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Book Review

***Sleeping Naked is Green* by Vanessa Farquharson**

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Environmental books, while informative, can sometimes make for dry reading. What initially attracted me to this book by Vanessa Farquharson was the title. The premise of the book is Farquharson—a young Arts and Life reporter for the right-wing, climate change-denying National Post—decides to spend a year greening her life. She commits to making one change a day. The entire year was captured on her Blog “*Green as a Thistle*” and the book strings together her events from a post-experiment perspective, although it is written more like a journal reflection of her blog. Some of her eco-conscious changes are small—like the switch to recycled paper towel—but some of the changes she implemented are not for the pseudo-environmentalist. Some of the most memorable changes are Vanessa using only vegan-friendly dental floss (p. 27), unplugging her fridge (p. 62), and giving up birth control (p. 157). Says Farquharson in the very beginning of her journey:

Even if the only thing this self-imposed challenge does is force me to re-evaluate my shopping habits, offer a few sacrificial light bulbs at the feet of Mother Nature, and figure out what it truly means to be a modern environmentalist, then ultimately, it’s worth it. That cheesy saying we have—about always regretting what we haven’t done, never what we have—is what I’ll have to cling to...” (p. 23)

Farquharson labels herself as a cynic, and her book is anecdotally written with refreshing candour. Making one change a day seems easy, but combining all of those changes takes her far away from her previous average consumer life. She writes with

honesty about the frustration that many people trying to reduce their carbon footprint come across. Distaste for the eerie glow cast by LED lights, remembering to carry around a re-usable shopping bag, the dilemma over whether or not someone who cares about the environment can eat meat—these issues are always on the minds of people interested in pursuing a greener lifestyle. Farquharson confronts these issues and her own feeling of hypocrisy in her book *Sleeping Naked is Green* in a way that really involves the reader. Her absolute humanity, including a very human predisposition to selfishness and hatred of change makes the book relevant and meaningful.

The most impressive thing about the book is the incredible inspiration that Farquharson evokes. The reader's inspiration comes through the process of watching the metamorphosis of someone else change her life for noble purposes—and wanting to be a part of that picture. Vanessa herself was inspired. Her goal was to share her experiences but she did it in a way that did not come across as preachy or judgmental. She made a real impact with her experiment. During her one hyper-eco-conscious year, she managed to save 11.02 tons of carbon dioxide.

This memoir is a book that is suitable for quiet reading. It is fun and yet informative. Farquharson's voice allows the reader to feel at ease—even if he or she is not a die-hard environmentalist. On the other hand, someone who is already invested in making lifestyle changes to reduce carbon emissions can still learn from Vanessa's changes. This book was a revitalizing and heartfelt read.

**Author: Damielle Paradis is currently a fourth-year student in the Bachelor of Applied Communications in Professional Writing program at Grant MacEwan University. She is an avid reader, a broad-spectrum writer (everything from poetry to non-fiction to academia), and a sometimes environmentalist.*

References

Farquharson, V. (2009). *Sleeping Naked is Green*. Toronto, Canada: Wiley & Sons Ltd.