



Hope Is a Bright Star: A Mother's Memoir of Love, Loss, and Learning to Live Again

Faith Fuller Wilcox

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Hope Is a Bright Star is a moving memoir about a mother's struggle to come to terms with the worst thing that can ever happen to a parent: losing her child.

Hope Is a Bright Star is Faith Fuller Wilcox's touching memoir about moving from loss and grief to love and healing after the tragic death of her fourteen-year-old daughter.

Wilcox's daughter Elizabeth was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of bone cancer, when she was only thirteen. Shortly after, Wilcox realized that she would be the one to carry her family through the crisis. Her husband was absent and angry; he refused to play an active role in his daughter's fight against the illness. Her other daughter, Olivia, loved her sister, but seeing her lying in bed with multiple IVs, or retching after days of chemotherapy, tore her apart; at times, it pushed her to apathy.

As Elizabeth's life-threatening illness progressed, Wilcox gathered the strength to leave her husband. She moved out and began creating a new life in a safer, happier environment for her two daughters. Despite growing weaker and weaker, Elizabeth never lost her hope or kindness; she spent her days at the hospital trying to comfort children going through the same struggle. When she died in August of 2001, she left behind a loving family that would miss her forever.

While the second part of the book focuses on Wilcox's life after the loss of her daughter, the first part, up the Elizabeth's death, is its most touching and interesting portion. It paints a vibrant picture of a brave, kind young girl discovering her illness and fighting against it, until her last breath.

The book's accurate, simple, and beautiful descriptions of Wilcox's grief are remarkable, too. Almost four years after the death of her daughter, she drove past the local high school and saw Elizabeth's class graduating; the book's bare description of the crowd is enough to evoke a strong sense of both Wilcox's loss, and of the unfairness of the situation:

Girls lovely in their white robes and graduation caps and boys handsome in royal-blue gowns with matching mortarboards seize my attention. ... I'm stunned. Elizabeth should have been graduating from high school today. She should have been radiant, dressed in her white gown and ready to celebrate with her friends.

Similarly, after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attack on New York City, the book explains how Wilcox is already living in her own nightmare; the suffering of so many strangers is too much for her. The book also contains some of Wilcox's poems, which illustrate her feelings in concise terms. They are a great addition to its clear prose.

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ANNA MARIA COLIVICCHI (May 17, 2021)

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