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▶ **THE AUTHOR'S PREVIOUS BOOK, *WOMAN ON SUBSTANCES*, WAS PUBLISHED IN THE US AND UK (HEAD OF ZEUS)**

▶ ***WOMAN OF SUBSTANCES* LONGLISTED FOR THE 2017 WALKLEY BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Everything Harder Than Everyone Else

Jenny Valentish

People push the limits of their endurance for all sorts of reasons: punishment, abstinence, ego, curiosity. But what drives those who push themselves to extremes in unconventional ways?

In *Everything Harder Than Everyone Else*, Valentish interviews pro-wrestlers, bodybuilders, adult film performers, iron women, performance artists and extreme athletes, exploring what motivates some people to adopt one seemingly extreme persona after another. A curious Venn diagram can be drawn: retired porn stars put on wrestling leotards; ex-wrestlers exploit their alter egos in adult films; dog-tired MMA fighters roleplay S&M. It seems the sense of self can be so shaky that if they quit one persona, they must leap to another or feel adrift.

But these rambunctious examples provide a lens for our own lives and habits. Valentish explores relatable themes, such as sensation-seeking and the role of dopamine, impulsivity and instant gratification, steroids and body dysmorphia, competition and catharsis, self-sabotage, obsession, reinvention. By understanding more about those who must always push the boundaries, we can recognise and illuminate our own motivations.

JENNY VALENTISH is the author of the acclaimed *Woman of Substances*, a regular contributor to *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Saturday Paper*, and former editor of *Time Out Melbourne* and *Triple J's Jmag*. She grew up in Slough, a satellite town of London, and moved to Australia in 2006.