



★ **No Son of Mine: A Memoir**

Jonathan Corcoran

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Jonathan Corcoran's poignant memoir *No Son of Mine* chronicles both his life and his mother's, unraveling the complex emotions involved with grief, family, and acceptance.

In 2020, Corcoran received news that his mother, Patty, had died. Stricken with COVID-19 and living in New York at the apex of sickness and death, he and his husband Sam had no choice but to tamp down their grief. His narrative cycles through before and afters: his mother discovering he was gay and disowning him; the painful rift and painful attempts at mending their relationship; and at last, his mother succumbing after a life too full of hardship.

There is an ebb and flow to the text, which jumps between timelines in a way that mirrors memories—in particular, memories of grief or trauma. The prose is aching, vulnerable, and honest: “Memory is a lived thing... a felt thing. What I felt was real.” This echoes in scenes whose details are laid bare: of Corcoran enduring microaggressions as a gay man from a working-class family in Appalachia; of explosive fights that his mother had with his adulterous father.

In spite of such pain and cycles of abuse, profound hope permeates this memoir. Found family, love, and finding one's sense of self are exemplified in Corcoran's connection to Sam and to the friends made over the years, and in his feelings over being accepted after years of hiding. Although forgiveness for Patty is not what the narrative seeks, understanding and compassion are placed at the foot of her legacy.

Chipping away at the impossible damage that a mother caused to her son, and reflecting their impossible mother-son love, the memoir *No Son of Mine* is a masterpiece.

NATALIE WOLLENZIEN (May / June 2024)

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