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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

RECKLESS

A Memoir

Allard, Rebecca

CreateSpace (212 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

One woman's memoir of a harrowing 16-year marriage to an ex-convict.

In 1975, former actress Allard worked in a copy center, in the same building that housed The Family, a theater company for former prisoners. She was quite comfortable with this fact, though, due to her long-term experience with the group as a theater manager. However, Allard eventually found herself drawn to a new member who often came in to make copies. Al Black, she writes, was physically formidable, with dark skin and a tall, highly muscular physique—but as she got to know him, she discovered that his personality was also larger-than-life. Black seemed to be reformed, but Allard saw how intense he became when telling violent stories of his past crimes. A big part of her was afraid of what he was capable of, but she was also oddly intrigued; Black was nothing like her milquetoast husband. After she married Black, however, she found out that the caring part of his personality was a facade. He soon plunged her into a dark, horrifying world of drugs, violence, sex and humiliation that she could never have imagined. With perfect clarity, Allard recounts almost two decades of her debilitating—nearly fatal—marriage, as she watched the man she loved spiral into a drug-induced, manic and often violent haze. She writes of how he forced her to visit sex clubs and watch him have relations with strange women in their own home. Allard fell into despair so deep that she couldn't imagine ever seeing the light again ("I knew I was in a dark well, one that I could not climb out of"). She eventually realized that she had to face all of her demons in order to truly heal. In this intense memoir, she shows how she managed to navigate the rocky road to her recovery.

A powerful story of a woman's desperate hopelessness and her long, arduous trek back to herself.