

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## **Buffalo Lockjaw.**

Ames, Greg (Author)

Mar 2009. 304 p. Hyperion, paperback, \$14.95. (9781401309800).

James Fitzroy travels home to Buffalo for the Thanksgiving holiday—and to assist his mother in committing suicide. Ellen, only 56 and a nurse, author, and patients-rights activist, has Alzheimer's. Several years before, as her dementia deepened, she told James she planned to commit suicide; he talked her out of it but now understands that she knew best. But James is the slacker in the family. Can he do it? *Buffalo Lockjaw* is a small, knowing, finely crafted debut novel, capable of rousing empathy, identification, pain, and even laughter. Small details of nursing homes—and Alzheimer's—are painfully accurate; “memory boxes” outside rooms, middle-aged visitors shocked that Mom is dressed shabbily in some other patient's clothes, moments of unexpected lucidity, Perry Como songs playing, and endless memories of Mom when she was herself. Ames is equally incisive on family dynamics. James and his father grope to understand each other, and James spends as much time as possible revisiting his Buffalo youth. And that's where the laughs are. An altogether winning novel.

— *Thomas Gaughan*