



# Because I Am Furniture

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## **Because I Am Furniture** Thalia Chaltas

Anke's father is abusive. But not to her. He attacks her brother and sister, but she's just an invisible witness in a house of horrors, on the brink of disappearing altogether. Until she makes the volleyball team at school. At first just being exhausted after practice feels good, but as Anke becomes part of the team, her confidence builds. When she learns to yell "Mine!" to call a ball, she finds a voice she didn't know existed. For the first time, Anke is seen and heard. Soon, she's imagining a day that her voice will be loud enough to rescue everyone at home—including herself.

## **Because I Am Furniture Details**

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# From Reader Review Because I Am Furniture for online ebook

## Cornmaven says

This book just didn't work for me. It's a novel in verse, which I usually like very much. But I don't think that the story should have been told that way. I think it should have been a regular novel.

The 'verse' alternated between pretty sophomoric stuff, I supposed in an attempt to make the voice of the 14 year old protagonist authentic, and some high level word usage within the verse, which would not fit a 14 year old living in the situation.

The father is over the top abusive - beats up the son, beats on and rapes the middle daughter, but doesn't touch the younger daughter. Hence the title. The mother, out of fear of something, has looked the other way, tried to not rock the boat. It's freaky, creepy, and I suppose accurate for some situations. The middle daughter does nothing because the father has told her he will kill her if she tells, and indeed, his anger is such that it would be reasonable for her to believe him. So she goes to great lengths to protect herself, including using the pill (but how did she get the scrip without parent involvement? - she's a minor - only through a Planned Parenthood office/clinic perhaps -except she's not indigent, and someone should have put 2 and 2 together).

There's an attempt to use volleyball as a some sort of metaphor for confidence, I think, but it doesn't work for me. In fact, the creepy sections are thrown in amidst a large amount of volleyball practice, and it was so weird. If that was the point, OK, but I am not so sure.

All in all, not my favorite book within the genre of abusive parents.

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## Brianna says

To be perfectly honest, this book would have been better in my opinion if it was not poetry. Poetry is just not my thing. The character development of Anke was great, she finally spoke up about what was going on at home. You got to read what you got to read in school. Still a good book though.

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## Becky says

I am always there.  
But they don't care if I am  
because I am furniture.

I don't get hit  
I don't get fondled  
I don't get love  
because I am furniture

Suits me fine.

Anke has a difficult home life, though that is putting it mildly. Her father is abusive. She sees all. Hears all. Yet though a witness, she's somehow avoided being the subject of his abuse. (Though witnessing it is damaging enough as it is.) Can a teen girl break out of her silence and get help for her troubled family?

Because I Am Furniture is a verse novel about hard issues: physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. With all the negative going on in her life, Anke finds great joy in the one positive of her life: volleyball. Can what she learns on the court change her life off the court?

Here's one of the poems I enjoyed from the novel:

They call us  
Nopes  
the "out" crowd,  
we don't fit their  
dog-show guidelines  
wealthy-beautiful.

We call them  
Yups  
they have to  
all agree,  
yup each other  
every day on every thing.

And we say  
Nope, don't  
want any part  
of your Yuppitude  
so tight  
society will burst  
with any change  
of thought.

But being a fractured, momentary gathering  
and not an actual collective,  
we say  
Nope  
individually  
with scrambled cadence

and their  
Yup  
is way  
louder.

(25-26)

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**

This is the kind of book that they need to have in schools, because child abuse and domestic violence is still alarmingly common and still not a whole lot of kids speak out about it because they don't know how or what the consequences will be. *Because I Am Furniture* is an empowering story of one girl struggling to find her voice, not just in sports but also in the attempt to save her siblings from the brunt of her father's abuse. She's always been the lucky one, largely ignored by him and thus able to avoid the worst of it, but still she knows her family is horribly dysfunctional at best, even herself, wanting so badly to be noticed that she actually *envies* her sister for being raped because at least then her dad would be paying attention to her. I'm not sure what to think of that but it's very disturbing.

Playing volleyball gives her a voice she never knew she had, and with that she learns the importance of standing up for not just herself, but also her family. Written entirely in verse, *Because I Am Furniture* isn't the first book to bring up themes of child abuse but it's still very powerful and well-written, if not rather jarring in some of its content.

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## **Rachel Green says**

Although hard to read, I am glad that I read this book. It was recommended by a teen at the library I volunteer at. I was somewhat surprised that there were not resources in the back of this book on how to identify and report abuse and would have liked to have seen that.

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## **Amanda D'Alonzo says**

Goodreads asks "what do you think?" Well, where do I begin? I read this book in one sitting, roughly one hour. Took me roughly another hour to return to reality.

Written in verse, a form I absolutely love, when done correctly, *I am Furniture* unravels the lives of a family plagued by abuse - sexual, physical, mental, and emotional abuse. The story reveals the rawness of emotion and the roller coaster of feelings that exist when an individual develops her ability to want something better.

There were moments when I questioned the insanity of not speaking up sooner, but Chaltas weaves a story in which it is easy to understand the protagonist's choices. I found myself feeling guilty devouring the book in an effort to find out what happens. Embarrassment ran through my cheeks when certain aspects of the abuse were so blatantly described. In the end, pride in Anke trumped all emotions.

*I am Furniture* tells the powerful story of taking back ownership of one's life and standing up for those that may not have the courage to stand up for themselves. A heartfelt reminder that we are in this crazy thing called life together.

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## **Anna says**

The plot was good and the verse was actually not terrible, but the ending felt abrupt and I didn't really

connect to the characters at all.

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### **Kristy says**

This is disgusting, disturbing, horrific and sad  
yet so beautiful and honest.  
So deep and moving,  
So heart-wrenching.  
How terrifying it must be  
to be terrified of your own Father.  
How mind-f\*&^ing it must be  
to want any attention from him,  
to be jealous of your sisters rape,  
to desire to be beaten  
or yelled at  
just something to know he knows you exist.  
How powerful you must feel  
knowing you are the reason he was sent to jail,  
how powerless you must feel to know he is now out.  
You are no longer furniture.  
You exist, you have a life.

If you have never really read any books with verse/poetry to tell the story, this might be a good one to start on. It's super quick and easy to follow. I still feel like I read a story, not just a collection of pretty words. This is not like that. My heart breaks, because you know this sort of thing goes on all over the world. There are so many people who are left so powerless and feel like they have no way out- I am so glad this one ended on a good note.

Try this one out... but be prepared that it is a sad story.

<https://www.amazon.com/Because-Am-Fur...>

This and other reviews (and other fun stuff) over on my blog  
Messyhousehappy life

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### **Hanna says**

Because I am Furniture, is not the best book ever. It is written in verse, but I think that it should have been written as a regular novel. I read the excerpt and saw how she plays volleyball and I knew that it was going to be cheesy. I still gave it a chance, though. Then I saw how it was in rhyme. No one should ever write poetry about volleyball. I could not stand it!

Then rest of the book was rather...

Her dad is a creepo and I don't know why Anke's (the protagonist) mom ever married him and why she was still married to him. He beats up Anke's older brother and older sister and I'm pretty sure that he rapes them both. I know he rapes the sister...

And her mom does absolutely nothing. I do not know why. In fact it seems like she thinks that it is like helping them or something. When he goes in their rooms, I think we all know what that means, she said that he was just making peace with them.

So we have the peverted, abusive dad, the mom who does nothing, not because she is scared, because she thinks it is for the best, the abused brother and sister, and the youngest daughter who wishes that she was beaten up by her very own father, because then he would love her. Quite a dysfunctional family.

In the end, she catches her dad trying to rape one of her acquaintances. She finds her voice through volleyball (how touching) and tells him to stop, saving her friend. When her dad comes home, she explodes. He throws an armchair at her and the bone of her leg comes out. That was pretty cool. I wish that they had told what happened after that. I think that it would have gone better with the story if he had beaten up someone else then, or maybe he could have kidnapped the sister and run away. Just some suggestions to juice it up a bit. Then they all live happily ever after once he gets thrown in jail. The end

(Sorry if this review was a little peverted, but so was this book)

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## **Alex says**

Because I Am Furniture is written in verse, and it works. It's quite a powerful novel that deals with an interesting subject: child abuse. Of course, we've seen it, read it, heard it all before. But Anke's not the one being abused, she's the witness of the abuse, which is probably equally as tough.

Even though it's a thick enough book, because it's in verse, it goes very quickly. I was able to read it in one day, almost in one go. I however, thought that maybe it was a little too short. There perhaps wasn't as much depth and detail as I may have liked. It describes her life, her experiences with volleyball, her journey to finding the strength to speak out. But that's really it. I would have liked to learn about more of the characters' opinions. Exactly why her father abused them, why no one really did anything. I mean, obviously the family was scared of the father. But... I just think there could have been more to it.

It's a very simple book in that way. There isn't really that much other stuff or subplots. It isn't really a bad thing, but well... I thought there would be more to it.

I do like the change in Anke. I like how at first she's timid and frankly a little weak, but as she plays volleyball, her confidence grows and grows. She learns a lot and I like the fact that it comes from a sport, in this case volleyball. Through volleyball, Anke discovers a strength and beauty within herself, and others notice. For instance, she attracts the attention of males now, including her father. Which is disgusting.

Overall, it's a great fast read that encourages one to be able to stop abuse. It reminded me a little of North of Beautiful, but with a lot less. But the abuse is the same, always from the father. Why is that? Or maybe I just haven't read a lot of books with an abusive mother, except for Lock and Key by Sarah Dessen.

Read it if you like verse. Read it if you're interesting in learning and understanding more of child abuse. Read it if you want to be able to feel good at the end. Read it if you want to feel empowered.

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## **Audrey says**

Full review can be found on my blog.

My thoughts:

I think the correct feeling I had when I finished this book is that I wished it was more. More emotional, more depth to the characters, more engaging to the reader. It was undoubtedly all of these things, but not to the point where I was a sobbing mess or screaming at the characters.

The abuse portrayed in this novel is described with the best mix of detached denial and up-close horror. Anke's feelings about it is conflicted which both surprised me and was realistic. She hates her father for what he is doing to her siblings, but she feels worthless because he doesn't pay the same 'attention' to her. It's a twisted way to think, but when you consider a daughter's longing for her father's appreciation it is scarily probable.

Another part I thought made the novel unique is the strong imagery that I wasn't sure a verse novel could achieve. I loved the references to leaves and trees, along with the attached symbolism. Anke's voice served her character well, both with the hints of fear and longing. I do wish I was more engaged with her character though, there were quite a few times I felt like I was "on the outside looking in" when I would rather, as a reader, be experiencing her emotions as well (you know what I mean?).

I did feel the secondary characters excluding her family were a bit weak. They felt mostly flat, especially the two love interests, Jed and Kyler. I wanted a bit more from Rona as well but I can understand Anke's desire to keep her at arm's length when regarding the personal issues. I loved the way volleyball was incorporated into the novel, kind of like the forbidden activity but something she can't help but love.

Lastly, I thought the ending was only okay. The way the abuse was resolved felt a bit clichéd, not to mention (just a tiny bit) reminiscent of the novel *Speak*. I wanted a bit more, and wished it could have been a bit less tidy. I also thought that throughout the majority of the novel Anke's emotions are always strongly portrayed until the very end where it kind of fell short.

Rating in HP Terms (OWLs): Acceptable

3.2/5 because I enjoyed this one quite a bit. It didn't take long to get used to the verse style and it dealt with a tough subject with poise and directness. It never shied away or sugar-coated a very serious topic that deserves attention. Anke's character is exceptionally written and the conflict portrayed in the novel is very strong. I wanted a bit more emotional attachment to Anke along with secondary characters with more depth. Figurative language is very well used (ugh, English teacher, go away!).

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## Lizzie Miller says

This is a very good book if you like sappy stories it is a sad story to begin with it is about a girl whose family ignores her. She has an abusive father but only to her brother and sister. Her dad ignored her all the time. Anke's older siblings, Darren and Yaicha, put up with the abuse their father gives to them and act as though nothing is really going on. She goes out for the volleyball team and makes varsity she is a good volleyball player but her dad doesn't like competition so he doesn't like that she plays. She still continues to play even though her dad doesn't approve. Her confidence builds more and more the longer she's on the team. She's wishing this would capture her father's attention but not even this seems to do the trick. Until one day at home she finds her voice with him and from there the book really takes a turn. Her sister, brother or her mom won't say anything to anybody about her father will she be the one to say something?? This is a book you won't want to put down. It is a super easy to read.

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## Sarah says

*{This review was originally published on Clear Eyes, Full Shelves.}*

Thalia Chaltas' *Because I am Furniture* exemplifies the unique power of novels in verse. There are a lot of young adult novels about family violence, and many of them are excellent. However, in *Because I am Furniture*, the verse form allows the reader to *experience* the house of horrors in which Anke, the main character, lives.

Fourteen year-old Anke's siblings are terrorized by their abusive father while her mother passively watches, seemingly accepting the violence and sexual abuse of her children. Anke, however, is simply ignored.

I am always there.  
But they don't care if I am  
because I am furniture.

I don't get hit  
I don't get fondled  
I don't get love  
because I am furniture

Suits me fine.

Anke is a younger narrator than I usually prefer--she's 14 and a high school freshman. I do think this was a barrier to my getting into the story initially, because she lacks some maturity, particularly in how she deals with friends at school. However, Anke joins the volleyball team and it utterly *transforms* her, as sports often do (and other activities like music, drama, debate team, whatever).

Her on the ground holding up the wrapper,  
me with my hands up in victory,  
"The CROWD GOES WIIILLD!"  
Two senior guys stroll by,  
eyebrows raised.

We grin.

Volleyball has taught me to yell.

Not only has volleyball taught Anke to yell, and stand up for herself and others, it's also taught her about friendships.

She develops a friendship with another girl from the team with a troubled homelife, Rona, and this helps her grow more self-assured. I loved that in this novel, while there is a minor love-interest plot, this new friendship is more important to the novel and Anke's transformation. That aspect to *Because I am Furniture* was extremely uplifting.

Unlike the previous book I read dealing with family violence, I really connected with Anke--she's tough and intelligent, but not artificially so. It read as appropriate and realistic for someone her age who's been through a lot and has managed to remain whole. The character development is quite outstanding for such a relatively short novel.

*However...*

If you are bothered by intense descriptions of violence and abuse, I have to warn you that this is likely not be the book for you.

I struggled through *Because I am Furniture* at points, particularly when Anke witnesses the abuse of her siblings and wonders if it would be better to be in their places, not so she can save them from their suffering, but because she at least would not be ignored and invisible. It was a struggle being in Anke's head at many, many points in *Because I am Furniture*,

He went into Yaicha's room  
last night  
after he hit her  
across the mouth  
for reading  
Cosmo magazine.

I burned in my blood,  
I turned to Mom  
as we stood in the hall  
and inside my head screamed, *DO something!*

Her eyes glazed and wide  
like an injured cat,  
her mouth pulled tight,  
Mom sighed in a voice that didn't match,

"It'll be okay.  
He's just making peace with her."  
And she walked away.

Because I am Furniture is filled with moments such as these. The experience of reading this book was extremely frustrating at times because I, like Anke, was extremely angered by her mother's apathy toward what her children are experiencing (that's what it appears to be, given that we're experiencing everything through Anke's eyes). And then I had to pull myself out of the reading book, and take some deep breaths before diving back into the pages.

And, that, as I mentioned earlier, is why Thalia Chaltas' debut is such a strong example of the power of the verse form.

### **FNL Character Rating: Tyra, in the Humble Pie episode.**

~~A younger voice than I usually read, but the intensity of the verse made up for that for me. Tough read because of the violence and abuse.~~

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### **Sandra says**

Not only are the verses in this book beautifully written with meaningful poetic devices, if you're inclined toward noting that sort of thing, the topic is unfortunately, always contemporary.

There's so much I could say about this fantastic book, but I'll focus in on a couple of points. Anke believes it's better to be like a piece of furniture in her family. Those who are noticed are hit and sexually used and abused. She's the youngest and somehow ignored in nearly every aspect of the family's life, most importantly by her abusive father.

The mother, who most will have no sympathy for, is somewhat more human and sympathetic at the end of the book. She speaks of how she had thought doing nothing was best for her family, that she'd once truly loved this man she called her husband.

Yikes! It is horrible to think that a mother could turn her eyes away from the horror of her and her children's lives to protect the sanctity of the family. There's nothing sacred about a man who rapes and beats. Still, it's not an atypical response from wives of such men.

Finally, Anke becomes noticed and does something to bring the beast to justice. The message in the book is that victims have power, if they will take it. It's also about the love that the family had for one another and how they can pull together to changed what seems destined to spiral down until it's reached the very depths of hell.

I caution people who may read this book. It's tough. It's horrific. It's a welcome-to-a-world-of-horror read.

On the positive side, it's beautifully written, demonstrates an attitude of personal power and change and it brings you into the mind of a girl of fourteen who has many qualities to admire and who finally overcomes circumstances that appear so abysmal that hope seems buried so deep that it can never see the light of day.

It's from the heart of a person who writes with empathy and hope. It demonstrates that those who feel powerless can prevail.

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## **Kristen says**

This was a heartbreaking look at abuse within a family, and most times I forgot about the story being written in verse.

Anke lives in a nightmare. Her father repeatedly beats her older brother, rapes her older sister, and terrorizes their mother, who does nothing to stop the abuse. But Anke is, for the most part, left alone. She struggles between feeling relieved that her father rarely chooses to speak or acknowledge her and feeling hurt that he doesn't "show his love" in some way. She knows she shouldn't WANT to be beaten or abused, but she can't help feeling unloved and unwanted.

At first the chapters switching from horrible home life to normal school day (classes, volleyball, boys) was a little jarring, but it's a realistic look at children who are raised in abusive situations. They are taught from a young age to hide everything and pretend things are normal. Anke, however, doesn't think she can continue doing that.

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