The Creature of Habit, A Journey

The Creature of Habit is the magnum opus of the Troops for Truddi Chase, a lavishly illustrated fable about overcoming trauma and PTSD habits intended to protect against harm, but which instead "place us inside a compound with walls so tall there's no way to escape. It is only in the breaking free from these habits that we begin to grow and discover our true selves" (pg. ii).

The Creature of Habit was posthumously self-published by Truddi's daughter, Kari Ainsworth, after the Troops' death in 2010.

Quick Details

Date Created: December 2014
Created By: The Troops for Truddi Chase
Location: truddichase.com

Circumstances of Creation

According to Truddi's daughter in the foreword, "A few years after the release of When Rabbit Howls, Truddi and The Troops finished their psychotherapy with Dr. Phillips and began a journey of self-discovery in order to prove to themselves that there is 'life after therapy' for multiples. Out of this discovery process, they created Creature of Habit, A Journey. Creature would give Truddi and The Troops a new way to speak into other's [sic] lives; to reach out to those struggling with the aftermath of trauma; to let them know that they aren't alone; and that through their own journey, they might find strength, knowledge, and freedom. [...]

"Back in the late 1990s, way before our current technology boom, Truddi and The Troops were told that Creature was too long and had too much artwork to publish. [...] Creature was packed away, never to be seen or heard from again. [...] By 2010, Truddi's health was in serious decline. With this knowledge, I desperately wanted to give her the gift of seeing all of her beautiful words and artwork in published from before she left this earth. [...] Unfortunately, Truddi was not to see the finished work. She passed away before it was completed. After her death, I knew my purpose in life was to see Creature through to the end" (pg. ii)

Story

This section contains SPOILERS.

The story follows the Creature of Habit in his escape from a highly-walled compound ruled by an abusive, spiteful vine. The vine has steadily grown larger and larger, until the compound is almost completely sealed, but some of the sky is still visible. The Creature's sight of the moon and night sky inspire him to one day disobey and flee the compound, determined to find his way to the moon and freedom, in the form of "unfettered thought."

Escape is not easy. Long after the Creature escapes the Vine, he is ensnared in his own thoughts and habits, created to survive the Vine's outbursts and adapt to its needs, even though the Vine itself is left behind. He compulsively writes "Chastising Lists" of his every flaw and misbehavior, and still sees things from the Vine's point of view, rather than his own. He tends to be unpleasant to the creatures he meets,

since he believes that anything that likes him must want to abuse him, or be contemptible since he himself is contemptible.

Along the way he meets Bragnificense, a large dragon-like being who speaks in rhyme and has very high self-esteem (much to the Creature's horror), and ghosts of old souls, who perished on their own journeys in pursuit of personal freedom. After various travails, he finds himself with this motley crew in a special valley, which may or may not literally exist, inhabited by the Sleeping Pool (which shows the viewer a reflection of his true self, and thus provides freedom) and a Voice (which is later discovered to be his own subconscious). The Voice helps the Creature along in breaking old habits, though the Creature is skeptical and reluctant at first. It also tries to cajole the Creature into looking into it, but he is terrified of what he might see.

The Voice tells the Creature the story of how his people came to be, and how they came from a different planet to the ones where the Vines ruled. The Vines were appalled by the Creatures' creativity and goodness, and thus enslaved their minds, using habit and fear to control them.

Meanwhile, through all of this, the Vine is warping space and time to bring all Vines, all Creatures, and all other forms of life together for a climactic battle for freedom. The Creature of Habit is frightened, but rises to the occasion, defeats the Vines, burns them, and finds freedom and happiness. Unfortunately, none of the other Creatures are saved; they are still enslaved to their Vine habits and must find freedom their own way. The Creature of Habit, meanwhile, looks into the pool, finds freedom, and goes his own way, free of the ghosts of the past and his constricted habits.

Illustrations

The book is filled with the Troops' lavish paintings of the animals, plants, and scenery that the Creature of Habit encounters. Vines are depicted, though it's unclear whether they are ordinary plants or the antagonist of the book. However, the Creatures themselves, the old souls, the Voice, and Bragnificense are never depicted; nor are the battle or other plot events.

Idiosyncratic Spelling/Formatting

"The various spellings (British, Middle English, Old English, etc.) originate from Ean, one of Truddi Chase's personalities. Ean, the Irish Troop member simply said that they are part of his background, his heritage." (Troops for Truddi Chase, 2014, copyright page)

The book also has erratic margins and line-breaks; some are clearly intentional, but others are less certain.

Citations

The Troops for Truddi Chase. (2014). *The Creature of Habit: A Journey*. Delaware: Moonbeams Unlimited Publishing.

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