



## Trouble the Water: A Young Woman on the Edge of Living and Dying

**Idina Santino**

Westwood Books

(666pp)

978-1-4808-7910-2

*A mother observes her daughter's cancer diagnosis and treatment in the memoir *Trouble the Water*, which covers years of dedication and family support.*

Idina Santino's moving memoir *Trouble the Water* concerns her young daughter's leukemia diagnosis and treatment.

When twelve-year-old Jada fell sick, she was eager to recover and return to rehearsing for a spring concert and ice shows. But tests revealed a serious illness: she was diagnosed with leukemia. Santino details Jada's treatments and brave resolve to continue living her life. She applied herself in school and was accepted to her college of choice. She also worked and made friends. In between recurrences of the cancer, she continually fought to live.

Jada's journal entries, which convey her frustration at having to live with leukemia, her excitement at going to college, and her hope for her physical therapy after two hip surgeries, are emotionally involving. She covers experiences before her diagnosis, too, as when she recalls looking forward to going to kindergarten and comparing it to her mother going to work. Her happiness, anger, and despair help when it comes to understanding her and her assertive personality.

Santino's childhood is also covered, used to flesh her out and enlarge her experiences in relation to her daughter's illness, as when she compares her son to her father and tries to imagine her son donating marrow to Jada. More heartwarming are the connections between mother and daughter: Santino surprises Jada with her dream car; together, they celebrate positive health status reports. Their conversations, and Santino's devotion, are shown to have been a source of strength for Jada through difficult hospital admissions and painful treatments.

Descriptions of the family's surroundings, including of the weather, nature, and changes in the seasons, contrast with coverage of the stark hospital environment, where a tube is observed hanging from Jada's arm and is compared to a snake that has its fangs fastened into its prey. And alongside such heavy metaphors are humorous, familiar treatments of others that the mother and daughter encountered: a colleague with stuffed chipmunk cheeks; a psychologist with a square physique that seemed likely to bounce back when hit.

Still, the book runs quite long in its coverage of Jada's eight-year cancer treatment, and is divided into only five sections—each representing a major change in her life. The text becomes overwhelming, replete with accounts that are slow to absorb. It is light on space for reflecting on the serious stories that it shares.

A mother observes her daughter's cancer diagnosis and treatment in the memoir *Trouble the Water*, which covers years of dedication and family support.

EDITH WAIRIMU (December 23, 2021)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*