

*Spent: A Memoir*, by Antonia Crane

rev. by Aimee Campos

Rare Bird Books

*Spent: A Memoir* is Antonia Crane's first full-length work. *Spent* is an autobiographical account of her perspective in sex work, recounting the days when she started out as an exotic dancer and fought not only the pull of the business, but also drug addiction and toxic relationships. Crane has previously written for *The New York Times*, *Playboy*, *Electric Literature*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and many more.

Crane describes the situations she found herself in, from the rush of creating a new alter-ego every time she stepped on stage, to the physical ache she felt when she gave up dancing in favor of more "normal" jobs and was barely scraping by financially. Crane can't stay away from the financial compensation and rush of the sex business, so she is also descriptive when it comes to the variety of clients she handles working in dance clubs and independent side deals she makes with fellow sex-workers, giving an honest reflection of her personal enticement to sex work.

Crane's writing is very nostalgic and she depicts the real view of sex work and all its messy gritty details. Much of Crane's diction creates unique imagery in the reader's mind, as Crane wanders through the cities of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New Orleans, in search of more validation in her self-identity, bouncing from one exotic dance club to another. Crane does a fantastic job of putting the reader in the same room with her, which may be uncomfortable to some, but nevertheless eye-opening to Crane's audience. Not only is the reader allowed into Crane's past, but Crane also presents an array of differing characters who shape her journey in both good and bad ways, further developing this real-life account even more. Some of the characters Crane introduces are her mother, as the desperate voice of reasoning who doesn't mind Crane's dancing, or Mayra, one of Crane's toxic exes, who threatens Crane constantly in a whirlwind relationship of dominance and submissiveness that further drives Crane to dancing.

This memoir is an intriguing, tense, and at times uncomfortable account of a sex worker's life. Crane isn't here to glamorize sex work, but instead to relay her story, one that could appeal to any audience looking to learn about a topic that is dismissed and not talked about often. With witty descriptive prose and an unpredictable protagonist, Antonia Crane's debut novel is not any kind of light reading – but then, most interesting books usually aren't.