



## Life After Death

By Damien Echols

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In 1993, teenagers Damien Echols, Jason Baldwin, and Jessie Misskelley, Jr.—who have come to be known as the West Memphis Three—were arrested for the murders of three eight-year-old boys in Arkansas. The ensuing trial was marked by tampered evidence, false testimony, and public hysteria. Baldwin and Misskelley were sentenced to life in prison; while eighteen-year-old Echols, deemed the “ringleader,” was sentenced to death. Over the next two decades, the WM3 became known worldwide as a symbol of wrongful conviction and imprisonment, with thousands of supporters and many notable celebrities who called for a new trial. In a shocking turn of events, all three men were released in August 2011.

Now Echols shares his story in full—from abuse by prison guards and wardens, to portraits of fellow inmates and deplorable living conditions, to the incredible reserves of patience, spirituality, and perseverance that kept him alive and sane while incarcerated for nearly two decades.

In these pages, Echols reveals himself a brilliant writer, infusing his narrative with tragedy and irony in equal measure: he describes the terrors he experienced every day and his outrage toward the American justice system, and offers a firsthand account of living on Death Row in heartbreaking, agonizing detail. *Life After Death* is destined to be a riveting, explosive classic of prison literature.

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## Life After Death By Damien Echols Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

Review

**A *New York Times* Bestseller**

**A *Los Angeles Times* Bestseller**

**A *USA Today* Bestseller**

**A *Wall Street Journal* Bestseller**

**A *Kirkus Reviews* “Best of 2012” nonfiction selection**

“Damien Echols spent eighteen years on death row for murders he did not commit. Somehow, in the depths of his unspeakable nightmare, he found the courage and strength not only to survive, but to grow, to create, to forgive, and to understand. *Life After Death* is a brilliant, haunting, painful, and uplifting narrative of a hopeless childhood, a wrongful conviction, a brutal incarceration, and the beginning of a new life.”

—John Grisham

“Wrongfully imprisoned by willfully ignorant cops, prosecutors and judge, Damien Echols draws on all his wits and his unique view of humanity to survive eighteen years on death row. My admiration for him, and the strength of his spirit, increases with every page.”

—Sir Peter Jackson, Academy Award-winning director, producer and screenwriter

“I am in awe of Damien's ability to write so beautifully, with such ease, humor and honesty—this is inspired storytelling, a wonderful book!”

—Fran Walsh, Academy Award-winning screenwriter, composer and producer

“The life of Damien Echols is a journey similar to that of the metal that becomes a samurai’s sword. Heated and pounded until it becomes hardened, it can hold its edge for centuries. It is incredible that Damien endured and survived one of the most tragic miscarriages of American justice, and emerged such a centered, articulate and extraordinary man and writer. *Life After Death* proves that he paid dearly for his wisdom.”

—Henry Rollins

“Exceptional memoir by the most famous of the West Memphis Three. [B]are facts alone would make for an interesting story. However, Echols is at heart a poet and mystic, and he has written not just a quickie one-off book to capitalize on a lurid news story, but rather a work of art that occasionally bears a resemblance to the work of Jean Genet. A voracious reader all his life, Echols vividly tells his story, from his impoverished childhood in a series of shacks and mobile homes to his emergence after half a lifetime behind bars as a psychically scarred man rediscovering freedom in New York City. The author also effectively displays his

intelligence and sensitivity, qualities the Arkansas criminal justice system had no interest in recognizing during Echols' ordeal. Essential reading."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)

"This is a stunning piece of work. Such hope while faced with injustice. Damien teaches us how to live."

—Eddie Vedder

"[Echols'] case garnered worldwide attention, but [his] memoir is about as far away from a publicity-seeking I-was-wronged story as possible. The author opts for a meatier, and certainly more haunting, account of his life behind bars, coupled with flashbacks to his childhood....Echols is a talented writer, and when the book dips into his own spiritual and philosophical beliefs...it achieves the kind of emotional resonance that many similar books lack....A tragic and often disturbing story."

—*Booklist*

"Damien Echols suffered a shocking miscarriage of justice. A nightmare few could endure. An innocent man on death row for more than eighteen years, abused by the very system we all fund. His story will appall, fascinate, and render you feeble with tears and laughter. A brilliant memoir to battle with literary giants of the calibre of Jean Genet, Gregory David Roberts, and Dostoevsky."

—Johnny Depp

"[T]his is an eloquent, even bitterly lyrical, portrayal of how an innocent man can slip through the cracks of the legal system and struggle to survive. Compelling and deeply moving, in the tradition of Helen Prejean's *Dead Man Walking* and Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, this memoir will appeal to a wide audience."

—*Library Journal* (starred)

"In this searing, finely wrought memoir, Echols recalls his poverty-stricken childhood, the trial of the West Memphis 3, and the harsh realities of life on death row ... The most affecting sections are Echols's philosophical musings on all he has lost, his thoughts often influenced by Zen Buddhism. In one journal entry that survived the guards' purge, Echols contemplates what he misses the most while in prison. The answer is a heart-wrenching and simple commentary on American prison life: 'In the end it's not the fruit I miss most... I miss being treated like a human being.'"

—*Publisher's Weekly* (starred)

“[A] tale of romance, resilience, and the power of the written word.”

—Stephanie Palumbo, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

“Echols is a writer whose talent is commensurate with the task of telling this story....The man who has emerged from death row at last is not quite a hero, but he’s something far more interesting: an artist—and, most definitely, well worth meeting.”

—Laura Miller, Salon.com

“Gripping...Echols has already lived a remarkable life, one forged in tragedy and all manner of iniquity. That he is able to write so movingly about the many trials he endured speaks volumes about his intellect and character.”

—Jesse Singal, *The Boston Globe*

#### About the Author

**Damien Echols** was born in 1974 and grew up in Mississippi, Tennessee, Maryland, Oregon, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. At age eighteen he was wrongfully convicted of murder, along with Jason Baldwin and Jessie Miskelley, Jr. Echols received a death sentence and spent almost eighteen years on Death Row, until he, Baldwin, and Miskelley were released in 2011. The West Memphis Three have been the subject of *Paradise Lost*, a three-part documentary series produced by HBO, and *West of Memphis*, a documentary produced by Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh. Echols is the author of a self-published memoir, *Almost Home*. He and his wife, Lorri Davis, live in New York City.

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I have the shape of a dead man on the wall of my cell. It was left behind by the last occupant. He stood against the wall and traced around himself with a pencil, then shaded it in. It looks like a very faint shadow, and it’s barely noticeable until you see it. It took me nearly a week to notice it for the first time, but once you see it you can’t un-see it....Perhaps it’s just superstition, but I can’t help feeling that erasing it would be like erasing the fact that he ever existed. That may not be such a bad thing, all things considered, but I won’t be the one to do it.

#### Users Review

##### From reader reviews:

##### Catherine Crider:

The e-book untitled *Life After Death* is the publication that recommended to you to see. You can see the quality of the e-book content that will be shown to you. The language that creator use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The article author was did a lot of exploration when write the book, hence the information that they share to you personally is absolutely accurate. You also could get the e-book of *Life After Death* from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

**Annie Hernandez:**

The book untitled Life After Death contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains your ex idea with easy approach. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read that. The book was compiled by famous author. The author brings you in the new period of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice learn.

**Harry Oliver:**

That reserve can make you to feel relax. This specific book Life After Death was colorful and of course has pictures around. As we know that book Life After Death has many kinds or type. Start from kids until teens. For example Naruto or Investigator Conan you can read and believe you are the character on there. So , not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it makes you feel happy, fun and chill out. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading in which.

**Tracy Gardiner:**

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