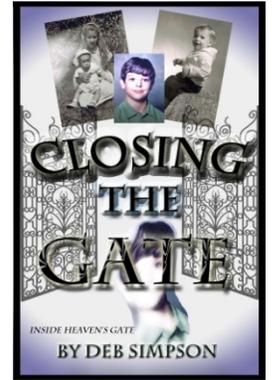


Closing The Gate

Advance Review

by Teresa Belardes



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For most of us, the headlines regarding the Mass Suicide of the thirty-six “Heaven’s Gate” cult members in Rancho Santa Fe, Ca. in 1997 was a sad curiosity. For Author Deb Simpson, it became up close and personal when her now adult, baby brother Jimmy, became collateral damage, his dead body discovered five weeks later in Atlanta Georgia. This, his second attempt to follow “those who went on ahead”, at last for him, successful.

This is a page turner of a story that manages to show clearly, the many facets of the characters who shaped the author’s life and that of her brother. It is a testament to their grandmother with whom she spent a few early years, that she was able to come away with enough tools to enable her to make different choices than the narrow possibilities that would inevitably be all that were available to her brother, after a childhood of loneliness and neglect. It paints a vivid case picture for the argument gauging Nature versus Nurture’

This author has managed, through her grief, to tell the poignant and tragic story of a childhood bereft of the safety and security of the traditional family at the hands of a mother and father who can only be described in hindsight as wholly unfit to parent, but whose journey is as fascinating as it is doomed. With these two, the dynamics that are at play are as intricate as the voices are strong, and everyone in their orbit comes away with at least a partial ticket to their ship wreck.

Deb’s detailed and appraising effort to sort out the path of a life that would lead to such a tragic end, results in a book that is at once a tribute and memorial to her brother, a soul search for the reader, and a call to arms for recognizing the utter importance of the early childhood years as a foundation for a well-rounded and fully formed adulthood. Might it also be a conscious or unconscious attempt to protect all the young and innocent souls that come after?

Probably.
Successful?
I hope so.

Closing the Gate is simply and frankly written. The author pulls you into her story and doesn’t let you go. In fact, you will be thinking about this one long after you close the book.