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Sweet Tooth: A Memoir



Synopsis

2015 International Book Awards Winner in Non-Fiction: Gay & Lesbian
A gifted writer, Anderson is...delightful in his irreverence, and astutely aware of himself and his particular perspective. His observations are often laugh-out-loud funny and will leave readers with the desire to...keep turning the pages...
"Publishers Weekly review for Anderson, author of *Tune in Tokyo* and *Sweet Tooth*
What's a sweets-loving young boy growing up gay in North Carolina in the eighties supposed to think when he's diagnosed with type 1 diabetes? That God is punishing him, naturally. This was, after all, when Jesse Helms was his senator, AIDS was still the boogeyman, and no one was saying, "It gets better." And if stealing a copy of an x-rated magazine from the newsagent was a sin, then surely what the guys inside were doing to one another was much worse. *Sweet Tooth* is Tim Anderson's uproarious memoir of life after his hormones and blood sugar both went berserk at the age of fifteen. With Morrissey and The Smiths as the soundtrack, Anderson self-deprecatingly recalls love affairs with vests and donuts, first crushes, coming out, and inaugural trips to gay bars. What emerges is the story of a young man trying to build a future that won't involve crippling loneliness or losing a foot to his disease—and maybe even one that, no matter how unpredictable, can still be pretty sweet.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's a feeling I get whenever I encounter the memoirs of non-famous people with whose work I'm not familiar. That question of "So, why do I care about [name of person] enough to read a book about their life?" In the case of Tim Anderson's *Sweet Tooth*, that question is basically a moot point,

because the writing is so hilarious that I can see myself reading this book a dozen times and always laughing out loud. And despite the specificity of his late-1980s/early-1990s struggles as a gay diabetic high school (and later college) student, there is quite a lot of universality to the way he depicts the awkwardness of growing up and dealing with one's adolescent angst. Things that happen to one's teenaged self often feel like epic tragedies while they're occurring, but years later those things take on comical tones. It's not nice to laugh at other people's pain, but laughing WITH other people at their former selves, in retrospect, can be a lovely and cathartic experience. It's like that trend in Open Mic nights where adults read aloud from their ancient middle-school diaries. Although I'm almost a decade younger than Anderson, there wasn't a single pop-culture reference that I didn't get (though this might not be the case for readers with different musical tastes). The only real criticism I would give is that the official book description misleads a little with its emphasis on Anderson's origins in North Carolina, when it could have been set practically anywhere in the U.S. because the book doesn't dwell on anything particularly "Southern". I received a review copy of this book via NetGalley.

There's no real sense of progress in this book. Tim starts off the book as a kid bent on rebellion and poorly controlling his diabetes. He ends it as a young man bent on rebellion and poorly controlling his diabetes. Sure, the rebellion changes form, from stealing porn mags to doing speed in a Manchester gay nightclub, but the feel is the same. What starts out laugh-out-loud funny earns only little snorts after 100 pages, and nothing at all by the end. The interstitial chapters, in which we watch Tim from a third-person perspective as he blunders into yet another blood sugar crisis, suffer the same fading value. At first, we feel bad for him, just a teenager trying to wrestle with all the normal teenager problems plus suddenly finding out his pancreas hates him. But by the time he's off at college, he really should know better, and instead of laughing with him in retrospect, I found myself wanting to slap him and say 'get it together, man'. I imagine this book might have more value to others. For example, young gay men from the south, or diabetic social rebels. I could believe that someone more invested in the author's personal struggles would be carried on by his story more than I was. But I, alas, was not.

As a memoir goes, the reader sees a side of diabetes rarely presented. However, after reading chapter after chapter of diabetic attacks, the reader wonders if the author needs a shrink more than insulin. Enough is enough. Too little time was spent on the personal feelings and relationships that actually worked for this apparently self-destructive personality. I wanted to know more about how

the author actually realizes love for himself and the only character who seems to have the balls to end the destructive behavior: Jimmy.

It was a good start, I was into it but it got really repetitive. You would think it was a tale of an actually morbidly obese person the endless listing of chocolate and snack ingredients. Sometimes less is more, good style at start but needed more diversity.

I liked this memoir of a youth who painfully discovers that he not only has a thing for hot guys, but he also has Type I diabetes. Now this was several decades back, when it was way more of a time consuming drag to have Type I diabetes, not to mention hard on your social life if you were lucky enough to have one. But Tim manages to find ways to work it to his advantage at times, as you will find, sometimes with comical outcomes.

When I started reading this memoir, I knew it was a memoir and he had to grow up dealing with diabetes, but I was a bit surprised when he started to mention his penchant for self pleasuring, the first hint of his homosexuality (straight guys do not talk of their masturbatory habits, as a rule, gays are more open and accepting of that part of their nature), but it was very much as if he totally accepted his sexuality (he was very confident in his sexuality). I found his dual acceptance of Christianity and his gayness a bit strange â “ ya know, Christians tend to condemn gays to heck, so he should have been feeling guilty or conflicted, but he did not. The best part of this story is how he wove in the episodes of insulin reaction with humor. He admitted he had a lot to learn about diabetes, but it was a learn by doing that he was going to do. He just was not going to be one who learned from others mistakes, he had to make them himself. His attitude was very positive, at least now it is, and he writes about it as if he was able to roll with the punches. He had to also deal with being gay. He had no mentors to help him, no other gays around at all, until he got to college. At college, the LGBTQ group was weird and he barely was able to do anything with them, but it did give him some social outlets and parties to get to know others, gay or not (he was very shy). The story goes until Mr. Anderson meet his love for life. They settle down and the two of them work on helping Mr. Anderson cope with his diabetes, and, of course, his love life is happy now to, so the book ends I am generally reading two or three books at once, but this story caught my attention, and I read it exclusively. It was funny, true and happy.

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