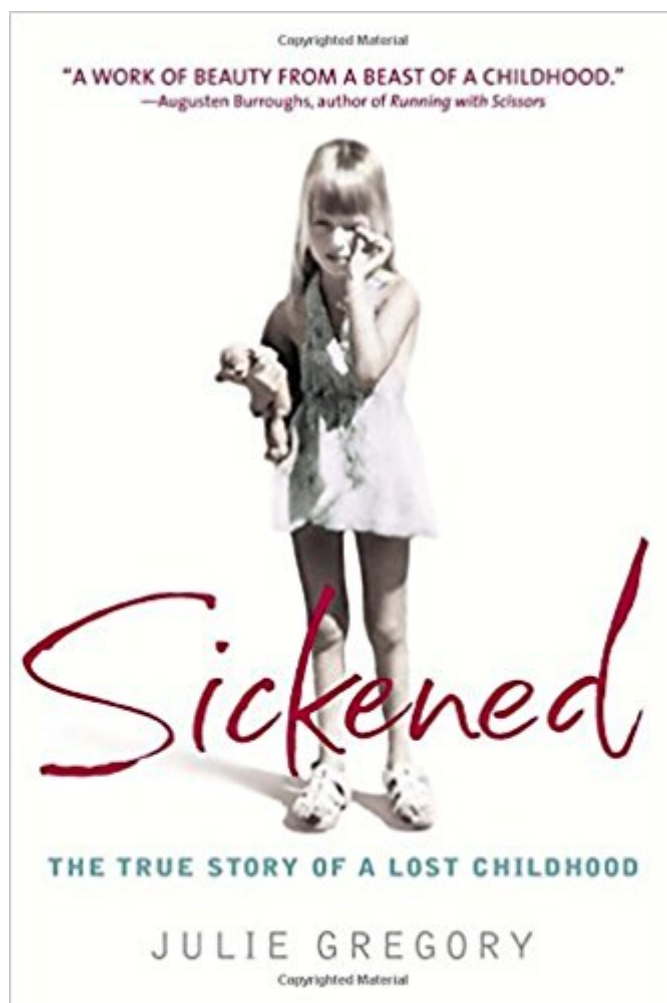


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Sickened: The True Story Of A Lost Childhood



Synopsis

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 naivety 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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Customer Reviews

"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." --Chris Monaco, Ph.D., Director, Childhelp USA National Child Abuse Hotline

"This searing and beautiful memoir represents a genuine triumph of the human spirit." --Marc D. Feldman, M.D. From the Hardcover edition.

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A well written book by a victim of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. My only criticism is that the reader is left at the end really wanting to know the outcome of a confrontation between daughter and mother. Otherwise it's a fascinating story and the author writes well so that it's compelling to read, believable, and even allows reader to have some empathy for the perpetrator of this illness, because it is mental illness. I hope the author can deliver a another version with perhaps a resolution, or further development of the story after confrontation. Is there the possibility of healing between mother and daughter? Or has mother died or otherwise been unavailable? That would seem likely if mother doesn't wish to look at the truth or won't cooperate, but even that is a story. It's such an awful thing to look back at a portion of life, a large portion, wasted in such futile and meaningless efforts. I hope the author can find some peace with this and come to healing. The reason I think I am hooked by it is that I have been writing about my own mother, who was not a

child abuser by any stretch of the imagination, but who I had a difficult relationship with and felt myself to be a sort of scapegoat out of a large family. I have come to peace with this, and am on good terms with my mother. But the whole process of delving into her life prior to my arrival on the scene gave me greater understanding of her need to control. I would certainly be interested in knowing more of the mother's background in this book. Thanks for a great read and for taking the time to write it well.

Too Real. My heart broke many times over. Sadly, I could see how the woman (I can't bring myself to call her a Mother) got by with it because children love, trust, and want to obey....Add to that all her reading of medical books, she was saying she was looking for "answers", but really she was studying, "learning" more and more about questions to ask and how to fool the Drs.!! I would really love to have an update on this family since this book was published. Is there a website or blog?

I was unable to set this one down until I finished it. Admittedly, the end was somewhat slower than the rest of the book, but it really helps the reader to understand how the main character moves forward and copes with her early life. I have read about numerous cases of Münchausen syndrome by-proxy, but this is the first time I have encountered a story that details how the perpetrator progresses from a seemingly normal person all the way to a psychologically, emotionally and physically abusive monster. I got chills reading some of this victim's earlier medical encounters that occurred solely due to the insistence of her mother, after years of routine medical encounters that make the mother seem like any other overbearing parents who takes their kid to the pediatrician. Prepare to be uncomfortable as you read one of the most insightful pieces of literature you'll ever encounter on this topic. Prepare to grow with the author as she relives and shares her dark story from the beginning all the way through to her epiphany moment when she realizes what has happened to her. This is one of the most real works I have ever read.

If it's a powerful story you are looking for, this is it. Julie Gregory suffered immensely at the hands of both of her parents throughout her childhood. But it was her mother's constant quest to find out "what was wrong" with her daughter that led both of them to countless doctors and specialists and Julie to endure embarrassing, ridiculous, painful, and extremely ridiculous medical procedures. To take a healthy child and put her through what she endured is sick, disgusting, and despicable. Woven with blinks of humor at times, this memoir truly makes you feel as though you are reading Julie's diary or at least taking a peek into her brutal world. My stomach was in knots as I

imagined the fear, the frustration, and the constant drive as a child to please her mother that this poor child felt. That the people most expected to protect us can end up being our worst nightmare is truly one of this book's themes. I truly hope this book makes every reader more aware of Munchausen by proxy syndrome and the toll it can exact on a child. The end result could have been an early grave. Fortunately, Julie is alive to tell her story.

I thank Julie Gregory for the exceptional opportunity of a rare inside glimpse of Munchausen by proxy. This is a fascinating read which I could not put down. I cried numerous times and in the end, I am awed by her inner strength. Surviving through MBP, physical, emotional, and verbal abuse throughout childhood is no easy feat, but to heal and become a healthy well balanced human being is the exception, not the rule. I have had a life-long interest in somewhat obscure psychiatric disorders, MBP being among them. I've never before seen anything on the subject written by a survivor of this form of child abuse. Most children die long before adulthood. On the upside, I do believe there is more of an awareness today in the pediatric field of medicine. It's certainly nowhere near the level needed. Hopefully, with first-person accounts such as this, people in general, and physicians especially, will become much more aware, making these cases more readily identified.

This is a very painful true story but once you begin reading, you cannot stop! Julie Gregory is an amazingly strong person & talented writer. Her ability to describe her deeply troubled childhood is breathtaking - but not in a storybook way. The fact that Julie survived at all is astounding. Her experiences are not for the faint of heart but need to be told. Julie has not only survived an unbelievably horrible early life, she has triumphed in spite of it & has risen from the ashes! Through this profoundly disturbing book, Julie has found a way to help others by exposing the brutal truth about MBP! This is a "must read" if you have any involvement with children especially in the foster care system. I have read many books about child abuse but none quite as shocking - or oddly inspiring - as this one!

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