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Once more, thank you for helping me out with this. If you ever need me to return the favour, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,

Elise

Note that Canadian spellings are used throughout.



Book Blurb



When sixteen-year-old Judith meets Cain, she has no idea what she's getting herself into. Cain is the most beautiful human being Judith has ever seen, but he hides a dangerous secret. When Jo-Jo, Cain's surrogate father, offers her a job, she accepts, unaware she's been recruited as a pawn in Jo-Jo's ecoterrorist plot.

THE NEW RECRUIT is a timely story, exploring how, without love and support from those around them, our disenfranchised youth can be so easily misguided.

Genre: YA, Contemporary, Romance, Girls & Women

Pages: 214

Release Date: 1 July 17 Blog Tour Date: 1 – 8 July 17

Post Review: any time

Sixteen year old Judith Abraham feels like an outsider. She has just transferred to a new school, has only one friend, and suffers from social anxiety, but when recruiter Cain Barrett offers her a job, her whole life changes. Things are great at first, but the more she learns about Cain's world of climate crusaders, the more she questions his motives behind singling her out. Will Judith find a way out before it's too late?

THE NEW RECRUIT is the first book of a trilogy (followed by Indoctrination) by author Elise Abram, winner of the 2015 A Woman's Write competition for I WAS, AM, WILL BE ALICE. THE NEW RECRUIT is a young adult contemporary romance for the new millennium. In a time when jobs are scarce, politics are unstable, and the future is uncertain, millennials are ripe for recruitment by cults, groups offering a stable world view in exchange for total devotion. THE NEW RECRUIT is meant to be a cautionary tale exploring how, without love and support from those around them, our disenfranchised youth can be so easily misguided.

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Author Bio



Elise Abram is high school teacher of English and Computer Studies, former archaeologist, editor, publisher, award winning author, avid reader of literary and science fiction, and student of the human condition. Everything she does, watches, reads and hears is fodder for her writing. She is passionate about writing and language, cooking, and ABC's Once Upon A Time. In her spare time she experiments with paleo cookery, knits badly, and writes. She also bakes. Most of the time it doesn't burn. Her family doesn't seem to mind.

ExcerptCHAPTER ONE

If I had to pick a moment, that single, deciding moment when everything went south, it would have to have been when my father told me he'd lost his job.

Dad had a job at a food distribution plant, picking and shipping customer orders. Kind of middle management. It paid good, but it didn't pay well. We'd been comfortable since Mom had died because they'd had this insurance policy that paid off the mortgage in the case of one of their deaths. Dad said he had connections, that one of the suppliers he knew wanted to hire him, but that didn't pan out. The world, it seemed, was in a recession. Businesses were failing everywhere. Stores were closing down all over the place, which meant that even the suppliers who had wanted to steal him away from his boss when he had one could no longer afford to hire him.

After a few weeks, Dad got a retail job making barely more than minimum. Though his biggest expense was his car, we needed it to get around, and so we had to find other ways to tighten our belts. Dad swore he'd do his best to make sure our lifestyle wouldn't change, and though he'd never admit it, it was a promise he couldn't keep.

The first major change came when I couldn't make my tuition the following semester. Mom and Dad were big proponents of parochial Jewish school. They'd both been raised in the public system. They'd grown up celebrating the major religious holidays—Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Passover, and (more fun than religious) Chanukah—and both had done a stint at after school Hebrew school, but none of them was particularly Jewish. Because they'd felt unprepared to teach me themselves, they'd decided, long before I was born, to send me to parochial school so I'd know what it meant to be Jewish. I hated it. Dad and I enjoyed pork roast, ribs, and cheeseburgers at home, and celebrated birthdays at Mandarin (all you can eat Chinese), a fact I had to hide from my friends and classmates. I had to wear this ugly uniform at school—a skirt that went practically to my ankles, and my elbows had to be covered, even when the weather was thirty-plus degrees outside. I hated it, but I knew how much it mattered to them and so I didn't complain. Maybe if I'd known how much it cost, I might have persuaded them to let me go public sooner.

Dad had a meeting with my principal and they offered to subsidize my tuition. When Dad said he still couldn't afford it, the principal suggested he take out a mortgage on his house. But when I caught my noble father sitting at the kitchen table one night, crunching numbers with his calculator, actually considering the consequences of a mortgage, I put my foot down. He looked up at me (I swear I saw tears in his eyes) and smiled, though whether out of relief or pride, I couldn't tell.

When second semester began, I was registered at the local high school. My first day was scary. I was alone. I'd known the girls at Jewish school since I was in kindergarten, but there?

My dad had wanted to walk me in, but I decided that was uncool—I didn't want to start my first day as the Daddy's Girl—and decided to go it alone. I stepped into the foyer of the school and it felt like stepping into a shopping mall, with its vaulted ceiling and green glass skylights. There were trees, actual trees, growing up from grates in the tiled floor. Further down the hall were banks of lockers. Much to my surprise, there was no dress code—boys and girls wore pants,

skinny jeans, or baggy sweats. No one wore kippas, but quite a few girls wore hijabs. My school, my previous school, had been populated by a homogeneous lot, and because of the uniforms, everyone had dressed the same, with the boys wearing pants and kippas, and the girls wearing skirts and sleeves.

This was definitely going to take some getting used to.

I looked down at my own clothes, an A-line, mid-calf skirt and baggy sweatshirt; I definitely needed to rethink my wardrobe.

"You look lost," a girl said to me.

I looked up and forced a smile. "I'm new."

She smiled back. Her hair was dyed ombre, something we weren't allowed to do at my old school. "Do you have a locker?"

I shook my head.

"A schedule?"

Another head shake.

"You should probably start at the office. Do you know where that is?"

I shook my head again.

She smiled, something warm and friendly; I'd have to find her again later and see if we could be friends. "Come with me." We turned right and walked down a narrow corridor. "I'm Jem, by the way. My mom loved that cartoon growing up." I must've looked at her weird sideways because she said, "Jem and the Holograms?" She gasped. "Oh! You should totally come over and see that movie with me some time. My dad? He's like this techno-geek? He has the entire basement wired like a movie theatre. I have the movie on Blu-ray." She paused. "Okay, so my mom has the movie on Blu-ray, but she'll let us watch it if we want."

I was thrilled. Here I was, not ten minutes into my public high school career, and I already had a friend and future plans. Okay, so they weren't exactly firmed-up plans, but I was ready to take whatever I could get. The mom thing freaked me out a bit. Moms were hard to swallow, seeing as I didn't have one anymore, and being around them only made me want mine even more. I decided that Jem's mom would be the type to stay in the shadows, calling down to see if we wanted snacks and then making Jem go up to get them, rather than coming down into the basement to serve us herself.

"I didn't catch your name," Jem said.

"Judith," I told her.

"Nice to meet you, Judy."

"Not Judy; Judith. Judy reminds me of that Jewish kids' singing duo, Judy and David." Jem's look grew stern. "You got something against Jews, Judith?"

I felt my eyes grow wide with surprise, A: that she'd straight up ask something like that, and B: as if me and my parochial school style clothes didn't tip her off that I was a Jew. "No," I said. I let out a short, snorty guffaw. "God, no. It's just that my cousin was addicted to them when she was young, and I've listened to enough of their music to last several lifetimes."

"I myself have a younger sister who still worships Judy and David," she said, kind of formal-toned. "So, good answer." She opened the office door for me and said, "You may pass."

Okay—so my new friend was kind of weird, but she seemed like fun, too. She took good care of me, introducing me to the office secretary who issued me a locker and then sent us to Guidance where I got my schedule.

We compared notes and discovered we had a common lunch and the same period three English class. We made arrangements to meet for lunch, and Jem walked me to my first class.

The rest of the first day went smoothly, I guess. All classes were kind of awkward, seeing as I knew no one, spoke to no one, and no one spoke to me. Jem introduced me to her friends at lunch and in period three English, and I recognized a few girls from my earlier classes. I left school feeling kind of good about the day. I had even higher hopes that the next day would exceed that day's experiences.

Dad was still at work when I got home, but he'd left a meatloaf in the fridge with instructions for me to put it into the oven. Dad is like the Ground Meat King. He can do a million and two dishes with it, everything from chili to shepherd's pie, to this awesome dish he calls "deconstructed cabbage rolls". His meatloaf rocks. He has about ten different ways to make it, and he's adding to his repertoire all the time. That night he'd prepared what he calls his Sweet-and-Sour Meatloaf. He makes it with this sauce of molasses and soy and enough garlic to drop a vampire at fifty feet. I love the way it smells when it cooks, knowing that it will taste even better.

With dinner in the oven, I decided to check out my wardrobe. I pulled everything from my closet and drawers and divided everything into three piles like they do on those hoarding shows on television: keep, trash, and donate. I don't own a lot of clothes, seeing as I had to wear an ugly uniform most of the time, so it didn't take long, but at the end of it, my trash pile held a few single socks and some holey underwear; my donate pile had everything from my uniforms

to the skirt I'd worn that day; and my keep pile was made up of exactly three pairs of jeans, one pair of leggings, two sweats, a few sweatshirts and sweaters, and some t-shirts. Depression sunk in. I needed clothes—badly—but didn't have the money to buy any. I had about five hundred dollars in my savings account, the aggregate sum of almost a decade of birthday and Chanukah gifts, but Dad insisted I save that for post-secondary school. I could ask Dad, and knowing he didn't like to say no to his little girl, I'm sure he'd oblige with the cash, but I didn't want to take advantage.

I decided I needed to get a job, so the next day after school, I made a bee-line for the mall. Lots of places were asking for extra help, but they all wanted me to apply online, so I went home and filled out as many digital applications as I could find.

I didn't hold out much hope, as my only experience was volunteering at school during their Chanukah toy drive, or at the local food bank over the summer, but I got a call from a clothing store the next day. The manager conducted a phone interview with me and asked me to come in the very next day for a face-to-face interview.

We met in the Food Court at the mall and talked for almost half-an-hour about my volunteer and school experience, as well as why I wanted to work at their store. "My mom died a few years back," I said, garnering her sympathy. "It's just been my dad and me ever since, and Dad got laid off a few months ago," I said.

The manager's face went blank, as if I'd caught her even further off guard than when I'd played the Dead Mom Card, and she had no idea how to react, let alone what to say.

"I need this job to help out, to try to make ends meet." I hoped I sounded responsible and sincere. Not wanting to destroy any credibility I might have built with the manager thus far, I decided not to add that working in a clothing store would also help me build my much-needed wardrobe, now that I no longer had to wear that gross-looking uniform, and given the 30% discount they offered their employees.

We talked a bit more and then ended the interview with, "We'll be in touch," before she said goodbye.

I sat at the table, playing the interview over in my head—what I'd said, what I shouldn't have said, what I didn't say but should have...

After the self-debrief, I decided I'd done quite well and deserved a reward, so I went to Tim Hortons, bought an Oreo Ice Capp and a Red Velvet Cookie, and took another seat.

That's when he approached me. "This seat taken?" he asked.

Thinking he meant he wanted to take the spare chair at the table to use elsewhere, I said, "No," but much to my surprise, he sat down across from me instead.

He took a sip from the coffee cup he'd been carrying. "Looking for a job?" he asked. His eyes were a striking turquoise, the colour you need to wear contacts to achieve.

"How did-"

"I saw your interview."

"Oh," I said. I took a careful sip of my Ice Capp, letting it melt in my mouth before swallowing to stave off brain freeze.

"How did it go?"

"Okay, I guess."

"Not much of a talker, are you?"

"You mean the interview?"

"I mean now."

"Oh." Dad always said I'd have the guys flirting with me any day now. I wondered if this was the day.

"My card," he said. He handed me a business card, which I thought was weird. I mean, how many teenage guys carried business cards with them? Unless he was older than he looked, like those actors who played teenagers long into their twenties.

I read the card. "Cain Barrett. Recruiting." I looked up into those blue-green eyes and felt I was drowning. "Who do you recruit?"

"People." I took offense to his evasiveness. He was the stranger approaching me—shouldn't I be the evasive one?

"Like who? For what?"

"For...things," he said matter-of-factly, as if I should already know.

I laughed, probably out of discomfort rather than amusement. What was on his agenda? Was his aim to flirt? Pick me up? Hire me for a job? Something more sinister?

"Things?" I asked.

"I work for a non-profit. We mostly raise money for the less fortunate—you know: selling flowers, silent auctions, organizing craft shows, stuff like that." He smiled and my creep-dar went up a notch.

"You were watching me?" I asked, remembering what had led to the conversation. He'd said he'd seen my interview, but he didn't approach me until after I'd bought my Ice Capp. That meant he'd been following me. And while the remote possibility that he'd just happened to be in the Food Court sitting near us, happened to be near enough to overhear our conversation, and then happened to see me again after I'd bought my drink was possible, I don't believe in coincidence.

"Well, when you put it that way—"

"Well, how would you put it?" Besides stalking, I mean.

He chuckled nervously and smiled, and I remembered why I was still talking to him. He was cute. It had to be the dimples. And the spiky hair. And the eyes, definitely the eyes. "I saw a damsel in distress and thought I'd help out. You know, be your knight in shining armor."

"And how do you propose to do that, Sir Cain?" Did that score too high on the flirtation scale? Did I mention I used to go to a religious school where the boys and girls were separated and like oil and vinegar, couldn't ever mix?

"Why, by coming to your rescue, Princess...?"

He made it sound like a question, so I said, "Judith."

"At your service, Princess Judith."

I remembered what he'd said before I'd introduced myself, and I cocked my head and squinched my eyebrows together. "Rescue? Why, whatever do you mean, squire?"

He chuckled again. It was an amazing sound, the sound of Cain's laugh. Equally amazing was the mellowing effect it had on me, making me believe he and I could be friends. More than friends, if we chose. "Keep the card. Think about my non-profit, about me. Call me if you're interested." Then he did this amazing thing: he took a step back and bowed with a flourish. "Later, my fair lady."

"Wasn't there a movie with that name?"

"Would you prefer Dame Judith?"

"Isn't that taken, too?"

He looked at me, grinned, and winked. I liked this banter and the giddiness I felt. My first flirtation. Judging by his reaction, I seemed to be doing okay with it. "I think that's Dame Edna," he said. "You know, that cross-dresser with the purple hair?"

"I was thinking more along the lines of Dame Judy Dench."

He smiled again, brought his palm to his mouth, made a kissing noise, and blew the kiss to me. "Till we meet again," he said.

I watched as he walked away, the words, "Count on it," sticking in my throat.

Guest Post 1

The Truth Behind the Fiction

When I was a teenager, my family business had a booth at the Canadian National Exhibition in the Food Building. My brother and I ran the booth during the day and my cousins at night. I was very insecure as a teenager, I wasn't popular, I didn't like the way I looked, I didn't like who I was, and I didn't date. So when a cute boy approached me to strike up a conversation at the counter one day, I was incredibly flattered. When he left, he said he'd come back a few days later to continue our conversation, which he did, only this time, he started spouting religious dogma in the middle of the conversation, which turned me off.

He told me the name of the organization he worked for and I went to the Coliseum Building to check it out. He wasn't there when I went, so I approached, questioned the people working there, and collected some flyers. It turns out they were in the business of seeking out teens for the purpose of converting them to their way of thinking. I liken their organization to a cult, because in later years, a number of deprogramming stations for their organization and similar ones, popped up around the GTA. I was worried, but we came up with a plan: the next time he came around, if I was in the back, someone would tell him I was busy, and if I was at the counter, someone would call me into the back on some "urgent" business. It just so happened that when he next came, I was in the back room and my brother told him I no longer worked there. He never came back.

When I was brainstorming for THE NEW RECRUIT, I thought about this experience and what might have happened if I hadn't had the support system I did. What if I'd ignored the warning signs and went with the recruiter because I was lonely, or if he had something to offer me that I couldn't find on my own?

THE NEW RECRUIT explores this question. Judith, my protagonist, is sixteen-years-old and she feels like an outsider. She's lonely because her mother has passed away, her father is always at work, and she only has one friend. She desperately wants to find a job so she can help her father with the finances and so he will be around more often. When she meets Cain at the mall, he strikes up a conversation with her, offers her a job, and eventually recruits her into his cult of ecoterrorists, which he is able to do because he makes her feel special, offers her something she can't find on her own, and she doesn't have a support system in place to protect her from going with him.

THE NEW RECRUIT is timely in that it deals with the question of how a child with a seemingly normal upbringing can easily be separated from her family, brainwashed, and coerced into doing something that horrifies the majority of the population.

Guest Post 2

I Scare Myself

Majoring in Cultural Anthropology in university was an eye-opener for me. The theory of evolution, the fact that Canada had institutionalized residential schools for First Nations Peoples, and the existence of cults were foreign concepts to me. The four years spent at post-secondary school definitely helped shape who I am today, sparking a love of research that has turned me into a life-long learner. Out of all the courses I took at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, the one that sticks out the most was one entitled Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion, primarily due to the experience I had while researching and writing the final paper.

I had always sort of known of the existence of cults—we passed the Hare Krishna temple on Avenue Road every time we drove to downtown Toronto—but I had no idea how many of them there were. The ones that piqued my interest when writing the final paper for the course were those preaching Satanism.

Wait! Before you click away, know that this is not about the fruits of my research—there were no word processors back then and the paper has long since been lost. No, this is about the research process, itself—consider it an un-bedtime story, if you will.

I set out to immerse myself in researching the topic of Satanic cults one day in the library, and the results were nothing but a comedy of errors, making my essay seem doomed from the start. Let me take you on a brief trip back to the late eighties for a moment, a time when cell phones and interconnected computers were still the stuff of science fiction. To do my research, I spent hours on end thumbing through actual card catalogues, wandering the shelves to search up periodical indices, and then photocopying the articles to take them home to read at my leisure. Expensive, yes, but the alternative would have been to camp out in the stacks, and it was more comfortable working at my own desk than sheltered in a carrel for days on end.

I started to get spooked when most of the books for which I searched were gone from the shelves. Not only that, but quite a few of the volumes containing periodical articles were missing, and articles had been missed during the curatorial process or ripped from its binding entirely. Before long, I realized writing the paper was going to be anything but a cake walk, more devil's than angel's food, if you'll pardon the pun. The final, spooky straw was when I was sitting in my dorm room in the wee hours of the night reading the Satanic Bible—an actual copy of the Satanic Bible—that I started to freak out and I realized the research process was doomed and I had to quit and just write with what I had.

My reason for telling this story is that this experience piqued an interest in me, something that still resonates to this day. Maybe that's why my latest novel, THE NEW RECRUIT, was something I had to write as a way to exercise my own demons with respect to the impression the experience left on me. In THE NEW RECRUIT, sixteen year old Judith Abraham is approached by a charismatic young man who, unbeknownst to her, indoctrinates her into his cult of ecoterrorists. Will Judith be able to escape before it's too late? Read THE NEW RECRUIT to find out.

Watch for INDOCTRINATION to read the next chapter in Judith's story.

Guest Post 3

Top 5 TV shows featuring cults

Ever since the Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion course I took in university, I've been fascinated by cults. The fact that a charismatic individual can present himself as all-seeing, all-knowing, and maybe even god-like, and is able to lure seemingly ordinary people from their friends and family to commit sometimes heinous acts is mind-boggling.

Emile Friedlander, in her article entitled "Why we can't stop watching TV shows about cults" proposes this is because cult leaders often "enact...the same evils and exploitations as the mainstream society to which he...offer[s] his followers an escape." Maybe that's why cults continue to thrive—they provide an escape from our busy, stressful worlds. In a *Psychology Today* article, <u>Adrian Furnham</u> suggests it is because cults offer "friendship, identity, respect and security...a world-view: a way of discerning right from wrong; good from bad...powerful incentives for all people whatever their background."

As the popular culture we consume is a reflection of our culture(s) and the human condition at large, it's not surprising that some television shows use cults as a backdrop for their stories. Here, then, are my picks for the top 5 intriguing shows about or with cults.

5. Aquarius

David Duchovny stars as a police detective who gets caught up in the cult of Charles Manson as he's trying to expose him. This edgy show dipped into history, blurring the line between reality. I've been a fan of Duchovny's since the original X-files series, so I kept tuning in, but I found the storyline slow and uninteresting at times. Still, it's an interesting supposition into what life might have been like for Manson's followers and those who interacted with him at the time.

4. The Cult

Using a house of mirrors structure, *The Cult* depicted a television series (surprisingly called "The Cult") that had ties to an actual cult. The show followed a journalist and a production researcher as they dug deeper into the phenomenon to rescue the journalist's brother from the cult tied to the television series. Though it sounds confusing to describe, *The Cult* (the real-life, CW television series) was intriguing in its complexity, though it may have proved too complex for many of its viewers as it was cancelled after only a single season.

3. The Following

Kevin Bacon plays former FBI agent Ryan Hardy who is targeted by cult leader Joe Carroll. Though he is in prison, his followers wreak havoc on the world, using the works of Edgar Allan Poe to justify their murder and mayhem. Hardy and his fellow agents get caught up trying to save the world from Carroll's teachings, risking the lives of themselves and those around them in the process. I liked *The Following*. There was something about James Purfoy's portrayal as the slimy, charismatic narcissist juxtaposed with Kevin Bacon's character who was coming apart at the psychological seams that was incredibly intriguing, and I was sorry to see it cancelled after only two seasons.

2. The Leftovers

Taking place three years after 2% of the world's population have just disappeared, the show follows the family of a police officer whose wife has joined a cult called the Guilty Remnant, one of many cults popping up after the event known as the "Sudden Departure". Having admittedly only seen 2 episodes

to date, I am looking forward to watching the rest of the series, if for no other reason than it stars Amy Brenneman of *Judging Amy* fame.

1. The Path

By far my favourite cult television show is *The Path*, starring Aaron Paul who leaves a cult and his wife and 2 children behind to try to find himself. The show follows Paul as he tries to put his old life behind, his wife as she ascends "the ladder" as a leader in the cult, and their children who struggle to find their place in the world. Though "Meyerism", the cult in *The Path* tries to do good in the world, the show demonstrates the old maxim of absolute power corrupting absolutely—Cal Roberts, Meyerism's current spiritual leader, takes risks to promote the cult that ultimately lead him and his followers down the wrong path.

In my new book, THE NEW RECRUIT, sixteen-year-old Judith Abraham meets Cain Barrett who recruits her into his social group. Little does she know, by following Cain, Judith will become a pawn in the group's ecoterrorist plot. Will Judith find a way out before it's too late?

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