



Angelhead: My Brother's Descent into Madness

Greg Bottoms

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"My brother saw the face of God. You never recover from a trauma like that."

So begins **Angelhead**, a taut, powerful memoir of the madness and crime that rips a family apart.

"I didn't see God, of course, but I saw my brother seeing God; I saw how petrified he was, how convinced."

Set in Tidewater, Virginia, in the 1980s and early 1990s, **Angelhead** documents the violent, drug-addled, schizophrenic descent of the author's brother, Michael. Commencing with Michael's first psychotic break at age 14 -- high on acid, seeing God in his suburban bedroom window -- through a series of petty crimes, bizarre disappearances, and suicide attempts to the shocking crime that landed him in the psychiatric wing of a maximum security prison, **Angelhead** enables us to witness firsthand, as never before, the fragmenting of a mind and a family.

"I knew, still know, that he saw, in some form, His or Her or Its face."

Bottoms shows, in pitch-perfect prose and with great empathy and dramatic tension, the psychological decline of his brother as he becomes obsessed first with heavy metal music, martial arts, and the occult, and then with the more bizarre aspects of Christianity. We not only see the effects Michael's odd and increasingly violent behavior has on the people around him, but also come to understand how the author, now a successful writer and journalist, used the power of language and storytelling both to save himself and to forgive his brother. With the fast pace and seamless structure of the best crime writing and the moral sophistication and depth of our finest literature, **Angelhead** will challenge what we know about mental illness and its impact on us all. It is a brilliant work of unusual intensity.

"In his room he was having his first of many psychotic breaks. It came in the form of crippling guilt, ruthless introspection. He was Jesus being scolded by an angry Father. He wore sin, all sin, heavy as lead shackles. God made him look at himself and he was a stone with a minuscule heart."

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