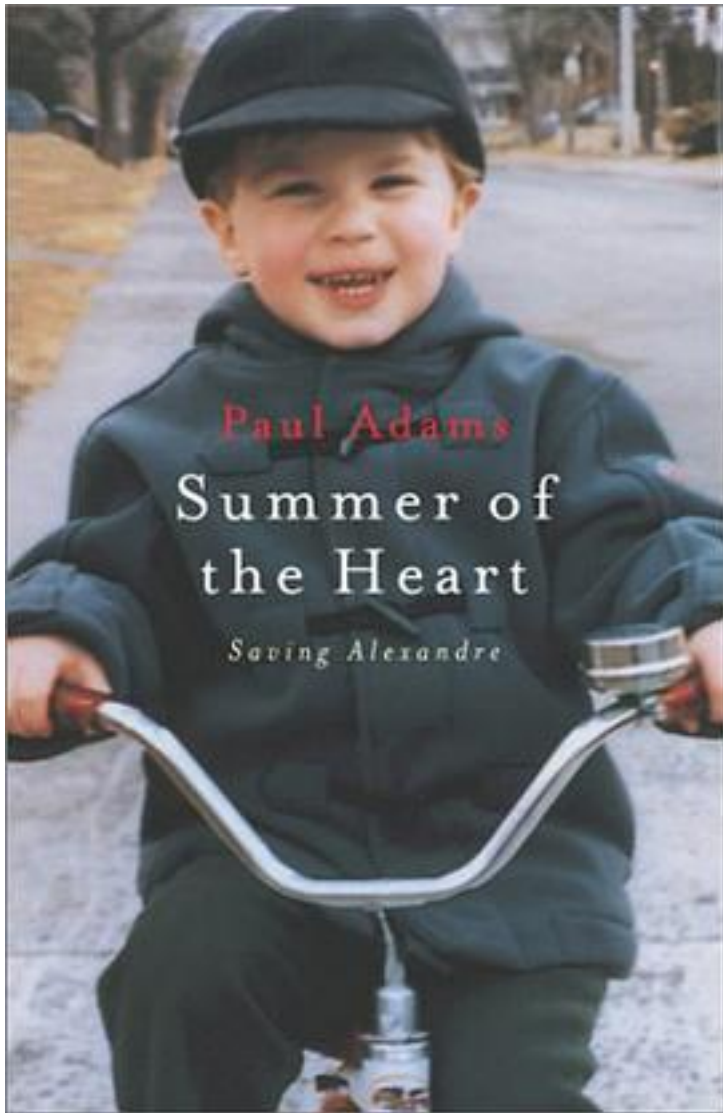


Summer of the Heart



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A father's heart-rending account of his baby's extraordinary will to live

When Alexandre Julius Adams was born – at Gatineau Hospital, in the summer of 1998 – he seemed a healthy little boy. When he had trouble breast-feeding, his parents assumed it was normal. As the days passed, however, he grew dehydrated, inconsolable, and then listless. His parents phoned a government hotline. A nurse suggested they take the baby to emergency.

So began an extraordinary life-and-death saga. Alexandre was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect, and only a combination of good fortune, superb medical expertise, and inner resilience enabled him to survive. “He was on a knife's edge in there,” the anesthesiologist grimly told Alexandre's father after the first operation. “A knife's edge.”

This book is a father's beautifully terse, stirring account of the saving of his son. At times it reads like an episode of ER – Adams chronicles the intricate, brusque mechanics by which a critically ill infant is sustained. Pediatric cardiology is deftly explained, and the history of our understanding of human anatomy is woven in.

But this is a deeply personal story, and it occasions as many chuckles as tears. The numbing strain felt by Paul and Suzanne is almost unbearable; their lives become an emotional roller coaster there is no stepping off. Alexandre's will to live is stirring – “Some children have it,” a doctor shrugs, “and some don't.” The grueling experience strains their relationship in unexpected ways before ultimately strengthening it.

Adams will always be haunted by the knowledge that Alexandre's survival was, in some ways, an accident of timing. Had he been born a couple of years earlier, the technology that saved him would not have been invented. If he'd been born a couple of years later, health-care cutbacks would probably have cost him his life.

Summer of the Heart will touch every reader, for it reminds us again and again what's truly important.

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目录:

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书评

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