



# A List of Things That Didn't Kill Me: A Memoir

By Jason Schmidt

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Jason Schmidt wasn't surprised when he came home one day during his junior year of high school and found his father, Mark, crawling around in a giant pool of blood. Things like that had been happening a lot since Mark had been diagnosed with HIV, three years earlier.

Jason's life with Mark was full of secrets—about drugs, crime, and sex. If the straights—people with normal lives—ever found out any of those secrets, the police would come. Jason's home would be torn apart. So the rule, since Jason had been in preschool, was never to tell the straights anything.

*A List of Things That Didn't Kill Me* is a funny, disturbing memoir full of brutal insights and unexpected wit that explores the question: How do you find your moral center in a world that doesn't seem to have one?

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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 10 Up—In this disturbing, heartbreaking, and inspiring memoir, Schmidt provides an account of an unstable childhood and adolescence. The prologue begins with Schmidt at age 16, coming home to discover his father crawling around the floor, covered in blood. The author then pulls back, describing his early years. After Schmidt's parents separated, his father, Mark, took custody of him. The two moved from one decrepit home to the next in Seattle, as Mark abused and sold drugs, barely earning a living. Schmidt's voice will resonate with teens as he writes candidly about his father's negligence and abuse, adeptly capturing what it was like to grow up impoverished, the hostility he encountered at school, the injuries and illnesses he endured, his difficulty finding and keeping friends, and the challenges of adjusting to his gay father's unstable romantic and sexual life. As Schmidt grew older, he believed more and more that he and Mark could never become "straights," or normal people. When the author reached adolescence, during the early 1980s, Mark and many of his friends were diagnosed with AIDS. It was a period when many gay men were dying, when those with HIV faced stigma, and when the effectiveness of medical treatment was minimal. Once realizing his father's fate, Schmidt feared what the future had in store but was inspired to take control of his life. VERDICT This unflinchingly honest work is a strong choice for readers who appreciate unfiltered stories, can stomach gruesome details, or aspire to work in social services.—Jess Gafkowitz, New York Public Library

## Review

"Schmidt's memoir is heartbreaking and touches the soul . . . Schmidt's brilliant prose will fascinate and appall teens and adults who read memoirs." ?VOYA

"A man whose emotionally unstable father moved him from home to home throughout the 1970s and '80s before dying of AIDS tells his story . . . Teens and adults who favor memoirs will be fascinated and deeply moved." ?Kirkus Reviews

"Schmidt's memoir—which spans his childhood to late adolescence and chronicles his abuse and near homelessness at the hands of his drug-addicted gay father—is an emotionally demanding read." ?Publishers Weekly

"This title joins the ranks of harrowing true stories like Dave Pelzer's *A Child Called It* (1993) and Augusten Burrough's *Running with Scissors* (2002), compelling accounts of childhood despair that are painful to read and impossible to put down." ?Booklist

"Disturbing, heartbreaking, and inspiring...This unflinchingly honest work is a strong choice for readers who appreciate unfiltered stories." ?School Library Journal

## About the Author

**Jason Schmidt** was born in Oregon in 1972. He has a law degree, and he lives with his family in Seattle, Washington.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Tara Scribner:**

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