



## The Key Publishing House Inc.

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www.thekeypublish.com

media@thekeypublish.com



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© Natalie Jeanne Champagne (www.thethirdsunrise.com)

Contact: Heather Smith, The Key Publicity

www.thekeypublish.com

E-mail: media@thekeypublish.com

Tel: 416-935-1790

## A Young Woman Shares Her Struggles With Mental Illness & Addiction

*The Third Sunrise* is different from many books in the mental illness/addiction and recovery genre as it offers the reader a unique perspective: the story of a child, twelve years old, who spent years in and out of the psychiatric hospital.

Many books are written on the topic of bipolar disorder, even more on addiction, but it is a rare that a book exposes, without hesitation, the life of a child afflicted with these things. *The Third Sunrise* includes excerpts from author's journal, written as a child in a psychiatric hospital, a desperate and terrified child.

### Essential Points:

1. *The Third Sunrise* focuses on the diagnosis of juvenile bipolar disorder at the age of twelve and serious addiction and alcoholism later in life. Juvenile bipolar disorder was considered very rare when the author was diagnosed fourteen years ago, particularly outside of North America, and it is becoming more common now. Despite this, controversy regarding this diagnosis exists. *The Third Sunrise* explores the issue in depth.
2. *The Third Sunrise* describes a child struggling with the diagnosis of bipolar disorder and then adult working to come into terms with the serious diagnosis.
3. *The Third Sunrise* does not just focus on bipolar disorder; it is also a memoir about living with anorexia and bulimia, anxiety, addiction and alcoholism. It is, at its very core, a story of survival despite dangerous odds.
4. *The Third Sunrise* is not a particularly easy read. It was difficult to write as Natalie held very little back. She chose to expose her life, though much it was hard to write, and readers might be surprised at the confessional aspect of the dialogue.
5. It is not a self-help book. Rather, it is the story of a child hospitalized for bipolar disorder at the age of twelve, became an addict and alcoholic later in life and survived. It is a memoir in every sense of the word—it is the story of Natalie's life and her family's experience.



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6. *The Third Sunrise* exposes the reality of bipolar disorder and addiction. The style of writing often reflects the disease of bipolar disorder: painful, frightening, although ultimately makes a statement—bipolar disorder is not a life sentence. The disease of addiction depicted as it often feels to the afflicted: raw, terrifying, and hopeless.

7. *The Third Sunrise* is not just Natalie's story. Her family has written parts of the book because mental illness and addiction is a family disease.

*The Third Sunrise* presents not just the story a young woman battling with mental illness but also eating disorders, anxiety, addiction and alcoholism. In addition, it involves a family's perspective—a family tortured by the illness. A family concluded that they might be attending their daughter's, their older sister's funeral. *The Third Sunrise* is as raw as the previous statement, and what separates it most from other books in this genre is the content: it is not censored, it is hard to read, and it was hard to write. It is in this way, having held nothing back, *The Third Sunrise* presents the reader with a different perspective: it invites them into a world that is painful, dangerous, exhibitionistic and, above all free of boundaries. It is, essentially, a book defined by blood, sweat and tears.

### Target Audience:

- *The Third Sunrise* appeals to a wide range of readers. Those who have a general interest in bipolar disorder and addiction and appreciate a first person account of the illness and recovery.
- Most people know someone in their lives who have struggled, or is struggling with, mental illness and addiction.
- The medical community will sure benefit from reading *The Third Sunrise* as it will shed light on some of experiences their respective patients face. It helps to put a face, a name and an experience, to the people they are trying to help recover.
- People who struggle with mental illness and addictions can connect with Natalie's experience as elements from bipolar disorder and addiction are shared among those afflicted. The process of recovery and sobriety are difficult. Finding commonalities among sufferers is important. It can help people feel less alone.
- Those who live with someone who struggles with mental illness and addiction. *The Third Sunrise* contains elements of the family's struggle and, finally, the ability to start over. The last chapter in the book is written by Natalie's family and reflects the pain they experienced along the way and the joy they have felt as she recovered.

Author is available for appearances and interviews and can be reached through The Key Publicity, Heather Smith, e-mail: media@thekeypublish.com, Tel: 416-935-1790.



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### Praise for *The Third Sunrise*

"Ferociously describes the rapture and capture of addiction. This young woman has worn herself to a blade in her troubles...A tremendous scorching roller-coaster of a story. I was moved."

~Kate Holden, Author of *In My Skin*

"Like Sylvia Plath, Natalie Jeanne Champagne invites you so close to the pain and agony of her life of mental illness and addiction, which leaves you gasping from shock and laughing moments later: this is both the beauty and unique nature of her storytelling. With brilliance and courage, the author's brave and candid chronicle travels where no other memoir about mental illness and addiction has gone before. *The Third Sunrise* is an incredible triumph and Natalie Jeanne Champagne is without a doubt the most important new voice in this genre."

~Andy Behrman, Bestselling Author of the book *Electroboy*

"Champagne pens an unflinching and gutsy account of a childhood lost to bipolar disorder and drugs, laying bare every grimy, sickening, heartbreaking detail. A portrait of a girl that courageously claws her way out of a depression and drug-soaked abyss and emerges a bright and brave young adult, *The Third Sunrise* is a fast-paced must-read for anybody that's been doggedly pursued by depression, bipolar disorder or addiction."

~Malina Saval, Author of *The Secret Lives of Boys: Inside the Raw Emotional World of Male Teens*

"I applaud Natalie's courage in sharing her story, and in helping connect the dots between mental illness and drug addiction."

~Margo Talbot, Author of *All That Glitters*

"This memoir tells a story that will stay with me forever. Haunting, riveting, intense, and addictive. A must read!"

~Marni Mann, Author of *Memoirs Aren't Fairytales* and *Scars From A Memoir*



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"The candour of this memoir will undoubtedly help those who have been affected by bipolar disorder, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual assault and self-harm as well as their families. It is this and the author's once seemingly impossible, yet now flourishing recovery of which she should be most proud."

~ Michael Richmond, Author of *Sysyphusa*

"An intensely gripping narrative...expertly crafted and totally addictive...a must read!"

~ Maggie Reese, Author of *Runaway Mind*

"Champagne's blunt prose cuts like a knife as she recounts the turmoil of a life lived beyond the edge. Holding no punches, her acerbic frankness at once draws and repels you yet . . . this is a book that you will not be able to put down."

~Jon W. Hansen, The PI Social Media Network, Talk Radio Host and author

### Synopsis

*"Psychiatrists and I; we do not get on well. They have failed to cure me; I am still damaged and it is for this reason that I am cheeky and certainly not pleasant. I am hurting. I just want them to fix me. Fix Me."*

*The Third Sunrise* takes the reader into a world that is as terrifying as it is exhilarating: it depicts the life of a young woman who, at the age of twelve, was diagnosed with early-onset bipolar disorder and spent many years in a psychiatric hospital where she was prescribed cocktails of medications promising recovery. Recovery never found her, and frightened, she found something else: drugs and alcohol. They quickly become exactly what she needed—a brilliant, black, detour from reality.

At the age of twenty, she had devoted her life to addiction and it nearly killed her in the process. Escape wasn't possible: she bathed in the darkness of cocaine, shook hands with heroin, and relished in the comfort of alcohol. She ceased to exist. The seizures she suffered at the hands of drugs, the abuse caused by those she invited into her life, and the pain she inflicted on herself and her family were lost to the underworld of drugs.

*The Third Sunrise* is a confessional, darkly humored, account of life through the eyes of a woman fighting to find it. More information is available at the book's web site: [www.thethirdsunrise.com](http://www.thethirdsunrise.com)

### About the Author

Natalie regularly contributes to mental health and addictions publications and is an advocate for mental health. She has published poetry in many anthologies. She currently lives in British Columbia, Canada. *The Third Sunrise* is her first book.



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## Author's Q & A

### **1. What inspired you to write *Third Sunrise: A Memoir of Madness*?**

I knew, at a very young age (as soon as I read my first book) that I would write a book one day. I was young, perhaps ten or eleven, but was a voracious reader. At this time, I had yet to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. At the age of twelve, when I was first diagnosed and hospitalized, I decided that I would work to become well so I could write a book about the illness. Of course, at that age, it was more of a dream than a reality but the dream followed me throughout painful years. It was one of the only reasons I stayed alive.

As a young woman, not yet stabilized, I spent a long time feeling hopeless, suicidal. I stayed alive so I could write this book.

When I was an addict I lost the ability to write. I could not even write poetry—something that had always come easily to me. I pushed the idea of writing the book out of my mind. It was too painful to understand that my addiction left me with an inability to write. To do the only thing that I had cherished.

Years later, sober, I sat down with the keyboard on my lap. Thirty minutes later, I had written the first chapter. I felt liberated. Free. The ability to write again help me stay sober and I decided that I would not hold anything back. All of the painful and terrifying things that had happened to me, I would put to paper. This inspired me to stay sober. Exposing my life was not nearly as terrifying as living in silence.

### **2. What surprised you most while writing this book?**

This is a comprehensive question. First, that I was able to write it. I have written my entire life, the dream of publishing a book about my life kept me alive, kept me breathing. Dreaming. When I became an addict I lost the ability to write. This loss was, perhaps, greater than any other. Writing has always been my escape. The drugs and the alcohol stole this away from me. I was without words. Without words and without dream. What surprised me, once becoming sober, was the ability to write again. Once I could, well, I never stopped. *The Third Sunrise* was written in blind, angry fury, it fueled my recovery from bipolar disorder and addiction. It freed me.

In addition, I was surprised how difficult it was, to write about being a child locked away, a young woman overdosing on drugs. Sometimes, it felt like someone else's life. I wished it were. I was surprised that I survived. That I can write these words.

### **3. What were the challenges (research, literary, and logistical) in bringing this book to life?**

First, was starting the book. Once started, I could not stop writing. Second, it is near impossible for a writer with no celebrity platform to find an agent and publisher. I worked really hard, for months, and am grateful I have the ability to share my story with the world, however painful it might have been to write it, it was equally healing.



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I also struggled with the content. I could recall addiction easily; visualize myself after overdosing, multiple attempts, failing, to recover. The addiction strangled my mind and putting it to paper freed it.

Writing about my life as a child, a child sick and confused and locked in hospitals was difficult. I did not want to believe that child was me. I referred to journals I wrote at that time, I have boxes of them, in order to accurately portray my experience.

For further accuracy, I requested all of my medical files from that time; I was handed binders, boxes of them, notes taken from psychiatrists and staff at the psychiatric hospital. I tediously went over the notes, many of them hard to read, most of them describing me as a very sick little girl. And I was.

In summary, retrieving painful memories, obtaining the medical records that described that time in my life was difficult. I was forced to understand that the little girl in the hospital was me. She is me.

#### **4. What are the most important points that you would like readers to have gained and appreciate after reading your book?**

- First, mental illness does affect children, and these children need help and support in order to recover.
- Addiction is raw and painful and I have written it as such. Addiction ruins lives; it ruins families. It kills people:
- But it is not without hope.

#### **5. Why is your story unique?**

I want to stress that we all have a unique story. That is part of our journey through life. But to put the focus on *The Third Sunrise: A Memoir of Madness*, it is unique in the following ways:

- Because I was diagnosed at the age of twelve. I exhibited symptoms of bipolar disorder when I was very little;
- My family documents this within the book. They offer a unique perspective.
- *The Third Sunrise* was written without intention: I wrote it because writing has always helped me heal, writing without a audience in mind allowed me to be honest;
- The level of honesty within the book is jarring. It might initially surprise people because I talk about things that we are not supposed to talk about in polite society, things that challenge the societal norm:
  - I write about being a child who was very sick and have incorporated journals from that time
  - I write about bulimia and anorexia graphically. It is a horrible disease and I have documented it as such.
  - Addiction nearly killed me. I scoured my mind for memories; I recalled seizures and overdose, abuse and reconciliation
- I write, in a chapter focused on addiction:





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*"Everything looks hazy when I scratch open my eyes. I am lying on a bed ... and I have tubes in both arms in various places. Something is attached to my lower parts so I do not involuntarily piss myself; I have lost complete control of my kidneys. I realize, through the haze of what is the sickening yellow of the hospital, the blue of the sheet that separates me from other patients, that I am alive."*

That was my reality; that is what I have been able to escape. *The Third Sunrise* is as raw as it is real.

### **6. What is your response to those who are surprised by your findings?**

Addiction and mental illness are not, to the person who is afflicted, defined by *findings*. The word "findings" is more relevant in the medical community. I have discovered that recovery is possible and that mental illness, addiction, is largely shared across humanity. Society, though the illness is often invisible, is, in part, defined by these diseases.

I have been asked by people, "How could you write about your life?" and my response: "How could I not write about my life?" It was escape for me and I understand, intrinsically, that putting a face to mental illness, addiction, is important.

That being said, I suspect that sharing my story is a positive venture, despite the fact I have exposed the feelings and reality that come with the territory of mental illness. I hope that *The Third Sunrise* can serve as a reality check: I wish, above all, that others' might seek help if they experience symptoms of illness, I hope that my honest depiction of addiction might expose it for what it truly is: a disease that kills people. A disease that people can recover from.

### **7. What is the most controversial issue in relation to mental health and addiction in our current era?**

When I was first diagnosed that most controversial issue in mental health was that of diagnosing a child with a serious illness. This is still the case and I believe it should be. Bipolar disorder carries stigma, stigma that can initially damage a persons' sense of self, regardless of age. Before I was diagnosed all other options were explored. But it's becoming more common; children can become ill but they can also become well.

As for addiction, I believe the stereotype of an addict is controversial, incorrect and damaging to society. When a person thinks of an 'addict' images come to mind: those living on the streets, without hope, not part of society. Here is the reality: there are more *functioning addicts* than not. What does this mean? Well, I worked in a government office while an addict, I spent time in college, I met people in rehab who were schoolteachers, part of the police force, parents'. Addiction is a large part of society, it sparks shame in those who suffer, if this stigma is removed, lessened, these people will seek help before they hit 'rock bottom'.

In addition: Many people, a staggering 80% or more, have both a mental illness and addiction. This is called concurrent illness: the person is abusing drugs and alcohol to mask the pain of mental illness, or, the addiction causes mental illness. This needs to be understood. *The Third Sunrise* touches on this.



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### **8. How did you organize the book?**

I did not start *The Third Sunrise: A Memoir of Madness* with the concept of organization in mind. Rather, I sat down one day and started writing. I wrote what about my experience with addiction, focusing on one event. After I wrote it I organized it. I pieced it together using medical records, my life as a timeline, my life as it was and as it is.

The chapter titles were important to me, the rather left-wing titles of them, captured my experience. The integration of quotes within my book defined certain parts of my life. *The Third Sunrise* wrote itself in many ways: I put my hands to the keys and my life poured out on paper. It was an organic process and focused less on organization at first—that came later.

### **9. What advice would you offer your readers so they can make the best of the out of your story?**

My advice is as simple as it is complicated: read *The Third Sunrise: A Memoir of Madness* with the understanding that this is my story, yes, but it is also the story of other people. People that we know, people we have met, those we work with. Mental illness is common: 1 in 4 people are afflicted and recent research suggests this number is much higher. People are afraid to seek help.

Addiction is common. The stigma society has created deters people from seeking help. My advice? Allow yourself to open your eyes, your heart, and recognize that my narrative is shared. Mental illness and addiction is a human affliction.