



brother. do. you. love. me.

Manni Coe

Reuben Coe, Illustrator

Greystone Books (May 7, 2024)

Hardcover \$27.95 (320pp)

978-1-77840-144-2

Illustrated by his brother, Manni Coe's touching memoir demonstrates how the patient rhythms of nature and family nurture can mitigate mental health crises.

In November 2021, Coe was in Spain for work. He received a text from England, where his thirty-eight-year-old brother, Reuben, lived in a care home with Down syndrome. The message was heartbreaking in its simplicity: "brother. do. you. love. me." Knowing that depressed Reuben hadn't spoken for a year, Coe moved his brother into a cottage to recuperate.

Always returning to this peaceful winter of recovery, the book spools through triumphs and low points from the family's history. Reuben lived by turns in care homes, in Spain with Coe, and in England with their parents. At his best, he could undertake the Camino de Santiago and perform drag shows; at his nadir, as when the narrative opens, he was locked in silence.

The book treats Reuben with dignity. The 2021 crisis was not a pandemic artifact, Coe asserts, but representative of an ongoing care system failure. He accepts a share of blame for Reuben's welfare too: "I am Sisyphus ... the boulder of our brotherhood has rolled back to the bottom," he writes.

Presenting relationships and mental health as having ebb-and-flow patterns, Coe records how loving attention to routines of meals, holidays, country walks, and Reuben's favorite stories—from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to Whoopi Goldberg movies—began to restore his brother's individuality and prepare him for a new assisted living situation. The true-to-life dialogue, which includes Reuben's neologisms, is a highlight, as are the many sweet felt-tip notes and drawings that reveal his particular obsessions. That the brothers are both gay is another poignant element.

With affection, the memoir *brother. do. you. love. me.* chronicles a brother's hard choices on behalf of his sibling.

REBECCA FOSTER (May / June 2024)

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