

Divine Intervention: A Tragic Memoir of Unwavering Faith

Gunmolly Kodiad

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The memoir Divine Intervention collects a lifetime of amusing and musing stories.

Gunmolly Kodiad's memoir *Divine Intervention* attributes both tragedies and coincidences to providence.

When Kodiad and his family left the crime of South Florida behind to move to Jasper, Georgia, they hoped for a quiet, small town existence. They were instead dismayed to find that Jasper had its own troubles: the town was battling drug addiction. Kodiad worked to deal with related issues, but other crises arose, too. Among other subjects, the book covers family struggles, social misunderstandings, mental illness, and Lyme disease.

The book is enthusiastic when it comes to recounting troubles. It employs wry humor and finds cause for inspiration in even harrowing circumstances. But its origins as the product of twelve "manic" hours of writing are also apparent in the choppy, chatty text, whose chapters jump between subjects in a dizzying fashion.

The book includes long ranting asides about topics like the health care system; only some are engaging, as with its expressed frustrations about dealing with the medical establishment. An account of a seeking a clear diagnosis, but having those efforts frustrated, is followed by a pop culture allusion: "I was starting to develop the *John Q* mentality," the book says, evoking the film about a distraught father contemplating a hostage situation to guarantee treatment for a family member's life-threatening condition.

But despite these forays into topics of general interest, the book holds its audience at a distance throughout. Some of its passages read like that of a diary, and its humor veers between being accessibly funny and in bad taste, as with its many jokes about prison rape. Its pages are eventful, if short on surprises and wide appeal; it is sometimes entertaining, but more often reads as a jumble of disparate thoughts. Further, its early suggestions of having a faith element go unfulfilled. There's little in the way of formal religious reflection; the divine interventions that are referenced are more often a matter of gathered coincidences and occurrences, which are nodded to without being mined for clear meaning. In the end, only the suggestion that God is talking through the book stands out as a topic of faith, but it is not fleshed out far enough.

As it flows through memories from Gunmolly Kodiad's eventful life, the memoir *Divine Intervention* rambles through a variety of sometimes amusing, sometimes merely musing, stories.

MATT BENZING (January 11, 2022)

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