Clarion Review

Biography

The Last Smile
Jeevan Zutshi
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Amit's health quickly deteriorated, and then he was gone. His parents were left looking back with the "hope of making some sense of it all." Amit's father, Jeevan Zutshi, writes, "The truth is, we cannot blame ourselvesÂ….But I have to admit that it eats at you every day-this question of what we might have missed." Zutshi wrote *The Last Smile* in memory of his son and with the hope that it would be a cathartic experience. Although the book is ostensibly about Amit, it also contains sections on the history of Kashmir, the life of the author, forty-five pages of family photos, and a discussion of the problematic relationship between medical practice and nutrition.

Zutshi is an immigrant from Kashmir who trained as a civil engineer, married, and came to America. At first, he found it difficult to obtain employment, but he was persistent about getting an interview. In the man's office, after they had talked for about an hour, Zutshi was asked when he could start. His new employer, he writes, "cautioned me that the next morning would be Friday the 13th. That meant nothing to me and I told him so. I have since learned that it is supposed to be a day of ill omen, but it will remain for me a very lucky day."

In 2004, at the age of twenty-seven, Amit began losing weight, but otherwise he seemed fine. A doctor mentioned that he had low sodium, and then his heart failed. Though the doctors could not assign responsibility to "over the counter" nutritional products, Zutshi suspected they had caused his condition. In an attempt to understand his son's death, which happened three years later, Zutshi has investigated nutritional products and believes regulatory reform is needed. This is a complicated issue, with many practical, philosophical, financial, scientific, and regulatory concerns. "Many manufacturers claim their ingredients are 'natural' implying that products are safe. However, this is not necessarily the case," he writes. Natural substances can be poisonous, and others may interact harmfully with prescription medicines. Ingredients that are not considered potentially lethal are not regulated and or subjected to thorough testing, but

even some vitamins can be toxic at high doses.

Although *The Last Smile* is an interesting read for its information about Kashmir, the author's life story, and the discussion of nutritional supplements, none of these subjects is explored with enough depth; the breadth of subject matter would be better treated in different books. However, readers who have lost loved ones will be touched by Zutshi's struggle with pain and his hope that his son's brief life was not in vain.