

## The Goodbye Diaries

**Marisa Bardach Ramel**

**Sally Bardach**

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Both a memoir and an exploration of a mother-daughter bond, *The Goodbye Diaries* is a moving story told through two voices: those of a then-teenaged daughter and her terminally ill mother. Using both of their journals as source material, Marisa Bardach Ramel delivers a years-long dialogue that recreates the heartbreaking process of losing a loved one. It's a beautifully written, heartfelt, and meaningful read about a difficult experience.

The story is told in the form of diary entries, with alternating chapters written by Marisa and her mother Sally. Marisa is just seventeen when her parents return from a too-long trip to the doctor to tell their children that the doctor gave Sally just two months to live, diagnosing her with stage four pancreatic cancer.

Following that devastating diagnosis, Sally's entries grapple not only with treatment and medical updates but with her thoughts about all the things she knows she will miss and her concern about her family's future. Sally's decades-old entries are sympathetic without glossing over challenges. She fights to see her daughter through high school and college despite the difficult odds.

Marisa's own writings demonstrate the struggle of trying to live a full teenage life beyond her mother's diagnosis. She doesn't shy away from depicting the darker parts of that experience, from closing herself off to her mother at first as a defense mechanism to navigating college and romance with a sword of Damocles always present.

What both authors share is an obvious love for one another, and the diary approach demonstrates that in ways big and small, letting them discuss their love of trips to the Gap together or their family jokes about *Seinfeld* alongside heart-to-heart talks about the future. That relationship carries the book—a lovely tribute to a dedicated mother.

JEFF FLEISCHER (May/June 2019)

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