



Praise of Motherhood

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The death of the author's mother sparks a series of reflections on the secret roles mothers play in the lives of troubled adolescents.

Praise of Motherhood Details

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Author : Phil Jourdan

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From Reader Review Praise of Motherhood for online ebook

Michael Gonzalez says

It took me a while to figure out why this book felt a bit familiar and different all at once, and then it hit me: Holden Caulfield (stay with me here...). I hated Catcher in the Rye, and the reason I hated it had everything to do with the kid at the center of the whole thing. Snivelly, whining, a chip on his shoulder, angry at the world. In short, everything the Phil we see in this book is not.

Phil is on a quest for understanding. There's a refrain in the book - why? Why did this happen? Why don't I feel anything? Why won't my mother tell me her secret? Why?

And Phil clearly had moments in this book where he is an angry young man, where he is lashing out at the world, but there's such an earnestness to him, an openness, that it comes down to this: Holden Caulfield is an asshole. Phil is not.

He twists and turns, walking the story in and out of reality, chasing a thread, a phantom that is not quite his mother, not the idea of her either. Her essence. The part of her that is him.

The book is masterfully constructed, with Phil inviting us into one of the worst periods of his life, leading us through it, making us feel, making us want to reach out to him, before masterfully turning things around towards the end of the book and making it clear that as much as he has been willing to share with us, as deep as we think we've been, we weren't welcome here. There's more, but it's not for us. Not our business.

But there's humor too! Moments where I found myself laughing at Phil's take on things, sometimes in places he might not have intended, and it comes from the honest and open presentation. This happened, then this, and then this. And Phil was the straight man throughout, his honest reactions hitting straight to the nerve of a situation.

The final three paragraphs of the book are simultaneously uplifting and heartbreakingly, words that'll stay with me for a while.

Jack Joslin says

How does one deal with the unexpected loss of someone close to them? More importantly, how does one do so in a way that will preserve the character of the deceased in an honest and heartfelt way, without utilising battered formulae and tedious elegies?

Look to this book. Phil Jourdan discovers the life - and loss - of his mother by turning the gaze inward, excavating his own flaws and delusions, trying to get to the core of what made her her. It is a great debut work - beautiful, funny, intelligent, unnerving and, ultimately, extremely moving.

Dakota Taylor says

Surreal. Short and sweet like a motherly kiss. A beautiful tale but not without its elements of dark humor. But the two are inseparable when writing about the subject of life and death. In fact, it defines most memoirs. Beautifully, dark. Jourdan does a masterful job at portraying the spectrum of human emotions through his carefully crafted characters that are so real on the page that the reader can't help but feel a part of his family. Phil drags us down with him in the trenches of the human psyche only to bring us back up and make us analyze.

Make us learn, and make us reflect. The relationship of a boy and his mother. The relationship of life and death. The struggle. This isn't just Phil Jourdan's novel, this is everyone's novel. Everyone can relate in some way. Although this is my first memoir I've read (and glad it was my first) I would have to argue that the same principles apply to every memoir. They are a reflection of our own lives. And this is what makes *Praise Of Motherhood* so powerful. I would recommend this book to anyone and everyone.

-Dakota

Irina-Marina Bor?oi says

If you love your mother, this book will touch you immensely. If you don't love your mother - or you simply don't give a damn - this book will show you what a son's love is all about and you'll wish you did. Phil Jourdan describes his mother mostly through their life together, focusing on the more troublesome moments, when she - Sophia - had all the patience and love in the world for a kid who was not on the right track. He lets facts speak for themselves, typical descriptions of his mother are scarce, but in the light of what she did for her children, and mostly for young Philippe, you basically understand what a wonderful person she was. He praises without praising, and with every page you get to know a little more about such a special woman in his life. And most of all, you'll wish your kid will someday love you like that, too.

Imke says

The book sucked me in right from the beginning. Consciously putting it down now and then, I wanted the experience of reading it to last longer. I didn't manage to stretch it much; the book hasn't even been in my possession a full day.

Phil's honesty is what made this such a great read. I smiled, I was surprised, concerned, sad and intrigued. His relationship with his mother, his struggles and his questions were all equally interesting and thought-provoking. Even though Mathilde wasn't a big part of the story, her presence in the book touched me, having a sister and being the younger one myself.

I like to read books that make me feel something, make a difference somehow. *Praise of Motherhood* did.

Melissa Storm says

Phil Jourdan's memoir *Praise of Motherhood* was not at all what I expected. Somehow I was thinking he'd dish up a collection of cutesy stories related to his mom--maybe a recollection of how he made her pancakes for mother's day at the age of eight and burnt the flapjacks terribly but she still ate every bite. No, that's not what this book is--it's much better.

Jourdan shows how his mother was there for him during his tortuous adolescence, how her patience and support allowed him to survive the demons of his young mind. In fact, this book doesn't read like a memoir at all; rather, it's high brow literary fiction. The author dapples with the experimental styles of Joyce, switching from stream-of-consciousness, to extended metaphors, to going into narratives dictated by people who are not him. More than Joyce, though, I was reminded of Gabriel Garcia Marquez who wrote in the style of Magical Realism. Phil Jourdan's life is magically realistic, and his portrayal of it is honest, bold, and perhaps off-putting to some (but hey, that's what happens when you do something different, when you discuss the issues that were supposed to have been neatly tucked under the rug of our collective conscious).

Throughout the entire memoir, Phil's love of his mother and his difficulty saying goodbye after her early death take center stage. And it is fitting that he chose to launch his literary career with an homage to this wonderful lady--because if not for her, he'd probably not be a writer today. Heck, he may not have even survived past fourteen.

Disclaimer Since Phil is a Novel Publicity client, I can't assign a star rating--it's not ethical, folks. Hopefully, this review will speak for itself!

Leonor says

Praise of Motherhood feels like what you would imagine a brain like if it were in book form. All over the place, but without ever feeling too far away from the core.

Phil's mother is portrayed in an god-like manner, always understanding, kind, smart, and mysterious, which you perceive through the isolated incidents and dream-like hypothetical scenarios that are the chapters. Nearly impossible to put down, I devoured it in less than a day. Intensely thought-provoking, really makes you wonder about the complexity of the human mind, which in Phil's case seems near-psychotic but still conscious of itself.

Beautiful.

I loved it.

Anthony says

I had no idea what I was getting into. Not only does this book place the reader directly inside the author's psyche as he moves through the grieving process, but you get the sense that the writing of this book played an integral part in completing that journey. This level of transparency without pretense or affect creates a very tenuous relationship between author and reader, where at any moment one could be taken out of the rather stream of consciousness narrative, but Jourdan seems to handle this with a rare finesse.

Put simply, you get the sense that this is exactly how he would relate the experience to you, the reader, over a pitcher of beer at a pub. And you'll walk away from this book thinking deeply about the quality of your own relationships. This book is such a unique experience, I will recommend it to a great many people.

Slit Your Wrists! Magazine says

It is borderline offensive for this book to be labeled as just a memoir, but understand the reasons for it to be

marketed as such. The reason I say that is because it's not JUST a memoir, this is an important piece of literature. The story Mr Jourdan shares with the world herein are profound and utterly inspiring.

Most memoirs I have picked up are from people trying to establish their own self-importance for something they have done and want to go down in history, frankly I find those sort of memoirs as interesting as watching political debates. Meaning they're boring and usually pointless. This fortunately is not one of those. This story needed to be told and is astoundingly thought provoking.

This is a man's struggle with psychosis beginning at a very young age and a woman who selflessly carried him through it. Jourdan does not hide anything, raw emotion and controversial situations are all there for the public eye to see. It will make you ask questions about yourself and make you care more for those around you. In such an empty alcohol and fashion driven industry, these golden literary messages of hope often fall from the view of the mainstream, but are needed now more than ever. And for someone to take such a painful situation and turn it into writing that can inspire those that read it is simply incredible.

His mother would be proud of this and you will be too after reading it.

~Laurance Kitts
Editor of SYWzine

Leila Summers says

I was given this book to review as part of a blog tour.

This story begins when the author, Phil Jourdan, receives news that his mother, Sophia, is in hospital and that he needs to fly home to Portugal right away. By the time he and his sister arrive, it is too late. Sophia's tragic death from an unexpected brain aneurysm leaves Phil feeling completely out at sea. This book is his way of trying to make some kind of sense of the enormous loss of a woman who played such a supportive and pivotal role in his life.

We as readers become privy to an extremely honest and introspective reflection of the author's mental anguishes. He describes his mother as a kind and long suffering woman who was a pillar of strength through his, sometimes lengthy, recollections of his psychologically unstable adolescence. The first two chapters were awkward for me, but by chapter three, I got into the flow. The bulk of the story weaves in and out of past and present; reality and imagination; memories and myths. At times it is not immediately clear who is speaking, or whether it is in fact an actual conversation or one that never took place other than in the author's own head. Though I found the dialogue in the book particularly authentic, the lack of punctuation did bother me somewhat.

Throughout the book, you feel the intense pain of the loss of a woman who was snatched from the author far too soon. She was his hiding place from the storms that raged within him, his emotional struggles, and constant anxiousness about the world. I felt that some of the rantings were unnecessary to the reader, though they probably provided the author with an outlet. Particularly toward the end of the book when he lashes out at various people. Though I found this distasteful, I understood it to be a part of the questioning and grieving process.

Praise of Motherhood is a very human portrayal of loss and how those left behind have to muddle through it

on their own. In the end, the reader is left with the importance of appreciating those who are dear to us while we still have the chance. As readers, we never walk away from a memoir untouched.

Edward Rathke says

I thought I left the star rating here blank and I think it should remain blank but I guess I put four stars there for some reason so I guess I'll keep it for now. It makes no sense for me to give a book like this a rating. Not because it's bad or good or immeasurable, but because it's about a friend, because it's true, and how do you quantify a friend's life? How do you even begin to try, and, if you do try, what purpose could that serve?

Praise of Motherhood is dark and beautiful and tragic because what else is a book about depression, psychosis, and the death of a mother meant to be about?

This is a book of true emotion and it's gripping. Sometimes even a little playful but always pulling you into Phil Jourdan. Into his heart, to his thoughts, but even as he opens up to us, he keeps us at bay, let's us know this isn't meant for us. His pain is not a show and his mother is not quantified by words and pages.

This book made me really uncomfortable. This book made a home for me. This book kicked me in the teeth. This book wasn't meant for me. This book was meant only for me.

I loved this book but love isn't the right word.

I hated this book but hate isn't the right word.

I'm not someone who reads memoirs or autobiographies, or even biographies for that matter but I'm glad I read this. I may read it again one day but I'm afraid to.

For such a small book, it carries great weight and it may just change you.

Read this book, even when it hurts, because it will.

Dave says

Praise of Motherhood is far from my standard reading fare, yet I found it immensely insightful, and read it in only two sittings. For anyone who's had a mother, this book will matter. There's something for everyone here, I most appreciate the insight into the relationship between a mother and son, often overshadowed in society by the "father/son" dynamic. A difficult topic to tackle, no doubt, and Jourdan masters it without diverging into a orgy of self pity. Brilliant.

Interesting, thought provoking, and relevant. Thanks.

Craig Wallwork says

Phil Jourdan has a natural gift for writing. He is sincere and honest, which is a rare commodity in a writer. It is almost as if the book is a physical extension of his body, his spine cracked and marked by the hours spent at the computer typing. And his heart, the many pages that are exposed when pushed open. A beautiful, sad, but resonating slice of human life. This book is as much about you, me and everyone else, as it is about Phil Jourdan. Wonderful stuff. Yes, it is a personal book, but its contents is far reaching. I think that's the real charm and strength of this novel. It's honest. Brutally at times, but my god, if only more writers bled on that page like this the world but be much richer for it.

Chenoa says

Phil Jourdan allows the reader to explore his mind in this memoir about the loss of his mother. The ebb and flow of it imitates the mind's natural rhythm, which is, in itself, chaotic. And through such writing, the reader follows the grieving process, finding comfort in memories and imaginings.

Although Sophia passed on, Jourdan gives her new life as he and others remembered her: a compassionate, kind-hearted, strong woman with a touch of mystery. One can truly begin to understand the love that only a mother has when Sophia describes living for the sake of her children. Such is the bond of a mother to those she carried, protected, and loved before she even knew them.

This memoir is a coping mechanism for the author, whose psychosis almost took control of him up until the death of his mother. And it's clear that while it may not have been the cure he was looking for, losing his mother opened Philippe's mind to what Sophia wanted him to understand while she was alive; that she would always be there.

Renee says

Praise of Motherhood is a short, honest, and moving piece of literature. Jourdan gets to the heart of what it is like to be a son, what it is like to be a mother, and what it is like to grieve. You will leave the novel feeling closer to your parents, closer to Jourdan, and closer to the kind of enlightenment new literature often promises but rarely delivers on.
