



Watching for Dragonflies: A Caregiver's Transformative Journey

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The moving memoir *Watching for Dragonflies* is a wife and caregiver's tale of contending with a spouse's multiple sclerosis diagnosis.

In Suzanne Marriott's memoir *Watching for Dragonflies*, lessons are mined from a decade of spousal caregiving.

In 1996, Marriott's husband, Michael, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The couple began to rearrange their lives. Once a teamster who delivered goods on the West Coast, Michael was no longer able to drive his truck with his signature determination. Still, he and Marriott hoped to treat the challenge as an opportunity for growth.

Over the next ten years, Marriott navigated couples' arguments and arguments with insurance agents and the health-care industry. She and Michael adjusted their travel plans according to the demands of MS. They also faced Marriott's colon cancer diagnosis together, learning new self-care skills and becoming experts with their medical devices. Due to their shared lifetime of mutual care, their bond transcended even death.

Its progression guided by Buddhist principles, the book seeks to "gauge every action ... by whether or not it furthers ... progress to the North Star, [the] soul's destination." Marriott recalls following this advice by focusing on how Michael's MS occasioned insights into her soul and his, leading them both to a higher destiny. Her book references other spiritual books and methods throughout, seeking to integrate them into this story. And dreams and journal entries are present, further differentiating the book's quotidian domestic settings.

The book's chapters all end with similar declarations of love and commitment, repeating what the previous material stated, though less impactfully. Some of Marriott's conversations with others are recalled, though in a sparing manner: they're used to emphasize moments in which she achieved new clarity and illumination. The book's intimate descriptions of experiences in hospital rooms, at home, and at vacation spots around California are more welcoming and natural. Marriott is seen ruminating through holidays that she and Michael spent traveling and enjoying nature.

Its tone encouraging and mindful of the fellow caregivers in its audience, the book also emphasizes small victories and cozy moments, as well as hugs, smiles, and even a friendly waiter at a restaurant. These balance the book's coverage of home health aides, nurses, and doctors, which is used both to express gratitude and to call out instances of neglect and negligence. Anecdotal evidence is shared throughout to support the idea that personal advocates are necessary when it comes to navigating the health-care system, which is called prone to fail patients otherwise.

The moving memoir *Watching for Dragonflies* is a wife and caregiver's tale of contending with a spouse's diagnosis; it includes sober views of the US's health-care system.

MARI CARLSON (April 11, 2023)

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