ForeWord Reviews

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Drunken Angel
Alan Kaufman
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Alan Kaufman lived through hell—decades of alcoholism, brutality, and loss—to ascend to heaven on earth, enjoying the life, daughter, and literary nobility he nearly obliterated.

Drunken Angel reveals a Jewish man who has a bigger heart than most, sacrificing his not-too-happy life in America to thrive in Israel and serve in the Israeli Army, only to forge an impossible love with a goddess muse—the one who lured him back to America. In more than two hundred pages of blistering hangovers, park bench nights, and fistfights, Kaufman becomes a celebrated writer and avant garde arts advocate—one of the first poetry slammers and spoken word heroes—with the admiration of his Jewish *Fifth Estate* predecessors: Ginsberg, Wiesel, and Singer. Yet drink, suicidal obsessions, and paranoia, partially caused by his childhood and wartime post-traumatic stress, taunted him daily.

On page 239, Kaufman sobers up to begin something that he had done rather well all along: *serve others* in order to help them achieve the goals he himself wanted. Since childhood, Kaufman took an interest in reading, and there the parallel begins. Unlike so many other "lone wolf" writers, Kaufman's success came as a result of his celebration of emerging talents. At Columbia University, he had the idea for *The New Generation*, an anthology of a decade's short story writing, launching his own career and reputation as the man with whom other writers, editors, poets, and artists wanted to schmooze.

Though *The New Generation* wound up in remainder bins and Kaufman inside a brandy bottle, nothing could erase the achievement from his life. It took AIDS-inflicted poet Jim Brody and a recovering alcoholic friend named Jackie to get Kaufman to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. And he kept going.

Finally clear-minded, Kaufman began the sober odyssey of continually seeking the Higher Power and finding along the way the little and big miracles that many other AA members discover: hope, purpose, opportunity, and achievement.

A clearly articulated roadmap to freedom for the addict, *Drunken Angel* is an easy and exciting memoir. This outlaw hero is someone to cheer for, different than so many of the literary

greats Kaufman loves—Hemingway, Dylan Thomas, Faulkner—all mourned from early loss to Bacchus.

According to Kaufman, it's no longer cool to die young and brilliant. And it's much more fun to party with Yahweh (God), as the beautiful and mysterious rewards of faith never cease.

Brandon Stickney