

Mama's Illness - Press Materials

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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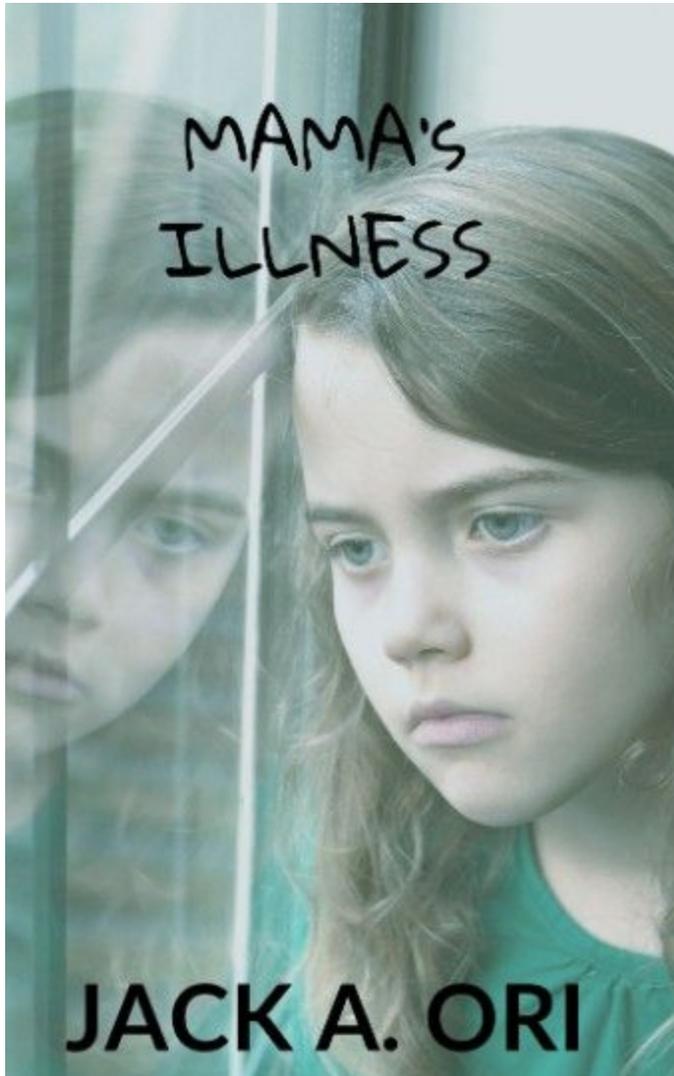
Social Media

- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/heroicmusebooks>
- Goodreads: <http://www.goodreads.com/JackAOri>
- Instagram: <http://www.instagram.com/heroicmuse>
- Patreon: <http://www.patreon.com/jackaori>
- Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/heroicmuse2016>



Author Bio

Jack A. Ori is a transgender life coach and writer whose mission is to empower young adults through stories to live life on their own terms, especially young people who face significant obstacles to success such as discrimination, poverty, or mental illness. He holds a Masters in Social Work from Columbia University, where he studied the intersection between mental illness and serious social problems such as drug addiction, sexual assault, and criminal justice involvement. Mr. Ori currently lives on Long Island, New York where he splits his time between writing, family, and playing his violin with a local orchestra.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Title: Mama's Illness

Author: Jack A. Ori

Publication Date: June 6, 2019

Format: Ebook

Available at:

- Amazon
- Apple
- Nook
- Kobo
- Scribd
- 24 Symbols
- Playsters
- Indigo
- Angus & Robertson

(All via:

<https://books2read.com/u/mlrR1P>)

ISBN: 9781393904397

Retail Price: \$1.93

Pages: 30

Genres: Contemporary/Coming of Age
Short Story

Fun facts:

- The first draft of this story was written using the daily #vss365 prompt challenge on Twitter
- Mama's Illness is a prequel to Ori's upcoming novel, *Reinventing Hannah*, which takes place 10 years later.

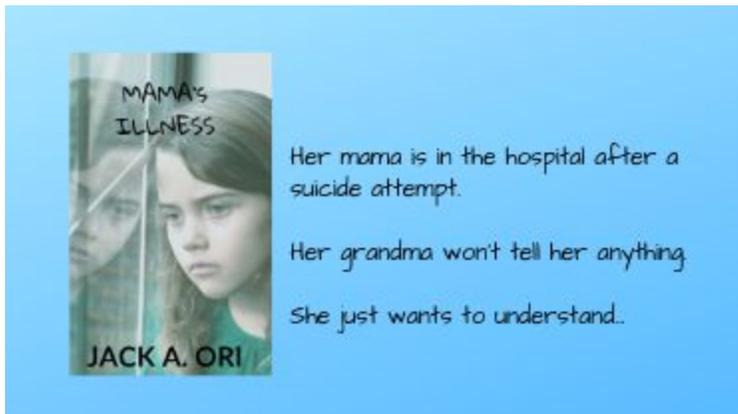
PROMOTIONAL INFORMATION

Tagline: What happens when a six-year-old comes home from school to discover her mother has attempted suicide?

Short description: The prequel story about six-year-old Hannah's struggle to understand her mother's mental illness.

Longer description: *Mama's Illness*, a short prequel to *Reinventing Hannah*, tells the story of Hannah's attempt to understand and cope with her mother's hospitalization for mental health reasons when she was only six years old. After Mama goes to the hospital, Hannah's world is turned upside down, especially because Grandma insists on keeping her in the dark to protect her. Hannah is a bright, resilient child, but is that enough to allow her to cope with her mother's mysterious illness and the steps Grandma takes to make sure she is provided for?

Promotional Photo



INTERVIEW RESOURCES

Sample Questions and Answers

1. Where did you get the idea for this story?

When I was working on the first draft of *Reinventing Hannah*, I learned that Hannah's mother was bipolar and had attempted suicide when Hannah was a little girl. It felt like an important story to explore further, both because it would add depth to Hannah's character and because I was gradually getting more and more frustrated with some of the negative depictions of people with bipolar disorder and other serious mental illnesses in media.

2. Why bipolar disorder? Is it something that you've dealt with in your personal life?

Honestly, bipolar disorder chose me to write about it, rather than the other way around. It just became clear to me that that's what Hannah's mother had as my first draft progressed. I'm not bipolar and as far as I know no one in my family is, though I had many clients when I was a social work intern who either had bipolar disorder or were related to someone who had it. Some of what I wrote was based on what I learned through working with these clients, though the situation in *Mama's Illness* is entirely fictional and not based directly on any one client experience.

3. You mentioned wanting to change the media depiction of mental illness. Can you expand on that?

One of the many hats I wear is as a TV reviewer and journalist, and in that capacity I've written many times about poor depictions of mental health issues on television. Many programs depict people with mental health problems as violent criminals when the reality is that most people with mental illness are far more likely to be the victims of violent crime than the perpetrators. This negative stereotyping isn't just confined to television. It's everywhere. And it affects people more than you might realize. Some people resist getting help for mental health issues because of the stigma and negativity surrounding mental health. This is something I dive into more deeply in *Reinventing Hannah*, as the now-teenaged Hannah fears the possibility that she could be bipolar like her mom and is thus reluctant to seek counseling after she is sexually assaulted. With *Mama's Illness*, I wanted to show the ways untreated mental illness can tear a family apart while contradicting those stereotypes.

4. How long did it take you to write *Mama's Illness*?

It took about three months. The initial writing was very slow because I was using the daily #vss365 prompt on Twitter to write this story. This prompt is a daily exercise in which writers are given a word of the day and challenged to write a "very short story" consisting of no more than one Tweet. Many people write different stories every day or write poems using the word of the day. I chose to write a continuing story using these prompts. As you might

imagine, it took quite a few Tweets to get to the end! After I had finally done so, it took me another couple of weeks to edit. The editing process was faster than on other projects both because of the short length of the story and because I had created a tightly plotted story, which is unusual for me on the first try! In contrast, it took me six full drafts to fully understand the plot of *Reinventing Hannah* and I will have been working on it for about 18 months by the time it is ready for final edits.

5. You wrote this in almost a serial format, dropping installments. How did you like writing this way? Would you consider writing another book like this?

I both loved and didn't love doing this. It was fun to try to fit the word of the day into each day's installment and to see reader reactions, but it felt incredibly slow, especially when I knew what was going to happen next but wasn't able to write more than a paragraph a day because of the parameters of the challenge I was doing. On the other hand, it got me writing every single day since readers were expecting a new installment, and the editing process when I was done was far faster than usual because doing it this way led to a tightly plotted story.

Not only would I do it again, but I already am. I'm working on a new, not-yet-titled story about a 16-year-old boy who gets himself in legal trouble when he turns to pot to numb the pain of his parents' divorce.

I also write my Days of Our Lives fanfiction in installments, though that's a bit different because there is no word of the day, so I usually have about a week's worth of work written at a time..

6. Your website says you write for young adult readers. How does a story from the point of view of a six-year-old fit into your overall body of work?

That's a really great question. First, to be clear: this isn't a children's story even though it is written from a child's point of view. I think young adults -- and older adults, for that matter -- can relate to Hannah's determination to find out the truth that her grandma is trying to keep from her and how painful it is to be separated from her mother without any understanding of why.

7. How difficult was it to write from the point of view of a child?

I have three nieces and a nephew that are a little older than Hannah, so I had plenty of material to draw from! I'd say that getting the language right was a huge challenge, especially since I was often asked to use words of the day that were far beyond what you would expect of a child. I often got around that by putting those words in her mother or grandmother's mouth, and using vocabulary that Hannah wasn't expected to know became part of their characters (and at one point a source of tension because Grandma takes it upon herself to explain Mama's vocabulary to Hannah.) The other challenge for me was to simultaneously make Hannah's voice that of a realistic six-year-old while still making this a story for adults.

8. *Mama's Illness* is the prequel to *Reinventing Hannah*. Tell us a little more about *Reinventing Hannah*.

We catch up with Hannah ten years later in *Reinventing Hannah*. Sixteen-year-old Hannah lives with her mom and step-dad, who have moved with her to New York, and her mom's bipolar disorder is under far better control. At the beginning of the novel, Hannah is a bit of a goody-two-shoes who shocks everyone by going to the kind of party a girl like her would ordinarily not be caught dead at, and sadly, she is roofied and sexually assaulted during this party. The novel is about Hannah's struggle to put her life back together and reinvent herself positively after this experience. She deals with anxiety related to the rape (especially when she wants to move forward with the guy she's liked forever), growing apart from her best friend, and her parents' overprotectiveness once she finally opens up to them. She must also overcome her shyness and fear to advocate for herself and other survivors after she is bullied over what happened to her.

9. How do the events of *Mama's Illness* relate to what happens during *Reinventing Hannah*?

I don't want to give everything away. But Mama's hospitalization still continues to influence the older Hannah, and part of her journey involves understanding this in a new way now that she is older.

10. What one message would you give readers if you could?

A major theme of all my work is that you're never as alone as you think you are. No matter what you're going through, there's someone somewhere who understands and cares, and it's important to express what you're dealing with and not try to handle it all on your own.

Other Interviews/Articles

[Author Spotlight - Amanda Kassner](#)

[Peer Highlight - Kristine Donohue](#)

[Uniweb Interview with Matt Whiteside and Reinventing Hannah Author Jack A Ori \(VIDEO\)](#)

PRESS RELEASES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUTHOR AND MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE JACK A. ORI PUBLISHES SHORT STORY

Story about a child's struggle to understand her mother's bipolar disorder is a prequel to a larger work.

BALDWIN, NY, June 2016 -- Jack A. Ori, an author and advocate for ending the stigma around mental illness, has published a short story aimed at empowering people who live with someone who has bipolar disorder. The story, *Mama's Illness*, is told from the point of view of six-year-old Hannah, who struggles to understand what's going on after her mother is hospitalized following a suicide attempt and her well-meaning grandmother tries to keep Mama's condition secret from her. The story is available in digital form and includes a list of resources for people and families with bipolar disorder.

Ori was inspired to write this story partially because of negative depictions of people with mental illness elsewhere in the media. "More often than not, television and literature reinforce the myth that people with mental illness are violent and dangerous," Ori says. "That adds to the shame many people feel about having a person with mental illness in their family, which stops them from getting the help they need. I wanted to show the ways serious mental illness really affects families and get people talking about it."

Mama's Illness is a prequel to *Reinventing Hannah*, Ori's forthcoming novel about a 16-year-old girl who struggles to reinvent herself in a positive manner after she is raped at a party. Ori says, "I can't give too much away, but the events of *Mama's Illness* definitely impact Hannah as much 10 years later, and part of her journey involves understanding her mother's illness in a different way now that she's older."

Ori is offering *Mama's Illness* for free in exchange for subscribing to his email newsletter. Interested readers can download it here:

<https://storyoriginapp.com/giveaways/4b40cdco-8354-11e9-884a-offd849e7383> It is also available for sale here: <https://books2read.com/b/MamasIllness>

Boilerplate: Jack A. Ori is a writer and life coach whose mission is to empower young adults to live life on their own terms. His latest novel, *Reinventing Hannah*, will be released in April 2020. For more information, please visit <http://www.jackaori.com>

EXCERPT

The afternoon Mama tried to kill herself, no one was waiting to pick me up when the bus got to my stop. I froze halfway down the steps, staring at the empty sidewalk. Sometimes Grandma came by herself and sometimes Mama was with her, but one of them was always there. They never, ever left me all alone.

"Come on, Hannah," the driver said. "I can't be late to drop off everyone else cause you're dawdling."

"But no one's here for me."

The driver frowned. "Your mama told me the other day she thinks you're big enough to walk home by yourself. You sure she didn't tell you the same thing and you just forgot?"

"No!" I began to cry.

"Stop that! I just told you you're a big girl, you don't need to cry over something this silly."

Some of the big kids behind me were whispering and laughing. I got off the bus so they wouldn't think I was a baby and ran down the block, jumping over all the cracks in the sidewalk in case it made a difference.

It didn't, cause when I got home, there was an ambulance in the driveway with its lights on. A police car too.

Grandma was talking to a police woman with blond hair tied back in a ponytail that was tied back again.

I put my fingers over my eyes to protect them from the ambulance lights. "Grandma! Where's Mama? I made her a special picture." I held up my rolled up drawing.

Grandma and the cop both looked my way. My tummy hurt and I said again, "W-where's Mama?"

"She's going to be all right, sweetheart," the cop said. "We're taking her to the hospital."

Grandma was frowning. I looked at the back of the ambulance through my fingers. Mama was lying on a big stretcher. Her eyes were closed and she had a plastic mask over her nose and mouth.

"Mama..." I said.

"Don't approach the ambulance," Grandma said. "Come here."

I ran towards Mama anyway.

Grandma grabbed me and pulled me back. I cried and screamed like I was being kidnapped even though I was too big to throw tantrums. Grandma held me tight. She said over her shoulder,

"She's upset, you know. She doesn't understand what's happening."

"Of course," the cop said. She knelt down in front of me. "Hannah, right?"

I nodded.

"Your mama got sick from taking too many pills. She needs to go to the hospital. And while she's getting better, she needs you to do something. She needs you to be a big, brave girl and do what your grandma tells you."

"If I don't am I going to jail?" I sniffed.

“I don’t think we have to worry about that. I know you’re going to be a good girl.” The cop ruffled my hair and said to Grandma, “You can head over to the hospital whenever you’re ready. Doc there’ll tell you when there’s news.” She walked away.

I pulled my lucky stone out of my pocket. I found it last year on the beach during one of Mama’s happy days when we went for a walk by the water. It was smooth and shiny and Mama said it was a magic stone that would always protect me. I wriggled, trying to get out of Grandma’s arms before the ambulance took Mama away.

Grandma held me tighter. “You cannot go to her, Hannah. I keep telling you that. I know it’s hard but you have to let the ambulance workers take care of her now.”

“But I need to give Mama this. It’s magic.”

Grandma sighed. “The doctors will just take it away from her because it’s not clean. Keep it with you and make a wish on it that your mama gets well for once and for all.” She squeezed my shoulder as the ambulance doors slammed shut and the siren went on. “Let’s go to the hospital to wait for news about Mama. I’ll help you with your homework while we’re waiting.”

Grandma took my backpack and put it in the car trunk. I wanted to sit in front like a big girl but she said I had to sit in the back and then she checked my seatbelt twice and asked me again if it was on before she started the car.