

The Painting and the Piano by John Lipscomb and Adrienne Lugo

A memoir detailing the trials and tribulations of two souls experiencing parallel struggles with family and addiction, *The Painting and The Piano* paints a vivid picture of two lives darkened by pain and loss. The first storyline involves the coming-of-age of the wealthy son of a titan of industry: Johnny Lipscomb. Johnny's mother and father are both functioning alcoholics—though, sadly, his mother becomes less and less able to cope as his story progresses. Johnny relies heavily on the surrogate mothering of his dear governess, Lizzy, who is firm but ever faithful. Eventually, Johnny's parents divorce, he must part ways with Lizzy, and his mother succumbs to the weight of her addiction: dying tragically and leaving Johnny to navigate his existence with nary a guiding light. Similarly, Adrienne, a foster child living in a loving home, comes to learn that her biological parents are not only recovering drug addicts, but also that they want to wrench her away from said loving home. Abusive and an alcoholic until the day she dies, Adrienne's mother is a direct parallel for Johnny's mother.

These two stories unfold in brilliantly poignant and tragic ways, and the cycles of abuse and addiction are explored in meaningful, real discourse that brings about a deeper meaning to the reader as they follow along the narrative. Although it is a non-fiction memoir, the book reads much like a novel: intense and at points, almost unbelievable. The writing could use some tidying up, but over all, it's a thrilling, fast-paced ride for those who don't mind a little gritty reality.