

Book title: Skin Game

Author: Caroline Kettlewell

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Book Review by Mindy Nakamoto

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Skin Game is a memoir of Caroline Kettlewell, a self-cutter for over 20 years of her life. Kettlewell describes the thought process, detail, compulsion, and temporary relief she experienced by cutting. She also had other undiagnosed mental health issues: an eating disorder, ongoing body image distortions, anxiety, and depression. Throughout the memoir, Kettlewell expresses her thoughts and emotions candidly about how she viewed herself for most of her life.

Kettlewell's memoir gives readers a glimpse into the life and mind of a cutter. Her writing style is articulate and personal. Although her writing is reflective of past events, she writes in a blunt and honest manner and does not "smooth over" her distorted thoughts and perceptions. For readers who are unfamiliar with cutting, Kettlewell's descriptions and exactness of cutting may catch them off-guard. Cutting is a behavior that is often difficult for non-cutters to understand or empathize with. Self-cutting is a behavior that many people misconstrue as a failed suicide attempts or attention-getting behavior. For Caroline Kettlewell, and many others who cut, the behavior is actually a secretive form of self-preservation or self-treatment. Kettlewell puts into words the many obsessive thoughts and personal duress that lead a person to cutting, the relief felt by cutting, and how it addicts that individual. Kettlewell describes cutting similar to how other addicts describe their addictions.

The memoir is Kettlewell's history of cutting, temporarily quitting, and cutting again during her schooling, college, and young adulthood. During the latter part of the memoir, Kettlewell describes the relief that she received from SSRI antidepressants. For her, it seems that the SSRIs helped her deal with the anxiety and depression that often led to cutting episodes, though she acknowledged that it was not a cure. *Skin Game* gives the reader an idea of what it can be like in the mind, body, and life of someone who cuts by closely examining the life of one cutter.