



A Mother's Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy

Written by Sue Klebold

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Mother's Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy

By Sue Klebold

A Mother's Reckoning Pdf

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold walked into Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Over the course of minutes, they would kill twelve students and a teacher and wound twenty-four others before taking their own lives.

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A Mother's Reckoning Living In The Aftermath Of Tragedy

For the last sixteen years, Sue Klebold, Dylan's mother, has lived with the indescribable grief and shame of that day. How could her child, the promising young man she had loved and raised, be responsible for such horror? And how, as his mother, had she not known something was wrong? Were there subtle signs she had missed? What, if anything, could she have done differently?

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A Mother's Reckoning Review

These are questions that Klebold has grappled with every day since the Columbine tragedy. In *A Mother's Reckoning*, she chronicles with unflinching honesty her journey as a mother trying to come to terms with the incomprehensible. In the hope that the insights and understanding she has gained may help other families recognize when a child is in distress, she tells her story in full, drawing upon her personal journals, the videos and writings that Dylan left behind, and on countless interviews with mental health experts.

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A Mother's Reckoning Quotes

Filled with hard-won wisdom and compassion, *A Mother's Reckoning* is a powerful and haunting book that sheds light on one of the most pressing issues of our time. And with fresh wounds from the recent Newtown and Charleston shootings, never has the need for understanding been more urgent.

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A Mother's Reckoning Pdf Free

All author profits from the book will be donated to research and to charitable organizations focusing on mental health issues.

Over the years, after a long time researching the Columbine case, I'd learned to view Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris as human beings. It was nearly impossible not to, considering I spent my time reading their journals, private online conversations, websites, jokes, accounts from friends and loved ones and teachers who liked and praised them as well as watching homemade videos they made for fun. Ever since I started the research, I knew I couldn't view them as monsters because it was far too simple. Over the years, after a long time researching the Columbine case, I'd learned to view Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris as human beings. It was nearly impossible not to, considering I spent my time reading their journals, private online conversations, websites, jokes, accounts from friends and loved ones and teachers who liked and praised them as well as watching homemade videos they made for fun. Ever since I started the research, I knew I couldn't view them as monsters because it was far too simplistic. The journey to becoming a so called monster was too complex, and to understand why they came to do inhuman things you first need to understand how they were as humans in the first place. And part of my understanding at least a piece of this puzzle, I thought, was reading about the perspective of the woman who had raised Dylan.

Until recently, the only thing I had from Susan Klebold's side was knowledge of the grief and confusion she must be feeling daily. I was aware of these feelings going into the 20/20 interview. I was aware of them going into her book. Hearing her tell her story, hearing a recollection of her memories, a perspective of the massacre and its aftermath as it was unfolding that I'd never heard before was, however, an altering experience. Since I was already treading this ground with the information that yes, Dylan was at some point just an ordinary kid, it wasn't hard for me to simply give into listening to her story as a mother who'd lost her child in more than one way. Hearing her talk about her son as a baby, as a child, as an adolescent, finding out the type of silly, funny, kind or embarrassing things he'd done before the massacre put a smile on my face I'd always catch and be confused by. It was easy to cry afterwards, too, for her, for his victims, but even for Dylan himself, and by extension Eric.

Part of the denial Sue faces against herself and Tom, as well as the Harrises, stems from the deep fear of the kind of truth she has to tell us would bring. There's unspeakable horror in looking into a home life that was normal and happy and had the joys and struggles of any regular family, and realizing that this is where a so called evil had been raised. I can only imagine the kind of desperation a parent must feel in realizing, if they allow themselves to, that you can raise a monster without knowing it, and you need not be in any special kind of circumstances to do so. Neither the Klebolds nor the Harrises had been people you'd point at and say "those people have something wrong with them" before the massacre. They were ordinary people, living their lives as best and as honestly as they could. In a post-Columbine world, it's easier for people to point the finger, although after reading this book, and hopefully with an open mind, they'd find that they no longer realize what they're pointing at.

An honest recollection of the past 16 years of her life is what this book is, at its core. It outlines a constant struggle between the grief for the child she raised and loved and wanted to shield from the smallest of problems and a love she still feels for a man she does not recognize but wants to go back to and save nonetheless. She talks extensively about brain health, and the illnesses that can turn any one of us from ordinary to a disaster waiting to happen, be it to ourselves or to others, or like in Dylan's case, to both. It is overall a tough read, a tough story to experience, even as a complete outsider to the events that took place. Even so I would urge anyone who thinks themselves capable of reading it to do so immediately and with an open mind and heart.

On a more personal note, there is unfortunately enough space within us to grieve for every person involved in this incident, for all the different reasons we might have for our grief. Pain is not and never will be a contest, and all I can hope is that everyone who has been affected by Columbine, or any other tragedy, can find some joy in their life. ...more

A Mother's Reckoning Audiobook

I have to admit I felt a little hesitant to order this at first, until I saw "All author profits from the book will be donated to research and to charitable organizations focusing on mental health issues."

Now that I have finished reading it, I am very glad to have purchased and read it. The story was not what I was expecting, and the heart break and anguish that Sue Klebold experienced, and was willing to share, makes me want to reach out and hug her. Columbine was a tragedy all around, and th I have to admit I felt a little hesitant to order this at first, until I saw "All author profits from the book will be donated to research and to charitable organizations focusing on mental health issues."

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Thank you Sue Klebold for sharing your story. A very worthwhile read for everyone.

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Audiobook, Library Overdrive,....read by Sue Klebold.....SPOILERS INCLUDED...

I havenâ€™t felt this incredibly dissatisfied about a book, in the way I do, like this, in a very long time.

A special thanks to local Goodreads friend - LisaVegan- for being a great support -discussing issues and battles I had - daily - hour by hour at times- with â€™my reckoningâ€™: living with my thoughts and feelings in the aftermath of Sue Kleboldâ€™s memoir.

Itâ€™s unimaginable the horrific devastating shocking pain - range Audiobook, Library Overdrive,....read by Sue Klebold.....SPOILERS INCLUDED...

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Itâ€™s unimaginable the horrific devastating shocking pain - range of emotions a parent faces after a tragedy of this magnitude: denial, grief, loss, shock, fear, sadness, sickness, guilt, ashamed, etc., knowing your child killed 13 students - a teacher - and injured 24 others. I had immediate empathy for

these parents years ago. I didn't blame them. I still don't....in fact I felt incredible empathy for them.

When I started this book - I felt even more compassion and empathy for Sue Klebold. Over lunch one day with Lisa - I said - "I had read a harsh review of this book - which I felt was too harsh...." this woman is so real - our hearts break for her. I WAS SURE I WOULD GIVE HER BOOK 5 starsNow, I don't think that review was harsh enough.

By the next day - I was writing Lisa,...SO IRATE... I had taken a complete turn from feeling empathetic, to feeling angry. As my reading continued "my thoughts and emotions were mostly judgmental about this entire book! I can't tell you how angry I felt at times. THIS WAS THE BOOK SUE WANTED THE WORLD TO READ? To me - there is SO MUCH OFF WITH IT I could write pages!!!!

I still feel sorry for the shoes Sue wears since her child did what he did - I'm not saying it's fair that she was left to suffer " - but what I don't respect are the choices she made in the print words she wrote. With the audacity, it took a lot of chutzpah- to focus on HERSELF (as a good loving mother AS MUCH AS SHE DID), and how her "sunshine boy" was a good kid - and she lost a son too, FOR MOST OF THE BOOK- over and over - so MUCH- I begin to cringe. I actually felt embarrassed and ashamed for so much narcissism she exposed of herself.

There were pages of examples of Dylan's childhood- (her "Sunshine Boy"). A few of HER INTERPRETATIONS from the examples she shared - I saw different than Sue.

I thought about how much denial she was in. Dylan was a son she wanted to see (I don't even blame her for being blind and having limitations - we all have them)"

But there was so much justification on her part, looking for false causes.... and turning the story into a suicide story as being more dominant than a kid who was a mass murderer - well - I'm sorry - I think she is still in denial.

When Sue introduces herself today to people - groups - wherever ... she says: "I am Sue Klebold, mother of a son who committed suicide. He was also one of shooters at Columbine".

Throughout this "entire" book Sue repeats how good she was (many examples - dinner with the family - she wanted to know who his friends were - had rules about violence in movies - etc - etc - etc - and about Dylan: smart, good grades, would still snuggle her), and that she had NO IDEA he was capable of this. She minimize- ("BOYS WILL BE BOYS", the year before when Dylan was arrested for a felony, and wrote a paper for a class that was so disturbing the teacher called the parents in. Is she kidding her self when she says there are no signs?

The denial about her son, started very early.

When Dylan was 10 years old - she took him roller skating. He was having trouble and falling down a lot. She wanted to hold his hand. THEY HAD VERY DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TRAITS AND DISPOSITIONS. It "would" be hard for a caring - hovering loving mother to get inside this type of child's head and needs

Dylan said he wanted to skate himself - he could figure it out himself. Sue says it felt like an hour waiting

A Mother's Reckoning Summary

I actually started listening to this in the summer. I only finished it recently. I find these books very hard to review.

I think this audio hit me harder than I expected. It was even more emotional as it is narrated by Sue Klebold. It took her many years to write this book. She knew there would never be a "right" time for it. She knows people blame her and her husband. She blames herself in many ways. What did they miss? Could she have stopped it?

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I wasn't sure what to expect when I started listening to this audio. I respect Sue Klebold for writing this book. I know there are many people that feel it shouldn't have been written, but I think we can all learn from her story and this terrible tragedy. I understand that not everyone will want to read it. But I'm glad I did.

I was glad to hear that she is donating 100 percent of the money made from this book to mental health and suicide prevention research.

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"Her book is a tribute to Dylan without being an excuse, and a moving call to action for mental health advocacy and research." A MOTHER'S RECKONING is a detailed and graphic account of the carefully planned massacre that occurred at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. It includes information on the recorded basement tape video made by Eric and Dylan as well as documented statements from their diaries and Sue's own journal. A great deal of this memoir is written from the perspective of what ac "Her book is a tribute to Dylan without being an excuse, and a moving call to action for mental health advocacy and research." A MOTHER'S RECKONING is a detailed and graphic account of the carefully planned massacre that occurred at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. It includes information on the recorded basement tape video made by Eric and Dylan as well as documented statements from their diaries and Sue's own journal. A great deal of this memoir is written from the

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perspective of what actually happened in the Klebold family world from the time of awareness. Sue Klebold expresses the emotional turmoil from the moment she receives the frantic call from her husband to come home from work on that horrific day, and documents the difficult task of trying to unravel the mystery of a son they loved and thought they knew so well. "While every other mother in Littleton was praying that their child was safe, I had to pray that mine would die before he hurt anyone else." In this account, Klebold also takes full responsibility for missing the signs that Dylan was depressed and in trouble admitting he did in fact show outward signals of suicide that she dismissed not recognizing them for what they were at the time, but now understands after consulting with numerous mental health experts. "To the rest of the world, Dylan was a monster, but he was my son." Excellent follow-up story to COLUMBINE, but a very sad and terribly heartbreaking read. (Having raised a son, I can attest that teenagers are often a difficult species to decode.)Final Note: Author profits from this book will be donated to research and charitable foundations focusing on mental health issues.
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A Mother's Reckoning Audiobook Free

There's no question that Klebold's story is horrifying—a story of mass murder and its aftermath that blessed few of us will ever have to tell. In the wake of epic tragedy, how does a parent come to terms with their child murdering other children and adults? How does a mother or a father miss the signs of impending doom, the stockpiled weapons? This book is Klebold's attempt to tell her story: the story of their family life, their parenting, and the complete and utter lack of signs leading up to her son's violent rampage some 16 years ago.

The introduction by Andrew Solomon (who interviewed the Klebolds for his very excellent *Far From the Tree*) sets a responsible, compassionate tone for Klebold's words that follow. He is magnanimous to the extreme and Klebold must have been relieved to read his thoughtful account of her situation.

Yet, when I started getting into the meat of Klebold's story, I became uneasy. Then, frustrated. By the end of the book, I had a flash of anger—which is certainly not the emotional spectrum I expected to encounter reading such a book.

I've always had sympathy for the Klebold and Harris families since reading Dave Cullen's *Columbine*, one of the finest and most detailed works of modern crime nonfiction, in my opinion. It's clear, based on available evidence, that the families were squarely in the dark about the scope of their sons' rage. Although both boys had been in trouble (even arrested together at one point), they seemed remorseful, made restitutions, and were moving forward with their respective post-high school plans. I started this book from that place—one of great sympathy—and is, unfortunately, not exactly the place I emerged from it.

There are several problematic elements to Klebold's account. They do not, in any way, tarnish my steadfast belief that her pain is mostly unknowable, and therefore difficult to judge as an outsider. But, when she takes a public step to bring that pain to the masses in this way, she opens up herself, and her story, to review.

I was initially made uneasy by Klebold's early and frequent references to "œbrain health," her preferred word substitution for mental health. (She explains about halfway through the book why she prefers it. The description makes sense, but it bugs.) Dave Cullen made it abundantly clear in *Columbine* that both boys, Dylan and Eric, suffered from mental health issues and explained the ways that this manifested prior to and during the planning of the massacre. However, Klebold sets the stage early on in the book for later hypotheses that seemed to be speculation at best and irresponsible at worst.

This inkling of unsettledness I felt became more acute when I realized that Klebold would spend next to no time discussing, addressing, or humanizing the victims of the attack. While it's well-trod ground, yes, I found it bizarre that Klebold remains so distant from the human element of the tragedy. Her laser focus on Dylan is understandable, and so is her need to respect the victims of the tragedy, but ignoring them "except when they reach out to her in sympathy" seemed strange at first and only more so as the book progressed.

The dehumanization of Dylan's victims was worst when Klebold recounts the massacre briefly, coldly. There is, up until that point, a subtle but ever-present desire to put the bulk of the blame on Eric, and Klebold's assessment of Dylan and Eric's actions that day is her biggest Freudian slip. (Or perhaps it was intentional "which would be worse.") She describes Eric first: "Eric shot Rachel Scott, killing her instantly [â€¦] Eric then shot at Daniel Rohrbough and Sean Graves and Lance Kirkland, who were climbing the hill toward them, killing Daniel and wounding the other two." When she switches focus to Dylan, her syntax changes too: "Dylan walked down the steps toward the cafeteria. He shot Lance Kirklin and stepped over Sean Graves on his way into the building." Kirklin was wounded, not killed, but the omission of any description beyond "shot" is startling. Later: "Eric had shot his rifle forty-seven times. Dylan had shot three times with his handgun and two with his shotgun." It's hard to believe the inclusion of that information was for any purpose but to show "what? How little Dylan had shot? Does it even matter when students are lying wounded, dead, and more are still to come? She continues, using the qualifiers "fatally shot" or "fatally wounded" or "shot under a desk" or "shot at a table." Maybe it's not as important as it seems. Maybe I'm reading into it. But the way she describes the massacre "in less than three pages" seems inadequate and even trite. For example: "Dylan shot Patrick Ireland as he was helping Makai Hall." According to Ireland, as he reached to apply pressure to Hall's wounds, Dylan saw his head pop up from under the table and shot him in the head with his shotgun. Klebold's choice to recount the massacre like a police report, rather than focusing on the depravity of the act, may be to avoid traumatizing the victims further, or as she says, "minimizing details mitigates the likelihood of contagion [or copycat crimes]." Maybe that's so. But in a book of excuses, what's one more?

Another major frustration point for me was Klebold's wishy-washy stance on guns. She expresses early on that she and her husband were "adamantly" opposed to them, even considering moving out of Colorado because of the weak gun laws in the state. And that moment "that statement" is about the last time you'll hear from Klebold about guns. She turns her focus to mental health for the remainder of the book "brain health, sorry" and drops the thread. I understand her desire not to insert herself into the gun control fray. And she's trying to raise money for mental health charities too. Fine "let's cut the really controversial stuff, like guns! ("We'll just keep the parts where I'm trying to understand why my teenage son committed mass murder.) The guns were acquired from unlicensed sellers at a gun show by someone other than Dylan and Eric, and it seems to me to be especially prudent for Klebold to have discussed the importance of gun control, whether it be gun show loopholes, background checks, or responsible ownership in the context of mental health issues in the home (see: Adam Lanza). For her to willfully ignore this topic is reckless. Full stop.

There were other issues too. She spends a great deal of time speculating on the bullying motive for the massacre, but what she has is just that—speculation. She cites a few anecdotes, nothing concrete, but still leaves breadcrumbs that lead the reader to believe it could have been an essential, driving force behind the violence. Klebold's desire to pick and choose from Cullen's research—she likes Eric being the psychopath, does not like Cullen proving the bullying motive a myth—is frustrating.

And, of course, I can't leave this review without pointing out how irresponsible it is for Klebold to inexorably link mental health issues like depression and suicidal tendencies to mass murder. She fixates on the shooting as a "murder-suicide," saying that if we can understand that, we can get a clearer picture of how Dylan made the decisions he did. But, while there is sufficient evidence of mental health problems in this case, I find Klebold's causation hypothesis a wholly simplistic and rash explanation. It's true that many teens suffering from depression are at risk for suicide. But what is not true, and what will never be true—despite Klebold continuing to point out depressive tendencies in Dylan's behavior, like "thousand yard staring"—is that depressed and/or suicidal teens go on in great numbers to commit acts of violence or murder. Mental health may be one part of the puzzle, especially when it comes to the unique profile of school shooters, but it's just that. One part. Klebold is obsessed, convinced that if she had seen the signs for what they were, she could have intervened, provided support, and potentially stopped him. But there are other puzzle pieces, including access to guns, bouts of rage or anger, and the unknowable snapping point—stoked and prodded by Eric—that clearly existed within him. Klebold acknowledges that the massacre was unlikely to have happened if either boy had been alone and not known the other. Cullen describes the interplay of their relationship quite well, and how the darker parts of their personalities came together in the name of destruction.

But still. It happened. It was complex, horrifying, and our country's first real glimpse into the now almost cyclic, expected nature of mass murder. And because it was the "first," and because it is the most infamous, I can appreciate Klebold's attempts here. I really can. But it doesn't go far enough. It doesn't quite hit the mark. But with our country's almost lackadaisical responses to school shootings or mass murder now, what else should we expect? Not much. Not much. ...more

"Oh my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you" Oh Absalom, my son, my son!

- The Book of 2 Samuel 18:33

"Good wombs have borne bad sons."

- Miranda, in William Shakespeare's The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2

On April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold armed themselves with guns and explosives and walked into Columbine High School. They killed twelve students and a teacher, and wounded twenty-four others, before taking their own lives. It was the worst school shooti "Oh my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you" Oh Absalom, my son, my son!

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-□Miranda, in William Shakespeareâ€™s The Tempest, Act I, Scene 2

â€œOn April 20, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold armed themselves with guns and explosives and walked into Columbine High School. They killed twelve students and a teacher, and wounded twenty-four others, before taking their own lives. It was the worst school shooting in history. Dylan Klebold was my son!â€•

-□Sue Klebold, from the opening lines of A Motherâ€™s Reckoning

This is a tough one. I got it as soon as it came out, and then it languished on my shelf. I needed the right mindset to crack the covers, and that mindset eluded me.

Iâ€™ve been interested in Columbine from the moment I heard about the shooting. I was a senior in high school when it happened, just weeks away from graduation. There had been mass shootings before (such as Charles Whitmanâ€™s 1966 spree in Austin), and there had been terrible assaults on schools before (such as the 1927 Bath School bombing that killed 38 children), but I had never heard of them, or if I had, I never cared. But then Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, students like me, walked into Columbine High School, a school like my own, and killed a dozen of their classmates, who could have been my friends. Something about the timing of the shooting imprinted itself on me. I have been reading about it ever since.

Thus, when Sue Klebold, the mother of one of the killers, Dylan, wrote a book about her experience, I ordered it without thinking. As soon as I looked at the cover, though, with a photo of a five year-old Dylan smiling next to his mother, I set it down. I wasnâ€™t sure I needed to know what was inside.

Then came Parkland. The massacre of more innocents at a high school. And the book came off the shelf. Not unexpectedly, it was heavy. Quite unexpectedly, it struck me with its importance. This is a book that parents of school-age kids should read.

A Motherâ€™s Reckoning is one of those titles that works despite the writing. Kleboldâ€™s style is not elegant. The best that can be said for her prose is that it is coherent. The structure tends to be a bit rambling, and certain points are made repetitively. You might expect me to say that Kleboldâ€™s work is â€œunflinching,â€• but it is not. It flinches a lot. She goes out of her way to show deference and respect to the victims, prefacing many of her discussions with pre-apologies. While I understand and respect the intent, the result is a book that can be painfully self-conscious at times. She seems intent on heading off every counterargument before itâ€™s made, leading to a lot of needless verbiage that disrupts the flow of her story. To avoid passing any blame from Dylan, Klebold fails to fully explore certain topics that might have been worth noting. For example, she raises the issue of Columbineâ€™s toxic environment, but does not pursue the discussion. Undoubtedly, she did this to avoid any

accusations that she was trying to shift liability. Similarly, of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, she has almost only good things to say, which is quite remarkable, since she's about the only one to praise them.

A Mother's Reckoning is tough to classify. The shadow of Columbine obviously lingers over every word, comma, semi-colon, and period. Yet, the actual shooting is dealt with only minimally. The book opens with an account of Klebold and her husband learning about the shooting, and the agonizing aftermath of discovering that not only had their son died, but that he had been the cause of so much suffering. There is also, about midway through, a terse yet excruciating passage in which Klebold narrates, victim by victim, her son's rampage through the school. Otherwise, though, she mostly leaves the events of April 20, 1999, in the background (those wishing to know the full story would be well-served by Dave Cullen's *Columbine*).

Instead, Klebold has a lot of other things on her mind. In part, this is a memoir about grief. Klebold's struggle with her son's death will be familiar to anyone who has lost a loved one. Of course, her experience was magnified beyond quantification due to the circumstances of Dylan's death. She had to grieve in private, while fending off reporters, receiving hate mail, having her entire life adjudicated in the press, and dealing with law enforcement. It is a situation almost beyond imagination.

A Mother's Reckoning is also, in a way, a biography of Dylan Klebold, filtered through a forensic microscope. Klebold narrates Dylan's life from the moment he was born. What was he like? What were his hobbies? How did he act? Above all: What were the warning signs? Overall, Dylan not only seemed normal, but rather well-adjusted. He didn't torture animals or get in trouble at a very early age. He had friends. He lived in a solid middle-class household. Negative environmental factors were almost non-existent. He wasn't pampered but he wasn't poor. He had the ability to hold down a job and get good grades. Despite the normalcy, Klebold uses a fine-tooth comb trying to find the missing link.

The link, Klebold ultimately discovers, was Dylan's depression. It was a depression that he hid as well as his weapons, explosives, and the troubling videotapes he made with Eric Harris.

Klebold does not come to her conclusions lightly. She has spoken to a wide variety of mental health professionals, physicians, and other related experts. Part of her story is intensely personal. Other parts are admirably objective. She seems to be intellectualizing the tragedy as a way of coping with it.

The most powerful part of *A Mother's Reckoning* is how Klebold reframes the Columbine massacre as not only an act of mass murder, but an act of suicide. She has support here from many experts, including Adam Lankford, whose book, *The Myth of Martyrdom*, argued that suicidal acts of terror can often be linked to depression and suicide.

According to many who have studied the shootings, Eric Harris was a stone psychopath. His journals are filled with a desire to kill the world. Conversely, Dylan Klebold's journals are filled with love; that is, a feeling that he was not loved, or could not find love. He was, in short, intensely depressed and looking

to end his own life. To the detriment of so many, he came into contact with Harris, and their individual mental health crises complemented each other in the worst possible way.

Klebold's discussion of suicide and depression are the reason I recommend this book. School shootings are terrible, and they are frightening. They are also, like plane crashes, statistically unlikely. Further, the odds of me raising a mass shooter "while greater than zero" are again not high.

Suicide, on the other hand, is one of the leading causes of death among young people. I have never met or known a school shooter or school shooting victim. I have known three people who have killed themselves, and two others who made real attempts. Suicide, as Klebold explains, is not an impulsive act, even though it often seems rash. Someone loses a boyfriend, or a girlfriend, or gets embarrassed in class, or gets called out on social media, and the next minute, they are dead, in an act that seems unplanned. As discussed here, with the input of real experts, that is often not the case. The final act may be precipitous, but there was likely a long series of moments, haunted by "the noontime demon", that led to that final irreversible act. That depression can be masked, that the symptoms can be so quotidian, is what makes it so terrifying.

A Mother's Reckoning says a lot of things that are hard to hear but dangerous to ignore. ...more

A Mother's Reckoning Book

It would be easy to admire Sue Klebold for her courage in writing a Mother's Reckoning. But having listened for the past few weeks to the audio version of Klebold's book with rapt attention and a knotted stomach, I think it is probably more accurate to thank Klebold for openly sharing part of her journey in dealing with her son Dylan's participation in the Columbine shootings. This book is heart wrenching and fascinating, but it very much feels like something Sue Klebold had to write for her own benefit, as part of her own healing process. She spends much of the book assuring her audience "and herself" that she was the best parent she could be. (In fact, at times I felt ashamed of some of my own parenting lapses in comparison with hers.) She also spends much of the book suggesting that all parents should be extremely vigilant about any signs of depression in their children and teenagers because Dylan had done a very good job of concealing his true state of mind right up to the date of the shootings. (This is an important message, but it certainly needs to be tempered with the realization that the vast majority of teenagers are not at risk of doing what Dylan did, or even of suicide.) In reality, it's hard for me to figure out what lessons to draw from Klebold's book. I read it with great interest and curiosity. I feel a lot of compassion for her. I think she does a tremendous job of expressing her experience of mourning, while paying due respect to the families of Dylan's victims. It was obviously extremely important for her to write this book, and admirably she is giving all profits to mental health research. But I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that she is looking for some form of public salvation "through the lengthy reflections on her good parenting and on the efforts she has made since Columbine to be a good person despite the circumstances. I can't say that I wouldn't do the same if I found myself in her shoes. But at times this made Klebold's book particularly painful. What was done can't be undone. What was done can probably never be fully explained. And she is condemned to a life in which some people will always try to reassure themselves that their child would never do what Dylan did by blaming his parents in their parenting and for failing to see what was coming "no matter what Klebold has to say. I do hope for Klebold that writing this book has helped her find some peace. For the rest of us, her book provides a window into a special kind of hell "losing a child that the world views as a monster.

A note on the audio: Sue Klebold does the narration. She does a great job, and it certainly adds to the emotional punch of the book to hear her tell her story in her own voice.

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Out of the worst tragedies there surely sprouts some specks light and hope. That seems to be the premise of this book and makes it the ideal choice for the buddy with whom I chose to read this. Pain and suffering seems to envelop people, but there are many more feelings and emotions that layer

themselves within the larger narrative of grief. Sue Klebold has the insurmountable task of penning this piece and trying not to get lost in the accusations surrounding the pall left by her son. Dylan Kleb Out of the worst tragedies there surely sprouts some specks light and hope. That seems to be the premise of this book and makes it the ideal choice for the buddy with whom I chose to read this. Pain and suffering seems to envelop people, but there are many more feelings and emotions that layer themselves within the larger narrative of grief. Sue Klebold has the insurmountable task of penning this piece and trying not to get lost in the accusations surrounding the pall left by her son. Dylan Klebold was one of the Columbine High School shooters, a murder spree whose infamy only grew in the months after events, once much of the evidence and backstory emerged. Sue Klebold seeks not to gloss over events or spend the entire book seeking pity from the reader, but to offer her own perspective of events and how she was blindsided by many of the narrative from April 20, 1999. The early chapters offer a cogent narrative of the events of the day and the period that followed, a time in which Sue and her husband, Tom, were crippled with doubt and guilt for what Dylan had done. Searching for answers, both in their own lives and that of their younger son, the Klebolds faced vilification over something they said they could not have predicted. As the book progresses, Klebold takes the reader back in time to depict Dylan as a loving boy who was extremely helpful and loving. However, with the power of hindsight, Klebold could see what might have been warning signs of the smallest order. Throughout, Klebold offers the argument that Dylan was a follower and that Eric Harris, his long-time friend and the other Columbine shooter, was the leader of this sadistic act. This is not to toss all the blame onto Harris, but Klebold posits throughout that her son's less aggressive nature surfaced in journal entries, recorded messages, and in footage of the actual school shooting. Addressing teen suicide and the inner turmoil that Dylan faced, Sue is blunt in her message to parents: do not ignore anything that seems out of place. Beneath the surface of any teenager's emotional expressions can be found torrential angst and calls for help. Had Sue and Tom Klebold delved deeper into Dylan's life as soon as they can issues, would Columbine have been averted? There is no way to tell and while media outlets seem to bask in finding a whipping boy, finger pointing serves no fruitful purpose. A powerful book that does offer insight, angst, pain, and confusion in all forms, Klebold is to be applauded for coming out and speaking about these hard issues in a frank manner. While it would be crass to choose any reading group that might 'like' this book, its insightful nature might prove useful to those who remember the Columbine shooting as they wrestle to better understand the chaos of that day.

After reading a stellar book on Columbine, many of my friends asked if I would consider reading Sue Klebold's biography/memoir to offer another interesting perspective. I will be the first to admit, I was hesitant. I did not want a sob story that bemoaned how the world had painted her with the same brush as her son, or that Dylan was the victim here, a youth that slipped through the cracks. Additionally, I expected a 'we wash our hands of this as we could not have known' piece. I could not have been more off base. Klebold takes responsibility as any parent would, but does not allow Dylan off scot-free for what he did. Klebold draws on all aspects of her life with Dylan: childhood, lead-up to the Columbine event, and her solo suffering with a son she never knew in the aftermath. Layered not only with poignant topics, but also some succinct diary excerpts to weigh-in on the discussion, the book flows wonderfully as it dissects some of the areas related to Dylan and the shooting. The blindside of what Dylan was going through, as well as the hindsight realisation that the signs were actually there shows

Klebold at her most vulnerable. She pulls no punches in lashing out at those who seek to pummel her with the guilt of the event, but is also compassionate enough to realise that her presence might be too much for some parents to handle. While many of the books on school shootings focus on the terror and the victims, Klebold posits that the list of victims is exponentially larger, left to include those members of the perpetrators' families that did not see it coming. I was left loving the frankness of this book, but also hating it, as I cannot shake those sickening feeling in my stomach that left me asking, "Could this be Neo? Will I ever know if he is struggling and about to topple into this abyss?" I am sick with worry, admittedly, but I also know that I can only do so much. I must send my son to school, unaware if there will be a school shooting, just as I can only hope that I will foster an open and honest relationship with my son to ensure that I see any signs. Klebold has left me with that hope and for that I am eternally grateful.

Kudos, Madam Klebold for touching on so many important issues within this book. While I struggled with some of it, more because of my personal fears, I loved how open and honest you could be with all of it. I admire your strength and determination to get in front of all this.

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A Mother's Reckoning Excerpt

4.5 Stars

TW: Suicide, gun violence, gore, the general graphic nature of homicide/suicide

All I can say is wow. I had a set of expectations for this book, and it surpassed even that. I knew it would be dark and haunting, but I think this will have a much more lasting impression on me than I could have ever anticipated. I listened to the audiobook that Sue narrates, and I can't remember the last time I've listened to an audiobook on 1x (regular) speed and absolutely drank in every word. I didn't wa

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This fits in the category of memoirs that are just beyond my experience and therefore, my true comprehension. I've read memoirs from people you couldn't pay me a billion dollars to trade places with, and this is one of those. Sue's story stretched my sympathy to monumental lengths, and I can't imagine how much more impactful this book would be to someone who has children. Hearing Sue's story as someone who doesn't even want kids was heartbreaking enough, but I can't imagine being her intended audience (parents) and having to hear her points about how sometimes loving your child isn't enough to save them and they have interior lives you can truly never know. One of the parts that stuck with me most was during the initial months of her grieving after they lost Dylan, Sue's husband told her, "I wish he had killed us too." That, alongside the scene where she describes going to the Columbine library and seeing the bloodstains on the ground, were so impactful and heartbreaking that I had to pause the audiobook and take a break to cry and reflect. It's truly one of the most haunting books I've ever read, especially considering Sue's detailed backstory of Dylan's "normal" childhood and upbringing.

And the way Sue writes about and frames her experience was a complete shock. I was expecting this to be a very self-based memoir discussing her life in April 1999 and the years onward, which it largely is for the first half. Like I mentioned earlier, I thought it would be very based around discussing Dylan's normality and deflecting blame. But the way that Sue recovered from this tragedy and educated herself on suicide and school shootings, and the amount of research that went into this book was SO unexpected. It's not just a self-indulgent story about how sad she is and her excuses about what could

have gone wrong; it's a regretful admission that she could have done better, but also a call-to-action for others to recognize suicide and mental health and the ways to prevent tragedy moving forward. She doesn't at all dismiss Dylan's unforeseen mental health issues, and once again, it astonished me how decisively she tackled the discussions, rumors, conspiracies, backlash, and everything else. I can't emphasize how impressed I am by this. Sometimes I feel like the format of this was lacking, like Sue would reference a certain event two or three times throughout different parts of the book, and it would seem a bit aimless and like it needed more editing to make it more chronological. Still, the second section of the book addressing suicide/homicide causes and prevention was so important, I can hardly discount this minor issue I had with it.

However, I need to disclaim that although this book surpassed my expectations content-wise, it also surpassed a threshold of graphic content I could handle. Nothing was explicitly graphic while listening that made me sick, but the lingering vibe of this book after I put it down was so unsettling that I couldn't sleep for two nights. I had to turn on cartoons just to be able to calm myself down because this could be so dark and lingering. (It didn't help that I got curious and Googled some of the pictures that Sue was mentioning being leaked and..... I regret.) So definitely be in a stable headspace when you go to read this, because it can quickly dismantle any good standing with mental health you've achieved. It's very penetrating, dark material. Nevertheless, I don't regret reading this and I definitely will never forget it. ...more

Sue Klebold's narrative is extremely difficult to relate to and empathize with. This book reads like a taut justification defending how good her family is, while very subtly hinting at how "others" live:

"I hadn't even been one of those cool parents who smokes pot with their kids or introduces them to their groovy boyfriends." (119).

So what's she saying here about single moms? Hmm...

From the first chapters, which begin on the day of the shooting, the author focuses specifically on her own image. Sue Klebold's narrative is extremely difficult to relate to and empathize with. This book reads like a taut justification defending how good her family is, while very subtly hinting at how "others" live:

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From the first chapters, which begin on the day of the shooting, the author focuses specifically on her own image: "I had taken pleasure in being an active and respected part of my community, in being thought of as a good mom. The censure beginning to emerge was excruciating." (44).

This is a mom who, the day after the Columbine massacre and suicide of her mass murdering son, went to the salon to keep her standing hair appointment. She was worried about how she would look at his funeral, and says so. (But says earlier that she actually prayed he would commit suicide if he was killing people at his school. Another example of a hard to understand contradiction). Let me just stop here a moment. Let's go there. Let's imagine you're a parent. You learn increasingly horrific acts are happening at your kid's school. You then learn your child may be doing it. You learn your kid is dead. Are you even aware of other people, or what they think of you? Are you concerned with how you look, whether you need a haircut? If you can relate to this line of thinking, hats off. But this is not remotely relatable to me on any level. The narrative speaks to every excruciating angle: are they being good house guests while staying with family, can she get her hair cut, What? No, I can not at all empathize or even get on a level where this is remotely imaginable.

As a victim, she plays the part well; at least she thinks so. It simply doesn't feel genuine. It feels desperate and forced, as one tries desperately to cajole, manipulate, and MAKE OTHERS BELIEVE what she believes. Sorry. I don't. Aside from snide remarks at single parents, there are numerous mentions of "this doesn't happen here," as Sue Klebold repeatedly makes mention of finally finding peers she can engage with who are "normal": professionals, with etiquette.

White privileged elitism at it's finest, while she claims despite her own microaggressions against others that her children weren't raised to hate anyone.

Aside from her blatant attempts at justifications and fixation on her self and how she and her family look, there is a great danger here in her understanding of mental health. Throughout her own need to understand her son's actions, she skips the psychopathy and obvious deceit almost completely and decides he was depressed and impressionable. This makes inference throughout that one who is suicidal can just as easily become a mass murderer. This. Is. Not. The. Case. As much as this woman name dropped and interviewed people for her own angles, there is NO LINK AT ALL that suicidal people may become homicidal as a regular or likely occurrence. Very rarely (perhaps 2-5%) of suicidal people are also homicidal. She also conveniently leaves out that most people with mental disorders that are diagnosed (while living, not post humorously) are more likely to be victims of violence. Not perpetrators. She also annoyingly decides to call "mental health" "brain health" throughout the book, only explaining about half-way the reasons for it. She claims it may reduce stigma. To me, it looks more like she is attention seeking, in her subtle way.

Post mortem mental health diagnoses for her son, the strange and dangerous link between suicidality and planned, premeditated, and deliberate murder. I find this book to be more harmful and uninformed than helpful, despite her repeatedly mentioned reasons for writing the book. I am one person, but my experience is that this book is an insult to a number of people: survivors of Columbine and other violent shootings; parents who have lost children to violence; parents who have lost children to any reason: and the field of mental health.

Mourning and finding your own personal meaning is one thing. But this book should not have been published.

A Mother's Reckoning: Living in the Aftermath of Tragedy

Never underestimate the power of denial, and skip this book. ...more