

What I'd Rather Not Think About

Jente Posthuma

Sarah Timmer Harvey, Translator

Scribe (Jul 4, 2023)

Softcover \$15.00 (224pp)

978-1-957363-35-6

In Jente Posthuma's bittersweet novel *What I'd Rather Not Think About*, a woman who is bereft after her twin brother's suicide searches to understand his mental illness.

The fraternal twins at the center of the story have peculiar obsessions. They share a fixation on suicide statistics. They moved to Amsterdam to study English, chose apartments on the same square, and plotted a joint move to New York City. But he dropped out of university to work at a gay bar and changed to be more like his boyfriends, and the siblings drifted apart. Now, she works part-time in a vintage shop and amasses a huge collection of sweaters.

The narrator never discloses her name; she used to be Two and her brother One because he was born forty-five minutes before her. The way that she defines herself in relation to him and his absence emphasizes the overwhelming nature of her loss. "My brother had gone and with him, all of my past," she writes.

But the past sees a resurgence, alternating with the present in the book's few-page vignettes. The twins' father leaving when they were eleven was a significant early trauma; then, One came out at sixteen, though Two had intuited his sexual orientation when they were eight (a fact revealed through the charming, subtle fact of them falling in love with the same television presenter).

With no speech marks, the conversations blend into cogitation and memories. Two meets with a therapist to parse her conflicting emotions and contemplate the meaning of self-harm. Suicide stories pervade the text, with the twins trading trivia about Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, September 11, 2001, and the Holocaust. A wry tone, however, tempers the bleakness.

What I'd Rather Not Think About is a forthright novel in which mental health, sexual orientation, and suicide are subjects of frank, empathetic consideration.

REBECCA FOSTER (July / August 2023)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.