

Fierce, Funny, and Female: A Journey through Middle America, the Texas Oil Field, and Standup Comedy

Marti MacGibbon

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The subject matter in itself is daunting, even frightening, but MacGibbon's courage and comedy make Fierce, Funny, and Female a winner.

Being funny is a survival skill. Marti MacGibbon's incredible memoir *Fierce, Funny, and Female* is not only a survivor's tale but an inspirational story of overcoming the unthinkable, again and again.

Through drug abuse and eating disorders, through sexual trauma and the murky waters of sobriety, MacGibbon relates how she found a way to smile again. An inspirational speaker and mental health professional, she has clearly made peace with her personal story.

Fierce, Funny, and Female has an accessible, friendly tone that sometimes stands in sharp contrast to the extremely dark, tragic subject material. These memories have clearly been shared more than once, and the chapters read like well-worn territory. This is MacGibbon's story, and she's sticking to it.

Rather than depict herself as a victim in every scene—which would be logical, considering what she's been through—MacGibbon represents herself as a survivor. With the value of hindsight, sobriety, and a hell of a lot of therapy, her narrative self puts the pieces together to make sense of her wild and crazy life.

"I realize now that I was attempting to control the trauma not only with drug seeking, but with anorexia, that this is fairly common behavior for a teen with post-traumatic stress, but then I only knew I was running, as fast as I could, to keep ahead of some unknown, inexorable destruction," MacGibbon writes.

The point isn't to portray herself as a hero or even to score sympathy points: it's to show that recovery is possible, no matter what your circumstances are.

Although being kidnapped, or forcibly injected with psychiatric drugs, aren't everyday experiences, MacGibbon is very relatable and, yes, even funny while discussing such incidents. Her sense of humor, she shows, became a shield from an early age to "fight off all the other stuff," including the guns, LSD, mental wards, hippies, and gangsters that pepper her pages.

What MacGibbon remembers—and doesn't—may lead to flinching. She's comfortable with her material and spares no one, even herself, from a gimlet-eyed inventory.

Above all, MacGibbon celebrates her resilience and her willingness to keep laughing. She goes in swinging, and from the first vivid scene, it's clear that she is a natural comedian and a wonderful storyteller. As she tackles her difficult adolescence and young adulthood, she seems to ask, "What else ya got?"

The subject matter in itself is daunting, even frightening, but MacGibbon, like the best magician, assures her audience

that there's nothing up her sleeve. Her courage and comedy make *Fierce, Funny, and Female* a winner.

CLAIRE FOSTER (January 25, 2017)

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