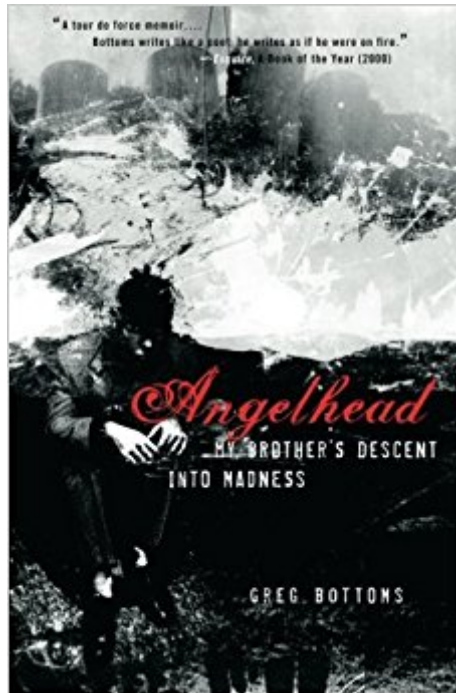




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Angelhead: My Brother's Descent Into Madness



Synopsis

A taut, powerful memoir of madness, *Angelhead* documents the violent, drug-addled descent of the author's brother, Michael, into schizophrenia. Beginning with Michael's first psychotic break "seeing God in his suburban bedroom window while high on LSD" Greg Bottoms recounts, in gripping, dramatic prose, the bizarre disappearances, suicide attempts, and the shocking crime that land Michael in the psychiatric wing of a maximum security prison. A work of nonfiction with the form and imagery of a novel, *Angelhead* enables the reader to witness not only the fragmenting of a mind, but of a family as well. "A tour-de-force memoir. . . . Bottoms writes like a poet, he writes like he is on fire." *Esquire*, Book of the Year, 2000 "Angelhead is a brilliant, albeit inconceivably sad book. The fact that Bottoms survived the ordeal is incredible. But the fact that he could write about it with such pathos and insight is nothing less than extraordinary." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* "Greg Bottoms has provided a biographical novel about his brother that may be as close as most of us will ever get to knowing what it is to be truly mad. *Angelhead* is a story nearly as terrifying as the disease it describes." *Psychology Today*

Book Information

Paperback: 227 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press (June 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226067645

ISBN-13: 978-0226067643

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 53 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #479,640 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #166 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Reference & Collections #184 in Books > Parenting & Relationships > Family Relationships > Siblings #813 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Mental Illness

Customer Reviews

When he was 10 years old, the author watched as his brother Michael lost his mind. High on LSD and screaming uncontrollably because God was torturing him, the 14-year-old smashed everything in his bedroom, his feet red with blood from broken glass. Michael collected snakes and let them slither around his naked body; he beat Greg nearly senseless, then smashed his own forehead into a sharp branch in repentance; he stayed up all night, watching Christian television or "puzzling over

his strange and cruel distance from God." Their parents, preoccupied by the ceaseless work that had taken them from a dirt-poor Virginia town to an affluent suburb that they really couldn't afford, thought drugs the problem and throwing Michael out the answer. Not until 1977, when he was 21, did they learn that he was an acute paranoid schizophrenic, so severely mentally ill that he probably would never be healed, although medication might control his behavior. Michael became increasingly dangerous, but could not be institutionalized against his will; when he set their house on fire in 1993, the father's reaction was relief: "This was the best thing that could have happened.... He'll be put away." He was, and, Bottoms acknowledges, "We've all found a peace without Michael that we're not willing to give up." There's no false sentiment in this unflinching memoir of a family that's alienated, instead of united, by tragedy: "We all hid from each other," Bottoms writes with characteristic candor. "We shared a space, a roof, nothing else." There is, however, tremendous sorrow for a blighted life and the havoc that it wrought. Bottoms's finely crafted prose offers no consolation or easy answers--simply emotional precision and the satisfaction of hard truth. --Wendy Smith --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

One of the most harrowing portraits of madness in recent memory, Bottoms's memoir documents the unraveling of his older brother in skillful, off-center prose. The chaos of mental deterioration, family denial, God obsession and terror begins in the 1980s, in the Bottomses' suburban home in Tidewater, Va. Fourteen-year-old Michael, high on LSD, believes he sees the face of God and briefly descends into a psychotic fit. From there, Bottoms follows his brother's fall from sanity in a series of misadventures that carve away Michael's humanity: homelessness; suicide attempts with Drano and hanging; sudden disappearances, sometimes to other states. The boy's parents watch his mental vanishing act with stoicism, more worried about the opinions of their prosperous neighbors than the health of their son. When Michael rapidly falls apart after a brutal trauma, the family's rage and frustration corrodes most of their remaining goodwill: he is jeopardizing their hard-won facade of happiness, destroying their hopes for normalcy. Throughout the book, Bottoms, whose work has appeared in the online magazines Salon, Feed and Nerve, candidly discloses his feelings of shame, fear and sympathy for his brother, as well as his disdain for his parents' handling of the crisis. Though the prose is occasionally flat in comparison to the crises it recounts, and bookstore browsers will have to get past the lackluster jacket, this memoir will rivet readers in their 20s and 30s who are interested in schizophrenia. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book clearly illustrates how mental illness can literally wreck a family. The complete lack of available resources to families is just terrible. Having a child-who becomes an adult- with a violent and frightening disease is absolute torture for a family to endure. There are no resources or answers. Only after torching their home is the violent son finally placed in a facility. Prior to that-threats, violence-pretty much nothing is done to help this family. This book cries out -screams- about the need to deal with these situations. Also another valid point-sometimes the illness is so disastrous and dangerous that these individuals simply must be confined. Very sad-but very true. Families should not be subject to the whims of a very disturbed and scary human being. Many of us are completely unaware of how little help there is for the mentally ill- until it strikes our own families.

Angelhead is a story about what it is like for family to be around and have to deal with mental illness. I imagine that many families have, or know someone, who has or has had to deal with mental illness on some levels. Michael has schizophrenia and this is a story of what that meant to his brothers and parents. Schizophrenia in Michael's case is very severe and has a tremendous toll on his family. I enjoyed the book overall. It was great to see a family's side of things and I cannot imagine how hard the author's life had to be or how hard this book was to write. This is not an easy book to read so be mindful of that before picking it up. There are parts that even made me uneasy and I often read things like this. It is brutally truthful however and that is what makes it a great story and book.

Best book I ever read

Other reviewers here do a fine job discussing the medical and psychological aspects of Greg Bottoms' work. I want to make a brief comment about the writing...These 200 pages are as pure a lesson on "How to Write" as you will ever encounter. Page after page of pure, clean, unfiltered thought. Not a single word seems to be wasted. Not a single word rings false. A brilliant, captivating work that deserves a much wider audience. Despite its stark subject matter and shocking conclusion, 'Angelhead' is a book that we need to press into the hands of friends and co-workers.

Kudos to mom in this story, never giving up and to Greg for having the courage to write about his families challenges. Until your directly effected by mental illness, it's hard to believe this stuff happens.

The book came in great condition. I am still reading, I wouldn't have bought the book if it was for my psychology teacher recommending us to read it in order to understand mental disorder in this perspective.

I bought this as an Ebook for my Kindle. I read it in one sitting, could not put it down. It evoked every emotion within me. It made me question as a Mom my own decisions and desire to keep up with the neighbors. I learned it's OK to not be perfect. A must read for all. Thank you Greg Bottoms.

A harrowing tale of one family's suffering through their son's mental disorder (schizophrenia). Told from his brother's perspective, I found it fascinating, but sad. It was a quick read for me. I would recommend it if you are interested in how mental illness can disrupt an entire family, but there are no real answers here. Parts of it are disturbing.

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