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A little boy responds to his mother's death in a genuine, deeply moving story leavened by glimmers of humor and captivating illustrations.

When the boy in this story wakes to find that his mother has died, he is overwhelmed with sadness, anger, and fear that he will forget her. He shuts all the windows to keep in his mother's familiar smell and scratches open the cut on his knee to remember her comforting voice. He doesn't know how to speak to his dad anymore, and when Grandma visits and throws open the windows, it's more than the boy can take—until his grandmother shows him another way to feel that his mom's love is near. With tenderness, touches of humor, and unflinching emotional truth, Charlotte Moundlic captures the loneliness of grief through the eyes of a child, rendered with sympathy and charm in Olivier Tallec's expressive illustrations.

The Scar Details

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Author : Charlotte Moundlic , Olivier Tallec (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review *The Scar* for online ebook

Lisa Vegan says

This is an excellent bibliotherapy book for young children who've lost a parent, I'd say ages 3-8.

Hopefully they'll have as good adults as the child in this book, but even if they don't this book might be helpful for dealing with the grief and confusion of losing a parent.

I appreciate how this child feels, and expresses, anger, and a whole range of emotions. I appreciate all the thought processes the child goes through. Nothing feels inauthentic; it seems as though a child could react in just this way.

I love the illustrations. They have a simplicity to them but they're so expressive. I like the liberal use of red, with some yellow. My imagination would have included quite a bit of blue, but somehow the red & yellow work wonderfully.

While this story shows this child and his father, and his grandmother too, coping with the loss of a mother, wife, daughter, it's not a happily ever after type story. The loss of the young child's mother remains a sad thing. And that's good, and realistic.

One caveat is that this story and its pictures might actually set off some sad and angry feelings in children going through a grieving process. That's not necessarily a bad thing at all, but it's good to be prepared for that possibility.

4 ½ stars

Josiah says

Oh, goodness...This is the sort of book one must read sparingly. The emotions are simply too volatile, too enormous, too crushing, too powerful. Read books like *The Scar* often, and you'll find yourself on the verge of tears all the time. Yet the story's message is profound, and needs to be relayed and received. We all need a book like this to act as our North Star and show us where in the world to go next when we suffer a loss as emotionally catastrophic as that of one's mother. What can we do without the most important person in our life, on those days we just aren't strong enough to face the remainder of our existence? *The Scar* offers no absolute answer, no well-defined set of steps to follow from grief's epicenter down a trail that never truly ends, continuing only slightly faded for the rest of one's life. The story does, however, relate the authentic experience of one boy whose mother's human frame could no longer withstand the devastating punishment of disease, cruelly forcing her to bow out on him before even guiding him into the transitive phases of adolescence. It's heartrending in the most intense of ways, an agony of uncontrollable colliding emotions that blow up in the face of the reader, but there is a reason for it. The boy's pain must feel completely real to us if we are to relate to it and understand through his story how we might one day escape on the other side of the tragedy that is losing a loved one.

The boy had to know it was coming. His mother no longer retained the strength even to get out of bed for him, weakened drastically by the sickness about to snuff out her life. She called him into her bedroom the

previous night for a restrained yet tearful goodbye, letting him know there was nothing left she could do to prolong the inevitable. Her struggle was coming to an end, and that meant leaving her son behind to make his own way in the world, without his mother. The boy refused to acknowledge her goodbye, but he instinctively knew she was gone the next morning, even before his father uttered the words that could never be rescinded. Now father and son are trapped in individual coffins of grief, isolated even from one another by the pain tearing their hearts to pieces. There are so many reminders in each other of what has been taken away. But what if the boy starts to forget about his mother? The way her voice sounded, her distinctive scent, the feel of her hugs against his little body? No, he can't let himself forget any of that, or he truly will have lost her forever. When a loved one exists only in one's heart and mind, how much more important is it never to forget them?

But the boy's father, and his grandmother, are there to remind him that his mother may be physically missing, but she isn't gone in every way that matters. He *won't* forget her, really he won't, even if it feels like the sharpness of the memories he has of her are beginning to soften around the edges. Love doesn't die as readily as the frail human body. It exists on multiple planes and in various forms, visible and invisible. It seeps into the cracks and can't be gotten rid of so easily, no matter how we fear its dissipation. A bond like the one between mother and son is impossible to destroy, no matter what happens to it. A connection that powerful outlasts death and time and all else known to mankind, and will remain with us through our darkest days, when we feel that survival without the one we love is impossible. The tragedy will leave behind its scars; of that, there can be little doubt. But scars pale and and transform into smooth skin, and there are still days ahead to live even after our heart has seemingly been pulled from our chest. As the boy's grandmother tells him, "She's there...In your heart, and she's not going anywhere." And someday, somehow, as absurd as it seems, as disloyal as it feels at first to think it could ever be the case, that will almost be enough.

My gosh, what does one do with a book like *The Scar*? Did it traumatize me? Yeah, it kind of did. Break my heart into a thousand pieces? Leave me sobbing uncontrollably? Open up emotional scars of my own, old and new? Yes, this book did all that. Yet I know that as hard an experience as reading it was, I needed to go through it. It's easy to become so afraid of feeling super-intense emotions that one backs away from it, preferring the shelter of comedy or warm sentiment to the agony of putting oneself through the pain of feeling a loss as profound as that suffered by the boy in this story. But while it wouldn't be healthy to *only* read books as emotionally taxing as *The Scar*, we miss out on a crucial part of the human experience if we don't let extreme emotions be part of our literature palette. We need to feel everything in its turn, if we're to make the most of what reading has to offer us. *The Scar* happens to be one of the more difficult parts of that experience, but I can say without reservation that it is not to be missed. I needed it, and I think you do, too, whoever you are, wherever you are in life. As you read Charlotte Moundlic's masterfully told story, you're sure to reflect on your own deepest scars and remember those individuals you have loved, both ones that are gone now and those who remain to be part of your life. May *The Scar* remind you to better appreciate both categories of loved ones. May it do the same for us all.

Deb Tyo says

This one came out of nowhere and hit hard.

I grabbed this book off the 'New Picture Books' shelf at the local library looking only at the cover thinking it was a story of a boy who fell on the playground and hurt his leg. I was not prepared for the first page of the story.

"Mom died this morning.
It wasn't really this morning.
Dad said she died during the night,
but I was sleeping during the night.
For me, she died this morning."

Whoa. I think there was an audible gasp as I sat unmoving for several seconds looking at the page and rereading the words.

This is a raw, powerful, moving, and honest story. A book with great potential for bibliotherapy, *The Scar* is not a picture book for very young children without parental or adult support.

I would pair this picture book with the middle grade novel *Milo: Sticky Notes and Brain Freeze* by Alan Silberberg.

Mathew says

I've now read a fair few books about bereavement and this one stands right in between *Missing Mummy* and *Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?: Explaining (sudden) death in words very young children can understand in terms of dealing with the issue of parental loss from the child's perspective*. All are very honest books which show children that feeling angry, betrayed, confused and misunderstood are all viable and important emotions to express; the power of Elke's book is that it is a true incident and that the words come from the boy himself. Cobb's text is lovely and deals with the issue with extreme sensitivity yet Moundlic's language and first person narrative are aimed at a slightly older audience and in this, I found that it does well in challenging and supporting the reader perhaps more openly.

The story is that of a young boy whose mother had died in her sleep. The language is so carefully considered that it could almost stand alone (the book has a lot of text) and I found it touching that through the first person narrative, there is a sense of desperate need for control and ownership over understanding the emotion that the young boy is struggling with. This, I felt, was missing from the other two (due to the age of the child in the text).

Both image and text show the boy as angry, confused, betrayed and almost willfully ignorant. His confusion of her father's terminology over how to approach the death of his wife with his son is interesting and brings up a powerful opportunity for the reader to share their own confusion over how others refer to such an intimate loss. What I also thought worked well was the boy's anger with everyone around him. Allowing the child to be seen carrying these emotions could act as a release for those who may have felt shame or confusion in suffering similar emotions.

What I also found myself touched by was the boy's incapability to either understand or confront the emotions that he is feeling. It's important that the reader knows that we don't always have answers to questions that are inside us and, more importantly, it is okay to not understand why we feel the way we do sometimes. What's important is that we acknowledge these feelings and, if possible, share them with someone else or let someone else see.

It took multiple readings for me to like the book as much as I do now and I wonder if this was to do with trying to understand the emotions that the boy is going through. Because he does not have the language or mind to work these out it meant that the reader (in this case who has not suffered a similar loss) could not empathise as much as I had wanted to.

The Scar is a beautiful book and there is a strong relationship between image and text which I could talk on further.

Angie says

The first sentence of this book is "Mom died this morning." This book is so warm, so touching, so real without giving dippy rationalizations like "Mom's in heaven" or things about life cycles. It has depth as it explores not only the boy's feelings, but his dad's and his grandmother's. It explores a range of emotions and acting out and irrational fears (don't open the windows--mom's gonna disappear for good). I think this is a great little book.

The only problem with it is the title and the cover. I thought this was going to be a story about a boy who cuts his knee. It was a startling shocker to read the first page. Pity the poor kid or parent who checks this out at the library and doesn't really look at it until they sit down to read it. They'll get a great book, but might have to deal with emotions and a story for which the timing isn't right.

Stephen says

I had a strong, tearful reaction to this book. Not typical for me, and certainly not for a children's book. I do work in a hospital, and work with children of gravely ill parents. Many books exist for children to help them face grief, but are often written with a "helper" voice. This book is not like that. The young boy narrates this story, and I was struck by the quality of tone and style. Thet includes the artwork. A great stand-alone book for children and adults, regardless if the reader is facing grief or not.

Randie D. Camp, M.S. says

A young boy is faced with several different emotions and challenges when his mom dies. The boy feels angry at his mom, burdened with caring for his father, scared his brother's scent is leaving him, worried that his eyes remind his dad of his mom, and is full of grief. When he acquires a scab from falling outside he briefly hears his mother's voice but with the help of his grandma he learns that his mother will always be in his heart.

This book is immensely emotional but captures a large range of emotions from the perspective of a hurting child. Children who have lost a mother should be able to identify with one or more of the feelings the boy experiences.

The illustrations are full of red and incorporate lines in a manner that demonstrates the anger, hurt, and sadness of the boy and those around him.

Kimberly says

I picked up this book at the library without knowing what it was about. The illustrations captured me and I

thought it was going to be a cute book.

As I read the book to my kids, I realized that it was about a boy whose mother dies. My 7-year-old loved this book. He wanted me to read it over and over to him. I read it 5 times already and he wants me to buy the book. It's disturbing that he loves this book so much (because I'm not dead!), but I think what he is responding to is the emotion and humor in it.

My dad's mom died when he was 8 and he said he was angry when she died. I was surprised that those emotions were addressed in this book. This book is very well written and well illustrated.

By the fourth reading I was able to control my emotions and not cry while I read this book. The boy talks about how he's afraid he'll forget his mother and tries to keep her smell in the house. He understands that he has to take care of his dad now, teach him how he likes his breakfast, and not to say things that will make his dad cry.

I can see how kids who have lost a parent can relate to this book. It is written in the POV of the boy who understands what is going on more than the adults think he does and that it is HE who has to take care of the adults instead of the other way around.

Sophie Goulding says

Wow! This book really hits you hard. I think that even if you haven't lost someone close to you (which I haven't) you are really sympathetic and become empathetic for the child who goes to lengths such as picking off his scab so that he can still be connected to his mum.

The amount the contrast of red and white is used is very interesting. The child goes very red when sad, angry and by the end of the book turns white as he is more satisfied and less angry. There is a range of the use of frames, sometimes there is no frame, sometimes the frame leaks into the next page.

Would share with upper KS2

Kelly H. (Maybedog) says

Extremely well written. Concepts are pretty advanced for picture-book aged kids but I think they would relate to the feelings. I think this is a good book for adults to understand how kids feel upon the death of a parent.

Elizabeth says

" 'No! Don't open the windows! Mom's going to disappear for good....'

And I fall and the tears flow without stopping, and there's nothing I can do and I feel very tired."

I love the syntax of the last sentence of this quotation; all those "and"s are perfect as part of the young narrator's voice; they also effectively convey the crushing power of grief. The loss of a parent--whatever the

age of the child--can reduce one to this rather primitive level of thought. Within this simplicity, however, there is both wisdom and strength. Sometimes, there is nothing one can do, and it is all right to be very tired.

Jessica Harrison says

Read full review at [Cracking the Cover](#)

Losing a loved one is never easy, but it's even harder for a young child, who doesn't necessarily understand everything but understands more than adults think.

In "The Scar," by Charlotte Moundlic, we meet one such little boy.

"The Scar" is one of the sweetest, saddest and most beautiful picture books you may come across. Author Chalotte Moundlic captures the pure, raw emotion of loss in a way that everyone can relate to. She also moves beyond the grief with humor and grace that even a small child will recognize.

There is quite a bit of text in "The Scar," but it works. Well-edited the story is told from the boy's point of view and every emotion plays out perfectly in sync with expressive illustrations. Olivier Tallec's artwork utilizes the color red to not only show anger and frustration, but also hurt and love.

Loneliness and emotional truth play out in this tender story. Though the main character is a child, "The Scar" will speak to anyone who has experienced loss. It may also be helpful for children whose friends are going through the same experience.

Never heavy handed, "The Scar" will make you laugh and cry. It helps open barriers and sets the stage for healing.

Claudia says

I came across this book when I was browsing the children's section of my local bookstore. I picked it up merely because the cover seemed interesting, and I assumed that it was a book about a child scraping their knee, or something of the sort.

As I flipped through the pages to look at the imagery, the words, "Mum has been dead for a few days," jumped out at me. I flipped back to the first page and began to read. I felt the colour rise in my cheeks as I was transported back to my childhood, which was when my father passed away, and I felt Charlotte's words settle in my chest as if they were a memory. Written flawlessly and accurately, this book will help children (heck, it helped me - I suppose it would help teenagers and adults alike) deal with the loss of a parent, and to help them move on from the death.

Beautiful, beautiful book. This is possibly my favourite children's book.

Laura says

The Scar by Charlotte Moundlic tells the story of a young boy trying to grieve, adapt, and accept the death of his mother. Told with such straight forward, simple gestures and emotion from anger to tears, this book will make your heart ache.

“I’m trying not to forget what Mom smells like, but it’s fading, so I close all the windows so that it won’t get out.”

An important, powerful, and emotional book for any family’s book collection to spur discussion and perhaps hope and healing.

3/4/12

babyhippoface says

This may be the best picture book I have ever seen that deals with the subject of death, as viewed through the eyes of a child. Usually when the topic is tackled in a picture book it's a grandparent or a pet that's died. Our young narrator has just lost his mother, and he knows death is permanent: *I knew that she wasn't gone--she was dead and I would never see her again. They were going to put her in a box and then in the ground, where she would turn into dust. I know very well that dying means that you're never going to come back.*

He also feels the burden of caring for his father: *And I cried a little because I didn't really know how to take care of a dad who's been abandoned like this. I could tell that he'd been crying, too--he looked like a washcloth, all crumpled and wet.*

Upon learning she has died in the night, the boy yells out, *Good riddance!* because she promised she would always be with him and now she's left them. He tries desperately to not forget what his mother looks like, sounds like, smells like. He remembers his mother's comforting words whenever he would get hurt, so he scratches open a scab on his knee and imagines he can hear her soothing him again.

This is beautifully, heart-breakingly written, and anyone who has lost a parent--at any age--will identify with our little man. Elementary school counselors will absolutely want a copy of this on their office shelves.
