

## Higher Love: A Psychedelic Travel Memoir of Heartbreak and Healing

Anne Kiehl Friedman

Boldspark

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*Higher Love is a self-aware memoir that catalogs multiple personal struggles and follows a dedicated pursuit of self-transformation.*

Anne Kiehl Friedman's psychedelic coming-of-age memoir *Higher Love* is a story about friends, family, and the love of oneself.

Friedman's vulnerable work begins by recounting her engagement to and eventual break-up with David in her late twenties. The latter event was a catalyst for change. She attended a yoga retreat in Costa Rica and traveled alone for the first time in Morocco; she made a complete career change too. At the same time, she ingested a variety of psychedelics.

Documenting internal struggles with body image, anxiety, and depression, as well as with a Lyme disease diagnosis and compulsive worrying about finding romance, the book begins each love song–titled chapter with a time, location, and a list of the substances that Friedman ingested in the relevant period. At one point, she consumed “all my pride and a million joints”; at another, she had mushroom truffles; elsewhere, there was nothing but “gnawing regret.” But while the drugs involved in Friedman's own transformation are a consistent theme, the book also issues a disclaimer: consuming drugs has its consequences, complications, and implications. Beneath a scene in which Friedman first contemplates taking ayahuasca, for example, there's a footnote identifying both damage to the Amazon because of white tourism and the dangers of not being informed prior to an ayahuasca retreat. Elsewhere, too, the book is fastidious about imparting information about the drugs represented: how they operate within the brain; how they change a person's interactions with the world around them. They are credited with inspiring growth but not creating it.

Its prose dominated by internal monologuing, the text is variously funny, self-critical, wry, cheesy, and reflective of longing. It cracks jokes about difficult moments in the past, but it also becomes serious at the right moments. In covering Friedman's experiences of oneness with the universe, her low moments, and the people who were most important in her period of change, for example, it is holistic, attuned to the multifaceted natures of others, and loving. And it names, at frequent intervals, potential sites of growth as well. Indeed, the text is intentional about acknowledging personal privilege, which helps to balance out its generous accounts of what brings Friedman joy. Thus, its progression comes in waves, matching her own halting change and inspiring both laughter and exasperation. Its ultimate conclusion that self-growth is rooted in self-awareness is satisfying.

*Higher Love* is an empathetic memoir that catalogs instances of self-love, discovery, and healing influenced by a healthy dose of recreational drugs.

NATALIE WOLLENZIEN (May 28, 2024)

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