

## Mother of Stories: An Elegy

**Alice Dailey**

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Grief, lies, and death haunt Alice Dailey's intense, intimate memoir *Mother of Stories*.

Dailey, a scholar and educator focused on the portrayal of death in historical literature, takes an unusual approach to writing about the effects of ancestral trauma on her life. In a swirling mix of past and present, literature and life, photographs, documents, and snippets of writings, each a weight holding her under waters of conflicting emotions, her narrative recounts her dysfunctional relationship with her mother and how she navigated the months before and after her mother's death.

A complex, lyrical work, the book issues a cry of grief—if not the kind that can be soothed by warm memories of the departed. Indeed, the book grieves for love that never was, a fact that her mother denied in words but confirmed in actions. Dailey's mother is remembered as a “daughter of dysfunction and neglect” and a “pathological liar” whose behaviors, stories, and lies caused her to question her own intuitive knowing and undermined her sense of self. After her mother's death, Dailey discovered a secret that confirmed what she had always intuited: that of all her mother's children, she alone had been unloved.

The book is a moving testament to the power of a story to create or destroy, and to the power of art to make the unbearable livable. Haunted by a legacy of ancestral abuse, Dailey demonstrates both insight and courage: knowing that her ability to create and to thrive depended on confronting a painful truth, she chooses to face it.

*Mother of Stories* is a memoir that reveals the generational effects of lies and unhealed wounds.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2024)

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