**Book Recommendation**

Carmen’s Legacy by John Maher

*Carmen’s Legacy* by her father, John Maher, is a deeply affecting book. It maps two major events that occurred in John’s life: the first was his own car crash in which, through no fault of his own, an 18-year-old woman lost her life. The second, the tragic death of his own daughter Carmen, 30 months later, who fell asleep at the wheel, hit a tree and lost her life instantly.

John’s life altered irrevocably after his own accident when he was 42 years of age. His slow recovery from catastrophic injuries – including an acquired brain injury – meant he lost his career and became severely depressed.

The second event, which took Carmen’s life, shattered his spirit again – and that of his wife and three other daughters – and might have robbed him completely of his will to live. Ironically, it ultimately – despite utmost grief and personal suffering – led to his purpose in life, as he captures in these beautiful words:

*“Carmen taught me that we all have a choice. You may allow yourself to be engulfed by sadness, hurt, anger or the many negative responses available. Or you can choose to respond positively with power and determination, and that will change you as a person because you will remember and cherish the good times. You may even choose to celebrate the event by turning it into a positive as I have.”*

John’s decision to “turn it into a positive”is the basis of the work he has done over the years since Carmen’s death in 1995. He has since presented his story to over 450,000 students in order to ‘wake them up’ to the peril of driving while fatigued. Armed with the knowledge that 28% of all road deaths are due to fatigue, he uses the personal details of his family’s tragedy to connect with young people and show them the ripple effects upon families and communities of the tragic loss of a loved member.

The book, *Carmen’s Legacy*, is indeed a *journey of love and hope.* The tragedy is deeply portrayed in the poignant prose elegy from John, with chapters also contributed by his three daughters. The hope is keenly felt in the effect this story of Carmen has had, and continues to have, in changing the behaviour of young drivers.

At **my manifesto** we are in admiration of John’s courage in telling Carmen’s story and his belief that he has actually grown because of the tragedy. He is able to take solace in the fact that in doing this awareness-raising work, he feels closest to Carmen, that she “works through [him] and because of Carmen [he] is a better person”.

This book chronicles authentically and movingly the axiom that “Grief is the price we pay for love.” John and family have paid the price, over and over, but they have also ensured Carmen has not died in vain, even if it is only one life that is saved because of it.

I offer these words of wisdom from the Persian poet Rumi to John, who surely knows their truth:

*Don’t get lost in*

*your pain,*

*know that one day*

*your pain will become*

*your cure.*