



Gonville: A Memoir

Peter Birkenhead

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“A captivating journey through the humor, pitfalls, delusions, and dangers of extreme family dysfunction and the boundless capacity of human love. The intelligent facility of Birkenhead’s writing shines” (Blogcritics.com).

Peter Birkenhead grew up trying to understand his father, a terrifying, charismatic presence who brutalized his family but also enchanted them with his passion and whimsy. An avid gun-collector and a virulently anti-war peacenik, a popular economics professor and a wife-swapping nudist, a near-radical leftist and a lifelong fan of the British Empire (who would don a pith helmet and imitate Michael Caine playing Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead in the bloody war film *Zulu*), he was a man who could knock his young son down the stairs one day and the next cry about putting the family’s aged dog to sleep.

When Birkenhead reached young adulthood, he reacted to his volatile childhood by forgetting its worst moments, trying to adopt all the trappings of normalcy, and sleepwalking through life. On occasion he found himself falling into rages that reminded him of his father, until a moment of revelation sparked the painful but necessary process of examining his childhood, and of ultimately moving beyond it.

Shocking, funny, redemptive, and utterly original, *Gonville* is light on its feet even as it deals in the darkest family tales.



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