FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Literary Collections

Solace in So Many Words
Various Contributors
Ellen Wade Beals, editor
Weighed Words LLC
978-0-9725254-6-6
(April 30, 2011)

To be human means striving to come to terms with impermanence, change, and loss. Rationally, one knows that nothing lasts forever, including youth or a perfect moment. But when the hard, cold, unavoidable reality of dissonance destroys the tranquil ideal of everyday life, one's coping mechanisms are put to the test.

Solace in So Many Words is a collection of essays, poems, and short stories compiled by Ellen Wade Beals in an effort to bring insight, understanding, and comfort to those trying to weather the storms of life. Fifty-two authors contribute works of various styles and approaches ultimately aimed at finding and giving reprieve.

In her introduction, Beals confesses that her own emotional response to the events of 9/11 was almost unbearable. Through it, she gained a perspective of pan-global suffering, which reached far beyond her immediate experiences, and the crushing weight of this pain threw her into a state of despondency. The most pressing concern for Beals became how to make an impact, a dent, any sort of meaningful contribution that would "make the world a better place." Thus was born *Solace in So Many Words*.

There are two common threads that tie together the book's contributed pieces. First, each writer dares to bear his or her soul in an honest, sometimes brutally revealing manner. Second, the quality or artfulness of the prose and poetry is remarkable, each engaging and telling in its own unique way. As the poet Antler relates in "Stop to Think," sometimes comfort is found in the anti-emotional realm of numbers and the greater workings of the physical universe. In T.C. Boyle's story, "Hopes Rise," an aging couple is terrified by the disappearance of frogs throughout the world. They finally decide to take matters into their own hands, ultimately finding salvation when they discover a writhing mass of breeding amphibians in the middle of suburbia. Other submissions are darker. In Jayant Kamicheril's "In the Wake of My Son," for

example, the narrator loses his son and talks about how he will have to think and speak of his son in the past tense; he explains that, “changing semantics takes time and practice, especially when the need comes with such uncouth speed.”

Beals has done nothing less than stitch a beautiful quilt of essays, stories, and poems with *Solace in So Many Words*, which only needs to be opened (even randomly) for it to provide comfort during life’s most trying moments. Through shared experiences and anecdotes, her book delivers hope and love, perhaps two of the most important, irrational human emotions in terms of surviving, processing, and navigating life.

Chris Fisher