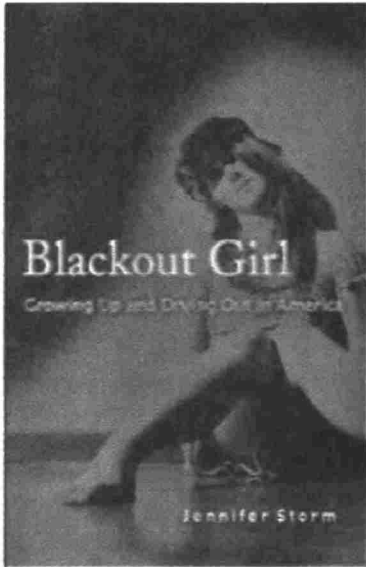


BOOK REVIEW



A journey of alcohol, drug abuse

Title: "Blackout Girl"
Author: Jennifer Storm
Pages: 206
Available: Online and book-sellers
By JOHN IRBY
Bismarck Tribune

A book galley was sent for review, and it was intriguing upon first glance. A somewhat eerie black cover with silver, white and red accented letters, and the words: "Blackout Girl: Growing Up and Drying Out in America." It was the life story of author Jennifer Storm.

The press release from Health Communications Inc. started out this way: "One in five teenagers has a drinking problem. At age 6, author Jennifer Storm was already stealing sips of her mother's creme de menthe. By age 13 she was binge drinking and well on her way to cocaine and LSD ..."



Irby

It seemed a perfect book to be reviewed in our citizen's book review program. And who better to review it than North Dakota's first lady, Mikey Hoeven, with her interest and hard work in educating the public to the hazards of teen drinking?

She graciously accepted, but after reading the book said she wasn't comfortable in submitting a review. She asked if I had read the book. "No," I said. She told me the book was a captivating read, hard to put down, but the author's was a terrible story with terrible things that had

happened to her.

Call me crazy, but that was all I needed to read the book. North Dakota's first lady was right on all fronts. As I read from chapter to chapter, my concentration was interrupted several times, complete with cringes, understanding what had made Mrs. Hoeven so uncomfortable.

"Blackout Girl" is a little more than 200 pages of nearly non-stop intensity. Storm holds nothing back in telling the story of her life — one no one should live — hooked on alcohol and drugs. Forget about the rapes — the first one at the age of 12 — physical violence and other self-mutilating or self-injurious behaviors Storm faced and took. It seemed that from the time she started drinking to the day she became sober, she was constantly cheating death.

"I often opened her pill bottle when she wasn't looking and watched these pills spill out into my hand. Even then I sensed that they had great power. ... I hated these pills, yet was totally fascinated by them. ... My mommy had to take these pills in order to deal with life because of me."

That confession early in the book showed a young girl taking the first steps down a long and wrong road. It also was the first of many references to a more-than-strained dysfunctional
See Irby, 2C

