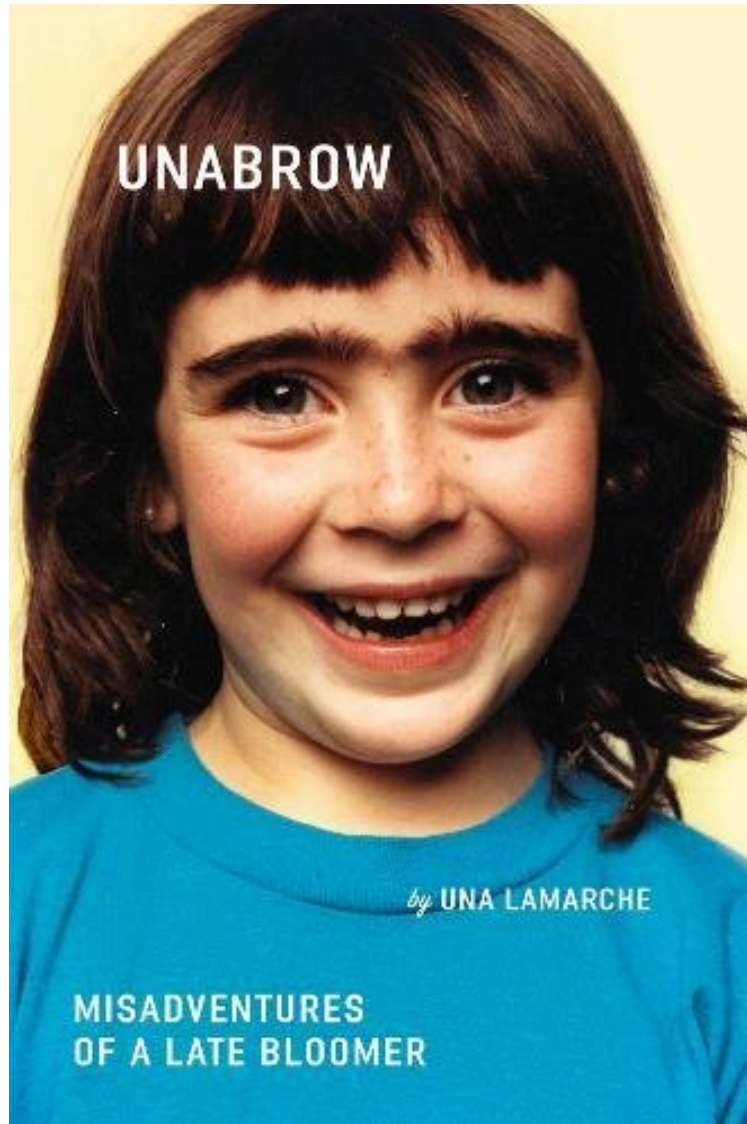


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Unabrow: Misadventures of a Late Bloomer

Una LaMarche

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#416942 in Books Ingramcontent 2015-03-31 2015-03-31Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.00 x .57 x 5.271, .46 #File Name: 0142181447272 pagesUnabrow Misadventures of a Late Bloomer | File size: 54.Mb

Una LaMarche : Unabrow: Misadventures of a Late Bloomer before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unabrow: Misadventures of a Late Bloomer:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The cover is the funniest part of this book.By EloiseAfter the first couple of chapters, the book read like a collection of blogs. She goes from childhood to what it's like having a baby, then back to teenage hood. She is at least a generation younger than I am so I found many references to movies, music, popular figures, etc. unfamiliar so I imagine younger readers will relate better. The generation gap was most telling in

her description of early motherhood. She may have loved her child, but she certainly didn't enjoy him. The lament about never peeing or bathing alone again made me shake my head. The second mention made me think it was not mere hyperbole, and came off as whining. I guess play pens, cribs, and infant seats no longer exist. The self-deprecating humor didn't always work for me, but there were definitely funny moments. The author tended to wallow in her descriptions as much as she did in her husband's sweat pants. I loved the part that she and her spouse had ruined each other for anyone else. I suspect all couples use their common history for silly gross reference only they understand. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must read for everyone!! By Dr. Stephanie Must read for anyone who ever had a time where they felt they didn't fit in, and for those who made it harder on those people. Nice memoir. Could be slow at times (about 5%), and then too fast at others (95%) - It only felt fast, because those sections were fabulously written and edited. These parts of the book were great and I wanted more of the good stuff. I would have given 5 stars if it was edited better. Must read for everyone: the people who had an awkward childhood (in Una's case also adulthood) can gain insight; those of us who had it easy can learn to have empathy for those that have a little (or a lot) trouble fitting in. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. and funny, but then it just gets weird - the ... By gbergey Starts out OK, and funny, but then it just gets weird - the most interesting/funny parts were in the "look inside" feature - F word is used way too frequently IMO. Would not buy again, or recommend to a friend!

In between highbrow and lowbrow, there's Unabrow. "Take the cast of 'Bridesmaids,' add a dash of pre-pubescent Eugene Levy, and you have the humor stylings of Una LaMarche."—Ann Imig, founder of Listen to Your Mother As a girl, Una LaMarche was as smart as she was awkward. She was blessed with a precocious intellect, a love of all things pop culture, and eyebrows bushier than Frida Kahlo's. Adversity made her stronger...and funnier. In Unabrow, Una shares the cringe-inducing lessons she's learned from a life as a late bloomer, including the seven deadly sins of DIY bangs, how not to make your own jorts, and how to handle pregnancy, plucking, and the rites of passage during which your own body is your worst frenemy. For readers who loved Let's Pretend This Never Happened and for fans of Mindy Kaling, Tina Fey, and Amy Schumer, Unabrow is the book June Cleaver would have written if she spent more time drinking and less time vacuuming.

"Hilarious, poignant, deceptively 'light'... well worth reading for the reflection and laughter it provokes in equal and utterly enjoyable measures."—Chicago Tribune "A combo of quirky humor and rich fantasy life throughout this collection of 20 essays, which are interspersed with hilarious graphs, cartoons, and line drawings... LaMarche is entertaining and fresh; readers will want to savor this sassy, offbeat commentary."—Publishers Weekly Praise for Una LaMarche: "Hilarious and spot-on."—F*cked in Park Slope A best humor blog of the year, 2013—Babble.com "A hilarious memoir. With an impeccable sense of humor, LaMarche guides us through her misadventures and serves up invaluable insights."—Sarah Barron, author of People Are Unappealing "If you have suffered the indignity of growing up female in America, you will love Una LaMarche. She is the kind of lady who will admit that she typed "BUTT DISAPPEARED!" into Google, and that is the kind of lady who deserves your time."—Jessica Grose, author of Sad Desk Salad "Take the cast of 'Bridesmaids,' add a dash of pre-pubescent Eugene Levy, and you have the humor stylings of the inimitable Una LaMarche. I adore this book."—Ann Imig, founder of Listen to Your Mother "Una LaMarche owns up to everything you probably still wouldn't admit—and she does it with laugh-out-loud style."—Amy Wilson, author of When Did I Get Like This? About the Author UNA LAMARCHE is an award-winning journalist and blogger. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and son. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. UNABROW Photo by Jeff Zorabedian UNA LAMARCHE is a writer and unaccredited Melrose Place historian who lives in Brooklyn with her husband, son, and hoard of vintage Sassy magazines. She is the author of two young adult novels, Five Summers and Like No Other, and remains a member in good standing of the Baby-sitters Club Fan Club. Lena Dunham once favorited one of her tweets. Praise for Unabrow "This book had me laughing out loud on every page. Una LaMarche has mastered the art of self-effacement."—Mara Wilson, actress and author of (K) for Kid "Una LaMarche owns up to everything you probably still wouldn't admit—and she does it with laugh-out-loud style."—Amy Wilson, author of When Did I Get Like This? "Una LaMarche is a delightful writer: funny, irreverent, with a sweet, good heart underneath it all."—Sara Benincasa, author of Agorafabulous! "After spending my life believing I was the only freak ever to have one boob grow in months before the other, along comes Una LaMarche to let me know I was never alone. For anyone who's ever eaten an elderly piece of candy found under the stove, or who is still upset that Billy and Alison never got married on Melrose Place, you will recognize yourself in these pages. Part confessional, part manual, Unabrow is all hilarious."—Caissie St. Onge, co-executive producer of Watch What Happens Live! Published by the Penguin Group Penguin Group (USA) LLC 375 Hudson Street New York, New York 10014 USA | Canada | UK | Ireland | Australia | New Zealand | India | South Africa | China penguin.com A Penguin Random House Company First published by Plume, a member of Penguin Group (USA) LLC, 2015 Copyright © 2015 by Una LaMarche Penguin supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are

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CONTENTS OR, A CHRONOLOGY OF ERRORS (Someday, this will explain a lot.)—Fran Lebowitz ACKNOWLEDGMENTS There are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of people who I need to thank for helping this book come to fruition, because based on my understanding of the ramifications of time travel (which itself is based on repeated viewings of *Back to the Future* and *Back to the Future Part II*), every single decision and human interaction of mine up to this point has gotten me where I am today, and if I were to go back and try to change even the most minuscule detail, like, say, to urge my seventeen-year-old, prom-bound self to reconsider her unintentional geisha makeup and the case of Zima she would later drink in a stranger's hammock, then I might come back to 2015 to find myself missing limbs, or working on a cruise ship. So thank you to everyone I have ever met, bumped into, or ducked into an alley to avoid. A few, however, deserve special mention. In rough chronological order: Thank you to my parents, Ellen and Gara, for bringing me into the world, fostering my twin loves of writing and excessive TV watching, and continuing to support me even after it became clear that I would probably write a book about you later in life; to my beloved sister, Zoe, for putting up with my diva behavior on family road trips, keeping me sane(ish) for twenty-seven years and counting, and agreeing to take care of my facial hair should I ever find myself on life support; to my extended family (both blood and marriage) and my incredible friends, for their encouragement and enthusiasm; to my inimitable agent, Brettne Bloom, who changed my entire life with a single e-mail, and who worked tirelessly with me to get a proposal into shape; to my amazing editor and biggest cheerleader, Becky Cole, for making me feel witty and hilarious while simultaneously seeing all of my crutches and flaws with a gimlet eye and gently plucking them out like stray eyebrow hairs; and to the fantastically talented editorial and production team at Plume, for making this book everything I ever hoped it could be. Finally, to Jeff and Sam, the loves of my life: without you, I am nothing. This book is for you. You may also share it with your future therapists in the interest of saving time. (You're welcome!) INTRODUCTION When we were three, my best friend Salvador and I used to play a game we called "look in butt." It was doctor, essentially, but as we had no interest in heartbeats or hearing tests, we chose to focus solely on the anus. One of us would bend over and the other one would conduct the examination. What we were looking for, I can't say—stray He-Man figures? lost crayons?—but we took our work seriously. For years afterward I assumed that look in butt was consensual—the only thing that tempered the humiliation of its existence was Sal's complicity—but my father finally broke it to me that he'd overheard us playing it once, and that Sal, as he'd removed his underwear, had turned and said to me gently, "Una . . . this is wrong." My small, naked friend's words have echoed in my head countless times since—when I attempted to fracture my own ankle in order to get out of track practice; as I was trying on my first boss's ten-year-old daughter's shorts while alone in their apartment; when I opened my college minifridge to reveal nothing but a bottle of gin and a carton of milk, and I thought to myself, Well . . . why not?—but they haven't made much of a dent in my track record of personal shame and flawed judgment. "Una . . . this is wrong," I'll think. But then I'll do it anyway because, sometimes, you can't tell what the right thing is until you do the wrong thing. And the silver lining about missteps is that they can set us on a better path. We examine them closely and try to come away with something, if not profound, then at least enlightening. In August 2009, I was newly married and still on birth control but had the poor judgment to watch the movie *My Life* while drinking a bottle of vinho verde. For those unfamiliar with the plot, it's a 1993 Michael Keaton vehicle about a man with terminal cancer who makes instructional videos for his unborn son. The poster shows a baby's hand reaching out for a grown-up hand, and the tagline is "Don't watch this movie with someone who is made uncomfortable by hysterical weeping." I decided that I should start keeping a list of lessons for my future children, not only in the case of my untimely and extremely heart-wrenching demise, but also just, you know, in case I got lazy or forgot. I had done a study on memory in college and learned that every time your brain accesses a long-term memory—say, that time you tried to somersault off the top bunk into the laundry basket—it gets altered slightly before it's filed away again, so that, little by little, stories change, and their morals get murkier. I wanted to get all my hard-earned wisdom down on paper before it faded into the abyss of my consciousness, replaced by plotlines on *Girls* and the words to early '90s rap songs. (That said, this book references both *Girls* and early '90s rap songs, because I know my strengths.) Even though I wrote these essays, charts, and lists with my future grown-up children in my mind's eye, please do not give this book to an actual child unless he or she shows signs of premature jadedness and is able to use the word "fuck" at least three ways in a sentence. This book is for adults only—although that makes it sound like there's a lot of sex in here, which there's not. I wrote this for my fellow women and mothers, but also for dads, dudes, trans people, precocious teenagers, octogenarians who refer to themselves as "pistols," and anyone who can barely take care of themselves. Peace, love, and metaphorical

brotherhood are all nice ideas, but I think what unites us as a species is that we all have cringe-inducing memories that we vow never to tell anyone and never to let anyone else repeat. Oops.XO UnaAUTHOR'S NOTEThis collection, contrary to the sage words of Fran Lebowitz, quoted previously, is largely a work of memoir, so obviously I have to write this disclaimer now that we live in the post-James Frey era in which every nonfiction writer lives in fear of being slowly shamed to death and/or drowned in his or her own sweat on live television. Just so we're clear: Everything happened as written to the best of my memory, which is to say, hampered somewhat by copious amounts of red wine and way too much exposure to pop culture in my formative years (I can give you the full name of every character on the original Melrose Place but do not know my blood type or my grandmother's birthday). I changed a few names here and there to protect people's privacy, and had to fill in some details using the similarly wine-addled brains of family and friends, but there's no straight-up lying. You'll notice, for example, that nowhere in this book do I mention having once thrown marbles out a window at Joe Cocker, because it was actually my friend Anna who did that, not me, despite what I have been telling people for the past fifteen years.UnabrowMy sister, Zoe, and I have this agreement that if I ever fall into a coma, she will come to the hospital every few days to visit me. This is not so that she can brush my hair or read to me from the latest tabloids (although that would be nice; I'd hate to have a brain bleed undo all my hard-earned knowledge of Kardashian genealogy); no, my sister will have a very specific and important job. She will be there to pluck my eyebrows.Zoe, who is a nursing-school student, told me that hospitals actually have junior staff members who are hired to do this kind of thing—trim people's nails, shave their beards, etc. But if she thinks she's getting off that easy then she is sorely mistaken.“How often do I have to come?” she'll ask, glancing reluctantly at her iPhone calendar. “Once a week?”“No,” I gasp. “Every three days for the eyebrows, and at least every week for the mustache.”“You never said anything about a mustache,” she grumbles.“Oh, and you'll need to pluck three hairs from my chin once per lunar cycle. Two are very stiff and black, but one is freakishly long and white. You might have to poke around for it; it likes to hide.”“Yay,” Zoe says.Once she asked me what I would do if I got marooned on an island like the castaways from Lost, all of whom seemed to have clandestine access to spa-grade laser hair-removal devices and blow-dry bars.“I'd bring tweezers,” I told her.“But your bags went down with the plane,” she said. “You don't have them.”“I strapped them to my leg with duct tape. Or I'd sharpen rocks and use them as razors. Or fashion a jaunty niqab out of palm leaves.”I am a girl with contingency plans.I do realize that most people's coma and plane crash preparations don't involve brow shaping, but I happen to be a special case. My God-given eyebrows are so thick that they have become the stuff of legend, albeit among a relatively small circle of people who care about my forehead (a circle that now expands to include you, gentle reader, so welcome, namaste, please enjoy the complimentary boxed wine and Nair samples).I also had a very impressive library.I emerged from the womb on April 13, 1980, not only with a full head of black hair, but with a matching set of tiny but unmistakable caterpillars above my eyes. By the time I was six, the two had joined, forming a fuzzy bridge over my still buttony nose. Had I been born in the fifties, my mother might have burned them off with lye or sent me to Ms. Hannigan's Home for Hirsute Girls, but unfortunately my parents were progressive idealists committed to raising confident children, and so blindly loved me the way I was. In the mid-1980s, the fashion and beauty industries had not yet begun targeting innocent prepubescent children, so I skipped happily into the great wide world totally unashamed of my Brooke-Shields-on-Rogaine look.Neither of my parents has ever, to my knowledge, had a unibrow. My dad's whole family is French and German, and they tend to be born blond, so they are absolved of blame. My mother's father's family, however, comes from Russia, a country known primarily for its vodka and excessive body hair.That doesn't seem to make sense, does it? I've always suspected my ancestors have conveniently excised some members from our family tree.*Unconfirmed by genetic testing.The moment I first remember being aware of my special genetic quirk was in fifth grade when a substitute teacher took over my class because our normal teacher, Mrs. Walling, had to have her gallbladder removed. I don't remember what the substitute looked like, but I do remember that in the middle of a lesson he stopped and stared at me. He leaned forward, smacking his palms on his desk and breaking into a toothy grin, and said, without a trace of menace, “Young lady, you have beautiful eyebrows. Don't ever pluck them!”The whole class burst out laughing, and I sat there blushing in confusion and trying to figure out if the laughter was at me or at him.Until that point I had never been made fun of for my eyebrows. I got teased way more about being a Goody Two-shoes (and for peeing in my woolen tights this one time during a spelling quiz in third grade, and not changing out of them because I thought no one would notice, and having my friends make up a song called “Una Has a Butt That Smells Like Pee”). I know they weren't all blind, so I can only assume they were just distracted by my braces and fetching wardrobe, which relied heavily on leggings, cowboy boots, and oversize tie-dyed T-shirts. Maybe, since I'd moved from Austin, Texas, in 1988, my Brooklyn classmates just thought Texas grew 'em bigger.That substitute teacher was just the first of many strangers to comment on my appearance. I suppose I should feel lucky that he was so kind. I'm glad my first taste of ridicule didn't come from the man who did a double take on the street and jabbed at his friend to gawk, or the group of Asian teenagers on the subway who kept shouting “Freak!” and then bursting into laughter, or the pervy photographer who said he wanted to take my picture because I had such an “interesting face.” I took to putting my hand up to my forehead in public places, as if I had a permanent itch right above my nose. It wasn't subtle, but it was acceptable camouflage.The saddest thing about my unibrow is that it would have been so easy to fix.

I mean, it's sort of ridiculous, given how much it came to stress me out. It's not like I had something that defied medical science, like an extra head from an absorbed twin, or even a surgical problem like a vestigial tail or third nipple. Literally the only thing standing between me and the end of my suffering was a six-dollar pair of tweezers (which, come to think of it, probably only cost three dollars in 1992—I could have used one week's allowance and still had two dollars left over to spend on decoupageing my vanity with Brian Austin Green centerfolds from Tiger Beat). I don't know why I didn't do anything about it sooner, but after decades of obsession I've developed two theories.

Theory 1: I Was Confused as to Which Decade I Was Living In There is actually a frightening amount of evidence to support this. Growing up, my parents only had a thirteen-inch black-and-white TV. The first cassette tape I ever bought was KC and the Sunshine Band's Greatest Hits. (In case you're wondering, this is not a cool answer to give when someone asks about your first adolescent musical experience.) In eighth grade, I took to wearing prairie skirts and love beads. A popular girl in my class once asked me, point-blank, "Why are you wearing that?" and I'm pretty sure I just shrugged and pointed to the swirly peace signs adorning my polymer clay bead choker.

Theory 2: My Mom Was Sort of a Hippie There's even more evidence to support this: She went to art school in the mid-sixties. She was at the March on Washington. She worships Bob Dylan. She didn't (still doesn't) shave her armpits. She keeps pictures of herself from the seventies wearing metal headdresses and fright wigs. She sent me to a Waldorf kindergarten, where I was forced to make dolls out of corn husks. She claims that no one should sleep in underwear because their genitals "need to breathe." Not exactly the poster girl for our country's self-flagellating adherence to cultural stereotypes of femininity, which I appreciate as an adult but could have done without back then. Also, since my dad had a beard and mustache at the time, there may well not have been a single razor in the house for the duration of my pubescence. That said, it was my mom who eventually introduced me to tweezers. It happened on a weeknight, in our living room. I was fourteen and had finally confessed—to my great shame—that I did not feel beautiful in my natural state, no matter how many times my parents loudly assured me that I was, and that they were not just saying that because they were blinded by familial love, or perhaps the glint from my glitter retainer. She sat quietly for a minute and studied me with sad eyes. "Would you like me to shape them for you?" she offered. I nodded mutely and then perched on a stool while she went to retrieve the necessary tools from her fireproof safe or wherever she had been hiding them. As she went to work, tears rolled down my face, as much from relief as from the stinging pain. When my mother was done, she held up a hand mirror, and what I saw took my breath away. I had a one-inch gap between the thick, wild, wiry mess on my forehead. I had eyebrows, plural. It hadn't felt that good to finally have two of something since my right boob had grown in. Of course, what I hadn't considered was that the only thing worse than being made fun of in junior high was to make an abrupt physical change immediately visible to all your peers. The next day, everyone asked about my eyebrows. It was a straightforward enough question: Did you pluck your eyebrows? But for some reason I refused to admit it. I said no, that I had simply been trimming my bangs and "missed." I tried to seem nonchalant, but it didn't help that I did not actually have bangs. The naked strip between my eyes was world expanding, a follicular gateway drug. Shortly thereafter, my mother took me with her to a salon that did brow shaping, in the hopes that we could achieve something better than two thick rectangles. The aesthetician had no idea what she was in for; I could see shock and fear in her eyes as I approached from across the room. But she gamely took on the challenge, chipping away slowly until she had transformed my sloppy dashes into two commas, floating across my forehead like stocky little sperm. On the floor beneath my chair, it looked like I'd had a haircut. I coasted on my new double brows for a month or two, but eventually I took matters into my own hands and got hooked on plucking. At first I just dabbled, kept them looking neat, experimented with shapes and varying degrees of thickness. But as I neared the end of high school, I rebelled, slowly deleting my eyebrows until they became almost invisible. I tried to be stealthy, but it was about as subtle as Chris Christie suddenly wasting away from anorexia. My mother noted this transformation with frightening dedication, and we started having the kinds of conversations you would normally see on a cautionary Afterschool Special, if they made them about really insignificant physical traits. "Honey," she said hesitantly as she made dinner and I did homework at the kitchen table, "I'm worried." "Mo-om," I said. "I'm fine. Don't start." "You look sick." Her eyes brimmed with tears. "Like Whoopi Goldberg." "Whoopi isn't sick." "Doesn't she have cancer?" "No!" "But, sweetie, she has no eyebrows." "Because she shaves them off, Mom. Which is her choice." "Well, I think it's awful. You know, when I was your age—" "Moooooooooom, stoooooooooop." "—I had gorgeous, thick eyebrows like you. And then I overplucked and now . . ." Her breath caught in her throat and she set down the organic pepper she was chopping. "Honey, they don't even grow anymore. I have to use a pencil." When I failed to respond, it only made her angry. "You don't know what you're giving up!" she yelled. "You're only sixteen. You have your entire life ahead of you!" "Shut up! You can't tell me how to conduct my own personal grooming!" [Cue angry teenage flounce out of room.] My mother was never a stage mother—unless that stage was my forehead. She was counting on me to live her shattered dream, so I'm not surprised that she was sad to see the unibrow go. "Una's eyebrows are too thin, don't you think?" she once asked my ninth-grade science teacher during a PTA conference. She seemed convinced that if she couldn't change my mind one-on-one, she could beat me through polling.