



To An Angel Who Is New

Arno Bohlmeijer

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This sad and moving story tells of the author's terrible car accident, in which he and his beloved wife, Marian, and their two daughters were badly injured. The scene is set just prior to the accident, which came to Bohlmeijer in a dream not long before. Poignant and tender are his thoughts, which he recalls by telling his version of what happened directly to Marian. He manages to remember many details, like how he was flung from the car because he wasn't wearing a seatbelt, and how his wife was trapped and crushed because she was wearing hers, and the girls' individual ordeals.

The reader is introduced to various colorful and caring family members and friends as they appear at the hospital bearing flowers and gifts, and giving selflessly of their time, and Bohlmeijer expresses what their presence meant to him. He relates his thoughts and feelings during his recovery in the hospital, including his inability to speak, let alone do anything for his wife and children, about whom he tries to inquire from the many vigilant visitors. His horrific account of his helplessness, his injuries, his children's injuries, his wife's sliding condition, the wonderful doctors and ever-present and attentive nurses, is both moving and alarming.

The accident happened in mid-December and the story builds up to Christmas and the New Year. Bohlmeijer tells of the anguish he goes through as his two young daughters, Phoebe and Rosemyn, recover in one hospital, unaware of their mother's dire condition in another. The discomfort he suffers from being immobile, learning to get around on crutches, the catheter, and his inability to hold his girls, is heartbreaking. He accepts that his wife is going to depart this world, in which he feels she has done her work, and commence her new life in the hereafter; he cannot bear to know that she is suffering so.

Bohlmeijer, an award-winning author of fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children, lives and works in the Netherlands. His other books include a highly praised telling of this story for young readers titled *Something Very Sorry*. His love for Marian is endearing as he eloquently, and bravely, details how he recovers from the worst of his injuries, tells the children of their mother's passing, and prepares to take them to the familiarity of home.

Life without Marian, and Bohlmeijer's guilt at having turned his head to look over his shoulder while driving, eats at him. His story is gut-wrenching, honest, and loving. The book is a page-turner; sympathetic readers will be anxious to get to the part when everything is back to normal, and the family can move on.

ADRIENNE PETTERSON (August 18, 2009)

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