



Once Upon a Gypsy Moon: An Improbable Voyage and One Man's Yearning for Redemption

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Michael Hurley watched his world unravel in the wake of infidelity, divorce and failure. In August 2009, he was short of money, out of a job, and seeking to salvage a life that had foundered. Deeply in need of perspective, he took to the open seas in a 32-foot sailboat, Gypsy Moon. The story of his 2-year outward odyssey, deterred by rough weather and mechanical troubles, combines keen observation, poignant thoughts, and deeper introspection with glorious prose.

Once Upon a Gypsy Moon also presents a rare and much-needed point of view on the familiar spiritual-journey narrative. It offers a star-crossed love story wrapped inside a rollicking good sea tale, but it also has something important to say to the reader about relationships, faith and disbelief, life and death, love and marriage, and what really matters.

Once Upon a Gypsy Moon: An Improbable Voyage and One Man's Yearning for Redemption Details

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Author : Michael Hurley

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From Reader Review Once Upon a Gypsy Moon: An Improbable Voyage and One Man's Yearning for Redemption for online ebook

Jess says

A very heartfelt, intimate, and personal story about the author's journey not only through the open ocean, but also through life. Hurley has written his memoir in such a way that the ocean and life are interwoven and interchangeable aspects of the book. He is able to describe the "ups and downs" that we go through on our journeys, and bring in a spiritual side to the book that makes it more encouraging, not overbearing. Not being a sailor myself, I did have to Google a couple of the terms in the book, but I think that had I not looked them up, I still would have been able to enjoy it. The memoir is told in a way that the terms add to the story, but don't consume the book, so that novices (such as myself) can still read it and not feel left in the dark. I really felt that Hurley was able to describe his life and journey in such a way that you feel like you know exactly what he was going through in each letter/chapter, and are able to relate to him. A wonderful story about loss, courage, determination, contentment, giving it all, and learning to let go. Thanks for the opportunity to read this through the Goodreads "First Reads" book giveaways before it hit the shelves!

Susan says

I won an ARC of Once Upon a Gypsy Moon: A Memoir from a Goodreads giveaway & I am glad I did. I found this book to be very interesting & well-written. It is a story of a man who after his 25 years of marriage ends in divorce & he is out of a job, contemplates what to do with his life. Michael Hurley is a trial attorney & was a professional sailor. His love of the sea & his sailboat, the Gypsy Moon, is the heart of this book. But it is more than that...it is also about finding oneself, true love and being able to pick up pieces of a life that was foundering. If you do not enjoy boats, sailing or stories about the sea, then this is not a story for you. But, you do not have to be an avid sailor or someone who lives to be on the ocean to enjoy this book. I have never been sailing, but have always wished I had the opportunity to experience the open sea on a schooner. So I found reading about Hurley's odyssey on his beloved Gypsy Moon quite interesting. Woven into his narrative of excitement & perils of sailing alone on the open sea are insights into Hurley's doubts, fears, faith and wanting to redeem himself. There are philosophical musings but Hurley is never self-serving or egocentric. I found him very likable. I also found this a story of hope, even against many odds. It is a feel-good story. I would recommend it for anyone who wants to take a journey vicariously on an aging 32-foot sailboat with a sailor who dearly loves the ocean & his Gypsy Moon.

Paige Bradish says

I received Once Upon A Gypsy Moon by Michael Hurley, from the publisher for my honest review.

When I was contacted to review this book at first I was not just a little, but very hesitant about reading a memoir about a mans journey in life on the sea. But me being willing to give anything at least one shot, I agreed to review it and here I am writing a heartfelt review.

In the memoir we learn about the life of the author Michael Hurley. This was interesting because it was not

just him whining about getting a divorce and being alone, but it was him telling us his story in a nice way. I liked that he admitted in the book that the reason for his divorce was because he cheated, he did not put any of the blame on his wife at all which is a step in the right direction, because that what I was expecting a whole spiel about why his wife is to blame but that's not what happened and I enjoyed that.

The writing in this book was so great. I absolutely loved the descriptions of the sea like this one, "and the ocean was what any writer would feel compelled to describe as eerily calm--eerie like a murderer's smile." this one line had the ability to give me the chills unlike any horror book I have read (Hurley 30). Another thing I enjoyed about this book was the author's mention of older writers like Thoreau, Mark Twain, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. All writers who I have studied and have works that I have loved!

Some of the chapters in the book were a bit boring but that's to be expected especially in a book about a man's journey to sea. It did not take the rating down much no more than a star. I liked the satisfaction of learning that Hurley does fall in love again after what seemed like an endless search it was a great edition to the book.

Overall it gets 4 out of 4 stars because the things I liked greatly overwhelmed the one thing I did not like. Even if you do not read memoirs I would recommend this because it happened to be a great story.

Casee Marie says

Michael Hurley was still reeling from the end of his twenty-five year marriage after a life-changing infidelity when he found himself out of a job and with little wherewithal, left only to look back on his life and wonder how to move forward. A lifelong sailor, Hurley found his call for perspective answered by the sea, and he committed himself to undertaking an impressive journey from Maryland to Nassau on his 32-foot sailboat, the Gypsy Moon. With only the open water of the Atlantic for company, Hurley set off on his expedition in the hope of uncovering answers to his many questions through self-reflection amid the natural grace – and hardship – of life on the open seas. Initially, he wrote letters to his friends that chronicled his innermost thoughts and experiences during his trip, but eventually those letters transformed into *Once Upon a Gypsy Moon*, a memoir that details two years spent between the Gypsy Moon's determined journey and the life on land that churned along because of it. On his adventure Hurley would connect to himself, grow ever more deeply in-tuned with his faith, and meet the love of his life. He would discover, as well, that life is as unpredictable, and sometimes as unsettling, as the ocean's tempestuous waters.

Once Upon a Gypsy Moon drew several different and impassioned reactions from me. At its height, the memoir captivated me in deep artistic appreciation; Hurley's elegant, fluid prose was a source of pure delight all its own, and his depictions of life aboard the Gypsy Moon had me wishing for a dockside view, at the very least, all the better to immerse myself in the memoir's tangible salty air. Amid the rocky terrain of the unpredictable ocean landscape – and with technical difficulties and masterful storms to blight his path – Hurley engages the reader with stories from his life, filled with both joy and sorrow. Through the entirety of his craftsmanship, Hurley has created a certain atmosphere that softly envelops his reader. When his narrative set foot on dry land, however, the scenes involving his social excursions felt slightly more distant. As it is in dreams, I felt that I couldn't quite make out the faces of the people he wrote about; the finite details didn't hook me there. Where they did, however, was in his documentation of his days spent tending to the Gypsy Moon. Even for one with as limited a nautical vocabulary as I, these scenes were clearly spun of a special sort of magic. Every memoir is, of course, an excursion into the deeper reaches of the author's own insight, and Hurley delivers his view of the world – predominantly of love, marriage, and the intricacies of his personal faith – through extravagant prose the scope of which reveals that the author is not just a sailor,

but also a dreamer and a poet.

Hurley's insights share their space in the memoir with the Gypsy Moon herself, and she's a bit of a scene stealer. Many would agree that few things are as commanding as the majesty of a boat on the water, and for a mortal man to offer something more enchanting is a true task. It would take an especially poignant story to entertain the reader as well as the simple, tremendous escapism of imagined life at sea; whether Hurley's missive accomplishes this will depend greatly, perhaps entirely, on the character of the reader who entertains the pages of his memoir, but he certainly puts his heart and soul into the process. His honesty and courage are admirable, and his opulent, creative use of language delivers the memoir in a beautiful presentation. At times sparkling with charisma and exuding the crisp excitement of maritime adventure, Once Upon a Gypsy Moon offers readers a journey through the ocean of life that will appeal to the hearts of dreamers and romantics, be they on land or at sea.

(Review © Casee Marie, originally published on April 16, 2013 at LiteraryInklings.com. I received a copy of the book for the purpose of review.)

Alisha says

I won this book from a goodreads giveaway contest.

This was a pretty decent memoir of a man going through a hard point in his life, and learning new lessons by trying to accomplish the goal of sailing around the world. Now, I have to admit, I know absolutely nothing about sailing, I have never even been on a sailboat. However, the way he explains it, certainly makes me more curious about learning. He makes the trip, the old boat, and the depressingly poor ports seem romantic and adventurous. Of course, this book is not only about sailing, but also about him falling in love and making a new life for himself. The relationship part of the book seemed pretty hurried though, although I suppose that's how it really was, since he talks about them being married in just a few months. I might have liked a little bit more detail on how the relationship formed, since it was such a big part of the story. I would recommend this to anyone going through a hard point in their life, especially one they are responsible for, or people who just really love sailing.

Arlena says

By: Michael Hurley

Published By: Center Street

Age Recommended: Adult

Reviewed By: Arlena Dean

Rating:4

Book Blog For: GMTA

Review:

"Once Upon a Gypsy Moon" by Michael Hurley was a good biography of this author's journey 'not only the open seas but through life. Mr. Hurley has done a good job as her interweaves the sea (ocean) and its 'interchangeable aspects' of this novel to give the reader a clear understanding of this journey that even enters into his 'spiritual side. Michael Hurley had be a trial attorney and was also a professional sailor. His life will go through many changes such as 'loss, courage, determination, contentment giving it all and learning to let go.' Wow, this was just a wonderful delivered story of Michael Hurley's life. In this memoir, he wrote about his divorced after twenty five years of marriage and being alone and even confessing that he had cheated. I

liked how he was man enough to take the blame for what had happened. The descriptions of the sea and his boat 'Gypsy Moon' was simply off the chartgood. The memoir was of Michael Hurley who had a hard life and was now learning new lessons and that one thing was the goal of sailing around the world. Now as he falls in love and making a new life for himself...we can only say he is doing it. This was one beautiful presentation that will appeal to 'the hearts of dreamers and romantics, be it land or sea.' Would I recommend this novel? YES!

Sue says

Once Upon A Gypsy Moon by Michael C Hurley.

I suspect the target audience for this novel/memoir is really men. It is written by a man and feels like a conversation with a man, for want of a better expression.

The synopsis suggested a story of a man who had gone through a divorce and was struggling with who he was in the wake of the divorce. That much is true. The book is penned by Michael Hurley as his memoir of a time in his life when he was in crisis with himself.

Very well written, but lacked the emotional struggle I had expected to read of. A lot of God references, and if like me you do not believe in God, then these references can become a bit tedious at times. There was also a hell of a lot of technical talk in the book, maybe it should be expected given that the book is about a voyage at sea and invariably technical things tend to go wrong on boats and the like.

The book was not what I expected, although it is very well written. If you are looking for something thought provoking then this is for you. Despite my annoyance with the over-use of references to God, I did find myself pausing to reflect on my own life once or twice.

A couple of reviews I have seen about this book have said there was not enough conflict, I disagree. The author is in conflict with himself, mostly, throughout the book and that really helps to drive the story forward. I thought the voyage itself came to a natural conclusion, albeit a disappointing conclusion for the author. I had half expected the voyage to be abandoned once he met and married his second wife.

I enjoyed reading this book and will give it 3 stars ***

Patty says

This memoir relates the tale of man running off on a dream - a dream I know my own husband had - to sail off and explore. The reason the book appealed to me was because I listened to my husband wax poetic about said sailing off for the first half of our marriage. We had an ocean going sailboat but when he finally realized that my seasickness was not a dream we pursued land based ways of sailing off - and we did. Fortunately for me, my husband did not decide to sleep with another woman as Mr. Hurley did.

There is a romanticism to the sea that many people find engaging; they love watching her, they love sailing upon her but she is not an easy mistress. Trust me, I know. Mr. Hurley spares nothing in his book as he shares his life before his affair (this is a minimal part of the book as the focus is the sailing adventure) and then his sailing off on his boat, the Gypsy Moon.

The stories are fine - I enjoyed them. My problem was the writing style. Perhaps Mr. Hurley was attempting

to be "old style" in presenting his tale of finding his white whale, I don't know, but it was just too florid? Stylized? Overdone? It was just too much!

The memoir could have been told with fewer words and better. I found myself putting it down and reading another book in between; something I rarely do. I just couldn't handle to much of this book at one time.

Susan Ashcraft says

A ship's wake tells you where she has been, not where she's going.

Welcome aboard the Gypsy Moon, a 32 foot sloop, aging gracefully and with a lot of life left in her sails. Reeling from the end of his marriage and the loss of his job as a trial attorney, the author, Michael C. Hurley, sets off alone to sail from Annapolis, Maryland to Nassau. This journal of a solitary sea voyage is based on six letters that Michael sent out to friends while on his journey.

Michael's love affair with the water and with sailing began as a child. Growing up, he learned to sail on Magothy River. His older brother would take him out on board boats he had borrowed, rented and, at times, owned. Later on, in his 20's, Michael owned a sloop called Itledoo, a 17-foot sloop. He dreamed of sailing to the South Seas, as many weekend sailors do. In 1986, he had the idea of deferring student loan payments and sailing away with his wife. However, the decision was made to stay ashore, work and raise a family. In the mid-90's he introduced his children to sailing. By fall of 2006, his marriage was over. Within a year after his divorce was finalized, Micheal was also out a job.

Sail along with Michael as he journeys forth on a voyage few of us will ever take. From a storm encountered on his second day into his journey to finally saying an unhappy good bye to the Gypsy Moon when her engine quit and left him afloat 300 miles from the nearest port able to do repairs, the journey is a true story of the sea.

This is not just a story about a one-man ocean voyage. It is also a love affair, a story of new beginnings and inevitable endings and mostly a story of hope.

I won my copy of Once Upon A Gypsy Moon on GoodReads. My review was unsolicited.

Cheryl says

I was very excited to read about Mr. Hurley and his story sailing upon the Gypsy Moon. I was expecting to read more about sailing. Which I did get some but not a lot. Just like a memoir I do get to know all about Mr. Hurley and his life. From growing up to why his marriage to his first wife fell apart due to infidelity. Mr. Hurley did recognize that it was his fault and accepted it. This I thought was great that he did and I liked him for it.

However after a while I grew weary of the steady pace and learning all about Mr. Hurley's life. I really craved to be on the open seas. There were just little glimpse of the open seas as Mr. Hurley sailed them. Again they were interrupted by him stopping at different ports along the way. Glad that Mr. Hurley found

love again with his new wife. If you are looking for a book that is about sailing then this is not the book for you. However if you like to read about people getting second chances then you might like this book.

Kay says

Sometimes, the acts of writing and reflecting overtakes the act of being, and reminding the reader of what it is like to live without the frills of overly complex storytelling. Unfortunately, this is where *Once Upon a Gypsy Moon* falls short. While there is a promising series of reflections upon what truly matters in life, and the journey to find that, pretention smothers it so that it takes a whole lot of digging to find.

I am not a boat person. Therefore, I'm sure much of the nuances relating to sailing went straight over my head. What I do recognize, however, is humanity, and it is in his depiction of the many layers to people that Hurley shines. You can tell when he's not merely relaying what happened onboard, when it's something he loves. It makes you fall in love with it, too. I found myself starting to yearn for the freedom Hurley describes, and the miraculous alignment of dreams in the midst of chaos. Despite the detached way he approaches most of his story, those moments make it worth it. While much of *Once Upon a Gypsy Moon* didn't do anything for me, those flashes of insight were still breathtaking, and I'm sure a sailor could appreciate this memoir far more than I could.

Travis Fortney says

My Review from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography, which you can find here:
<http://bit.ly/116DGr3>

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Once upon a time, I came up with a half-baked notion to sail around the world. It didn't matter to me that my only sailing experience up to that point was on a Hobie Cat on Lake Erie. My self-confidence at that time--I was a Junior at Prescott College in northern Arizona--was infectious enough to make other people at least entertain the possibility that I wasn't completely nuts. I remember precisely where my sailing dreams ended. I'd convinced a young lady to take to the seas with me, and we drove together to visit a thirty-six foot sailboat resting in a field on a small farm in Chino Valley. I spoke the the owner of the boat, we climbed aboard, we talked about the price and the work the boat needed, and the owner left us alone to make our decision. We stood together on the deck and looked out over the bow--I suppose both of us were imagining the Arizona desert to instead be the Pacific Ocean--and it suddenly dawned on me that I was expected to purchase this boat. I realized the enormous and thankless task ahead of me if I actually wanted to make the trip happen, and I abruptly came to my senses. But I digress.

For those who understand the urge to leave the landlocked life behind, there are ample rewards to be found in Michael C. Hurley's new memoir *Once Upon a Gypsy Moon*, which describes the author's solo adventure to Nassau in the Bahamas and beyond. It's not quite a trip around the world, but Hurley does a wonderful job of describing the perils of solo sailing, the determination that such a trip requires, and just how long such a dream must sometimes be held in order to come to fruition. Hurley was first bitten by the sailing bug at the age of eleven but only set off on his trip more than three decades later, when his life was in a state of mild

crisis due to a recent divorce and a series of professional and financial setbacks.

Hurley makes for a personable traveling companion, and *Gypsy Moon* is well written, but I didn't feel like I was the target audience for this book. Hurley's Christianity plays a large role in the text, as do his generational musings, and online dating. It's makes for a touching and engaging read, but readers who share Hurley's concerns about God, fatherhood, infidelity, career, and finding love in early middle age would more closely connect to the book, especially the large sections which don't take place on board the Gypsy Moon.

All in all, Hurley has crafted an inspiring, heartfelt and honest read about accomplishing a long-held dream, which is especially recommended for readers who appreciate inspirational and confessional writing from a Christian viewpoint.

Georgiann Hennelly says

Hurley leaves Annapolis Maryland on the Gypsy Moon an aging 32 foot sloop . His 25 year marriage ended in divorce three years ago. Hurley is short of money and he has no job, he is seeking to salvage his life that has floundered. His outward odyssey is carried on in fits and starts as he gets deterred by bad weather and mechanical problems. He first makes port in Beaufort, North Carolina after a three hundred fifty mile solo passage that included a midnight run through the Grave yard an area off the outer banks of North Carolina known to have caused thousands of ship wrecks. The story follows him to various ports of call where he uses keen observations to reconcile touch points of events from his past. Through his personal stories he gets lessons on some diverse topics like Faith, disbelief, Life and Death, and finally Love and Marriage. Very well written. I loved how two Star Crossed Lovers found each other against all odds. A true story of Hope for all of us who have had to pick up the pieces of our life's and start over again.

Cheryl says

I won this book on Goodreads. I was glad to find that it was much more than about sailing but also about his spiritual journey as well. I would have liked a bit more about the actual sailing though, than appeared in the book. Overall a good read.

Jemilla says

I received this book for free as a First Reads giveaway.

Honestly, I'm not too sure what to say about this book. I did enjoy reading it, albeit in small relaxed portions. As someone who knows very little of boats, I often found myself feeling slightly lost and floating across paragraphs pretending I knew what the author was talking about, but the message of the book was clear and enlightening. I was going to put a quote which I thoroughly enjoyed, but I lost it, so I'll paraphrase... Even the most sane life is temporary.
