



Cat's Whisker

Robert Steven Goldstein

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In Robert Steven Goldstein's reflective novel *Cat's Whisker*, a man muses on the schism between science and spirituality.

Spirituality has always been of interest to Sammy, who is culturally and ethnically Jewish. As a child, he read through the nontechnical science ads at the back of his father's engineering and technology magazines, but any attempt he made to explore spirituality outside of his family's tradition was brought to an abrupt end.

Adulthood gave Sammy the freedom to explore without oversight. He moved through life as a technological whiz, using the physical exertion of jiu jitsu and the more intangible aspects of meditation to recharge his energy. In retirement, his childhood fascination with Rosicrucianism reasserts itself through an encounter with a member of the local order; their new approach to meditation opens him to a more whole, present existence.

The book's prose is velvety, like a meditation, complementing the unhurried pace of the tale. As it follows Sammy from his childhood into his adulthood, the story asserts a pattern: its alternating chapters move between the two periods, though some mix the elements of each together, too. Still, there is a clear forward trajectory: the story curves and loops back on itself until the two timelines meet. It is easy to be swept away in the flow. Even the book's apparent tangents on topics like plant neurobiology are made to connect to Sammy's story in clear ways, and with speed, where they are introduced.

The rounded cast engages in emotional, spirited exchanges: with Jake, Sammy's best friend, the conversations are lively and thought provoking, used to clarify Sammy's spiritual explorations; with others, Sammy's tone shifts to reflect his loner sensibilities. On his own, he is prone to long-winded ruminations; in company, he is comparatively energetic, and either awkward or self-assured, depending on his place within his personal development. Though he is a bit old to be said to be "coming of age," Sammy works his way toward being at peace with his past and present; he hopes to finally allow his mind to follow any and all of its thoughts to their clear ends.

Cat's Whisker is a fascinating novel whose hero meditates on the complementary natures of science and spirituality, working to embrace cosmic consciousness.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (October 28, 2021)

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