



# Planet of the Blind

*Stephen Kuusisto*

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"The world is a surreal pageant," writes Stephen Kuusisto. "Ahead of me the shapes and colors suggest the sails of Tristan's ship or an elephant's ear floating in air, though in reality it is a middle-aged man in a London Fog rain coat which billows behind him in the April wind."

So begins Kuusisto's memoir, *Planet of the Blind*, a journey through the kaleidoscope geography of the partially-sighted, where everyday encounters become revelations, struggles, or simple triumphs. Not fully blind, not fully sighted, the author lives in what he describes as "the customs-house of the blind", a midway point between vision and blindness that makes possible his unique perception of the world. In this singular memoir, Kuusisto charts the years of a childhood spent behind bottle-lens glasses trying to pass as a normal boy, the depression that brought him from obesity to anorexia, the struggle through high school, college, first love, and sex. Ridiculed by his classmates, his parents in denial, here is the story of a man caught in a perilous world with no one to trust--until a devastating accident forces him to accept his own disability and place his confidence in the one relationship that can reconnect him to the world--the relationship with his guide dog, a golden Labrador retriever named Corky. With Corky at his side, Kuusisto is again awakened to his abilities, his voice as a writer and his own particular place in the world around him.

Written with all the emotional precision of poetry, Kuusisto's evocative memoir explores the painful irony of a visually sensitive individual--in love with reading, painting, and the everyday images of the natural world--faced with his gradual descent into blindness. Folded into his own experience is the rich folklore the phenomenon of blindness has inspired throughout history and legend.

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