



The Bitter Taste of Dying: A Memoir

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In his first book, author Jason Smith explores the depravity and desperation required to maintain an opiate addiction so fierce, he finds himself jumping continents to avoid jail time and learns the hard way that some demons cannot be outrun.

While teaching in Europe, he meets a prostitute who secures drugs for him at the dangerous price of helping out the Russian mafia; in China, he gets his Percocet and Xanax fix but terrifies a crowd of children and parents at his job in the process; and in Mexico, Smith thought a Tijuana jail cell would be the perfect place to kick his Fentanyl habit, but soon realizes that the power of addiction is stronger than his desire to escape it.

The Bitter Taste of Dying paints a portrait of the modern day drug addict with clarity and refreshing honesty. With a gritty mixture of self-deprecation and light-hearted confessional, Smith's memoir deftly describes the journey into the harrowing depths of addiction and demonstrates the experience of finally being released from it.

"Jason is a great writer who's clearly done the life-destroying research that I can relate to. This is the voice of a new generation of drug addicts." – Jerry Stahl, NY Times bestselling author of Permanent Midnight and Happy Mutant Baby Pills

The Bitter Taste of Dying: A Memoir Details

Date : Published July 2015 by Thought Catalog

ISBN :

Author : Jason Smith

Format : Kindle Edition 210 pages

Genre : Autobiography, Memoir, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review The Bitter Taste of Dying: A Memoir for online ebook

Lauren says

I really enjoyed reading this--it's the latest in the Awesome Addict Memoirs rabbit hole I've fallen down this year (and am loving!). This guy's story is tragic and crazy; he writes with an honesty that is sharp and captivating. I was a little skeptical of the high reviews at first, but now that I'm finished with the book, I totally get it.

Stacey Krummenacker says

This book is beautifully written, honest and heart breaking account of the pain that is addiction. Jason pulled no punches in his retelling of his addiction. I couldn't put the book down and I finished it in just a few hours.

Sky Fuller says

I've been avoiding this book as I figured it would be too dark and painful. Had a few hours to kill yesterday and breezed through it. Wouldn't quite call it uplifting but certainly not the depressing tale I was expecting - and it ends on a very positive note. It's a great firsthand account of prescription medication addiction that could happen to anyone. The author was a clean cut kid, good student, stellar athlete, from an intact family - who suffered through a 16 year pain medication addiction as a result of a football injury at age 17.

The language is rotten and I know lots of people who wouldn't be able to finish the book as a result of that. This aspect was slightly disappointing. I think I was more drawn to this story because the author is from my home town. Otherwise, I would have probably put it down and opted for a memoir that told the same story but stuck to higher literary standards.

If nothing else it's worth reading the 5 page afterword & acknowledgements. There is a really great paragraph that describes the superior problem solving abilities of drug addicts, who can use the same skills they used to feed their habits, to do something positive in the community - if given a chance once clean. Definitely gave me a much needed new perspective on this problem.

Thanks to whomever recommended it to me. Can't remember but I know a few people did and I was quick to dismiss the recommendation as something that wouldn't work for me.

Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted illegally.)

So what's the most heartbreaking thing about the times we live in, when there have been literally hundreds of millions of books published at this point and several million more getting printed every single year? Well,

that would be that, no matter how intriguing or shocking or riveting a true story any particular person has lived through by now, there have already been thousands of books already published on that exact subject, making the chances likely that many of them are better than the newest one being penned. Take Jason Smith's *The Bitter Taste of Dying*, for an unfortunately perfect example; for while Smith absolutely gets an A for his earnestness and honesty when detailing a heroin addiction that consumed him in his youth, the simple fact is that there wasn't a single thing in this entire volume that I haven't already read dozens of times by other writers over the years, and Smith's beginner, single-sentence-paragraph writing style just can't hold a candle to such authors as Jim Carroll or William S. Burroughs who have written so much more powerfully and poetically about this subject. It used to be that the mere fact that Smith actually lived through this tale made it inherently worth reading; but unfortunately this is 2016 when such a statement is no longer true, and it makes me sad to have to admit that Smith's undoubtedly intense experience simply doesn't come across here as very literary or very readable. It is not recommended to a general audience; although as always with books like these, it's well worth the time of someone battling a drug addiction themselves and who wishes to get yet another outsider's perspective on it.

Out of 10: **5.5**, or **7.5** for recovering drug addicts

Jami says

Wow. This book really grabs onto you and doesn't let go. I was very excited for this book as I have followed Jason's writings on the prescription drug epidemic (and other short stories on Medium) for some time. First and foremost, Jason is a natural storyteller and I am quite certain that he could write a mundane story about going to the grocery store that would be interesting, thought-provoking, and make you laugh out loud. But this is no mundane story. As someone who has not personally struggled with drug addiction, this was a fascinating read and I felt like I was right there along for the journey...which was honestly terrifying at times. The ride was scary and heart-breaking but also funny and enjoyable, and I couldn't put it down. It is a rare author that can combine all of those things into one book. I have read other autobiographical works regarding addiction that were interesting to read but none felt as heartfelt and authentic as this. I knew Jason when he was that football star and I never would have guessed all that he was going through and continued to go through. Words can't express how glad I am that he is still here to tell his story (or should I say stories). Bottom line, I see more great things to come from Jason and cannot wait for his next book!!

Judy Herzanek says

A Wild Ride: Disturbing, frightening while brutally honest, witty and sarcastic.

Author Jason Smith has a rare talent . . . and an amazing story. *The Bitter Taste of Dying* is his memoir of addiction, struggle, despair, discovery and ultimately, recovery. The book is engaging, brutally honest, dead serious while at the same time, sarcastic and "laugh-out-loud funny."

The Bitter Taste of Dying leaves the reader with graphic mental images of life and death, struggle and surrender. We witness the insidiousness of addiction as it slowly and completely consumes Jason.

Jason describes the all-consuming nature of drug addiction:

"Drug addiction is a love affair, pure and simple. It's hot, and passionate, and seductive, and engrossing. It's captivating, in that it makes an addict think about the drug non-stop, never content because you know what you have won't last, regardless of the size of the most recent score. Maintaining addiction is a game of chess,

ever contemplating the NEXT move, the NEXT score, for fear that when what you have is gone, you'll be without."

He describes the moment he realized he was addicted:

"The drugs didn't get me high anymore. They just kept me from being sick. It's like the drugs have turned on you, refusing to hold up their end of the bargain. No matter how much I did, I couldn't get high. I went from chasing a high to running from a detox."

And we read about an ingenious little trick he learned from watching an episode of the "Intervention A&E series."

"I never thought of doing drugs like that.

It took about 30 seconds, and when it hit, it hit hard.

Wooooosh.

Euphoria, Instant Euphoria.

For the first time in a year, I FELT SOMETHING. Sure, the high was great. But I was just relieved to be able to feel again. I had energy. I could eat. I could leave the house. I could interact with people again. I had life."

Just when we are sure Jason will "reach his bottom" and turn his life around, he veers off onto another detour. Through his honest "no-holds-barred" descriptions, we ever-so-slightly, glimpse into his dark world. "I wanted to stop with every fiber of my being, but could not. Nothing obliterates the human spirit and self-esteem more than using a substance against your own will, while hating every second of it. I was homeless, living outside of a train station, stealing bread and drinking from public toilets. And when given money to survive, to eat, to re-hydrate, to live like a civilized primate, I chose the drugs."

The vivid memories of his time spent incarcerated and detoxing alone in a Tijuana jail cell is disturbing and frightening.

He speaks of his fear of withdrawal:

"The only thing worse than a journey through hell is knowing that you're about to go on a journey through hell."

16 years later, Jason finally got clean and sober. He writes:

"It took me losing everything to appreciate anything."

This memoir reveals great gems of wisdom as it nears the conclusion. Through powerful and painful episodes with his wise, experienced sponsor, Jason eventually learns what it takes to stay clean and sober and truly comes to know that "you help yourself by helping others."

An excellent read and source of hope and wisdom.

~Judy Herzanek/Changing Lives Foundation

Co-author of: Why Don't They Just Quit? What families and friends need to know about addiction and recovery.

Karla says

A candid look at the extraordinary lengths an addict will go to to feed the flames of their addiction, and how far they will continue to go long after logic, reason, and everything and everyone they ever loved has left

them.

For the addict, this book is a chance to see the similarities.

For the co-addict, this book is a chance to understand the choices, or truly the lack of choice, that addicts have when caught in the throes of their addiction.

For everyone, it is a chance to read a good story well told.

For anyone that has been around addiction in any shape or form, there are so many relatable moments. I love the analogy of 'now me', 'tomorrow me', and 'yesterday me', and the clarity when describing his part in things. I've found myself sharing parts of his book or recommending it to people on an almost daily basis since I finished it. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and I can't wait for the next one from Jason!!

Margaret Carpenter says

Thank you Jason Smith, for inviting us to read about your incredible story. Having been around addiction for most of my adult life, I found your story intriguing and very emotional. I would highly recommend The Bitter Taste of Dying to anyone. Thank You!

Katie says

review to come, but excellent book.

Lindsay says

Incredible story about what an addicts life is and becomes. Quick and enlightening read. Thanks Jason (a high school classmate) for having the courage to tell your story so publicly. I am so glad you ended up on the other side.

Jen from Quebec :0) says

Fantastic! A memoir that read like a real, structured NOVEL. Further review to come! --Jen from Quebec :0)

Michael Klein says

An amazing journey of one man's struggle for 16 years to rid himself of addiction.

I struggle with drugs myself and have a daughter struggling with alcohol addiction, so for me this journey, this life story was very poignant. I could not put this book down. Even if you never struggled with addiction, you still will enjoy the read, however it is easier to identify with the author, when you've faced the

demons yourself. Thank you Jason for sharing this touching, grueling and at times embarrassing story of your life.

Christa Wojo says

Just a few years ago, Jason Smith was lying in his bloody bathtub, the blood slowly draining from his slit wrists. Now he is here to tell us how he reached the point of suicide after his long, dark descent into prescription opiate abuse. *The Bitter Taste Dying* is a story of resurrection told by an author who has literally come back from the black grip of death.

Today's junkies are not just on the street corner anymore. Big Pharma are the suppliers, and doctors are the pushers, cultivating (perhaps inadvertently, but that's debatable) a massive population of addicts from all demographics.

After a severe car accident, Smith has back surgery and is given a perpetual menu of painkillers and muscle relaxers by his physicians. It doesn't take long for the high schooler to realize that by taking more than the recommended dosage, he could obtain the warm, euphoric mental and physical comfort only opiates can bring. But all too soon he also discovers the pangs of withdrawal whenever his medication runs out.

If anyone has difficulty understanding what an addict feels like, Smith describes it with painful accuracy. "You know that feeling of having your head held under water, the last of your oxygen depleted, where every fiber of your being screams at you to get to the surface for more air? That's the feeling of needing more drugs..."

As Smith grows into a man, his addiction grows to mammoth proportions and he must go through heroic efforts to keep himself in pills and Fentanyl patches. Smith tells the story in an approachable, conversational tone that may have you laughing out loud at some parts. As horrendous as it is watching how far he would go and how morally low he would sink to get more drugs, it's difficult not to marvel at his ingenuity and boldness.

Smith also writes with tender honesty and cutting unabashedness that is rare in any writer, much less any human being. The reader immediately feels very close to him, making his shocking confessions feel like blows.

The Bitter Taste of Dying is an important book that underscores the urgency with which society has to address the prescription drug abuse epidemic. It allows us to watch with uncomfortable closeness how easy it is to develop an addiction to pain medication and how quickly and mercilessly it can devour one's entire life.

From aspiring football star to international criminal, Smith shows us step by step how opiate addiction can happen to anyone you know, and very likely destroy them. Most importantly, *The Bitter Taste of Dying* reveals the light at the end of the tunnel—even the most hopeless addict can make it out alive.

Lyvierre says

I loved this book, read it all in one sit. He's brutally honest, and starts to conceptualize the rationale of a modern day drug addict. He vividly describes the lengths he will go to to feed his addiction. He has a very

powerful message in the mentality of why relationships fail when you are an addict. A definite recommendation.

Amber says

Absolutely awesome! If I read a book in a day, I know it was one of the top books I've read. Jason's writing was very sincere and cut to the chase. The book seems to be a truthful account of someone's life stuck in addiction without an overly exaggerated "pink cloud" for an ending. I'm not spoiling it, but I appreciate the writing as well as Jason's openness in this book. It is his story without filler words or chapters...every chapter had me hanging on to the book to get through to the next and I couldn't put it down! Thanks for sharing your story, Jason. I hope your life continues in the direction you dream for!
