ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Jamais Vu
Susan Kay
Xlibris
978-445007844-3
Four Stars (out of Five)

"I am tired," Susan Kay writes in an excerpt from her 2008 journal, "tired of my religion, of church, of all my personal and interpersonal dysfunctions. I want to have a wider swath of life…The stale odor of my confinement is killing me." Such brutally honest introspection that penetrates the high walls of ego is rare and refreshing. Intense, almost desperate motivation propels Susan to open herself up to whatever may come, and what comes makes for compelling reading. The themes she explores are universal and will inspire in nearly every reader moments of powerful self-analysis.

With the help of nature CDs and visits by Jesus and Albert Einstein, Susan sets out to free herself from the Christian dogma that has defined her life. Ocean waves take her to a log on the beach, where she finds herself shedding an oozing ball of guilt and a huge, heavy coat of shame. Without these lifelong companions, she is surprisingly happy to find herself, "naked, small, and weak."

A truck shows up on her beach filled with wonderful symbolism; a megaphone to remind her that no one ever really listens, a mirror with no image, a vanity where she makes herself up, costumes she has worn. As objects are discarded in the surf, decades of self-destructive weight are lifted.

She unashamedly stands naked in front of a younger version of herself who has shown up for a walk on the beach, and cries over what she describes as her "first real act of self-love." A big wave compels her to move deeper into self-exploration which sends her into a real-world bout of resistance. No longer can she physically or emotionally tolerate the games she once played so well as a church leader. They send her to bed for days with debilitating symptoms, freeing her from the role she is in the final throes of rejecting for good.

While watching television one evening after days in bed rather than in headphones on the beach, her cat reprimands her for wasting time with so much serious work to be done. A little later, Einstein tells her forcefully, "You must learn to focus!" With her meditations

producing such transformative fruit, she heeds their advice and moves forward.

She sees through years of worrying that God might not want her to do this or that, and begins to take the liberating responsibility for her decisions. She realizes that most people are complacently asleep, and knows beyond a doubt that it is her job to awaken. She begins to understand and shed her destructive patterns; her saboteur, lonely child, and abusive accuser.

This book could be two or three times as long—she has that much more to say. The references to her husband, sister, parents, and people in the church leave one hungry for more information about these people. There are also a few weak transitions and confusing moments, but the flaws are easily overlooked in this excellent little book.

Patty Sutherland