

## Two Years Journey, the Rise from Leukemia and Aneurysm to the Opportunity of a Lifetime

**Derrick R. Harding**

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*Harding's memoir offers a real-life and sometimes poetic glimpse into the challenges of leukemia.*

Jamaican educator Derrick Harding documents his battle with leukemia in his short, direct, and occasionally poetic memoir, *Two Years Journey*. This is an informative account of illness, recovery, and faith.

The book begins with a prophetic moment in Harding's church that led to a diagnosis of a bone marrow disease and eventually leukemia. Nine chapters follow the author through his treatment, including chemotherapy, a stem-cell transplant from his brother, and an unfortunate fall in the hospital that caused further medical complications.

Besides detailing the author's physical and medical ordeal, the book captures his psychological conditions, his changing moods, and his steadfast Christian faith. Other people—including family members, doctors, and nurses—flow through the diary-like chapters, too.

*Two Years Journey* is impeded by its transient and episodic structure, though. Some chapters are underdeveloped, relying on setting details and vague asides rather than contributing to the central conflict. There's no real narrative arc to propel the book forward, and toward the end, the book takes an unnecessary detour into the author's teaching career and transfers among various schools.

The book's best sections hone in on physical aspects of Harding's health struggles with precise and exacting prose. This offers those with family members suffering from leukemia, or readers suffering themselves, a firsthand account of issues that they may experience, addressed in a down-to-earth, educational, and colloquial manner. Other issues are depicted in more literary terms. Descriptions of a catheter, for instance, are almost absurdist: "It hung like the ends of a shoelace strung through the upper edges of a loafer."

*Two Years Journey* is also strong in its poetic meditations, as Harding explores his faith in God, the beauty of creation, and the miracle of healing. The book's opening chapter offers such exultant sublimity: "I chanted and moved vigorously, yet in effortless motion, like the silky, smooth, rhythmic tapping of a ballpoint font from an electric typewriter." Such lyricism is endearing and provides a much-needed contrast to the book's more clinical passages. The book also includes one of Harding's own poems, a touching and bittersweet eight-liner called "Sweet Tears."

Harding shows promise as a writer, and *Two Years Journey* hits some important notes, offering a real-life glimpse into a harrowing disease and the role of faith in the recovery process.

SCOTT NEUFFER (November 15, 2016)

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