

## Carrying the Tiger: Living with Cancer, Dying with Grace, Finding Joy While Grieving

**Tony Stewart**

West End Books

(307pp)

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*Carrying the Tiger is an emotive, intimate memoir about supporting a spouse through a cancer diagnosis and navigating grief.*

Tony Stewart's poignant memoir *Carrying the Tiger* is about terminal illness and the grief that follows.

After Stewart's wife, Lynn, was diagnosed with aggressive lung cancer, the couple worked together to find "their way forward" and to "make peace with" their experiences. Discussing how they met, their symbiotic relationship, their life in Manhattan, and their travels in addition to life after the diagnosis, the book describes all in depth, including the steps from diagnosis to treatment and the process of grieving one's lost spouse. Indeed, the book is a meticulous record of cancer treatments, enumerating the names of medicines, specific treatments, aspects of the aggressive cancer's growth, and conversations with medical specialists and clinic personnel. Some such points are belabored, though, resulting in a sluggish pace. More compelling are the book's personal touches. After Lynn died, for example, Stewart planned a memorial exhibition of her art, noting, "Lynn left a legacy of beautiful paintings. I don't want them to rot away in storage; I want to share them with the world."

A central theme of the book is Stewart's use of a website as a means of updating the couple's friends and family on Lynn's illness. Entries on this website and comments responding to them are interspersed with the book's descriptions of medical appointments, treatments, and the fallout of the illness. Indeed, the website entries complement the narrative well, adding personal and emotional touches. For example, while in the text proper Stewart describes the elements involved in the decision to start a clinical trial in plain terms, the adjacent website entry summarizes the couple's thought processes and Lynn's physical reactions to the experimental drug in more intimate terms. Comments left on the site by friends, family members, and Lynn add a visceral and communal element.

Stewart's decision to continue the website posts after Lynn's death to document his mourning process—and the process of beginning to plan a life beyond the one he shared with Lynn—expands the book's scope. Stewart writes about developing a new relationship in time, too. It became part of his healing. However, some graphic details are shared about his new relationship; they are jolting in comparison to what comes before them.

An elegiac memoir, *Carrying the Tiger* is about coping with loss, finding a community, and seeking a happily ever after in the wake of grief.

CAROLINE GOLDBERG IGRA (March 3, 2025)

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