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Everything I Never Wanted To Be

Dina Kucera

Dream of Things (2010)

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Reviewed by Charline Ratcliff for RebeccasReads (09/10)

Where to start? “Everything I Never Wanted To Be” is a brutally open and honest look into the heart of a family beset by drug and alcohol abuse. And, as if that’s not enough to cause one major stress, add caring for an elderly mother with Parkinson’s disease and a grandson with Cerebral Palsy, and working as a checker at a grocery store. Amazingly enough though this family somehow manages to retain a fierce love for one another.

“Everything I Never Wanted To Be” chronicles the life of author Dina Kucera. She shares with us her ups and downs, her fears, her failures, and her triumphs. She shows us she’s human. I respect what she has been through and I commend her for doing whatever it took, and takes, to help herself and her family. As an aside, I don’t feel Kucera needs to use her education, or lack thereof, in an attempt to show the world that her book is different; that she is different. Her writing does that for her. Her heart, soul, and humor shine forth from the book’s pages and THAT is what will make a lasting impression to those who read her memoir.

I also applaud Kucera for not allowing the sad, horrific or overwhelming experiences to keep her down and I like the way she uses humor as an outlet. Even though “Everything I Never Wanted To Be” is a true story there were still quite a few times I actually laughed aloud as I read. I’ve worked as a grocery store cashier. I can empathize with many of her job related experiences, inane customer comments and conversations.

All in all I found “Everything I Never Wanted To Be” to be very well-written and informative. Kucera has a way with words and she shows us a different perspective of drug and / or alcohol dependency. Nowadays we hear about drug use and alcoholism on almost daily basis. The common belief seems to be that if we paid more attention to the people in our community we could stop them before they became addicted to substances which ultimately set them on a path of destruction. If we did this we could save them from themselves. What I take away from this memoir is that it’s just not that simple. Not that cut and dried. What I understand from this book is that the chemical makeup of an addict requires something their body didn’t provide in order for them to feel the way we “normal” people do. They may need something just to be able to enjoy the feel of the sun on their face or the wind in their hair. Things that most of us take for granted. They may not even know it themselves but then one day someone offers them something and all of a sudden the world makes sense and they finally feel “normal.” Who wouldn’t want that? I also know there is a lot of criticism directed at people with dependency issues. My feelings are that unless we have personally experienced it I think we should provide empathy and help versus disdain and judgments.

Lastly, a note to the author... Maybe it took becoming everything you never wanted to be in order to become everything you wanted or needed to be... Divine Order and all that. ;)