

Clarion Review ★★★★☆

Deedee Divine's Totally Skewed Guide to Life

Diana Estill

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Deedee Divine's Totally Skewed Guide to Life is an irreverent companion to everyday frustrations, follies, and fears, from visiting the post office to obsessively worrying over the safety of children and grandchildren. Deedee Divine is the unrestrained alter ego of author Diana Estill. "Deedee is the part of me that doesn't hold back, the woman who voices strong and totally skewed views for which she offers no apologies," Estill writes. She uses Deedee to voice uncensored musings and anecdotes inspired by both the wisdom and exhaustion of having lived a full life.

Estill tackles the shared issues of body image, marriage, and motherhood. The book is divided into sections with names like "Family That Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger" and "Romance & Other Myths." She begins each of her short essays with a generally accepted fact that she can debunk or elucidate with her humor and experience. In "Deedee's Supermarket Safety Guidelines," she theorizes that most car accidents happen within five miles of the home because of the proximity of homes to supermarkets, where according to Deedee, people don't know how to behave.

Estill is a humor columnist who has been featured on a variety of TV and radio programs and whose essays have appeared in newspapers across the country. Her first book was titled *Driving on the Wrong Side of the Road: Humorous Tales of Love, Lust & Lawn Care*.

Estill's brand of humor is gently self-deprecating and her shoot-from-the-hip observations often make a lot of sense. For instance, she wonders why Valentine's Day falls in the middle of winter, the season of hibernation and unshaven legs. She petitions to have it moved to a season like spring which is more naturally inclined to foster romance. In another essay, "September Mourn," she writes that she and her husband chose to get married on Labor Day in order to acknowledge how much work a marriage requires. Yet, they did not realize that in her state of Texas, Labor Day also marks the first day of hunting season for doves, the quintessential symbol of peace.

Deedee Divine's Totally Skewed Guide to Life will entertain general audiences, but those who have shared her experiences—having a husband, grown children and grandchildren—with laugh loudest and most often. The title does exaggerate the book's tone, as Deedee's rants are sassy, rather than "totally skewed." And while her essays are enjoyable, the topics are covered so briefly that they leave the reader wanting more substance. Yet in the end, it is refreshing to hear Deedee say whatever is on her mind.

(August 21, 2009)

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