

Wild by Cheryl Strayed (2012)

Her abusive dad left her mom & 3 kids when Cheryl was 6. Her mom remarried, but they were still poor. Her mom loved her so much & Eddie was a good step-dad. Cheryl married Paul at 19. Her mom died suddenly of cancer at age 46 & Cheryl [22] went into a tailspin. Her grief pulled her to other men & drugs before they divorced.

She came across a book & read it. She decided to hike the Pacific Crest Trail [PCT]. In 1995 she backpacked 1178 miles of the PCT [starting at Mojave, skipping the snow-packed Sierras & WA]. When she started her pack [Monster] must have weighed 70 pounds [over half her weight]. She wasn't in shape & never hiked before. She soon began to ask herself: what have I gotten myself into?

Her feet blistered beyond imagination. She ultimately lost 6 of her toenails. She was rubbed raw from her shoulder & hip straps. She was fortunate to bring Spenco 2nd Skin to cover her blisters. She was exhausted covering 9 miles a day [later did 18 constantly]. She put the wrong gas in her stove & messed it up. She realized she would run out of food before she got to Kennedy Meadows [south]. She had not seen a human in 8 days. She took a jeep road & found some workers. They took her home & fed her & let her take a bath. The next day took her to fix her stove.

A man [Greg] came up the trail & called out her name [he read it in the trail register]. It was nice to see another hiker. He said the Sierras were "socked in [snow]". She was ready to quit & now she had a reason, but he encouraged her. A man helped her throw out stuff she didn't need. Trail angel Ed gave her food & mailed her an encouraging card that she would get later.

Her friend mailed her supply boxes along the trail, but sometimes she would have to hitchhike to a town to get them. After 2 weeks her body was getting in better shape, but her feet were getting worse. It's hard to follow a trail when it's covered in snow or on solid rock. She got lost a couple of times. Strangers were nice to her, but some gave her the creeps.

Modoc Plateau was hot & little water. She almost died when a water tank was empty. She had to push on without water in 100 degrees. It is all about mind control: keep moving forward. She was humbled, but strengthened. Several people told her that her boots were too small but she couldn't do anything without money. Until a man told her REI would send her new ones free. Soon after her old boot fell over a cliff & she had to walk miles in sandals & duct tape.

She had to go through heat & cold, rain & no water, snow & ice, fallen trees, landslides & cross rivers. She had to endure so much physical pain on the trail she mostly forgot about her emotional pain. When she was afraid, she would keep telling herself "I am not afraid". She saw bear, deer, fox, rattlesnakes & a llama. She didn't realize how much food & cash she would go through so she was always hungry & broke.

The PCT in OR was mostly covered in trees, had berries & rained more. Her friend came to see her & they went to Bagby Hot Springs. She finished her trip at the Bridge of the Gods [Columbia River]. Years later she married Brian & had two kids.

Quotes: "I'm a slow walker, but I never walk back." (Abe Lincoln); "Tell me, what do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?" (Mary Oliver); "Fear, to a great extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves". "The memory of it more frightening than the experience of it had been". (CS);

Books: PCT: vol. 1 & 2 (Wilderness Press); Staying Found (June Fleming); The Dream of Common Language (Adrienne Rich); Beyond Backpacking (Ray Jardine);

Movies: High Sierra; Wild

Facts: Sierra Nevada means "snowy range" in Spanish. Sections of the PCT began in the 30's but wasn't complete until '93 [dedicated in '68]. Crater Lake is the deepest lake in the US.

I read this book before the movie came out & quickly forgot [or blocked out] the colorful language & details of her grief. I thought the movie was exaggerating until I verified in the book. She was born 17sep68 & felt like the women with a hole in her heart before the hike.

Definitions:

- 42- dromedary = camel
- 43- soliloquies = monolog
- 47- equanimity = calmness
- 58- intimations = hints
- 67- austere = harsh
- 170- talisman = jewel
- 191- alacrity = eagerness
- 196- sated = satisfied
- 203-detritus = debris
- 206- coalesce = merge
- 218- postprandial = after a meal
- 219- retched = vomited
- 228- rigueur = strictness
- 244- flaxen = blond
- 248- pudenda = private area
- 249- solicitously = kindly
- 256- languid = relaxed
- 298- lascivious = naughty