

And They Thought I Had It All

Sara Gordon

FriesenPress

(236pp)

978-1-5255-5655-5

Imbued with grace and thoughtfulness, And They Thought I Had It All is a memoir about persevering through hidden struggles.

Sara Gordon's memoir *And They Thought I Had It All* maneuvers tragedies and difficult family members to find joy within.

As children, Gordon's mother and her best friend made a pact promising that they would adopt children and remain friends. They followed through on this promise, both adopting two children, including Gordon. Gordon and her brother grew up in an affluent Jewish household in Washington state; their father founded and ran a chain of restaurants named for their mother.

At eighteen, Gordon fell in love with and married Neil, who seemed charismatic and sweet, but whose true character was revealed when he lied to Gordon about where he spent his money and turned to alcohol and drugs. Gordon supported her children through difficult circumstances, processed business matters with care, and worked toward cutting ties with an aggressive family member. On the outside, she seemed to be lucky, but—from her childhood through her experiences as a mother and the complications of her eventual inheritance—Gordon's memoir exposes her hidden struggles.

The book begins with foundational background information about Gordon's adoption, which, though not the focus, proves central to the optimism and gratitude with which she navigates her experiences. Her heartbreaking circumstances include her son requiring heart surgery as a newborn, but even these are presented with hope.

Myriad motions are palpable thanks to intimate details and animated language. There are many specifics, but none are extraneous. Gordon's eloquent sentences flow, and her scenes are easy to picture. Both emotions and logic factor into how the story is told, especially as Gordon recalls Neil's persistent gaslighting about money and his drug use. She shares how she kept track of his movements and worked to keep their marriage together.

Within the chronological text, each scene is given the space suitable to its importance within the story. Even calamitous events are recorded in a manageable sequence, with enough space placed between landmark events to keep each approachable, and this is a thoughtful arrangement. Though the book's organizing purpose is not clear until the end, all of the emotional threads are tied together by its cathartic conclusion.

Sara Gordon's memoir shows how she used her strength to pull through heartbreak and damaged relationships; it expresses gratitude toward her adoptive parents and for her privileged upbringing.

AIMÉE JODOIN (November 26, 2019)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.