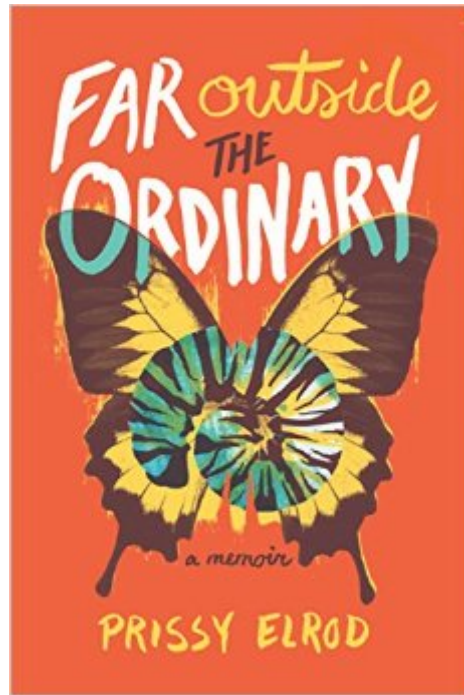


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Far Outside The Ordinary



Synopsis

An emotionally honest account, *Far Outside the Ordinary* has been described by some as *Steel Magnolias* meets *The Help*. It chronicles the period in Prissy Elrod's life, when during a routine physical, her fifty-year-old husband is diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme brain cancer and given less than a year to live. Never one to take no for an answer, and driven by hope and her strong faith, Prissy is determined to save her beloved husband and the father of their two daughters. She is a strong, tenacious woman who doesn't accept the diagnosis. Guided by their faith, hope, and love, the two of them spend the next year searching for a medical miracle. Prissy believes her husband will recover and that somehow she can save him. Despite her extraordinary efforts, her husband's health deteriorates and Prissy has no choice but to find cancer caregivers. She hires two southern black caregivers after a friend's recommendation. The "Angel of Death" moves into her home in Tallahassee, Florida, and works around the clock to aid her family and care for her dying husband. Soon, Prissy finds herself a spectator in her own home, observing events far outside the boundaries of her once ordinary life. This is a true love story about how people with unwavering southern charm's from different cultures forge friendships and respect for one another, while supporting a man who was given a death notice. After her husband's death, Prissy struggles to make a new life for herself and her two daughters. *Far Outside the Ordinary* is also a story of happily-ever-after, a fairy tale, and how a second chance at love can come disguised and when least expected. When her high school boyfriend reappears in her life, Prissy learns love has no expiration date. She finds herself swept up in an exciting and romantic love story and realizes this could be a new beginning to the rest of her life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Far Outside the Ordinary" begins with a two-page prologue, and in that short introduction, I already found problems. In it, a writer from the show "Dawson's Creek" (a "distinguished man of color") approaches the author to ask for the right to tell her story. She responds, "Thank you so much for the offer. I'll get back to you." The next line: "Of course, I never did get back to him." Two things about that line bothered me. The first was that she did not even call him to say thank you but no thanks. The second is the use of "of course." This objection might seem trivial, but it underscores what seems to me to be a central problem with the book. Prissy comes across as a spoiled, insensitive, self-indulgent taker. I feel awful writing that, especially in light of what she went through. So let me get to that. The first part of the memoir deals with a serious interruption in Prissy's life. Her 51-year-old husband is diagnosed, more or less out of the blue, with a brain tumor and given about a year to live. I have nothing but sympathy for Prissy Elrod on this point, and her grief is often almost palpable. One of the wonderful things, though, is that there are people with profound sympathy and empathy around, and Prissy seems to have been blessed to be surrounded by many during her trying time, including the Black help that arrives. As another reviewer noted before me, the portion of the memoir dealing with her struggles during this period is well done, and Prissy goes through a variety of emotions that I would expect nearly anyone would go through in similar circumstances: anger, hurt, betrayal, denial, and so forth. But her husband's death occurs roughly halfway through the memoir, and after that, it seems as if she has forgotten all the help she received. She gets a job for which she probably is not qualified through connections. She seems to do little to help those who helped her. And in general, she conveys a sense of privilege and entitlement that is not at all charming. Her treatment of race also raises issues. I don't think that if I went through the book carefully, I could find a line that proves any animosity or hostility, but there was, for me, an unmistakable sense of discomfort in reading this book with regard to the issue of race. I wish I could put it better, but I really can't. Ultimately, "Far Outside the Ordinary" is Prissy Elrod's story as she chose to tell it, and there certainly are effective parts, whether phrases she turns or the story of her husband's passing. I assume it is mostly honest and sincere. Fair enough. I just found too much that was not pleasant to read. I don't mean the emotional pain she experienced; I mean the side of herself she chose to reveal.

I liked this book for the most part. Prissy is a housewife, with two children and a lawyer husband. She's living a comfortable life without too much to worry about, until her husband is diagnosed with cancer. She gives an honest account of having her life turned around by illness of a family member. (I've had a similar experience in my family-more than once). She admits to her manic behavior to save her husband. She hires some great caregivers with soap opera issues of their own. She writes with complete honesty through the long process of caring and watching her husband die. Other issues happened and she describes how she handled it, but it wasn't easy. I felt a lot of empathy for her most of the time. When she describes living in a 4000+ sq ft home alone and planning a trip to Europe (twice)...I wasn't as emphatic, but the privileged have their problems like everyone else. I think Prissy learned a lot from her caregivers. This book was described as having a fairy tale ending which I didn't find to be completely true. It's a happy ending, but I thought the ending was abrupt. It leaves you wanting more...what does her old boyfriend look like? What happened on their weekend? How long was the courtship? etc...but something tells me that she plans to write a follow up story so she cut the story short. Overall, interesting to read, but the last few chapters were a little redundant. Recommend

While I found the book an entertaining quick read, as a Tallahassee native/resident I did not feel that it portrayed our city in a flattering light. Ms. Elrod seems to be a bit tone deaf when it comes to people of a different race and professionals as well. I was really taken aback when a flyer for the book was sent home in my child's elementary school homework folder (her daughter is employed as admissions staff). I imagined how a professional mother who works hard to support her family would feel about Ms. Elrod's portrayal of her ability to get a prestigious job with no qualifications. Or more concerning, how a black family would feel reading this - do Ms. Elrod and her supporters merely see black people as "help" as portrayed in the book? Her lack of awareness and empathy was off putting and disappointing. Not all people in Tallahassee, including those of us from "old" families, think this way.

Like a phoenix from the ashes, Elrod's story inspires us that we can come through the hardest of times with grace and embrace a new and maybe even a more beautiful form of ourselves. This is a priceless and rewarding read that elegantly weaves sorrow, determination and humor in a cast of characters that you would think could only be fiction. You'll have to keep reminding yourself that this is a true story. To quote Steele Magnolias, "laughter through

tears is my favorite emotion. It sums up the ride this touching story takes you on and one you will not regret! Reading the last line leaves you hoping for a prequel and a sequel.

I just got finished reading this book and feel it a privilege to be taken along on Prissy's journey of tragedy and triumph. I laughed and cried, then laughed again. I knew Prissy in high school so many years ago but never knew the turns her life had taken. I could hardly put the book down. It is so well-written and easy to read, filled with humor amid the sadness, and having a fairy tale ending. My husband and I got it on our Kindles and he finished the book even before I did! So this book is for everybody! She lets us see her despair and brokenness but then in the end her triumph. I was disappointed only that the story ended too soon and I can hardly wait for the sequel. I haven't enjoyed a book this much in a very long time. A true story of inspiration and hope.

Although I have never had to experience the death of a husband, I feel like I have been through this with Prissy. I could feel her pain. So glad she found happiness in the end. A wonderful, heartwarming story.

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