Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Breakout: Surviving Abuse and Alcoholism. This is My Story.
Sukree Boodram
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Sukree Boodram was born into a large and prosperous farming family in Guyana, West Indies. She was a happy and academically gifted child who enjoyed an uneventful early life in Guyana's sylvan countryside. In *Breakout*'s opening chapters, Boodram eloquently shares the fascinating history of Guyana, while conveying the unfortunate cultural and religious values that contributed to her future problems. The most egregious was the belief that divorce was an unthinkable sin.

During Boodram's final year of high school, she met Robbie and fell in love. Though aware of his heavy drinking and warned of his "bad boy" status, she was convinced love would conquer all, and remained committed to him through the next twenty-six tumultuous years.

After high school, Boodram moved to the United States to live with family, work, and continue her education. She did not see Robbie again until she returned to Guyana for a week-long visit three years later. The reunion went well, Robbie moved to the States, and Boodram began to plan their wedding. Once settled in this country, Robbie was often out drinking with friends and showed little interest in Boodram's needs or desires. Though only twenty years old, Boodram began to resign herself to a life of unhappiness. In the few miserable months between the couple's civil and religious ceremonies, Boodram realized she was making a serious mistake and attempted to end the relationship. But because she was unable to tell her family the truth about Robbie's drinking and deal with the shame of divorce, she quickly caved into their well-meaning pressure and resumed the façade of happiness.

Boodram's inability to end the marriage, despite Robbie's ever worsening alcoholism, makes *Breakout* difficult and depressing to read. Though it was patently obvious that she and her children were being irrevocably harmed by Robbie's unbelievably destructive behavior, it was her decision to stay in the marriage that is most disconcerting. To cope, Boodram became a

type-A overachiever, turned to alcohol and prescription drug abuse for several years, practiced myriad forms of denial, threw huge amounts of money at the problem, and otherwise did everything wrong. She wrote *Breakout* to be a positive and inspirational primer in how to deal with an abusive and alcoholic husband. However, it's more of a lesson in what not to do. To her credit, Boodram does share some excellent information about and insights into the disease of alcoholism and ends each chapter with valuable advice.

Boodram writes well, and her life story is an extraordinary case study in the insidious and destructive power of alcoholism.

Patty Sutherland