

The Mercy Papers: A Memoir of Three Weeks

Robin Romm



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When Robin Romm's *The Mother Garden* was published, *The New York Times Book Review* called her "a close-up magician," saying, "hers is the oldest kind [of magic] we know: the ordinary incantation of words and stories to help us navigate the darkness and finally to hold the end at bay." In her searing memoir *The Mercy Papers*, Romm uses this magic to expand the weeks before her mother's death into a story about a daughter in the moments before and after loss.

With a striking mix of humor and honesty, Romm ushers us into a world where an obstinate hospice nurse tries to heal through pamphlets and a yelping grandfather squirrels away money in a shoe-shine kit. Untrained dogs scamper about as strangers and friends rally around death, offering sympathy as they clamor for attention. The pillbox turns quickly into a metaphor for order; questions about medication turn to musings about God. The mundane and spiritual melt together as Romm reveals the sharp truths that lurk around every corner and captures, with great passion, the awe, fear, and fury of a daughter losing her mother.

The Mercy Papers was started in the midst of heartbreak, and not originally intended for an audience. The result is a raw, unsentimental book that reverberates with humanity. Robin Romm has created a tribute to family and an indelible portrait that will speak to anyone who has ever loved and lost.

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