

Sonja Dunn is a television writer, producer and performer who lives in Ontario. She is the author of *Butterscotch dreams*, and is President of CANSCAIP.

TEENAGE EATING PROBLEMS

I was a 15-year-old blimp, Patti Stren. Irwin Publishing, 1985. 192 pp. \$12.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7725-1538-7.

Patti Stren has found her voice. This is the most apparent and most important aspect of her latest book, which deals with three mutually opposing yet co-existing teenage problems: overeating, overdieting, and purging. They are, as we all know, one overwhelming and deadly problem because they stem from an emptiness in the pit of the stomach that just doesn't go away.

Patti has always been able to open painful situations to their core and lead us with gentle humour to embrace the way things really should be, only this time she does it with real people. She started out with cuddly animals, then moved on to dream-like people. Now she gives us a living, breathing, choking and hoping teen-age girl.

My mother says I'll have stubble for the rest of my life. You see, Maude, as I refer to her, caught me in the bathroom redhanded. She found me shaving my mustache off with my father's razor.

There might be something larger than life in the too-perfect fellow who loves Gabby through thick and thin, and something too mature in Gabby's coming-of-age and everything-coming-out-right scene, but that's the telescoping that art forces on a writer. Anyone who's ever watched time lapse photography in the original footage, or thought about it, knows that art imitates life only in its dramatic moments. Besides, if Patti had let anything permanently bad happen to that lovable Gabby, I couldn't have taken it.

Gabby is charming and funny and her desperation is fun to read because she struggles so hard. The book is a "ton of fun" and should be an overnight read for teenage girls, a day and a half for slow readers. I don't think they'll put it down.

Sofiah Friesen is a Toronto writer and reviewer.