

## Sin Bravely: A Memoir of Spiritual Disobedience

**Maggie Rowe**

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*Sin Bravely is a hilarious, thought-provoking, and thoroughly unconventional story of salvation.*

Maggie Rowe's memoir of the summer she spent as a troubled teenager in a fundamentalist Christian psychiatric center is a rare creature: a tale that is simultaneously laugh-out-loud funny and sincerely thoughtful about the role of sin, salvation, and certainty in the human psyche.

As the child of a Southern Baptist family, Rowe grew up on a steady diet of the Bible and Protestant Christian religious teachings. Like many bright young people who take ideas seriously, she asked uncomfortable questions. If God is good and all-knowing, then why does he create souls that will be tortured for eternity? If human understanding is imperfect, then how can anyone really know whether they are saved or damned?

"Jesus's eyes seemed kind, but I will not let myself be fooled," Rowe says:

*I know that [He] could turn on me at any moment; that He is kind until He is not, that He is absolute love until He is absolute vengeance. I know He could effortlessly toss me into hell for all eternity before turning back to nuzzle his beloved sheep – all without messing up His Pantene hair. I am in jeopardy and I will not let myself forget it.*

Driven by such doubts to seek certainty at the Grace Point Evangelical Psychiatric Institute, Rowe instead finds herself immersed in the difficulties and absurdities of lives other than her own, and tentatively exploring a path to something completely different.

Rowe, today a successful actress, screenwriter, storyteller, and producer of Comedy Central's long-running stage show *Sit 'n' Spin*, has a wonderful feeling for the rhythm of a story and a mordant eye for detail. She has tackled religion before, in satirical presentations such as Hollywood HellHouse, but the story presented here is far more personal.

Rowe's delivery is expressive without being mawkish, conveying metaphysical dread, thoughtfulness, sympathy, and deadpan irony in her tale of self-absorbed therapists, enigmatic counselors, and the eccentricities and struggles of her fellow patients. Most affectingly, she also unflinchingly skewers the naive assumptions, self-indulgent rationalizations, and tormenting doubts of the hell-haunted girl she once was. The salvation she finds is not at all what she thought she was looking for.

*Sin Bravely* is a hilarious, thought-provoking, and thoroughly unconventional story of salvation, and this is the ideal way to experience it: through its author's voice.

BRADLEY A. SCOTT (Religion 2017)

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