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Loser Goes First: My Thirty-Something Years of Dumb Luck and Minor Humiliation

Dan Kennedy

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Dan Kennedy : Loser Goes First: My Thirty-Something Years of Dumb Luck and Minor Humiliation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Loser Goes First: My Thirty-Something Years of Dumb Luck and Minor Humiliation:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. what the heck happened to us?By The Agency ReviewDan Kennedy

is a very funny man. And like most funny people, he has a lot of balls. Because - and this is something that most unfunny people don't realize - it takes real cojones to be funny. Comedy is about surprise and constantly stepping off the edge of the cliff with only your innate sense of timing and structure to save you. And that takes courage. But it takes a particular brand of that courage to write a memoir when you're only in your thirties. Because for most people, it isn't until at least our thirties that we have anything worth saying. Up to that point we've spent most of our time going down blind alleys, exploring dead ends, and doing the kinds of things that years later, we'll look back and say "what the hell was I thinking?" If we're lucky, by the time we get to our thirties, things have turned some sort of corner. What was once clumsy and awkward and unexplainable has become celebrated and honored and respected. There's a lot of hardware and a lot of "oh, so that's what he was talking about..." But write a memoir in your thirties and you're just (to read the rest of this review, please visit theagencyreview.wordpress.com/loser) 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. InspiringBy DirtyHe got his first book deal at 33. Sleeping soundly but also working hard. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. So Disappointed :(By RobynI really wanted to like this book, but I can't make it past page 75 no matter how many times I try. The reviews from national magazines and amazing authors (like Jerry Stahl) said that it was lol funny but I haven't laughed once - or even smirked. In fact, I found it tried much too hard to have humor and completely fell flat. After reading Augusten Burroughs, I likely have a new standard for humor. His books are poignant, intelligent and hilarious while Loser Goes First is typical, trite and self-indulgent. The book received one star because there was no lower option.

It all begins on Christmas morning, 1978. Dan Kennedy is ten years old and wants a black Gibson Les Paul guitar, the kind Peter Frampton plays. It will be his passport to the coolest (only) band in the neighborhood—Jokerz. He doesn't get it. Instead, his parents present him with what they think he wants most, a real-estate loan calculator (called the Loan Arranger) and a maroon velour pullover shirt with a tan stripe across the chest. It is the first of what will become a lifetime of various-sized failures, misunderstandings, comical humiliations, and just plain silly choices that have dogged this "hipster Proust of youthful loserdom," as author Jerry Stahl has so eloquently called Mr. Kennedy. Dan's hilarious and painfully awkward youth soon develops into a . . . uh . . . hilarious and painfully awkward adulthood. His first two choices for university are Yale (Lit or Drama) and Harvard (Business), so he reviews his high school transcripts and decides on Butte Community College in Oroville, California, where he studies for about four and a half weeks. We could go on here and describe in detail all of Dan's good-natured stabs at ambition, but he, himself, sums it all up quite nicely: "If you've ever tried and failed miserably at being a rock star (no guitar/talent), a professional bass fisherman, an extra in the movie Sleepless in Seattle (guy drinking martini in bar while Tom Hanks makes a phone call), a Madison Avenue advertising executive, a clerk/towel person at a suburban health club (named Kangaroo Kourts), an espresso street-cart owner and operator (in the one neighborhood of that coffee-swilling town, Seattle, where, remarkably, no one really seems to drink coffee), a dot.com millionaire, an MTV VJ, or a forest fire fighter, this book is for you." Along the way, a few lessons are learned and we are treated to one of the most original, riotously funny, unsentimental, and offbeat memoirs in recent history. Dan's a favorite in McSweeney's and at the very popular Moth readings in New York City. We should be happy that he failed so miserably at so many things—and took notes!

.com Many people spend their lives searching for their true calling, the one thing at which they excel and which will catapult them to fame and fortune. For Dan Kennedy, author of the darkly comic memoir Loser Goes First, that talent is decidedly not rock and roll. Kennedy details a life spent pining for the glory of rock stardom as a junior high student, an Austin, Texas, open-mic failure, and at various grim stops along the way as he shoots for the big time without the burden of talent or the tedium of learning to play an instrument. Kennedy's talent is also not acting, although he lands a gig as an extra in Sleepless in Seattle that leads, much to his chagrin, to nothing at all. Even his scrupulously cultivated talent of being an indie scenester is torpedoed when he willingly accepts an audition to be an MTV VJ, only to have the tryout be an unmitigated disaster. Finally, Kennedy discovers a pair of latent abilities. He finds, after he's into his thirties, that he has a knack for advertising copywriting that sets him on the path to his first financial success almost accidentally. And in writing Loser Goes First, he reveals a talent for relating his own dumb moves and embarrassing fiascos with an honesty and wit that is vividly entertaining. Loser Goes First approaches narrative structure with the same indecisive distracted quality that Kennedy used in his actual life and the result is a chronicle of Kennedy's first 33 years peppered generously with film treatments, bullet point lists, imagined dialogue, and other snippets that seem transcribed from a very clever notebook. While such meandering could be perceived as too self-consciously quirky, it matches the story and keeps the humor crisp. --John MoeFrom Publishers

WeeklyMcSweeney's contributor Kennedy claims to have managed to miss just about every zeitgeist of his life so far: leaving Seattle for Austin to make music just as grunge was taking off and failing to make millions in the dot-com excesses at the opposite end of the same decade, to name two. Part mock Chicken Soup for the Slacker ("Maybe the only reason we don't do half of the things we try to do in life is because we just never get around to doing them") and part Sedaris-style essay collection, this episodic book presents Kennedy from his normal-but-awkward childhood to his normal-but-still-awkward adulthood. Early flights of Walter Mitty fantasy segue later in the book to a hard-won

semi-maturity after he ends up broke in Manhattan after a failed grab at MTV VJ fame. His 30 years, though at a glance misspent, have taught him a lot-and won him a lot of friends. One of the book's main attractions for certain readers will be its shortcoming for others: Kennedy's spot-on generational references might seem alien to someone who didn't spend the '80s wearing Ocean Pacific shorts and listening to the Plimsouls and Oingo Boingo. Yet the main achievement here is that each potential success remains just that close in the mind of this book's protagonist; while Kennedy-the-character was constructed by and resembles Kennedy-the-author, the latter maintains a particular warmly bemused (or faux naïve) distance from him, the signature move of the McSweeney's generation. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The subtitle of this book may strike fear in the hearts of readers treading water in the sea of Gen-X memoirs. But rather than being the drop of water that drowns them, this self-deprecating series of essays is a life preserver (albeit one with mismatched paint and a nagging feeling that it really should have been an inner tube). What Kennedy gets, and most of his contemporaries miss, is how little he gets. Rather than sharing untested nuggets of wisdom, he laughs with us as he recounts his slouching efforts as musician wanna-be, teenage bass fisherman, record-warehouse gofer, newsletter designer, health-club attendant, forest-fire fighter, espresso-cart manager (with no employees), TV comedy writer, advertising copywriter, and, eventually, author. In fact, the only thing he is expert at is misreading signs about what to do with his life. We cringe delightedly as Kennedy records his inability to make small talk, smart decisions, or much of himself. And when he does finally deliver his insights, it's not with a self-aggrandizing shout but a welcome, modest shrug. Keir Graff Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved