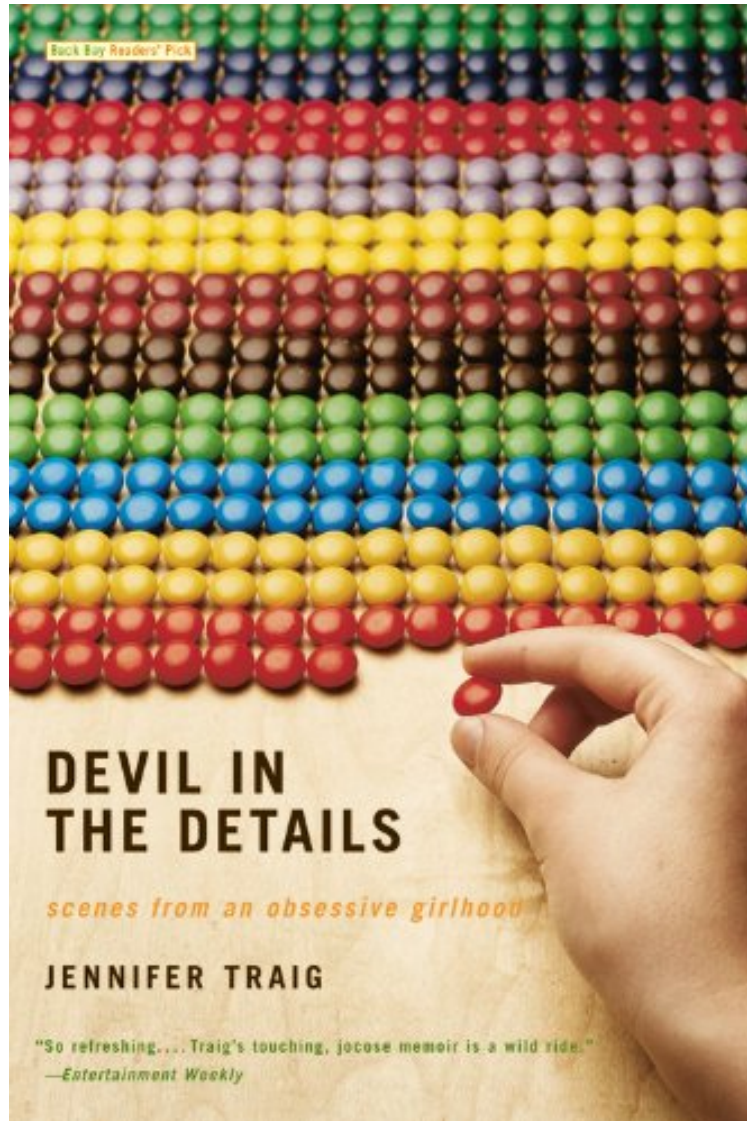


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Devil in the Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood

Jennifer Traig

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#461972 in Books Traig, Jennifer (EDT) 2006-02-09Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.25 x .75 x 5.50l, .53 #File Name: 031601074X272 pages | File size: 64.Mb

Jennifer Traig : Devil in the Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Devil in the Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A deeper look into the truth about obsessive-compulsive disorder and teenage lifeBy Alisia EscobarI read this book for an outside reading assignment in school and could not have loved it more. Jennifer Traig pinpoints the exact emotions of a teenager dealing with siblings, school, and puberty, while incorporating her own struggles with OCD. Her mind never stops going. She never stops wondering: "What if?" And "What will happen?" Her inability to live a normal drama filled high school life made her childhood a battle and a

challenge everyday. Teenagers tend to be made fun of by others because of clothes, grades, and their level of athleticism. She was forced to deal with these pressures in addition to those that came from her painfully severe scrupulosity. Her OCD was what defined her. She shows her struggle in having a normal life while balancing her unexplainable behavior and dedication to religion extremely well. Her biggest concern was not who was going to take her senior prom, but, "If I don't wash my hands over and over, will my father be diagnosed with cancer?" and "Is this glue that holds together the milk carton kosher?" Aside from the fact that this was the toughest time in her life, she still manages to describe it in a light hearted and sarcastic manner. You begin to see how she came to terms with her OCD as she jokes about her crazy behaviors as a child. She was able to connect with the average teenager on a whole new level. Jennifer Traig proved two things. 1. Every teenager is misunderstood in some way either by parents, peers, or siblings. 2. The petty things teenagers stress over are nothing compared to problems like mental illness. I think this book will give many teenagers a huge reality check. If they're like me, they'll start to realize that everything isn't as bad as it seems. Jennifer Traig was able to reveal a side of teenage life that most adults fail to understand even though they went through it themselves. Her battle with scrupulosity might have kept her from living a carefree childhood, but it did not keep her from happiness altogether. She was able to ignore certain aspects of her OCD and remain optimistic about her future. The only problem I experienced throughout the entire book was keeping track of her age and the year because she switched back and forth between her toddler, high school, and college years very often. Other than this, I found her story to be extremely inspiring and it is like nothing I have ever read before.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. both genuinely funny and instructive, "Devil in the Details" is bound to be a cult classic

By Bruce J. Wasser

As a teenager, memoirist Jennifer Traig was one screwed-up girl. At various times, she suffered from anorexia and an acute form of obsessive compulsive disorder, scrupulosity. The product of a religiously blended family, she had to discover her own identity as a Jew, often with bizarre definitions of prayer and practice. Deeply introspective and yearning for intellectual stimulation, she grew up in a conservative, stultifying rural Northern California community. Nothing worked for her. Yet, her observations are side-splittingly funny and she wastes not one drop of energy on self-pity. "Devil in the Details" will probably obtain a cult following and should be required reading for any female teenager given to dramatizing every crisis in her life. There is little actually humorous about Traig as an adolescent. She drives her parents to distraction with her constant regimen of hand-washing, a quasi-kosher diet that reduces her to stick-figure proportions and a series of arcane, tragic-comic religious observances. Her sarcastic and edgy sister, Vicki, provides a welcome contrast to the withdrawn and weird Jennifer. However, Traig turns dust into diamonds; her quirky, disoriented life has a ruthless order to it. What appears out-of-control to a dispassionate observer makes sense to the ritual-bound author. Traig reminds us that the early 1970s provided no psychological answer to OCD, a syndrome that didn't even have a name at the time. There were no meds to mellow out those with the disorder, and Traig humbly and simply determines to cure herself. She is at her best when she describes herself in a self-deprecatory manner, and since wit exists in practically every paragraph, the memoir glistens with understated insight and induces real laughter. When the author finally comprehends that others have had enough of her antics, she resolves to stop the behaviors. For the better part of her high school career, she careens between self-induced sickness and health. Traig's postulated need for self-help may not sit well with a current generation increasingly dependent on chemical solutions to emotional problems. The author wisely notes that her parents' endless patience and acceptance enabled Traig to find her own path to health. The entire family seems to understand that life is an erratic roller coaster ride and having perfect children is far too overrated a goal in the first place. Consequently, Traig only indirectly chooses her own path to recovery; her parents' unwavering (if unspoken) belief in their daughters exists as a crucial positive variable. "Devil in the Details" exudes a joy in living. Whether it be the author's descriptions of learning to drive, her dissection of the mixed-blessings of a Jewish/Christian household at holiday time, or the universal discontent felt by the alienated during high school, the memoir has both grit and grace. Jennifer Traig clearly loves language, and her writing is rich in memorable metaphors and captivating alliteration. As unique a teenager as she was, Traig's story resonates with universal appeal.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insanely Relatable

By Happy Hoot

Every woman who actively manages their anxiety/depression/OCD/worry should read this. It is insanely relatable and reminds its readers that we are only human, and are not alone in our string of catastrophic thoughts. Without making light of the daily ruminations of anxiety and OCD, Jennifer paints a hilarious picture of what it's like to deal with OCD; most notably fully knowing that what you are doing to calm your compulsions is not logical, but has to be done nonetheless. Her descriptions of the situations she found herself in are truly clever and one of a kind, and will have you literally laughing out loud from chapter to chapter.

Jennifer Traig's memoir *Devil in the Details* paints a portrait of a well-meaning Jewish girl and her good-natured parents, and takes a very funny, very sharp look back at growing up with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Recalling the agony of growing up an obsessive-compulsive religious fanatic, Traig fearlessly confesses the most peculiar behavior like tirelessly scrubbing her hands for a full half hour before dinner, feeding her stuffed animals before herself, and washing everything she owned because she thought it was contaminated by pork fumes. Jennifer's childhood mania was the result of her then undiagnosed OCD joining forces with her Hebrew studies-what psychiatrists call

scrupulosity. While preparing for her bat mitzvah, she was introduced to an entire set of arcane laws and quickly made it her mission to follow them perfectly. Her parents nipped her religious obsession in the bud early on, but as her teen years went by, her natural tendency toward the extreme led her down different paths of adolescent agony and mortification. Years later, Jennifer remembers these scenes with candor and humor. In the bestselling tradition of *Running with Scissors* and *A Girl Named Zippy*, Jennifer Traig tells an unforgettable story of youthful obsession.

From Publishers Weekly In this 1970s memoir, Traig describes how, from the age of 12 until her freshman year at Brandeis, she suffered from various forms of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), including anorexia and a rarer, "hyper-religious form" of OCD called scrupulosity, in which sanctified rituals such as hand washing and daily prayer are repeated in endless loops. The daughter of a Jewish father and a Catholic mother, Traig becomes obsessed with Jewish ritual, inventing her own prayers since her Jewish education is limited. Initially, Traig's family is amused; eventually, they try to help. Still, this memoir is less about suffering than it is about punch lines. When Traig swathes herself in head-to-toe flannel on hot summer days, her mother points to a scantily clad teenager on a talk show entitled *My Teen Dresses Too Sexy* and suggests Traig cool off like the adolescent "in the red vinyl number with the cut-outs over the chest and fanny." Traig spoofs Jewish rituals, cracking up at elaborate bar mitzvahs produced like Las Vegas floor shows and the meticulous analysis that goes into deeming a food item kosher. The author's behavior makes her seem like a character on *Seinfeld* or *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and her book is a funny though sometimes cursory look at mental illness. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist By turns hilarious and harrowing, this spiritual-psychological autobiography poses a classification conundrum: it fits as comfortably alongside titles by David Sedaris (especially *Naked*, with its similarly themed essay "A Plague of Tics") as it does next to those by Oliver Sacks. When she was an adolescent, Traig's loose collection of neuroses coalesced into a hyperreligious form of obsessive-compulsive disorder known as scrupulosity. The condition finds the once spiritually indifferent teenager purifying her school binders, using separate bathrooms for milk and meat, and perplexing and vexing her mixed-faith family. Traig guides readers through her baffling, lonely world with frequent stops to deliver ba-da-boom zingers ("Today the condition is common enough that there's a Scrupulous Anonymous. I've never joined, so I can't tell you if they subscribe to all twelve steps or just repeat one over and over"). Though uproariously funny, this is perhaps best for intermittent sampling. Considering the deliberate--one might even say obsessive--manner in which Traig wrings humor out of her tribulations, one can't escape the sense that she has unwittingly reproduced her childhood affliction in book form. Jennifer Mattson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "So refreshing....Traig's touching, jocose memoir is a wild ride."?Entertainment Weekly