

113 Days: Time Served

Bradley Good

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113 Days is a memoir as well as an invitation to grow in understanding what it's like to live with mental illness.

Bradley Good's memoir of mental illness, *113 Days*, falls to rock bottom and then climbs back to health.

How did I get here? That's the question that echoed in Good's mind when he found himself in the Los Angeles County Jail, beginning a stay of 113 days. During his time in jail and in writing this narrative, he attempts to answer that question. To do so, he confronts his past, his father, the choices he's made, and, most poignantly, the bipolar disorder that caused his life to spin out of control.

The book begins with the incident that preceded Good's incarceration: he threw a stapler through a window. The style with which Good relates this incident and others is crisp and clear, if distant: the man writing the book is no longer the man in his stories, and as he narrates, it is clear that he can't fully comprehend his previous motives. The resulting disjointed feeling replicates what it's like to live with mental illness.

The text conveys a firsthand, though lay, understanding of mental illness, not bogging itself down with details of symptoms and diagnoses but rather capturing the feel and essence of life with a disorder. Good's story is most about his personal reckoning, coming to grips with his illness, and embracing life.

Good recalls healing from hard times but declares, "It's too early for me to say if I am strong in some places because life has certainly left some scars." The self-reflective text shows growth, though the processes it details are not complete; it is the messy beauty of a work in progress. A quote references Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*; throughout, Good derives clarity from comparing his life with Hemingway's, and the addition is both expansive and literary.

Chapters are numbered according to the days of Good's jail time, with "before jail" chapters woven in. This mix imparts a deep sense of who Good is and all that led up to his incarceration. The engaging, assertive writing balances dialogue, exposition, and descriptions well. The pace is methodical, even slow, though Good's warm, open narrative voice keeps the pages turning.

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MELISSA WUSKE (October 19, 2018)

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