

Waves of Grace

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by Patrick Doherty

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Date

LCCN: 2007049175

Doherty, Patrick (Patrick Jay), 1971-
Waves of Grace / by Patrick Doherty
p. cm.

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Marguerite escapes from problems at home by surfing off of North
Carolina's Outer Banks, but when her drunken mother's boyfriend tries to rape her, friends
provide support as she finally seeks the help she needs.

ISBN-13: 978-0-9744446-6-6 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-9744446-6-9

[1. Family problems—Fiction. 2. Surfing—Fiction. 3. High schools—Fiction. 4. Friendship—
Fiction. 5. Alcoholism—Fiction. 6. Outer Banks (N.C.)—Fiction.] I. Title.

PZ7.D69742Wav 2008

[Fic]—dc22

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Printed in the United States of America

All About Kids Publishing
9333 Benbow Drive
Gilroy, CA 95020
www.aakp.com

In general, this is dedicated to my students

In particular, this is dedicated to the memory of
William F. Doherty

Acknowledgements

Waves of gratitude to the following:

To my mother—my first teacher and editor; to cousin Chris Neal and Kim Neal of Boston, for allowing me to finish this novel in the upstairs study on a cold January evening; to Clifford, Waldsmith, Pfeiffer, and Rooney—tried and true friends for life; to G. Kelly and S. P. Kelly-surf-brothers, soul-brothers, and also true friends; to the HAT surf crew (you know who you are); to a living angel named Claudia who once saved me; to my immediate and extended family (my karate-do family, also); and finally, to five of the more resilient persons I've been honored to know—John Doherty, Hope Skinner, Sherman and Linda Harrill, and Patricia Farrell.

Chapter 1

Blankness. Nothingness. Emptiness of emotion.

Marguerite sat on the tip of her long board. The tail and back fin hung dangling just above the sand. The ankle-leash that connected her right leg to the fiberglass vessel snaked up to the back of the board. She looked at it with a desultory glance. She did not want to form a thought now—nor feel any emotion. She let the sound of the breaking waves and the occasional cry of a seagull fill her mind. Out of breath and half-exhausted after being in the water for two hours, Marguerite stared at the outer break of waves, her theme-park-ride for the last seven years.

To put her own thoughts into motion would just cause more pain and tears, and she had had enough of that. More than enough.

Too much, she thought at times.

Too much bad luck in the last few years. Too much fighting with her mom. Too much of nobody being there for her. Too much of schoolteachers coming down on her

for not living up to her potential. Too much of Rick...

God, what does my mother see in him?

Too much to sort out.

This moment by the shore was her temporary defense.

Just sit and look.

With her forearms crossed in front of her chest and her elbows on her knees, she looked down at the sand that dotted the right forearm of her black-and-blue wetsuit. Her hands were trembling from the fall chill, and she looked at the pink scar on the upper part of her right wrist, by her thumb-muscle. Its color was shifting to light purple, and she could feel her teeth chatter slightly.

The cold weather indicator shows it's time to get back in the water, girl.

She looked at the scar with a sort of half-pride—a built-in water thermometer. It was also a mark of a faded past—a mark of her resilience.

Scarred and bruised I go through life, she voiced internally. And scarred and bruised I tough it out.

Marguerite stood up, grabbed her surfboard, and tucked the inside rail under her left armpit. She untangled her leash and started for the shore break again. The waves had cleaned up considerably, and now broke in nice, five-foot glassy faces.

Time for one more session.

She found hope in those waves. Marguerite knew that much. Hope for a better life than what she was stuck with now. She had to get out of the box of chaos and turmoil that surrounded her. Its walls were becoming thicker, more ominous, and closer to concrete. She needed an escape, and soon. For now, hope was fifty yards out in front of her, just beyond the sandbar.

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