



The Cancer Chronicles: Unlocking Medicine's Deepest Mystery

George Johnson

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When the woman he loved was diagnosed with a metastatic cancer, science writer George Johnson embarked on a journey to learn everything he could about the disease and the people who dedicate their lives to understanding and combating it. What he discovered is a revolution under way—an explosion of new ideas about what cancer really is and where it comes from. In a provocative and intellectually vibrant exploration, he takes us on an adventure through the history and recent advances of cancer research that will challenge everything you thought you knew about the disease.

Deftly excavating and illuminating decades of investigation and analysis, he reveals what we know and don't know about cancer, showing why a cure remains such a slippery concept. We follow him as he combs through the realms of epidemiology, clinical trials, laboratory experiments, and scientific hypotheses—rooted in every discipline from evolutionary biology to game theory and physics. Cogently extracting fact from a towering canon of myth and hype, he describes tumors that evolve like alien creatures inside the body, paleo-oncologists who uncover petrified tumors clinging to the skeletons of dinosaurs and ancient human ancestors, and the surprising reversals in science's comprehension of the causes of cancer, with the foods we eat and environmental toxins playing a lesser role. Perhaps most fascinating of all is how cancer borrows natural processes involved in the healing of a wound or the unfolding of a human embryo and turns them, jujitsu-like, against the body.

Throughout his pursuit, Johnson clarifies the human experience of cancer with elegiac grace, bearing witness to the punishing gauntlet of consultations, surgeries, targeted therapies, and other treatments. He finds compassion, solace, and community among a vast network of patients and professionals committed to the fight and wrestles to comprehend the cruel randomness cancer metes out in his own family. For anyone whose life has been affected by cancer and has found themselves asking why?, this book provides a new understanding. In good company with the works of Atul Gawande, Siddhartha Mukherjee, and Abraham Verghese, *The Cancer Chronicles* is endlessly surprising and as radiant in its prose as it is authoritative in its eye-opening science.

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