



Not By Accident: Reconstructing a Careless Life

Samantha Dunn

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One day as Samantha Dunn was leading her horse through the canyons of California, he inadvertently trampled her, nearly severing her leg.

In a life filled with risk-taking and injuries, this was the most serious accident yet. It spurred Dunn to question her inclination toward carelessness, and she learned that a pattern of accidents often indicates deeper issues bubbling below the surface. This last near-fatal episode was a wake-up call; she had been looking away, not only from her horse, who had shown clear signs of panic, but also from her complicated past and troubled marriage. *Not by Accident* follows the stages of Dunn's long and painful recovery, during which the emotional healing process proved even more challenging than the physical one.

Not By Accident: Reconstructing a Careless Life Details

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Rebecca says

The author has an impeccable strategy to keep the reader's interest. Although the topic is harrowing - there is always potential to write a dull story but this one is otherwise.

The writing was clear and the details placed the reader into the story. I laughed and I cried within a few pages. This is a hard feat for any writer to do. Humor and vulnerability are key tools in the writer's toolbox.

I look forward to reading more of Ms Dunn 's work.

Shannon Fahy says

If you love horses and stories about being knocked down in life and coming out on top you will love this book like I did.

Sharon says

This is a true story. Samantha is hurt so badly by her horse she has to fight not only her injuries but her faith in her horse. I couldn't put this book down. She never feels sorry for herself and just keeps pushing for good health and renewing her spirit. She's an amazing woman. I highly recommend this book. I'll be keeping "Not by Accident" in my library to be read again.

Susan says

I finally decided to finish this book. I dragged it out as long as possible because I just didn't want to say goodbye to Samantha Dunn and her horse Harley. Such good writing. Such an insightful story. I loved this book and am sad that the experience of reading it is over.

Lisa Manterfield says

When author Samantha Dunn is thrown from her horse and comes close to losing a leg, she is forced to evaluate whether her long string of accidents have been a run of bad luck or if she's been living a reckless life. Going against all advice, she is determined to get back on the horse, both literally and figuratively. With her frank, self-deprecating humor, Dunn asks the question, of both horses and life, of whether the rides we take are worth the potential fall.

Kelly Kittel says

I read this book feverishly, because I actually had a fever and felt too miserable to do anything else besides blow my nose every ten seconds. As a result, I didn't take notes and the lines are blurred between what was the book and what was my own feverish state. Regardless, it was compelling and interesting and gut-wrenching and, like all good memoirs, caused me to reflect on my own existence.

I've never been good with horses, or most other animals either, so it was interesting for me to read about life from the viewpoint of a bonafide horse lover. I can now say I understand the relationship better, altho I will continue my general practice of avoidance. I guess horses are intuitive and I do know from experience that whenever I've been coerced or have otherwise consented to riding one, both horse and me know all too well just who's in charge. So to read about this horrific horse accident is confirmation for me. I'll be sticking to goldfish.

I smiled when Samantha's guru advised, "Keep breathing. If you only do one thing, keep breathing." The fact that Samantha gets back on the horse, proverbial and otherwise, might seem crazy. But I'm a woman who continued to get pregnant in spite of nearly dying in the process. And not just once. So I completely understand. Our passions sometimes borderline on obsession but when they are what drives us, what gives our lives purpose and meaning, there is no turning away. As she writes, "It is my nature to forget."

I've been part of a discussion lately about the role of God in tragedy and particularly agreed with this bit as written to her by a priest when she asks for guidance, "Someone once said that life must be lived forward but can only be understood looking backward. I think we have to endure much before we can see how God has guided our steps. To do it prematurely is to make as real only what you wish were real. I am of the providence-is-a-mystery school. By that I mean that human and divine life is so complex and interrelated that it is almost impossible to see how God acts or why. I don't see the suffering of innocents or the dreadful acts of the holocaust have any place in God's providence. But I believe that God is there, even there. I live providence as a belief and a question. Perhaps this will get you started."

Heather Marie says

Dunn's book is certainly a soul searching confessional that seemed to resonate with me personally. Her descriptions of horses and our (women's) relationships with them have left me pining for my own long gone equine friends. I appreciated the way she wove flashbacks, medical information, and other stories into the tale of this life changing accident. Dunn writes artfully and believably. Dunn's story of transformation was pleasantly palatable and thought-provoking, a welcome contrast to Gilbert's Eat, Pray, Love which I could not even get 50 pages into because of its insipid triteness.

Shayna says

I just changed my rating to 5 stars, because I'm realizing how often I think of this book when I'm struggling with something or feeling down or overwhelmed in general. Samantha Dunn is such an honest writer and a strong, grounded woman, but hardly "perfect," which is one of the things I love about her. The horse-riding aspect serves as a metaphor in a lot of ways, so you don't have to be an equestrian to get it. Highly, highly recommended. Then be sure to follow up with Dunn's "Faith in Carlos Gomez."

Dena says

"It seems to me that you don't care enough about yourself to pay attention to what you are doing. That's why you keep getting hurt." -- this is said to Samantha on p. 192.

The above words resonated with me because I had to learn to care about myself as an adult.

I appreciated how Ms. Dunn merged the research on "accident prone" people and our medical understanding of the body with her personal story throughout the memoir.

Jean Minton says

Samantha Dunn tells her story of recovering from a near-death horse accident beautifully. What struck me most about this book was Dunn's ability to so clearly describe her feelings on every occasion. Her story telling makes her incredibly easy to connect with. I especially appreciated Dunn's descriptions of her mother and grandmother and the way she weaves in references to their influence on her life. Beautifully written.

Victoria Plettner-saunders says

I LOVED THIS BOOK. Read it in a day - not because it was a short book or easy read but because I just couldn't. put. it. down. Thoughtful, personal, revealing and researched. Thank you Samantha for another great read.

Sarah says

Ow. And wow. This book could be described as a story about woman and her horse having a terrible accident. But really it's a story about perception and pain and fear and mothers and daughters and failed relationships and failing ourselves and pain and healing and how to get over yourself for long enough to become your own heroine. The telling is crisp and witty and spirited. I was annoyed with Samantha Dunn because I could not put this smart and candid story down long enough to go pack and shovel and walk the dog. I Loved this book.

Linda Atwell says

First off, I'm a memoir fanatic--so if it is a true story, I want to read it. This is a story about the day Samantha Dunn takes a horse ride in a California canyon. When she dismounts and tries to walk Harley through a creek, he becomes frightened and tramples her, causing severe damage to her leg. She is minutes away from bleeding to death when a stranger comes out of nowhere to rescue her. The story of the accident was gripping and I couldn't put the book down. I also wanted to hear how this injury disrupted her life and she's very open about the pain and lifestyle changes she had to endure. She tries a variety of ways to reduce her pain and heal herself. Fortunately, there is a happy ending to this tragedy. I'm not particularly a horse person

(even though I've ridden in the past) but it isn't just a story about a woman and her horse. It is a story about love--her relationship with her horse(s), the other people in her life, and coming to terms with the relationship she has with her own self. It is a beautiful, worthwhile story.

Elizabeth Butcher says

I could not put this book down. So much for me to think about regarding a person being accident-prone that I need to give this some time and re-visit this book again later for a second read.

Jamie Rose says

Full disclosure, Sam is a friend of mine. However, I read this book BEFORE we became friends, and I LOVED IT! She is a masterful writer. Her tone is conversational, which makes her craft is very stealthy--her excellence as a writer sneaks up on you. Her description of the riding accident that inspired the book is harrowing, her personal discoveries universally resonant, and her prose is impeccable. I highly recommend.
