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Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?

by Daniel Scheffler

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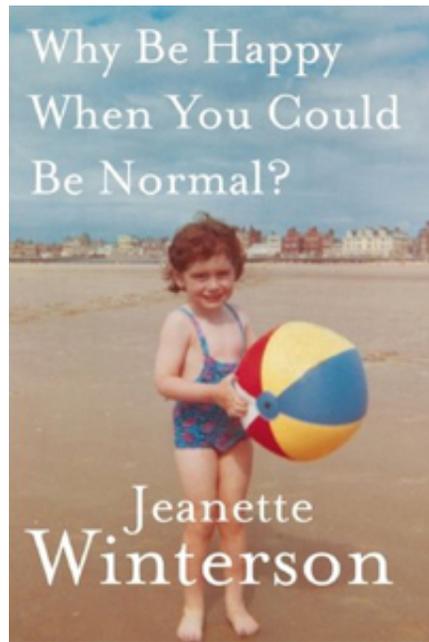
" **Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?**" is the genius latest work from Manchester born Jeanette Winterson. Honest, brutal and graceful, the earnest dame of sincere writing has, again, presented the world with a piece of consequential writing.

Adopted into a family of Pentecostal Evangelists and an odd, but so painfully familiar, relationship with her mother (referred to as Mrs. Winterson in the book) alongside many zany adventures means that the "New York Times Bestseller" is not only fascinatingly interesting but also savage and unsparing with her bona fide emotions.

The story starts with an obese religious note where Winterson reflects on how Mrs. Winterson, when angry, would say "the Devil led us to the wrong crib" and the emotions that it brought her as a young child, and I guess as a strong adult eventually. From shutting herself in the larder, to discovering vaginas, to finding her solitude in her own home where she is the bearer of all keys is where this book ushers the charmed reader.

Memorable moments like leaving home at age 16 (well, actually being evicted would be more apt rendition of that scene), for having lady lovers and an attempted suicide after some more heartbreak, a desperate breakup with a long term partner, and copious battles with her place of belonging and sense of self, as all adopted children do according to Winterson, give the book a truthfulness that defrosts even the most unemotional critics instantly.

Her unique use of words, her perfect references to the zeitgeist and her attention to not-too-much detail boil together for this anomalous totem. Jeanette Winterson is the winner of prizes like Whitbread for first novel and the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize; but these prizes are somehow bland and peripheral compared to the real show and finesse of this influential writer.



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As an openly lesbian writer, Winterson's obvious passion for women, for life, for love and for the world comes through in sentences that sing, ideas that ridicule and themes that soothe. Didactic in all the right places, humble everywhere else and astute from the outset, "Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?" feels like piercing your tongue, or ear (or bellybutton for that matter) - the pain is acute, the fear of the pain is worse but the end result is exactly what you

signed up for.

"Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?"

Jeanette Winterson
Grove Press New York
\$10,20

by Jeanette Winterson

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