

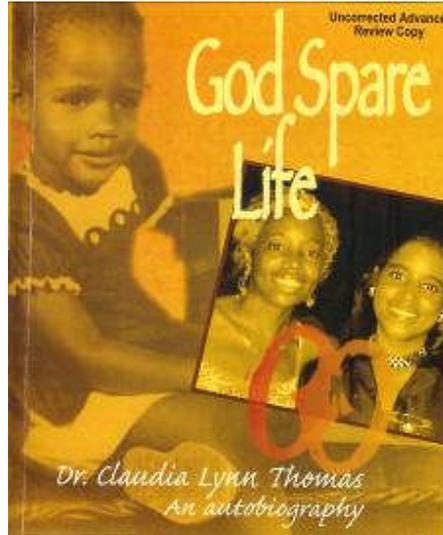
A Review of
God Spare Life

An Autobiography

Author: Dr Claudia Lynn Thomas

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

This was an interesting read. I was looking for a transplant story and, at first, was disappointed when so much of the writing was so detailed (down to color of people's clothes and appointments in a room, just "TMI" (that's "too much information") and spent so much time on the author's childhood years. In retrospect, I found that much of that detail played into the richness of her life's story, giving it depth that allowed the reader to appreciate how this young, African American rebel in the years of the 1980's when civil rights was seen as a "war time" on our campuses and cities, could in her own feisty way stand up to a medical training program (and the chief surgeons in those teaching programs) that often destroyed the students it was trying to grow. We follow along as she grows into a full fledged doctor, observing in the OR through her eyes surgeries and procedures in gruesome detail, later sitting in on patient consultations as she delivers both good news and too often, painful messages of loss and tragedy. We live through the stresses of ER rotation and even later, her personal fears as hurricane Hugo threatens everything she has lived for in both life and possessions.



Eventually you get a kidney transplant story with detail that might be scary in how she relates the challenges of dialysis to yourself or others who are facing similar treatment for their own kidney failure. But would you expect a medical orthopedic surgeon, because that is what she grows into, and one of the best in a field where females and especially blacks are seldom seen, to provide us with any less detail as she endures life threatening issues related to both the disease and its treatments?

Woven into this "transplant story" is a love story worthy of a different kind of novel, but this one is her real life. Her conversational telling brings out our smiles as we follow her discovery, after 35 years of total dedication to her training and career, true love and a princess like life together in and around the idyllic island of St. Thomas, followed by tears as we watch it all fall apart with failing health changing all.

The kidney crisis is met with her typical strength of character, bringing this thriving surgeon to her knees despite a sister willing and able to donate a kidney. We live through a life struggle that will serve as an inspiration to anyone facing their own health (and life) challenges. A key message that comes out of this reading is how important the foundation our upbringing is to our future lives (bless those mothers), and, especially in dealing with a life saving transplant, the role our caregivers play even when all else seems to fail.

Dr. Thomas' book is an enjoyable read written by a loving and gifted doctor, but I would hesitate to put it into the hands of a patient still dealing with the early emotions of facing their own kidney failure and dialysis treatment since there are so many failures described in this telling. At the same time, those life threatening and painful times serve as strong incentive to myself and others to do everything we can before things get to that stage, especially if we have already undergone an organ transplant and are putting our kidneys at risk anyway with the toxic side effects of our organ saving meds. There are many things still within our control and this story serves to remind us of that fact, urging us to do what we can while we still can, hopefully avoiding that added life challenge. Without giving away her story, let me assure you that the tale does have a positive ending, so don't be afraid of reading it.

Note: **God Spare Life** is scheduled for release July 15th by Windsor Media Enterprises (WMEBooks).

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.