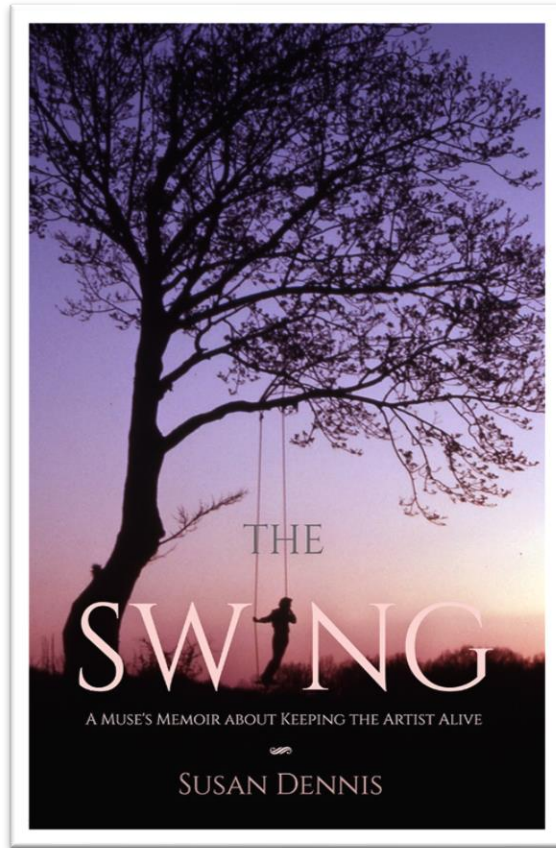




“Book Review: *The Swing*”

By Susan Morris



An exquisite memoir of the joys and complications of loving a dying artist

Captivating. Charming. Brilliant. These are only a few of the ways to describe Susan Dennis’s memoir *The Swing*. This collection of standout moments in a life of love and art explores the romance before and after the loss of photographer Charlie Dennis.



Told with a deep appreciation of his work, this book illustrates Charlie's passion for photography as all-consuming. It inspires in us a desire to find the images he captures with his Fuji: the Detroit architecture, the root ball documentary of Hurricane Fran's destruction, the beauty of that first trip to Bald Head Island.

From their first date—lying on asphalt to photograph a church in a neighborhood plagued by Detroit's 1980s gang wars—to managing a marriage strained by long term illness, memoirist Susan Dennis describes this touching life in a way that resembles a piece of art in itself. Laced with emotionally tumultuous circumstances, nearly every page includes an honest wit and direct humor that counterbalances the heartbreak so well.

The author approaches the ups and downs of medical treatment with strength and determination.

“If Charlie had a 1% chance to get out of this, I would find out what it was and claw my way to it.”

Watching a loved one suffer is heart-wrenching and painful. Like the artist's photography, *The Swing* is a raw and exquisite capture.

Susan Dennis invites readers into a devastating argument during the days when the effects of Charlie's illness are beyond comprehension. On his “ninth cat life” physically, emotionally, he struggles with his mortality as a person and as a father. Susan Dennis's courage in capturing the truth of the narrative is appreciable for all those who are also struggling with a dying loved one.

One thing I cling to in this memoir is the artist's thriving creative spirit despite the overwhelming pain he must have been in. As the author struggles to cope with her husband's failing health, his drive to do something with his life leads him to demand more from her—even as she too is breaking.



She is his primary support system, his inspiration, and his most faithful partner. The voice of her writing on the page allows insight not only into the passion of a great photographer, but also the soul of the author's love. That love is inspiring and special.

One of my favorite quotes from the book, "***Dig deeper and trust in this complicated love,***" arrives around the time that Susan Dennis recounts this particularly difficult time in their marriage. The scene distills an important truth about making love last.

"I honestly think he would have died sooner...faster...without his cameras than without his treatments, medications and surgeries."

The tale would not be complete without the closing pages, but even those moments which must have been exceedingly difficult to capture on the page, offer more than a confirmation of death's misery.

With frank narration and trademark humor, Dennis shares insight into how she handles Charlie's passing, as she speaks at his funeral, grieves for her loss, copes with how to move forward, and spearheads an exhibition of his work, titled: "The Triumph of Art Over Illness."

This charming and brilliant memoir explores the joys and complications of loving a passionate artist, who created despite a relentless physical illness. While its focus is on the life and love of an artist, this memoir would be valuable to anyone witnessing their loved one battle for life.