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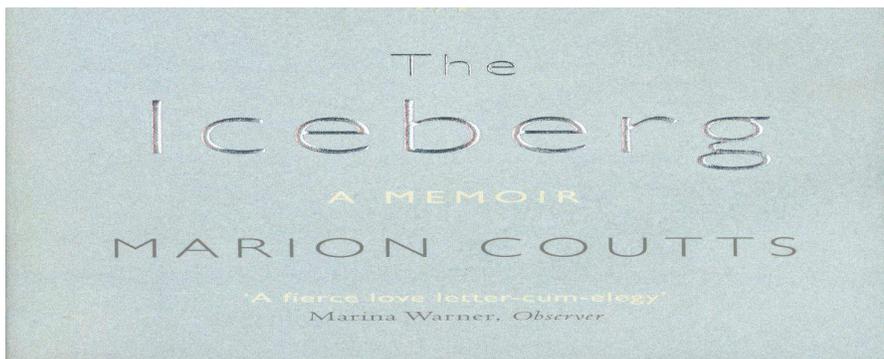
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The Iceberg- Marion Coutts

This book is a compelling and moving day-to-day account of the physical and emotional impact of a close family member becoming terminally ill. The writer has beautifully constructed a moving narrative, baring all her emotions and thoughts over a three-year journey as her husband dies with incurable cancer.

This book is written by [Marion Coutts](#), an artist, and writer. She works in video, film, sculpture, and photography. Her work has been exhibited widely nationally and internationally including solo shows at Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Wellcome Collection, London. She has held fellowships at Tate Liverpool and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. She documents her life after her husband Tom Lubbock, whom she was married to for 14 years, is diagnosed with an invasive brain tumor, sited in the area controlling speech and language. For Tom, a celebrated art historian, critic, and collagist, his speech and language capacities were defining abilities. When this devastating illness intruded into their lives, they were painting a rosy picture of life with their 18 months old son, dreaming of seeing their son grow in front of their eyes.

Nothing could have prepared the family for this devastating news. On one side, Marion is caring for an infant who is learning the complexities of speech, while her husband is losing his. In between, she feels bewildered, overwhelmed, and vulnerable. She takes us through this heart-wrenching journey, where every succeeding moment, whether it is a visit to the doctor, surgery, a post-surgery treatment, and even a walk down to the park, brings new apprehensions, hopes, fears, and, of course, dreaded thoughts. In addition to his gradual decline, Tom underwent two brain surgeries over a period of two years. For Marion, the anticipation of what may lie ahead is more painful than knowing the results of the surgery.

The impacts on Marion were both physical and psychological. She sees and experiences the world differently now, simultaneously with and without Tom. For Tom, accepting the fact that he is being slowly robbed of his most important faculties is a devastating loss. Nevertheless, he pursues what he loves most till his death, writing and speaking. Even though he becomes increasingly debilitated, he keeps writing for others and for himself. He maintains a diary which was later published as a memoir: *Until Further Notice, I am Alive*

Multiple paradoxes are recounted in the book. Marion is preparing two kinds of food, one for her husband, with many dietary restrictions, and another one for her son, to meet his growing needs. On one hand, she is looking for a primary school for her son, while at the same time searching for an appropriate nursing





COVID 19

Although death can be perceived as a finite end, we tend to think less of the dying process, of the minutes and hours that may extend over a few years. Dying is filled with unanticipated moments and paradoxes, affecting both patients and families. Coutts narrates a searing description of these final moments.

By Dr Gavril Hercz | September 29th, 2016 | 2016, Reviews | 0 Comments

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About the Author: [Dr Gavril Hercz](#)



Dr. Gavril Hercz is a nephrologist at Humber River Hospital and Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Toronto. He completed his psychoanalytic training at the Toronto Psychoanalytic Institute and is a member of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society. His major area of interest is the impact of physical illness on patients, families, and caregivers.

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