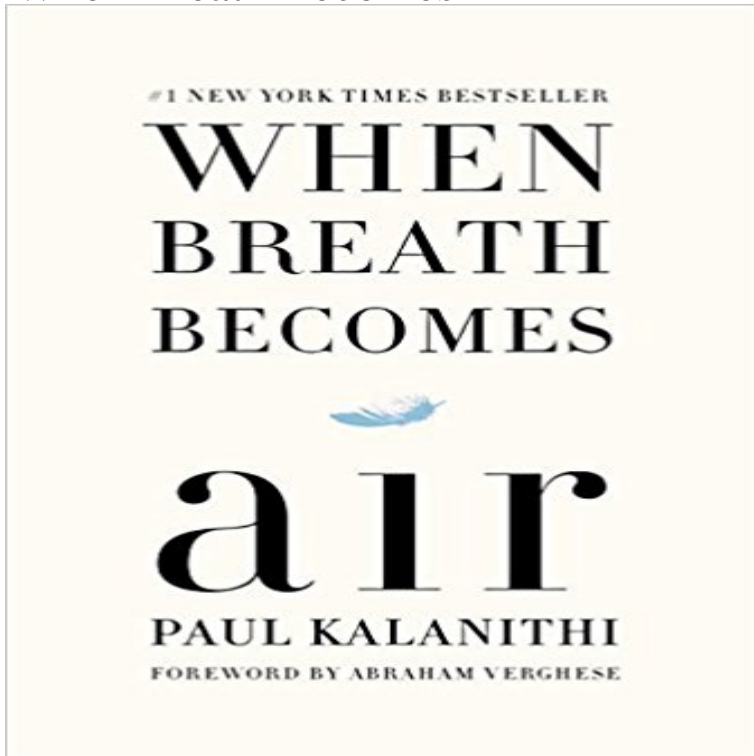


# When Breath Becomes Air



#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

For readers of Atul Gawande, Andrew Solomon, and Anne Lamott, this inspiring, exquisitely observed memoir finds hope and beauty in the face of insurmountable odds as an idealistic young neurosurgeon attempts to answer the question What makes a life worth living? At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just like that, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. When Breath Becomes Air chronicles Kalanithi's transformation from a naïve medical student "possessed," as he wrote, "by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life" into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality. What makes life worth living in the face of death? What do you do when the future, no longer a ladder toward your goals in life, flattens out into a perpetual present? What does it mean to have a child, to nurture a new life as another fades away? These are some of the questions Kalanithi wrestles with in this profoundly moving, exquisitely observed memoir. Paul Kalanithi died in March 2015, while working on this book, yet his

words live on as a guide and a gift to us all. "I began to realize that coming face to face with my own mortality, in a sense, had changed nothing and everything," he wrote. "Seven words from Samuel Beckett began to repeat in my head: 'I can't go on. I'll go on.'" When *Breath Becomes Air* is an unforgettable, life-affirming reflection on the challenge of facing death and on the relationship between doctor and patient, from a brilliant writer who became both. Praise for *When Breath Becomes Air* "I guarantee that finishing this book and then forgetting about it is simply not an option... Part of this book's tremendous impact comes from the obvious fact that its author was such a brilliant polymath. And part comes from the way he conveys what happened to him—"passionately working and striving, deferring gratification, waiting to live, learning to die" so well. None of it is maudlin. Nothing is exaggerated. As he wrote to a friend: "It's just tragic enough and just imaginable enough. And just important enough to be unmissable." Janet Maslin, *The New York Times* "An emotional investment well worth making: a moving and thoughtful memoir of family, medicine and literature. It is, despite its grim undertone, accidentally inspiring." *The Washington Post* "Possesses the gravity and wisdom of an ancient Greek tragedy ... [Kalanithi] delivers his chronicle in austere, beautiful prose. The book brims with insightful reflections on mortality that are especially poignant coming from a trained physician familiar with what lies

ahead.â€•â€”The Boston Globe  
â€œDevastating and spectacular  
... [Kalanithi] is so likeable, so  
relatable, and so humble, that you  
become immersed in his world  
and forget where itâ€™s all  
heading.â€•â€”USA Today  
â€œItâ€™s [Kalanithiâ€™s]  
unsentimental approach that  
makes When Breath Becomes Air  
so originalâ€”and so  
devastating... . Its only fault is  
that the book, like his life, ends  
much too  
early.â€•â€”Entertainment  
Weeklyâ€œSplit my head open  
with its beauty.â€•â€”Cheryl  
Strayed

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