



Life Came to a Standstill: True Accounts of Loss, Love, and Hope

Gwendolyn Broadmore

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This is a beautifully written meditation on grief, healing, and hope.

Life Came to a Standstill is a beautiful compilation of eight stories of heartbreak and loss.

Each story is written by someone who lost either a sibling or a child, and details who was lost, how they were lost, and the crushing and inevitable sorrow of the days and months following the tragedies. The survivors' accounts are presented to help others in similar situations to cope and heal, and to bring some light into the dark process of grieving.

Each of the narratives is devastatingly sad, yet each also maintains a hopeful note. After the unexpected death of her son, Liam, collection editor Gwendolyn Broadmore wanted to help others in similar situations; she assists here with the bibliotherapy of sharing tragedies.

Though focused on a topic generally considered off-limits, the book moves from dark feelings and intense grief into discussion and conversation, with the awareness that solace can be found in the sympathetic stories of others. Broadmore's own story is presented alongside seven others, and it's clear that each of the writers is working toward catharsis.

The stories may center on a common theme, but each remains special and unique. The writers aim to normalize certain survivor behaviors and thought patterns, and address issues such as how to discuss the deceased person around others, how to keep their memory alive, and when and how to reach out for help.

Grief is also shown to impact everyone differently, and these raw stories help to foster understanding about those different processes. Many of the writers are advocates of grief support groups, and discuss turning points in the timelines of their grief when they received outside help; others are encouraged to do the same.

Poems and quotes are sprinkled throughout the book, with the suggestion that reading them was a profoundly important act in the healing process; art is shown to be a strong avenue for channeling emotions and working toward calmer feelings. These additions tie the stories together, creating fluid transitions between tales.

Even through the shock of an unexpected loss and the resultant feelings of sadness that never wholly go away, turning to reading is one effective method of channeling emotion. Broadmore's collection reflects this awareness, and aims to help others in their own times of grief. *Life Came to a Standstill* is a beautifully written meditation on grief, healing, and hope.

KATIE ASHER (February 21, 2018)

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