel.net)

**Maintenance Phase**.....[www.MaintenancePhase.com](http://www.MaintenancePhase.com)

**Ologies**.....[www.AlieWard.com/Ologies](http://www.AlieWard.com/Ologies)

**Material Girls**.....[www.MaterialGirlsPod.com](http://www.MaterialGirlsPod.com)

**Gastropod**.....[www.Gastropod.com](http://www.Gastropod.com)

**Conspirativity**.....[www.Conspirativity.net](http://www.Conspirativity.net)

