



Beautiful Scars

Kilee Brookbank

Lori Highlander

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This is a story of joy, love, and thankfulness that will touch the hearts of mothers and daughters.

Beautiful Scars by Kilee Brookbank and Lori Highlander is a moving story of how one girl recovered from devastating burns, with her mother at her side.

When Kilee Brookbank was sixteen, she was a typical small-town high school student. But then an explosion and a fire destroyed her home and left her with burns covering nearly half of her body. During a time already full of self-learning and reinventing, Kilee faced surgeries and skin grafts. She had to relearn how to take care of herself, do day-to-day tasks, and see her own beauty and potential, despite her long recovery and the scars left by her injuries.

The narrative alternates between Kilee and her mother, making this more than a portrait of tragedy and recovery; it's also an inspiring look at a mother-daughter relationship. The dual narration, which has the potential to make the book feel disjointed, balances well, keeping the pace moving forward even as it fully delves into each event.

The story, though told through the voices of two women, reaches past their immediate relationship to their family as a whole. It showcases the family's history, including divorce and sibling relationships, all surrounded by love, in order to explore the entirety of a young girl's life and what it means to be a mother. The women also offer an inspiring look at the friends, neighbors, and medical personnel in their town and at Shriners Hospitals for Children in Cincinnati—all of whom provided practical help and buoyed their spirits. As Kilee and her mother learn and grow, their example of love, thankfulness, and compassion comes through.

High-quality photos show the grim reality of what happened to Kilee, including shots of the destroyed family home and of her wounds, but they also give a vibrant picture of Kilee's personality both before and after her accident, through prom photos, family portraits, and other everyday smiles. Together, they impart the hope that comes from multifaceted recovery.

This book will touch the hearts of mothers and daughters across different life experiences, and it will provide hope and encouragement to people who have lived through traumatic injury and recovery or helped children through such a harrowing process. Both Kilee and her mother offer their honest insights, not denying the pain and despair they felt, even as they cling unwaveringly to hope. Since the event happened in the recent past, in 2014, both perspectives are fresh, even a bit raw at times. It is particularly powerful to read Kilee discuss her struggles with maturity and wisdom that is gained through experience, before the full weight of adulthood clouds her memory.

Beautiful Scars is a story of joy, love, and thankfulness—even in painful times.

MELISSA WUSKE (September 7, 2016)

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