



Ivy Briefs: True Tales of a Neurotic Law Student

Martha Kimes

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From first-day nerves to first-year grades, from bizarre job interviews to bar exam insanity, "Ivy Briefs" pulls back the curtain on the marbled halls of law school, revealing the absurdity often bubbling beneath the surface. Meet Martha Kimes: a naive small-town girl with strong neurotic tendencies who has (due to an inexplicable stroke of luck) been admitted to Columbia Law School. She's a Midwesterner in the middle of Manhattan, a student on the verge of a nervous breakdown. In her candid memoir -- the best of its kind since "One L" and the only one written by a woman -- Kimes makes her way through law school, doing battle with a memorable cast of characters:

The Sadistic Professor: Every law student's nemesis, the Sadistic Professor takes pity on no one. The Socratic Method is his favorite torture device, and he's got staying power that rivals that of the Energizer Bunny.

The Gunner: So enamored with the sound of his own voice, he finds it physically impossible to keep his hand from gunning up into the air every time a professor asks a question. Ten minutes into the start of the school year, everyone is already sick of the Gunner.

The Do-gooder: Lurking behind a kind exterior is a pit bull ready to pounce on those who don't plan to devote their legal careers to public service. But would she be so quick to categorize all those who dare go into corporate law as loathsome, soulless warriors for the devil if she, too, had student loans to repay?

The Boarding School Bastard: He wears a firmly pressed pin-striped oxford shirt and has a condescending attitude bigger than most European countries. By definition he is better than you because he went to Exeter. And he'll never let you forget it.

With sharp wit, dead-on aim, and a healthy dose of self-deprecation, Kimes proves that it is possible to survive law school with both your sense of humor and your sanity intact.

Ivy Briefs: True Tales of a Neurotic Law Student Details

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Author : Martha Kimes

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Kichi says

I absolutely love how Martha mocks the lofty 'legal profession' personae that some people feel so vainglorious about. She makes them look incredibly cheap. An accomplished Ivy League litigator herself, she casually brings home the point that you don't have to be a high rolling a-hole or a self-absorbed bish to actually be a lawyer. Seriously, you don't have to.

Stephanie Cianci says

As a recently Law School grad, I found this book to be 100000% accurate and anyone who wants to go to LS should read it. It doesn't matter, seemingly, if you go to Columbia or to XYZ Local Law School, there are some timeless parts of law school that never change. The writing was accurate, witty and easy to read.

Topher says

Not a bad read, light entertainment about what it would be like to be in Law School. I took the LSATs my senior year of college and did well. I really thought about it at the time, but, I was pretty sure I was going to be getting married (and I did) and wouldn't be able to support a family (which, thankfully, was a non-issue) if I was in law school. From time to time, I ponder this decision. Its one of many that I can't decide if I made the right choice or not.

Personally, I think it sounds a heck of a lot easier than the PhD - in some ways, temptingly so. Would a JD / PhD in Geology lead to interesting employment? And, I find myself in the same shoes I wore 12 years ago. Law school would be 3 more years of school after the PhD is done, 3 more years before I'd want to get married and have kids. I'd be pushing 40 at that point. And, unlike grad school (at least in the sciences), it'd be 3 years of tuition and no stipend or other sort of pay. Do I want to be 40, trying to start a family, and 100-150K in debt?

So, like I said, can't really say if I made the right choice or not when I chose to look for employment after college.....

Michael says

I absolutely loved this book...set from the perspective of a young law student, Ivy Briefs provides a humorous yet gritty account of the trials and tribulations of a modern day law student. If you're interested in Law or the legal process, buy this book. Now.

Dina says

Law School would not be for me. :(

Maureen says

I am a law student, and I laughed out loud throughout this book. It captures a lot of the characters of law school, a lot of the elitism at Ivy League law schools in particular, and some of the real experiences you may endure which help you realize how different professional school (and law school friends) are from your undergraduate friends. I notice many of the reviews seem to be from non-law-students. This is absolutely a book that you will enjoy more if you are in law school. Consider it a great beach read for your post-finals vacations.

Whitney says

Every 1L student should be required to read this book during winter break. The relief that comes from hearing the self-deprecating humor of a former student of law, for a student right in the midsts of it all, is an absolute necessity for any self-worth left after surviving the first semester.

Lesley says

When they say neurotic, they're not kidding around. What they don't tell you is that it's a little insightful but also quite humourous. Was an enjoyable read but I'm not sure if I was wanting to go to Law School (especially Columbia) that it would do anything but make me a little neurotic. At the end when she's sitting around in the LSAT prep course with others from Tier 4 schools, I had a huge grin on my face. Read it and find out why. It just goes to show that all colleges and universities AREN'T created equally.

Robert says

A number of people have written about this book as a portrait of law school and its depiction of the unique experiences of law students. It would be a mistake, however, for the potential reader to consign this entertaining and irresistible work to the niche of legal anecdotes.

Martha Kimes has written a memoir of her days in the high pressure world of Columbia Law School that transcends its specific setting. You don't have to be a law student to identify with her persistent feeling that she is in over her head and doesn't belong, nor to appreciate her tenacious pursuit of her goal despite her lingering self-doubts. Ultimately, Kimes has penned a quest story, a journey through hallowed halls peopled by characters familiar to anyone who has ever studied with the best and brightest and most competitive of their chosen field.

In the end, Martha Kimes finds success without pretention, and no one seems more surprised by that than herself. The book is like that as well. It's a fun and compelling journey through a lofty world most of us will

never experience, guided by the girl next door.

Erin Frost says

Clever and I learned a bit, though it was sometimes hard to identify with the protagonist

Sara says

I am about to begin my law school journey in August and thoroughly enjoyed this book. I cannot review the book based on accuracy but it is similar to OneL. I enjoyed that it depicted her entire law school career rather than just the first year.

Heather says

A fun, easy read for the aspiring law student.

DJ says

on the one hand, it's a relief there's something out there other than One L (or The Paper Chase... or Legally Blonde), and written by a married woman & U Wisconsin alumna. at some points her sense of humor really brings to light the loss of perspective that I've been told grips most law school students - at least at Ivy League schools. (I haven't been to law school myself though)

on the other hand... her values differ so vastly from mine that it was hard to maintain interest and finish the book. the message seems to be that material wealth and social status should be the primary focus not just of the law school student, but of every human being! she essentially scoffs at those who enter law school for any other reason.

I think readers should know what happened to her after the book ends. she became an attorney in the 90's, it's 2010. she no longer lives in NYC, she's raising two sons with her husband. according to a 2007 interview, she's Assistant General Counsel to the Make-a-Wish Foundation. I'd be interested to know to what degree her experiences after law school (or after finishing the book) may have changed her perspective. follow-up book? I'd buy it.

Debby says

Read this if you're going or have been to some law affiliated educational institution. It's funny but I think it'd be boring or lost on anyone without knowledge of law and how it is taught/studied.

"As it turned out, I hadn't really left Wisconsin for the Big City. I had left Wisconsin for what turned out to be a place just like my small town all over again." Reduction of the new to the old.

"...those people from the 'lesser schools' had been learning actual, practical, useful, bar-exam relevant law...While I had been learning how to think like a lawyer, they had been learning how to be lawyers. And that put them in far better shape than me." Rankings are propaganda, American education is a racket. Congratulations you've earned a degree in regurgitation and that pays zero. Can you walk the walk?

Sarah Brannon says

Meh. Definitely makes me happy that I never went the law school route. Although, I will say, after having spoken to lawyer friends I know who have experienced life in a mega law firm in cities like NYC and Chicago, apparently Kimes's own experience/depiction is very accurate.
