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Clarion Review

General

My Everything
Denise Skelton
iUniverse
978-0-595-36023-9
Four Stars (out of Five)

Reading this book is like going on a blind date with a checklist of requirements: must be able to cook and be at least six feet tall. No Birkenstocks. You think you know exactly what you want but when you crack the cover of your "date" you discover that inside awaits everything you've ever wanted in a partner—only the person is short loves sandals and lets Safeway do the baking.

If you're expecting a traditional mystery novel tear up your checklist right now. Skelton a former private investigator has served up a romance intermingled with elements of mystery and mainstream fiction that result in an engaging read.

Just like the theoretical blind dater mentioned above African-American P.I. Dee Meyers already has an idea of her perfect mate. She definitely does not intend to fall in love with the WASPy and wealthy Benjamin Harrison. As you might expect she will soon learn that getting what you think you want is in no way as good as getting what you need.

However as befits a private investigator and independent modern lady Dee is no stereotypical "little woman" depending on her big strong man. In fact she is rather delightfully prone to sock people who disrespect her.

Her romance with Ben is only a part of this novel—just as in real life love does not overwhelm every aspect of a person's existence. Dee must also cope with her beloved but "user" cousin Terry the ups and downs of her business a schmuck ex-boyfriend racism and a psycho ex-girlfriend of Ben's.

The author's sense of humor saves the book from taking itself too seriously with the heart-tingling romantic sequences undercut by moments like the one where Ben is stuck on an airplane next to a new grandmother "whose life mission seemed to be to tell everyone about her new grandson whether they were listening or not… " or the time Dee gets busted by the cops for trying to photograph a couple having illicit sex in the men's room—for her agency of course!

Even after running from dogs while trying to obtain proof of insurance fraud Dee's dialogue remains witty: "'I need a drink to settle my nerves' she said.

'Good idea' [Ben said]. 'What's your poison—sherry scotch?'

'No I'm going to need something stronger' she said as she pulled into a donut shop parking lot. 'Hot chocolate with extra marshmallows.'"

Although the book is not as subtle as a creative writing course might have it (a few of the characters seem to go from calm to outraged in a heartbeat especially in the beginning chapters) the emotional satisfaction you experience as *My Everything's* mysteries are solved and the conflicts resolved will stick with you long after you turn the final page.

Holly Chase Williams