



On His Own Terms: A Doctor, His Father, and the Myth of the Good Death

Joseph Sacco

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People die the way they live, showing the same weaknesses and strengths in illness as they did in health. This is what Joseph Sacco learned when his ailing father died from lung cancer in 1988. A recent Resident in a Bronx hospital, Dr. Sacco was well-versed in the technical aspects of death, but had never personally confronted it. He was, at first, frustrated by his father's refusal to accept lung cancer and impending death. Finally, Dr. Sacco confronted his own sincerity, both as caretaker of his father, and as a doctor. His insight came too late to help his father, but he asks readers to question the popular conception that acceptance is necessary for a good death. The final lesson of the book is that caretakers are responsible for encouraging the dying in their own path, rather than to impose any preconceptions.

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