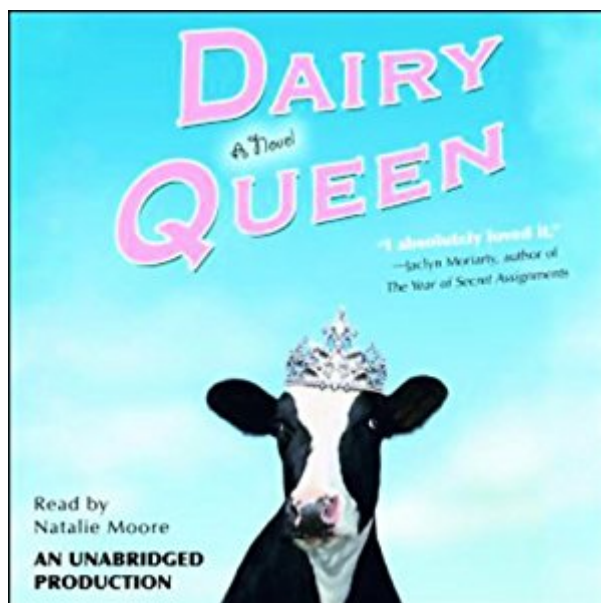


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Dairy Queen



Synopsis

FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. After spending her summer running the family farm and training the quarterback for her school's rival football team, sixteen-year-old D.J. decides to go out for the sport herself, not anticipating the reactions of those around her. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Caveat: I'm very much an adult, and not a tomboy. Thus, not the target audience of this book, or so I thought. I didn't grow up on a farm, either (although I did grow up in the midwest). Still, after a few pages of getting used to the voice, the book quickly and easily roped me in. DJ Schwenk is going through exactly what the majority of teens go through: she's struggling to be an obedient daughter, even when it's challenging; she's satisfied with school, although she doesn't feel like she fits in with the popular kids; she lives in a limiting small town (the small town here is a literal metaphor for the seemingly limited, small world in which many kids live before getting the drivers' licenses). As the plot synopsis indicate, DJ has found herself doing more and more of her family's work on the dairy farm because her mother has just received a promotion at work and her dad has suffered an injury that's made it not possible for him. She lives in the shadow of her estranged older brothers, who were star football players on the local high school team and are now playing in college. When, at the recommendation of a family friend, DJ begins to train the local rival team's QB, things fall into place for her and she realizes that she wants to go out for the football team. What makes this book beautiful is its subtlety. DJ doesn't do this as a political statement; instead, she just has a realization

that it's what she wants to do because she enjoys it. Similarly, other family members and friends are coming to the same sorts of realizations - a close friend admits she's gay, her dad realizes how much he loves cooking, her younger brother confesses his secret (I won't spoil it). All of these realizations are presented through DJ's eyes as matter-of-fact situations that DJ warmly takes in. She's hugely relatable and through that, hugely likeable. Even the happy ending isn't trite but instead realistic.

When I read a contemporary YA book that's as enjoyable and wonderful as this one, I wonder why I don't read more contemporary YA. I like to read for meaty issues--and this book actually has some--but I also like to read for the sheer joy of reading, which is why it's such a pleasure to pick up a book like this one. I wanted to just fall into the pages and spend as much time with its characters as I possibly good. One thing that really struck me about this book was its voice. I liked how it was sort of stream-of-consciousness at times. The wording was very inelegant, and that made the book wonderful because it felt like I actually was reading the musings of a teenager who was growing up on a farm. Sometimes characters in YA novels feel more sophisticated than they should. This isn't to say that there aren't sophisticated teenagers out there, because of course there are, but adolescence is a time when you spend so much of your time flailing away that I liked that it showed in this book. Even adults don't always have it all figured out, so it was refreshing to read a book like this, where I wasn't confused by a world-weary attitude that felt too old for a sixteen-year-old character. Along with the well-done voice, this is a book that tackles a variety of issues in a sensitive, convincing way. D.J. and her family are pretty typical in that they have trouble talking about any big issues. It's uncomfortable to do this, and I could really buy into the idea that they spend a lot of time concealing what they feel. Naturally, their reluctance to talk about anything leads to a whole host of issues, and I thought Murdock did a wonderful job of showing how difficult it can be to find your voice and to talk about the things that really matter with the people you love the most. The family dynamic was just so convincing and so well done. No one is really to blame, and none of the characters are what I would consider bad, they're just all human beings whose foibles complicate their lives and relationships. I don't mind really angsty books if they have something to say, but it's nice to read something down-to-earth, where people are dealing with the sort of communications issues most of us deal with on a regular basis. I loved D.J. as a character. I loved that she wasn't anyone uber special. She felt like a girl to whom I could relate, a girl who might actually exist. She makes mistakes, she does dumb things, and she acts in ways that hurt other people, even when that's not her intent. Yet her earnestness pulled me in, and I really felt for her as she struggled to

figure out what she wanted out of her life. I think it's normal for a lot of people at that age to feel that way, to pause in the middle of doing all those things they're told they're supposed to do and wonder what the point is. I liked that D.J. had her own reasons for wanting to pursue football, and I like that, though Murdock touches on the difficulties this entails, it doesn't become some huge deal or the impetus for an epic battle. The story is more personal, and I was glad for it. As soon as I finished this book, I noticed that there were two more and I instantly wanted to read them. While this is a trilogy, this first book isn't like the first book in most trilogies that I read. The story arc is complete, the important things are tied up, but there's still more room for story, more potential for growth from all the characters. I can hardly wait to spend more time with the Schwenks.

4.5 stars I loved this book so much I read it in one sitting in the bathtub of all places. And trust me, I live in student housing in desperate need of renovation so that is by no means a cozy bathtub, but I was so engrossed in this story that I kept reading long after the water got cold. I admit, I grew up on a farm driving tractors ever since I was a little kid (so young that I look at my kids and think Were my parents really crazy enough to let me operate machinery when I was that age???) so I LOVED all of DJ's description of the farm. This setting was pitch perfect for me. Catherine Murdock knows about agriculture and farm living and Midwestern charm. That part about having to send a favorite cow, Joe Namath, away in her old age? I have lived this, so I felt a connection to this story and its characters that I haven't felt in a long time. Besides that setting, I was captivated by DJ's authentic voice. As she struggles to be seen by her family and find her own balance between her work on the farm and pretty much everything else that takes a back seat to that, I felt equal parts admiration and sympathy for this hard-working girl who needs a bit of appreciation. Of course I love a little romance in my YA books, and Dairy Queen has just a dash of romance that develops perfectly in that slow, realistic kind of way. I've had this book sitting on my shelf unread for two years, so thanks to Colette who read it and told me I was going to love it because she knew me back during the farm girl days. She was right. Everything that is wrong in Catching Jordan is right in Dairy Queen. THIS is what Catching Jordan should have been.

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