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I Am Not Myself These Days: A Memoir



Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling, darkly funny memoir of a young New Yorker's daring dual life—advertising art director by day, glitter-dripping drag queen and nightclub beauty-pageant hopeful by night—was a smash literary debut for Josh Kilmer-Purcell, now known for his popular Planet Green television series *The Fabulous Beekman Boys*. His story begins here—before the homemade goat milk soaps and hand-gathered honeys, before his memoir of the city mouse's move to the country, *The Bucolic Plague*—in *I Am Not Myself These Days*, a book with plenty of dishy anecdotes and moments of tragi-camp delight. (Washington Post).

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Customer Reviews

I Am Not Myself These Days is Josh Kilmer-Purcell's outrageously intimate memoir of a young man living a double life in the heady days and nights of mid-'90s New York City. As we follow Kilmer-Purcell through alcohol-fueled nights and a love affair with Jack, a crack-addicted male escort, he offers up an alternative universe where normal is "a Normal Rockwell painting that, if you leaned in close, would discover is made up entirely of misfits." By day, Josh drudges off to a Soho-based advertising firm where he creates ad campaigns for corporate clients. At night, he dons live goldfish to complete the look of Aqua, a 7-foot-tall award-winning drag queen who trolls gay clubs in search of her next drink/one night stand. In between, he spends his time trying to build a stable, loving relationship with someone whose beeping pager is a constant reminder of the pair's almost inevitable fate. Yet even as Josh's escapades get increasingly absurd, Kilmer-Purcell is

always there to remind us that the story we're reading is real, and that fundamental human emotions and desires are essentially universal. In the end, everyone just wants to be loved and to fit in somewhere. And while the lesson may seem hokey at times, Kilmer-Purcell's sharp wit rescues the memoir from becoming an exaggerated sob story: The night before any major holiday is always a blockbuster night at gay clubs. Thousands... across the city fortifying themselves for long trips home where they'll be met with awkward silences, stilted conversations and cousins with whom they'd experimented with decades ago. From start to finish, *I Am Not Myself These Days* is an extraordinary journey into an amazing life. To be a fly on the wall is an adventure that should not be missed. --Gisele Toueg

In the go-go '90s, Kilmer-Purcell spent his days as an advertising grunt and his nights hopping around Manhattan's gay clubs as "Aquadisiac," over seven feet tall in a wig and heels with goldfish swimming in transparent bubbles covering "her" breasts. (Not that Kilmer-Purcell wanted to actually become a woman; as he explains to his mother, a drag queen is "a celebrity trapped in a normal person's body.") He meets a cute guy, and soon he's moved into Jack's penthouse apartment -- which he pays for by working as a male escort. Kilmer-Purcell gives much of his story a *Sex and the City*-ish spin, finding comedy in the contrast between his and Jack's sweet, cuddly relationship and the sexual demimonde of drag queens, hookers and masochists they count among their friends. But there's always a dark undercurrent: before the two get serious, Kilmer-Purcell's alcohol-impaired judgment frequently puts him in dangerous situations, but things get worse when Jack starts smoking crack during sex parties and becomes addicted. The exact, unflinching detail with which Kilmer-Purcell depicts his downward spiral makes it impossible to look away, especially since it's not until the final scenes that he allows himself to succumb to sentimentality. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

I was not familiar with Mr. Kilmer-Purcell until I saw "*I Am Not Myself Thesedays*" on sale in the Kindle store. Now that I've finished reading it, I feel my life would have not been complete had I not read this book. It is an everyday tale of love between a drag queen and a hooker, but it's delivered with eloquence, wit and heart that it transcends any niche one might try to shove it in. The story is told through the eyes of Aquadisiac, a 20-something drag queen who has just moved to NYC. She recounts her lifestyle, her love and her humor in her 1st year in New York. But it really is so much more - it's an exploration of the definition of love, the meaning of normal the idea of rational

behavior. A real-life experiment in how to do everything you should not do and how rewarding that kind of reckless behavior can be. Not rewarding in terms of monetary gains, everlasting love or exemplary progeny, but rewarding in the most basic sense of endurance. Living in the s***tiest possible conditions and still surviving - granted that you are in these murky conditions because of some terrible decisions, still you are making it through. This is something I can appreciate as I have and forever will be the good little choir boy so nothing really goes wrong, but this also reduces the possibility of anything exciting really happening. It is good to make questionable decisions, because one should question everything - and if you can't, well, you can read a book about someone who did just that and live vicariously through them like I do.

I have been a fan of the Beekman boys for several years, so it was natural for me to want to read it and see more of Josh's life; but this is a must read for anyone struggling with identity and/or self-doubt issues. The courage it took to write this book...to bare one's self to the world; to reveal the destructive choices, the pain, and the ridicule (even self-inflicted), is the epitome of strength and self-preservation. "I Am Not Myself These Days" will make you laugh, make you cry. It will break your heart yet give you hope. You'll want to shake Josh and scream, "WTF?!" on one page, then yearn to wrap your arms around him and hold him on the next. It's such an emotional roller coaster that you forget it's really someone's life you're being allowed a glimpse into. Incredible. Incredulous. Profound. To Josh I humbly say, "Thank you for sharing with us that we may be better, stronger for reading. May you have only happiness for the rest of your life...you've had enough heartache. "

There are very few books that make me cry. This one did, and although in rereading the last third or so of the book I could anticipate the ending, probably the only reasonable ending, it surprised me. Kilmer-Purcell created folks that I became too quickly attached to, both Jack and Aqua. His underlying humor - not only did I cry at the end, I actually laughed out loud various times - is brilliant; his almost photorealism vignettes of New York City and its night time denizens will remain with me a long time. I was really relieved to find out he - the author - has what sounds like a happy and successful real life now.

Brief Description: Kilmer-Purcell's first memoir (before the *The Bucolic Plague*) chronicles his days as a drag queen named Aqua and his doomed love affair with a crack addicted male escort who specializes in S&M. The relationship between Josh and his boyfriend Jack is the heart of the book, and it shines brightly before exploding into a supernova of pain, addiction and loss. My Thoughts:

Kilmer-Purcell seems to have lived enough lives to fill many memoirs. Although it was hard to reconcile the Josh in this book (alcoholic ad man by day and drag queen by night) with the bumbling but persevering gentleman farmer of his second memoir, his wickedly sense of humor and self-depreciation was instantly familiar. Frankly, I'm impressed that Josh survived the days chronicled in this book long enough to transform himself into one of the Beekman Boys. Although this memoir is often really funny and fascinating in a "let's see how the other more flamboyant half" lives sort of way, it is also filled self-destructive behavior that I found both compelling and horrifying. (I must warn you that this book isn't for everyone. If graphic descriptions of gay sex, S&M, or drug use offends your sensibilities, steer clear! Although Jack and Josh don't live anything near a conventional lifestyle, their love affair feels doomed in a tragic Romeo and Juliet sort of way. And just because the heart being broken belongs to a 6-foot drag queen who keeps live goldfish in his corset doesn't make this story any less affecting, emotional or touching.

Josh Kilmer-Purcell does the most excellent job in introducing his readers to the unfamiliar drag queen/manwhore scene of New York City in the 90s. So often we characterise the people of these industries to be so different from us, the average reader living the average life. But through his memoir, we realise that they're not as un-relatable as we assume them to be - we may not smoke crack, be constantly drunk, have massive orgies at birthday parties like its the norm, but we worry about the same problems. How will I pay my rent, does the man I'm living with love me, or even why can't I just care less about consequences and repercussions of the decisions I make. This novel is funny, tragic, thought provoking and has left me emotionally distraught. The characters are witty and interesting, and most importantly as human as it possibly can get. The author impressively writes his experiences in a matter-of-fact style, highlighting what I think is an important theme of the memoir: that it isn't about how you feel about the events in your life but rather, that what happens happens and there's little you can do to change it regardless of how angry, broken, or hurt you are by it.

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