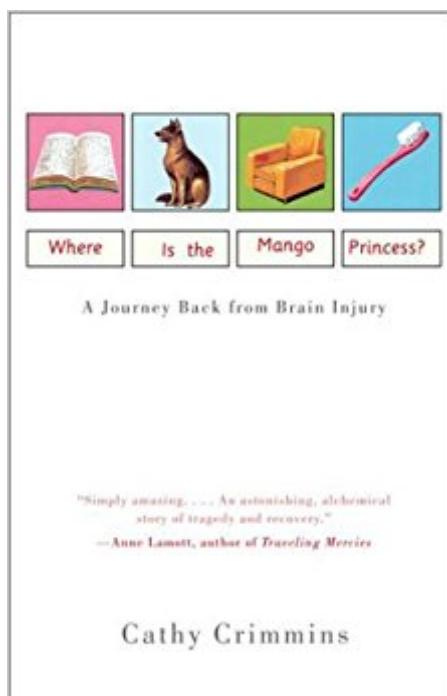


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# Where Is The Mango Princess? A Journey Back From Brain Injury



## Synopsis

Humorist Cathy Crimmins has written a deeply personal, wrenching, and often hilarious account of the effects of traumatic brain injury, not only on the victim, in this case her husband, but on the family. When her husband Alan is injured in a speedboat accident, Cathy Crimmins reluctantly assumes the role of caregiver and learns to cope with the person he has become. No longer the man who loved obscure Japanese cinema and wry humor, Crimmins' husband has emerged from the accident a childlike and unpredictable replica of his former self with a short attention span and a penchant for inane cartoons. *Where Is the Mango Princess?* is a breathtaking account that explores the very nature of personality-and the complexities of the heart. Outstanding Book Award Winner from the American Society of Journalists and Authors

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## Customer Reviews

"Alan's brain got run over by a speedboat," Cathy Crimmins writes. "That last sentence reads like a bad country-western song lyric, but it's true. It was a silly, horrible, stupid accident." And so begins the harrowing tale of a family vacation gone awry when a speedboat collides with her husband's small craft, changing their lives forever. Crimmins (*The Seven Habits of Highly Defective People* and *When My Parents Were My Age They Were Old... or Who Are You Calling Middle-Aged?*) is used to writing with wit, self-effacing humor, and a warmth that can bring readers to their knees--or at least to tears of laughter. But in this stunning memoir about her husband's brain injury and the subsequent fallout, Crimmins has outdone herself, bringing all her sharply honed narrative skills into

play as she tackles the life-wrenching drama of witnessing her husband's near death and ensuing rebirth as a very different person. Crimmins takes readers inside the drama with all the right details and interior feelings to keep us fully mesmerized: her 7-year-old daughter's ashen face, her husband's twitching body, the paramedic's alarming question, "Is your husband one of these people that ordinarily has large pupils?" As deftly as she takes readers inside this personal story of not-quite recovery--more like discovery--she is also able to pan back and show readers the comedic silver lining (the self-important doctors, the moments of mishaps, and of course, the whereabouts of the mysterious Mango Princess) that lies within the cloud of her family's tragedy. Anyone who has endured a head trauma or loved someone who has will be engrossed by this wise and knowledgeable storyteller. The rest of us will have a captivating lesson about the rejuvenation of the brain as well as the human heart. --Gail Hudson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although it was frightening when Crimmins's husband, Alan, an attorney, suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) while on a family vacation, it was his long-term rehabilitation that proved most daunting, for brain injuries can cause significant personality changes. This chronicle of Al's injury, treatment and rehabilitation shows how perplexing and stressful traumatic brain injury can be for both victim and family. Crimmins (*When My Parents Were My Age, They Were Old* and Newt Gingrich's *Bedtime Stories for Orphans*) knows how to tell a story for maximum effect, filling this account with funny and outrageous anecdotes, raw emotion and predictable rage toward HMOs that won't fund optimal treatment. Like many TBI patients, Al became bizarrely uninhibited; Crimmins describes how he swears profusely and masturbates in public, and her worries about suddenly being married to a stranger: "I once had a husband who was doing a dissertation on Samuel Beckett, who had a thing for obscure Japanese cinema.... I can't imagine being married to a man who won't be able to discuss books or go to the theater with me." Despite Alan's extraordinarily good recovery, Crimmins muses, "I miss his dark side.... Now I wince as he chortles over mediocre cartoons... with TBI he has become what he wasn't before, a regular, uncomplicated guy." Though this story is an eye-opener on some levels, it remains essentially shallow. More information on neurological research would have been welcome, and attention to the experience of other TBI families (to which Crimmins devotes only three paragraphs) would have added the perspective that this self-centered account lacks. Agent, Kim Witherspoon. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Seeing the overwhelmingly wonderful reviews for this book, I had no reason to believe I would be disappointed. I was wrong. I want to be sure to say that the family has my full empathy. I know that what they have all gone through, and continue to go through, is nothing I take lightly. That said, the book was an account. I found myself cheering everyone on, of course....but not liking any of them. I appreciated the author's honesty throughout, but I can't say that I learned much about traumatic brain injury. I felt the book was a waste of my time and my money. I sincerely wish this family the very, very best, but I do not recommend this book at all. Considering that the wife and author of the book is actually an author by profession, I was deeply disappointed.

"Accidents divide things into the great Before and After." -from the Prologue. *Where is the Mango Princess?* is an honest, heart wrenching account of a family enduring a TBI. Cathy Crimmins holds back little in her blow-by-blow account of her husband's bizarre boating accident that left him forever struggling with a brain injury. I would highly recommend this book to any of you close to someone suffering with a TBI. Not only is Crimmins' story heartfelt and relatable, but it's also informative and enlightening. A must-read for the TBI community.

As the wife of another TBI survivor, I found myself nodding in understanding, with tears of shared memories sliding down my cheeks, over and over as I read this book. My husband was nearly killed when a large birch tree he was felling on our property 'kicked back' and swatted him like a fly. Like Al, he was air-lifted, close to death, to the nearest hospital trauma unit ... where I experienced much the same minute by minute, day by day nightmare Cathy describes so well. The first hours, wondering if your husband will live or die ... days that feel like weeks, weeks that feel like months. And then reality hits ... rehab is a battle not only for the TBI survivor, struggling to swallow, speak or sit up, but for the caregiver as they fight equally hard for every benefit, every extra day of covered services ... along with the constant trauma and stress of wondering what the future will bring. They call a severe TBI a 'life-altering event' for good reason. It forever alters the life of not only the survivor but of their main caregivers as well. This is a well written book, full of the realities of life with a TBI survivor, without exaggeration.

Now that I have a year under my belt, having had a husband that had gone through extensive brain surgery, I would recommend this book to anyone with a family member that has had brain trauma. The worst is far behind us, and as Cathy Crimmins hung in there with her husband, I suggest doing the same. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, though it may seem like an

endless cave, you will come out on the other side. Patience (which I lack), hope and prayer and Finding the Mango Princess will get you back to where you were!

My wife suffered a traumatic brain injury a year and a half ago as a result of a ruptured aneurysm and subsequent brain surgery to repair it. This book was recommended to me while she was in rehab. This book is so candid about the effects of TBI on the patient, the spouse, the family. I could never write this book because my experience was too painful. I want to both remember and forget at the same time. This book told me I was not alone in what I was experiencing. Many times in this book I thought to myself "Yes, I know that. I have been there too." This is a must read for anyone who has had a loved one suffer TBI. Please know you are not alone.

Life is precious and can change in an instant. A brutally honest portrayal of a family's journey when husband/ father is struck on the head in a boating accident. Ms. Crimmins pulls no punches or sugar coats the difficulty in dealing with something that could happen to anyone. She paints herself as neither Saint nor villain, but human trying to be a wife and mother in a difficult situation . Worth a read, then go hug your loved ones.

I thoroughly enjoyed being taken into the world of TBI survivors; Cathy and Al's story is an inspiration to anyone who is willing to see the messy reality of life after TBI. The story is well written and flows effortlessly, making it an easy anecdotal lesson for students of speech pathology, such as myself, who are seeking to deepen their understanding of future clients and families. Cathy uses just enough medical terminology to satisfy the student-reader in me, but always defining and explaining them in lay-terms, often in the ways that she found helped her to best understand, and painting a picture of what each big medical term meant for them in day-to-day life.

Amazing read, a must for anyone searching for real answers of how TBI effects not only the survivor but the friends and family as well. Not only can you survive but you can thrive! Thrive as you are now, not how you were before the injury. Well written, well articulated, and a very honest look at our challenges just to get through one hour to the next, every day? Thank you so much for sharing your / our story. It was wonderful to look at myself through someone else's journey and know I am not alone. Cheers from a 5 time TBI survivor.

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