Clarion Review

Travel

Greece: The Untold Story
Elizabeth Kinnell
AuthorHouse
978-1-4343-3640-8
Two Stars (out of Five)

In *Greece: The Untold Story*, author Elizabeth Kinnell promises a glimpse of Greek life beyond the usual tourist areas, but the story of her days as an English language teacher in the mainland town of Karditsa is primarily an outline of what she ate, read, or did. Instead of evocative passages about cross-cultural experiences, or learning what the New Zealander felt about her new pupils and friends, the reader gets factoids about how many letters or emails she posted to a raft of people that are never introduced, extended complaints about airline delays, and descriptions of what she snacked on at the local market. These mundane recitations of her daily schedule read more like choppy diary entries; without elaboration, they don't hold much interest for the reader.

Along with snippets of her time in Greece, there are snippy passages in the book. In her preface, the author unnecessarily insults another writer's Greek travelogue, and her disdainful tone seems out of place. This inauspicious beginning and other rants throughout the book make it read like a personal journal, rather than a travel book that invites the reader to experience new sights and insights. Toward the middle of the book, however, Kinnell begins to share her views about how Greek culture is different from other European or Western countries, and these livelier passages about health-care bribery, religious homogeneity, littering, miserly social-service budgets, and the competitiveness of secondary students begin to form a more interesting account.

The daily schedule blurbs are enlivened with summaries of global news events and this is a nice touch that helps anchor what was happening around the world while the author was somewhat cocooned in her corner of Greece. Kinnell also has a clear and direct writing style, and the book design, from cover photo to layout, is polished and professional.

It would be helpful for the reader if the author had supplied a little more information

about herself before plunging into the story of her travels. Was she always interested in living abroad? Was this her first job out of school? What fascinates her about other languages and cultures? She offers little insight into her own motivations and how she came to live in Greece.

Kinnell sometimes inserts whole paragraphs written in another language that are neither translated nor explained; they seem superfluous. Her many references to language instruction terms and English proficiency examinations also lack explanation. A glossary defining such jargon and certain Greek expressions would have been helpful.

The best travel books help the reader visualize unfamiliar destinations with detailed, vivid descriptions, and more such observations would have enticed a wider audience to *Greece: The Untold Story*. As is, there simply isn't enough meat on the bones of this book. Ultimately, what transpired during Kinnell's year in a landlocked corner of Thessaly remains untold.

Rachel Jagareski