

Clarion Review ★★★★☆

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

It's Come to This: A Pandemic Diary

Laura Pedersen

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It's Come to This is an ideal pandemic diary; it captures the changes and strangeness brought about by Covid-19.

Laura Pedersen's meticulous, timely memoir *It's Come to This* covers 2020 and early 2021, focusing on the Covid-19 pandemic and the facets of life that it touched.

Pedersen lived in New York City in that period; she watched her neighborhood quiet down. Local shops closed their doors and sidewalks emptied. Parks were desolate and grocery stores were barren. Pedersen details health updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, major news headlines about former President Donald Trump (here, "Crazy Uncle Donald") and the White House, civic unrest, and the Black Lives Matter movement following numerous police murders of Black people.

The book isn't all doom and gloom, though; it has its fair share of humor and charm. New phrases ("Blursday" for not knowing what day of the week it is; "flatten the curve" as the CDC's plan of attack against the virus) are highlighted alongside more serious matters. Pedersen pokes fun at the way toilet paper was a hot commodity in March and April of 2020, despite there being no shortage from a manufacturing perspective. Thus, *It's Come to This* comes to serve as a thorough reminder of the often unprecedented, often mundane details and changes that society as a whole experienced in 2020.

Pedersen's writing is conversational, but with occasional breathtaking lines. In response to the common refrain in the early days of the pandemic that we're all in this together, she writes "We were in the same tempest, but very different boats—from rafts and rowboats to yachts and speedboats." Her work acknowledges that many people have privileges that others can only dream of, and that the lack of those privileges was exacerbated by the pandemic.

Each chapter opens with a poignant epigraph. A chapter from late summer about being sick and tired of staying indoors has a quote from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* about homes being prisons, while a chapter about Ruth Bader Ginsburg includes the powerful declaration that enough women will be on the Court when there are nine. These quotations are literary and timeless, suggesting, in turn, that this book could also serve as an official pandemic diary decades from now.

The book's epilogue shifts in tone, though, from that of a weekly diary entry to that of a preacher; it waxes poetic on the fairness of the universe, ancient philosophers, and Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*. It works toward a final remembrance that no human is alone in the world, and that, in order for justice and equality to be achieved, everyone must work together, despite their differences.

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ASHLEY HOLSTROM (April 30, 2021)

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