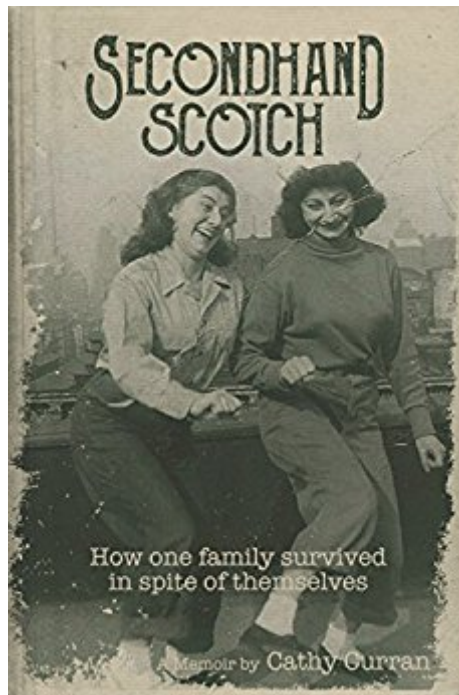




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Secondhand Scotch: How One Family Survived In Spite Of Themselves



Synopsis

When your grandparents make bathtub gin and go shopping with funny money, and your dad flaunts his degree from the school of hard knocks, you grow up learning that "life ain't no got-dem picnic." These lessons are handed down to Cathy Curran by Eastern European immigrants who learned how to survive caring little for aesthetics--"if it worrrks, who gives a got-dem what da hell it looks like." Lucky for Curran, her mother is a gentle soul with a dry wit. Lillian Low's homespun values--people come in all flavors just like ice cream--bring joy and humor into the Low house. When restless Joe Low ditches one suburb for another just because he wants a do-over, Lillian tells him, "How the hell many do you need? Don't you know that wherever you go, you've got to take yourself with you?" Along for the ride is the colorful Low clan, who turn up to celebrate the arrival of Joe and Lillian's army of kids. They eat, drink, sing, Joe gets plastered, and all too often scotch-fired arguments lead to some good old-fashioned fistfights, which are immediately forgiven with an unspoken rule--shut up and forget it, then it all gets swept under the rug. But when Curran pulls up the carpet, pandemonium emerges from hell with a vengeance. Through the vision of a sensitive young girl with a wickedly funny voice, "Secondhand Scotch" uncorks some harsh realities, but never ceases to warm and entertain.

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Customer Reviews

I've been meaning to get around to writing a review for this book for quite some time; although it has been months since I read the book, it has stuck with me and my emotions all the while. I truly believe that the author of this book deserves to have her name and her work publicized as much as possible, not just because of the hard work and ardor she has clearly put into the making of this memoir which is weaved of very special stuff, but also because it is simply a riveting read. There are many famished readers out there who are hungrily searching for the next genuine and well-written memoir to stir up their feelings and transport them into someone else's mind - far too many for such a treasure as this book to remain a secret uncovered by so few. *Secondhand Scotch* is accessible, and it engagingly connects generational history, memories (from the perspective of both the child and adult Curran), and personal retrospection, with commentary that is both down-to-earth and intelligent, as opposed to various other memoirs I have read in which the author is rather self-absorbed and attempting to be overly erudite at every which turn. Curran takes on no such pretensions and as you read the book you feel as if she is your friend. Her strength in putting up with what life has handed to her is incredibly motivational to me, and her experiences make for a captivating tale, especially for those who have ever been on the receiving end of physical or emotional abuse. If you're looking for a book that is "easy-to-read" as in, a book that contains no "difficult-to-read" content without a hint of anything that can possibly stir up your emotions (which is one of the noblest things a book can do), then I tell you that *Secondhand Scotch* is a bit too real for you, and I encourage you to seek out a more boring book about a more boring family.

I was recommended to read this book from a close friend as I grew up in the neighborhood of the author. I can confirm that this book is authentic as I purchased "killies" from the author's Grandfather and knew the family, albeit being seven years her junior. I shopped at "Enders" and was bothered by the same siren from the firehouse continually. The book is so realistic It is almost unbelievable to me as I was brought up in a situation similar to the author and cannot imagine how she wrote this down so beautifully. Her clarity and ability to pen all of this down was remarkable. I highly recommend this book. I thank her for sharing these moments and feel privileged to have been

allowed into her life in the detail that she shared. God Bless the Low family. Great read!

Second Hand Scotch was an excellent read. I could hardly put it down! This is a multifaceted book that covers all the senses. This book entertained all my emotions, that is talent! It has great historical information as well as insight on the human spirit. How strong our basic human desire is to love and be loved. Wow just Wow! I highly recommend this book!

I simply could not put down Cathy Curran's *Secondhand Scotch: How One Family Survived in Spite of Themselves*. I binge read this unique and courageous memoir about growing up in a huge European immigrant family in two days. I laughed and cried. THAT makes it a winner to me! When I say *Secondhand Scotch* is unique, it truly is. There are memoirs covering every topic imaginable but I've never read one quite like this one which covers in depth the topic of unique family dynamics, which made it even more enjoyable. Personally I could relate to her story since I, too, came from a similar background, as did millions. But you don't have to relate to her background to appreciate her expertly crafted description of her family life. Ms. Curran maintains her outstanding sense of humor throughout the book despite constant family upheaval, which occurred to many of us Baby Boomers born into families with traditional ways of child rearing instilled in them. This book is courageous. People may have expected Cathy to save the huge Low family from abuse. It's obvious to me she did the best she could at the time. Cathy's constant love for her family as a primary caretaker drives her to understand her colorful family, how they passed on their learned ways of child rearing which unfortunately include corporal punishment. Remember, *Spare the rod and spoil the child* was commonplace during that period of time. The positive thing is she broke this cycle in her own adult family life yet maintains a love and understanding for the huge European immigrant Low family, especially her Dad, Joe Low. He was a product of learned behavior and she came to terms with that. In conclusion I must add I am in absolute awe of Ms. Curran's superb phonetic writing of her family's accents, which had me constantly laughing. This is a *got-dam* GREAT BOOK!

This book touched me personally in so many ways as a child growing up in the 50's & 60's. It's about resilience and forgiveness during the life of Cathy Curran who was a child of Eastern European immigrant parents living in Central New Jersey. She was the 2nd eldest child and was treated like a slave and physically beaten by her father during his almost daily drunken tirades. She

was expected to clean the house every day but also acted as the protector of her mother and younger, while also receiving verbal and physical abuse from the father and her sister. Her mother was the bright light in her life by singing songs and making jokes behind her husband's back to comfort Cathy and the other children. While they were dirt poor, her mother stretched every dollar to the extreme while her father squandered the money he made. Later, Cathy often heard the excuse of "that's all I knew" from her father and grandparents to defend their behavior. She also humorously describes the enormous family gatherings with all the aunts and uncles and cousins and their efforts to survive. I am so glad that I read this book.

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