

Both Things Are True: A Journey from Fearing Trust to Trusting Fear

Janine Valentine

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Both Things Are True is a memoir about finding oneself in the midst of pandemic difficulties.

Janine Valentine's memoir *Both Things Are True* is a heartfelt chronicle of quarantining alone in another country after testing positive for COVID-19.

In September of 2021, at the end of a two-week international vacation taken with her friends in the Maldives, Valentine tested positive for COVID-19. The positive result came as a surprise: Valentine, who was vaccinated, had been at sea around the same people for a week. The group of friends she was traveling with, including her roommate, had all tested negative for the virus.

After confirming the diagnosis through a second test, Valentine had no choice but to stay in the country, alone, with little cash and almost no clothes beyond what she was wearing. Criticisms of social irresponsibility and poor planning by tourist businesses arise: Valentine notes that the boat the friends used had no plan in place for dealing with a guest who tested positive for COVID-19 during a voyage. In order to fulfill her quarantine, Valentine was told to book a two-week stay in a cheaper hotel, where nobody requested a negative COVID-19 test in order to grant admission. If somebody asked, she was instructed to lie. Because nobody gave her another option for staying, she complied. The situation tested her resilience. She had to grapple with her fears about abandonment and loneliness.

The memoir is organized into sections that focus on a day of quarantine each, as well as on Valentine's return home. It shows how her symptoms progressed, worsening and abating by turns. Side by side with this chronicle of her physical state is an account of her emotional struggles and growth. Indeed, it's the emotional side of the debacle that receives the closest focus. Her fear, sorrow, and bitterness are examined in turn. Being left alone in another country brought up her lifelong fear of abandonment, and the book delves into how she worked through it and grew from the experience. The prose is intimate and honest, though often it's more akin to a journal's work than to that of a traditional memoir. Its texting abbreviations, like "lol" around amusing events, are distracting. But it closes in musing form, with a reflection on the lessons learned during the quarantine experience; at last, the book's threads weave into a cohesive whole.

Ending with loving descriptions of home, *Both Things Are True* is a memoir about finding oneself in the midst of pandemic difficulties.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (August 29, 2022)

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