

Iron Boy

Arthur Bozikas

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Iron Boy is a memoir about illness, superstition, and the ultimate arrival of hope.

Iron Boy is Arthur Bozikas's moving memoir about learning to live with a chronic illness.

Bozikas was twelve when he was first told that he wouldn't live past his twenty-fifth birthday. He was born with a chronic blood disorder, Beta thalassaemia major; it left his body was unable to produce healthy red blood cells. He required regular blood transfusions to survive.

Historical context about the condition is provided, including the fact that people with Beta thalassaemia major often did not live past early adulthood. Explanations of the treatments that Bozikas himself endured, which led iron to build up in his heart and other organs, are included alongside less narrative resources for learning more about the illness. Advice for helping others with the condition is interjected, too.

Despite his frightening prognosis, Bozikas writes that his childhood was not marked by fear. He was an avid comic books reader and a fan of Iron Man; he came to think of himself as a superhero, too. He was also led to believe that God would look after him if he gave his heart and soul to the Greek church.

Alongside descriptions of Bozikas's struggles with his illness, this disperse book also includes elements of family history, such as that his parents were immigrants who moved to Australia from Greece in the late 1950s; and that he had a troubled relationship with his brother, who was jealous of the attention heaped on his ill sibling. Later, the work stretches to include Bozikas's love story—about how he met his wife, Helen, as well as the details of their first, troubled pregnancy in their early twenties.

With clarity and concision, Bozikas takes care to explain the medical terms and practices that he covers, many of which are central to his story of recovery. He also ably deals with topics like migration and the struggles that follow from starting over in a new country, intertwining his tale with those of his parents. This weaving results in moving revelations, as of about how religion and superstitions impacted his family's decisions. He discusses how his parents overcame their initial assumptions, desires to place blame about his condition, and superstitions about the illness, deciding to focus on finding a cure: "Once my parents convinced themselves that I was normal, they believed it wholeheartedly."

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ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (February 21, 2022)

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