

THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Mallory Smith knew she was dying from a young age—you can prolong life to some degree after a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis, but it is a progressive and fatal illness. This collection of her detailed diary entries describes the beautiful moments in her life (love, vacations, finishing high school, and going to college,) as well as the medications, hospitalizations, failing health, and uncertain wait to see if she could be cleared for a lung transplant. Given that Mallory kept her writings password protected until after her death, her mother ultimately curated the entries from over 2,500 pages, following her daughter's wish that she share anything that could be helpful to others. It is a thoughtful selection that captures a key struggle Mallory grappled with: prolong her life by being cautious, following treatments exactly, and avoiding any choices that would put her out of reach of her medical team, or risk the pursuit of her own happiness to make her short years more profound and worth the accompanying struggles. Photos deepen the potential connection between the reader and Mallory's narration, highlighting her fierce desire to live and find joy even as the pictures progressively feature more hospital scenes and medical equipment. Most entries are written by Mallory herself although some of the later ones are written by her loved ones, faithfully describing her last days. End matter includes an afterword from her boyfriend, an update on new treatment options for cystic fibrosis patients that have emerged since Mallory's death, and a brief final piece from Mallory reflecting on how she hopes to be remembered. AS