Clarion Review

Self-Help

Everything Men Have Learned About Women
F.J. Portera Jr.
978-1-4389-2347-5
Three Stars (out of Five)

"A man's face is his autobiography. A woman's face is her work of fiction" Oscar Wilde once said. In this proud tradition of male puzzlement comes a wonderfully humorous statement by author F.J. Portera.

Indeed *Everything Men Have Learned About Women* is more appropriately called a "statement" than a book since it consists of over a hundred blank pages bookended by a preface and a conclusion.

Funny. But what any prospective reader may well ask can a hundred blank pages tell us?

Quite a bit it turns out. The key to Portera's message is in what he does write in the summary and conclusion. His message is simply this: men have learned nothing about women.

While readers may detect a slight note of exasperation in Portera's tone his message is not an angry one. It is a gesture of compassion and understanding toward other men who have tried to understand women—and failed miserably. Portera wishes that his father had given him this book in his own youth and his relief is palpable as he writes "it's not just me it's all men!" Eager to prevent his own progeny from experiencing the same frustration Portera calls this tome "a book I will hand down to my own son."

On a more utilitarian note Portera touts his book's ability to win "brownie points" with the women in a reader's life. "[Y]ou need to keep it in plain sight so she can appreciate you trying to understand her." That could work. The book could also be given as a gag gift to some hapless male.

The book’s main drawback is actually also its funniest trick: Portera’s brevity. What he does say in the introduction is interesting and could use some expanding and polishing. Sure if not done well a standard-length introduction to a book consisting of nothing would detract from the work’s comic zip. But one can’t help but feel that Portera’s tales of women-related misunderstandings would be entertaining.

Readers seeking serious relationship advice will need to look elsewhere; this book is a humorous jab at all such attempts to understand one’s female partner.

But perhaps even a serious quest to improve a troubled relationship could benefit from a little humor and a fresh start at step one: the realization that we know much less about each other than we often allow ourselves to believe.