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HURRY DOWN SUNSHINE

a memoir

by MICHAEL GREENBERG

Named one of the “BEST BOOKS OF 2008” by
Time, Library Journal, Shelf Awareness, St. Louis Post-Dispatch,
and Amazon.com

“Greenberg, a native New Yorker and columnist for the *Times Literary Supplement*, writes with unflinching honesty and heart. He brilliantly renders daily life in a Manhattan psych ward.... The result is a startling piece of writing, by turns sobering and surreal.”

—Booklist (starred review)

“Greenberg’s elegiac, beautifully crafted memoir

chronicles the summer his teenaged daughter, Sally, lost her mind to madness.... At times acutely painful, at times painfully funny, his story alternates between the progression of Sally’s bewildering, frightening decline and Greenberg’s own at times comically absurd experience.”

—Library Journal (starred review)

Already sold in fourteen countries and with an excerpt in the September issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*, **HURRY DOWN SUNSHINE**, by noted *TLS* columnist Michael Greenberg, is no ordinary memoir. In recounting what happens, what is felt, what is seen, and what is, when his daughter is struck mad at the age of 15, Greenberg does with madness what Joan Didion did with grief in *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Possessing the immediacy of memoir, but written with the grace and sensitivity of the best novels, **HURRY DOWN SUNSHINE** offers a story that is both engaging and erudite; a cast of characters both colorful and stunningly real; and writing at once transparent and transcendent.

Beginning with Sally’s crack up on a West Village street on July 5, 1996, and spanning the course of that summer, Greenberg reconstructs in vivid detail Sally’s break from reality and her descent into psychosis. From one day to the next, says Greenberg, “Sally became another person. She was speaking a language that I didn’t speak, she could not hear the language that I spoke to her. We were in separate worlds.”

(continued)

On that July evening, Sally was brought home by the police after rushing into a busy street in Greenwich Village, convinced she could halt the oncoming traffic. The mania had come over her abruptly: her habit of poring obsessively over poems late into the night or listening to music on her battered walkman for hours could be considered ‘normal’ teenage behavior, and yet it was a clue to the internal tumult that was about to overwhelm her.

And so just a few days later Greenberg found himself in the surreal world of a Manhattan psychiatric ward during the city’s most sweltering months. Shocked and bewildered, he tried to make sense of what had happened—perhaps this illness had been Sally’s genetic inheritance; perhaps, as a writer, he hadn’t been able to provide the secure and stable home she needed. But as he watched the other concerned families on the ward and took in their shared experience more deeply, he began to realize that the answers to his questions were not so simple.

Orbiting and overlapping the story of Sally’s illness are the stories of Greenberg’s wife, Sally’s stepmother, whose loving but tense relationship with Sally evolves into true familial connection; his brother, whose own bouts of mental illness had shaped the dynamic of the family; and his mother, whose revelation of a painful secret from her own life casts the events of that turbulent summer in a new light.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Native New Yorker, Michael Greenberg dropped out of school when he was sixteen and went to Argentina where he worked as a reporter during the infamous Dirty War. Since 2003 he has worked as a columnist for the *Times Literary Supplement* of London, writing feuilleton-style essays about New York and the often excruciating ironies of the writer’s existence. He has also contributed many critical essays and cover stories to the *TLS*. Greenberg’s fiction and essays have appeared in the *Village Voice*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Forward*, *Bomb*, *Departures*, and *The Boston Review*.

As a screenwriter and “script doctor” he has worked with photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank, writer/director Rudy Wurlitzer, South American filmmaker Sergio Castilla, and director David Atkins (on the movie *Novocain*, starring Steve Martin.) Director Jonathan Nossiter (winner of the 1997 Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, and more recently the director of *Mondovino*) has recently optioned one of Greenberg’s stories.

HURRY DOWN SUNSHINE

a memoir by **Michael Greenberg**

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