

Gemini Joe

Memoirs of Brooklyn



Gemini Joe, Memoirs of Brooklyn

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Revision - First Person Version

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I loved reading Gemini Joe: Memoirs of Brooklyn and it had my attention right from the beginning to the end. It is a simple story of an ordinary life, but that is precisely what makes it special. I enjoyed reading about all of the day-to-day life in their household with the big Italian dinners, fishing, sports, daily life, their connection with what is known as “the Mafia,” and so much more. Janet is able to write as a silent observer and this to her credit because the narrative genuinely feels like Joe talking to the reader and, at times, to his daughter. It’s a very engaging and well-written book and probably one of my favorite memoirs I have read in a long time!

Gisela Dixon for Readers’ Favorite

This is a story that explores family dynamics, addiction, love and friendship, and one man’s journey towards inner freedom. It is deeply moving, inspiring, and told well. Gemini Joe, memoirs of Brooklyn has great emotional depth and explores the psychology of an alienated child. as a memoir, it’s a great success; a true story rendered vividly in the reader’s mind.

Ruffina Oserio for Readers’ Favorite

Gemini Joe is a gritty, compelling portrait of a man.

Ralph Tejada Wilson, Author of *a Black Bridge*

*From the day of one's birth
God has given to man
All that abounds on the earth
For all his needs and pleasures
As a gift and a burden
Making man responsible
To care for all its keepings
And protect them like his treasures
To look at life as he looks in a mirror
All that he projects, good or evil,
Reward is greater than he gives
As a mirror returns a larger image*

~ Gemini Joe ~

Author Note

The earliest memory I had of my father was at a family wedding when I was four years old. I could still see my mother smiling and dancing, happy to be with her family. My father sat at a table, glaring as she glided across the dance floor. He drank one scotch on the rocks after another until jealousy took hold of him and his rage cut the evening short.

Driving home in a drunken stupor, he yelled as he stomped on the gas pedal. The car tipped from side to side. I cowered on the floor in the back seat, praying we wouldn't die as he sped around the curves.

This was the beginning of what my life was to be and, as I grew older, I learned to distance myself from his frequent tirades. He spent most of his time at the bar, where they knew him as "Gemini Joe," a charismatic, funny man who was the life of any party, but his family rarely saw this side of him at home.

A bottle of scotch on the table was all it took to set him off, causing us to hide at the top of the stairs, listening and waiting for the fighting to end.

When, finally on the downside of his drunken spells, the yelling subsided, it was time for the "crying game." He was predictable in his tears.

Years of fighting and turmoil followed until it became a natural state of family life. My father alienated everyone around him and remained a stranger for most of my life. I only saw brief moments of his true character when he wasn't drunk or angry.

I wanted to love him but found it difficult to please him. I wanted to please him but knew it was impossible.

When he divorced my mother, I felt obligated to cut him out of my life out of loyalty to her.

Until one day, I received a letter along with a poem. It said,

"The name of this poem is 'For a Moment,' because at the time I wrote it, it seemed as though everything important and good, only seemed to last but a moment! Janet, I love you and think of you always. Some day we will meet again, hug again, and kiss again.

Love Always, Dad."

*We gathered the pearls of the ocean,
We counted the stars in the sky,
For a moment, we showed our emotions,
Then, in a moment, we said, Good-bye!*

I didn't know this side of my father. Impressed by his words, I asked him to send more of his poems. Most of there were dark, depressed, and moody while some of it was childlike and simple. His letter opened the lines of communication between us.

Curious, I asked if he would tell me about his childhood. He wrote four pages then stopped, claiming he wasn't feeling good and couldn't do it. Disappointed, I almost gave up, but then I had an idea. I sent him a tape recorder and five cassette tapes.

At first, he had trouble operating the piece of technology, so I called to instruct him how to use it and didn't let up until he felt comfortable.

"This is great," he said. "I'm starting to get the hang of it and I'm having fun. I get tired and have to stop, but then I keep coming back to it."

Joe was happy to make the tapes about his memories and was thrilled that I showed interest in him. Every week another tape arrived, and episode-by-episode I learned about my father's long forgotten memories.

Even though he chronicled his early life, I had many questions. We never talked about his family and I only saw the unhappy side of him. I called to ask about things that weren't clear, or to get more of his story, and our conversations became a ritual.

As I collected the missing pieces of his life, I had an opportunity to understand the true nature of the man buried deep beneath the alcoholic.

Originally, I published this book in third person narrative. Ten years later, my father spoke to me in a dream. He told me to listen to his tapes again. When I did, I realized that his tapes were not of a hurt and bewildered man, but of a sensitive and caring boy with wild-eyed enthusiasm for his family. I've decided to rewrite his story... in his own words.

Gemini Joe



Prologue

In the summer of 1903, Domenic Finno heard stories about America. Everyone wanted to stake a claim in the *Land of Milk and Honey*. Some said you could get rich, others warned you'd have to get past the Irish first. Good with a needle and thread, he really wanted to be a tailor but New York needed laborers to build sewer systems.

Domenic didn't know the difference between mortar and concrete, but he had a strategy. Once he established himself in New York, he'd start his own tailoring business. He told his father about his plan, but at forty-six years old, his father, who had never left his village, begged his son to stay in his home country. Domenic ignored his father's pleas and took his chances in the New World.

With a third class, steerage ticket in his hand, he stepped onto the ship that would take him across the Atlantic to a new way of life. He pushed past his fellow passengers from Naples and made his way toward the bow of the *Manuel Calvo*. On the horizon, low-lying clouds snuffed out the sun and threatened rain.

Once out to sea, storms attacked the ship, one after another. The ship rocked and creaked as waves crashed against its sides, pouring cold seawater onto the deck. Domenic stood at the bow, salty mist spraying his face. He tightened his coat across his chest and closed his eyes. Down below deck, the

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