



Loved by an "Angel": The Story of a 9 Year Olds Lifelong Battle with Cancer, but Never Her Faith!

Christopher Scott Beaucher

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"Our jaws dropped. We were both speechless. We couldn't even move," Christopher Scott Beaucher writes in *Loved by an "Angel."* A neurosurgeon had just informed Beaucher and his wife that their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Kristin, had a rare kind of brain cancer called medulloblastoma.

Kristin had brain surgery followed by experimental chemotherapy and, in spite of her young age, radiation. Following five-and-a-half good years, the cancer returned at age eight. After more brain surgery and chemotherapy, Kristin died at age nine. Various organizations held benefits for Kristin, such as the Solid Rock Baptist Church's Walk-a-Thon. Even though Kristin endured tremendous difficulties, she maintained her faith in God and was more concerned about people other than herself. When her tumor returned, she tried to comfort her parents. Beaucher often refers to her as an angel.

Black-and-white photographs throughout the book enable readers to keep track of Kristin's changing appearance. Because chemotherapy causes hair loss, many of the photos show her bald. Captions would have been helpful so that readers could identify the people with Kristin.

This well-organized book has a mainly chronological presentation. Appropriate titles for chapters and sections of chapters, such as "Hospice at Home," give readers an overview of the events. The book provides brief explanations of medical terms. For example, the doctors who told Kristin's parents that her tumor covered most of her cerebellum explained that that portion of the brain controls motor skills and that it's located "where the spinal cord goes up into the brain."

Occasional humor eases the tension of the heartbreaking drama. For example, Beaucher suggests that a football game between Miami and Florida State caused Kristin, in the womb, to cheer so hard that she induced her mother's labor. Beaucher's good descriptions of his emotions increase reader identification. Referring to his anxiety over Kristin's first surgery, he writes, "I was doing well just to remember my name!" He uses a number of clever, descriptive expressions. For example, regarding his reaction to Kristin's death, he writes, "My world had stopped, and all I wanted was to get off."

The book's problems are minor. Chapter one begins with the names of Kristin's major relatives and her birth statistics. Fortunately, this information is brief but it would have worked better a little later. An interesting first paragraph would have more effectively grabbed readers' attention, such as Beaucher's unfortunate plea to God for a special child or Kristin getting stuck in the birth canal. Readers will notice various typographical errors, as well as missing and extra words.

Reading about Kristin's and her father's struggle will provide support to other families whose children have cancer or other serious illnesses. It will also give parents of children with cancer an idea of what they might expect regarding treatments. Additionally, it can help health-care professionals understand the perspective of patients' families.

Kristin's premature death was a tragedy. However, the story of her courageous struggle with cancer provides a marvelous, lasting inspiration.

NORMA KELLAM (July 11, 2011)

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