



Autobiography of a Face

By Lucy Grealy

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"I spent five years of my life being treated for cancer, but since then I've spent fifteen years being treated for nothing other than looking different from everyone else. It was the pain from that, from feeling ugly, that I always viewed as the great tragedy of my life. The fact that I had cancer seemed minor in comparison."

At age nine, Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with a potentially terminal cancer. When she returned to school with a third of her jaw removed, she faced the cruel taunts of classmates. In this strikingly candid memoir, Grealy tells her story of great suffering and remarkable strength without sentimentality and with considerable wit. Vividly portraying the pain of peer rejection and the guilty pleasures of wanting to be special, Grealy captures with unique insight what it is like as a child and young adult to be torn between two warring impulses: to feel that more than anything else we want to be loved for who we are, while wishing desperately and secretly to be perfect.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

At age nine, Lucy Grealy was diagnosed with a potentially terminal cancer. When she returned to school with a third of her jaw removed, she faced the cruel taunts of classmates. In this strikingly candid memoir, Grealy tells her story of great suffering and remarkable strength without sentimentality and with considerable wit. Vividly portraying the pain of peer rejection and the guilty pleasure of wanting to be special, Grealy captures with unique insight what it is like as a child and young adult to be torn between two warring impulses: to feel that more than anything else we want to be loved for who we are, while wishing desperately and secretly to be perfect

From Publishers Weekly

Diagnosed at age nine with Ewing's sarcoma, a cancer that severely disfigured her face, Grealy lost half her jaw, recovered after two and half years of chemotherapy and radiation, then underwent plastic surgery over the next 20 years to reconstruct her jaw. This harrowing, lyrical autobiographical memoir, which grew out of an award-winning article published in Harper's in 1993, is a striking meditation on the distorting effects of our culture's preoccupation with physical beauty. Extremely self-conscious and shy, Grealy endured insults and ostracism as a teenager in Spring Valley, N.Y. At Sarah Lawrence College in the mid-1980s, she discovered poetry as a vehicle for her pent-up emotions. During graduate school at the University of Iowa, she had a series of unsatisfying sexual affairs, hoping to prove she was lovable. No longer eligible for medical coverage, she moved to London to take advantage of Britain's socialized medicine, and underwent a 13-hour operation in Scotland. Grealy now lives in New York City. Her discovery that true beauty lies within makes this a wise and healing book.

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From Library Journal

When Grealy was nine years old, a toothache led to a visit to the dentist, several misdiagnoses, and eventually surgery that removed most of the right side of her jaw. What she had was Ewing Sarcoma, a deadly form of cancer. In this expansion of her award-winning Harper's essay, "Mirrorings," Grealy sensitively recounts the chemotherapy she endured and the more than 30 operations she underwent in an effort to reconstruct her jaw. For Grealy, the tragedy of her situation was not the cancer but the pain of feeling ugly. As a child, she suffered the cruel taunts of classmates and insensitive stares of adults (Halloween was a great liberator with its concealing masks); as a young woman, fearing that no one would love her, she pinned her hopes on the surgeries that would magically fix her disfigured face and her life. Grealy writes with a poet's lyric grace, but her account of her endless quest for beauty at times becomes repetitious; the most moving part of her memoir comes in her depiction of chemotherapy's agonies and the unintentional cruelty of parents telling their suffering child not to cry. For all collections.

Wilda Williams, "Library Journal"

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maria Abel:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? That's why, you

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Valerie Herrera:

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Philip Martin:

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