



An Imperfect Rapture

Kelly J. Beard

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In the Foursquare Pentecostal Church in the 1960s, Kelly J. Beard's mother saw demons, though those demons ended up being nothing like Beard's childhood self imagined: "Instead, they will appear in fires and floods, in her family's fractured lives, and in the carnage of their faith." An earnest memoir about the destructive influences of poverty and fundamentalism, Beard's *An Imperfect Rapture* bears witness to their legacy.

Beard's parents were deeply invested in each other, often at the expense of their children. When they transformed into strict fundamentalists, the family entered a "spiritual and financial vise" with lasting repercussions. There was a god who functioned as enabler and source of their fatalism, one whose answers to prayers begot a hopelessness and desperation so profound it's abject.

Once her parents' anger and unpredictability combined with a rigid sense of God and church as the only sources of community and trust, the dissonance of violence, neglect, and poverty wasn't discussed. From authoritarian parents to abusive siblings, the trauma in this memoir is phenomenal and harrowing. The neglect ranges from benign to malign, and Beard delivers these horrors without ceremony, dropping them into her narrative almost casually.

Beard's prose confers beauty on even the ugliest moments. The memoir thrives on unexpected and vital imagery: her father an "intermittent pulse of images held under water," their Doberman pinscher pawing "the seam at the back door," and people praying in tongues "woven through like silver through silk."

Noting "I don't think you can compare pain any more than you can compare love. I don't try to compare theirs with mine," Beard doesn't distance herself from the miraculous or the horrific. Rather, she names both experiences as real and claims her heritage in each.

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