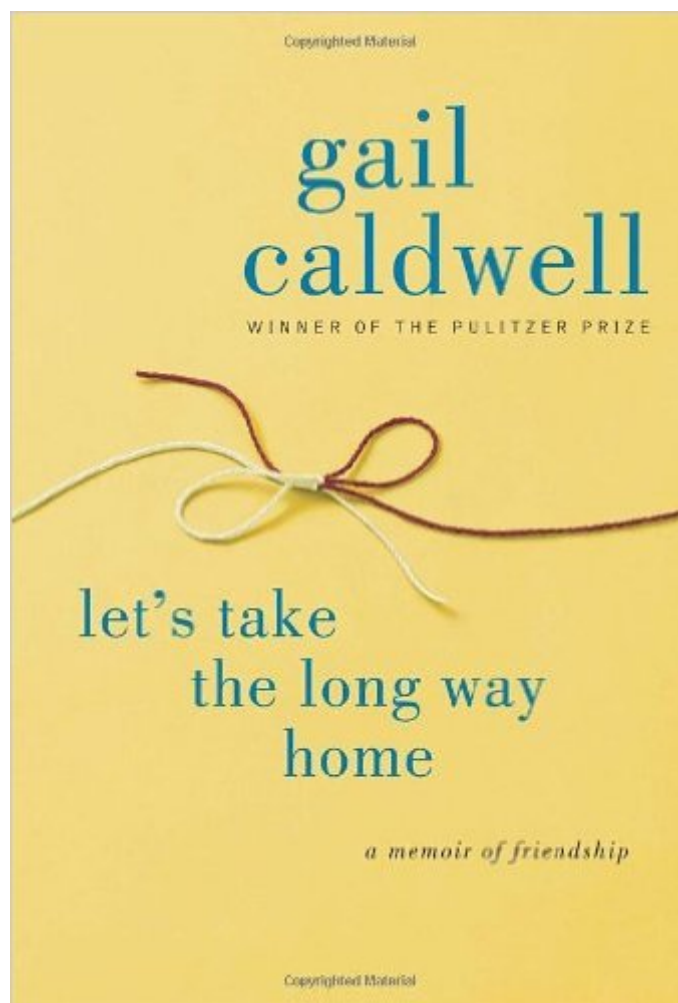


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Let's Take The Long Way Home: A Memoir Of Friendship



Synopsis

It's an old, old story: I had a friend and we shared everything, and then she died and so we shared that, too. So begins this gorgeous memoir by Pulitzer Prize winner Gail Caldwell, a testament to the power of friendship, a story of how an extraordinary bond between two women can illuminate the loneliest, funniest, hardest moments in life, including the final and ultimate challenge. They met over their dogs. Both writers, Gail Caldwell and Caroline Knapp, author of *Drinking: A Love Story*, became best friends, talking about everything from their shared history of a struggle with alcohol, to their relationships with men and colleagues, to their love of books. They walked the woods of New England and rowed on the Charles River, and the miles they logged on land and water became a measure of the interior ground they covered. From disparate backgrounds but with striking emotional similarities, these two private, fiercely self-reliant women created an attachment more profound than either of them could ever have foreseen. The friendship helped them define the ordinary moments of life as the ones worth cherishing. Then, several years into this remarkable connection, Knapp was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. With her signature exquisite prose, Caldwell mines the deepest levels of devotion and grief in this moving memoir about treasuring and losing a best friend. *Let's Take the Long Way Home* is a celebration of life and of the transformations that come from intimate connection—and it affirms, once again, why Gail Caldwell is recognized as one of our bravest and most honest literary voices.

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Customer Reviews

Gail Caldwell's memoir is a touching account of friendship that is brief but all encompassing.

Although she and Caroline Knapp are only friends for seven years before Caroline is felled by lung cancer, the two built a relationship that is deeper than what's enjoyed by many blood relatives. Their lives contained many similarities. Both women are childless, single writers and former alcoholics who initially bond over their dogs, but their relationship deepens to the point where Gail says it was easy to mistake them for sisters or lovers. Both women are loners which makes it seem kind of unlikely that they would form this lasting friendship, but their relationship works because they respect each other's boundaries and both believed in confronting problems head-on instead of stewing in silence. Gail's account of her years as a functional alcoholic are stark and poignant. In one particularly bad moment, she passes out in a drunken stupor and breaks four ribs. This doesn't stop her from drinking and she fashions a portable bar by attaching a bag of ice and a flask of liquor to her crutches. It takes her a long time to accept that she was in fact an alcoholic and needed help to stop drinking. And unlike Caroline who'd written a book about her drinking problem, Gail never really liked to discuss this part of her life and they had been friends for a while before she ever broached the subject. But despite all their other similarities, it is their devotion to their dogs that dominates most of the story. These women love their animals and spent lots of time and money training and caring for them.

If you have tears, prepare to shed them. Caroline Knapp was the author of *Drinking: A Love Story*. I've written about it on [...] because some of you surely have issues with alcohol, and I thought it might be of use. And because it's acutely observed and beautifully written. And because there's a painful irony here: Caroline got sober, only to die in June of 2002, when she was forty-two, seven weeks after she was diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer. Caroline Knapp had a best friend. Gail Caldwell. Also a writer. She won the Pulitzer Prize for Criticism in 2001. She too had alcohol issues. Two women writers. Both dog lovers. Both recovering alcoholics. Both living alone, and liking it. Both athletes. Near-neighbors in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Friends. Best friends. One died. The other wrote a book: *"Let's Take the Long Way Home: A Memoir of Friendship."* [To buy the book from , click here. For the Kindle edition, click here.] There are men and women I love, and I think they know it, and I hope they know how incredibly lucky I feel that I'm in their lives, but we're talking about something else here, something deeper and more precious and, certainly, scarier. "It's an old story," Caldwell begins. "I had a friend and we shared everything, and then she died and so we shared that." Define everything. Well, rowing on the Charles River. Writing. Alcoholism. And, most of all, afternoon-long walk with their dogs: "Let's take the long way home," she would say once we had gotten to the car, and then we would wend our way through the day traffic of Somerville or Medford,

in no hurry to separate.

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