

Winter Stars: An Elderly Mother, an Aging Son, and Life's Final Journey

Dave Iverson

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Compelling in sharing admiration for the women in his life, Iverson's monumental memoir about assuming a caregiver's role is marked by complexity, love, and humor.

Journalist Dave Iverson's memoir *Winter Stars* is about caring for his elderly mother as her health deteriorated.

Iverson spent ten years as his mother Adelaide's primary caregiver; she had dementia and other ailments, and died at the age of 105. Still, his decision to care for her was unhesitating, and he moved in to help despite his own busy life and concerns. Stories from Adelaide's life—about her personality, marriage, and active older years—are included, showcasing the deep roots of their mother-son relationship.

Even as it traces the worsening of Adelaide's condition, the narrative remains heartfelt and clear-eyed, embracing the full spectrum of Iverson's emotions without dwelling in moments of sadness and dread. Iverson writes about being surprised by his anger at the situation, but also records the steady growth of his patience and compassion, even as the years, and his nerves, wore away. The book shows him facing unanticipated hurdles, but also rising to their challenges, surprising himself in the process. And the text also affords credit to fellow carers, like the "remarkable women caregivers who became my teachers, my comrades, and my kin." Indeed, the book is compelling in sharing admiration for the women in Iverson's life, who are shown maintaining their depth and humanity, even in the face of terrible adversity.

Further, this monumental story is marked by complexity, love, and humor. It moves through pivotal moments in Iverson's relationship with his mother with a proper sense of gravity, affording space both to the particulars of her illness, and to his own reflections during those times. Keen details and acute prose enliven it, particularly when it comes to the settings that Iverson and his mother found themselves in, and to the conversations that stuck in his memory; also vivifying is the book's sincerity in capturing his conflicting emotions.

Iverson's work is ably paced to ensure that poignant moments come amid its accounts of hectic times, ensuring immersion. This is also true of its central image of winter stars, which are celebrated for holding the cold, bright promises of life and death in tension. There's also staying power to lines about a promise that Iverson glimpsed in his mother's eyes.

Winter Stars is the elegant memoir of a relatable caregiver who spent a decade caring for his ailing mother.

MELISSA WUSKE (January 19, 2022)

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