



Don't Leave Me This Way

By **Julia Fox Garrison**
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Introduction

Julia Fox Garrison's deeply moving memoir cannot fail to have a powerful impact on anyone who reads it, even if they've never had a major life crisis. One day at the office, Garrison innocently takes an over-the-counter cold remedy. Hours later she has a major vent in her brain that leaves her entire right side paralyzed and her mind confused and afraid. She fights to regain her health and her life, in the face of stubborn doctors who misdiagnose her and tell her that she will never walk again, or drive, or be anything like the highly active person she was before. Garrison holds her own against these limits with every weapon in her arsenal, from outright anger, to insisting on regular visits from a manicurist. With bravery, honesty, and fierce humor, she leads the reader through her recovery step by step. She gives the reader an uncompromising look into the medical industry and its pitfalls and into the radiant strength of one woman's heart.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is it about Garrison's character before her injury that helps her to fight misdiagnosis and recover?
2. When someone is disabled, receiving help can be both a blessing and a challenge. Discuss some of the ways in which both were true for Garrison.
3. Garrison writes at length about the problem of getting doctors to really listen to their patients, and then to respect what they say about their own symptoms. Why do you think this problem is so widespread?
4. Discuss the roles that Garrison's family—parents, siblings, husband and child—played in her recovery.
5. Garrison insists that she somehow knows that her diagnosis is wrong. Where does this kind of knowing come from?
6. Anger plays a great part in Garrison's story; it is definitely a healing tool. What part does acceptance play?
7. How did you feel about the fact that the corporation that made the cold remedy was never held responsible for what happened to Garrison?
8. At the end of the book, Garrison includes a list of guidelines for doctors. Would you show these guidelines to your own doctor? Why or why not?
9. How did you react to the episode where Garrison's well-meaning brother drops off a whole cooked chicken for her and then leaves, forcing her to lower her face into it in order to eat it?
10. After reading Garrison's story, do you feel that you might think differently about your own health and your relationship with doctors and medical care?

About the Author

Julia Fox Garrison lives north of Boston with her husband, young son, and dog. Before her stroke, she had a successful career as a software support manager. Now she is regularly invited as a motivational speaker to doctor's groups around the country.