



Impossible Motherhood: Testimony of an Abortion Addict

Irene Vilar

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Irene Vilar was just a pliant young college undergraduate in thrall to her professor when they embarked on a relationship that led to marriage—a union of impossible odds—and fifteen abortions in fifteen years. Vilar knows that she is destined to be misunderstood, that many will see her nightmare as an instance of abusing a right, of using abortion as a means of birth control. But it isn't that. The real story is part of an awful secret, shrouded in shame, colonialism, self-mutilation, and a family legacy that features a heroic grandmother, a suicidal mother, and two heroin-addicted brothers. It is a story that looks back on her traumatic childhood growing up in the shadow of her mother's death and the footsteps of her famed grandmother, the political activist Lolita Lebrón, and a history that touches on American exploitation and reproductive repression in Puerto Rico. Vilar seamlessly weaves together past, present, and future, channeling a narrative that is at once dramatic and subtle.

Impossible Motherhood is a heartrending and ultimately triumphant testimonial told by a writer looking back on her history of addiction. Abortion has never offered any honest person easy answers. Vilar's dark journey through self-inflicted wounds, compulsive patterns, and historical hauntings is a powerful story of loss and mourning that bravely delves into selfhood, national identity, reproductive freedom, family responsibility, and finally motherhood itself—today, Vilar is the mother of two beautiful children.

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