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Review of *Scattered Shadows: A Memoir of Blindness and Vision* by John Howard Griffin; Orbis, 2004

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Griffin, John Howard. ***Scattered Shadows: A Memoir of Blindness and Vision***. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004. 230 pp. ISBN 1-57075-539-6, $18.95 (pb).

Scattered Shadows, by the author of the groundbreaking *Black Like Me*, is a memoir comprising essays written in the 1940s and 1950s covering Griffin's gradual descent into blindness after a war injury, and the sudden, spontaneous, inexplicable restoration of his vision ten years later. Here Griffin beautifully recounts his eventual acceptance, and

▼ continued biography/autobiography

even embracing, of his disability.

For avid readers, who read many good things all the time, it is a revelation to come across a book that is as outstanding as this one. Page after page is filled with intelligence, insight, and occasional humor. The chapter titled "The Blind Man of Tours" exemplifies the book's poignancy. Griffin recalls his exchange with a blind beggar in France, whom he visited to gain understanding of what lay ahead for him as his vision was fading. The beggar, who presented himself as a vagabond by day, appeared in silk brocade and leather slippers when he greeted Griffin at the door of his room. The two listened to classical music as they carried on a conversation that was deeply meaningful and satisfying to both of them, and instructive to Griffin.

The editing, by Griffin's widow's second husband, is excellent. The selections chosen take the reader crisply through the author's odyssey of disability, including accounts of the author's studying Gregorian chant, farming livestock, writing best-selling novels, and starting a family. They demonstrate Griffin's resourcefulness, candor, and lack of willingness to succumb to self-pity or inability.

—Sue Ann Gardner
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