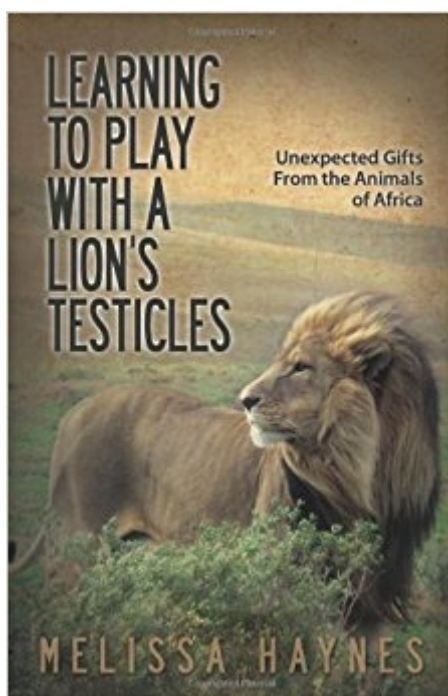


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# Learning To Play With A Lion's Testicles: Unexpected Gifts From The Animals Of Africa



## Synopsis

The cheeky title of Melissa Haynes's story of adventure in Africa, *Learning to Play with a Lion's Testicles*, earned the book some big publicity on NBC-TV/Late Night with Jimmy Fallon on September 4, 2013 where it topped the show's list of "Titles Not to Read" for September 2013. Melissa's book was also a big smash on the March 11, 2014 Ellen Show, where Ellen and guest Ricky Gervais highlighted the book throughout the entire hour. *Playing with a lion's testicles: An African saying that means to take foolhardy chances.* For the reader who has ever dreamed of going to Africa or knows the pain of loss and guilt, *Learning to Play with a Lion's Testicles* will fill your soul. Melissa, an exhausted executive from the city seeks meaning and purpose from her work volunteers for a Big Five conservation project in South Africa. Her boss, an over-zealous ranger, nicknamed the Drill Sergeant, has no patience for city folk, especially if they're women. He tries to send her packing on day one, but Melissa stands her ground with grit and determination, however shaky it may be. Conflict soon sets the pace with a cast filled with predatory cats and violent elephants, an on-going battle of wits with the Drill Sergeant. Even Mother Nature pounds the reserve with the worst storm in a century. But the most enduring and profound conflict is the internal battle going on within Melissa, as she tries to come to terms with the guilt surrounding her mother's death. When death grips the game reserve, it is the very animals Melissa has come to save that end up saving her.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Melissa Haynes created and orchestrated successful national campaigns for major corporate

players, opened and ran a prosperous business in Mexico. Her project management experience landed her a handful of lucrative Olympic contracts for the 2012 Winter Olympics. She ghostwrote a column about entertaining in the Vancouver Courier for years and a chapter in the award-winning chef's cookbook Inside the Recipe Box. She is a self-admitted chronic adventure junkie and travel addict. She is passionate about animals, adventure, conservation and scribbling. But her greatest accomplishment and adventure to date was volunteering in Africa and living to write about it.

Melissa Haynes, *Learning to Play with a Lion's Testicles* is a must read for anyone who loves animals, has turmoil in their family lives or likes nice writing. Haynes has brilliantly interwoven the great themes of life and literature—fear, love, guilt and passion—in her personal journey through her mother's death and her volunteer expedition to Africa where she is forced to look eye to eye with gorgeous and deadly animals daily. In this expedition cum memoir Haynes guides the reader without pushing, quite like the Drill Sergeant who masquerades as a ranger in his daily life, toward the center of her darkness and the beauty of her breakthrough—a slaughter. "I am covered in blood," she tells us, "but her triumph appears complete. The circle, she writes, "is finally closing." Funny, even though we take a personal safari and meet our demons every day, after struggling with Haynes through hers, she makes confrontation feel like a walk in the park.

Despite a few grammar problems, I loved this story. I had heard about it on Jimmy Fallon's show and was intrigued by the title. Melissa's journey really hit home for me. Fear, regret and guilt are not welcome in our lives. Our time here is so precious. Too precious to be wasted. Melissa shared her own experiences in overcoming those things and more. And I'll read it again and again.

The name of the book caught my attention. The beginning of the book also caught my attention because it was well written and humorous! Her experiences were very interesting and I learned something about South Africa too! I will encourage others to read this book

Such an amazing book! Inspiration for courage and standing up in the world.

This book was on a list of 'must reads' somewhere, so I looked it up on . The reviews looked

promising. I started reading and was soon disappointed. The character roles were not clear to me in the beginning and the writing was, as other reviewers mentioned, amateurish. I kept thinking this was written for young adults. I'm a bit more than a third of the way through the book and am contemplating not finishing it. I hate to do that but I'm still looking for the insightful journey I was promised. Laughing? Crying? I don't know about that. I may have furrowed my brow in confusion and I believe I rolled my eyes a few times. Does that count for emotional investment? But to be fair, I'm not done yet. Knowing me, I will finish what I started and see where the rest of the book takes me. It has to be on that 'must read' list for a reason right? I may be back with updates if I make it through.

I'm enjoying this book--especially how the author incorporates the flashbacks. I really like the humor as well. And when I feel discouraged about my day job, it's fun to read about somebody picking up balls of elephant dung with their hands!

Ms. Haynes' story resonates with anyone who needs to make a change, but few have her courage and her commitment. Risk empowers us as much as it can deflate us, so sticking with the program can yield all kinds of results. For young women, often carrying extra, unwanted baggage out into the world, this book will help steer you through the rough patches. An intimate voice and an intimate story with a unique perspective.

Got this for my sister in law as a gift. Got plenty of laughs.

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