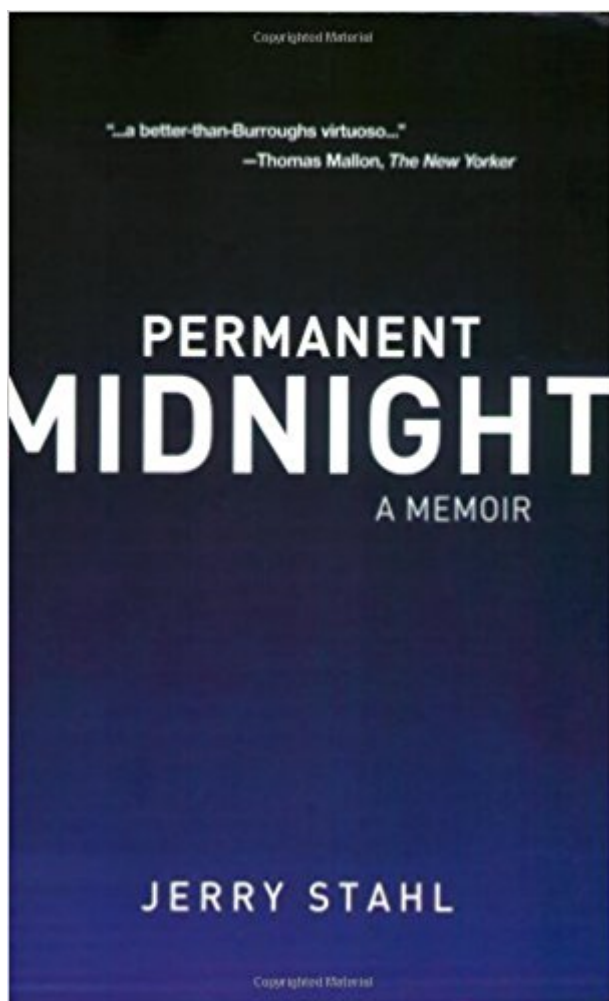


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# Permanent Midnight: A Memoir



## Synopsis

“An extraordinary accomplishment. . . . A remarkable book that will be of great value to people who feel isolated, alienated and overwhelmed by the circumstances of their lives.” —Hubert Selby, Jr., author of *Last Exit to Brooklyn* “[Stahl] is a better-than-Burroughs virtuoso.” —Thomas Mallon, *The New Yorker* “Original, appalling, indelible picture of a man trying to swim and drown at the same time. Stahl has nerve, heart, a language of his own and a ghastly, riotous humor.” —Tobias Wolff, author of *This Boy’s Life* “Permanent Midnight is one of the most harrowing and toughest accounts ever written in this century about what it means to be a junkie in America, making Burroughs look dated and Kerouac appear as the nose-thumbing adolescent he was.” —Booklist A searing confessional infused with the darkest humor, *Permanent Midnight* chronicles the opiated abyss of a Hollywood screenwriter and his formidable climb into sobriety. Made into a major motion picture starring Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson, *Permanent Midnight* is revered by critics and an ever-growing cult of devoted readers as one of the most compelling contemporary memoirs. Jerry Stahl was born in Pittsburgh. He is author of the novels *Perv: A Love Story*, *Plainclothes Naked and I, Fatty*, the paperback edition of which will appear in 2005. He currently lives in Los Angeles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“An extraordinary accomplishment. . . . A remarkable book that will be of great value to people who feel isolated, alienated and overwhelmed by the circumstances of their

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Jerry Stahl was born in Pittsburgh. He is author of the novels, I, Fatty, Perv: A Love Story, and Plainclothes, Naked. He currently lives in Los Angeles.

I've read this book a few times. It's funny, disturbing and as many note, a little too hip for it's on good. That said, I like the fact that it is not preaching to me or too didactic, as he admits he isn't completely sober even after he sobers up. His quick wit and ability to manipulate the reader is stellar. You empathize with his compulsive need to devour any and all drugs in his path, even if you don't fully understand it. One of the reasons the book is so moving is Stahl's willingness to expose some very dark secrets. The way he drives by his landlady when she flags him down for help because her elderly husband is succumbing to a heart attack is just one. Dragging his infant daughter into a shooting gallery even unnerves a skeletal junkie as she mad dogs him for his lapse in decorum, shooting up in his neck while living in his vintage caddie, ignoring the creepy child porn in his dealer's closet, uncomfortable scenes of his excess as he pitches an outrageous yet brilliant story line for his puppet from outer space sit com, stealing his kind friend's pills and the end which begins with the Rodney King riots, a sort of moment of truth for anyone who lived in LA for the sh\*\* is burning show. When you read a book more than once, as I often do, each time is a different experience. I realized my third time in that Stahl was a skillful manipulator not unlike my player beaus from back in the day. If you go to a reading or event where Stahl is featured, you'll note a bevy of bookwormmy women in all shapes, colors, ages and demographics are watching him with adoration and hopelessness because they intuitively understand he is unavailable to them. Maybe this is part of his appeal. But he seduces you. You fall for the narrator, and you're probably going to confuse him with the writer no matter what book you read. One assumes PM, a memoir, is the closest to who he truly is. I'm not so sure. Having read him since he was a Hustler hack churning out Penthouse Forum letters( I was like 11 and raiding my old mans collection of gentleman rags as

I prepared for my first career as a stripper) and later latching on to his voice in the LA weekly as I stripped in preparation for my destiny as a writer, I truly responded to his style because I never connected the dots until much later when a student in my HS English class ( he had a heroin jones at 17 and asked me to help him-- he's a nurse who married the girl I chose for him these days) brought me this book and insisted I read it. Next thing I knew I had the Stahl collection circulating in my underground book club as kids latched on to Perv, Fatty and Love Without. Ultimately Paradoxia by Lydia Lunch beat him out. But I dragged kids to Stahl's readings and he ended up shipping us books so I could keep up. I know I was a great teacher because my students were always stealing my books. So is PM perfect? Not really . It's legendary though as Stahl admits the tome originally started out as a nearly 1000 page embarrassment his mentor Cubby wisely advised him to edit with this advice : Write with love. I try to heed these words myself but it's not as easy as it sounds. However, I suspect it is the guiding spirit in this memoir which opened the door, for better or worse, to many a drug addled memoir. In grad school I wrote a paper on the history of drug memoirs which was just around the time Stahl's was getting a lot of attention for this book. I had DeQuincey, Crowley and Irvine Welsh but something about Hollywood hipster put me off. I clearly recall reading an article about Stahl in the LAT and considering going to his reading that night at Skylight Books. It was 1998 or 99, I didn't go, but I alluded to Stahl in my conclusion as the beginning of a trend. When it comes to literary matters my insights tend to be uncanny. Sadly my own life tends to be less available for such penetrating scrutiny. I would like to say Bukowski is my biggest influence as he's a much better writer than Stahl. But I know that Stahl's manic and cartoonish excess has been the Template for the writer I am today. His been a part of my Writing life since I knew I was a writer and always in an illicit and scary way. As such he's made me a little dishonest, something Hank's influence dissuades. But that's the nature of fiction, and like it or not memoir is fiction because none of us are willing to tell everything . Stahl just makes it look that way.

What I'd give to have a serious, some-what sit down with Jerry Stahl. I thoroughly enjoyed this memoir from start to finish. I would like to know what happened to Kitty. Did he love her? Really? I am sober a year and change and would have liked a chance to read about his experience getting sober for longer than a 90 day period. Maybe I was seeking hope from him. My family is from Pittsburgh so a lot of his stories really hit home for me. He certainly lucked out with Hubert Selby Jr. as his mentor, as I look up to him as well. Overall, Stahl's style had me on the edge of my seat whether he was kicking or scoring or how the days ran together in the meandering lifestyle of being a dope fiend. I remember what it was like to have all the time and the money in the world. Dope was

just not something I'd ever imagine would run out, until it did. I could really relate to his whole Kitty saving him deal, even though it doesn't last. I enjoy knowing that I'm not the only one who has replaced the stuff with love. Whatever works. His words work with my head and I'm glad it's over (but I'm actually already reading it again). What a trip. I'm just stoked to know the man is sober. It's possible to make it out alive. We need to know where we came from to keep us from going back. From one junkie to another, the last few pages with the dope sickness and subtle epiphany, made me want to vomit as I crawled on rock bottom with him. Poignant stuff. His veracity and humor were perfectly put down on paper. Raw, gripping, Hollywood man...Note: I just had a chance to meet Jerry at a reading in downtown Los Angeles. He was one of the nicest and most humble men I've ever met.

I first read this book two years ago, and it still feels stuck in my head as though I finished it yesterday. I don't have any real experience or understanding of hardcore drug addiction, but this book is so phenomenally written that it doesn't matter. Stahl may have struggled through a litany of personal issues and may have never achieved the success in Hollywood that he could have, but he's a fantastic spinner of poignant, funny, and captivating prose. A gut-wrenching depiction of his life through the very worst scenarios imaginable (seriously, many of these anecdotes will absolutely stop you in your tracks), *Permanent Midnight* doesn't ask for your sympathy, but the quality of the writing--plus that undercurrent of thought that, deep down, you know he's a good guy--makes you pull for him at all times. Highly recommended.

I guess it depends on expectations. I heard the author interviewed prior to purchasing the book. He certainly didn't try to hide the facts but I just got fed up with the sleaziness.

Thanks Jerry for helping me through a hard time in my life with this book. It's always good to hear from somebody who's been through the fire, and out the other side. It gives one hope. Things are better now but this book has a permanent place on my bookshelf.

Sincere, well written, full of insight and bittersweet observations. Really good.

excellent!

I would've liked to read about Stahl's recovery, too, but the ending was pretty abrupt. Other than

that, this is a classic addiction memoir.

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