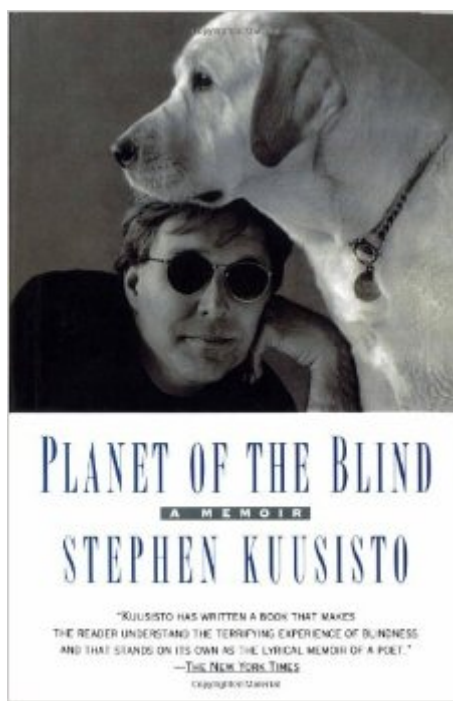


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Planet Of The Blind: A Memoir



Synopsis

"The world is a surreal pageant," writes Stephen Kuusisto. "Ahead of me the shapes and colors suggest the sails of Tristan's ship or an elephant's ear floating in air, though in reality it is a middle-aged man in a London Fog rain coat which billows behind him in the April wind." So begins Kuusisto's memoir, *Planet of the Blind*, a journey through the kaleidoscope geography of the partially-sighted, where everyday encounters become revelations, struggles, or simple triumphs. Not fully blind, not fully sighted, the author lives in what he describes as "the customs-house of the blind", a midway point between vision and blindness that makes possible his unique perception of the world. In this singular memoir, Kuusisto charts the years of a childhood spent behind bottle-lens glasses trying to pass as a normal boy, the depression that brought him from obesity to anorexia, the struggle through high school, college, first love, and sex. Ridiculed by his classmates, his parents in denial, here is the story of a man caught in a perilous world with no one to trust--until a devastating accident forces him to accept his own disability and place his confidence in the one relationship that can reconnect him to the world--the relationship with his guide dog, a golden Labrador retriever named Corky. With Corky at his side, Kuusisto is again awakened to his abilities, his voice as a writer and his own particular place in the world around him. Written with all the emotional precision of poetry, Kuusisto's evocative memoir explores the painful irony of a visually sensitive individual--in love with reading, painting, and the everyday images of the natural world--faced with his gradual descent into blindness. Folded into his own experience is the rich folklore the phenomenon of blindness has inspired throughout history and legend.

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Customer Reviews

When people ask me if it isn't "painful" to be deaf, I often surprise them by saying: "not nearly as painful as being hard-of-hearing." Back in those days, you see, I was still trying hard to fit into a hearing world. I was still coming to terms with what hearing loss meant to me, and dreading what it might mean in the future. All in all, it is far easier for me now, totally deaf that I am, than it ever was to be hard-of-hearing when my constant companions were denial and pain. I was reminded of all of this recently when I read Stephen Kuusisto's book "Planet of the Blind; a Memoir" for here is someone who knows well what it means to live hand-in-hand with those same companions. Mr Kuusisto began his odyssey through the land of denial as a result of a premature birth, which resulted in almost total blindness. The seeds of pain took root soon afterwards, as his parents struggled to find their way through unanticipated and, to them, rather horrifying territory. In the end, like many parents faced with such a situation, they chose the "you can do anything you want to" path. Now, this path, properly followed, is not bad in and of itself. Certainly we have all heard of people who have learned to manage despite harrowing disabilities. Just the other day, for example, I saw on TV a feature on a woman who is doing just fine without arms, compensating through the use of her legs and feet. "My parents" she told the audience, "always told me there was nothing I could not do." At the end of a film clip, in which she demonstrated her abilities, the audience stood up and gave her a standing ovation, and everyone, I am sure, went home with happy tears in their eyes.

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