



Rushdie's Resilience through Stoicism and Optimism in *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*: A Book Review

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Book Review

Salman Rushdie's *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder* is an enthralling narrative of survival and rehabilitation that is wrapped tight and passionately around a love tale about his wife, Eliza and also about incidents of attack that almost changed his life. A man dressed all in black, including his mask and clothes, charged down the aisle toward Salman Rushdie as he was getting ready to deliver a lecture on the value of protecting writers from harm on the morning of August 12, 2022, at the Chautauqua Institution in upstate New York. The man was armed with a knife and attacked Rushdie. Hence, Rushdie had to undergo physical therapy right after emergency surgery to regain hand use, and one side of his lower lip was left permanently paralyzed due to a damaged nerve in his neck.

Rushdie therefore writes with urgency, seriousness, and unwavering honesty in his memoir, *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*. It serves as a very poignant reminder of how writing can make sense of the unimaginable. This is a personal reflection about life, love, grief, art, and having the will to get back up after falling. Rushdie states in the book's opening chapter that his attacker—whom he will not identify—had read very little of his writing. It can be concluded, from this that 'The Satanic Verses' was not the subject of the attack, whatever it may have been, he will make an effort to comprehend the content of this book.

This memoir pays homage to Rushdie's fifth wife Eliza (Rachel Eliza Griffiths), the talented poet, novelist, and visual artist, but it is also dedicated to the several men and women who saved his life and helped him get well. After meeting Eliza, the rest of Rushdie's family agreed with his description of their connection as the last and final one in his life. Additionally, the love tales appeal to be presented in the first person, which may be one of the reasons Rushdie abandons the intriguing but unusual third-person story of his years of isolation and concealment following the fatwa in his previous biography *Joseph Anton*. On top of that, it seems quite first-person when someone injures you fifteen times, as he states. That therefore amounts to an "I" tale. The structural arrangement of the narrative is equally striking. It is divided into two halves, each with four chapters: *The Angel of Death* and *The Angel of Life*. Rushdie tries to make references to symmetry, balance, and order in an imbalanced world. The most powerful portions of the memoir are these first few chapters, which go into startling detail about the attack and his medical care. It is astounding that he survived so many horrific wounds at the age of 75. The memoir is more contemplative in the second half. Rushdie writes about the struggle between the West and Islamic fanaticism, but his finest writings are about the struggle between authors and rulers and a similar terrifying knife assault on the famous Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz. Although Ovid was sent into exile, Osip Mandelstam was one of the greatest authors in the Soviet Union punished by Stalin, and Lorca was killed by Spanish fascists, their works have endured longer than the authorities that afflicted them.



Rushdie's agent, Andrew Wylie, foresaw the inevitable nature of the memoir and told the writer, despite his denial, that he would write about it. The memoir is both cathartic and inevitable. After the attack, Rushdie started writing again and soon realized he had to finish the piece before going on to anything else. As a result, he began to discard the notes for his next work of fiction. Writing about it would be my method of not just refusing to be a victim but of claiming what had occurred, taking responsibility for it, and making it mine. I would use art to combat violence. Though the book's brief thoughts on freedom are, in the sense of core level, one wishes, there were more. However, this does not negate the author's experience of subliminal sentiments of imbalance and injustice, he even in his cerebral logic attempts to intellectualize the events to appease his mind. Yet, the subconscious mind can be such a trickster as he admits that he gave his memoir, "The Knife" a lot of consideration during those empty, restless evenings, which he now discovers. In addition, Rushdie accurately points out that the term has degenerated into a minefield, an intellectual war zone where both the left and the right have attempted to subvert the classical liberal conception of freedom as it is expressed in the works of writers like - Thomas Paine and John Stuart Mill. He also contends that views about what the latter may and cannot say have restrained free speech if it has become a license for prejudice on the part of the former.

The memoir carries over Joseph Anton's bitter memories of being disparaged, at times angrily, by individuals on opposing sides of the ideological divide. Rushdie's new memoir serves as a reminder of the significance of rediscovering a true liberal spirit in these turbulent, polarized times, especially in a world that seems to have forgotten that any credible defense of free speech must involve upholding the right of free expression to those you disagree with, dislike, and even dislike for. For the first time, Rushdie relives the horrific events of that day and its aftermath, along with his journey towards physical recovery and healing, which were made possible by his family, his army of medical professionals and physical therapists, his love for Eliza, his community of readers throughout the world, and their love. According to Nigella Lawson, the memoir is 'Stunning...the ugliest thing turned into the most beautiful'.

Salman Rushdie, therefore, writes a compelling book about the horrific assault on him; the recollections he presents here are as raw and confused as a conversation. The memoir is all about positivity, encouragement, and the will to live. Rushdie triumphs against all difficulties, turning tragedy into strength, violence into irony, and romantic affection into a balm for hatred. Though the memoir, is a very different book and contains a lot of antagonists, Rushdie's need to have his suffering forever preserved is reasonable.

Book Details

[1] Salman Rushdie. *Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder*. Jonathan Cape Ltd (UK), Random House (USA), 2024, pp. 224, ISBN-13: 978-17-87334-79-3

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