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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS

Invisible Woman: Invisibility to Invincibility

Jagdish D. Kulkarni
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Jagdish Kulkarni, a physician and psychiatrist, offers insight, understanding, and ways to cope in his book *Invisible Woman: I to I: Invisibility to Invincibility*. The book, just one part of the Invisible Woman brand, is joined by a Web site by the same title and a second, www.jayslegacy.org. The Invisible Woman concept was established in memory of the author's wife, Jayashree, who died suddenly in 2009. He writes in his introduction, "From my grief, the idea for this book was born…Jayashree had the amazing ability to recognize the masked potential in other women…I feel compelled to pass on the guidance that she provided to me during our journey together in life."

The positive, uplifting tone of this book is in itself cathartic. By the fourth chapter, the author has moved from eulogizing his wife and into a more traditional anecdote studded self-help format. But don't skip the first chapters—the gems that surface are a delight. "The first time that she wears a beautiful necklace, a woman will be admired and complimented by friends and family," Kulkarni writes. "But after months and years of wearing the same jewelry, it becomes an expected part of the woman…So it is with a woman's selfless love. It slowly starts becoming imperceptible to the family and friends."

The chapter "Gray Matters" discusses physical differences in neurons, dendrites, and hormones that lead men and women toward different reactions to similar stimuli. For example, a man's brain houses a much larger amygdale, "which corresponds with impulse, sexual drive, competition, and aggression." This may explain a man's tendency to "consider it a personal affront to be passed or cut off by another car," Kulkarni explains. In the same chapter, the author comments on women's ability to carry on several conversations about unconnected subjects. "A woman has eleven percent more neurons than a man in the areas of language and hearing," he writes.

Chapter six focuses on women's personalities for predisposing factors, traits, and styles of coping with stress which lead to feelings of invisibility. He categorizes traits, assigning their holders with such titles as the Merger, the Pleaser, the Doubter, the Masochist, and the Lost. These are followed by coping mechanisms that most every woman will recognize: Guilt as a Tool, Overbearing Attitude, Self-Worth through Knowledge, and Selfless Giving.

The next eight chapters explore the individual trait categories in more detail with advice on how women can find healthier mechanisms for dealing with relationships. Chapter fifteen contains advice for men. Subsections such as "How can a man determine what his wife needs?" are accompanied by lists of physical and emotional signs. For example: "She expresses less initiative and little to no enthusiasm."

The book offers age-old advice, biological influences, and psychological explanations in an uplifting and comforting format. There is a 1950s' feel to the traditional gender roles portrayed in the various anecdotes, and the book doesn't offer advice or anecdotes that reflect a professional woman's relationships. Yet, women who suffer from self-esteem issues or relationship failures will draw support and insight from this spousal tribute.
DAWN GOLDSMITH (July 27, 2010)

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