

A Season in Hell : A Memoir



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Amazon.com Marilyn French, author of *My Summer with George*, *The Women's Room*, and *Her Mother's Daughter*, learns at the beginning of this memoir that she has esophageal cancer. (A smoker for 46 years, she had ignored friends and doctors who implored her to quit.) She is told that one survives metastasized esophageal cancer. *A Season in Hell* is French's personal story of her journey through the nightmares of aggressive cancer treatment, seizures, a two-week coma, kindhearted nurses, and uncompassionate doctors. One told her not to get her hopes up when her tumor disappeared, and a neurologist said (prophetically?), "Doctors hate writers; they always say horrible things about us." It is also French's story of triumph--because she succeeds in conquering the cancer, though she emerges from the struggle far from well, with "just about every system in my body [damaged]

by chemotherapy or radiation." Readers share the worst and the best with French, and by the end of the book get to know this woman, feel a part of her humanity, respect her courage, and cherish her circle of close friends (including Gloria Steinem) and relatives who gave her so much when she needed it most. --Joan Price From Publishers Weekly From 1992 through part of 1996, French endured a horrific battle with esophageal cancer and a "virtual return from the dead." Every possible health-related indignity is recounted here as she tells the reader far more about her hellish ordeal than most will want to know. The author takes great pains to ventilate about every unpleasantness she has endured (from male M.D.'s who "belittle" French by calling her a "tough lady," to "obtuse" book reviewers who fail to appreciate her writing, as well as the quotidian irritations of the world at large). Thankfully, she does express gratitude to her devoted children and her caring, high-profile female friends (Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer, etc.). This Job's litany of horror is, however, a nightmare endured by a wealthy, much-honored literary giant, and a little acknowledgment of the many who suffer similar catastrophes without the status or financial wherewithal would have been nice. Although brief glimmers of growth and self-introspection appear every 40 or 50 pages, far more often the reader is presented with the author's calendar activity list, which resemble afterthoughts. Only one in five esophageal cancer victims survives, so it cannot be denied that French beat the odds. But such a talented writer should have known that a prolonged rant would not inspire others facing similar hardships. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. See all Editorial Reviews

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