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Damage Control: A Memoir Of Outlandish Privilege, Loss And Redemption



Synopsis

A powerful blazingly honest memoir told with humor and panache about a mother and son finding each other again after years of estrangement. A coming-of-age story of outrageous excess, glamour, entitlement and grand delusion, lived above the fray and over the top. A gay man's journey through the joys and perils of his generation, coming out in the early eighties in the shadows of a terrifying disease that would devastate so many, surviving tremendous loss and culminating in his decision to adopt a child as a single parent. When Sergei, a psychotherapist who has been living in Paris for the past decade, discovers that his mother is terminally ill, he decides to leave his practice and his life to be by her side, in the hope of healing the bitterness and discord before it is too late. This memoir offers a fascinating and disturbing portrayal of a glamorous woman whose life has been one of great elegance and luxury, along with disillusionment, grandiosity, seduction and self-destruction: her childhood in pre-Castro Cuba, a mythical island paradise; her marriage at the age of eighteen to a dashing young Swiss man and their subsequent exile; her frantic and desperate resolve to create a mythical life of her own and pass on the traditions of aristocracy to her children, all the while leading a double life and suffering feelings of intense longing and frustration and guilt which eventually cause her to destroy and walk away from everything that she has been raised to want and expect out of life. DAMAGE CONTROL is ultimately a rendering of the cycle of life, saying goodbye to a parent so you can say hello to a child, and finding grace and redemption through a mother's love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I knew Sergei Boissier as a student and erstwhile advisee when he was at Taft or thought I did. It turns out he occupied several overlapping but distinct worlds and was just coming to know himself. This book recounts that process in sometimes quite graphic detail. Throughout, I was reminded of the words of Miller's Alfieri in "A View from the Bridge," who says of the main character: "he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients." Miller sought to redefine heroism in the age of psychoanalysis as candor. Boissier's account (as befits a therapist, perhaps) is saturated with it. It is engaging and well-written. I was also reminded of Evelyn Waugh's observation that when a writer is born into a family the family is over. Boissier has willingly paid a price for his revelations. It will be interesting to see how the choices he has made for himself affect his daughter, who so far seems to be thriving in his care.

Sergei has written a riveting memoir, touching and very well written and look forward to his next book and/or memoir. Having known the cast of characters quite well, there were no surprises.

Damage Control is such a good read! The author remains open and transparent with every word from beginning to end. The images he evokes transported me and I felt as though I was right there. I could see, feel and hear exactly what he was describing. To be so completely honest about events that he could have allowed to destroy him shows an amazing strength and courage. The author instead chooses to always find the lessons in the madness no matter how difficult it may be to face. This book is about discovery, growth, forgiveness, redemption, love and renewal. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, your fears and insecurities and your family with us. I'm sure everyone will be able to find some part of themselves in this book they can relate to and hopefully it will help them along their journey.

This book is a fascinating memoir and a testimonial as to what life is like in the rarefied atmosphere of International High Society. The author offers a most candid and vivid account of his life spent in several continents, in constant travel and re-location, a journey that is always life changing or mind altering or both. The structure of the book is around the pivotal event of his mother's mortal disease that allowed barely a year for them to really make peace with their convoluted pasts and express the love they had such great difficulty expressing while life was just normal, although normal is a word that hardly applies at all to their environment and life style. It goes back and forth between her present illness and the past, in flashes that at time feel like videos, viewing photographs from an

album, others feel like pages from a 19th Century novel or a Spanish religious confessional from the 17th Century. One is in the midst of this magical world of glamour and splendor, but we are able to see it's flaws as well, the high toll it takes on real life's values, the loneliness and the pain are as present there as the design gowns and the catered parties. The author's mother was Cuban, "Dollsie" as he calls her lived a life that reads like a script for a Hollywood movie. Her growing up between Havana and her grandfather's ranches, her debut into society in Havana's Golden Era, and her marriage just before the Fall of the Ancien Regime in Cuba to a scion of European aristocracy is all described in detail. The winner of her hand had to fight off two French princes and a Cuban golden boy of society that kept on appearing at every European spot that golden summer to win the competition for Dollsie, when it all coalesced into her marriage proposal and she married into the Swiss family that was to change her life forever. After her marriage she had an affair with two Russians, one of them a Prince, the other destined to be her second husband and father of her last child; this is where you can envision an opera by Tchaikovsky, with all the beautiful arias of love and regret, nostalgia and remembrance. That's one part of the book, the other is the author's struggle to come into his own in the midst of that opera, no easy task to say the least. As in real life opera, the secondary roles are difficult to sustain in the presence of a diva, which was Dollsie's character role par excellence, and to make your mark on them is a sign of true grit, which we totally get here. What emerges is an equally stunning testimonial by the author, into gay life at the time of AIDS. This is one of the best histories of the period I have ever read, not in a documentary way, but as it is remembered by someone who lived and suffered through that catastrophe and came out a survivor, and a matured individual that can help others through the emotional and psychological devastation, it's a beautiful transformation that will make a strong impression, no matter what your background may be.

Very rarely has a book made me either cry or bookmark pages...this book has done both. There is just too much "good" about this book to point out any one thing, but for someone suffering thru dysfunctional relationships with their own parents and children, it hits very close to the bone. Too close at times. However, at the end of the day three tenets ring true-love, forgiveness and acceptance. Thank you, Sergei, for reminding me of what is truly important and thank you for sharing what must have been incredibly painful to recount.

I got the book yesterday. Its beautiful, funny, poignant and really really well written. Although it is a warts and all memoir, the author's love for his mother does shine through and although the mother

did some pretty awful things, still. you see what an amazing lady she must have been. People are complicated and the characters in this book are no exception. I read it in one reading. Unputdownable. Buy it! But make sure you have time before you start it as you won't be able to stop!

This man is a talented writer, he has led an incredible life and is humble and grateful for it. He has succeeded in his life totally. He never gave up or checked out but kept moving forward gently and gracefully. And finally, he finds what he has been looking for.

Blown away at this marvelous tragically written memoir of the life of a son and the tumultuous relationship between he and his mother. Rarely do I cry at written words but because his story resonated with me and my own relationship with my mother, without the fame and glory, touched on a rare red hot nerve. Great job Sergei.

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