

Throes: A Transformative Parable: An Epic Journey into Darkness and Discovery of Transcendence

Mary Dolor

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Throes is an engrossing memoir in which a family member's addiction rips apart many lives.

Mary Dolor's gripping memoir, *Throes*, finds her grappling with her daughter's drug addiction.

This story of Dolor's daughter Mariah's life, from her adoption through to her adulthood, is told in stark detail. Mariah began using drugs in middle school, and kept a journal into her young adulthood. Shared alongside Dolor's striking accounts of Mariah's slow descent into addiction, Mariah's journal entries confirm events, and are complete with the preserved errors of her original text. The effects of Mariah's addiction on the whole family are displayed, and the turmoil around it lasts for years. In the process, Dolor divorced her high school sweetheart and made the difficult decision to cease communication with her daughter.

Dolor's poetic prose portrays both pain and darkness well. During a desolate time, she writes: "In this place, there are no life rafts of companionship or respite. Just you in the tumbling waves, rolling in murky emptiness." Such moments are complemented by uplifting ones, as with a description of a family reunion, where Mariah seems to enjoy the company of her cousins, and to be an avid participant in all the boisterous activities.

Each time Mariah betrays Dolor, the letdown is calculated in precise terms. Within dramatic passages, the weather is used to illustrate feelings and reactions, while inevitable emotional crashes are foreshadowed well: each time Mariah comes back, the dread of what is to come is palpable. But some details are confused, including around a high school course that Mariah took, and related to place names for family trips.

Insights into medical rehabilitation centers arise. Many of Dolor's experiences are frustrating, and she imparts advice to other families on what to avoid when interacting with professionals. The technical side of addiction is shared, including an explanation of neuroplasticity and how drug and alcohol addictions change an addict's brain, making it clear that recovery takes a long time. These are useful facts for those in similar circumstances. Similarly, questions are posed at the end of each chapter to assist with navigating the hazards of having an addicted person in one's life; these repeat in the appendix. Some of the questions are specific to Mariah's case, though.

Working toward a measure of personal peace, *Throes* is an engrossing memoir in which a family member's addiction rips apart many lives.

JILL BEAUCHAMP (September 9, 2020)

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