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Crank
Hopkins, Ellen

Author: Hopkins is an award-winning poet and NYTimes best-selling author. In Crank she loosely recounts the disturbing story of her daughter's addiction to drugs.

Book. The story is told in free verse that often involves more than one person talking. The poems take on the visual appearance of the subject matter from time to time. This is the first of a planned trilogy, with *Glass* and *Fallout* rounding out the three. Her themes include prostitution, drug use and addiction, sex, and mental illness. Punctuation is optional since much is stream-of- consciousness writing that attempts to portray thoughts rather than traditional dialog or conversation.

Storyline: *Crank is* the first of a trilogy loosely based on her daughter's drug addiction. The novel is told in free verse though Kristina Georgia. Kristina is a gifted student who makes straight As and is everyone's delight. On a visit with her absentee father, Kristina's alter idem, Bree, takes over Kristina as Bree struggles with crank, aka "the monster." While the book does not intentionally glorify drug use, in the 544 pages of poetry, drugs are omnipresent, and getting high is often seen as either pleasurable or an escape from the drudgery of life. Drugs, sex, rape, pregnancy, and depression pervade the book.

Passages: "Leigh, caught up in a tempest of uncertain sexuality"

"Not quite silent, shouts obscenities just because they roll so easily off the tongue."

"I didn't understand the terminology of words like infidelity. Nor the implications of my father's addictions."

"He says, *Please?* She says, can't." He, *why not?* She, "I'm not that kind of a girl."

"It's a lie. He pulls her into his lap, silencing meager protests with full-lipped kisses."

"I've never been touched by a boy. Didn't want his face, burrowing into my hair, finding my neck. Tasting."

"I moved at a near sprint, drawn toward a symphony, primitive passion. Lovemaking. Wildcats mating, snarls at the joining, satisfied roars signaling completion."

"Been smokin' pot since I was 13, couldn't quit if I tried, besides why try? It makes me happy, mellow. Makes me eat too much, but oh, well. The white stuff was a different story. He'd stay up all night, eating zip, bowling and snorting line after line. Rent money right up the nose."

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“We used to do coke til “just say no” put the stuff out of reach. Now it’s crank. Meth. The monster. It’s a bitch on the body, but damn do you fly.”

“ I felt it with every nerve, every fiber, every molecule of my being. I wanted him to kiss me, with every nerve, every fiber, every molecule of my being. But I was scared to kiss him. Every nerve, every fiber, every molecule screamed! He leaned forward, parted those perfect lips.”

“Monday ducked Lince and made out at the park. Learned a thing or three. Tuesday took in a movie. Sat in the back row really made out. Thursday back to his apartment. Things got heavy. Heart-stomping heavy. Friday bummed a ride and went skinny-dipping up Red Rock Canyon. Saturday … sneaked out after dinner for a smoke and a taste of tongue.”

“*You’re gonna love it. You’ll see.* I watched him pour powder, yellowish white. *It will take you to heaven.* Use the blade to chop the chunks fine, draw two crooked lines. *Make you want to fly all night.* He held the mirror to my face, handed me a sawed-off straw, *Make you want to make love to me.* So he does, and it’s electric, high voltage, stun-gun strength desire melting sinew and bone. And he asks, *How ‘bout another line?”*

“It’s a matter of semantics. How does Webster define “all the way”? Does it mean, start to finish, an act of defilement, pure physicality, no choice but yes, no stopping now, no holds barred, everything off, nothing left to chance, all the way in?”

“It was hands, exploring taboo places. *Oh, God! You’re perfect!* Lips and tongue, not far behind. *Let me eat you up…* It was body rush after body rush, intensity building. *Touch me there.”*

“I got up, headed for the door, hoping Adam would try to stop me. But lust is stronger than love. And monster lust is unconquerable.”

“*I shouldn’t be tootin’. My boss almost caught me last time. Think I could convince her to try a line? I’d love to get her in bed.* Adam said, *Don’t blame you there, man. She’s a babe, for someone my mom’s age. I’d do her too. Think she’d go for a threesome?* Lince said, *Whoa, baby. Keep it in your pants, at least til I take it out of them. Anyway, three’s a crowd.”*

“The circle tightened, moving me back, away from the safety of the street. *Damn, you are a fine little piece.* Think. Think! But my brain moved too fast to process well. My eyes gave it away. *Yo. I think this bitch been cranking.* That was license enough. Bodies bumped, pushed me into a doorway, blocked escape. *Ever done a three-fer? You’re gonna love it, baby.*

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*“*Hands covered my mouth, rough, held my arms, strong, ripped my clothes, vicious. *No!* I screamed into dirty flesh. *Not this way!* Buttons burst, zippers opened, I closed my eyes, braced for pain.”

“I needed food, sleep, but the monster denied every bit of it. Playing wasted couch potato was all that I could ask for. And more. Fading speed buzz, escalating alcohol, it was all I could do to stay upright. So I didn’t.”

“Somewhere between the transvestite who slept with his (her?) mother’s boyfriend and the perky blond (transvestite?) evening weathergirl.”

[Friend Lince attempts suicide.]

[After seeing Lince on the sidewalk, blood pouring from her head] “And all that made me really really need a line.”

“He never even asked if I enjoyed spending time with the monster. He only wanted to know if Buddy and I had done the dirty, perhaps right then between his own disgusting sheets. His question reeked of voyeurism.”

“in sincere need of a good blow instead, I let the snot drip.”

“He pulled a bindle from his pocket, tapped the sparkly powder inside. *Cooked up fresh yesterday*. The monster stormed Bree’s door. *That’s my girl. Let’s forget the bullshit and fly*. We soared through the night, and beyond daylight. *Funny thing about the monster. The worse he treats you, the more you love him*. I knew already that had to be true. Blood geysered in my veins. Thoughts stampeded across my brain. Together, ecstasy.”

“Adam took me in his arms kisses melting hurt, forgotten ice Unhurried hands lifted my shirt *Pump Pump*. *Pump* rose up in my heart. And a bit farther south the monster-fueled inferno built thigh to belly button Adam’s mouth moved lower, inch by trembling inch I was ready to do it oh so ready. Right that very instant….”

“Flustered, flush, he swore he didn’t care, pouted and pleaded and cajoled. But I was not about to lose my virginity in a fountain of menstrual fluid.”

“Translation: We really should spend one evening together. The fridge is empty again. He’s not over there boinking you, is he?”

“Translation: [Lince] Looks like she’ll survive, with or without a brain. Are you still on your period? I’m on my way to pick up a bindle.”

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"[D]espite Scott smelling depressingly clean, while my own speed-induced body odor reeked even stronger, despite my mom insisting I looked fabulous, having dropped four or five pounds, all the while wondering if anorexia had arisen…."

[Kristina/Bree gets tattoo with unsterile needle which becomes infected and must take antibiotics to cure infection.]

"The Reno crank scene, or what I knew of it. Legit entertainment --music, magic, comedy clubs. Legal and semilegit – gaming, sports betting, light night carousing. Legal, semi-immoral – adult revues (aka "titty shows") gay clubs, strip clubs, swap clubs, beyond-the-city-limits prostitution. Such activities, 24-7, practically invited the monster's participation."

[Adam stays behind and hooks up with Lince and tells Kristina/Bree it's okay for her to do the same.]

[Brendan, a new boyfriend in Reno, rapes Kristina/Bree, and she later discovers she's pregnant.]

"Met him and what? Dressed up like Halloween, prayed to the devil, and sacrificed hoofed animals? *Shared a bong, said he was creepy*. Major understatement, if the dude was really for real? If pot made you buddy up with Satan, you could keep it! *But don't worry. Evan's long gone*. I reached for a whiff of courage. *Far fuckin' out! Beer's in back."*

"I swear, every guy you kiss, is so different. Each has a unique essence, each a significant style. Brendan was eau de lavender, vanilla, Heineken, Crest, and top-notch speed. His style was *"no is not an acceptable answer*. He was Bree, with a penis."

[Poem about vaginas follows.]

"I looked [mother] in the eye and for the first time in my life, told my mother, "Fuck you."

[After this declaration, Kristina/Bree and her mother fight and cry.]

[Adam and Kristina/Bree discuss their lovers, but Kristina/Bree is not happy with the arrangement. More dope follows.]

"He pulled out a bindle, which looked a bit short and a six-pack of beer. For the next twenty minutes, we snorted and drank, climbing to a very tall buzz. We talked and joked and giggled. And it all seemed just like it should. Until it didn't anymore."

[Poem, "It Started with a Kiss" on page 341, describes the "crank-revved" rape scene: "I laid there, sobbing, as he worked and sweated over me. Stoked by the monster, it took him

a long time to finish. *Give me a line, I'll give you an encore.* He pulled away, sticky and bloody. Throbbing inside and out, I didn't move, didn't dare look him in the eye."]

"*When it starts to smoke, suck fast. Hold it in as long as you can.* Robyn held a match just below the yellow powder. It browned, bubbled, smoked. A waft traveled up the V. *Here it comes. Don't let it get away. Oh, God, that smells good!* It tasted nasty. But it took me higher than ever before. The monster pirouetted in my brain."

"*I got the E. It's critical—pure MDMA, the real deal. But you don't have to try it if you don't want to. Speed, with a hint of psychedelia? Going primeval, no fear, no pain? I want to do everything with you."*

"Chase Wagner, the most beautiful man in the whole wide world (despite what the rest of the world could see), showed me exactly what making love should be."

"When someone offered a second dose of birthday E, I said, "Absolutely." And when someone broke out the crank, I was ready to snort up, to smoke up, to shoot up. I should have been scared to death. But ecstasy dissolves all fear."

"It was a day of firsts: giving myself willingly to ecstasy. To a man. A needle. It didn't hurt, not at all. The sting was rather pleasant, like excising an ingrown toenail. Now take the rush of snorting, multiplied by 100, you get smoking. To find mainlining, you approach infinity."

"I spent the day: Throwing up. Eating. Emotional. Dazed. Lost. Alone. Finally, I went to the pay phone and made two calls. One to Planned Parenthood. The other to Chase."

[Chase takes Kristna/Bree to Planned Parenthood after declaring his love for her and asking her to marry him. Planned Parenthood description follows. She learns that Chase is NOT the father, Brendan, the rapist, is. Kristna/Bre decides to keep the baby, but her drug use threatens abnormalities.]

[Now pregnant] I did slip once or twice. One tiny snort was all it took to satisfy desire so deep it snatched my breath away. But don't worry. I swear it was only a time or two. You won't tell, will you?"

[Baby is born but at 17 Kristna/Bree finds motherhood difficult. Her mother is good with the baby. The coda: "Crank is more than a drug. It is a way of life. You can turn your back. But you can never really walk away. The monster will forever speak to me. And today, it's calling me out the door."