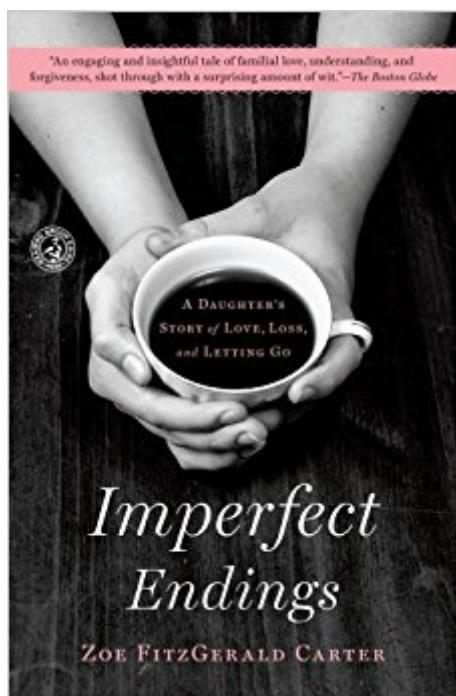


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# Imperfect Endings: A Daughter's Story Of Love, Loss, And Letting Go



## Synopsis

Zoe Carter's busy life on the West Coast with her husband and daughters takes an unexpected detour when her glamorous, independent-minded mother, Margaret, tired of living with Parkinson's disease, decides she wants to end things. As Zoe and her sisters negotiate over whether or not they should support Margaret's choice and who should be there at the end, their discussions stir up old alliances and animosities, along with memories of a childhood dominated by their elegant mother and philandering father. Capturing the stresses and the joys of the "sandwich generation" while bringing a provocative new perspective to the assisted suicide debate, *Imperfect Endings* is the uplifting story of a woman determined to die on her own terms and the family who has to learn to let her go.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After living with Parkinson's for 20 years, Carter's headstrong mother, Margaret, decides she wants to end her life—and have her three daughters by her side when she goes. It's a decision that leaves Carter, the youngest and long the favorite child, in distress. Will her mother really go through with it, and if so, how soon? Margaret, it turns out, has already contacted the Hemlock Society. Bookshelves loaded with literature about death and dying further attest to her convictions. Carter, who lives in Northern California, frequently visits Margaret in Georgetown, doing her best to stay composed. (It's especially difficult when her mother keeps changing the date on which she wants to die.) Eldest sibling Katherine distances herself from

the situation, while sister Hannah is a reliable source of moral and emotional support. Carter alternates the account of her mother's final months with chapters about her childhood, complete with tales of sibling rivalries and her alcoholic, womanizing father. Carter tackles a depressing subject with dark humor and heart. --Allison Block --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Carter coaxes beauty from the bleak in this book about the months after Margaret, who has Parkinson's, tells her three girls she plans to end things and wants them to be there when she does. Ultimately, in losing her, Carter finds a mother she never thought she'd know. •People“Carter's memoir about her terminally ill mother's decision to end her own life becomes a bittersweet tale of how Carter and her sisters coped with their mother's botched efforts, their own sibling rivalries, the ongoing controversy over assisted suicide, and the hard, final task of acceptance. •Elle"An engaging and insightful tale of familial love, understanding, and forgiveness, shot through with a surprising amount of wit." •The Boston Globe"I could quote from the book all day. . . but instead I'll just recommend that those intrigued by the subject spend a little time with the ailing but ferocious Margaret and her daughters. A decision to die can sound romantic or it can sound repugnant. Carter shows us what it was like in reality." •Paula Span, The New York Times.com“The questions that rise from her story are urgent, important and timely. Sharply focused, engaged with essential ethical questions. •San Francisco Chronicle"Zoe Carter is a luminous writer with a dramatic story to tell. With wisdom, poetry and dark humor, Zoe describes her ailing mother's courageous decision to end her life. In years to come, plenty of sons and daughters will face the same moral and practical dilemmas as Zoe's family; *Imperfect Endings*, with its wit and love, will provide an invaluable resource, as well as remain a fascinating, fabulously compelling read." •Jennifer Finney Boylan, author of *She's Not There* and *I'm Looking Through You*"In her wise and moving memoir, journalist Zoe Carter tackles a difficult subject -- her mother's decision to end her own life after years of severe illness. Under what circumstances can her family make peace with this choice? Many of us will find ourselves facing this kind of dilemma as our parents move towards death, and I cannot imagine a better guide than this thoughtful, compassionate book." •Julie Metz, author of *Perfection: A Memoir of Betrayal and Renewal*"I love this book! Zoe Carter has taken what could be a very sad story and turned it into

something beautiful and incredibly insightful. Her portrayal of her mother is wonderful, and reveals in moving and illuminating detail a slice of Washington life." *•Kate Lehrer, author of Confessions of a Bigamist: A Novel*"First-time memoirist Carter comes close to perfection in this chronicle of her mother's quest to orchestrate her own assisted suicide. . . .With surprising humor and sensitivity, Carter presents the struggle to come to terms with mortality and family dynamics." *•Library Journal (starred review)*"A poignant memoir." *•Kirkus Reviews*

Whether or not one believes the choices this family made in Zoe Carter's memoir, *Imperfect Endings*, are right or wrong, Carter is an undeniably powerful writer, who has an easy way with words on a complex and timely issue. She has taken the difficult, to say the least, subject of life and death and crafted it into an unforgettable personal story laced with wit, wisdom, humor, compassion, insight, and abundant food for thought. To be honest, when I first picked it up I wondered if I wanted to "go there." I'm glad I did--I found it incredibly moving.I know it took more than a little courage for Zoe Carter to write this provocative slice of life. *Imperfect Endings* meant paring familial fat to the bone and sucking out the marrow, which she did unabashedly.How does a daughter say, "Yes, Mom, I'll watch you die slowly by your own hand." I'll be a party to your staged sit-in with death.Hauntingly beautiful are the two words that washed over my soul when I finished reading Zoe Carter's *Imperfect Endings*. A true page turner, brought together through a dynamic flow of the highs of love and tenderness, and the lows of anger and sadness, revealing what it takes to be, at once, a mother and a daughter.I could see both sides as the drama unfolded: the mother's perspective, as she desired to make her exit --actually to direct it, while maintaining a modicum of dignity; and the three daughters' reluctance to come to terms with their mother's wishes and say goodbye to Momma. Throughout much of the memoir, a cloak of angry sadness hung from Zoe's shoulders--she was deemed the caretaker, ever flying from coast to coast, always at her mother's beck and call, while growing numb by degrees to her mother's flirtatious and ever changing dates with death. Zoe was the "good" daughter--but also a woman conflicted by daughterly duties over shadowing those of being a wife to a man trying not to lose his patience, and mother to young daughters of her own, needing her attention.Fluctuating between flashbacks of childhood memories and present day dilemmas, Zoe creates authentic scenes that strip away allusion to expose the raw reality of the family's intimate workings. The three daughters' angst for their parent's past transgressions and weaknesses was palpable, and their reckoning of their mother's pretenses and denial, although heartbreakingly understood, at least by two of the sisters, stayed unresolved.But, in the final days, as their mother, Margaret, slipped away, the atmosphere rang clear with tenderness

and acceptance as Zoe's arms, gently enfolded a feather of a woman as the parade passed by, and songs from her lips sent Momma's soul soaring.

Not perfectly written. Not a deep study of religion or philosophy. This is a from-the-heart-account of three sisters and a dying mother who wishes to end it all at home and with dignity. The sister have three diffent views on whether, when and under what circumstances this may or should occur. How they deal with the mother, with each other and with death is a subject that should be of active interest and proactive consideration by every one who has a mother or a father. Or, who is approaching similar decisions for themselves. My father rejected cancer treatment which would, in all probability, have lead to him living an additional six months at the least to two years at the most with constant surgeries and interventions. He chose to go home and starve himself in the presence of his children and with the support of the hospice workers. It took about two weeks. His decision was made public and over 150 collegues, friends and family came by the house for a last visit. It was a wonderful death, given that all men must die, and we left no unfinished business between us or between my sister and me. That's what this book is about. I've been in the writer's place, exactly, and her story rings very true to me. Read this book. If you are older, give it to your children; if you are younger, give it to your parents. I am Virgil Taylor's son.

Riveting and intimate, this deeply moving and personal story allows one to escape into another reality. Exquisite depictions engaging all of the senses bestows the reader with the experience of being Zoe, past and present. Pulled in from the first few words and grieving at the last because, alas, it was all over . . . will there be a sequel?! What happened with her mother's caregivers? Her mother's friends? The eldest sister? How is she and her family doing now? I WANT A MOVIE!!! Perhaps a Ron Howard or Penny Marshall movie with Rene Russo playing Zoe Fitzgerald Carter. Thank you so much, Zoe, for putting your neck out and risking personal repercussions on this controversial subject. It is about time for all to see the compassion and unconditional love required in allowing a loved one the dignity to choose their own ending; a dignity we already offer our beloved canine and feline companions.

This lovely story, set against a background of glamour and privilege, touches the heart in many ways. Carter writes with precision and wit about this most difficult subject, how to respect a parents wish to die. Devotion shines from every page, along with confusion, frustration, and humor. The answer to this terrifying question can only be approached by tapping the accumulated knowledge of

those who have faced it. Carter joins the conversation with clarity and hard-won perspective. It is a heartening tale that contributes to one of the most agonizing debates of our time.

In short, this is a wonderful exposé on how to address an exit strategy for a parent from the viewpoint of a thoughtful and gracious daughter - akin to "Sophie's Choice" in reverse. Ms. Carter's dilemma is complex, and her memoir well portrays the nuances of the family dynamics involved in the process. As an individual with Buddhist leanings, the topic of how, when and why life is to end is of great personal interest and this memoir definitely provokes a deeper contemplation of these questions. Ms. Carter's work is highly recommended by this reader !!

This is the perfect book for anyone who has ever wondered what he/she would do if a family member suffering from a terminal illness decided on no more treatment or even on a treatment that might hasten the inevitable. The book involves a mother and 3 daughters and each has a different perspective on what the mother has decided to do. It's a book to make you think.....whatever your opinion of assisted suicide.

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