

The Truth Within: A Humanist's Memoir

Leonard M. Cachola

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The Truth Within is a memoir about coming of age amid struggles with difficult events and stifling religious dogma.

Leonard M. Cachola's poignant memoir, *The Truth Within*, is about family scars and a search for truth, meaning, and relationships.

Sensitive and artistic, Cachola learned early on that he was vulnerable. His home life was steeped in tension and arguments, and his father beat him, impacting his self-esteem. Sharp descriptions, as of Cachola's father slamming a door open and looming in its entrance, belt in hand, his "war face with its furious eyebrows, angry eyes, and bared teeth," are frightening. Cachola asserts that his father, an office clerk at the local phone company and an avid amateur tennis player, wanted him to become a rich and famous tennis star, but their times together on the court entailed more abuse until he stood up to his father and refused to play.

The accidental shooting death of Cachola's best friend contributed to his perception that the world was a brutal place. Still, he was curious about life, death, and whether or not God existed and intervened on behalf of believers. Diagnosed with cancer at the age of thirty-two, Cachola faced surgery, treatment, and eight years of regular testing. These cast a long shadow, as did his awkward relationships with women.

The book is conversational and honest. Cachola discusses the difficulties of growing up as a first-generation American in a Filipino family, including working to make ends meet in 1980s Houston. The specter of cancer brackets his story, which begins with him just about to undergo surgery and ends with the results of his final tests. Between these accounts, the book moves at a steady pace, trading between inner reflection, dialogue, and action.

The narrative captures the emotional, mental, and spiritual confusion of being young and without healthy adult role models. Cachola confronts work-related disappointments, failed relationships with women, and the burden of his unresolved childhood traumas, but also includes touches of wry humor: he and a Mormon girl kiss "as though they were at war;" and, with regard to heaven, his acrophobia has him reasoning, "Why would I want to subject myself to an eternity living in fear of looking down?"

The book becomes satisfying as it works toward a worldview in which "God was no longer a higher power to be worshipped or feared, but a symbol of hope, a belief in a better world, and an aspiration to be the best version of myself." However, missing words, unnecessary italics, punctuation problems, misused words, and spelling mistakes disrupt the text.

The Truth Within is a memoir about coming of age, and developing a healthy worldview, amid struggles with difficult events and stifling religious dogma.

KRISTINE MORRIS (June 27, 2020)

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