



## Paper Souls

*Allie Burke*

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From the author of the bestselling genre-defining *Enchanters* series, comes a new literary tour de force about Emily, a young woman balancing two worlds between her fingertips: the one that is real to her and the one that is real to everyone else...

The question is: which one will she choose?

Never romanticizing what it means to be a twenty-something schizophrenic in a world broken by normalcy and half-baked fairytales, Allie Burke's latest novel unites Emily and her world at large spanning from the streets of Russia, to the sheets of her bed, to the idiosyncratic comfort she gets from worlds that don't exist at all.

Woven with angst and darkness, bursting with heartache, Paper Souls tells of the irreparably damaged and broken, and how they survive.

## **Paper Souls Details**

Date : Published September 8th 2014 by Booktrope Editions

ISBN : 9781620154830

Author : Allie Burke

Format : Paperback 126 pages

Genre : Mental Health, Mental Illness, Contemporary, Adult

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## From Reader Review Paper Souls for online ebook

### Melanie Cesa says

When I finished this story, I had chills. The intricacy of this story weaves it's way around you. It's very intimate. You become Emily, you feel her emotions, hear her thoughts, and see everything through her eyes.

"Life wasn't perfect, but it wasn't supposed to be. Eternal beauty could not exist if it were not for the face of the fatal flaw."

Emily's journey is raw and complex. There's heartache, friendship, betrayal, loss, and love. We aren't told what schizophrenia is, we experience it. The story is stunning and the writing incredible. I found it very different and almost lyrical. It's direct, straight to the point, and makes you feel so much.

Each character is perfectly placed throughout the story with so much meaning and purpose. The twists that happen are unexpected and there are times you are questioning what is real and what isn't. Could this really be happening?

A brilliantly written, powerful story that will stay with you.

"Do you notice how the sane person has been committed due to a suicide attempt, and the psychotic girl is the one saving him?"

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### Dennis Sharpe says

Breathtakingly Overpowering!

Damn.

There is an electric spark to the words contained in this text. A vibrant shocking rhythm that draws you on to keep reading as the time, the hours, even the world around you melts away and you are with Emily. You can see in and through and around her in a visceral, living, breathing way that is rare to find in most books.

The subject matter, and blunt 'in-your-face' delivery, are both refreshing and unexpected. The chaos of the just being in Emily's world is riveting and a bit frightening.

This is 126 pages of 'can't-put-it-down'... 'punch-you-in-the-face'... raw... emotional... sexual... painful... furious... funny... frightening... force.

I wish I could think clearly enough to articulate all that this book brought up in me, but I am still awash in it. This is a book you cannot pass up.

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## **Dane Cobain says**

Disclaimer: While I aim to be unbiased, I received a copy of this for free to review.

Where do you begin with a book like this? It's pretty clear from the start that you're dealing with something special here, and if you like reading about drugs, madness, violence and the darker sides of the human race then you're going to love this.

Paper Souls follows the story of a schizophrenic called Emily who falls for the singer in a band, and whose life is changed forever. In fact, there are two sides of the story which perfectly echo her unusual mind, and it's a pleasure to read.

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## **Nicole Lyons says**

Paper Souls took my breath away, and I inhaled it within hours of its arrival. The only way I could have gotten Allie's exquisite words in faster was if I had eaten the book. One week after I had closed Paper Souls, I opened it back up again, and I walked the gut wrenchingly beautiful journey that Allie wrote while in the depths of a schizophrenic psychosis.

I'm not going to give you any spoilers, I'm just going to say that there is something in this book for everyone and what you take away from it may surprise you. Allie Burke is phenomenal, and this book has the potential to save your life. Paper Souls is one of my top five all time favourite books, I highly recommend it to everyone.

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## **Heather Faville says**

I am fast becoming quite a fan of writer, Allie Burke. I have read/reviewed her first three books, The Enchanter's Series, and enjoyed watching her power over the written word improve with each new book. Paper Souls is no exception, in fact, for such a young author writing in....well, it's hard to categorize what genre this book truly fits into, I would be hard pressed not to use the word, masterful. Yes, yes I will use that word, you see this book is not like many out there on the market. Rarely will you find a story whose main character has schizophrenia. And when/if you do find such a book, rarely is the character seen in a positive light. They are either seen as creepers, scary serial killer types or played off as a character in need of your sympathy. With Paper Souls, Allie has MASTERFULLY taken us into the mind, the psyche, of Emily Colt and given us somewhat of a glimpse of what a person with her illness can go through on a day to day basis.

Our main character, of course, is Emily Colt. She is a beautiful young woman, owns her own bookstore, which solidifies her book nerd credentials, part time drug user and just happens to have schizophrenia. She has friends, but keeps them at a distance never allowing to let them get too close. We learn of Emily's family and where she comes from. We are, also, given, more than a glimpse at Emily and her lovers. Paper Souls shows us Emily's world as she searches to find some normalcy, some acceptance for who she is without fear and without hiding who she is...and maybe, just maybe some inner peace.

Paper Souls is a simple and fairly quick read, but that by no means, means that it is a simple story. Each of the characters, besides Emily, is skillfully developed and I do not feel any are under or overused. All are relevant and allowed the time needed to "get to know them" so that we understand their relationship to/with Emily. Allie Burke gives us a glimpse into the thought process of a character who, while she has schizophrenia, she does not let it define her. She beautifully captured the raw range of emotions that we all go through, but, I feel, a person, in this case Emily, with this illness must feel tenfold...love, lust, anger, fear, heartbreak, etc. As more is learned about Emily, a strange feeling begins to take hold....like there are two stories going on at the same time and you're not quite sure which is reality and which is in your head. I'm not sure, but I believe that is what it can be like for someone with a mental illness and if that is the case, then bravo to Allie Burke for pulling that feeling off on paper.

Yes, I highly recommend Paper Souls to be added to your MUST READ list. Better yet, don't add it, just click on the cover image above and go buy it....now. It's a wonderful story that makes you think, makes you feel and will stick with you days and I daresay weeks after you finish reading it. A well done tribute to those who suffer from any form of mental illness.

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Seriously... just... Damn.

There is an electric spark to the words contained in this text. A vibrant shocking rhythm that draws you on to keep reading as the time, the hours, even the world around you melts away and you are with Emily. You can see in and through and around her in a visceral, living, breathing way that is rare to find in most books.

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### **Jennifer Ricketts (Donnie Darko Girl) says**

I received a review copy of this book for my stop on the blog tour at Donnie Darko Girl.

Imagine if dreams were tangible, allowing you to walk through them at will. Reading Paper Souls was like that for me - I felt like I was walking in someone else's dreams, namely those of Emily Colt, the protagonist. Without using quotation marks, the dialogue seemed muted, further lending to the novel's dreamlike quality, and I liked the way it read.

Emily is a character I'll still be thinking about long after the end of this book. She's certainly flawed, but we

all are and this made her even more likable to me. It's annoying to read about a protagonist who's made out to be basically perfect. Emily has been in some extremely dangerous situations where, really, she's lucky to still be alive. Anything could have happened to her those times.

I have my B.A. in Psychology, though I'm currently not doing anything with my degree, and I was always fascinated by schizophrenia in my classes. Schizophrenia is easily misunderstood, and the media doesn't help with the general public's confusion surrounding it. This illness is complex and multi-layered, just like Emily. Allie Burke handles this topic with the utmost sensitivity while simultaneously laying bare the illness and what it can do to one's quality of life.

If you've been curious about schizophrenia and want to find out more about it without having to read a textbook, I highly recommend Paper Souls. The way this book is written is exquisite, and I could never hope to come close to adequately describing how beautiful and utterly heartbreakingly this story is. You'll have to read it and find out for yourself.

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### **Lindsay Bassett says**

At first, when I was being pulled along in Paper Souls, my mind wanted to pick apart what was real and what wasn't. I knew the character was Schizophrenic, so it felt like I was in a murder mystery. Except, instead of "who done it" I was trying to figure out who was real. I thought, like a murder mystery, there would be a big unveiling and I'd go "Ha, I knew it the whole time!"

The thing is, by the time Emily arrived in Russia, I didn't want to know anymore. Some of the most likely candidates for non-real things were some of my favorite parts. I appreciated who Emily was, intricate and a creature of her own experiences. It was then I realized, what does it matter what is real and what isn't? I experienced the story differently after that.

I've seen this book described in other reviews as heart wrenching, and insightful into the life of a schizophrenic. Insightful, maybe, to someone that's never had a break with reality. Heart wrenching, maybe, to someone that's lived an easy life. Or maybe I've lived an easy life and my heart is just not so easily wrenched. After all, I am living in a first world country. Regardless, those weren't the things that I felt touched by in this book.

No, what struck me about this book was it was a damned good story, with a damned good writing style and damned good characters. I normally stick to my standby genres of fantasy, sci-fi, historical fiction, and historical non-fiction. Most fiction books outside of those categories get a yawn out of me for lacking anything out of the ordinary. Not this book. I read it today, only taking a break for grocery shopping and the eating of soy cookie dough ice cream. No yawning, but much quick page turning. The main character, Emily, is still on my mind: A beautiful, intricately written character that I can add to my memory banks of characters that I consider as real as friends. Thanks Allie Burke for a great read.

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### **Myra Espino says**

4.5\*

Paper Souls, an interesting and nice read.  
The story and characters are good.  
I love the story's concept and it's flow.  
From simple to complex, the story just keeps getting better and better.  
The characters, they are great.  
Especially Emily.... She's an interesting character.  
A woman with a complex personality.  
With Emily's condition, she faced different challenges that will make the story more interesting that will brought the story to the next level.  
The story, it's amazing!  
I love how I was intrigued on what will happen next to Emily and her friends.  
As the story goes, Emily's journey just keeps bringing the story more exciting.  
Many unexpected things happened in this book that made me like the story more.  
Ms. Allie did an amazing job in making this book full of unexpected things and interesting read.  
Loved it!

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### **Marni Mann says**

I read Paper Souls weeks ago and I still haven't fully processed the power behind that story. One of the most unique, tortured tales I've ever read. I feel like my mind has been fucked, stomped on, and delicately kissed. Allie Burke knows how to write dark, but this was dark at its rawest form, emotional, even fragile at times, before it suddenly stabbed you back into reality. Speechless--in the best possible way.

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### **Jerry says**

Before I start the review let me set context. First, a 5 star from me means that this is a book I would recommend to anyone to read (over 18) regardless of what genre they typically read. Second, this is a review, not a book report. If you want a plot summary, you won't get it here. Third, this review is for an advanced copy, so the one you read might have a few subtle edits.

This is a difficult review to write because the book contradicts itself. Masterfully. It is short book and it reads easy, but it is not an easy read or short on development of the characters. What makes the book read so easy is the craft of Ms. Burke. Her words draw you in, the rhythm she creates lulls you just long enough and then the tempo changes. Within each section she is true to the tempo, that underlying rhythm, but you are on edge because you know another change is coming. That suspense for what will happen next is not overused. It is a cloth woven with the temperament of the characters and the vivid imagery she creates. It is funny that very little of the environment is described, yet I always felt like my mind was fully in whatever space the characters occupied. There are twists to the plot that do not follow a typical, umm, I'm not sure how to classify the genre of this book. It is its own type. The plot twists don't go where you would expect them, but neither are they contrived. As each new scene unfolds you gain more insight into Emily, the main character, and the people whose lives intersect with hers. It is no spoiler that Emily has schizophrenia. I've read some novels where a character had this disorder and they were portrayed as in one state or another - normal or serial killer-like. This is the first book I have read where I felt what it must be like to have that constant

presence of a shadow whispering to you from a dark corner. There are times when Emily steps outside of herself and sees her actions as if watching a play. In the hands of Ms. Burke, Emily shows us what it must really be like to be inside a mind that shares its space with other consciousness. The twists and turns in the plot and interactions are a reflection on the conflict and semi-reality that Emily experiences. Her anomie is as much an outcome of her clear perception of those around her as it is of the affliction she has. In order to move forward she has to stay disengaged enough not to get pulled into her own deeper conflicts.

Emily has a lot to deal with. People around her are just as broken as she is, but in different ways. All are three dimensional and feel very real. What Ms. Burke does with elegance and grace is weave the lifelines of these interesting people together into a tapestry that has weight and substance. To say the work is character driven sounds almost trite. Without the characters there would be no story. That sounds even more trite. It is also why I would recommend this to any of my friends or acquaintances. The pages drip of human sweat and sexuality, of our duplicity and self centeredness, of our anger and kindness. Without preaching a deeper literary theme, she captures the essence of the human condition. How we find strength even when we are frail. In its own way this is a very positive and optimistic work.

Let me close with saying that reading the words was a treat. Emily is a complex person surrounded by complex people and having to deal with complex issues. Yet, Ms. Burke conveys all of that complexity in prose that is clean and stripped of excess. That takes immense talent.

Read this book. By the end of the first paragraph you will be hooked. Don't stop there, it only gets better as it shifts and turns through the lives of the characters.

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### **Cathi Shaw says**

The book was ... just ... wow! I received this book from the author for an honest review. And my pile of books to be reviewed as huge. So it sat in the pile forgotten for a while until last night when I opened it and I COULD NOT PUT IT DOWN.

The main character, Emily, is a complex, fully developed woman. Struggling with mental illness her story is aching and intriguing. Even though her choices and decision may not make sense to the reader, one can't help cheering her on.

Filled with twists and turns that keep the pacing of this book perfect, I was enthralled from beginning to end and will definitely be looking for more from Allie Burke. What an incredible read.

I will be recommending this book to all my adult friends this holiday season. Definitely a book worth reading!

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### **TL Jeffcoat says**

It's not often I run across a book that moves me. I don't mean that as just emotionally, but spiritually. I have to say that I haven't read a story that hit me that deep since reading the biblical verse where Jesus saved a prostitute from an angry mob and made it a lesson to not judge people. I won't get all spiritual in this review,

but I just have to make it clear, I was deeply moved, and I can't stop thinking about Emily Colt.

I'll break it down without spoiling any of it. Emily Colt is the female lead in *Paper Souls*. A strong character, with a sometimes uncommon outlook on life. She is surrounded by both loving and not so loving people who push and pull on her for their own selfish reasons, much like everyone else in the world. What stands Emily apart from most everyone else in the world is that she's schizophrenic. I loved how most of the book refers to her "illness" but never goes into too much detail until about halfway. When the reader finally gets a glimpse of not just her narrative mind but the voices that talk over her own narrative, its eye opening as to why she hides from the world. For those of you who know nothing about Schizophrenia, you should look up a video that CNN did with Anderson Cooper. It was called "Anderson Cooper tries a schizophrenia simulator" and is one of the best real life tests I've ever seen about what it's like to be schizophrenic.

I do not pretend to completely understand the experience of one who is schizophrenic. I hear several voices in my head, but when I tell them to be silent, they do, and when I focus on something, they assist me with multiple points of view. That might not be a normal thing either, but my voices work with me as a team and I can easily tune them out when I need to. That is not the case for someone who is schizophrenic. One of my most favorite people in the world was my grandmother, who had been a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic. I never understood what that meant, until I saw her with my own eyes, completely overwhelmed by her voices. It was terrifying to see someone you love suddenly be someone you don't recognize.

Getting back to the book, Emily Colt has learned to live with the voices, and she has a successful life, but things happen, her life takes a few strange turns, and as you follow the story through her eyes, you will question what is real and what isn't. In the end, it doesn't matter. The true lesson in this book is about the human soul.

Allie's writing is very smooth and the flow of the story expertly handles the chaotic life of Emily Colt in a way that makes it easy to read and enjoy, but it will tug on the heart strings and really dig deep into you. Superb. One of the best books I've read all year. That's saying a lot because this isn't my usual genre, but finding out the main character was schizophrenic drew me to it.

My hat is off to all those who have to live with schizophrenia and still find a way to make a life for themselves. This book is an absolute must read. Allie Burke just earned a new diehard fan, I will go out and find the rest of her books, no matter what they are about, and I'm going to read them. I will also be purchasing this book for my collection and to support this writer. This review is based off of an advanced copy for reviewing.

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### **Wendy Garfinkle says**

A heart-wrenching, beautifully woven tale of survival, Allie Burke's *Paper Souls* is different from most books I've read – not only in subject matter, but also in structure.

The structure puts me in mind of Tahereh Mafi's *Shatter Me Series*. Stark and lyrical. I love this style of prose. It's unpredictable and often irreverent, thumbing its proverbial nose at the reader's expectations of what comes next.

The subject matter – Schizophrenia and how one woman refuses to be defined by it – is raw, jagged, and thought-provoking.

Allie by turns caresses your senses with the sensual, loveable side of Emily Colt, then stabs you with Emily's sharp, biting wit and – sometimes violent – confrontations with those who have wronged her.

Emily is a multi-layered protagonist who is determined to live life on her own terms. Love her, hate her, Emily Colt is a character you'll not soon forget, and Allie Burke is an author worth reading.

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### **Melanie Surani says**

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

It took me a while to figure out what I wanted to say about this book.

1. It's very well written
2. Some of the characters and situations are confusing

While early on in the novel I was thinking, "I am definitely going to have to read this again," I'm not sure it's supposed to be 100% clear. The main character (and the author) is diagnosed with schizophrenia -- that alone made me interested in reading this book because I (like most people, I'm sure) have no idea what that entails. Because the disease involves hearing voices and hallucinating people and situations, one has to wonder if some of the characters and plot points in this story actually happened. The book is an emotional roller coaster and it's not always pretty.

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