



God Said, Ha!: A Memoir

By Julia Sweeney

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1995 was, for Julia Sweeney, a truly horrible year. She got a divorce (amicable), bought a small bungalow in Hollywood, and looked forward to a life that said, "Here dwells a happily single young woman!" But then the ax fell. Her younger brother Mike was diagnosed with terminal cancer and moved in with her. Her parents came to be with Mike--and moved in with her. Suddenly her tiny bungalow for one was filled to the rafters with Sweeneys. Here she was sleeping on her pull-out sofa bed while her father walked around, his Walkman on all day and her mother marveled at Julia's lack of such staples as stroganoff mixes. Every day was spent bringing Mike to and from chemotherapy, every evening watching "Chicago Hope" or "E.R." Julia was now on seriously intimate terms with the people she had spent half a lifetime growing up away from. Just weeks before Mike died, Julia was diagnosed with a rare form of cervical cancer--what Mike called her "sympathy cancer"--and within days of burying her brother, she underwent a radical hysterectomy, beginning her own journey through "the International House of Cancer." From these Job-like travails, Julia has written a remarkably funny and touching memoir about a family in extremis that manages to persevere with humor, grace, and love.

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- Sales Rank: #1265412 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Bantam
- Published on: 1998-05-04
- Released on: 1998-05-04
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .44" w x 5.50" l, .55 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A truly horrible story is told very well in this memoir of family tragedy and recovery from life-threatening cancer. After leaving *Saturday Night Live*, comedienne Julia Sweeney was newly divorced and looking forward to a new life in Los Angeles. But her optimism was shattered when she learned that her brother had been diagnosed with cancer. He moved in with her, and before long Sweeney found out that she was suffering from a rare form of cervical cancer. The story of Sweeney, her brother, and her parents (whose moving in with her gave odd comic relief to all the health problems) is a moving tale, tragedy leavened with moments of good humor and uplifting insight.

From School Library Journal

YA?Sweeney, formerly Pat of Saturday Night Live, relates her experiences in coming to terms with her younger brother Mike's death from lymphatic cancer, and her own brush with cervical cancer. Building on her one-person autobiographical show in Los Angeles and on Broadway, the author has put her spoken words into print and created a sad but never depressing account of one disastrous year in her life. Fresh from a recent divorce and in her early 30s, she planned on moving into a small bungalow in L.A. and creating a haven all her own. Suddenly, instead of a sanctuary she found herself sharing the space with her parents and assorted friends and relatives as they nursed Michael through his last months of life. In 34 short chapters, each headed by a small photograph, Sweeney talks about the "worst year" in her life by concentrating on funny episodes that gave her the strength to deal with these events. She first looks at her parents' flaws and eventually values their strengths. YAs will find her courage at handling adversity a model to follow in their own lives when sometimes laughter and tears are so closely related they seem inseparable. Dottie Kraft, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA

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From Library Journal

Comedy and cancer work together in this memoir from Saturday Night Live alum Sweeney ("Pat"). Based on her one-woman show with little new material added, the book covers the year immediately after her leaving SNL, when Sweeney, recently divorced, moved to California. Before she settled in to bachelorhood and her "new, perfect little home," her brother Mike was diagnosed with lymph cancer. After Mike moved in with Sweeney, along came her Seattle-based parents to live out the ordeal with her?and the "perfect little home" became Grand Central Station. The stories of Mike's chemotherapy and relapses and of Sweeney's living again with her parents are poignant and witty, but the printed page is no match for the well-lit stage, as seeing the material performed, with Sweeney's timing and facial expressions, is what makes the tears of sadness and laughter flow. Before Mike died, Sweeney was diagnosed with cervical cancer or, as Mike called it, her "sympathy cancer." You wouldn't wish Sweeney's ordeal on anyone except a professional comedian. Similar to Gilda Radner's *It's Always Something* (LJ 6/15/89), Sweeney's book will make readers smile with understanding and empathy. For biography collections. Bette-Lee Fox, "Library Journal"

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