Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

A Reflection of Strength
Arnaud Bellevue
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Since the formation of the United States, immigrants from every part of the world have left their native countries in search of a better life in America. Memoirs filled with the pain and joy of these sometimes risky transitions bombard the publishing industry at every level. Though not everyone became rich or famous, at least not immediately, many immigrants have fascinating stories to tell. If it's true that hardship builds character, Arnaud Bellevue is one of those outstanding individuals who became a stronger and more whole because of his trials. *A Reflection of Strength* describes the process of adapting to American ways and learning to integrate dreams and desires into daily living.

Bellevue was born in Croix Des Bouquets, Haiti. In 1965, his family immigrated to the tough city streets of Brownville, Brooklyn, when he was eleven years old. Early on, he struggled with the English language and American culture, trying to keep up in school and maintain a calm and happy life amongst family and friends. Though he wanted to be a professional soccer player as a young man, he eventually relinquished this pursuit for practical reasons. Later, he graduated from college.

Much of this memoir discusses Bellevue's heartbreak upon losing his wife to multiple sclerosis after a ten-year battle. The long hours and the gradual deterioration of a spouse he loved casts a somber tone over this well written book. In explicit detail he illustrates the agonizing course of the disease and the depressing impact of its fatal conclusion. Readers are offered an intimate glimpse of the caregiver's role he played, as well as a devastating look at the complications associated with MS. Unfortunately, Bellevue allows the medical particulars of the tragedy to take precedence over a description of his own personal experience and his otherwise exceptional delivery suffers.

Arnaud Bellevue holds a bachelor of science degree from the New York Institute of

Technology. He has worked in pathology for over twenty-five years and currently lives in New York. Readers will be happy to hear he remarried in 2004.

Interspersed with Bellevue's lowest lows are the uplifting, gratifying moments of his fascinating acclimation to America. Admirable is his ability to overcome hardship and emerge an enlightened person sensitive to every nuance of his existence on earth. Rather than bitter and hardened, this man acquired profound perception and sophistication.

Julia Ann Charpentier