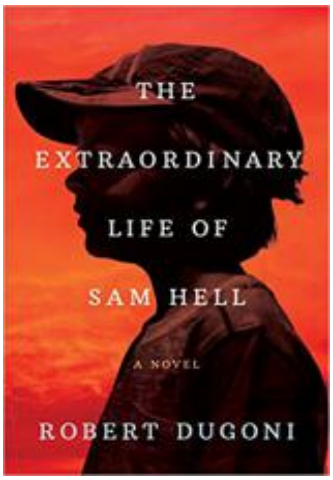
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The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell

by Robert Dugoni



About the Book

***Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* bestselling author Robert Dugoni?s coming-of-age story is, according to *Booklist*, ?a novel that, if it doesn?t cross entirely over into John Irving territory, certainly nestles in close to the border.?**

Sam Hill always saw the world through different eyes. Born with red pupils, he was called ?Devil Boy? or Sam ?Hell? by his classmates; ?God?s will? is what his mother called his ocular albinism. Her words were of little comfort, but Sam persevered, buoyed by his mother?s devout faith, his father?s practical wisdom and his two other misfit friends.

Sam believed it was God who sent Ernie Cantwell, the only African American kid in his class, to be the friend he so desperately needed. And that it was God?s idea for Mickie Kennedy to storm into Our Lady of Mercy like a tornado, uprooting every rule Sam had been taught about boys and girls.

Forty years later, Sam, a small-town eye doctor, is no longer certain anything was by design --- especially not the tragedy that caused him to turn his back on his friends, his hometown and the life he?d always known. Running from the pain, eyes closed, served little purpose. Now, as he looks back on his life, Sam embarks on a journey that will take him halfway around the world. This time, his eyes are wide open --- bringing into clear view what changed him, defined him and made him so afraid, until he can finally see what truly matters.

Discussion Guide

1. Samuel Hill was born with ocular albinism, which makes his pupils red, causing children to tease him and call him ?Devil Boy.? Throughout his many trials and tribulations, Sam?s mother consistently assures him, ?God gave you extraordinary eyes, Samuel, because he intends for you to lead an extraordinary life.? Parents work to shield their children who are different. What did you think of her choosing to deal with her son?s condition in this way?

2. David Bateman becomes Sam?s nemesis in grade school. Can you recall a bully from your youth? How did you deal with him or her? What do you think of Sam?s handling of David?

3. Ernie and Mickie prove to be loyal friends to Sam. What is the thread that bonds the three? Think of friends from your own childhood. Why do those particular friends stand out?

4. Sam describes how the kids are divided at St. Joe?s: ?kids were lumped into groups. You had your jocks, the nerds, the dorks, and the stoners. I straddled the line between the nerds, dorks, and jocks, with jock being the most tenuous.? What group did you belong to in high school? Thinking of those who were in particular groups when you went to high school, where are they now? Do you think that what happened with them in high school had an impact on the people who they are now? How has high school changed since Sam?s school days, or has it?

5. Coach Moran is on the horns of a dilemma concerning Sam and the basketball team. Do you agree with the way he handled the situation? How did this turn out to be a positive thing for Sam?

6. Who are Sam?s mentors? What sort of impact did each have on young Sam? Who do you think had the most impact on him? Do you think that Sam also had an impact on his mentors?

7. No stranger to hardship and disappointment, Sam is heartbroken when he loses out on being chosen valedictorian, despite his excellent grades. Do you think his reaction was justified? Why or why not? And was Ernie right to turn down the honor?

8. Sam tries to be pragmatic: ?Reality could be painful?my reality was that I was not going to live some extraordinary life, as my mother fervently believed, and prayed for.? Do you think that Sam feels betrayed by his mother?s staunch faith in him?

9. The stroke that Sam?s father suffers tests Sam?s faith in a myriad of ways. Can you recall a time when you faced a crisis of faith?

10. After high school, Sam finally decides to get colored contact lenses. Talk about this as a decision for him. How are they a mixed blessing for him?

11. Years later, Sam has to decide whether or not to be the doctor for the daughter of his childhood bully, David Bateman. What are your feelings about his wrestling with this? What would you have done in his position?

12. How has Sam?s life come full circle after meeting young Fernando in Costa Rica? Why is it important to him to stop wearing his contacts?

13. THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF SAM HELL easily could have been called ?Have Faith, Samuel.? What do you

think the novel says about faith and forgiveness? How does each character struggle with faith?

14. Sam Hill has seen his share of life?s highs and lows. Do you think his life was truly extraordinary?

Author Bio

Robert Dugoni is the *New York Times* and #1 Amazon bestselling author of multiple series, including the Tracy Crosswhite police series, the Charles Jenkins espionage series, the Keera Duggan legal thriller series, and the David Sloane legal thriller series. He has sold more than 12 million books worldwide.

His stand-alone novel, THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF SAM HELL, was named a *Newsweek* Favorite Book of All Time, and *Suspense* magazine?s 2018 Book of the Year Robert?s narration received an AudioFile Earphones Award. Other bestselling novels include A KILLING ON THE HILL, winner of the Silver Falchion award for best historical novel; THE WORLD PLAYED CHESS, the World War II blockbuster; HOLD STRONG; THE 7th CANON; DAMAGE CONTROL; and THE CYANIDE CANARY, a 2004 *Washington Post* Best Book of the Year. Many of his novels have been optioned for movies and television series.

Robert is the recipient of the Nancy Pearl Award for Fiction and the Friends of Mystery Spotted Owl Award for Best Novel Set in the Pacific Northwest. He?s a two-time finalist for the International Thriller Award, the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction, the Silver Falchion Award for mystery, historical and legal thriller, and the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award. His books have been translated into more than 30 languages and sold in 40 countries.

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Publication Date: April 24, 2018
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 428 pages
Publisher: Lake Union Publishing
ISBN-10: 1503949001
ISBN-13: 9781503949003