

The Blind Man Game: A Memoir of Art, Activism and Adaptation

Paul Boskind

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Humor and a dash of cynicism mark The Blind Man Game, a memoir about contending with vision loss to become a notable activist.

Psychologist Paul Boskind's memoir *The Blind Man Game* is about vision loss, activism, and tenacity.

The book opens with a discussion of Boskind's vision loss beginning at the age of twenty-one, when he was diagnosed with Stargardt disease. He lost his central vision over time, experiencing long stretches of stability followed by rapid declines. He had to make adjustments to accommodate his worsening condition, including counting steps, not bothering to turn on the bathroom light, and using his other senses to locate his tweezers.

Other people's reactions also had to be navigated. Once, a child commented on his white cane and her mother shushed her: "He's blind." His internal reaction was "Yeah, but not deaf." At Machu Picchu, he navigated his way to the top of the mountain with relative ease, but he could not see his feet during the descent and clung to his husband the whole way down.

The chapters do not appear in strict chronological order; they alternate between Boskind's youth and his adulthood, though there is some muddling of the timeline since the jumps aren't notated. The chapters set in his youth focus on his dysfunctional family life and early relationships with men, while the chapters set in his adulthood are more about his life as a political activist focused on LGBTQ+ rights and his experiences in declining vision; they cover his encounters with icons including Hillary Rodham Clinton and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The prose is casual and conversational, including fourth-wall breaks like "as you may have noticed" and "I have to tell you this"; some detract from the natural flow of the narrative. Non sequiturs also impede the work: In the middle of a story about a wheeling-and-dealing father, for example, comes "Oh, I've got to tell you about the Corn Flakes." Bounces between tales of long-lost lovers and fundraising galas are also sudden. Instead of a cohesive story is a gathering of anecdotes from across a lifetime.

Dollops of wisdom regarding grief appear alongside the more optimistic memories; some feel out of place. The bulk of the narrative is marked by humor and a dash of cynicism. The tone is sometimes too insular, though, leaving outsiders at a distance.

An inspiring memoir about internal strength, *The Blind Man Game* is a story of vision loss and grit.

ASHLEY HOLSTROM (November 5, 2024)

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