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Two Chai Day

Irene McGoldrick
Rising Star (September 2010)
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“The hardest part of mourning,” says Irene McGoldrick, “is that no one else can do it for you.” Most of us who have lost a loved one appreciate that truth. But we also know the blessing of a friend who has been there. In *Two Chai Day*, McGoldrick seeks to be that friend, as she shares the story of her husband’s cancer and her own sense of loss and grief at his diagnosis and death.

McGoldrick details Bob’s cancer and eventual death, unveils the experience of fighting the disease, and shines insight into the journey so many walk. In the process she explores how cancer can impact relationships, how patients might deal with their illness, the particular challenges spouses face, and the always-unique healing process after a loved-one dies.

The book begins with a fleeting glimpse into Irene and Bob’s early relationship. It then focuses on the stages they went through after Bob started feeling ill: his initial diagnosis, first stages of treatment, a stem cell transplant, hope for recovery, Bob’s final days, Irene’s grieving process, and finally, moving forward. Through it all, McGoldrick cared for a toddler and was pregnant with a second child.

Two Chai Day presents a series of snapshots that combine into a cohesive and fascinating story. And it includes selections from her husband’s journal, allowing him, to tell the tale from his perspective. Readers get a first-person picture of what it is like to battle cancer. Difficult feelings and challenges never receive a sprinkle of sugar from the author, but neither does the book become overwhelmingly dark.

As a social worker, McGoldrick recognizes that people need to know they are not the only ones who have experienced a certain pain. And it can help to see how another has survived a traumatic ordeal. Yet it’s important to know that she offers a portrait, not solutions or steps for others to follow.

This book might particularly benefit family and friends of those who face cancer or have lost someone to it. However, extreme sensitivity should be used with considering it for anyone currently battling cancer or their spouse—and those with a very recent loss as well. In the midst of the fight and during grief, there are times when another’s story helps, and times when it proves too much to bear. But for the right person at the right moment, this book might just reveal what a friend is going through or might offer someone understanding during a tremendously difficult time.

DIANE GARDNER (September 27, 2011)

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