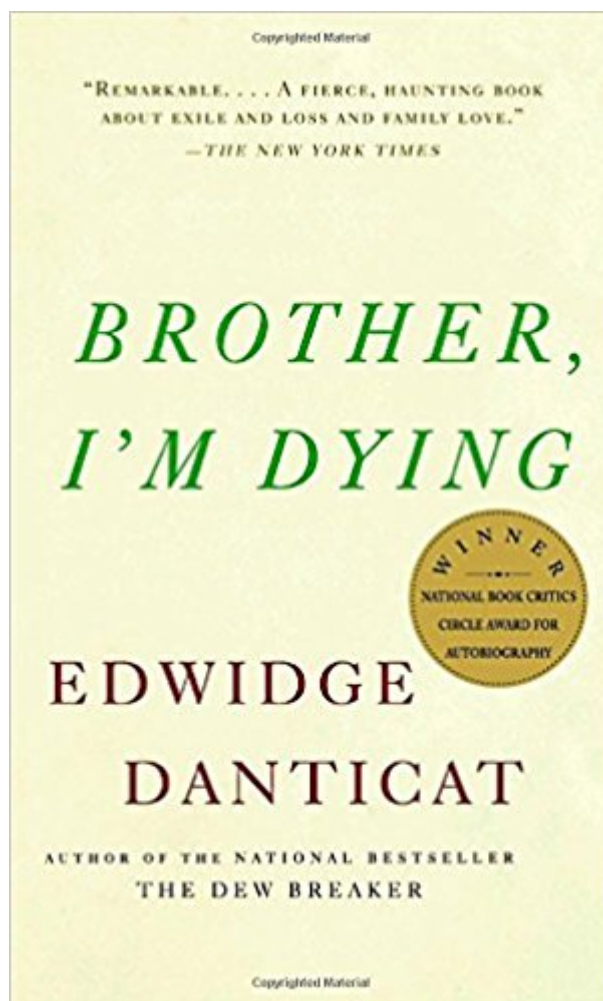


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# Brother, I'm Dying (Vintage Contemporaries)



## Synopsis

Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography  
A National Book Award Finalist  
A New York Times Notable Book  
From the age of four, award-winning writer Edwidge Danticat came to think of her uncle Joseph as her “second father” when she was placed in his care after her parents left Haiti for America. And so she was both elated and saddened when, at twelve, she joined her parents and youngest brothers in New York City. As Edwidge made a life in a new country, adjusting to being far away from so many who she loved, she and her family continued to fear for the safety of those still in Haiti as the political situation deteriorated. In 2004, they entered into a terrifying tale of good people caught up in events beyond their control. *Brother I'm Dying* is an astonishing true-life epic, told on an intimate scale by one of our finest writers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Danticat's moving memoir focuses on her Uncle Joseph, who raised her in Haiti, and her father, who was reunited with her in the United States when she was 12. Robin Miles brings the two brothers to life. Portraying Danticat's father, Mira, as soft-spoken and wise, she sagely decides not to try to imitate the mechanical voice box he uses after losing his larynx to throat cancer. The women sound much more alike, but Danticat's mother and many aunts have relatively minor roles. The exception is Danticat herself, the powerful narrator whom Miles portrays as a calm presence in the midst of political and familial tragedies. Miles's Creole sounds fluid and authentic,

and listeners will have no trouble understanding the characters' French accents (Creole phrases are followed by translations). Miles uses the same pace throughout, but she might have given more pep to Joseph's breathtaking escape from Haiti. Miles is a perfect fit for Danticat's books—she previously read *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. She artfully immerses listeners in Danticat's world and will leave them wanting more. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Edwidge Danticat's father and uncle chose very different paths: the former struggled to make a new life for himself in America, while the latter remained in the homeland he paradoxically loved. In following their lives and their impact on future generations, Danticat's powerful family memoir explores how the private and the political, the past and the present, intersect. The most poignant section focuses on Joseph's tragic trip to the United States at age 81, but Danticat also tells a wider story about family and exile, the Haitian diaspora, the Duvalier regime, and post-9/11 immigration policy. Emotionally resonant and exceptionally clear-eyed, *Brother, I'm Dying* offers insight into a talented writer, her family history, and the injustices of the modern world. Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

This book was a mandatory read for my daughter in college. After she read Edwidge Danticat's memoir that she found to be compelling and enlightening of our government and the Haitian people's lives, I read this true story. One of the themes of the book is death, but it is a love story told to the reader of the two men who raised her, her uncle and her father, both of whom are no longer living. One learns about Haitian customs and their way of life, and you will gain a whole new respect for their way of life on that island. Besides these two wonderful family men, Danticat's other family members are very interesting, and their world is unlike anything we know. How our government in Miami treats refugees and her uncle is reprehensible. I recommend this book highly to teen students and adults. Danticat is now a famous writer who lives in Miami, and she deserves every success as she is a phenomenal story teller.

Edwidge Danticat is possibly the best American fiction writer of the younger generation. Her novels and story collections have cut a broad swath through the history of 20th century Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. Their virtues include lyric and narrative pleasures, a plainspoken and elegant voice, intelligence and intelligibility, and the bridging of two cultures separated by language and mutual misunderstanding. With *Brother, I'm Dying*, Danticat expands upon the gift for nonfiction she

first demonstrated in her book about carnival in Jacmel. This time, she tackles memoir by way of family history, a private story that stands in for hundreds of thousands of other private stories and has deep public policy implications. Through the Dantica and Danticat families, we get an up-close-and-personal look at the terrors of Haitian history from Papa Doc to the present, alongside the beauties of place and people too often underexplored in newspaper accounts of Haiti. The book's velocity increases toward the end, when Danticat's uncle is run out of Port-au-Prince by street gangs, only to encounter the surprisingly deadlier American immigration system. This part of the story is the most deeply felt section of a deeply felt book, and the reader wants to scream with outrage and the indignities Danticat's uncle suffers, and especially at the unwillingness of the immigration authorities to respond humanely to his illness, his difficulties in communicating, or his family's quite reasonable requests that he receive proper medical and legal attention. I find myself grieving now, after finishing this book, and I want to know what I can do to make my country more compassionate. Certainly, Haitians receive shabbier treatment than almost any other ethnicity in our immigration and legal system, and, like Danticat, I find myself wondering why, and suspecting that it might be a manifestation of the worst prejudices we have not yet laid to rest. It is true that books can be about virtuous things without being very good, but the urgency the reader feels about the book's subject owes much to the extraordinary power of the writing. If Danticat were a writer who chose subject matter of a lesser intensity, I believe that more critics would write about the sentences, the structural choices, the wise management of information in her books. That they do not is a testament to the power of the stories she chooses to tell, and her ability to get out of the way and give character and story center stage rather than the pyrotechnics of language which she is certainly capable of exhibiting.

Ms. Danticat recently gave a talk at the university where I work, and it was a very enjoyable evening. I bought two of her books for my kindle when I got home. This is the first one I read. Having seen her made a difference, and by the end I felt like I knew her very well. She conveys emotions brilliantly without a lot of words, and it is easy to immerse yourself in her life in Haiti and all the troubles she recounts in that unfortunate place. It is not about her, though. She tells of her father and his brother, who served as a surrogate father for her while her parents carved a life for their family out in Brooklyn. As her father's health declines, her uncle goes through a series of catastrophes out of his control, all of which could have been prevented by a shred of human decency and which point out how little has changed in how our country treats the lives of others. I am excited to read the second book soon.

Wasn't enamored of the book - didn't "grab" me - but for my book club, it was well-received from a "stimulates discussion" standpoint. I, myself, lost interest since I was a bit confused by the jumping around in location, timeframes, character discussions.

Great biography and story about Haitians and Haitian Americans. Highly recommend it.

Danticat's book chronicles the history of Haiti in the 20th and 21st centuries through relating her family's story. She brings the reality of US racism and colonialism to life through recounting the saga of her grandparents, aunts and uncles, and her parents. The relationship between her father and his brother is particularly poignant. Her spirit honors life, recognizing that it can be fraught with difficulties.

The life story of every Haitian: strong family ties, love, untraditional families, community service, struggles, unmet needs, instability, natural disasters, resilience, migration, pride, human rights, and death. A must read for anyone interested in learning about recent turmoil in Haiti's story.

This won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography. It is lively and engaging. Parts are wrapped in joy and humanity; others are wrapped in devastating evidence of the cruelty of war to the non-political citizenry. It is the account of Edwidge's family, part in civil-war-torn and occupied Haiti and part in New York and Miami. The depth of cruelty of all sides in the wars and civil unrest in Haiti and in immigrant detention in Miami destroys any confidence you might have in humanity. The love, dedication, and family bonds coexist with pervasive inhuman cruelty. The narrative voice - Edwidge in first person - puts the reader into the story so completely it's hard to emerge. You finish it with hope for the human spirit, but sadly convinced that there isn't a consistently compassionate God.

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