

Review

Emmi Smid, *Luna's Red Hat*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015, 34 pp. (Hbk). ISBN: 978-1-84905-6-298, £11.99.

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This is a short story book suitable for children aged 6+ that reveals the moving story of a little girl, Luna, who lost her Mum to suicide the previous year. Each page is beautifully illustrated and has clear short sentences that introduce the reader to the emotions and feelings of Luna. The book gives voice to her anguish, sadness and fear whilst recognizing the importance of both acknowledging her suffering and offering support and reassurance. The story ends with Luna and her Dad remembering happy moments with Mum, and enjoying a picnic together, looking forward with hope.

Author Emmi Smid is an illustrator who specializes in creating picture books to introduce young children to difficult topics. Her story and illustrations have been complemented by a final chapter written by Dr Riet Fiddelaers-Jaspers, a bereavement specialist in The Netherlands.

This book is intended for children with basic reading skills who have lost a parent to suicide, and adults who are supporting the child through that experience.

I was curious to read this book and hopeful that it would go some way to filling the gap in literature for young children on this difficult and emotive subject. I was not disappointed. Although the subject matter is a difficult one to broach, the story is carefully crafted. It is effective in its simplicity as the story unfolds gently, offering insight into Luna's grief and Dad's support. The theme is sensitively handled as Luna is helped through her heartbreak and loss.

The book looks at loss and coming to terms with that loss from the child's perspective, although Dad's sadness is touched upon. It focuses on those left behind rather than issues of faith and is therefore suitable for a wide range of specialists. The final pages offer guidance for parents with paragraphs on how children understand death, how to inform your child and questions

from children. Although this section appears brief, it offers basic information and an internet link for more detailed material.

I would highly recommend this book to healthcare chaplains, families with children who have lost a parent to suicide and professionals caring for those families.