



On Sunset

Kathryn Harrison

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In the tradition of *The Hare with Amber Eyes* and *Running in the Family*, a memoir of the author's upbringing by her grandparents in a fading mansion above Sunset Boulevard -- a childhood at once privileged and unusual, filled with the mementos and echoes of their impossibly exotic and peripatetic lives.

Kathryn Harrison always understood that her family was beyond eccentric -- they'd breached the bounds of the unconventional. She was largely raised by her grandparents in an outsized Tudor confection of a house on the periphery of Bel Air, which she thought of as "Sunset," her kingdom of the imagination, inhabited by the past and its numberless artifacts. True wandering Jews, her grandparents had arrived in Los Angeles in the forties after dramatic, globetrotting lives. Harry Jacobs had been a fur trapper in Alaska, a soldier in the trenches of the Great War, a traveling salesman in a Model T. Margaret Sassoon had lived a privileged life as a member of a Jewish merchant family in Shanghai, turning down offers of marriage from Russian princes exiled by the Revolution. Kathryn Harrison grew up in an almost mythical realm of their letters and artifacts and stories -- until declining finances forced to sell the house on Sunset in 1971, and night fell fast. *On Sunset* seeks to recover that childhood, that place, those lives -- and does so with piercing poignancy.

On Sunset Details

Date : Published October 2nd 2018 by Doubleday Books

ISBN : 9780385542678

Author : Kathryn Harrison

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Onceinablue moon says

For me this was an unusual memoir, I had the book and audio, but spent the majority of the time listening, it was like a wild stream of consciousness. Usually memoirs are linear and straightforward, I went to school here, married, had job a, blah blah blah, but this was all over the map like a tumbling river. Easy to get lost in and obviously she is a free and fluid thinker. Enjoyed my arm chair travels back in time.

Ren says

3.5 Kathryn Harrison could describe a pile of dirt and make it sound like the most fascinating thing in the world. This one wandered a bit without ever reaching any clear conclusion or making a point but it's almost forgivable for her descriptions of atmospheres, of how things must have felt to someone or how she remembers that they felt to her. I liked her writing entirely from her childhood perspective, something very different from her other memoirs.

Tanya Marquardt says

I devoured this book - it was such a pleasure to read about Harrison's childhood and loved the way she went back and forth between the lives of her grandmother and grandfather, whose lives traversed across histories and continents to meet in LA and eventually raise Harrison. We see Kathryn as a child, wondering at her grandparent's lives the way one might wonder at fairy tales. Pictures of their lives and their families are sprinkled throughout the book, and this helps to place them in relationship to historical events as well as to class and sexuality. A snapshot of a bygone time, in all its pleasures and adventures as well as the repression and erasure of culture that came with British colonization. We keep seeing the young Kathryn trying to locate herself in relationship to the stories she hears, stories that live in her and create the writer that she becomes.

Sarah says

The writing is littered with details and jumps around so it is hard to follow.

I received an ARC from NetGalley.

Nicholas says

Brave, raw, interesting, engaging, & honest as always.

Beth says

This was unexpectedly lovely. If you liked this, try *The Mad Boy*, *Lord Berners*, *My Grandmother and Me* by Sofia Zinovieff.

Autumn says

3.5

Mary says

This was poignant and lovely...a nostalgic portrayal of an unconventional family and upbringing, compassionately told by Kathryn Harrison.

Thank you Goodreads giveaways for the ARC.

Michelle Kidwell says

?On Sunset?A Memoir?by Kathryn Harrison?Doubleday Books?Doubleday?Biographies & Memoirs?Pub Date 02 Oct 2018?I am reviewing a copy of On Sunset through Doubleday and Netgalley: ?Kathryn Harrison always knew that her family was eccentric, her family breached the bounds of the unconventional. Kathryn was raised largely by her grandparents in an outsized Tudor style home on the periphery of Bel-Air, which she thought of as "Sunset" the kingdom that existed in her imagination., inhabited by the past and its artifacts.?

Kathryn's grandparents were true wandering Jews! Her grandparents had arrived in Los Angeles in the forties after leading globetrotting lives. Her Grandfather Harry Jacobs has been a fur trapper in Alaska, a soldier in the trenches during the Great War. As well as traveling salesman in a Model T. Her grandmother Margaret Sassoon has lived a life of privilege as a member of a Jewish Merchant family in Shanghai even turning down offers to marry Russian Princes who were exiled by the revolution. The family was supposed to sell the house due to failing finances in 1971, this book seeks to recover Kathryn's childhood in a way.

I give On Sunset five out of five stars!

Happy Reading!

Murray Heltzer says

Poorly written memoir. Does not make you fully understand the make up of her family. Only touches on her relationship with her mother

Kathy says

I won a copy in a Goodreads giveaway; this did not influence my review.

I initially found *On Sunset* difficult to follow; Harrison meanders and swiftly shifts topics and time periods. While she never develops a true organization for the book, I eventually found a rhythm in reading it. It is a strange book that is sort of a hybrid memoir/biography as much of the book is told from the perspective of hearing stories from her grandparents as a child in their house on Sunset Boulevard (thus the title). The synopsis on the book jacket led me to expect more stories about the house itself and her family's financial difficulties. While these topics are interspersed throughout, I found the book primarily one of family lore. I was particularly enthralled with the photographs, some of which are over one hundred years old. Harrison shares some fascinating stories of her grandparents' lives but there is little overlap in their shared histories as a married couple or as parents. Typically Harrison alternates between stories of her grandmother's and grandfather's early lives before they met one another, though occasionally Harrison veers into stories of earlier ancestors or of the places her grandparents once resided - I found the latter topics a bit dry. The big disappointment of the book is that it ends when she and her grandparents are forced to sell their house on Sunset Boulevard; I was left wondering if her grandparents lived to see her to adulthood. An epilogue would have provided a more well-rounded ending.
