



It Happened to Nancy: By an Anonymous Teenager, A True Story from Her Diary

By Anonymous Teenager

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The editor of the classic GO ASK ALICE has compiled the poignant journals of a 14-year-old date-rape victim who contracted AIDS and died.

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Editorial Review

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Gr. 7-12. Fourteen-year-old Nancy, an asthmatic, meets 18-year-old Collin, a gentle, caring young man who appears to be the answer to her dreams--until he rapes her, leaving her HIV-infected. In spite of her rapid decline, explained in a note at the beginning of the book, as the result of her weakened immune system, Nancy leads a full, poignantly happy life because of the loving support of both friends and family.

It Happened to Nancy follows the YA-enticing diary format seen years ago in *Go Ask Alice*, which also was edited by Sparks. And the same reservations remain. Is this really a teen's diary, or is it Sparks' attempt to convey the reality of adolescent susceptibility to HIV/AIDS in a format that will impact YA readers? Does the occasional place lapse (the Arizona time zone is earlier than South Carolina's) reflect editing sloppiness while Sparks was changing both names and places for privacy, or a fiction writer's lack of focus? There is no way of knowing. Although this is frustrating for adults who monitor the children's/YA field, it's doubtful that it will make much difference to the book's intended audience. YAs will devour this book just as they did its predecessor. Nancy's initial "love" relationship with Collin, her subsequent date rape, and the terror of her diagnosis will be real to teenagers, especially girls. And Nancy's support network is truly educational. Adolescents crave the kind of friends who stand behind Nancy throughout her ordeal (she even has a boyfriend!), as well as the loving relationship she has with both her parents, divorced but determined to work together during this tragedy.

Sparks provides additional educational information at the end of the book, "Questions Nancy Wanted Answered About Rape and AIDS," a good thing, since Nancy asked her diary several questions without providing their answers in the body of the text. Parts of the book are graphic: Nancy worries about blood from her menstrual cycles, how to dispose of her tampons, and how to deal with her rectal ulcers, a common manifestation of AIDS. And, of course, she dies--the ultimate AIDS inevitability--unlike what happens in so many other books about teens and AIDS, both fiction and nonfiction. She progresses from happy-go-lucky junior-high-school student to AIDS patient to death in a spiral that will hold YAs' attention, without the didacticism of so many message-inherent titles. In spite of its flaws, Nancy's diary should be on our shelves.

Frances Bradburn

Review

"I Love Nancy, I love her still, and hope you will not only love Nancy but appreciate her decision to make her most private thoughts and experiences public, in the hope of helping you better understand AIDS."--
Doctor B

About the Author

Beatrice Sparks is a family and adolescent therapist who edited the diary that formed the basis for *Go Ask Alice*, and has since edited many diaries on topics such as gangs, AIDS, and teen pregnancy in the 1988 *Annie's Baby*. She lives in Provo, UT.

Users Review

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Morgan Woods:

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Janice Wilham:

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