

[PDF] Never Change

Elizabeth Berg - pdf download free book

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Author: Elizabeth Berg
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Description:

Elizabeth Berg has a single great gift as a novelist. She creates heroines who are stuck and unhappy, yet deeply sympathetic. This may seem like an easy trick to pull off, but it's not. Think about it: usually when a character is mired in a problem--especially a problem stemming from her own reluctance to change, or fear of commitment, or lack of identity--the reader is ready within a few dozen pages to shout, "Pull yourself together!" and set the book aside. In contrast, Berg's characters seem like enjoyable challenges: problems with actual solutions.

In *Never Change*, Berg uses her gift to great advantage. Middle-aged Myra Lipinsky describes herself as "the one who sat on a folding chair out in the hall with a cigar box on my lap selling tickets to the prom, but never going." And despite a flourishing career as a visiting nurse, she feels as much an also-ran as ever. As the novel begins, in fact, high school seems to be rearing its ugly head again: Chip Reardon, the heartthrob of Myra's youth, has returned to town to live with his parents. Chip is

dying from a brain tumor, and Myra becomes his nurse. Berg is not the kind of writer to lay bare the unsettling power dynamics of such a situation. Instead, Chip and Myra become friends and, well, learn how to love each other. It's a testament to the author's strong sense of character that we actually believe--and what's more, care about--Myra's emergence from her emotional cocoon. And the book is full of nice details, like this snapshot of children being read to at a library, "rising up on their knees to see the pictures, resting their hands unselfconsciously on those ahead of them so that they would not lose their balance." Such careful observations, recounted in Myra's voice, make us believe that she is a character worth knowing, and worth saving. --*Claire Dederer*

From Publishers Weekly Oprah author Berg (her *Open House* was a 2000 Book Club selection) turns in another sweet, unprepossessing and reassuringly predictable novel whose characters experience loneliness, loss and healing. "Odd-shaped," and with an "unfortunate" face, Myra Lipinski has been lonely all her life; she trained as a nurse "because I knew it would be a way for people to love me." Now 51, she lives alone with her dog and works as a visiting nurse in Boston, caring for an array of eccentrics that includes the feuding Schwartz couple, the feisty DeWitt Washington and the anxious teenage mother Grace. Resigned to spinsterhood, Myra is secretly thrilled when her agency assigns her to care for a former crush, Chip Reardon, who has returned to his parents' home with end-stage brain cancer. In high school, Chip was a golden boy, athletic and clever, out of ugly duckling Myra's league. Now, though, he and Myra strike up a friendship based on their mutual loneliness and on Chip's resistance to his parents, who want him to pursue aggressive treatment for his cancer. Chip prefers to die peacefully, a decision that only Myra seems to understand. Chip and Myra become inseparable: he tags along on her patient visits and eventually moves into her house, where their budding friendship takes a romantic turn. On the brink of death, Chip helps Myra to realize that her isolation is as much self-induced as fated; throughout their lives, both he and Myra have shied away from human closeness. In an inspiring, well-deserved denouement, Chip's inevitable death forces Myra to embrace the world in all its bittersweet complexity. Berg's fans will be grateful for the same gift: a novel that serves as a gentle, if unambitious, reminder to "only connect." 10-city author tour.

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