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Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir

David Rieff

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Both a memoir and an investigation, *Swimming in a Sea of Death* is David Rieff's loving tribute to his mother, the writer Susan Sontag, and her final battle with cancer. Rieff's brave, passionate, and unsparing witness of the last nine months of her life, from her initial diagnosis to her death, is both an intensely personal portrait of the relationship between a mother and a son, and a reflection on what it is like to try to help someone gravely ill in her fight to go on living and, when the time comes, to die with dignity.

Rieff offers no easy answers. Instead, his intensely personal book is a meditation on what it means to confront death in our culture. In his most profound work, this brilliant writer confronts the blunt feelings of the survivor -- the guilt, the self-questioning, the sense of not having done enough.

And he tries to understand what it means to desire so desperately, as his mother did to the end of her life, to try almost anything in order to go on living.

Drawing on his mother's heroic struggle, paying tribute to her doctors' ingenuity and faithfulness, and determined to tell what happened to them all, *Swimming in a Sea of Death* subtly draws wider lessons that will be of value to others when they find themselves in the same situation.

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