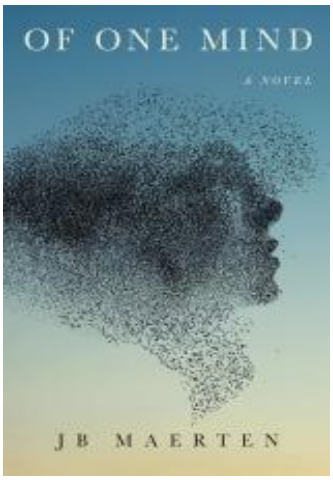
Of One Mind

by JB Maerten



About the Book

The life --- or death --- of a teen with a traumatic brain injury could be determined by a controversial experimental procedure that may unlock a previously undiscovered level of consciousness.

Kyle Nichols, a teenage baseball player with major-league potential, lies in a hospital bed after suffering a traumatic brain injury with a devastating twist. He is fully conscious and expected to survive but is completely paralyzed and unable to communicate. Kristen, Kyle?s mother, has no way to know his wishes, so she is forced into an unspeakable choice: transfer Kyle to a long-term care facility where he could linger for decades, mute and helpless, or provide him with a gentle death by ending his life support.

Although Kristen is wary of experimental procedures, Kyle?s beloved Uncle Owen pursues any treatment that might improve the boy?s quality of life. He connects with neuroscientist Dr. Rene Elder, whose new research is devoted to helping people with brain trauma regain their voices and agency. Her experiments uncover a radical new way to connect with patients, challenging Rene with revelations far beyond her imagination. As Rene and Owen rush to confirm the method?s potential for helping Kyle communicate his wishes, they face strong resistance from both Kristen and the medical establishment. Hanging in the balance is Kyle?s right to make this decision for himself: Life or death?

A brilliant debut novel that challenges all we know about consciousness and existence, OF ONE MIND explores the depths of love, loss, belief --- and the wonders of the universe.

Discussion Guide

1. Rene rejected Rob?s demand that an active church life be a priority when raising their children. How did you feel when she made that choice? Have differing views of religion and spirituality affected any of your relationships?

2. Rene had a difficult experience when she and Aisha tried the Witness. What would it be like to know exactly what someone else is experiencing? What would be the pros and cons of allowing someone else to know what you were thinking and feeling?

3. How did Kristen?s experiences with the deaths of her grandmother and best friend shape her view of end-of-life issues? What experiences have you had that shape your perspective on death?

4. What did you think about Kristen?s rejection of the Witness experience for Kyle? Was she making a reasonable choice, or was she letting her fears get the best of her?

5. Dr. Stauss was a talented neurosurgeon who saved Kyle?s life after a horrific accident. He was also a highly ambitious and arrogant researcher. How would you react if he were caring for someone you love?

6. Owen was Kyle?s surrogate father, at Kristen?s request. Was he overinvested in Kristen?s decisions? Did he have the right to override Kristen?s opposition to using the Witness with Kyle?

7. Rene and Owen each chose to take significant risks to honor Kyle?s autonomy and give him the opportunity to make his own life-or-death choice. How did their experiences with the Witness lead them to take those risks? Have you ever been faced with taking a big risk for someone else?s well-being?

8. Many people with disabilities report feeling discounted or undervalued. Have you or someone you know ever had that experience?

9. Kyle chose to die. Were you surprised? How did you feel about his decision? What might you have decided if you were in his position?

10. Rene predicted that she would face a culture war in the future as word of her discovery became public. Why did she think that? Do you agree?

11. What would be the implications for our society if the Witness technology was real? In what ways might the Witness be used in education, therapy, law enforcement or other arenas? What would change, and would those changes be for the better?

12. Compare the concept of a universal consciousness as an inherent part of reality with the concept of a personal god. What thoughts and feelings come up for you?

Author Bio

JB Maerten has long been committed to aligning her work with her personal values. Before turning to her passion for writing, she served people living with HIV/AIDS and, later, people experiencing homelessness. A lover of nature and the proud owner of a vivid imagination, JB explores dramas at the intersection of science and philosophy. OF ONE MIND is her first novel.

JB lives in Northern California with her wife and their two four-legged roommates. They enjoy taking long walks,

birdwatching and cheering for their favorite women?s basketball teams.

Critical Praise

"This heartfelt debut plunges into consciousness, connections, and overlapping mysteries of the mind and universe.... The novel pulses with wisdom and feeling."

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