Carol Anne Milton takes us on an emotionally charged journey as she recounts her son Alan’s suicide. As she chronicles the events from the time she learned that her son had taken his life, through the aftermath of despair and grief, and ultimately her resolution to help others, her words pierce your chest and echo the tragedy of her loss in the chambers of your heart.

*The Coldest Night* offers a unique approach to the survivor experience as Milton called upon her family and Alan’s girlfriend to revisit their immediate feelings after learning of Alan’s death. The insight offered through their personal reflection mirrors the pain and confusion of many families as they struggle to redefine their lives. The stories affirm the anguish felt at the loss of a brother, cousin and boyfriend. This broad perspective is offered to help the reader, especially if an attempter, understand how it feels to lose a loved one to suicide.

Intentionally written to turn the most painful episode of her life into a teaching opportunity, the book imparts wisdom gained from experience and supplemented with knowledge gleaned from research. However, some of her data is much more conjecture and personal opinion than fact. *The Coldest Night* is an attempt to reach parents, educators, pastors and anybody (young people in particular) who think that life is not worth living. Spirituality and connectedness to God are highly touted throughout the book, with Milton stressing her belief that through a relationship with God comes strength, a powerful protective factor against depression and suicide ideation.

Milton illuminates two cogent and poignant thoughts: 1) there is no timeframe for grief that we must follow, and 2) the mind can only take in so much at a time. Working in the aftermath with survivors, we find that each family will experience the death of a loved one in their own way, in their own time, with their own issues. There is no model or script that applies to suicide survivors. Grief is an individual process varying from person to person, family to family. Although it can be shared, it must be processed individually and each person must be given permission to grieve however, and at whatever, pace they need. It is a highly individualistic process for finding meaning from the loss and a way of learning to live in a new world - a world without their loved one. Grief should not, and does not, follow a check list or stages. The mind and heart can only take so much. Grief will flow in and out like the tides. The grief will come upon you, flow in like the tide, but when the mind has taken in enough and reached its limit, it will not allow anymore in.

Milton’s ability to analyze searing emotional distress and pervasive feelings of guilt allows the reader to experience the effects of coming to terms with the “why” of suicide. Although not a large volume (just 127 pages) it contains a vast amount of information on the topic. The book is published, written, and based on experiences in Ireland and as such, there is some cultural specificity that is enlightening but, at times quite notable. It is an incredible exploration of the myths and misconceptions pertaining to suicide. Written to console and inform, the pages contain a pervasive message of hope and strength. I think Milton has hit the mark with this piece.