

The Square Root of Someone

Anne Brandt

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Mostly insightful and poignant, occasionally humorous, "The Square Root of Someone" is a collection of twenty-four exquisitely wrought, intensely personal essays penned by Anne Brandt. Some of these pieces originally appeared in "The Chicago Tribune Magazine," "The Denver Post," and "Seniors." Brandt is also the co-author of two non-fiction books and the winner of the first prize in the Great Books Contest for her novel, "The Personals Chronicles."

In "The Square Root of Someone," using words as a canvas, and drawing upon a vast range of inspirations, including her childhood and children, friends and relatives, death and divorce, trips and places, the author vividly paints both the joyous and challenging experiences that touched her life in the past and present. Written with a charming candor and a friendly, conversational style, Brandt's stories aptly reflect her profound understanding of human nature and keen observation of the minutiae of everyday life.

The author elevates the mundane and transforms moments that we often take for granted into impressionable works of wit and smooth eloquence. A writer's block, family reunions, getting a tattoo, visiting a tanning booth, and eating in a deli are the seemingly ordinary activities that come alive with her creative pen. Whether she is writing about bidding adieu to the family cat, trips abroad with her mother and grandparents, the vicissitudes of friendship, the warm memories of her aunt's home, spending Christmas at a funeral home, her bonding endeavors with her stepdaughters, or the spectacular beauty of Provence, she evocatively sweeps the reader into her world.

While each story in this collection is captivating in its own way, perhaps the most stirring and uplifting ones are the descriptions of the author's meeting with her father after a gap of forty-five years; her gifting of a one hundred year piano to a poor, talented boy; and her significant other's attempts to join the police force at the age of sixty-three. The author writes from the heart, and a subtle simplicity of language makes her pieces even more powerful.

Models of brevity and lucidity, Brandt's gems encompass all the elements of deftly crafted personal essays. "The Square Root of Someone" is an indisputably enthralling collection that will have universal appeal.

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