

Wine Witch on Fire: Rising from the Ashes of Divorce, Defamation, and Drinking Too Much

Natalie MacLean

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Intimate and revelatory, Natalie MacLean's memoir *Wine Witch on Fire* covers her career as a wine writer, as well as the unexpected end of her marriage.

MacLean was raised by a single mother in Canada. Because her father's presence was infrequent, she told friends he was "at sea." After a stint in the technology industry, she began writing about wine. This freelance work allowed her to stay home and care for her son. In time, she established an impressive online presence, becoming an award-winning journalist, author, and wine expert.

Then, in 2012, MacLean faced her own "disastrous vintage." Her husband asked for a divorce after twenty years of marriage, and she was accused of copyright attribution violations. The charges prompted social media attacks; MacLean's credentials were derided, and she endured humiliating assessments of her hairstyle and breasts, as well as a rape threat on Twitter.

MacLean summoned transformational energy to work through this troubled time. A perfectionist by nature with a desire to be accommodating, MacLean felt the need to release her repressed feminine anger "like the witches I loved in literature — Circe, Hecate, Morgan le Fay." She navigated the copyright attribution matter with legal help. She also began to note the wine field's sexism: it was dominated by men, from the vineyards to sommeliers and critics. And she pursued new romantic relationships, finding a partner with old-fashioned values and modern sensibilities.

Evocative wine commentary runs throughout the book. An Argentinian malbec is like "diving tongue-first into an ocean of plum pillows," while a Riesling evokes "a green apple after a spring rain." The deceptive giddiness of "Wine Mom" culture is also explored, along with the risks of overindulgence and alcoholic dependence.

Forthright, wry, and heady, *Wine Witch on Fire* is a memoir about wine, life, and hard-won wisdom.

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