

Worthy: A Memoir

Denice Turner

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Unapologetic and observant, this memoir of family recognizes the difficulties of balancing expectations and disappointments.

In *Worthy*, Denice Turner explores her family's history and the legacy that haunts the relationships within, particularly the expectations and disappointments negotiated between parents and their children. These relationships are further complicated against the backdrop of religion—specifically, what Turner observes as the competing and often confusing doctrines and beliefs promoted by the Mormon Church. The apparent contradictions wreak havoc on gender roles and stereotypes, warping Turner's understanding of her sexuality.

Throughout, an underlying suggestion of mental illness left unchecked and of cries for help left unanswered permeate Turner's well-rendered portrait of her family's successes, failures, and negotiations to secure some footing on ground both solid and celestial. At the heart of it all is the recognition or refusal of one's worth and how it allows for contentment, if not happiness:

What my mother and I knew without question was that our worth was always contingent. We would be lovable when our eyeliner was right, when we lost twenty pounds. We would please God when we paid our tithing and got our temple work done. We would be proud of ourselves when we graduated from college, had respectable careers, earned a wink from a colleague or friend.

Regardless of a readers' religious, socioeconomic, or geographic realities, *Worthy* offers larger truths about grief and the ghosts which still animate and influence families, long after they have disappeared from the physical landscape—admitting that a friendship has run its course, recognizing that my children are turning into adults, letting go of unrealistic expectations. There are literal deaths and figurative deaths, and figurative ones can feel just as raw. Grief doesn't come from losing a person, but from losing all the hope you invested in them.

Worthy is a clearly written memoir, well organized across sixteen concise and thought-provoking chapters. Women readers familiar with the juggling act demanded by the roles of wife, mother, daughter, sister, teacher, and student will appreciate Turner's efforts to recognize these tricky maneuvers while leaving room to value oneself.

AMANDA SILVA (Summer 2015)

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