

When Rain Hurts

A Memoir by

Mary Evelyn Greene

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When Rain Hurts

An Adoptive Mother's Journey with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

by Mary Evelyn Greene

“A searingly candid chronicle of the heroic struggle of two adoptive parents to raise their multiply disabled son.... A useful, inspiring cautionary tale for prospective adoptive parents.” (*Kirkus Reviews*)

When Rain Hurts is the story of one mother's quest to find a magical path of healing and forgiveness for her son, a boy so damaged by the double whammy of prenatal alcohol abuse and the stark rigors of Russian orphanage life that he was feral by the time of his adoption at age three. Bizarre behaviors, irrational thoughts, and dangerous preoccupations were the norm—no amount of love, it turns out, can untangle the effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. More people are coping with and caring for those affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders than individuals living with autism, but because there is a stigma associated with this preventable, devastating birth defect, it is a pandemic of disability and tragedy that remains underreported and underexplored. *When Rain Hurts* puts an unapologetic face to living and coping with this tragedy while doggedly searching for a more hopeful outcome for one beautiful, innocent, but damaged little boy.

Praise for *When Rain Hurts*

“With *When Rain Hurts*, Mary Greene has captured what it means to become a person of integrity. The author's untiring story of commitment to her adopted, multiply disabled son Peter and his highly sensitive, cognitive and biological systems teaches and inspires. In most homes, where FAS, autism and other severe biomedical disorders are not a fact of daily life, a child's developmental milestones are celebrated as givens. Greene asks us to look at things with a set of different measures altogether, to rethink our cultural preconceptions of what constitutes achievement or success. If I were asked to name my favorite overachievers, I'd choose those who have gone above and beyond the call to map the depth and possibility of our humanity. I'd name intrepid Greene and her courageous son, Peter.”

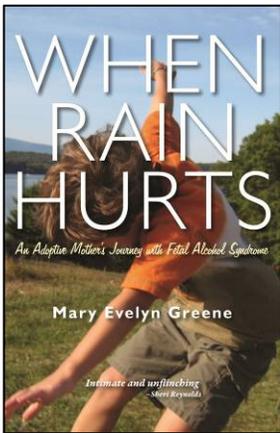
—Valerie Paradiz, PhD, author of *Elijah's Cup*
and Director, Autistic Global Initiative of the Autism Research Institute

“What I wanted was a family,” writes Mary Greene, “not a booby-trapped marathon that lacked a finish line.” In this intimate and unflinching memoir, Greene describes the space between her dreams of motherhood and the reality of life with an adopted child suffering from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. *When Rain Hurts* is emotionally complex, fascinating, gritty, exhausting, and teeming with protective mother-energy and love. Three cheers for Mary Greene's fighting spirit and the work she's doing to create and protect her family while educating so many of us about the complexities of international adoption and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.”

—Sheri Reynolds, author of *The Homespun Wisdom of Myrtle T. Cribb*

Biographical Note

Mary Evelyn Greene, Senior Managing Attorney with the Environmental Integrity Project, adopted two toddlers from Russia in 2004. Ever since, she has doggedly devoted herself to improving her alcohol-exposed son's condition, publishing articles in *Adoptive Families Magazine* and *Adoption Today* along the way. She currently lives in Silver Spring, Maryland with her husband and children. This is her first book.



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More Praise for *When Rain Hurts*

“With vivid language and strong imagery, she describes the harsh deprivations characteristic of Russia’s orphanages, the incompetence of its international adoption agency, and her frustrated need to be a mother.... [Readers] will find in Peter’s story fertile suggestions for a public support system capable of addressing the complex problems of formerly institutionalized children.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Mary E. Greene shares her family’s journey through the world of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome with a lucid candor free of self-pity (and a healthy wit). To anyone either struggling to make sense of the journey to adopt a child, or dealing with a skewed adoption system, Greene’s book will offer both camaraderie and sustenance.”

—Edie Meidav, author of *Lola, California*

“What will a mother do for her child? If your name is Mary Greene, the answer is ‘everything possible.’ Greene’s searing account of learning to parent her prenatal alcohol-exposed, bipolar, orphanage-veteran son is an unforgettable lesson in commitment, fortitude, and unconditional love. This riveting and candid story sheds a brutal light on the challenges faced by many post-institutionalized children and their families, and assures them, ‘You are not alone. There is hope.’”

—Jessica O’Dwyer, author of *Mamalita: An Adoption Memoir*

“A searingly candid chronicle of the heroic struggle of two adoptive parents to raise their multiply disabled son.... A useful, inspiring cautionary tale for prospective adoptive parents.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

From *When Rain Hurts*

Adoption Day

My greatest hope, both then and now, was that we could in turn bestow this gift, this sense of belonging and place in line, to Peter and Sophie. So as I dressed that morning, rehearsing answers in my mind to questions about my suitability or desire to parent, a sense of calm emerged. I realized that Peter and Sophie were already a part of our family and just waiting to go home. They felt as much a part of me as the memories of my brother singing “White Wedding” at our reception (to the shock of a few and with riotous laughter from the rest), or the churning sensation of riding in the backward-facing seat of my mother’s station wagon, even the autumn afternoon in Tallahassee that I learned my father had terminal lung cancer. These children were already woven into the fabric of who I was, and who I might one day become.