Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Three Truths and a Lie: a memoir
Graham E. Fuller
CreateSpace
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Five Stars (out of Five)

No book can begin to describe the pain, the sorrow, the anguish of finding your child dead one morning from a drug overdose. Graham E. Fuller has suffered that greatest of all losses. Rather than dwell on the hurt and torment of such a tragedy, Fuller fights through the grief to present a story of love, remembrance, and family courage. *Three Truths and a Lie* is a chronicle of how Fuller and his wife repeatedly tried and failed to help a son whose self-destructive spiral came to a tragic conclusion shortly before Christmas in 1994.

That Fuller's adopted Korean-born son, Luke, will meet his tragic end is made clear from the start. Knowing this only makes the two hundred pages devoted to describing the efforts to keep Luke on the straight and narrow that much more poignant and dramatic. It is impossible to read this book without being swept up in the emotional turmoil that battered the Fuller family for so many years.

Many readers—perhaps, sadly, too many—will be able to identify with Fuller, having gone through similar struggles with a child who lies, cheats, and even steals from his own family to buy drugs. Despite his many flaws and failings, Luke is presented as a loving boy with a good heart, and that is what gives Fuller's memoir its true power.

Three Truths and a Lie is not all sadness and struggle. There is happiness and even humor here, for Fuller remembers the good as well as the bad. He takes joy in having a son who is "a free spirit, a risk taker," and he regularly expresses his pride when Luke tries to reverse his "deeper pattern of failure" by entering rehabilitation, Be Free, Outward Bound, and other programs for youth at risk. Fuller sends Luke to military school and when that does not work, packs him off to live, work, and study abroad. His hope is that, by removing Luke from the "toxic teenage mall world" of 1980s America, his son might grow into the man he is capable of becoming.

Unfortunately, nothing works, or nothing works for long. There comes a time when Fuller, exasperated, asks the reader, "how do you throw your own damn kid out of the house with no clear place to go, clearly unable to fend for himself?"

Three Truths and a Lie could have ended with a funeral, but it does not. Fuller writes of how he tries to focus on the good memories, and even concocts loving fantasies of what Luke might be like had they succeeded in helping him. The death of a child does break a parent's heart, but in remembering his son, writes Fuller, there are times he feels that he has "grown a second heart."

Mark McLaughlin