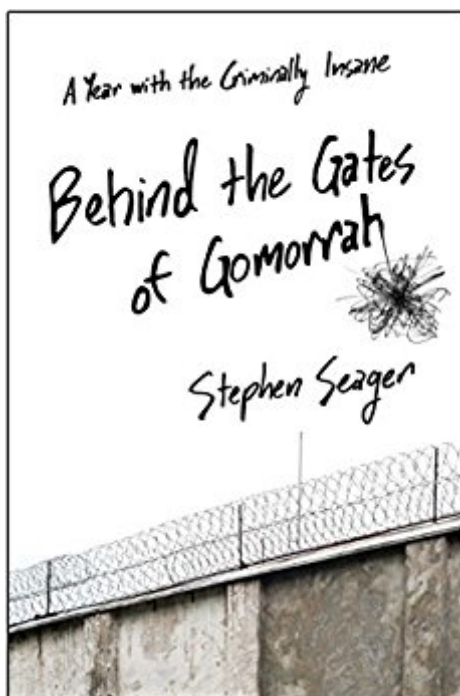


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# Behind The Gates Of Gomorrah: A Year With The Criminally Insane



## Synopsis

A darker twist on Orange is the New Black, this true insider's account delivers an eye-opening look into the nation's largest state-run forensic hospital, a facility that houses the real-life Hannibal Lecters of the world. Psychiatrist Stephen Seager was no stranger to locked psych wards when he accepted a job at California's Gorman State hospital, known locally as "Gomorrah," but nothing could have prepared him for what he encountered when he stepped through its gates, a triple sally port behind the twenty-foot walls topped with shining coils of razor wire. Gorman State is one of the nation's largest forensic mental hospitals, dedicated to treating the criminally insane. Unit C, where Seager was assigned, was reserved for the "bad actors," the mass murderers, serial killers, and the real-life Hannibal Lecters of the world. Against a backdrop of surreal beauty—a verdant campus-like setting where peacocks strolled the grounds—is a place of remarkable violence, a place where a small staff of clinicians are expected to manage a volatile population of prison-hardened ex-cons, where lone therapists lead sharing circles with sociopaths, where an illicit underground economy flourishes, and where patients and physicians often measure their lives according to how fast they can run. To cross through the gates of Gomorrah is to enter a looking-glass world, where the trappings of the normal calendar year exist—Halloween dances and Christmas parties (complete with visits from Santa), springtime softball teams and basketball leagues, but marked with paroxysms of brutality (Santa goes berserk), and peopled by figures from our nightmares. Behind the Gates of Gomorrah affords an eye-opening look inside a facility to which few people have ever had access. Honest, rueful, and at times darkly funny, Seager's gripping account of his rookie year blends memoir with a narrative science, explaining both the aberrant mind and his own, at times incomprehensible, determination to remain in a job with a perilously steep learning curve.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A close acquaintance's stepson was sent to Napa State Hospital when he was about 23 for bludgeoning his father to death while his father lay sleeping. He was high in meth as I understood it. He had been a student of mine briefly when he was 15 before he dropped out. His parents were at a loss what to do and tried to get him help for years. I read this and was concerned regarding treatment of "patients" at facilities such as this. I have much more insight and understanding as to the conditions under which this young man will be living for a very long time.

A must read for every lawyer, and judge working in the criminal justice system. Even if you're not, a very inciteful expose into the problems within our mental health system, problems confounded by our legislatures, and the judges and lawyers who try in good faith to grapple with these issues in the courts. We've inadequately funded our state mental hospitals releasing truly mentally disturbed people to wonder aimlessly the streets of our cities with inadequate care or protection and at the same time allowed some of the most dangerous individuals to take advantage of the laws related to mental defenses in criminal cases. A great read, entertaining, at times amusing, poignant and frightening.

Yes! I enjoyed reading "Behind the Gates of Gomorrah: A Year with the Criminally Insane" by Stephen Seager and finally learned about what goes on inside the Napa state hospital for the insane. It satisfied my curiosity. As a kid growing up in an area nearby, I had heard and wondered about this place of mystery. We kids would say, "if you get too crazy, you'll be shipped off to Napa." The author showed courage for working there. In addition, as a reader, learning about the author's

year "Behind the Gates of Gomorrah: . . ." he also satisfied my curiosity about several notorious murders that had occurred across our nation over recent years by elaborating on their details that our media had not included.

Harrowing account of a hospital for the criminally insane by a doctor who worked there. As a former psych nurse I was riveted by this account, though most mentally ill patients are not violent. Reveals how risky it can be for the medical personnel who have to deal with the most dangerous of the psychologically disturbed.

This insightful book is appearing at an especially key moment as the US Congress contemplates legislation to fix the disastrous system that exists for responding to severe mental illnesses. Stephen Seager's vividly written memoir lets us see the daily horrors created by the failed social experiments that dominate mental illness care. We witness how the forensic system fails very ill people whose disorders led to their imprisonment; they are 'free' to keep rejecting the medications they don't understand they need. At the same time, other patients are able to prey on them and on those whose illnesses are under control. It's also shocking to learn about the very violent working conditions that the staff must endure. While the book suggests possible solutions, even more solutions are concisely listed in the author's recent article, "A Violent Place We Call a Hospital" in The Sacramento Bee. The book is especially important for those of us who are parents of people living with psychotic disorders and is a reminder of why we must keep working to change dysfunctional mental health policies. Susan Inman author, *After Her Brain Broke, Helping My Daughter Recover Her Sanity*

Frightening to know that these hospitals exist. Being a former juvenile correctional officer, I've seen juveniles with mental issues that, if left untreated, moves the person toward committing more violent crime, thus sending them to adult institutions with limited mental health treatments. I've seen where Central State Hospital, a treatment facility in Milledgeville, close due to budget cutbacks, and either transferring patients to other treatment facilities or releasing them to the general public only begets more crime. It is a well known and vicious cycle, and akin to what the author stated, "nothing gets done".

This book was truly engrossing. I found myself trying to read more, every chance I got. I was reading on my lunch breaks, and on all of my spare time. Dr. Seager is very talented in his ability to

provide such vivid detail, that it's as if you were right there with him. I only wish this were a tale that included a wrap up of some of the psychotic and dangerous persons he detailed. Since this is based on reality, I would imagine the saga with these individuals is still under way. I pray that none of them get released. I live in California, and I certainly wouldn't want to run into any of them!!!!Great work, Dr. Seager!

Loved reading this book. The characters were interesting and I thought the author brought some seriously important issues to light

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