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## The Double Life of Alfred Buber, by David Schmammann



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Alfred Buber grew up in Rhodesia and moved to the States as a young man, displaced by the troubles and seeking a university education. He sees himself as no-one special, somewhat short, somewhat clumsy, somewhat bald. But he's intelligent and, despite his unpromising start, he's doing rather well. In fact, he may even be rich, though still a little lonely.

Alfred Buber never quite fit in, not as a Jewish child in Rhodesia, not as school-friend of the half-Asian misfit Rosalind, not as law student helping an Asian girl who can't quite keep up, and not as the staid, conservative Mr. Buber, pillar of company and community. Alfred's father sent him to a foreign land; his mother moved back to England; his "guardian" never really seemed to guard him very much; and Alfred's not even sure what his dreams are, except that they remain unfulfilled.

In an effort to appease the self that dreams his dreams, Alfred Buber goes to Bangkok where a sweet young bargirl offers her "services," and he falls in love. Except Alfred Buber, pillar of the community, really can't dream of bringing such a person home. Except Alfred Buber, dreamer of great dreams, most certainly must.

Two worlds collide, as surely as they did back in Rhodesia when it changed to Zimbabwe, as surely as they did when young Alfred first arrived in America. What's real, what's imagined, what's public, what's secret, all jostle for first place in Alfred's thoughts. And a man who's hidden his identity in an effort to fit in just might end up revealing all in this very tightly written "memoir" of his life.

There's sweet comedy, tragedy, fine observation of small-town life, absorbing descriptions of exotic locations, poverty, love, hope and guilt in this book. But above all, there's life, in the words and the characters and story, and in the feelings left behind in the reader as the final page turns.

*Disclosure: I was lucky enough to receive a bound galley of this book from The Permanent Press in exchange for an honest review.*

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Worth a look I think. Thanks Sheila.

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