

We Used to Dance: Loving Judy, My Disabled Twin

Debbie Chein Morris

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In the emotive, empathetic memoir We Used to Dance, a family has to let go of one of its beloved members.

Debbie Chein Morris's loving memoir *We Used To Dance* is about the emotional and relational difficulties of caring for a physically disabled sibling—and the gut-wrenching decisions that a family's members made for her.

Judy had cerebral palsy and a deteriorating spine. As she got older, her family members had to decide whether placing her in a nursing home would be her best option. For Morris, Judy's twin sister, the decision took an emotional toll. Judy had been her friend as well as her sister; they'd laughed, argued, and danced together as children. Thus, along with caring for her aging mother and feeling frustrated with her other siblings regarding Judy, Morris processed and navigated the difficulties of trying to do what was best for her family—often on her own.

Morris is a candid narrator whose feelings of guilt and frustration over placing Judy in a care facility are made acute. Indeed, throughout its pages, the book does an able job of detailing her hopes, fears, and questions. Making decisions for Judy took on cataclysmic significance in Morris's adult life. And interspersed throughout the book's coverage of the decision itself are cherished memories from the past, fleshing out the details of Morris's relationship with her other siblings and mother in a way that clarifies their internal thoughts and emotions too—if sometimes to excess. Conversations are recorded in a screenplay format, and the complexities, nuances, and conflicts of such exchanges are somewhat flattened in the process.

Each chapter ends with a journal entry by Morris, used to further reflect on the difficult time during which she and her family were making plans for Judy. These entries also cover her emotional, psychological, and relational struggles—in a way that sometimes repeats what the chapter covered before them. Indeed, some function as redundant summaries. Further, the prose is direct, literal, and sometimes passive; in tandem with the book's excessive explanations, these stylistic habits lessen its emotional impact. Still, Morris's story is both poignant and thorough, recording a challenging period in her life in an expansive manner and reflecting on the inevitable nature of loss in emotional and engaging terms.

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N.T. MCQUEEN (October 16, 2023)

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