

The image shows the front cover of the book 'Mortality' by Christopher Hitchens. The cover is black with the title 'Mortality' in a large, white, serif font at the top. Below the title, the author's name 'Christopher Hitchens' is written in a smaller, white, serif font, split across three lines: 'Christopher' on the first line, 'Hitchens' on the second line, and 'Hitchens' on the third line.

Mortality
Christopher
Hitchens

Book Review. *Mortality* by Christopher Hitchens.

Saturday, September 1st, 2012.

Ignoring the forward by Graydon Carter and afterward by Carol Blue, *Mortality* has eight chapters. The first seven are a collection of essays Hitchens had already published about his cancer. And I had already read each of them (in magazine form). So reading them again – this time on thicker, hardback-bound pages – felt like the stoking of an old romance. Like retelling stories at the wake. And his final words really were among his best, so it felt right to share them in this way... one last time.

The final chapter in *Mortality* is a bunch of inchoate thoughts. Unconnected strings of half-shaped arguments and fragments of ideas. I meant to save this part. I planned on only reading the first seven chapters, saving the eighth for a time when I'd really need it. Owing to my bizarre diet and behaviors, I'm sure I too will die of cancer. And as much as I cast off other people in my life (for the surrogate friendship of old, dead writers), I may very well be doing that dying by myself... save for those writers who come with me in all the corporeal bulk of their ink and paper. And I just wanted to save a precious bit of that relationship for a time when I'd really need it.

But when I got there – after rereading the first seven essays – I couldn't stop. It was like having sex and promising to pull out just in time. No matter how honest my intentions, you're going to have a full load of semen as deep into your vagina as I can cram it. Not on purpose; my biology just takes over. Trying to save a Hitchens chapter was no easier than trying to climax into a napkin. I should have known from the beginning, when I was promising myself that I'd pull out in time, that I'd read it – again and again – until I could recite it by heart.

- Courtney Jensen