

Clarion Review ★★★★★

SPIRITUAL

Love's Ways: A Meditation on Love

Mark Gabriele**Kazzrie Jaxen, Illustrator****Kim Shkapich, Designer**

Mirambel Publishing (Sep 20, 2013)

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If all you need is love, then these meditations are the perfect gift to yourself.

If the words and images in this little gem didn't work so well together, it would be tempting to frame each evocative page and hang it on the wall. *Love's Ways: A Meditation on Love* brings together Mark Gabriele's inspirational text and Kazzrie Jaxen's color-saturated abstractions in a small book that packs a big punch. Gabriele composed this ode to love on the occasion of his brother's wedding, but his message extends beyond romantic love. In a few carefully chosen lines, Gabriele illuminates love's presence in every life.

Gabriele writes about love almost as a character, with nuances that he wants to explain. "Love's math," writes Gabriele, "is different from ours. It understands how to add, and how to multiply—but not how to subtract, not how to divide." Observations like this float alone at midpage, contained within a series of fine-lined rectangles. With only a few words per page, Gabriele gives his readers time to contemplate their meaning before moving on to the next phrase. Although he does reproduce the entire text as a whole at the end of the book, the effect is not nearly as contemplative as the deliberately paced body of the book.

A great deal of the meditative effect comes from Jaxen's pastel paintings. A different painting, each with its own particular palette, faces each page of text. Lively greens, dusky purples, and swirling pinks add another dimension to Gabriele's words. Several pastels bleed off the edges of the page, echoing Gabriele's message of love's infinite nature.

Largely abstract, with soft fields of color blending into one another, the pictures do contain hints of each page's message. For instance, when Gabriele writes that "for where love is offered, love is returned," Jaxen combines hues of blue to invoke the feeling of a wave coming to shore and going back to sea. The illustrations—including the rich indigo and violet cover image revealing the shadow of a heart shape—engage readers by suggesting a concept or theme and allowing the audience to create its own personal meaning.

Love's Ways would make a touching wedding gift, and it would be equally appropriate as a heartfelt expression of compassion to any loved one. It could also be a gift to oneself—to meditate on over time and bring some love to one's daily life.

SHEILA M. TRASK (November 13, 2013)

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