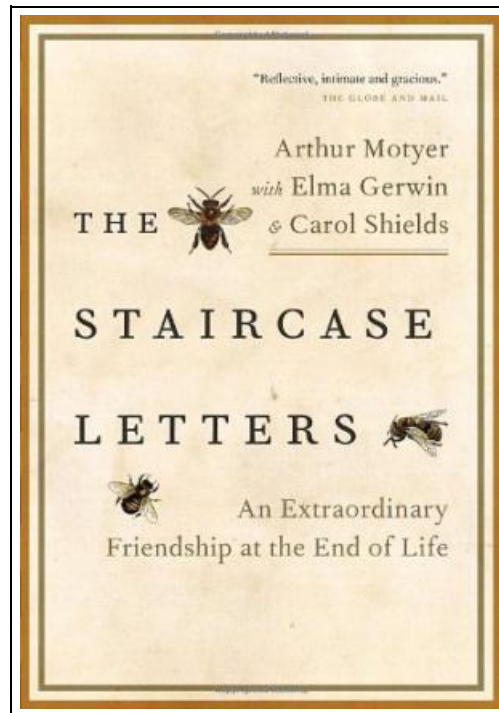


## The Staircase Letters: An Extraordinary Friendship at the End of Life



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## THE STAIRCASE LETTERS: AN EXTRAORDINARY FRIENDSHIP AT THE END OF LIFE



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Random House USA Inc, India, 2008. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 180 x 127 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. Full of the magic of everyday life in the shadow of death chickens must be cooked for dinner parties, and grandsons questions about God must be answered! The Staircase Letters is a moving and profound story of friendship and facing the end of life. When Elma Gerwin found out in 2001 at the age of 61 that she had cancer, she reached out to two coasts and to two old friends. One was Arthur Motyer, novelist and teacher, and Elma's university professor from forty years before, and the other was acclaimed novelist Carol Shields, who was facing her own battle with cancer. Years later, Arthur is the only survivor. Still contemplating how Elma's and Carol's correspondence affected him, he has gracefully brought the letters together and interspersed them with literary references and poetry. As both women's illnesses progress, they compare notes on the ups and downs of living with cancer: the joy when Elma is told one area is cancer-free, followed quickly by the terrible news that the cancer has spread; the delight in having family near, while the thought of saying goodbye seems impossible. The advice they give each other: from how to approach treatments to how to get to sleep at night is heartfelt, warm and often leavened with humour. As Carol and Elma contemplate what happiness is and how one makes a "good death," 74-year-old Arthur, feeling inadequate in the face of such fundamental questions, discovers that he is exactly where he should be. In *The Staircase Letters*, the reader catches a rare and touching glimpse of the lives of three extraordinary people: two facing death and one left behind. From the Hardcover edition.



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