



Life in a Skinner Box: A Memoir

Michelle Dean

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Dean's story-telling is as real as it gets while she takes the reader on a visceral and intellectual journey of a life examined. After her parents' divorce, Dean--an only child--is raised by her rational father, who interacts with her through logic and science. Yet, as a soulful young girl, Dean has a deep desire to love and be loved. Because this important piece of her core is never recognized or affirmed, she spends years searching for someone or something that can resonate with the deep emotional connection she craves.

Using the only framework she has--rationalism--Dean experiences repeated disapproval from adults and rejection among her peers, which leads her to mistrust and dissociate from...*herself*. Along the way, she is able to connect with other damaged people, because she can empathize and see a life of beauty beneath the barriers of others' brokenness.

As a young woman, Dean becomes more aware of her own dynamic internal battle--between trying to be what others expect and realizing that she only feels unity when she experiences the world alone. Only through studying psychology, experimenting with drugs and underground subcultures, and travelling solo can she feel internal integration.

Full of vulnerability and strength, Dean doesn't hold back from sharing her own role in her failures, as she learns to channel her pain into compassion for those that failed or hurt her. A deeply introspective and emotionally honest Dean uses humor, lively characters, and an on-going philosophical dialogue with her father--spanning 35 years--to search for answers regarding the nature of human behavior, the meaning of free-will, and the existence of mind and soul.

But in her heart, the answer she's always been searching for is "Will I ever truly be seen or loved?"

The answer lies within her book.

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