



# **The Memory Palace: A Memoir by Mira Bartok**

## **(2011-08-09)**

*Mira Bartok;*

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Publication Date: 2011 In the tradition of *The Glass Castle*, two sisters confront schizophrenia in this poignant literary memoir about family and mental illness. Through stunning prose and original art, *The Memory Palace* captures the love between mother and daughter, the complex meaning of truth, and family's capacity for forgiveness. "People have abandoned their loved ones for much less than you've been through," Mira Bartók is told at her mother's memorial service. It is a poignant observation about the relationship between Mira, her sister, and their mentally ill mother. Before she was struck with schizophrenia at the age of nineteen, beautiful piano protégé Norma Herr had been the most vibrant personality in the room. She loved her daughters and did her best to raise them well, but as her mental state deteriorated, Norma spoke less about Chopin and more about Nazis and her fear that her daughters would be kidnapped, murdered, or raped. When the girls left for college, the harassment escalated—Norma called them obsessively, appeared at their apartments or jobs, threatened to kill herself if they did not return home. After a traumatic encounter, Mira and her sister were left with no choice but to change their names and sever all contact with Norma in order to stay safe. But while Mira pursued her career as an artist—exploring the ancient romance of Florence, the eerie mysticism of northern Norway, and the raw desert of Israel—the haunting memories of her mother were never far away. Then one day, a debilitating car accident changes Mira's life forever. Struggling to recover from a traumatic brain injury, she was confronted with a need to recontextualize her life—she had to relearn how to paint, read, and interact with the outside world. In her search for a way back to her lost self, Mira reached out to the homeless shelter where she believed her mother was living and discovered that Norma was dying

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