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Journey of a Near Miss

Downs Laura
Laura Downs
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Sometimes one has to weigh very heavily whether or not to move forward with God's demands especially if it means taking nine long years to write a memoir. *Journey of a Near Miss* by Laura Downs is the result of such a heavenly request.

Downs' sad but unexciting tale starts at the end with the death of her partner David. In a few pages she describes his last breaths and then alludes to the dark backstory that eventually brought her to David's deathbed.

Laura first meets David when she is sixteen years old. They seem immediately drawn to one another but that sexual tension isn't acted upon until Laura is in her late thirties. Laura first marries Ken Daily a lout who humiliates and beats her. By the book's halfway point she finally comes to her senses after her husband beats their four-year-old son. Frightened for both their lives Laura arranges to leave Ken and file for divorce.

During her fourteen-year marriage Laura sees David intermittently at social functions and that pull from so long ago still exists. Once divorced from Ken Laura and David finally become lovers. But David has commitment issues and Laura not wanting to lose the love of her life goes against her religious beliefs and moves in with him. All is well until David is diagnosed with terminal cancer. It is at this juncture that Laura shows a steely determination to make David comfortable during his final days and carry out his last desire that she marry his brother Robert—who has been secretly in love with her.

When David's draws his final breath Laura has a divine moment and travels to the light with him. It is at this point that she hears God's requests: Marry Robert write and….in a section that shouldn't be amusing Laura ingenuously writes that she's forgotten His last wish.

Journey of a Near Miss is terribly flawed. Although it took Downs nine years to write the book it that the manuscript was never edited or proofread. But it's more than grammatical and punctuation errors that weaken the story. Despite the author's honesty about her violent marriage and David's illness the memoir falls flat. Instead of peeling back the layers of her life and showing readers the raw nerves that result from abuse and heartbreak Downs cheats the reader by never divulging those dark secrets she refers to in the prologue.

For an inexperienced writer *Journey of a Near Miss* is an ambitious undertaking. To be fair to Downs her memoir has the potential to become a brave and haunting story with some outside guidance.

REBECA SCHILLER (March 13, 2009)

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