



I Left It on the Mountain: A Memoir

Kevin Sessums

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On his 53rd birthday, Kevin Sessums woke up in his L.A. hotel room wondering how he would get through his scheduled interview with Hugh Jackman. For years he had interviewed the bright lights: Madonna, Courtney Love, Jessica Lange, and all the other usual suspects; but, Kevin knew that his rapidly unraveling life was as shallow as the hotel's hip furniture and he was hanging on by his fingertips. In *I Left It on the Mountain*, Sessums chronicles his early days in NY as an actor, his years working for Andy Warhol at *Interview* and Tina Brown at *Vanity Fair*, countless nights of anonymous sex, his HIV Positive diagnosis and his descent into addiction. It's also the chronicle of one man's spiritual redemption found while climbing to the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro, walking the Camino de Santiago de Compostelo and trudging across the cold, lonely winter beaches of Provincetown. Peopled with the famous like Daniel Radcliffe and Diane Sawyer as well as anonymous companions corporeal and otherwise whom he met while mountain climbing and hiking, *I Left It on the Mountain* is the story of one man's fall and rebirth, the next moving chapter in Kevin Sessums' extraordinary life that takes him from the high to the low and back again. For readers who loved *Mississippi Sissy* and want to know what happened to that tenacious little boy with the baseball mitt, *New York Times* Best Seller *I Left It On the Mountain* is the sometimes very dark, but ultimately hopeful answer.

I Left It on the Mountain: A Memoir Details

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Author : Kevin Sessums

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From Reader Review I Left It on the Mountain: A Memoir for online ebook

Jason Mayo says

This book is brilliantly comic, although I doubt that was the author's intent. Even the cover is over the top. Don't know if I could read his other memoir at this point.

Margie says

Hmmmm . . . I would have liked more about the walk and less about his drug and sex life.

Sergei says

One wishes he had left the book on the mountain too. Early on, he asks Daniel Radcliffe (one of the plethora of dropped names including, of course, Madonna & Warhol), "do you really want to hear all this?" Not really.. Sex on meth, star fucking, an 80 page journal of his trek on the Camino real, followed by more celebrities and more meth and more sex. TMI. Or as they say in AA, TFS. Thanks for sharing. Proof that you definitely shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

BMR, LCSW says

This memoir is the follow up to Sessums' first one *Mississippi Sissy*.

This one picks up after Kevin establishes himself in NYC art circles with a little help from his friends. Then he becomes a meth addict, and is saved from his addiction by the grace of the one he calls his "Angel of Light," Lucifer.

Along the way he seroconverted with HIV, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, walked the Camino pilgrimage in Spain, interviewed celebrities for magazines you've probably heard of, and tragically became estranged from his younger brother, Kim.

It's a winding, complicated memoir about a winding, complicated life. I still don't know what happened to Kevin in many of the sections, even as he explained in great detail. Especially about the "Angel of Light." But it's not about my life, and I don't have to understand it.

Recommended only for those who read *Mississippi Sissy*, and want to know what happened next.

Jamie Lyon says

Such a beautifully written book! An amazing book about a search for Spirituality and forgiveness. I think I could have read an entire book just about his experiences on the Camino in Spain. Not a book for everyone, but for the open-minded, it is a worthwhile and moving read.

Mediaman says

Never trust a man who quotes page after page of minute dialogue from when he was six years old. Never trust a man whose "memoir" is so completely self-involved that he sees everything in life through how others didn't take pity on him instead of how he caused his own problems. Never trust a man who claims to be a journalist but asks celebrities inane questions and then outs them or hints at outing them. Never trust a man who spends half of his book quoting Keats. Never trust a man who spends a month on a spiritual pilgrimage, followed by rampant drug abuse and sexual violence. Never trust a man who fictionalizes his life story in order to make himself more sympathetic to the reader.

This horrific book (it's hard to believe it got published!) is poorly written by a total loser and pretends to be a memoir when truly it's mostly fiction. It deals partially with the author's early childhood, which he spends page-after-page quoting minor details that are impossible to remember from that young an age. For example, he names the specific three songs playing in a row on the radio when he is six years old during a scene with his parents. It would be impossible to name three songs playing in a row that you heard last week! He also spends a large chunk of the book giving crazy details of what happened during his many drug binges--yet if he was as high as he claimed there is no way he could come up with the multi-page details of a 15-year-old hallucination the way it is written here. This is creative writing, more for an English class fiction assignment and not something professional.

Then he tells the fascinating, terrible story of how he gave his life to Christ, only to have the pastor then molest him. We have to assume this is true, but after finishing this book and reading all of the other exaggerated stories I would question how much truth there is in anything the author has written. He seems delusional. His messed-up spirituality is a major theme in the book and was interesting for awhile, but when he started worshiping a Buddhist elephant god while attending the Episcopal church on Sunday and saying he didn't know that he believed in Christ, that's when I checked out. This guy is screwed up. This book is his admission to being screwed up, and he tries to shift the blame to his parents' early death and that pastor's abuse.

Way too much of the book is spent on a month-long pilgrimage he took in France/Spain, which is actually pretty boring. He doesn't do drugs or have sex, meets other dull people, and doesn't even come to a conclusion about the trip. It seems like a way to fill pages.

Ironically, much of the book contains very little detail of some major things that occur in his life--this isn't really about his stories but more about his over-analysis of his mental/spiritual impressions of what has happened to him in life. At one point he mentions that he has been working on this book since 2007, with not much here to show for it. But the book ends in 2012 and was published in 2015! Where is the rest of it? What is he hiding? Or is he planning on selling another memoir? It seems like it's his only way to make money, since he claims to be broke and homeless.

The book ends with a long, depressing description of how he couldn't stay sober. This guy is screwed up, and he figured out a way to make money by fictionalizing the life stories that no person could ever remember specific details and quotes about. Read it at your own risk--there are a few fascinating passages but don't

believe a word of it.

Jennifer Glacken says

Disturbing and redemptive....loved this book. Not sure why I picked it up--not one of my usuals but so glad that I did.

Leonel says

Sometime a book just speaks. Kevin Sessums' "I Left It On The Mountain" speaks. It speaks like poetry, it gives too much information, it's tales are self-indulgent. But damn if it isn't a book that speaks not just from the heart but from the soul. Sessums writes about his life, starting from when he first moved to New York City in the 70s, to working with Andy Warhol at The Factory and for Interview Magazine, segueing to his days in Vanity Fair, and then his downward spiral to meth addiction. (The last part can be an exasperating read, but imagine living it) In between those years, he writes about climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and walking the Camino trail to Santiago de Compostela. I must admit that sometimes the writing can be a bit much. Like a rich dessert, I sometimes needed a break from it to fully appreciate it. It took me two weeks to finish this book - no light reading here. But as I finished it, I found myself weeping - there is such profoundness here that even as I read every word, I know I have only began to scratch the surface. One day I know I will re read it and it will make more sense. I have lived a full-ish life at my age now, but I know I have not lived a life yet. Once I do, this book will make more perfect sense.

<http://luhathoughts.blogspot.com/2015...>

Kristi Richardson says

“What does this word mean?” he asked. “Epiphany?”
...”It’s a secret that tells itself.”

I received this memoir as part of the Goodreads FirstReads program.

One thing I have discovered in reading autobiographies and memoirs is that deep down we all have a common core whether we are gay HIV positive writers as Kevin Sessums is or Irish actresses such as Kate Mulgrew. I can identify with both of these diverse people and learn from each.

Mr. Sessums tells a tale of hope and looking for answers in a world that is hard to navigate. He wrote many celebrity interviews for Andy Warhol’s Interview and Vanity Fair magazines. I probably have read them without realizing the author. He also has a drug problem.

The most painful chapters for me was about his addiction, because I have known loved ones that died from drugs and that is hard to relive. Some of his honest writing seems to glorify the “trip” but thinking logically, you wouldn’t want the drug if it wasn’t giving you something you can’t get elsewhere. It helps to explain why so many people fail in rehab.

My favorite parts of his story was his decision first to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa and then walking the Camino de Santiago de Postelo in Spain. These parts were so interesting and enlightening that I think he may want to try his hand at travel writing. I had never heard of the Camino before but it is a month's walk across Spain that many people famous and otherwise have done throughout the centuries in order to find enlightenment and answers to their life's journey.

This book, at times spiritual and uplifting, also contains some harsh realities of sex and drug use that may put some readers off. Just be warned but try to get through those as this book is lyrical and so well written that it is hard to put down. I haven't read his first book "Mississippi Sissy" about his boyhood but it's on my list now.

This story is for anyone who feels they are losing their purpose or enjoy other people's journeys through life. I loved it.

Rob says

I read Sessums' earlier memoir, *Mississippi Sissy*, last year and loved it. I was eager to learn more about Sessums' life as an adult. I loved this book as well. It's beautifully written with candor and honesty. His journey isn't an easy one, and many details of his addiction are difficult to read. His rocky road to forgiveness and wholeness, though, is quite inspiring and relatable (at least for this recovering addict).

Barbara says

Kierkegaard "Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best Thoughts and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. But if sitting still-and the more one sits still-the closer one comes to feeling ill. If one just keeps on walking everything will be all right." (Quote on Jessica Lange's fridge"

Mark says

A natural pick up where *MISSISSIPPI SISSY* left off. Honest, harrowing and unflinching much of it is not easy to read but resonates so authentically. The deceptively loose structure tightens like a net and pulls the reader relentless to the book's finish. As much as the book entertains, it's got even more potential to educate and inspire.

Tex Reader says

3.5 of 5 stars – Gritty Story Ranging from Fame to Sad to Inspiring.
[I'm excited to have won this as a Goodreads First Read – so thanks, Ivan!]

I'm a fan of biographies and memoirs, and it's more to Kevin Sessums credit than not that this wasn't your run-of-the-mill, typical celebrity discourse.

Sessums is an intelligent, skilled storyteller, which might be expected given his having been a celebrated entertainment writer. But rather than his tone here being light, it was more gritty, dark, at times graphic and detailed. And it fit with the subject of interest. He approached his own life in a somewhat objective, detached third-person manner. Yet his anecdotes were entertaining and moving. I was sad, lonely, desperate, fighting, determined, hopeful and inspired right along with him. It was not all doom and gloom, some happy and humorous moments as well, but mostly there is the darker side of the tough part of life.

Some of the things that I had an issue with might also be seen as just "that was what Sessums' life was like" and he was just describing it. At times the story was a bit choppy and uneven, but maybe that was just a reflection of his life over these years, as you might imagine it might be for an addict. There were spots of graphic depictions of drug use, violence/abuse and sex - which may be offensive to some, but at the same time it is a apt description of the times and the experiences of addicts, homeless, the abused, orphaned, gays, etc. - so more power to him for being able to put it to words. It did make me think at some point that it was almost as if he wanted me to know how bad it got, before he began his climb back up. I suppose that can also be a good literary technique.

I admired but also wondered about his level of honesty. Indeed, this was almost a confessional about what all he did. But that was just it. It was a lot about what happened, events in his life, and what he did, but often not going any deeper. In a way, he was honest to us, but not as much to himself about himself. Granted, there was some introspection, but I was hoping to see more of a psychological understanding beyond the surface explanations. To me that showed through at times, such as with the name dropping and superficial celebrity stories; it was almost as if he still hadn't quite gotten fully past the former shallowness and dealing with things just on the surface that may have helped lead him to his downward spiral. A way of avoiding the deeper issues is to mask them by talking about happenings.

That's just speculation on my part when Sessums story got me to thinking, including to his credit about myself at times. It seems that he did indeed do some sorting out, may still have some to do as his journey continues. I appreciate his sharing his journey so far and wish him good fortune on the road ahead.

Richard Kramer says

In CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, by Tennessee Williams, the character of Maggie, immortalized by a white-slipped Liz Taylor, wonders what victory the titular creature could ever hope for. "Just — stayin' on, I guess," she decides, after a moment, and almost sadly. "Just — stayin' on." Those words came to me, those white-slipped words, when I recently read I LEFT IT ON THE MOUNTAIN, a memoir by Kevin Sessums that will be out in February, that you can pre-order on Amazon now. I thought, after reading this harrowing, glittering, tragic and triumphant account of his life — and yes, it encompasses all those adjectives — how did this cat stay on? Well, he did. Somehow. And his book is the history of that.

Mr. Sessums takes us on a tour of his highest times, and his lowest, and writes of both with wonder and a strong, surprising sense of pride. These experiences were, uniquely, his. They made him. They hurt him. But they ARE him, they add up to him. And because he's not only an intrepid soul but a first-rate writer, he knew that the way to endure after jumping from that hot tin roof was to tell how it was to be up there. Not just some of it; all of it. To do this he had to look at his life, add it up, weigh the fabulous against the fucked-up and then stand behind it all. He had to choose it all, all over again — the Vanity Fair Oscar party (he was the

king of their celebrity profilers), and the meth needle in his arm, as well. There are many reasons to write a book, but the need to both save your own life and recognize that it was worth saving is pretty high up there. Because if you can do that — as Mr. Sessums, I think, does here — you can forgive your own life, for where it led you, for where it didn't. And then — maybe, maybe — you can forgive yourself. Because you know, then, that you ARE your life.

Kevin Sessums knows this. He has laid out, sifted through, disassembled and reassembled his story. And oívey, what a story! Madonna is in it. Courtney Love. Hugh Jackman? Right over here, and in some astonishing ways. Meth dealers, anonymous sex partners. Keats! Daniel Radcliffe. And how they all make sense as pearls on the same strand is what Sessums learns when he makes a pilgrimage to the Camino de Santiago de Compostello, a grueling and endless road in Spain on which Sessums, like thousand of pilgrims before him, discovers connections that made me gasp, and moved me to tears, as well.

So how, finally, to describe this book? *I LEFT IT ON THE MOUNTAIN* is a confessional, a recovery tale, a seance with the ghosts of a lost childhood, a social history of a time, and a number of places. It's about what you find is left when you believe you've lost it all, and how you can only find that when you are sure that is true. It's about the price you pay, of which no one ever informs you, for wanting the glittering city to yield up its blessings to you, a price you discover you've been paying from the start. You find yourself broke, financially, spiritually. And who are you after that? Who were you, truly, before it? Will you ever be able to find the answers? And if you find them, will you be able to embrace them, to mourn them, to mourn the idea of yourself that you've carried for so long so you can, finally, become yourself? I don't know another book like this. I don't know how he lived his life, or how he wrote about it. I only know I respect him for doing both.

And one last thing. He's hung out with Courtney Love, Jessica Lange, Daniel Radcliffe, Barbra Streisand; the list of names goes on, and he's not shy about dropping them. But the true stars, of this book and of his life, are Archie and Teddy, his dogs. You can tell, from how he writes about them; I had the sense that he worked with them at his feet, feeling their heartbeats as he sifted through his life, trying out a word or phrase on them and using it if they sighed, tossing it if they cocked their head. Because dogs, as we know, can be the best editors.

I think they'd be proud of him. No. I know dogs. So I know they would.

Tim Kresler says

What a self indulgent piece of junk.
