Out of My Mind: An Autobiography by Kristin Nelson Tinker

Where Are You Kris?

Born in 1945 into a Hollywood family of competition, achievement, and celebrity, Kristin Nelson Tinker began to paint in her distinctive American primitive style when she was in her teens. Out of My Mind brings together more than 100 of her autobiographical paintings to tell in words and images the story of her life. 171 illustrations, 136 in color.

My Personal Review:
There was a time when all of us and our mothers too were in love with Rick Nelson. But the one most in love with him was Kris Harmon, who became his wife in April 1963. She wrote a book about this life, and it is a book from which everyone can learn -- from her example, her words, and her artwork.

Rick Nelson brought rock music into the living rooms of America and made it acceptable. He was the teen idol of a generation - the Prince of Rock and Roll in the days when Elvis was the King. I am appalled that the kid at Starbucks doesn't know who Rick Nelson is today.

Rick's fans have always criticized Kris for reasons I only partially understand. (Remember, they weren't wild about Yoko either.) For instance, Kris had a temper; Rick did not. His fans criticized her when she was with him on the road and when she was not. Kris and the kids always had to compete with the fans and his band for his attention. Rick liked being a father, but he was not home very often.

In 1981, she left the marriage and Rick reluctantly. Rick's sudden death in an airplane crash in December 1985 shocked the nation and left many people in addition to his family bereft for a long time. I attended a Tribute to him in 1993 in L.A. and was surprised at the number of people from all over the world who grieved his death as a personal loss.
In 1987, Kris was accused by her family of being an unfit mother at the time she sought treatment for pill and alcohol addiction. This is, unfortunately, a reason that keeps many women from seeking treatment when they need it. Asking for help takes courage; getting help means one will be a better mother. To be punished for it enrages me still. She discusses this time in her life without sparing the hurt.

The book has over 100 of her paintings in it and many poems. Some reviewers have called it a daybook, or journal, not a traditional autobiography. It is a memoir in the true meaning of the word -she has elevated her personal story to a more universal level.

When asked in an interview once how she feels about Rick now, she said something like, "I miss him. He was funny. We were friends and had fun. And I still miss him." After all those years of fights in court, the truth emerges.

Kris is building an extraordinary legacy. It is clear that she finds solace and salvation in her artwork and in New Mexico. She is, for the first time, being recognized as herself, not the daughter of someone famous, or the wife of someone famous, or the mother of someone famous - but for herself. And it is clear that she has learned that death ends a life, but not a relationship.

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