



## Drunken Angel: A Memoir

*Alan Kaufman*

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Alan Kaufman has been compared to Jack Kerouac, Henry Miller, Hubert Selby Jr., even Ernest Hemmingway—his life reads so much like a great movie that the world of cinema has just optioned his first memoir, *Jew Boy*, for a feature film. *Drunken Angel*, his new autobiographical work, drops like a sledgehammer. It is the most gripping, chilling and inspiring account ever written of a life-long battle with alcoholism and the struggle to write. Graphic in its grit, an education in pain, *Drunken Angel* is being hailed as "the Naked Lunch of memoirs."

The book chronicles Kaufman's headlong plunge into the piratical life of a literary drunk, and takes us shamelessly through noirish alleyways of S&M sensuality, forbidden pleasures and pitfalls of adultery, the thrilling horrors of war, plus raging poetry nights, mental illness, homelessness, literary struggle and his strange, magnificent rise into a sobriety of personal triumph as crazily improbable as the famous and notorious figures he meets along the way. *Drunken Angel* contains revealing portraits of such literary figures as Allen Ginsberg, Kathy Acker, Barney Rosset, Anthony Burgess, Elie Wiesel, Ron Kolm, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Jim Feast, Bernard Malamud, Hubert Selby Jr., Bob Holman, Sapphire, not to speak of the gutter dreamers, Nuyorican Poets, Unbearables, Babarians, Slammers, Black foot Indians, commandos, criminals, junkies, renegade cocktail waitresses, hoboies, painters, and a host of others who each in some way, big or small, play their part in peopling the wildly exhilarating drama of Kaufman's passionate and exotic life.

Whether the addiction be booze, women, violence, writing or fame, Kaufman honors us with an explicit honesty that only a writer of enormous power and artistic greatness can attain, and his life, as *Drunken Angel* poignantly shows, is a profoundly meaningful quest for truth and spiritual values.

## Drunken Angel: A Memoir Details

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## From Reader Review Drunken Angel: A Memoir for online ebook

### **Kate says**

I'm throwing caution to the wind and giving this 5 stars, even though while reading certain parts I thought I'd give it three or four. But the end was so good, and the story had such peak moments, and the writing is invigorating--so I do recommend it.

The first half of the book is crushingly dark, but Kaufman's writing style elevates the material. That someone can make art out of such a mess of a life speaks to the power of literature.

I was troubled by the way he depicted and treated many women in the book--but in many ways, so was he. He ultimately called himself on the carpet.

On the other hand, I appreciated his insights into Judaism and life in Israel.

While I know there are many ways to approach treatment for addictions, this book is a good example of how AA can work very well for some people.

I like books about writers. I like memoirs that read like novels. I like books about redemption. So, 5 stars it is.

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### **Adam says**

#### **A good fast read**

I'd read a preview of this one a few years ago, but wasn't quite ready for it then. Great first 100 pages, far more interesting than a typical drunkalog.

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### **Ezekiel Tyrus says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and will recommend it to others. It is more than just an addiction memoir. It's about somebody's becoming a human being really. The whole, "Courage to change the things I can, accept the things I can't," is presented in the latter part of the book as a lifestyle choice. I enjoyed the descriptions of Tel Aviv's bohemia. I'm aware all cities have their colonies of bohemia but was unaware Israel did or I simply never thought about it but thought that was cool and interesting. Page 332 of the paperback edition caused me to stop reading and brood for several minutes regarding miracles, fate, etc. And lastly, the scene where Alan Kaufman, a former Israeli soldier decides on a drunken whim to enter a punk/skinhead bar for the sole purpose of getting into a fight is worth the price of the book alone. Me, a former bar-bouncer who worked some punk skinhead clubs in Florida in the early 90s knows the scene. The writer deserves to be proud of himself and this book.

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### **Aaron Mcilhenny says**

Overall, I thought this was a great book. It takes a while to get into because he glosses over everything he (presumably) covers in Jew Boy, and I feel like the fifty or so pages about him getting published could have been shortened, even though I enjoyed them. He also sometimes did this thing where his sentences didn't have subjects, which I did not like at all. But other than that I found Kaufman's memoir to be a touching, vivid, and real account of alcoholism and PTSD, one that belongs on the same level as Sheff's Tweak in pushing awareness for addictions everywhere.

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### **Brenda says**

The writing style was a little different from what I am used to, but it worked for this memoir. The author painted a raw, human, and mostly unflattering picture of the depths of his alcoholism, and the time, opportunities and relationships sacrificed for it. I had a hard time putting it down. At a point when it seemed impossible, one brief conversation with an empathetic stranger fueled a successful journey through AA. Reading about the struggle, his relationship with his life-saving sponsors, and his renewed chance at a real, healing life- and the spirituality surrounding his journey - was captivating.

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### **Saira says**

Despite the number of dropped personal threads and increasingly scattered thoughts as the end of the book neared, I really enjoyed this personal reflection. His detailed journey into addiction, self-loathing and debilitating paranoia, though raunchy and never-ending, was a bitterly accurate portrayal of the inner workings of the alcoholic mind.

I have never read his other books, but I am curious. Ironically, the part of his life where his writing began to take off was where I felt the story became more choppy and disjointed.

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### **Kristen says**

He is just annoying

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### **Heather says**

Most of this book I did not enjoy at all, however the middle was pretty interesting. I like the actual parts about his recovery, not the babble in the first half of the book. It gets lost near the end too. Very hard to focus on. I much enjoyed the part about the fish.

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### **Susan says**

This book is enormously compelling, but I wish a couple of things were included: information on the further impact of his newspaper writing, and more on his emotional state in his evolving attitudes toward women.

Otherwise, if you are an artist and a late bloomer - whether due to having to earn a living or for some other reason - this book can be incredibly inspirational.

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### **Carl Macki says**

Alan is reading this Sunday in Petaluma at the Poetry Walk, <http://petalumapoetrywalk.org>

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### **Deanna Comer says**

I found this book to be a real page turner. Although Part One leads anyone in their right mind to be filled with disgust and dislike for the author/main character, I was never fully able to recover from that feeling. It seems as though Alan blamed a lot of bad parenting on his ex wife but he was completely absent for the entirety of his daughters upbringing and cannot possibly fathom what it really is to be a parent. I think Alan grasped this to an extent but nonetheless is naïve. Truly a story of hell on earth and learning to survive even if only to exist.

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### **Julie says**

An addiction and recovery memoir so exhaustive in detail that it's only yanked back from the potentially tiresome by Bronx-born Kaufman's relentlessly intelligent and honest voice. The son of a deeply troubled, abusive Holocaust survivor and a father with a serious gambling addiction, the author makes no excuses for his own terrible alcohol-soaked behavior that results: from hurling his body through blackout marriages, a dizzying array of sexual encounters that rival Richard Hell's (in Hell's own addiction and recovery memoir), the Columbia University writer's program (to which he applies in person with a fistful of dollars), to taking the burgeoning spoken word poetry scene by storm--just to name a few. The PTSD he suffers as a result of service in the Israeli army only adds fuel to the fire that nearly consumes him on more than one occasion. Once in recovery in San Francisco, the book, at times, feels a bit like a paid public service announcement for AA, but Kaufman examines his redemption and his new identity as a writer tirelessly, many times feeling like he deserves none of it. Another level of redemption arrives at the narrative's close in the form Kaufman's teenaged daughter, Isadora, in Washington Square Park, which Kaufman transforms to a landscape for angels--healing, gentle, luminous.

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### **Squirrel Circus says**

This is one of those books about which I made a mental u-turn halfway through. About a 100 pages in and I HATED this guy - Kaufman. Really despised him, had no respect for him as a writer or a human being. I

almost quit this book, but I gutted it out until "Part Two", and I GOT IT. Kaufman despised HIMSELF in the first half of the book, and, why not? He was a miserable drunk, user of women and friends, and a walking waste of potential. As he considers recovery, I was sold - sold on Kaufman's talent as a writer and humbled by his willingness to bare his personal rock bottom in such a way that his own self-loathing becomes visceral to the reader. This memoir is just REAL. To quote the cover blurb from Dave Eggers, "He's not neat, he's not careful...But there's more passion here than you see in twenty other books combined."

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