



Sickened: The True Story of a Lost Childhood

By Julie Gregory

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A young girl is perched on the cold chrome of yet another doctor's examining table, missing yet another day of school. Just twelve, she's tall, skinny, and weak. It's four o'clock, and she hasn't been allowed to eat anything all day. Her mother, on the other hand, seems curiously excited. She's about to suggest open-heart surgery on her child to "get to the bottom of this." She checks her teeth for lipstick and, as the doctor enters, shoots the girl a warning glance. This child will not ruin her plans.

Sickened

From early childhood, Julie Gregory was continually X-rayed, medicated, and operated on—in the vain pursuit of an illness that was created in her mother's mind. Munchausen by proxy (MBP) is the world's most hidden and dangerous form of child abuse, in which the caretaker—almost always the mother—invents or induces symptoms in her child because she craves the attention of medical professionals. Many MBP children die, but Julie Gregory not only survived, she escaped the powerful orbit of her mother's madness and rebuilt her identity as a vibrant, healthy young woman.

Sickened is a remarkable memoir that speaks in an original and distinctive Midwestern voice, rising to indelible scenes in prose of scathing beauty and fierce humor. Punctuated with Julie's actual medical records, it re-creates the bizarre cocoon of her family's isolated double-wide trailer, their wild shopping sprees and gun-waving confrontations, the astonishing naïveté of medical professionals and social workers. It also exposes the twisted bonds of terror and love that roped Julie's family together—including the love that made a child willing to sacrifice herself to win her mother's happiness.

The realization that the sickness lay in her mother, not in herself, would not come to Julie until adulthood. But when it did, it would strike like lightning. Through her painful metamorphosis, she discovered the courage to save her own life—and, ultimately, the life of the girl her mother had found to replace her.

Sickened takes us to new places in the human heart and spirit. It is an unforgettable story, unforgettably told.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A painful but wonderfully written memoir that should create greater awareness of a bizarre disorder... Keen self-awareness, a sharp eye for details, and an original, poetic voice."

--Kirkus Reviews

"This story of unfathomable child abuse is told with remarkable wit, compassion, and courage. It's a work of beauty from a beast of a childhood."

--Augusten Burroughs, author of *Running with Scissors* and *Dry*

"Like some Diane Arbus photograph come to life, Julie Gregory's *Sickened* offers us a portrait of quintessential American Disturbos in all their tender, heinous can't-look-and-can't-look-away glory. A miraculous book by a woman whose very survival is itself a miracle."

--Jerry Stahl, author of *Permanent Midnight*

"Set in a southern-culture-on-the-skids world reminiscent of J.T. Leroy, *Sickened* is written with a lyrical directness that is both riveting and horrific. Julie Gregory reminds us that those who find the courage to slay the dragons of their past and stop the cycle of abuse are the true heroes of the world."

--Ann Magnuson, actress, singer, writer

"A stunning account by a courageous woman who journeyed from the depths of hell to reclaim her own power and worth. Julie Gregory casts an extraordinary beacon of healing. You will be hearing a lot about this one."

--Alan Cohen, author of *I Had It All the Time*

"A born storyteller with perfect pitch, Julie Gregory guides the reader through this surreal form of cruelty, in which the ultimate weapon is the scalpel, with originality, gusto and heart-stopping courage."

--Sylvia Fraser, author of *My Father's House: A Memoir of Incest and of Healing*

"Gripping self-disclosure by a remarkable young woman . . . *Sickened* will surely and *finally* impact the proper diagnosis and treatment of children caught in the terror of MBP."

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"This searing and beautiful memoir represents a genuine triumph of the human spirit."

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From the Inside Flap

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bobby McCabe:

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Ward Beaver:

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Brenda Evans:

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Teresa Obannon:

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