Amazon Best of the Month, March 2009: While this latest memoir from Susan Jane Gilman (former Hypocrite in a Pouffy White Dress) appears to be a saucy account of international sexcapades, it quickly reveals its whip-smarts, sucking you into a story that brilliantly captures the ecstatic terror of gleefully leaping from your comfort zone—and finding yourself in freefall. Its 1986, and newly minted ivy league grads Susy and her friend Claire have never left the U.S. when (inspired by a Pancakes of Many Nations promotion during a drunken night at IHOP) they hatch a plan to circle the world, starting in China, which has just opened to tourists. From the moment of arrival, theyre out of their depth, perpetually hungry, foolish, and paranoid from relentless observation. Claire, who carries the complete works of Nietzsche like a Gideon Bible, seems more capable than Susy until encounters with military police, hallucinatory fevers, and a frantic escape from a squalid hospital expose cracks in her psyche that utterly derail their plans. Rich with insight, dead-on dialogue, and canny
characterization, Gilmans personal tale nails that cataclysmic collision of idealism and reality that so often characterizes young adulthood. Be prepared to wolf down the final hundred pages in one sitting. --Mari Malcolm

Features:
* ISBN13: 9780446578929
* Condition: NEW
* Notes: Brand New from Publisher. No Remainder Mark.

**Personal Review: Undress Me in the Temple of Heaven by Susan Jane Gilman**

Like I have said before, I have been on a huge memoir kick lately. This book appealed to me because it takes place in China and there's traveling as well. I have become a HUGE fan of the Travel channel lately so I've been reading a lot of books that have to do with travel as it's something I can't do right now except in books. This book really captured my attention and I could not put it down while I was reading.

There were times of the book when I wanted to scream at both Claire and Susan. I know this book takes place in the 80s when not much was known about mental illness as it we do now. Therefore I could understand why Susan thought Claire was just being annoying at first. However, when things started getting worse, instead of thinking about getting help, Susan still thought that Claire was just acting up and acting like a spoiled brat. I guess I really shouldn't be annoyed with Claire because it's obvious that she went through a mental breakdown. I honestly think that she should have never even left for the trip in the first place. It was obvious that her whole life she had been pampered and sheltered and never exposed to the real world before. Going to China and seeing what life was really like was a complete shock and she just couldn't handle it. I was tad disappointed that we don't know what happens to Claire at the end of the story. I can accept the explanation given but all the same it's still a letdown. Also of note, the author says in the beginning of the book that she had changed and hidden the identity of Claire so much, she was almost unrecognizable.

As I said, the book takes place in the 80s before even Tienanmen Square or the Beijing Olympics. A lot has changed in China since then so I think it would be interesting to see Gilman take another trip back to the country and discuss the differences. The book doesn't make China seem like a backwater dangerous country because you have to remember that the country is being seen by two college students who are young and vulnerable. If you are expecting a travelogue type book, you're not going to find it in this book. It's a memoir and not a travel guide. Don't expect to read about sweeping adventures across China or tight focus on Susan's travels. It's more about her experiences in the country, both the physical and psychological adventures than it is a tour guide.
Personally I think this book would make a wonderful movie. Gilman does a really good job at making her story come alive and I really felt like I was there with her and feeling her emotions. This book was a page turner and I never once got bored while reading. Gilman hints that if she feels the urge, she would write a book about the rest of the travels she took while on that trip. I really hope she does because it would definitely be a book I would love to read. The book was a joy to read and I had a lot of fun traveling along with Susan. If you have wanted to discover China or a looking for a really good memoir, this book is perfect for you. HIGHLY recommended.

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Undress Me in the Temple of Heaven by Susan Jane Gilman 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!