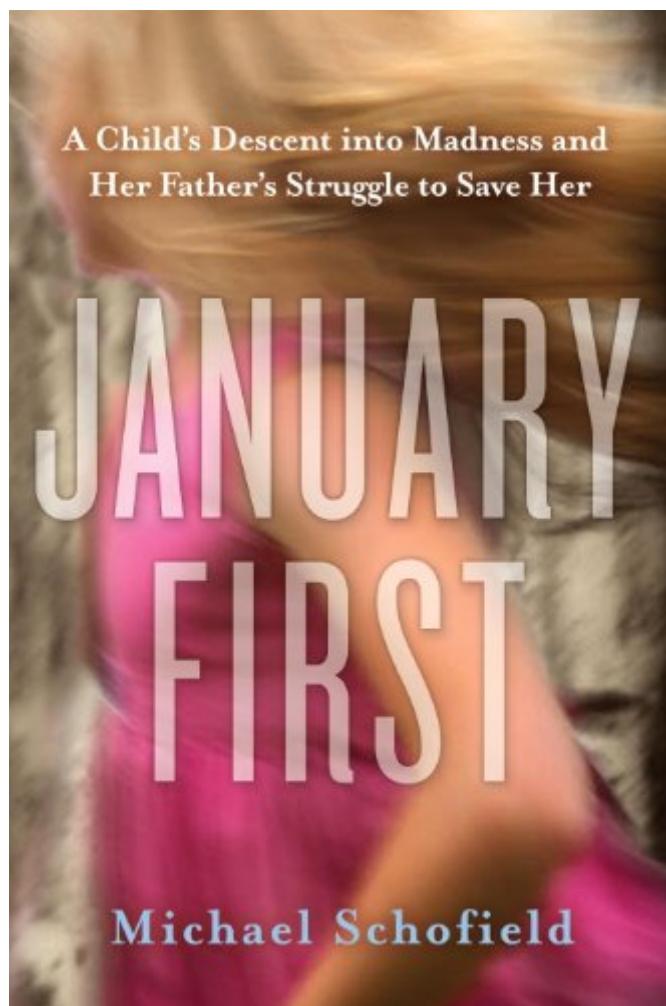


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# January First: A Child's Descent Into Madness And Her Father's Struggle To Save Her



## Synopsis

Michael Schofieldâ™s daughter January is at the mercy of her imaginary friends, except they arenâ™t the imaginary friends that most young children have; they are hallucinations. And January is caught in the conflict between our world and their world, a place she calls Calalini.Â Some of these hallucinations, like âœ24 Hours,â• are friendly and some, like âœ400 the Catâ• and âœWednesday the Rat,â• bite and scratch her until she does what they want.Â They often tell her to scream at strangers, jump out of buildings, and attack her baby brother.Â At six years old, January Schofield, âœJanni,â• to her family, was diagnosed with schizophrenia, one of the worst mental illnesses known to man.Â Whatâ™s more, schizophrenia is 20 to 30 times more severe in children than in adults and in Januaryâ™s case, doctors say, she is hallucinating 95 percent of the time that she is awake. Potent psychiatric drugs that would level most adults barely faze her.Â A New York Times bestseller, *January First* captures Michael and his family's remarkable story in a narrative that forges new territory within books about mental illness. In the beginning, readers see Janniâ™s incredible early potential: her brilliance, and savant-like ability to learn extremely abstract concepts. Next, they witness early warning signs that something is not right, Michaelâ™s attempts to rationalize whatâ™s happening, and his descent alongside his daughter into the abyss of schizophrenia.Â Their battle has included a two-year search for answers, countless medications and hospitalizations, allegations of abuse, despair that almost broke their family apart and, finally, victories against the illness and a new faith that they can create a life for Janni filled with moments of happiness.Â A compelling, unsparing and passionate account, *January First* vividly details Schofieldâ™s commitment to bring his daughter back from the edge of insanity.Â It is a fatherâ™s soul-baring memoir of the daily struggles and challenges he and his wife face as they do everything they can to help Janni while trying to keep their family together.Â

## Book Information

File Size: 3510 KB

Print Length: 322 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (August 7, 2012)

Publication Date: August 7, 2012

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B0058Z4NK0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #189,556 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #20 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Counseling & Psychology > Pathologies > Schizophrenia #80 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Schizophrenia #191 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Parenting & Relationships > Special Needs

## **Customer Reviews**

Yawn. This guy comes off like he is the only one who cares about his kid. He's just the one kicking himself. Sad story,

This book is not really about the child. It is all about the father. Great opportunity to write an interesting book but overall failed.

It would be hard to put down this book if you didn't have the time to read it all at once. I normally space my reading out, but with "January First," I read the entire book in one sitting. Although I do not have a child with his daughter's tendencies, I do have a young niece (4 yrs. of age) that exhibits similar behavior. Her mother is waiting until she is older to have her tested and have a brain scan/MRI, etc. I could easily relate to January's actions and her father's distress. It is encouraging, yet sad to hear a little voice admit, "I don't want to do these things," but devastating to have them say "I want to die." My sincerest wish to their family is that things will continue to improve. I am certain that their love will bridge those difficult moments and the family will continue to develop. Anyone who has a child or acquaintance with mental challenges, or recognizes themselves in this book will appreciate it. January, the child AND the book, is a gem.

This story is heart wrenching. Reading it, I feel grateful that I have never had to deal with this. It is such a bitter pill for parents to swallow, but, also, such an unbelievable price for a child to pay every day of her life. Our bodies can get sick and everyone gives sympathy, but, when our minds, our own 'computers' are defective, the results spew over to the lives of others, and, as such, those with

mental challenges are judged and condemned for something they cannot help. These parents have done the best they can. I respect them greatly.

I bought this book after reading Michael Schofield's Huffington Post article, if only because I wanted to somehow support him financially for all of his troubles. It was not an easy book to get through -- be warned, it is dark, filled with negativity, and even distressing. (I ate a lot of chocolate while reading it.) But you might have expected that anyway: after all, the book focuses on a six-year-old girl who has a severe case of child-onset schizophrenia, and has not been noted by Publisher's Weekly for its optimistic outlook. If you're interested in the mental health of children and how our culture treats those afflicted with schizophrenia, I would definitely recommend it -- but be warned that it's not something that will leave you feeling hopeful and fulfilled.

While other reviewers have been harsh in their criticism towards Michael Schofield, they are wrong to be so judgmental. He writes candidly and honestly about his daughter January "Jani" or "Janni" who suffers from child onset schizophrenia at the age of six years old. Michael and his wife, Susan, thought they had a budding genius in their firstborn daughter but slowly the illness especially its violence unpredictable nature who hits her baby brother, dog, parents, and others without control. This book is about acceptance of the diagnosis which is cruel especially for a child so young. It's a heartbreak story especially if you have seen her parents on television in Dr Phil or the Oprah Winfrey Show. Jani is exhausting with so much energy and stimulation. Her father, Michael Schofield, obviously loves his daughter and would go to the ends of the earth to save her. He no longer wonders if Jani will win the Nobel Prize, become a doctor, lawyer, scientist, marry or have children. He just wants Jani to be happy and alive. There is a gut wrenching scenes where Jani wants to commit suicide because she has the illness. The Schofields are remarkable family because they are dealing not only with a severe mental illness but also society's refusal to take it seriously. Their daughter is severely mentally ill and needs to be on the most extreme anti-psychotic medication probably for the rest of her life. Susan and Michael have also another child, a son named Bodhi. When he was small, Jani and Bodhi had to live with one parent in 2 one bedroom apartments where Michael and Susan would take turns with each child. The situation worked until Bodhi was big enough to protect himself from his big sister. The family is still together and Jani is much better. Her parents have established the Jani's Foundation to help others like themselves especially with insurance companies who don't cover the enormous expenses that would bankrupt any family. The insurance companies should help families who have children like Jani's maintain

and get access to health care and medication. Mental illnesses should not be stigmatized by insurance companies, hospitals, and society as a whole.

The story is fascinating but it's through Michael Schofield's eyes, the father. It'd be hard to write any book about your own child without it being distorted with one's own perceptions. I think Michael has a lot of growing and maturing to do and I also think the love and respect for his wife he may have does not show through in this book. He's very disrespectful to his wife in this book and doesn't give her credit where credit is due. Still, the story of January and what the family has gone through thus far makes you feel empathy.

Having followed Jani's story, I found her father very disturbing in the book. His anger is relentless. He fought every professional to no avail. It was Jani herself that got the help she needed. I felt that Michael was a deterrent in her diagnosis, as he felt he knew more than Jani's doctors and teachers. He was obsessive to a very unhealthy degree. It seemed his mental issues were never addressed properly. However, I found the book interesting and well written. I read it in a day, hoping to find some closure in Michael's anger. I never found that to be the case. I hope there is a follow up book with better results. Michael needs to deal with his anger issues to be able to deal with Jani's disease, since it is a lifelong illness.

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