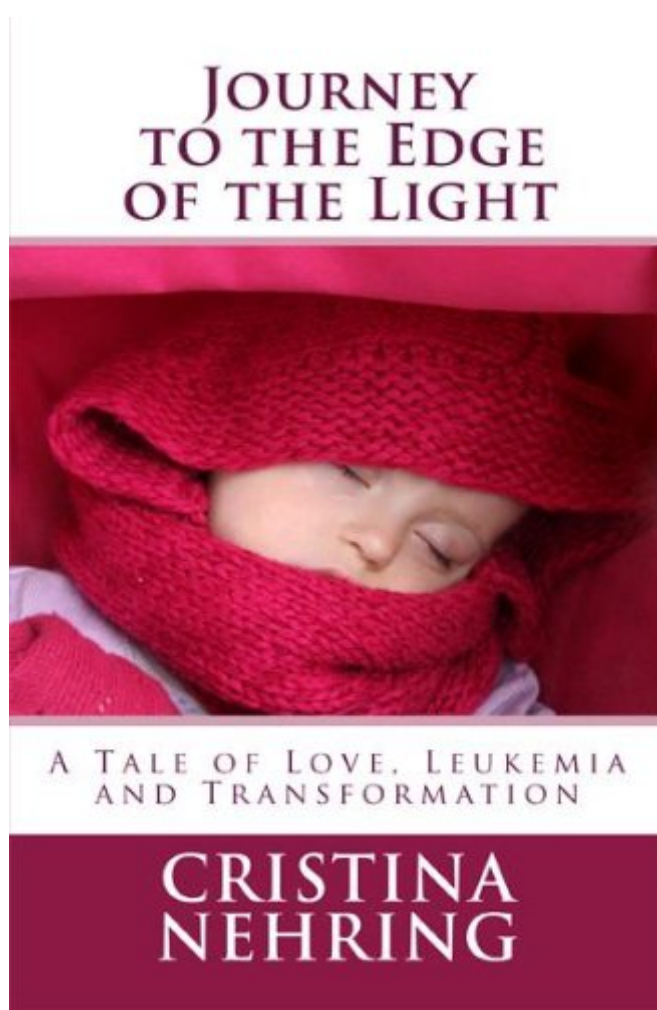


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# Journey To The Edge Of The Light: A Story Of Love, Leukemia And Transformation (Kindle Single) (Kindle Singles)



## Synopsis

She was a romantic and a globetrotter, a daredevil and a writer on the edge of literary fame. Then her life was irreversibly transformed—and so was her philosophy. In this wholly unexpected personal account, the author of *A Vindication of Love: Reclaiming Romance for the Twenty-first Century* (2009) offers us a *Vindication of Life* as inspiring as it is heartbreaking. The story of Cristina and her little daughter, Eurydice, is a tale of redemption and self-reinvention. It is about expanding definitions of love—and it is about confronting death. Not least, it speaks to us of life's sweeping ironies: Sometimes bad luck is the new good luck, and the realization of your worst fears may be the greatest gift you can receive.

Biography: Nehring first acquired national attention through her fiery criticism in the pages of *Harper's Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New York Times Book Review*. A "compassionate contrarian," she won many awards for her politically incorrect cultural and literary essays. Her first book, *A Vindication of Love* (Harper Collins, 2009) argues for a bolder, braver, wilder form of modern loving, drawing extensively on literary and historical analysis. It was published to wide acclaim and translated into several languages. Nehring also works as a travel writer for *Condé Nast Traveler*, and holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of California, Los Angeles. She lives in Paris and Los Angeles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cristina Nehring, whose "vindication" of consuming romantic love made a controversial stir last year, has begun to narrate an altogether different kind of love story. At the precise moment she learned that her book had been vaulted into the rarefied heights of serious public attention, she was also informed that her newborn daughter Eurydice had Downs syndrome-- and a related form of leukemia that would require extensive, long-term residential treatment. Nehring candidly admits she never intended to have children and that when she learned she was pregnant in consequence of a world-eclipsing love affair, every concerned friend and advocate she knew advised strongly against bringing the child to term. Something deeper in Nehring knew otherwise, and she is now in the second year of service of a love she finds more more sustaining than even that of the heroic lovers she celebrated in her first book. The care and tending of Eurydice through the course of extended months of hospital care, invasive needles into her daughter's delicate vessels, the daily administering of necessary but nauseatingly toxic chemotherapy medicines-- could be the stuff of unreadable bathos. But in Nehring's case, it is miraculously otherwise. She is in love with this child, a love clearly requited. There is no martyrdom here, just dedication and an admirable openness to the next surprising thing. At this brief narrative's conclusion, there is hope and light on the horizon. Nehring has in mind a book-length treatment to come. Like this published preview, it will, I believe, be transporting. The details, the particulars can be heart-breaking. But the force of Nehring's love and the quality of attention paid to the winsome Eurydice is like nothing I have read before. Nehring may well be charting new emotional territory here, and it is most becoming.

Cristina Nehring's 'Journey to the Edge of the Light' is a poignant, probing, and profound memoir about her infant daughter's fight for life. In a month when Americans, inspired by Amy Chua's 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,' are re-examining how they interact with their children, Nehring's essay asks altogether more vital questions. Single-parent Nehring's daughter, Eurydice, was 18-months-old when she was diagnosed with leukaemia. At the time, Nehring had published her first book, 'A Vindication of Love,' to wide acclaim. But this acclaim would be overshadowed by Nehring's new career - being a stay-at-home mom to Eurydice. The 'home' in question - an isolation room at UCLA Children's Hospital in California. With terrifying eloquence, Nehring describes the seven-months she lived on a pull-out chair next to the crib of her suffering child. Through this period of not knowing what would happen next, Nehring knew one thing: that she loved her daughter, and

that she could not live without her. As an award-winning essayist for Harper's, the Nation, and the Atlantic Monthly, Nehring came to prominence interrogating conventional wisdom and scrutinizing social norms. But it was when she had a child of her own that her expectations were truly upended. 'Where I could have expected a long-limbed, light-haired, oval-faced, oversensitive little elf,' she writes in 'Journey,' 'I had on my hands a short-limbed, dark-curved, spherical Buddha of a babe whose soft, steady gaze was like the still eye of a storm.' Later Nehring describes Eurydice as 'unintimidated, omnivorously curious, effusively affectionate, observant, ingratiating, utterly unroutinized and altogether trusting.' Nehring's prose is, too, omnivorously curious, observant, affectionate, but always honest and unimintimidated. With heartbreaking accuracy, she depicts the constant, chemical nightmare of hospital life. 'One of the most jarring parts about accompanying your child into the hospital is witnessing the near-instant takeover of her body by medical technology. Eurydice had not been in isolation 24 hours when she was wheeled into surgery and emerged with a garish incision in her flawless infant's chest out of which dangled two outsize tubes. ... And into them, starting the next day, was funnelled the poison that doctors believed was Eurydice's strongest prayer of staying alive.' In spite of this, 'Journey' is neither misery-memoir nor sob story. It is a narrative of tender reflection and honest appraisal, of awareness, affirmation, and, ultimately, optimism. During her time in hospital, Nehring evaluates anew what matters most in life. Nehring's prose is infused with wit and warmth. 'It is tempting to take up permanent residence in gray sweatpants,' Nehring writes of her introduction to hospital life. 'Not Eurydice and me. With each passing month, I dressed my baby girl in more vibrant violets and reds, golds and greens, oranges and electric blues. Resistance through color, I called it in my head.' She vows to defeat the darkness of disease with a 'conflagration of color.' Her prose is similarly flashing in its insight and analysis. Like Susan Sontag, Nehring has the capacity to delineate disease as both a destructive reality and an elusive, almost mythical concept that resists interpretation. She mines through metaphor to uncover the often unspoken truth of cancer survivors. About chemo she is shockingly candid. 'Chemo is Russian Roulette. You're shooting a gun whose contents you don't exactly know. There are bullets that pass through the target unnoticed. There are bullets that kill the organism altogether.' In one of the strongest passages of the essay, Nehring takes issue with the writer Christopher Hitchens, who has said that cancer should not be conceived of as a battle. Cancer is absolutely a battle, Nehring tells us, one that we need to win, as much through affirmation and encouragement as through medical treatment. In its ability to clarify, instruct, and inspire, Nehring's prose is in itself a kind of medicine. She writes movingly of 'the power of a love enlarged by affliction, enfeued by encounters with eternity and illuminated with electric gratitude.' I too feel

illuminated after reading this astonishing, often harrowing, but ultimately exhilarating essay.

For writing about a baby in chemotherapy, Nehring comes up with a piece that is gripping (can something you read on a mobile device be a "page-turner"?) and real and honest and not sappy or morbid. It's about being a single mom and a new mom and an unexpected mom and the mom of a sick baby, and also about illness itself. It's about fashion ("resistance through color") and struggle and faith and the clash between personal and professional. Nehring, the author of *A Vindication of Love*, also dares to compare parental love with romantic love, and tackles ideas about illness as a metaphor for war, while telling the story of her daughter's struggle. I appreciated that Nehring told the story of how Eurydice came to be born without scorn for her daughter's father or his disinterest in his daughter; his actions speak for themselves. This is a story of parenthood, but Nehring also touches on her struggle to have a foothold in the professional world while her daughter was so very ill, and also writes optimistically about her views on love: "I believe that romantic love can be a form of heroism and of feminism." She takes us inside the hospital's walls and shows how she and her daughter, a team of two, held steady and weathered what was a precarious battle with spirit. She doesn't devolve into self-despair, even when writing about what could be the worst case scenario, and her essay is stronger for the moments of tenderness and fear that do occasionally pop up as well as what I sensed was her belief and faith that her daughter would emerge victorious. Kudos to Nehring and for utilizing the technology to add a welcome set of photos at the end that illuminate the text and show Nehring's daughter Eurydice around the world on the travels she writes about in the essay. While the piece stands alone, these are a great addition.

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