



# **Yoga Bitch: One Woman's Quest to Conquer Skepticism, Cynicism, and Cigarettes on the Path to Enlightenment**

*Suzanne Morrison*

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## Yoga Bitch: One Woman's Quest to Conquer Skepticism, Cynicism, and Cigarettes on the Path to Enlightenment Suzanne Morrison

What happens when a coffee-drinking, cigarette-smoking, steak-eating twenty-five-year-old atheist decides it is time to get in touch with her spiritual side? Not what you'd expect...

When Suzanne Morrison decides to travel to Bali for a two-month yoga retreat, she wants nothing more than to be transformed from a twenty-five-year-old with a crippling fear of death into her enchanting yoga teacher, Indra—a woman who seems to have found it all: love, self, and God.

But things don't go quite as expected. Once in Bali, she finds that her beloved yoga teacher and all of her yogamates wake up every morning to drink a large, steaming mug...of their own *urine*. Sugar is a mortal sin. Spirits inhabit kitchen appliances. And the more she tries to find her higher self, the more she faces her cynical, egomaniacal, cigarette-, wine-, and chocolate-craving *lower* self.

*Yoga Bitch* chronicles Suzanne's hilarious adventures and misadventures as an aspiring yogi who might be just a bit too skeptical to drink the Kool-Aid. But along the way she discovers that no spiritual effort is wasted; even if her yoga retreat doesn't turn her into the gorgeously calm, wise believer she hopes it will, it does plant seeds that continue to blossom in surprising ways over the next decade of her life.

[suzannemorrison.blogspot.com](http://suzannemorrison.blogspot.com)

## Yoga Bitch: One Woman's Quest to Conquer Skepticism, Cynicism, and Cigarettes on the Path to Enlightenment Details

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# From Reader Review *Yoga Bitch: One Woman's Quest to Conquer Skepticism, Cynicism, and Cigarettes on the Path to Enlightenment* for online ebook

## Danielle says

Eat, Pray, Love annoyed the hell out of me, despite the fact that it had some very profound messages. I just couldn't stomach the author: her lack of self awareness re: her privilege and her selfishness.

This book is Eat, Pray, Love, but good, with a hysterically funny author. I felt like we were meant to be best friends. The part about the possessed blender was probably my favorite, although the urine therapy is a close second.

I would have given this book the full five stars had the author not droned on about the relationship she was in when she wrote her diary entries and, even more annoyingly, the "sailor." The ending seemed abrupt and unnecessary, as well as completely out of sync with the rest of the book.

That said: great memoir, hilarious author, and spot on about the ambivalent relationship many of us have with our yoga practice.

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## Jessica says

Overall I was pretty unimpressed with this book. The premise was that the author Suzanne Morrison hoped that yoga would turn her from a cynical, skeptical, smoker into an enlightened "perfect" yogi. After signing up for some yoga classes she finds that she loves it and when her favorite teacher invites her to come to Bali for a 2 month yoga teacher training she immediately starts saving up for it. But, during the retreat Suzanne finds that her connection with her favorite teacher starts to unravel, and although she makes some great friends she finds she's the same person at the end of the retreat - not the perfect yogi she envisioned. Parts of it are OK, but some of the chapters are really disjointed and rambling. In the end I was just forcing myself to finish it since I had read so much.

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## Andrea says

I was ready to dislike this book based on a preconceived idea I had about the author\* but since it is the yoga memoir du jour, I decided to give it a shot, anyway. And I'm very happy I did! Unlike *Poser: My Life in Twenty-three Yoga Poses*, which wasn't really about yoga, or *Stretch: The Unlikely Making of a Yoga Dude*, which focused almost entirely on yoga humor, *Yoga Bitch* successfully combines both memoir about yoga *and* humor, with an equal emphasis on both spiritual exploration through yoga and her twentysomething desires for a stable love relationship.

It's the story about Morrison's time at a 2-month yoga teacher training in Bali, back in 2001, while her boyfriend is preparing to move their lives from Seattle to NYC. Morrison's idealized notions of her yoga teachers, Indra and Lou, and their romantic partnership lead her to examine her own relationship and ideas

about being in love. When Indra and Lou inevitably fall off their pedestals, Morrison is forced to deal with their -- and her own -- humanity. Morrison's Catholic background provides a solid backdrop for her questions about God, and her cravings for "forbidden fruits" (including cigarettes, alcohol, and sugar in addition to ... well, I don't want to give anything away) come into conflict with her feelings that she ought to be following a more righteous path. She is not as cynical as she pretends to be, although she definitely goes through the bitch phase (spiritual materialism at its finest) during a certain period in Bali.

I would not say her humor is snarky. Snark is mean-spirited and hostile. Morrison's humor is down to earth and accessible. This was a pretty quick read, and more sweet than I imagined it would be. Recommended!

\* She wrote an article for Elephant Journal titled, "Confessions of a Flowtard," a term that came across to me as highly ignorant and hurtful. Anyone -- yoga person or not -- who willingly uses "tard" or its variations and thinks it's funny immediately becomes suspect in my book. I commented on the article and pointed her to the R-Word campaign website (<http://www.r-word.org/>) and she thanked me and promised to check it out. So, there may be hope. Despite that nonsense, I didn't find any other kind of ignorance in her book; in fact, her writing was really smooth and clear and intelligent, even in her super-casual "journaling" tone.

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## Ciara says

i'm just gonna say straight up that i bet i would have liked this book more if i did (or knew anything about) yoga. if you are a yoga person, take this review with a grain of salt.

my main problem with this book has nothing to do with my knowledge of yoga though. my main problem is that i thought the book was structured in a really weird way that didn't really make any sense to me. i cracked the book open (i put it on hold at the library based on a review i read, so i hadn't seen it before i started reading it) & was really taken aback by the fact that it was basically double-spaced, like an undergraduate research paper. i was like, "what the fuck? this is only going to take me an hour to read." i flipped through the rest of the book & found that some it was double-spaced & some of it was a normal paperback book layout.

i read on & discovered that the normal paperback book layout, which makes up the majority of the book, is in fact suzanne's diary from the two months she spend studying yoga in bali when she was 25 years old. apparently her teachers recommended that all the students keep a journal during their retreat & suzanne took this very seriously. i mean...supposedly. i keep a journal & maybe i'm just a lazy slacker but my journal doesn't really have a narrative like suzanne's supposedly does, i don't recount detailed conversations complete with dialogue tags, i don't build up narrative tensions & suspense...possibly the book is BASED on suzanne's journal, but surely it was reconstructed & rewritten? i don't know.

the double-spaced parts in-between were...i don't know what the fuck they were. chapter breaks? they really served no purpose whatsoever except for suzanne to be like, "then when i moved to new york, one day this thing happened that tangentially relates to this thing i wrote about in my journal."

if the book really is just suzanne's bali journal, unedited, that's cool & everything, but it makes me hate the double-spaced parts even more. because they are just a few pages long & they are fucking double-spaced! it's so distracting! i get maybe she wanted to make them look different to differentiate them from the journal but couldn't she have used a slightly different font or maybe employed a nice border seguing between the time frames or something? the double spacing was unspeakably irritating.

& i am just going to spoil this because it was so fucking annoying: the boyfriend that suzanne keeps writing about, the one she is going to move to new york to be with? yeah. that doesn't work out. the sailor she keeps writing about, the one who reads a lot & is 18 years older than her? yeah, they get married eventually. even though they met when he was 40 & she was 22, which is pretty icky. had i known that the whole book was leading up to this weird "reader, i married him" love story, i might not have read it.

i mean, there were elements of this book that were thoroughly amusing, entertaining, insightful, etc. but in the end, it's about a 25-year-old american woman who drops a couple thousand bucks to go on a yoga retreat in bali. think it through.

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### **S.P. says**

Suzanne Morrison is a serious student of yoga. Her pursuit of excellence and self-discipline is a serious pursuit. When she decides to follow her beloved mentors to Bali for an intense training program, she puts her whole heart into it. With rigorous practice she hopes to attain enlightenment, at least enough to make some important decisions about the direction of her life.

When she encounters the reality of her situation--cut off from family, friends, meat, sugar, caffeine and cigarettes, and stranded among people so humorlessly devoted to attaining a higher level of awareness that they don't see the inherent ickiness of drinking their own urine--Morrison cracks. And when she cracks, her story becomes deeply funny. Belly-laugh funny.

This book describes (in beautiful prose style - meticulously, joyously detailed and specific) one of those adventures in which the heroine falls short of her heart's desire, yet that failure proves to be a necessary and significant step on the road to real understanding. Morrison's daily disasters and triumphs point out the difficulty we encounter when our objective turns out to be so lofty that every grasp at it further demonstrates the limits of human capacity.

What could have been a plodding story about a young woman discovering that her ideals are just a little bit crazy, and yet terribly important in sustaining joy, is transformed by Morrison's wit and energy into something marvelous to behold. The story sails along from one hilarious moment to the next. Our heroine learns to embrace the grotty, unkempt part of the soul that resists all grooming and training. We are, ultimately, both soul and body. Morrison contrasts our aspirations with our reality and finds forgiveness, employing an astonishing charm and intelligence.

Buy this book.

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### **Sarah says**

The best yoga book ever. This is hilarious and, more than readable, well written, jauntily paced, fun! I respect and share Morrison's ambivalence toward yoga. Is it exercise, is it spirituality? (that's my own ambivalence speaking). Morrison starts out as the most unlikely yoga teacher trainee I could imagine: a smoker, meat and sweets lover, potty mouth (pun intended) and all around smart ass who had only been taking a regular yoga class for two months when she signed up for the training her teachers led each year in

Bali, primarily because she idolized Indra, the wife in a husband wife teaching team. Morrison highlights the shenanigans, gossip and hilarity that ensue while allowing some of the day in, day out, 'life on the mat' to fade into the background. But how could she not? There's too much good material all around her, too many whackballs and, to be honest, inane yoga practices, to concentrate on every downward dog. I'm sure Morrison stepped on quite a few toes in the yoga community with this one. It's an apt criticism of the culture while also being a kind of love letter to it.

Addendum: I just don't agree with other reviewers' comparison of this book to *Eat, Pray, Love*. I didn't get the sense that Morrison orchestrated her teacher training to serve as fodder for a later book. I think she truly stumbled into an experience begging to be written about. Elizabeth Gilbert, the author of *Eat, Pray, Love* had several books under her belt and went in search of a feel-good, spiritual travelogue. She even takes a break mid-way through, there's an itinerary. In short, Gilbert sought her story out knowing her experiences would become a book. I might be wrong on this, but I felt Gilbert was a bit older at the outset of *Eat, Pray, Love*, so her weepy, panicked, "I don't want to be married anymore" bathroom scene came across as all the more immature. Morrison was practically a baby during her Bali experience, so I forgave the immaturity. She also recognized her immaturity and unreasonable expectations for what they were. I think we all imagine, as twenty-somethings, that life will be offering up something pretty great, any time now, and become confused at life's stubborn intractability. Lastly, Morrison has an authentic, well honed sense of humor, she has a sense of judgement. She comes across as a woman you could drink a beer, smoke a cigarette and eat a steak with, all while trashing your yoga teachers. Gilbert is kind of holier than thou and strikes me as inauthentic. She flees her marriage to go on a spiritual journey, eats a lot of pasta and gets embroiled in another relationship pretty quickly. In short, Morrison kept her head for the most part and brought a healthy skepticism to her experiences, while truly wanting to find a lasting spirituality and change. Gilbert gobbled down every spiritual offering she could get her hands on like a global spiritual consumer, a neurotic new age American woman on the loose. BTW, I loved her book *The Last American Man*.

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### **Johanna says**

2.5-3?? read. Easy, a bit of a Bridget Jones does yoga but not quite as good.

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### **Jenny Stanfield says**

I have 8 shelves set up on Goodreads and this book doesn't fit into any of them. It's sort of like *Eat Pray Love* but for 25 year olds, and I don't usually read stories like that - of women trying to find themselves. I'm too cynical (but cynicism is in the title), and I'm not a sappy *Twilight* reading sort of person.

But! Once I picked it up, I couldn't put it down. It felt like I was reading about a real person (because I was) who weighed options logically, changed her mind based on reason, and didn't blindly follow whatever whim life brought to her...and it brought her some interesting ones. Suzanne made me like her when I really didn't want to. I feel like I know her, and I am her in some ways.

You don't have to be an aspiring yogi to get lost in this story. You don't have to prescribe to a certain religious or spiritual belief to love it either.

I particularly enjoyed Indra's story, and how Suzanne flip flopped between idolizing her and being repulsed by her. As more and more is revealed about Indra, more and more is revealed about Suzanne's character. In a way, she uses Indra to find her self based on her reactions to Indra's secrets.

I would definitely recommend this book.

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### **Jesse says**

Y is for Yoga Bitch by Suzanne Morrison. The book says she's a cynical smoker who goes on a 2 month yoga retreat to get in touch with her spiritual side. The problem I have with books who advertise 'I'm cynical and have problems' and then resolve all the problems by the end of the book already had one foot in the door.

One memoir I read about a woman who decided to change her life with magazines complained about her terrible relationships but she was already in therapy and had a quality boyfriend candidate waiting in the wings. No memoir has someone go from totally-flawed to totally-fixed. There's always some groundwork.

Morrison was the same because while she was a cynical coffee-loving smoker, she was also a yoga junkie before she left. She idolized her teacher and loved doing yoga so she was open to spiritual awakening no matter how agnostic she proclaimed to be. One of her reoccurring points is that she enjoys the theatricality of religion. Like many of us, she probably just wants something she can believe in.

She gradually warmed to the ideas and practices of people drinking the Kool-Aid (among other things). When she became the perfect yoga student with meditation, concentration, and a seizure-like vision, I wasn't that shocked. The beginnings of that were already there. You can tell by the way she talks about the female yoga teacher she adores and idolizes her in the beginning. Her thirst for approval was obvious but not unfamiliar.

Eventually the teacher is revealed to be flawed and human. Morrison claims to enjoy knocking her off the pedestal and kicking her former idol. She wanted something to believe in but her cynicism loved that this latest 'god' wasn't perfect.

At the end Morrison seems to be unchanged but in retrospect she admits to being transformed in a way she didn't realize yet. Morrison has a good voice and this was an interesting story to tell.

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### **Tracey says**

Yawn. Many of these yoga memoirs are cookie-cutter copies of Eat, Pray, Love, and I'm simply not interested in such navel gazing.

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### **Beth Jusino says**

Some yoga memoirs spend a lot of time trying to understand yoga. This is not one of those. Part "Poser" but mostly "Eat, Pray, Love," Yoga Bitch is really only nominally about yoga. It's much more about how a

coddled 25 year-old on the verge of independence, having given up her family's Catholicism but desperately searching for some new structure and leader, seeks to find herself in the mystical rituals of yoga. About what happens when the people we idolize turn out to be human. About the old saying, "Wherever you go, you'll still be there." And about just how far we'll go for approval. It's funny, narcissistic, uneven, sarcastic, and very, very honest. "Is this all just ritualized narcissism, dolled up to look like a series of virtues, an inner science, a path to God?" Morrison asks toward the end of the book, when her disillusionment is getting the best of her. There's no answer, but she's asking good questions. I wish I could give it 3 and a half stars, but since the author's from Seattle, I'll round up.

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## **Denise says**

Funny, interesting, and very genuine.

What I liked best is that there's no grand transformation in the author -- just a very real experience, told in a very real voice. Which makes *Yoga Bitch* as approachable as it is entertaining. I seriously laughed out loud in several places and had to put the book down until I could catch my breath. But underneath it all is Morrison's fearless storytelling about a time of confusion, growth, and slow steps to a very real sort of transformation.

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## **Amanda says**

What is it about yoga memoirs as of late? They are all deeply moving while at the same time being incredibly funny. I love it! Suzanne Morrison is fantastically funny and there is so much of her experience with her yoga teacher training that I can relate to. Although I have to say that there were no "piss drinkers" in my class (at least not that I know of... hmmm there was that one person whom I thought always smelled a little of... no, no I am pretty sure there were no piss drinkers in my yoga teacher training).

At one point while reading this book (I will admit it, it was when the farting in class came up in the book) that I was laughing so hard that my husband had to ask me what the heck I was doing and when I replied that I was reading about honking like Ganesha I think he sort of rolled his eyes.

Beside being truly entertaining this book spoke a little to the falseness yoga can sometimes foster in some of the students and teachers. I have to admit the more I paid for yoga the more disconnected I felt from my yoga. I dislike the commercialization of yoga and yet I make handmade yoga mat bags and sell them. I much like Morrison, feel that there is this HUGE contradiction in the way Americans (and most likely other people around the world) practice yoga. I have learned to accept that it is just a reality of life and of yoga. Some of us just feel the call of all the "shiny happy things" more than others.

Besides the cigarette smoking, I really like Morrison as a person (at least as the person she comes across in her writing I do not actually know her...). I learned a lot from her book, mainly that we really are all the same when it comes down to it, we even experience spiritual journeys in very similar ways.

Read this book to laugh, to think and to inspire you to make your practice your own.

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## Regency says

I LOVED this book. I couldn't stop laughing, it was hilarious! I found myself easily relating to both the protagonist as well as the situations in the book. The author put a great spin on many subjects that could have been really heavy, and not only made you laugh, but also made you think. I started reading it to my partner (he isn't at all into yoga) and he laughed and thought it was great. We're about half-way through it so far. His comment: "You know, you wouldn't have to be into that stuff (sic) in order to enjoy this book" So there you go, from a guy who is not into new agey woowoo (his words). I agree with that statement, that while yoga types would definitely get a bigger kick out of it, one need not be a yogi to fall for this book.

I will note that the book jumped around a bit, probably about halfway through to the end, back in forth in dates, times and places. A little confusing at times. But all in all, a fantastic read and even though I just finished it, I'm excited to continue re-reading where I left off with my partner. I couldn't wait for him and just had to finish it! :)

Any disappointment? The book was awesome. However, of course you want the main character to be perfect and wonderful, and the story to go a certain way. But, this wasn't like that. This was very real story, about a woman who is finding herself. And that's not always a pretty sight. It's a little hard not to judge the protagonist a little when things start going south during her retreat. It was difficult to not to want to give her a good shake (because she was acting like a spoiled brat LOL) and I felt disappointed in her results after completing her retreat. It just seemed like a childish response, and I guess I just wasn't buying it. But, that being said, it just means that she is human, and as she did note in the story that her's wasn't the typical "once was lost, now is found" type of tale. So I can appreciate that. She really does bare all of herself for the world to see- her light and her shadows. That was refreshing and still very much inspiring. You felt that she was being very truthful to you, the reader, and I applaud that. It is a very "This is me. All of me. Take it or leave it" approach and I'm thankful for her for sharing it like that. I am so glad I picked up this quest of Suzanne's and thrilled that I had so many great laughs, but also did a lot of pondering as well. I dogeared a lot of pages so I could go back and review them.

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## Catherine says

I grew up in the same town as Suzanne Morrison; went to the same high school, and even the same church I think, so it was really interesting for me reading her memoir. I too am an actor and writer, and I've recently found my way back to a yoga practice, so I identified with many aspects of her journey.

Yoga Bitch read sort of like a self-help manual for me. Suzanne's journey, and the lessons she has learned acted kind of like signposts for me. "Watch out for this one, Catherine, this one could be big for you."

I breezed through this book-it was fun to read. More importantly though, it's an example of someone looking back at her experiences with wit and humility, fearlessly searching for the lesson. We live in a world lacking in self-awareness. I don't think that most people have the courage to look at their path and ask if they're on the right one. No one wants to question their integrity or motives or whether they acted like the best version of themselves. Suzanne does that with courage. It's inspiring.

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