



Blue Genes: A Memoir of Loss and Survival

Christopher Lukas

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Tony and I are brothers across the stroboscopic echoes of the past: dissolving across black interludes into the next image, and the next, and the next, until all vestige of pure vision is destroyed. All that is left is memory, and we know how faulty that can be. Who Tony was is forever blurred by who I was and how I remember who I thought Tony was . . . He is dead, and I am alive—left to dwell on questions, and to seek the answers . . .

Would I, too, end up killing myself? Was the legacy of self-destruction I would discover in my family too great for me to survive? If so, when would the pendulum swing? And, if it never did, why not? How could I—almost alone among my family—escape?

—From *Blue Genes*

This courageous, engrossing memoir explores the complex and shattering effects of a family legacy of depression and suicide on the author and his brother, the award-winning journalist, J. Anthony Lukas.

Christopher (Kit) Lukas's mother committed suicide when he was a boy. He and his brother, Tony, were not told how she died. No one spoke of the family's history of depression and bipolar disorder. The legacy of guilt and grief haunted Kit and Tony throughout their lives.

Both brothers achieved remarkable success, Tony as a gifted journalist, Kit as an accomplished television producer and director. After suffering bouts of depression, Kit was able to confront his family's troubled past, drawing on his experience to write *Silent Grief*, an invaluable guide to surviving a loved one's suicide. Tony forged a sterling career, eventually winning two Pulitzer Prizes, including one for the now-classic book *Common Ground*. But he never seemed to find the contentment Kit had attained; he remained creative, but depressed. In 1997, shortly before the publication of his acclaimed book, *Big Trouble*, Tony Lukas committed suicide.

Blue Genes portrays the lives of two brothers who alternately locked horns and found solace in each other. Written with heartrending candor, it captures the devastation of this family legacy of depression, but it is also surprisingly uplifting, as it details the strength and hope that can provide a way of escaping its grasp.

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