



A Piece of Cake

Cupcake Brown

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This is the heart-wrenching true story of a girl named Cupcake and it begins when, aged eleven, she is orphaned and placed in the 'care' of sadistic foster parents. But there comes a point in her preteen years - maybe it's the night she first tries to run away and is exposed to drugs, alcohol, and sex all at once - when Cupcake's story shifts from a tear-jerking tragedy to a dark, deeply disturbing journey through hell.

Cupcake learned to survive by turning tricks, downing hard liquor and ingesting every drug she could find while hitchhiking up and down the California coast. At just 16 she stumbled into the terrifying world of the gangsta, dealing drugs, hustling and only just surviving a drive-by shooting. Ironically, it was Cupcake's rapid descent into the nightmare of crack cocaine addiction that finally saved her. After one four-day crack binge she woke up behind a dumpster. Half-dressed and half-dead, she finally realized she had to change her life or die on the streets - another trash-can addict, another sad statistic.

Astonishingly, Cupcake turned her life around and this is her brutally frank, startlingly funny story. Unlike any memoir you will ever read, *A Piece of Cake* is a redemptive, gripping tale of a resilient spirit who took on the worst of contemporary urban life and survived it. It is also the most genuinely affecting rollercoaster ride through hell and back that you will ever take.

A Piece of Cake Details

Date : Published April 10th 2007 by Broadway Books (first published January 1st 2006)

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Author : Cupcake Brown

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From Reader Review *A Piece of Cake* for online ebook

Melissa says

This book started out as a great read. I loved her stories of life in foster care and on the street. About halfway through the book it became redundant. Towards the end it picks up again and became more interesting. Part of the problem is her grammar. She tries to use street talk and then transform into more educated prose, but she doesn't do a very good job. The story of her amazing life is hidden behind poor writing.

Demetria says

A Piece of Cake is a prime example of a story that is much better than the writing. This memoir is the life story of Cupcake Brown, a woman who has overcome abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution, domestic violence and gang life to become a successful attorney and thanks to this book, a best-selling author. Brown's journey is nothing short of amazing. In fact, some have questioned the validity of her claims (in light of James Frey and others) because of the extreme situations detailed in the book. I don't know if everything in the book is true, but I do know that she should have hired a ghostwriter.

Almost all the early chapters end with some over the top dramatic sentences that were something like "I had no idea that my whole life was about to change" or "All of that stopped with what happened next." Too much. The story is already so incredibly dramatic there really is just no need for the "obvious" ink to saturate the end of every chapter. Also, there are very awkward sentences interspersed throughout the book and there's too much telling as opposed to showing.

This book is a quick read though. The story moves along at a decent pace and there are so many dramatic turns that even if there's a lull, you know something outrageous is coming up. All in all, this is a very compelling life story that deserves a better writer, so it can be told properly. If this book was pitched as a novel, I don't think it would have been a best-seller, but because it is supposedly "real life," it has gotten a lot of attention. I think all stories, whether they are fiction or non-fiction or something in between, should be written in the highest possible quality. Good writing is for everyone, not just fiction writers.

Shanae says

Hmmm, well, I really don't know how to describe Cupcake Brown's *A Piece of Cake: A Memoir*. It was underwhelming for me. I tend to go into a book with a lot of skepticism. It is, in my opinion, the author's responsibility to provide me with a literary experience so profound that I do not question his/her motive. Every writer has a motive. No one writes just to write - there is a mission and I think part of Brown's mission was to provide a story so unbelievable, so hurtful, so shocking that you'd feel sympathy for her. And I did...for a little while. Somewhere between her decision to join the Crips and her decision to snort heroin - she lost my sympathy and I thought she was a dummy. She writes this tale with such love and admiration for her stepfather and uncle that it was shocking. These two men watched her throw her life away and did nothing, because she was "grown." Huh, what? Now, granted, I know this is the early 80s and it is the onset of the crack epidemic...I mean, when Cupcake is smoking crack, it's not even called crack, ya know? You

gotta buy cocaine and mix it into crack yourself - this is even before Freeway Ricky made a big dent in South Central (but that's another story for another day lol). But people knew drugs, particularly cocaine, were dangerous - people knew this by the 80s - yet Cupcake's protectors did not protect her...did not even extend a hand to her. Anyway, back to the reasons why I don't like *A Piece of Cake*. For one, the work was poorly written. Brown comes across as untruthful she presents facts about things I just don't understand a person who lived in a drug and alcohol induced haze could possibly recall. Further, the erratic transition between "slang" terminology or urban vernacular and "proper speech" is irritating and not well done. Additionally, I found the book a bit boring and I think Brown could have shortened it a lot! The audio book is inadequate, the speaker sounds like she should read children's books. Not the story of a drug addicted young woman who rises to a position of prestige through hard work and determination.

Veronica says

This book is good but very hard to read! It's about Cupcake Brown's life after she was thrown into the foster care system back when there was zero regard for the best interest regarding placements. Man, she has gone through so much shit and I'm only about a fourth through the book. I cannot read this book at night in bed because I was having dreams about it. When I met with my teenage client the other day, I was thinking about Cupcake's experiences. Nonetheless, it is super good to read for the sheer fact that we should know what effects our work has on the kids we serve (though I hope that most of them do not suffer so much!) You can borrow it when I'm done!

Adriane says

This is a raw account of Cupcake Brown and her real life of drugs, sex and redemption and how you can turn it all around if you just believe in yourself. Not for the faint of heart or those who believe that life is all cupcakes and puppy dogs. I love the way she uncovered the raw truth of how the world, foster system and sometimes even your own flesh and blood can be real ugly. A definite favorite. Visit her website for more info, just Google her name.

Petra X says

Did you ever read Push or see the film (it was called Precious)? That was like an extract from this book. It's an autobiography that is just brilliantly written and everyone in it is a total stereotype and all completely believable. I've never read anything like it.

I understand why in the black ghettos of the US kids want to be in gangs, the appeal of the Cripps is perfectly explained. I am seeing life not from a girl at the very bottom of the ladder, but one who had violin lessons and then became a victim of a system that does not help those it doesn't want to.

Update I'm three-quarters of the way through. I've done nothing but read today. I'm not at all happy with this book. It is ending too soon. It's *that* good. The author and Guinevere Turner, the scriptwriter of American Psycho are writing the film script. It's going to be a Hollywood movie. I have mixed feelings about this. It will end up being 90 mins of Hollywood glamour rather than the street-grit of documentary film-making the

subject cries out for. Cupcake Brown is amazing in many ways, including as a writer. If she never did anything else in life but write, the literary world would be so much richer.

BookAppétit says

A Piece of Cake is one of those books that won't fade into the background long after it's been shelved for me. The story is so incredible, at times I felt like I was reading another Frey memoir that was somewhat embellished. Cupcake Brown is thrown into the foster care system at 11 and survives abuse, the streets, gangs, and drugs/alcohol to a point that puts her behind a dumpster for several days at one point. If you don't like rough language- this one will be tough. However, I think it's so important to take ourselves out of our own world and understand others. Isn't that what is so great about reading! This book put a slightly different spin on how I might view the underbelly of society, it isn't always a choice- but the better choice from what they were given as a start in life. It also wakes you up to the life of a drug addict and how desperate they are for committing crimes for cash/drugs. We can all use a bit more compassion and Cupcake endures all to make her own choices in life. She's a woman I'd like to meet in person.

Sarah Goodwin says

I see a lot of people complaining about the writing of this book, and, ok, it takes some getting used to. The sentence structuring is weird, and in places there are cliches and over the top dramatic sentences, but, that's how people talk. I found the style to be confidential and chatty. I would be really easy for me, a white, middle class woman with a perfectly nice upbringing, to feel alienated by the world depicted in this book, but the inclusive tone kept me hooked.

Cupcake's story is amazing, dark, inspiring - but, more than that, it is full of personal detail and thought. For most of the book cupcake doesn't believe she has a problem with drugs, and though the young voice is convinced, that of the narrator is wry and knowing.

I loved this book, and have recommended that to everyone I know.

Ashley Daviau says

I first read this book years ago and fell in love with it but I don't think I was able to fully appreciate then as I did this time around. Because I don't remember FEELING so much the last time I read it. But this time around, I was hit by feelings with what felt like the force of a hurricane.

This is such an incredibly dark, gritty and yet stunningly beautiful story about one woman's journey through hell and back. Because truly, I don't think there's any word more fitting to describe what Cupcake went through than hell.

Her journey struck so many chords with me, not because I've suffered through her disease but because many of my family members have. I've seen firsthand what kind of consequences her disease and behaviour can have on a person's life, how easily it spirals out of control and how hard it is to put all the pieces back

together.

And that made me appreciate Cupcake's story all the more because not only did she truly hit rock bottom, but she fought and clawed her way out of it and (not without A LOT of hard work) made a wonderful, sober life for herself. Her story is truly inspiring and one that I'm sure to reread many times in the years to come!

Danica says

This is a great story, but even that can not make up for the horrible writing techniques. The author has had an amazing life and her story is truly amazing and leaves a feeling of hope for those who have friends or family involved in addiction. However, she tends to ramble and repeat her situations to the point that the story becomes boring and redundant. Also, you can tell she is attempting to write in the way that someone in that situation would actually speak, but at the same time, she never seems to leave that horrible writing behind! I feel that if someone else had written this story for her and shortened it by about 100 pages (the repetitiveness) it would be much higher in my list of recommendations.

Elyse says

I read this a long time ago ...(I still own it)
It was a hard book to put down.
Are they really making a movie?

Yikes!

Eva Leger says

This is one of the best books I've ever picked up. I don't think I've ever read a better book on the subject of drug and alcohol addiction and recovery. I knew there was a reason why I got this book without knowing much about it. Knowing enough about addiction and recovery to know that this is an honest account only made it that much better for me. After reading A Million Little Pieces and knowing it was a load of crap before the "truth" came out- reading a HONEST recollection of someones addiction and subsequent recovery was refreshing. Ms. Brown managed to actually make me laugh out loud at several different parts and there were others that I just could not believe happened! The fact that she went from drug and alcohol addict to a lawyer and author is astounding and shows us that anything is possible. This book and Ms. Brown reminded me so many times during reading this of so many life lessons that I've forgotten or let dwindle away during my life. It's a memoir of a woman named Cupcake Brown and the life she led from childhood to adulthood. I'd recommend this to ANYONE who enjoys memoirs and/or books on addiction recovery. Fantastic book! I'd read something else by this author in a heartbeat!

Renee says

Cupcake Brown (that's her real name) was 11 in 1976 when her mother died. Custody of Brown and her brother was given to a stranger—their birth father—who only wanted their social security checks. He then left them with an abusive foster mother who encouraged her nephew to rape Brown repeatedly. Brown got better and better at running away. A prostitute taught her to drink, smoke marijuana and charge for sex. Her next foster father traded her LSD and cocaine for oral sex. Eventually she went to live with a great-aunt in South Central L.A., where she joined a gang. Almost 16, having barely survived a shooting, she decided to quit gangbanging. Drugs were her new best friends. A boyfriend taught her to freebase, but then there was crack, which was easier. Before long she was a "trash-can junkie," taking anything and everything. It wasn't until she woke up behind a Dumpster one morning, half-dressed and more than half-dead, that she admitted she needed help. Brown conveys this all in gritty detail, and her struggle to come clean and develop her potential—she's now an attorney with a leading California firm and a motivational speaker—ends her story on a high note.

Jenn says

Before I started reading this book, I read several reviews of it. They varied--either people really like it or they didn't. I really liked it.

Of those who didn't they complained generally about one of two (or both) things:

- 1) The story was too unbelievable; therefore, it must be exaggerated or falsified in some way; and
- 2) The book is poorly written--has bad grammar and obvious transitions, for example--and probably should have been written by a ghost-writer.

I disagree with both of these points. Anyone who thinks the story is "too unbelievable" is clearly too sheltered and needs to take a few moments to come out of the safety of suburbia to see what the rest of the world is like. If someone thinks for one moment that these kind of things do not happen to children across our country and that the results are not those shared by Cupcake Brown, I've got a bridge I can sell him/her. Those of us who have experienced abuse know what it can do to a kid and how it can effect him/her. And those people will relate to and understand Cupcake Brown and her memoir--even if her experiences are different and perhaps more extreme. One thing this memoir does well is show you how and why a fractured and abusive childhood can lead to a life of crime and substance abuse. It makes it make sense. If there's one thing this memoir is, it is real, in every sense of the word...

...which brings me to point 2: the writing. The writing makes this book a quick read, and it also makes it real. It would be harder to believe or understand the story Brown has to tell if it were written without the slang, the cheesy metaphors, and the obvious transitions. This is a woman who dropped out of high school. Then, she studied criminal justice at a community college. Chances are, she never took an elective creative writing course, so what do you expect? She went to law school. She writes in the to-the-point way of lawyers. If you want long, obtrusive, flowery metaphors, then this book is not for you--because that's not what this book's about. Furthermore, except for when she does so purposely in dialogue or when transcribing her thoughts, Brown does not write grammatically incorrect sentence. She may write simple sentences, but she does write them correctly. It irks me when people who do not even know grammar themselves review work like this and claim the grammar throws them off. I studied grammar for 6 years. Between her and her editor, Brown wrote a book that is pretty much grammatically correct.

I really enjoyed reading this book. It was quick and the story was good. It is real (and because it is, if you can't handle bad language, you shouldn't bother). A part I really related to was the "Marcia Brady" past. I, too, created a Marcia Brady past for myself, and I, too, was afraid of what revealing the truth of my past would bring, of what people would think...particularly after I worked so hard to break free of it. This book, I am, sure will give courage to others who also need to let go of their Marcia Brady pasts and allow them to see that accepting your past is accepting who you are, and only through so doing can you ever truly make something of yourself in life or be happy.

Part of what this book does is expose the failures of the child welfare system in this country and the ignorance of our society, so in a way, this book was written for those people who claim this story can't be true. Yes, it's sad; yes it's shocking; but yes, it's true and it can happen. Perhaps most importantly, though, the book gives hope to us all--hope that those who the system has forgotten or failed that they are worthy and can do and be something better; hope to those feeling defeated that things can get better; hope to those who feel alone that they aren't; hope to us all that with a strong support network and our inner fighter, we can conquer our biggest obstacles and achieve our biggest dreams.

Izetta Autumn says

At a certain point in this memoir, I just had to question the unbelievable events of Cupcake Brown's life. How could all of this happen? How could a person survive? It can't possible be true, can it? But for Cupcake Brown, she's lived every moment of it.

There are two things that I truly appreciate about this memoir: it gives a very detailed view of addiction, particularly to crack cocaine and addiction generally, and it makes it clear that care and protection of children is a paramount task for any society that even dreams of calling itself civilized.

The memoir would have been even better, if it had been slightly shorter, particularly around Brown's partying. I felt that I wanted to learn more about how she succeeded - and got her life together. But I imagine that she will write more.

For many people, I imagine that the book will feel like one degradation, stereotype, or caricature after another. It is unsettling to read, especiall in the era of James Frey-esque memoirs. It is, however, a powerful memoir.
