

The Long and Tortured Road: A Memoir

Thomas Kind

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The Long and Tortured Road is an intimate memoir about recovering from struggles with mental health and addiction.

Thomas Kind's poignant memoir *The Long and Tortured Road* covers his bipolar disorder and his process of self-discovery.

At forty-five, Kind experienced a life-altering nervous breakdown that set him on the path of healing, forgiveness, and self-love. In this memoir, he reflects on the foundations of his struggles, including his tough childhood with an abusive father who found fault in all of his actions. The resultant fear and self-doubt became phantoms to him, weighing Kind down and influencing his decisions. He struggled with alcohol, depending on it to numb perceived judgments toward him. He worked himself to exhaustion to prove himself too.

The book is split into five sections whose headings sum up their content well. Its opening is intense, showing Kind contemplating suicide while being mentally exhausted and feeling pinned to his bed. This is an intimate invitation into Kind's life and the inner workings of his mind; it complements his expressions of his experiences with bipolar disorder, which manifested in uncontrolled tics that affected his ability to interact with people without feeling drained.

The book is also graphic, and includes tense scenes, as of Kind's father racing to New Jersey to visit relatives, inflicting fear on anyone who threatened his self-imposed deadline by expressing bodily needs. Later, it records Kind's visits with therapists and gives credit to the people who helped him to change his lifestyle for the better. It also includes a thorough list of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) helplines.

However, the memoir is also restrained in its discussions of other elements of Kind's life, leading to a sense of imbalance. It notes that the birth of Kind's children helped him to quit using alcohol and cigarettes; however, the children themselves are only mentioned in passing, and expressions of their personalities are withheld, creating a gap in the narrative. Indeed, the impact of Kind's bipolar disorder on others, including his children and wife, is often concealed. Kind's wife is described as supportive, as when she returned home from a visit to her parents to help him through a nervous breakdown, but she isn't fleshed out beyond these quick contributions. And Kind's efforts to prevent his father's toxicity from rubbing off on his children, which involved limiting his parents' access to them, are mentioned but glossed over; there's a limited sense of how these boundaries impacted the grandparent-grandchild relationships, and of whether Kind's parents adhered to his rules or not.

The Long and Tortured Road is an often insightful memoir about mental health struggles.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (April 24, 2023)

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