

Crybaby: Infertility, Illness, and Other Things That Were Not the End of the World

Cheryl E. Klein

Brown Paper Press (Sep 20, 2022)

Softcover \$17.99 (344pp)

978-1-941932-19-3

Cheryl E. Klein's memoir *Crybaby* is candid about living with infertility and cancer simultaneously, while also navigating everyday life.

When Klein and her fiancé, CC, decided to start fertility treatments to have a child, their situation was a little rocky. CC thought that they had time, but Klein wanted to start sooner, rather than later. They did so, but not without strain. After multiple rounds of treatment and pregnancy loss, they decided to start the adoption process.

The stress took a toll on their relationship, and Klein is unflinching in recording her feelings. She needed reassurance, and worried that she was "too much." When she noticed a stretch mark-like change in one of her breasts, she went to the doctor and received a diagnosis of breast cancer. She juggled her reactions: it was unfair, and she felt resentment, anger, and hope in turn. But even while facing cancer treatment and life afterward, she maintained hope that they would be picked by a birthing mother so that she could become a parent.

These events are set within the larger social context of CC and Klein's friends having babies, further compounding Klein's feelings of isolation and resentment, and causing conflict between her and CC. Klein narrates the disappointments and highs of the open adoption process, as well as the combined stressors of infertility, adoption, and illness. While her prose is engaging and relatable, its chronology is obscured; at times, it jumps to unrelated events. However, because of Klein's directness, the book is fast to regain focus.

Crybaby is a propulsive memoir about living through cancer, infertility, and adoption that weaves its experiences into a cohesive whole, resulting in a personal but universal story of hope.

JAIME HERNDON (September / October 2022)

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