



Spent

Antonia Crane

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Bold, brash, brutal, and beautiful, Spent grips from the beginning and is in turns shocking, touching, devastating, and loving.

As compelling on the page as she must have been on the stage, stripper-turned-writing instructor Antonia Crane has written a dark, intoxicating memoir about her raw and reckless years as a pole dancer, sex worker, and drug addict. Straightforward and unapologetic, Crane's *Spent* begins in the backwoods cabin where, at fourteen, she lost her virginity on a mattress that smelled like bug spray, then goes on to the hotels and tantric temple where she gave hand jobs and "happy endings" to men who wanted to feel desired.

But while there may have been secrets in the bedroom, there are none in *Spent*. Crane writes candidly about her solitary youth, her obsession with being "chunky," her loss when her lawyer father abandoned the family for a woman with a "baby voice," and the months she lived with her painter boyfriend on "a diet of meth and oranges." She describes the ecstatic completion she felt when "one day became three" and nothing mattered more than her lesbian lover Bianca and their crystal methamphetamine supply. "Sharing meth with Bianca was like swimming underwater and spitting lava into her mouth. We held the night up by our arms as the hours collected lint in our pockets; black swollen pupils big as walnuts, locked in a trance. Everyone else fell away like burnt sun."

It's this kind of painful, poetic prose that makes *Spent* sing, its rhythm and imagery transferring the depths of Crane's euphoria and despair into palpable book pages.

However, this is not just a drug book or a sex book. Like any classic story, it's about a journey—a hero's journey. But rather than wearing a cape or suit of armor, this hero wears leopard-print fur shorts or, in many cases, nothing at all.

Crane is unrepentant about her life choices. She is as honest about her experiences with anal and fetish sex as she is about her devastation over her mother's cancer, her battle with bulimia, and her lifelong struggle with self-worth and loneliness. Without trivializing, overstating, or oversentimentalizing, she also celebrates her eventual sobriety, involvement in advancing sex-workers' rights, and, ultimately, her newfound strength, acceptance, and belief in herself, along with her desire to help others find the same.

Though *Spent* is Crane's first book, it is not her first piece of writing. A visiting professor at the University of California–San Diego, she is a regular columnist for *The Rumpus*, a contributing editor of *The Weeklings*, and a senior editor and founder of *The Citron Review*. She is also a winner of the storytelling competition run by The Moth and has had essays published in numerous anthologies. Hopefully, this first book will not be her last.

Bold, brash, brutal, and beautiful, *Spent* grips from the beginning and is in turns shocking, touching, devastating, and loving. Perhaps most important, it is also very real. *Spent* is an extraordinary story told by an extraordinary writer.

CINDY WOLFE BOYTON (February 7, 2014)

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