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# You Can't Catch Death: A Daughter's Memoir



## Synopsis

In all of the obituaries and writing about Richard Brautigan that appeared after his suicide, none revealed to Ianthe Brautigan the father she knew. Through it took all of her courage, she delved into her memories, good and bad, to retrieve him, and began to write. You Can't Catch Death is a frank, courageous, heartbreaking reflection on both a remarkable man and the child he left behind.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press; 1st edition (May 22, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 031225296X

ISBN-13: 978-0312252960

Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 0.8 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.1 ounces

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## Customer Reviews

Although I began reading You Can't Catch Death with the expectation that it would be about her father, Ianthe Brautigan quickly set me straight; this book is about her. Reading the book provides a fascinating look at her turbulent childhood with a talented, but troubled father. A father who clearly loved his daughter but, just as clearly, didn't quite know what to do with her. Brautigan the younger is a skilled wordsmith whose first book displays a polish and readability usually associated with more 'seasoned' authors. Whether or not you appreciate Richard Brautigan, after reading this book you will appreciate his daughter.

I love this book. It is as painful to read as going to the funeral of a friend or a writer whose work you loved. It is as rewarding as the grieving process. We've been wondering about Brautigan's daughter, the girl with the strange name, Ianthe, and this book of hers lets us know all about her. This memoir she has taken so long to write suggests she has struggled to find her own voice, as a writer, and I am happy to report that her father's style has influenced her enormously. That's a very good thing. I will look forward to the publication of the next Brautigan and I will be as sad it is not by

Richard as I am happy it is by his daughter, Ianthe. Write a novel, Ianthe, write short stories and short short stories, too. We'll be waiting patiently for you.

In an effort to reconcile memories, dreams and fears with real life, Ianthe Brautigan writes of her life with father, Richard Brautigan. After he took his own life in 1984, she was left with memories and what-ifs. This book is her journey into remembering and discovering her father and his life. Within the pages of this book lies a healing journey, back to the terrible drinking times, back to the grandmother she never knew, back to treasured mornings at her father's San Francisco apartment, and other times shared with her father. Photos capture the fragments of that life, and let us glimpse again at the shy, wild-haired Brautigan. Somewhere in facing down demons and fears of this past life, I feel she somehow reclaims her own life and is no longer afraid of the future. This book had a powerful impact on me. The story of a daughter trying to gather the pieces of her life and to set them out to study, is a portrait of courage and grace.

My first Richard Brautigan work was "Trout Fishing In America" which I read in the late 60s. I was -- and still am -- enchanted by his poetic visions of life. There is something very pure and absolutely wonderful in the way he wrote. For the next several years, I made it a point to seek out his books whenever I visited bookstores. Then, in the mid-70s, life became busy with family and work, and I lost touch with this sensitive poet and his little books of sparkling wit and beauty. In May 2000, I unpacked a box and found again Brautigan's beauty books that had been packed away for the preceding 25 years or so. I stopped unpacking, went outside, sat down beneath a tree, and read the books I had of his again -- "Trout Fishing In America", "In Watermelon Sugar" (my favorite), "The Pill Versus The Sprinhill Disaster", and "Rommel Drives On Deep Into Egypt". The sweet memories of his writings flooded back to me -- here was a truly sensitive soul so full of music and poetry, a unique way of seeing the world, and a beautiful way of expressing it. My interest rekindled, I wanted to find all the books I had missed of his in the intervening years, and learned of his suicide in 1984... I discovered his daughter's book, and read the story of her father through her eyes. It's also a book about herself, about her coming to grips with the tragedy and terrible pain of her father's death, about her journey to Oregon to see her father's mother and come to grips with the poor and abusive boyhood that Richard had kept hidden from his family. We see Richard Brautigan and come to know him as the sensitive, troubled, eloquent, and deeply beautiful soul he was, and we hear it through his daughter's tenderness and love. Yes, I'm sure Richard would be very proud of his daughter -- and very happy too. I truly hope we hear more from Ianthe. She has her father's gift of poetry and

expression, and she has her own voice.

This was a lovely book. I remember how saddened I was to learn that Richard Brautigan had taken his own life. His books had been a source of pleasure during my college years. I picked up this book in hopes of some insight into the reason for his death and was rewarded with much more than I could have hoped for. The vignettes of life with her father and dealing with his death were so immediate. The scenes stay in my mind and the beauty of the writing stays in my heart. This is a beautiful portrait of Richard Brautigan, his daughter and their love for one another.

-Ilanthe Brautigan stays on target throughout her memoir -- as the daughter of Richard Brautigan, and the daughter of a father who killed himself. Brautigan turns out to be an articulate author, and she expresses her feelings very openly. I feel callous saying that this is an enlightening read for R. Brautigan fans, because much of I. Brautigan's drive derives from her troubled feelings about him. But the book is also a biography of her father, the ways he lived (as well as the way he died, which is vividly described). While reading, I felt it was a reliable biography, from the POV of someone very close to him, who understood him, and had her own experiences with respect to growing up his daughter; it was a reliable/subjective biography, which turned out to have merits of its own that an outsider can't match -- for better or worse. What it loses in objectivity, it more than overcomes. No doubt I. Brautigan has had many other life experiences too, but very impressively she keeps to her mission to tell the story of her father, his life, his death, her relationship to and evolving feelings about it. I did not expect it to be as well-done as it is. Kudos, as well as my sympathy to the author who indeed had an unfortunate and difficult time due to his suicide. Regarding R. Brautigan, fans will appreciate her anecdotes and stories, despite their coming from the place they do -- of having to learn that she can not "catch death."

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