



## The Price of Admission: Embracing a Life of Grief and Joy

**Liz Petrone**

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Liz Petrone's wildest, most hopeful dream at the age of twenty was to have someone tell her that everything was going to be okay, and to say it with enough conviction that she could believe it. It didn't happen. Instead, Petrone faced the alcoholism and eventual suicide of her beautiful, perfectionist mother; survived her own anorexia, alcohol abuse, and suicide attempt; and came to discover that, while not everything would be okay, life is worth the pain that waits on the other side of joy.

Petrone was haunted by the belief that with the right words and a listening heart unwilling to accept "I'm fine" as an answer, she might have saved her mother from suicide. From the depths of her soul, she shares the two most helpful words that can be said to someone in pain: "I'm here." The hard part: one can't just walk away after having said them.

Life taught Petrone that the next breath is never guaranteed—that each moment is a gift that comes with the ache of realizing that this could be, and eventually will be, the last time we greet the arrival of spring, see a beloved face, or share the bouncing joy of a beloved dog. Yet she came to see that when something, or someone, is lost, "we are not left empty. We are left with the gift of all those years, all those memories, and all the ways having lived through it has changed us into better versions of ourselves."

Tender and exquisite in its rendering, *The Price of Admission* shows how both the loving and the letting go are part of the dance of life. In its magical closing, the past and the future, and love and loss, are tied together to build a firm bridge to acceptance and healing.

KRISTINE MORRIS (September / October 2020)

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