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Everything I Never Wanted to Be: A memoir of alcoholism and addiction, faith and family, hope and humor

By Dina Kucera

Dream of Things, \$14.95, 201 pages

Both a situation comedy and a family tragedy, the author of this drug abuse memoir has done a laudable job. This life is really a hellish one, but like many reality shows featuring poor white folk, it is so absolutely over the top that it makes readers laugh out loud and thank God it is not them.

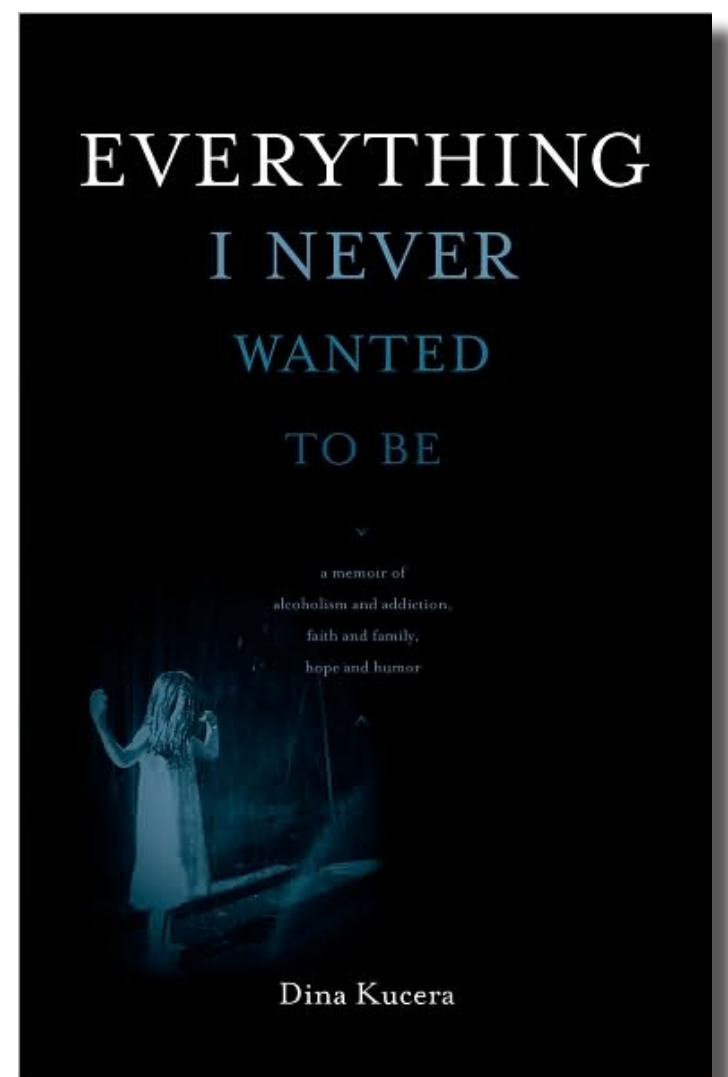
The author/narrator, Dina, is a checker in a grocery store. Her mother, who has advanced Parkinson's disease, and her grandson who has cerebral palsy, live with her. So does her oft-unemployed husband and his always-unemployed identical twin. It gets better.

Pivotal to the story is the fact that her youngest daughter, Carly, became an OxyContin and heroin addict at age 14. In fact, all three of Dina's daughters are addicts of either alcohol or drugs, and one of them announced she was a lesbian after her husband went to prison for donning a ski mask and robbing a convenience store while high on crack. Dina herself struggles to remain off alcohol and pills.

The author has successfully navigated a challenging task: integrating observation and exposition, her youngest daughter's journal entries, remembered dreams, memories from her childhood, and her earlier years as a parent, and created a narrative tale with well-wrought scenes that are at times heartbreaking and at other times hysterical. Sometimes both. She has created multi-dimensional characters too, primarily through her convincing and very funny dialogue.

She passes on some wisdom in this book, which about mid-way through takes a spiritual turn, including "Life happens even when we're not in the mood for it." And, "Bloom where you're planted, unless you've been planted on a shit farm. Then you should repot and bloom in a better area."

I enjoyed this, and will recommend it to friends.



Reviewed by Robin Martin
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