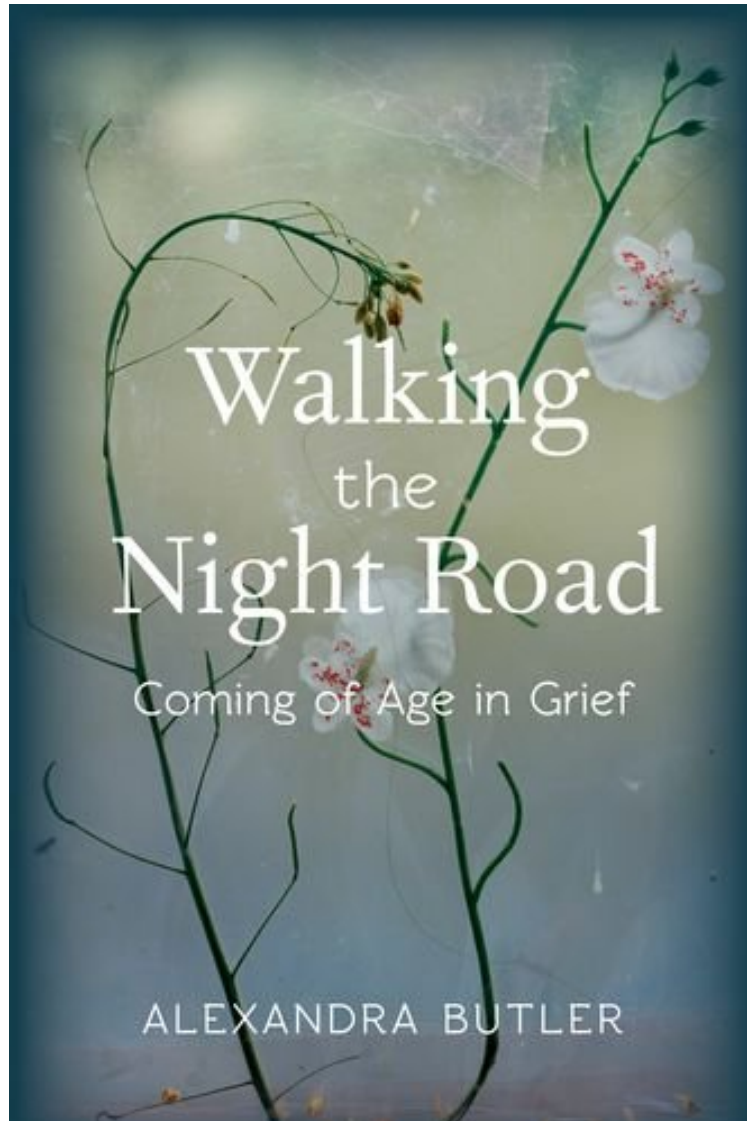


[Mobile ebook] Walking the Night Road: Coming of Age in Grief

## Walking the Night Road: Coming of Age in Grief

*Alexandra Butler*

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**Alexandra Butler : Walking the Night Road: Coming of Age in Grief** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Walking the Night Road: Coming of Age in Grief:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Surpringly funny yet heartbreaking tale of griefBy tiffany Anada PA very well written account about what it's like to lose a parent as a young adult. It is somehow very funny at times and then heartbreaking at times. I actually enjoyed reading this memoir on grief more than Joan Didion's, Year of magical thinking. I look forward to seeing what Alexandra Butler write about next.2 of 3 people found the following review

helpful. Mourning...By Jill MeyerEverybody grieves their dead and every period of grieving is different. Alexandra Butler lost both of her parents from disease in a span of a few years, and writes about her parents and her grief for them in her memoir, "Walking the Night Road: Coming of Age in Grief". It's a fairly interesting book, but rather awkwardly written. Alexandra's parents - Dr Robert Butler and Dr Myrna Lewis - were leaders in the field of aging and the final days of life. Lewis was Butler's second wife - he had three daughters from his first marriage - and their daughter, Alexandra, was a "late-in-life" baby. She grew up in the midst of both her parents work and their lives together. She was much closer to her mother, in whose shadow she grew up. Her relationship with her father was a bit more problematical; he was old enough to be her grandfather and they did not seem to be close until his last illness and death. I caught glimpses of the relationship between Myrna and Bob, but the resentment Myrna showed Bob was difficult to construct other than seeming to be resentment at his greater fame in their chosen work and detachment from his home life. Alexandra Butler was in her mid-twenties when her mother was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She lived with her parents and was her mother's main help until a nurse - also named "Myrna" - was hired to take over her care. After her mother's death, Alexandra went through a protracted mourning period where it seems she both mourned and tried to figure out her mother's life and her place in it. Then her father became sick with a form of leukemia and died. Losing two parents is difficult enough without having a strong personal identity to help sustain yourself. Now maybe "personal identity" is important here. In the book, I never really figured out just "who" Alexandra Butler was. Yes, "daughter of", and "half-sister of", and, eventually, "wife and mother of", but in the book she seems so non-existent in her own right. After receiving a diagnosis of depression, she began taking Zoloft, which seemed to help her. Butler's writing is stream-of-consciousness and it is not tightly written. Maybe memoir writers are allowed a bit of bit of wavering in their writing; after all, they're writing about their emotions. But Butler's book is too wandering. Maybe a lot of it should have remained within the confines of a therapist's office. I had high hopes for the book after reading an excerpt from it in the New York Times last week. However, this book - and the subject - are highly personal and other readers may enjoy it. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. the most honest book about grief I've read

By S. Roher Alex Butler has written a powerful meditation on grief occasioned by the loss of her parents. This is the most honest book I've ever read about grief. Her mother, we learn, counseled her daughter that living and loving intensely is what makes life worthwhile. Sounds nice but it doesn't fit a culture terrified of night roads and ready to prescribe antidepressants if grief goes on for too long (three months according to some experts). Butler's parents were revered, larger than life figures in the world of aging, so perhaps it's not surprising that this very personal story evoked echoes of Greek tragedy writ in modern times. Reading this, I understood for the first time why Greek tragic figures rend their clothing we tear ourselves apart as grief rips away our screens of familiarity. Losing both her parents, she reaches for the stories of who they are (we all have our stories, handed down) only to find that the old stories fall away as new shapes and colors and emerge from the shadows. It's the changing of the author's inner geography that she maps so brilliantly, and with ruthless honesty. Only Hollywood looks good grieving here, the ratio of human shortcomings to angelic moments is marked with precision, with slicing insights sometimes poetic, sometimes hilarious that knock off pedestals in favor of real human passion. No one volunteers to travel this night road, but Butler shows how in the wake of huge loss and all recognizable markers one can try on, discern, remake new shorelines by which to navigate. Ultimately, this book occasioned by loss becomes an invitation to travel anew.

The house looked as if she'd brushed it over with a hurried hand. Things were open drawers, cans, and closets. A pile of newspapers fanned out across the floor by the front door, and still I did not wonder. She must have dropped them as she ran, I thought. My mother was often late. But had I stopped to look, I would have seen the fear in the way the house had settled a footstool that lay on its side, several books that had fallen from their shelves. When you count back, you can see a story from the end. I like that the seemingly natural narrative that forms this way. With the end in my hand, the story becomes mine. I can have it all make sense, or I can lose my mind like she lost hers like I lost her. But I can have my story. Walking the Night Road speaks to the experience of caring for a loved one with a terminal illness and the difficulties of encountering death. Alexandra Butler, daughter of the Pulitzer Prize-winning gerontologist Robert N. Butler and respected social worker and psychotherapist Myrna Lewis, composes a lyrical yet unsparing portrait of caring for her mother during her sudden, quick decline from brain cancer. Her rich account shares the strains of caregiving on both the provider and the person receiving care and recognizes the personal and professional sacrifices caregivers must make to fulfill the role. More than a memoir of dying and grief, Butler's account also tests many of the theories her parents pioneered in their work on healthy aging. Authors of such seminal works as *Love and Sex After Sixty*, Butler's parents were forced to rethink many of the tenets they lived by while Myrna was incapacitated, and Butler's father found himself relying heavily on his daughter to provide his wife's care. Butler's poignant and unflinching story is therefore a rare examination of the intimate aspects of aging and death experienced by practitioners who suddenly find themselves in the difficult position of the clients they once treated.

Alexandra Butler's account of her parents' deaths is engaging and affecting. Boomers and their children will learn much from this memoir as they themselves approach the finitude of life. (Andrew Achenbaum, Professor of Social

Work at the University of Houston)An honest look at marriage, aging, happiness, and survivalboth wise and funny. You will walk the Night Road too. (Barbara Walters)A detailed, beautifully written, insightful account of the process of dying and of livingit's difficult to put down. Butler is able to use her words to breathe life into the people she is writing about and provide the reader with an ability to enter their lives as observers who can nearly feel the sun, shudder in the cold, and hear the creak of the floors. (Jeanette Takamura, Dean, Columbia School of Social Work)This book is Ms. Butler's passionate account of her fight to help her mother, the author of works on mental health and aging, Myrna Lewis, in her battle against a malignant brain tumor. The depth of her grief and her fury against a foe she knew must win is palpable on every page. (Peter Pouncey, Author of Rules for Old Men Waiting)Alexandra Butler's memoir of the last year-and-a-half of her mother's life is a searing, exquisitely written, brilliant work. Its honesty, insight, and poetic sensitivity left us deeply moved, far more so than anything else we've read in many years. It is truly a magnificent accomplishment. (Lawrence K. Grossman, Former president of NBC News and PBS)I read this book in one sitting last night and it is really remarkable. She captures, a la Virginia Woolf, the inner voice and experience of illness, death and grief in a way I have not seen before. Lots of talent there. (Diane Meier, Director of Center to Advance Palliative Care)The vivid, expressive intelligence of the writing made the exploding consequences of Myrna's cancer invade my mind in ways that were deeply moving and instructive. I was struck by the author's skill as a writer from the devastating start of the book, in which Myrna has already crossed the threshold into a world from which she can't return. It reads like a nightmare at first, but then settles into the pit of the stomach as not nightmare at all, not even the cultural nightmare of cancer as dread incarnate, but as our everyday, waking reality transformed into a bizarre parallel universe. Butler has composed a particular and telling vignette with implications beyond her immediate circumstancesa tragi-comic subtext to the way many of us are driven to organize our lives in unbroken chains of projects. (Joan Retallack, John D. Catherine T. MacArthur Professor of Humanities, Bard College)I read it in one sitting. I laughed; I cried my eyes out; I related the whole way. And the beauty of it is that my mother does not have cancer. No one has cancer. It's the relationship and the feelings, deep to the core. This is not about cancer. It's about people, about the relationship between the people and the journey. I bet that people will relate no matter what kind of death or loss. (Joan Siffert, Senior Vice President of Development at Gilda's Club)Beautifully and skillfully written. (Rabbi Harold S. Kushner)Beautiful, heartbreaking and incisive, Butler's memoir is a brutally honest retelling of her mother's tragic battle against cancer. Her words go beyond just grief, they inspire a greater understanding of what it means to be a child, and how the lines that define familial roles are often more complex and messy than they seem. A child is never just a child. A parent never just a parent. Walking the Night Road is a cathartic tribute to anyone who has ever lost a parent. (Will Reiser, Screenwriter, 50/50)Butler has written a moving and powerful book about the unlikely blessings that a death can bring. Anyone who has lost a loved oneor indeed anyone who has unwillingly embarked on an adventure only to find themselves in a better placewill enjoy this account. She reminds us all that hardships can sometimes be gifts wrapped in pain. We just need to see them that way. (Dan Buettner, Author, The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People )Butler gives an exceptionally full-bodied description of family life, with its enduring connections, weaknesses, cruelties and warmth. (Terri Apter Times Literary Supplement)Very well written, organized and presented, Walking the Night Road is... extraordinary and highly recommended. (The Midwest Book )Well written and engaging. (Journal of Gerontological Social Work)About the AuthorAlexandra Butler recently received her MSW from the Columbia University School of Social Work.