



The Autobiography of My Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics)

By Jamaica Kincaid



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From the recipient of the 2010 Clifton Fadiman Medal, an unforgettable novel of one woman's courageous coming-of-age

Powerful, disturbing, stirring, Jamaica Kincaid's novel is the deeply charged story of a woman's life on the island of Dominica. Xuela Claudette Richardson, the daughter of a Carib mother and a half-Scottish, half-African father, loses her mother to death the moment she is born and must find her way on her own. Kincaid takes us from Xuela's childhood in a home where she can hear the song of the sea to the tin-roofed room where she lives as a schoolgirl in the house of Jack LaBatte, who becomes her first lover. Xuela develops a passion for the stevedore Roland, who steals bolts of Irish linen for her from the ships he unloads, but she eventually marries an English doctor, Philip Bailey. Xuela's is an intensely physical world, redolent of overripe fruit, gentian violet, sulfur, and rain on the road, and it seethes with her sorrow, her deep sympathy for those who share her history, her fear of her father, her desperate loneliness. But underlying all is "the black room of the world" that is Xuela's barrenness and motherlessness.

The Autobiography of My Mother is a story of love, fear, loss, and the forging of character, an account of one woman's inexorable evolution, evoked in startling and magical poetry.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"My mother died at the moment I was born, and so for my whole life there was nothing standing between myself and eternity," writes Jamaica Kincaid in this disturbing, compelling novel set on the island of Dominica. Born to a doomed Carib woman and a Scottish African policeman of increasing swagger and wealth, narrator Xuela spends a lifetime unanchored by family or love. She disdains the web of small and big lies that link others, allowing only pungent, earthy sensuality--a mix of blood and dirt and sex--to move her. Even answering its siren call, though, Xuela never loses sight of the sharp loss that launched her into the world and the doors through which she will take her leave.

From Publishers Weekly

Kincaid's third novel (after *Annie John*) is presented as the mesmerizing, harrowing, richly metaphorical autobiography of 70-year-old Xuela Claudette Richardson. Earthy, intractably antisocial, acridly introspective, morbidly obsessed with history and identity, conquest and colonialism, language and silence, Xuela recounts her life on the island of Dominica in the West Indies. In Kincaid's characteristically lucid, singsong prose, Xuela traces her evolution from a young girl to an old woman while interrogating the mysteries of her hybrid cultural origins and her parents, who failed to be parents: her mother died during childbirth; her often absent father, a cruel and petty island official, cultivates a veneer of respectability ("another skin over his real skin"), rendering him unrecognizable to his daughter. At 14, Xuela undertakes an affair with one of her father's friends, becomes pregnant and aborts the child. Experiencing that trauma as a rebirth ("I was a new person then"), she inaugurates a life of deliberate infertility, eventually becoming the assistant to a European doctor, whom she later marries. Xuela's Dominica, two generations after slavery, is a "false paradise" of reckless fathers and barren matrilinear relations, of tropical ferment, fecundity, witchcraft and slums, whose denizens resemble the walking dead. With aphoristic solemnity at times evocative of Ecclesiastes, Kincaid explores the full paradoxes of this extraordinary story, which, Xuela concludes, is at once the testament of the mother she never knew, of the mother she never allowed herself to be and of the children she refused to have. 75,000 first printing; major ad/ promo; author tour; translation, first serial, dramatic rights: Wylie, Aitken & Stone.

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From Library Journal

Kincaid, who triumphed with novels like *Annie John* (LJ 4/1/85), here tells the story of a 70-year-old West Indian woman who looks back over the relationships that enriched her life. The 75,000-copy first printing shows that the publisher expects this work to go far.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics)? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with their opinion or you have additional opinion?

Rodney Hussey:

This The Autobiography of My Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics) book is simply not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is definitely information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This particular The Autobiography of My Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics) without we comprehend teach the one who studying it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't always be worry The Autobiography of My Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics) can bring once you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even mobile phone. This The Autobiography of My Mother: A Novel (FSG Classics) having fine arrangement in word along with layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Amy Zambrano:

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