

# The Toss Of A Lemon

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one otherwise regular january morning in 2009 michael wise s world was thrown into turmoil he was at the peak of his career as an internationally renowned specialist dental surgeon when he was struck by an exceptionally rare near fatal streptococcal blood infection within hours his vital organs failed as this catastrophic illness swept through his entire body he was in a coma and on life support for ten days careering ever closer to death on the toss of a coin is a raw and honest account of michael s fight for survival and rehabilitation charting his gruelling journey from health to near death kidney dialysis a kidney transplant from a live donor and recovery he was both patient and clinician which gave him a unique insight in part one the reader enters the strange mind of a person in a coma parts two to four describe the physical and emotional stages of the illness following intensive care michael remained on the critical list for several weeks as doctors battled to save his life kept alive by dialysis michael needed a kidney transplant and after fourteen months a donor was found leaving him to additionally contend with recovering from surgery meanwhile the possibility that he would lose his dental practice and income also plagued his mind affecting his recovery despite the overwhelming odds michael remained positive helped by coping strategies that empowered him to be involved in his predicament rather than swept along as a victim the long term psychological effects of his battle are explored in part five where he recounts the importance of life and how as an atheist he was facing death only once did he lose the will to live it was impossible to face my mortality and for it not to influence my approach to life he recalls according to doctors michael should never have lived and if he miraculously survived he should be severely incapacitated he is neither he is fit and lives a full and active life on the toss of a coin will inspire anyone facing or supporting a loved one experiencing health battles and will enthrall fans of biographies memoirs and those interested in the human condition

in south india in 1896 ten year old sivakami is about to embark on a new life hanumarathnam a village healer with some renown as an astrologer has approached her parents with a marriage proposal in keeping with custom he provides his prospective in laws with his horoscope the problem is that his includes a prediction albeit a weak one that he will die in his tenth year of marriage despite the ominous horoscope sivakami s parents hesitate only briefly won over by the young man and his family s reputation as good upstanding brahmins once married sivikami and hanumarathnam grow

to love one another and the bride now in her teens settles into a happy life but the predictions of hanumarathnam's horoscope are never far from her new husband's mind when their first child is born as a strategy for accurately determining his child's astrological charts hanumarathnam insists the midwife toss a lemon from the window of the birthing room the moment his child appears all is well with their first child a daughter thangam whose birth has a positive influence on her father's astrological future but this influence is fleeting when a son vairum is born his horoscope confirms that his father will die within three years resigned to his fate hanumarathnam sets himself to the unpleasant task of readying his household for his imminent death knowing the hardships and social restrictions sivakami will face as a brahmin widow he hires and trains a servant boy called muchami to help sivakami manage the household and properties until vairum is of age when sivakami is eighteen hanumarathnam dies as predicted relentless in her adherence to the traditions that define her brahmin caste she shaves her head and dons the white sari of the widow with some reluctance she moves to her family home to raise her children under the protection of her brothers but then realizes that they are not acting in the best interests of her children with her daughter already married to an unreliable husband of her brothers choosing and vairum's future also at risk sivakami leaves her brothers and returns to her marital home to raise her family with the freedom to make decisions for her son's future sivakami defies tradition and chooses to give him a secular education while her choice ensures that vairum fulfills his promise it also sets sivakami on a collision course with him vairum fatherless in childhood childless as an adult rejects the caste identity that is his mother's mainstay twisting their fates in fascinating and unbearable ways

in the tradition of the swerve comes this thrilling detective like work of literary history that reveals how a poem created the world we live in today it was improbably the forerunner of our digital age a french poem about a shipwreck published in 1897 that with its mind bending possibilities of being read up and down backward and forward even sideways launched modernism stéphane mallarmé's one toss of the dice a daring twenty page epic of ruin and recovery provided an epochal tipping point defining the spirit of the age and anticipating radical thinkers of the twentieth century from albert einstein to t s eliot celebrating its intrinsic influence on our culture renowned scholar r howard bloch masterfully decodes the poem still considered among the most enigmatic ever written in bloch's shimmering portrait of belle Époque paris mallarmé stands as the spiritual giant of the era gathering around him every tuesday a luminous cast of characters including Émile zola victor hugo claude monet andré gide claude debussy oscar wilde and even the future french prime minister georges clemenceau a simple schoolteacher whose salons and prodigious literary talent won him the adoration of paris's elite mallarmé achieved the reputation of france's greatest living poet he was so beloved that mourners crowded along the seine for his funeral in 1898 many refusing to depart until late into the night leaving auguste renoir to ponder how long will it take for nature to make another such a mind over a century later the allure of mallarmé's linguistic feat continues to ignite the imaginations of the world's greatest thinkers featuring a new authoritative translation of the french poem by j d mcclatchy one toss of the dice reveals how a literary masterpiece launched the modernist movement contributed to the rise of pop art influenced modern design and shaped the perceptual world we now inhabit and as alex ross remarks in the new yorker if you can crack mallarmé's poems it seems you can crack the riddles of existence in one toss of the dice bloch finally and brilliantly dissects one of literary history's greatest mysteries to reveal how a poem made us modern

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