



Mom, Twice a Child

Marilyn R. Duncan

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Mom, Twice a Child is a loving testament to the beauty of one mother's life, even as daughter becomes caretaker.

Mom, Twice a Child by Marilyn R. Duncan is a daughter's warm reminiscence of her mother's childhood and a reflection on her elderly years with dementia.

"Before I get into the story of her illness I want to give you a glimpse of the beautiful, elegant, classy, sexy little lady whom I love and am proud to call my teacher, my friend, and my mom." With that, Duncan sets a welcoming, positive tone for the story of her mother, Jeannette Marguerite Butler. The first part of the book shares Butler's early years, and the second part details Duncan's growing role as her mother's caretaker as her health declines. Duncan manages the two time frames, and the transition between them, remarkably smoothly. The book contains very personal, specific moments from her mother's childhood and homages to her mother as an individual, but mixed throughout are widely relatable elements of family and the heartbreaking challenge of transitioning from child to caregiver. Through it all, Duncan's positive spirit—which she surely inherited from her mother—shines through.

While the telling of this story is clearly personally cathartic for the author, it has broad resonance as well. Part 1 offers historical insights into what it was like during the 1920s and beyond as a black woman in Canada—"I was like a fly in a glass of milk," Butler said. Part 2 offers practical information and advice for caregivers alongside the narrative. For example, Duncan faces challenges like keeping upsetting information (such as her sister's illness) from her mother to avoid causing undue stress.

The chapters are short, keeping the book moving forward and echoing mother and daughter's optimism and courage as they forge into the future. The chapters often feel a bit like a journal because they relate information rather than weaving scenes. The information and anecdotes are well chosen to present a full yet concise story rich with deep emotion.

The type and layout are elegant and appealing, and the photos' reproduction quality is high, especially given the age of many of them; like the content itself, they give the book an intensely personal feel.

This book will appeal to caregivers of aging loved ones, particularly those suffering from dementia. Duncan's support will help these readers feel they're not alone, and her reverence for her mother will invite people to nostalgically document their own family history. *Mom, Twice a Child* is a testament to the beauty of one mother's life, and how that beauty resonates in the life of her daughter.

MELISSA WUSKE (December 3, 2015)

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