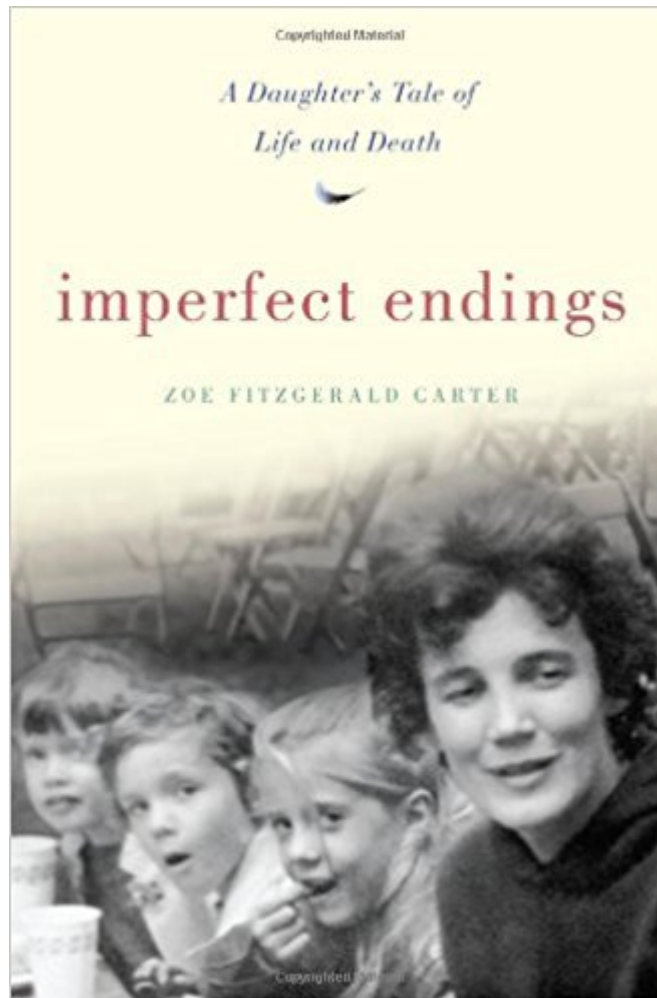




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Imperfect Endings: A Daughter's Tale Of Life And Death



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, decides she wants to "end things." Tired of living with Parkinson's disease, Margaret declares she is no longer willing to go where the illness is taking her. Unsure how -- or when -- she will end her life, she is certain of one thing: she wants her three daughters there when she does it. Stunned by the prospect of losing her mother and concerned about the legal ramifications of participating in her suicide, Zoe does what she can to convince her mother to abandon her plans. But for nearly a year, Margaret will talk of nothing else. Calling Zoe at random times of the day, she blithely asks which would be better: overdosing on morphine or Seconal? Getting help from the Hemlock Society or doing it on her own? And when would be a good time -- February or May? Or how about June? Shuttling between her family in California and her mother's house in Washington, D.C., Zoe finds herself increasingly drawn into her mother's "exit plans." She helps Margaret procure a lethal dose of drugs from a local psychiatrist and endures a bizarrely funny encounter with Bud, the Hemlock Society's "Caring Friend" who seems a little too eager to help Margaret kill herself. Anxious to maintain her role as "the good daughter," Zoe finds herself in conflict with her older sisters, both of whom have difficult histories with their mother. As the three women 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

I couldn't in my wildest dreams have imagined a book like this! A book about a debilitated mother's determination to end her life and enlist the help of her daughters to do so. But here it is, and it's a captivating story told by one of the daughters, Zoe Fitzgerald Carter. For Carter, the experience is emotionally draining. She is repeatedly dragged to her mother's bedside from the opposite coast, the date and method of "self-delivery" continually changing. They meet with a volunteer from the Hemlock Society, the "guide" who would ensure the suicide is effective, and to intervene and finish the job if it is not. The scenes between the mother, her daughters, her caregivers and friends are almost surreal, as the mother's determination grows and she lets more and more people in on her plan. Carter and her sisters struggle to get their mother to see that her plan endangers their lives, leaving them vulnerable to prosecution and imprisonment. Not only that, but they want her to see that they love her and don't want her to die. Isn't that enough for her? Apparently not, a reality that sends the author into even more tangents of grief. Does her mother not even love them enough to stay around for them? This is an acutely observed and finely written story. I literally could not put the book down. The reader comes to understand everyone's point of view, roots for both mother and daughters, can't imagine how the struggle will end. At first, I was put off by the author's anger, her snarkiness, her brusque treatment of her mother and even her ennui. But then I turned the situation in on myself: How would I react if it were me in her place? No better, I'm sure.

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