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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Monica Fernandez, Media Manager, [media@redhen.org](mailto:media@redhen.org)

P.O. Box 40820, Pasadena, CA 91114 / (626) 356-4760 / fax: (626) 356-9974 / [redhen.org](http://redhen.org)

# Human Heartbeat Detected

ESSAYS BY

Chelsey Clammer

*Human Heartbeat Detected* is a collection of lyric, flash, and personal essays that looks at how we are human to one another—both exceptionally and horrifically.

Human Heartbeat Detected is a collection of essays that explores how we are wonderfully and terrifyingly human. Hitting on themes such as trauma, emotional abuse, marriage, mental illness, and grief, these essays delve into how humans are simultaneously beautiful and terrible to one another. Though regardless of how we might make each other shatter, our hearts continue beating—even when we might not want them to—and we wade through the wreckage of our lives to find ways to survive. With exquisite language and captivating storytelling, the essays in Human Heartbeat Detected face what it means to be human.

## ADVANCE PRAISE

“Chelsey Clammer’s *Human Heartbeat Detected* pulses with energy, peril, sexuality, and fearless compassion. These innovative essays, many of them in flash form, push at the boundaries of conventional prose, while at the same time pushing toward revelation and understanding.”

—**Dinty W. Moore**, author of *To Hell With It*

“The women in these essays, including Clammer herself, are “just taking it blow-by-blow, bracing . . . for the impact,” struggling against assault or abuse or mental illness or a court system that doesn’t believe them, a healthcare system they can’t afford, or silences they don’t understand. *Human Heartbeat Detected* introduces us to women on l(edges) who scramble back, or don’t. Clammer, who describes herself as a “terribly impulsive woman,” once again showcases how the essay, as a genre, follows its own impulses. “We’re all full of surprises,” Clammer writes. So is this bold collection.”

—**Jill Talbot**, author of *The Way We Weren’t: A Memoir*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chelsey Clammer is the author of the award-winning essay collection, *Circadian* (Red Hen Press 2017), and *BodyHome* (Hopewell Publications 2015). Her work has appeared in *Salon*, *The Rumpus*, *Hobart*, *Brevity*, *McSweeney’s Internet Tendency*, *The Normal School*, and *Black Warrior Review*. She teaches online writing classes with *WOW! Women on Writing* and is a freelance editor. Chelsey received an MFA in creative writing from Rainier Writing Workshop, and an MA in women’s studies from Loyola University Chicago. She currently resides in Colorado. You can read more of her writing at [www.chelseyclammer.com](http://www.chelseyclammer.com).



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## **MEDIA CONTACT**

Monica Fernandez

Media Manager

626-406-1206

[media@redhen.org](mailto:media@redhen.org)

## **MARKETING CONTACT**

Tobi Harper

Marketing Director

626-406-1209

[marketing@redhen.org](mailto:marketing@redhen.org)

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**MORE PRAISE FOR *HUMAN HEARTBEAT DETECTED***

“In her third collection, Clammer's command of—and true delight in—the lyric essay is on full and marvelous display. *Human Heartbeat Detected* is an exquisite and almost improbable marriage of opposites, in both content and form. Brash, bawdy, and tender by turns, these essays linger in the shadow where love and hatred overlap, pinpoint the instant when the past bleeds into present tense, articulate with awful beauty how the body chafes against the mind. Shelve this somewhere between *Purpura* and *Baudelaire*; these essays exist at the precise juncture of the sublime and the profane.”

—**Marya Hornbacher**, author of *Madness*

“It’s rare to read a book as daring and alive as *Human Heartbeat Detected*. Chelsey Clammer isn’t afraid to take us to the darkest places, but it’s always in service of ongoingness, a deep belief in love and what it exacts of us. How do we live in the wake of catastrophe? Every sentence here strobes with the light of that question.”

—**Paul Lisicky**, author of *The Narrow Door*

**FROM *HUMAN HEARTBEAT DETECTED***

In the grocery store, we try to shop together, both of us armed with a black plastic basket. We weave through my produce section, stroll down his frozen foods aisle. En route from navel oranges to cookie dough ice cream, I say, “Oh! Gotta go grab some salad dressing.” He stands. I grab. I return seconds later to his face changed. Staring at the floor, eyebrows raising up and diving down, the musculature of his face in conversation with something I cannot see, something that cannot be heard.

\*

The book on schizophrenia says “split mind.” Not “split personality,” mind you. The two are different. He is not two different men. Though lately, I have wondered where my husband has been.

\*

He built a robot that will only turn on when it detects a human heartbeat. He worked on this robot for days. Months. On and off. Taught himself computer programming and soldering, then how to tweak and tinker in various ways with various wires and breadboards and circuits and others things from companies with names like Adafruit, like Arduino, like mBot. Micro Center became a frequent destination. He worked on the robot, testing and retesting, programming and reprogramming, getting it to talk and move and turn on when sensor and computer and robot all recognized the basics of life. Of being able to be a human. The heartbeat. For days, months, even now I hear the robotic female voice over and over and over and over as she declares my husband’s success at programming software that sparks with life, that he actually activated alive just by being alive himself. Thumbs to sensors, the robot senses his heartbeat, and then she says what he programmed her to say: “Human heartbeat detected. Welcome, human.”



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