



The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness

Karen Armstrong

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In 1962, at age seventeen, Karen Armstrong entered a convent, eager to meet God. After seven brutally unhappy years as a nun, she left her order to pursue English literature at Oxford. But convent life had profoundly altered her, and coping with the outside world and her expiring faith proved to be excruciating. Her deep solitude and a terrifying illness—diagnosed only years later as epilepsy—marked her forever as an outsider. In her own mind she was a complete failure: as a nun, as an academic, and as a normal woman capable of intimacy. Her future seemed very much in question until she stumbled into comparative theology. What she found, in learning, thinking, and writing about other religions, was the ecstasy and transcendence she had never felt as a nun. Gripping, revelatory, and inspirational, **The Spiral Staircase** is an extraordinary account of an astonishing spiritual journey.

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