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Review: My Father's Words

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My Father's Words

By Patricia MacLachlan

Katherine Tegen Books an imprint of HarperCollins, c2016

DESCRIPTION:

Fiona's world changes abruptly one morning when the psychologist father she adores is killed in a car accident as he swerves to miss a child who has run into the street. Fiona's mother is in the middle of finishing a college degree and is unable to give the emotional support that Fiona and her younger brother Finn need but surprising help comes from Thomas, one of Dr. O'Brien's former patients, who asks if he can call every Monday evening and talk to her about her father for just two minutes. It is through Thomas that her father's wisdom continues to give the family guidance. It is also Thomas who suggests Finn find an outlet for his grief by reaching out to help someone else and it is Luke, their next-door neighbor, who takes them to volunteer at the local animal shelter. There, Finn is assigned to Emily, a dog whose owner has passed away. As Finn reads his favorite stories to the dog and sings a song his father used to sing, called *Dona Nobis Pacem*, she begins to respond. It is this song that provides the key to Emily's future and Finn's healing.

CRITIQUE:

Once again Patricia MacLachlan provides a touching story full of wisdom and grace. Dealing with the subject of death, she does so in a way that children can understand and not be overwhelmed. Showing the power of words, she uses the sayings of Fiona's father to carry beyond his death and provide healing for his family, giving them all the ability to move forward. This is an uplifting story that can be appreciated by children and adults alike. The vocabulary is simple, but the emotional impact runs deep. Recommended for all readers.

RELATED SUBJECTS:

Brothers and sisters, Death of Parent, Dogs, Family love, Friendship, Loss, Music, Neighbors, Parent-child relationships

CHARACTER THEMES:

Caring, Coping, Inspiration, Kindness, Sharing, Wisdom

AWARDS:

Best Children's Books of the Year (Bank Street)