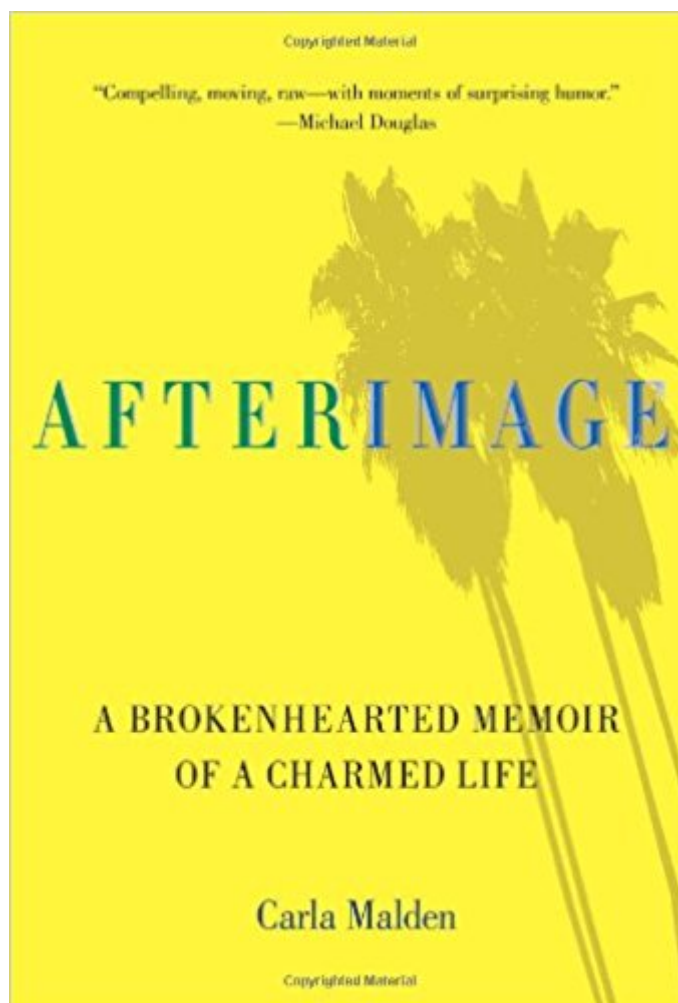


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# AfterImage: A Brokenhearted Memoir Of A Charmed Life



## Synopsis

In this fiercely personal account of her battling the before, and surviving the after, of losing her husband to cancer, Carla Malden takes us on a journey through grief to gratitude that alerts the entire forever-young generation: this is not your mother's widowhood. *AfterImage* is a story of love more than loss, memory more than sorrow, life more than death.

## Book Information

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Love & Loss

## Customer Reviews

"I've spent my professional life telling stories. *AFTERIMAGE* does exactly that and touches us where we live. It is compelling, moving, raw -- with moments of surprising humor. I try to leave my audiences with meaningful and enduring images from my movies. That's exactly what Carla Malden achieves with her newest book.

• Michael Douglas "Carla Malden traces the awful journey of her young husband's illness and death with such precision and care, expressing the emotion between the exhilaration of hope and the darkness of reality so powerfully, that her eloquence turns grief into poetry and enlightenment.

• Blythe Danner "Carla Malden's memoir about her husband and screenwriting partner Laurence Starkman is a haunting story of love and loss, and a demonstration of the courage required to put a broken life together again.

• Susan Cooper, author of *The Dark is Rising* "All I can say is WOW!!! I read for a living which means I consume over 50 books a year just to prep for my show. Never has one made me cry until I read this manuscript. Although this is a book that will tug at your heart, it is like the tug on a fishing line when

you know you've got a big one. I can't wait to share it with others. I'd be honored to have author Carla Malden as a guest on my show. This is more than a book, it's a blessing for anyone who reads it.

Barry Kibrick, Producer and Host: *Between the Lines* Emotionally raw from start to finish, the story . . . also celebrates a rare and profound love that transcended death. A brutally candid memoir of the all-consuming and profoundly uncomplicated power of grief.

Kirkus Reviews A searing account of how the author coped with her husband's year-long struggle with colon cancer and his untimely death. Screenwriter Malden's daughter of actor Karl Malden, with whom she wrote the memoir *When Do I Start?* (1997) had been together with screenwriter Laurence Starkman from the time they were high-school students in the late 1960s. Certainly by Hollywood standards, their partnership had proven to be remarkable, and not just for its longevity, but for their deep connection. "We got each other in a way that we knew no one else ever would or could. Soul mates, they call it. So when Starkman was diagnosed with colon cancer in 2006, Malden was devastated. The good some would say "charmed" life she had been leading with her beloved "best friend" had now turned permanently upside down. Without mincing words, the author chronicles her harsh awakening into the very human world of suffering. The day of Starkman's diagnosis, she unwillingly entered a "foreign land" in which "I [did] not speak the language." Literacy was forced upon her through radical immersion in her husband's unexpected health crisis. Bewildered, angry and frightened, she struggled to adjust to the demands of his metastasizing cancer, which included endless rounds of hospital visits, blood tests and chemotherapy and a fruitless search for balance and normalcy. Malden's experiences with illness and the eventual bereavement it brought offered no glimpses into higher spiritual truths or God. For her, a universe in which cancer could strike down her vibrant husband was "random|capricious and nihilistic." Emotionally raw from start to finish, the story makes for admittedly difficult reading. What saves it from sinking into pure melodrama are its fleeting moments of humor and the fact that it also celebrates a rare and profound love that transcended death. A brutally candid memoir of the "all-consuming and profoundly uncomplicated" power of grief.---Kirkus Reviews

"Mrs. Starkman," said the doctor, "sit down. Ten months, three weeks later, my husband was dead. I will say it right now, from the start, that the most I will be able to offer is this: For some inexplicable reason at once miraculous and diabolical the

heart keeps beating even when it is irreparably broken. The eye experiences an afterimage when a bright light is extinguished. But there are also afterimages of the heart, afterimages that remain imprinted well beyond the time a beloved has died. Carla and Laurence were high school sweethearts who married, worked as screenwriting partners, and delighted in their daughter. In this beautifully told, fiercely personal account, Carla Malden traces her journey, sharing how her world shifted with her husband's cancer diagnosis and treatment, then crumbled with his death. How, in learning to fold his absence into her life, she has carried on. An exploration of grief too soon, this book is, at its core, a love story, as all real stories of loss must be.

"Afterimage" is a love story on steroids as told by screenwriter Carla Malden. She writes about her husband Laurence's 11-month struggle with colon cancer and his untimely death at age 55. Carla also chronicles her grief during her first year as a young, baby-boomer widow. The book covers a lot of territory and almost reads like a novel. I couldn't put it down even though it's in hardcover.

(Where's the e-book?). I lost my own soulmate, Jeri, to ovarian cancer in 2009. She died at age 56. So I can relate to the cancer-fighting part, and I can certainly relate to the grief that follows. Mostly, I can relate to the love story that accompanies "death do us part." This is not a self-help book but it helped me tremendously. Why? Because Carla shared with us something very personal. Her raw account helped me reflect on my own experience with cancer, death, and the subsequent grief. The book helped me fill in some of the missing pieces in this endlessly-complex puzzle. Thank you, Carla. The disease-fighting chapters provide a vivid description of the emotional roller coaster that accompanies late-stage cancer. Carla knows her medical terms and colon cancer treatments. She describes Laurence's surgery and how he dealt with his colostomy. She describes the chemotherapy, the catheter port, and the neuropathy. She hits it on the nail when she writes: "Chemo nurses are a special brand of angels." I can relate with her when she writes: "I am not a caregiver...I am his wife.... I wanted to get back to Laurence's hospital room, in the way that you can think of nothing but returning home to your baby when you leave her with a sitter for the first time...." Carla describes Laurence's agonizing pain at the end. There's no whitewashing. Here's an example: "Sometimes Laurence lay in bed, legs bent, and shook. He did not tremble; he shook. Because his body could do nothing else against the pain.... Pain management remained the issue of the day--every day, every hour, every minute." For Carla, the pain created a major dilemma: "All he wanted was to be out of pain. All I wanted was to have him defogged, to have him back." She describes how Laurence felt trapped in his body: "It was too scary: the sight of my husband caved into a chair, eyes closed, desperate to be somewhere else--somewhere other than his own body."

Here's more: "The only place without pain was so far away, too far away. He couldn't go there and still be here." Finally, Carla understands that the fight is over: "I had been desperately clinging to the illusion that he and I were still living in the same universe. But at this moment, I knew that this was no longer the case. The agonies inflicted on him by his body dictated his world now. He could only interpret events in terms of how they would impact his own private hell." Carla felt guilty that she had not agreed to stop the fight sooner: "I am so sorry I trapped him there.... I did not allow myself to understand how horrific the pain was.... How could so much medicine have done so little?" From behind his morphine drip Laurence breathed: "It's okay." He died shortly after. The grieving part covers the last third of the book, and it's just as powerful. Carla writes: "The yearning is a bitch. A longing that does not subside...." She discovers that the love relationship continues after death: "I find myself in an ongoing relationship with a dead man. Rationally, I suppose I don't want to go through the rest of my life married to a dead man, but the alternative happens to be worse, as it turns out, I more fiercely do not want to go through the rest of my life having let him go.... We are still dancing, Laurence and I. Together." Carla builds on her memories: "Memories are what I subsist on.... There could not be too many memories." She does not believe there is an end to grief: "Time heals nothing.... The pain does not diminish. The pain does not change." Her remedy: "Somehow you are still alive. So what you learn is that you can live in this much pain.... Time allows you to accumulate numbers of days lived in pain, one after the other--days that you would believe would have killed you, but have not." To net it out, "Afterimage" is a powerful memoir, an amazing love story, and a masterpiece within its genre. It's about how we live, die, and grieve in the age of cancer and high-tech medicine. Carla is a courageous, avant-guard writer who tackles death and dying in all its modern rawness. It's a must read for all lovers, especially baby boomers who are now entering the end-of-life queue. Of course, no one reads that kind of stuff. Why? Because we don't believe we're ever going to die. Death is something that happens to others. As a result, these masterpieces, sadly, go unread. Robert Orfali, Author of Grieving a Soulmate: The Love Story Behind "Till Death Do Us Part"

Dying, even more than death, makes us uncomfortable, and it's the reason I dreaded reading this book even though I had heard such wonderful things about it. But from the very first page - make that the very first paragraph - Carla Malden writes with such love and courage that you feel as if she's holding your hand as she tells you the unvarnished truth of her story. As I read it, I found myself looking at my wife and children a little more carefully and wondering how I would cope in similar circumstances. I only hope that I would display as much dignity, affection - and yes, even

humor - as the writer does in this beautifully written memoir.

An amazing book. As a male, I was concerned that this might be a "chick book". It's hard to believe that reading a story about someone gradually losing their battle to cancer could be an engaging book, but this is. The author has a gift for expressing her experience and laying bare her life and emotions. I almost felt embarrassed to be allowed so deeply into someone's personal life. I think it's that rare shared intimacy that makes this book so appealing to read. It's a great book about a wonderful relationship with a tragic ending. Somehow at the end I even felt uplifted. I recommend this book to anyone who appreciates a great storyteller telling a great story..

It was an honest and insightful read. I can't say I enjoyed it, it was too sad to say that. But I appreciated the author's style and high quality writing.

Wonderful words of love, pain and grief. The path of the living spouse who supports the dying spouse. Profound. Lovely.

In very simple terms, the author successfully expressed complex feelings and emotions she experienced during her husband's fight against cancer. The book was very well done.

I heard about this on NPR while attending my brother's funeral and ordered for Kindle to read on the flight home.

Very real writing and Carla Malden knows this path. Nothing superficial, she shows the process of loss and goes clear to the bone.pb

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