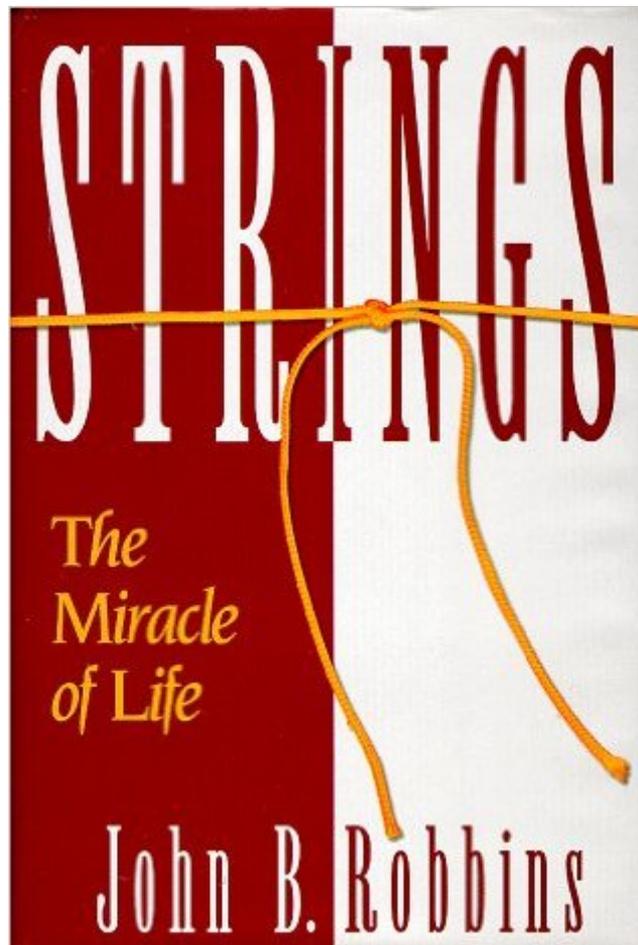


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Strings: The Miracle Of Life



Synopsis

John Robbins, 48, wandered the jungles of Southeast Asia for ten years, settled in Thailand, then learned that hepatitis was destroying his liver. An American, a former university professor, and a Buddhist monk fluent in the Thai language, he was told--after eleven hospitalizations and a major surgery for liver disease--that his life expectancy was now measured in months. His only hope: a transplant.

Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: North Star Publications (MA); First Edition edition (July 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1880823179

ISBN-13: 978-1880823170

Product Dimensions: 9.4 x 6.3 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

John Robbins uses a mix of Buddhism and basketball (effortless effort) to tell how he survived and prospered after a near death experience. Part medical thriller and part spiritual exploration, he tells his story of surviving a liver transplant. His recollections about his surgeon alone are worth the read. A very good writer, he tells his story without self-pity or fatalism. Inspiring is perhaps an over-used word in book reviews, but you will agree it applies to Strings.

Strings is the ultimate road book for the end of the millenium. It carries the reader through the several transformations of its author-protagonist, Dr. John Robbins, Ph. D. Rice University, child of the fifties and radical political intellectual of the 1960s. Robbins has a brilliant academic career, but discards to transform himself through his journeys, which take him around the world, and deposit him in Buddhist monastery in Thailand. But the book does not end with the author finding peace, love and fulfillment in the interiority of the Buddhist wats of asia, for he is suffering from Hepatitis B,

a problem that compels him to return to America for medical treatment. His condition complicated by his rare blood type, he enters a state of profound intoxication, and the staff at the hospital inform his family that he will soon die. At that moment, the doctors discover a matching liver several hundred miles away, and the drama unfolds in a bullet-paced sequence of rollercoasting surges through the medical lexicon and surgical vocabulary, which actually begins on the first page, for the earlier biographical material is mottled into the background as a series of poignant flashbacks. The author ultimately struggles against his own post-operative doubts and uncertainties, to transform himself once again, this time into a marathon-running guru of anti-materialism, which make this book the ultimate road book of the millenium, surpassing, Conrad, Kerouac and Amis in its power to explore the tortures confronting the psyche, and the pathways, through the carnage of human existence to a higher plane. It offers people a passage to peace, after a nightmarish confrontation with an internal apocalypse, that makes it a classic.

Mr. Robbins takes the reader, grabs them quickly, and doesn't let go until the end. You know he survives his ordeal, but you are still in tears in the middle wondering "is he going to make it?" Thanks for writing this valuable book.

This is a nonfiction book that baby boomers facing health crises--their own or their parents'--should read. But this tale of miraculous recovery from life-threatening illness feels more like a Vonnegut novel than the standard human interest story you might expect. It cuts elegantly between the tense and fast-paced action of a quite miraculous liver transplant and sophisticated spiritual and philosophical questions about ethical issues in life and medicine. There is a wonderful section that presents the disorientation of a type A personality in a medical crisis--mental confusion due to prolonged illness, lack of control, medical complications, frustration at the slow pace of recovery--and reads like a primer for 50-somethings who are facing their first serious illness or surgery or trying to understand the growing frailty and increasing health care needs of their aging parents. It weaves the varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives of patient, family, and medical professionals into the most complete picture of a modern medical crisis I've seen.

It was with great sadness that I recently learned of the passing of Dr. John Robbins from one of his Thai friends. I knew John in Bangkok prior to his illness and saw him in Washington, D.C. both while he was waiting for the transplant and later after he received it. My last conversation with him was at the time his book was published and he was so excited by the possibilities. John's use of the

Buddhist "stings" to hold the book together is wonderful. His "rat-a-tat" writing style in describing the fast pace of medical events is attention-getting. John changed the world a bit with his book. I regret I will not be able to tell him how much it meant to me.

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