

Girl, Uncoded: A Memoir of Passion, Betrayal, and Eventual Blessings

Brandi Dredge

She Writes Press

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Girl, Uncoded is a woman's powerful memoir about navigating a relationship with a dangerous man.

With names changed to protect its subjects, Brandi Dredge's memoir *Girl, Uncoded* is about her struggle to extricate herself from a toxic relationship and build her own identity.

Dredge became pregnant at sixteen. The father, Gary Richard, was a man eight years older than her: "I loved the smooth way he talked to people—his charm." To help his case in a shoplifting charge, Dredge married him and had a second child. But trouble followed Gary Richard, and the police continued to show up at their doorstep.

As Dredge began to recognize Gary Richards's true nature and the extent of his crimes, she worked to remove herself and her children from his reach. She turned to God several times throughout her life to seek guidance. In time, her faith brought her the strength and comfort she sought:

*Like a weighted blanket, the pressure of the Divine touch was safe, and it wrapped around my pain.
The crying stopped, and in the silence, I heard direction. You can go. I have you.*

Suspense increases as more is revealed about Gary Richard. His actions, and Dredge's reactions to them, reveal the consuming nature of their toxic, abusive relationship. Dredge resolved to leave Gary Richard several times but was unable to fully cut him out of her life. Her feelings toward him are covered in complex terms, reflecting the contradictory nature of their involvement.

But despite the book's emotive subject matter and the unpredictable turns that it takes, the prose is often quite direct. Much space is devoted to descriptions of the periphery of scenes, including season changes and room interiors. Further, in conversation, Dredge is often limited to expressing her emotions alone. More expansive are the frequent interjections of her internal thoughts, which help to flesh out the implications of the book's actions in the moment.

However, while a few scenes are described in detail, many are rushed through. The book covers a large swath of time, and some periods are encapsulated via sequences of events that appear in plain prose, resulting in narrative pauses. In such moments, Dredge's emotions are also underattended to. Still, every detail of the story is filtered through her perspective: "I have set out to tell you the truth; however, I recognize that truth is only mine." The book never extends beyond this reach.

Girl, Uncoded is an affecting memoir that emphasizes the power of faith in the face of intense personal struggles.

JULIA DILLMAN (July 8, 2024)

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