



The Brutal Truth

Jonathan Harnisch

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A collection of personal essays exploring the author's experiences battling schizophrenia and other mental illnesses. Prolific writer and filmmaker Harnisch (Porcelain Utopia, 2016, etc.) explores his personal struggle with mental disorders in this short collection of autobiographical pieces that he originally wrote for his "online community dedicated to mental health." Throughout his adult life, he writes, he's received myriad diagnoses from doctors, including PTSD, depression, and schizoaffective disorder. His book elucidates the day-to-day activities of a person who suffers from such conditions, and the author mentions frequent communication with therapists, a demanding cigarette addiction, and many sleepless nights. At times, the prose is hard to parse and the content can feel repetitive. However, the author shares some incredible insights into what it's like to suffer from the rarely understood symptoms of schizophrenia. In one essay, for example, he describes his experience of paranoia: "We have become the target of a vast conspiracy stretching on invisible webs....It lives in the telephone wires, the cell towers, the papers, and even online....It nests in the hearts and minds of my family, friends, and loved ones." He also sheds light on what it's like to suffer from delusions: "Symbols, mythology, and connections, even coincidences, take on a very deep and personal meaning, a very deep and personal context." Ultimately, although this work is challenging and heavy, it's also uplifting, as the author never loses hope for recovery; instead, he remains tirelessly optimistic: "I keep moving ahead, as always, knowing deep down inside that I am a good person and that I am worthy of a good life." A courageous, if difficult, self-portrait of one man's suffering, as well as his hope for recovery.

-- Kirkus Reviews

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