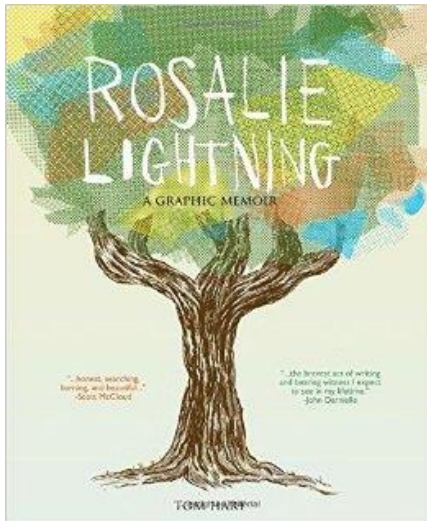


SPOTLIGHT



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Rosalie Lightning: A Graphic Memoir by Tom Hart

It's not often I shy away from a book because of the threat of an emotional wallop. But, after picking up Tom Hart's *Rosalie Lightning* and reading the summary, I wasn't sure I could handle it. It tells the true story of the unexpected death of Hart's daughter and the emotional impact it left on Hart and his wife.

The art in *Rosalie Lightning* is not beautiful. At times it even looks rushed. But it always feels purposeful. In the happier flashbacks, Hart and his wife have whole (be they still simple ovals) eyes, while in the grief stricken panels, those eyes are mere scratches, hard to focus on. It makes sense: the most rushed looking panels take on an air of cathartic release.

A theme, and not a surprising one considering that Hart teaches sequential art, is the importance of signs and symbols. In the wake of Rosalie's death, Hart and his wife are always betrayed by signs, glancing back almost hopelessly to consider signs they might have missed. But eventually signs start to help them heal.

In the nightstand beside my bed is a stack of photos. My wife, who religiously updates our family photo albums, threw in a bunch of extras for which she didn't have immediate use. It's my sleepy, go-to well of bookmarks. When I was done with *Rosalie Lightning*, my bookmark fell out and only then did I realize that I'd been using a photo of my own daughter. A sign not to take things for granted.

Review by John Mutford, Public Services Librarian