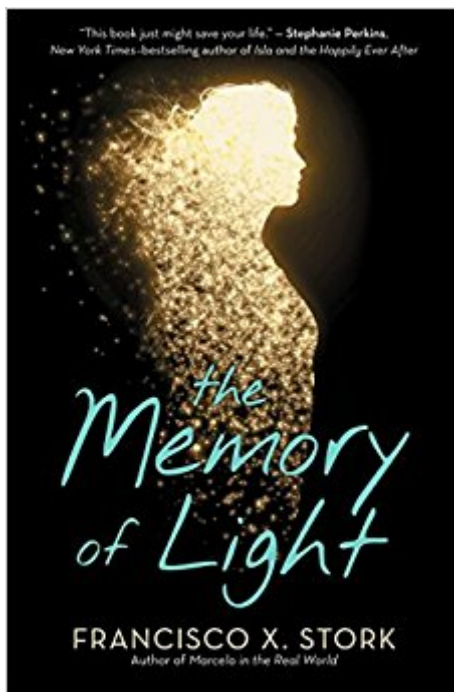


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# The Memory Of Light



## Synopsis

When Vicky Cruz wakes up in the Lakeview Hospital Mental Disorders ward, she knows one thing: After her suicide attempt, she shouldn't be alive. But then she meets Mona, the live wire; Gabriel, the saint; E.M., always angry; and Dr. Desai, a quiet force. With stories and honesty, kindness and hard work, they push her to reconsider her life before Lakeview, and offer her an acceptance she's never had. But Vicky's newfound peace is as fragile as the roses that grow around the hospital. And when a crisis forces the group to split up, sending Vicky back to the life that drove her to suicide, she must try to find her own courage and strength. She may not have them. She doesn't know. Inspired in part by the author's own experience with depression, *The Memory of Light* is the rare young adult novel that focuses not on the events leading up to a suicide attempt, but the recovery from one -- about living when life doesn't seem worth it, and how we go on anyway.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—After attempting to commit suicide in her bedroom, Vicky Cruz wakes up in the psychiatric wing of the hospital. Exhausted and nearly catatonic, Vicky goes through the motions asked of her by the quiet but firm Dr. Desai while intending to stay only the mandatory time before going home to try again. After attending group therapy with the other three young people on the ward—her energetic roommate Mona, intimidating E.M., and angelic Gabriel, however, Vicky

accepts Dr. Desai's help in convincing her domineering father to let her stay. As Vicky begins intensive treatment, things start to look up, but the looming question of whether she and her friends can survive in the outside world remains. Stork's latest starts slow, with a cold, dry tone that mirrors Vicky's own emotional depletion. As the new environment and people begin to reach Vicky, however, the prose follows suit, growing smoothly into a warm and powerful tone. Unlike many novels about teens and suicide, this work focuses entirely on recovery. Vicky is dealing with a deep depression born from her mother's death and learns not only to name her illness but to cope with the effects and stand up for her needs. Stork's depiction of depression deftly avoids the traps of preaching or romanticizing and instead is accurate, heartbreaking, and hopeful. VERDICT A beautiful read that adds essential depth to the discussion of teens and mental illness. —Amy Diegelman, Vineyard Haven Public Library, MA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Praise for *The Memory of Light*: "Stork further marks himself as a major voice in teen literature by delivering one of his richest and most emotionally charged novels yet." -- Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Stork writes sensitively about Vicky's journey from near death to shaky recovery... A subject that needs the discussion Stork's potent novel can readily provide." -- Publishers Weekly, starred review "Accurate, heartbreaking, and hopeful... A beautiful read." -- School Library Journal, starred review "Undeniable emotional strength and an encouraging, compassionate message. Stork writes his characters with authenticity and respect... Highly rewarding." -- Booklist, starred review Praise for *Marcelo in the Real World*: "[A] brisk, brilliant, unsentimental novel." -- Robert Lipsyte, New York Times Book Review "Stork introduces ethical dilemmas, the possibility of love, and other 'real world' conflicts, all the while preserving the integrity of his characterizations and intensifying the novel's psychological and emotional stakes. Not to be missed." -- Publishers Weekly, starred review "It is the rare novel that reaffirms a belief in goodness; rarer still is one that does so this emphatically." -- The Horn Book Magazine, starred review Praise for *The Last Summer of the Death Warriors*: "Stork's latest marks him as one of the most promising young adult authors of the new decade." -- The Horn Book, starred review "Complicated yet ultimately endearing characters are a Francisco Stork standard. His latest novel doesn't disappoint." -- Chicago Sun-Times

4.5 stars, actually. I don't have direct experience with clinical teenage depression-- although I did watch a friend go through it in high school. Francisco Stork writes with great insight and sensitivity-- and here he takes on the touchy subject of a variety of mental illnesses with trademark sensitivity. But more than just presenting a realistic spectrum of the way bipolar, schizophrenia, and

depression may shape teens, Stork gives us a bonus spectrum: a variety of Latino characters of various economic and immigration status backgrounds. Vicky Cruz is the third generation-American, rich daughter of an ambitious businessman, and she just tried to commit suicide. She finds herself in an emergency hospital bed attended by Dr. Desai (a female psychiatrist of East Indian background) and forced into group therapy every day. Only the members of the group become a source of support and acceptance to each other, and ultimately Vicky finds reasons to live intricately bound up with her relationship to the others in the group. We meet the group, they seem fine, they go to a ranch to explore their therapy a bit more-- and things explode. I really liked how Stork presented the characters in their more "normal" phases at first and then pulls the rug out from under you by showing how their illness flaring up can really mess up their relationships and lives. Mona, the bipolar, almost dies because she stops taking medication and becomes obsessed with her sister. Gabriel, presented more or less as the normal, wise one from the beginning, descends into a particular kind of madness that it would be hard to follow him into as a caring friend. Vicky manages it. She also manages to learn to stand up to her family's expectations and deal with the loss of her mother. So I know this is a novel. I know there has to be some kind of hope woven through the story. But I kept having to suspend disbelief about the nugget of wisdom each character had, as well as the overall path towards wellness Vicky took (she didn't even have to take medication). Not that it couldn't happen this way in real life, but just that I wondered if there was some way to convey through the story the daily grind, the many moments of wrestling with illness that I saw in my high school friend in Vicky's story. Regardless, this is an important book for teens. It does a superb job of unpacking stereotypes about mental illness and latino culture.

I love Francisco Stork books and this fictional book about depression, suicide attempts, recovery and friendship was so moving. I also read this book as part of our May twitter chat we will have on YA/student instabilities they face 5/24 AT 8pm with #yabookchat. Vicky is a teen who has tried to commit suicide and spends time in a mental health facility where she meets and bonds with 3 other mentally ill teens- E.M., Mona and Gabriel. Vicky has a very supportive Doctor in Dr. Desai and a father, sister and step mom who do not understand why this has happened. As Vicky talks in group (gets to know her "friends"), and works in the hospital, she becomes more aware by talking and confronting her feelings that she suffers from depression. What I liked is how Stork shows Vicky and her family being totally shocked that Vicky was in fact depressed, did not understand what depression is, and how she must continue to talk and learn how depression can and will affect her and what tools she will need to keep with her to deal with this throughout her life. I liked the baby

steps Vicky took to become mentally strong and how she continued to slowly look at the light and the sun as growth in her life and pledge not to be afraid or lonely anymore. I think this book should be read by all teens, guidance counselors, teachers and parents should read and learn from this book. Stork has taken his own experiences with depression and attempting suicide and woven a stark, realistic, and moving story about overcoming and living day to day with mental illness - highly recommended.

I'm not sure where I found this book and why I bought it. It has sat for a bit now on my kindle waiting for me to read it. Yesterday, with two hours of time to kill, I started reading. And reading and reading. I'm not religious (at all) and at first I wondered if this was going to be a big problem. The characters often refer to God. It wasn't. The writing is spectacular and the characters are people I'll never forget. Bravo

A compelling read that is both powerful and empowering. I was viscerally moved and held captive by the images and feelings evoked by the honesty and clarity of the author's writing. This is a book that is not just read, but experienced fully. As a mental health counselor, I was challenged to examine many of my beliefs around suicidal ideation, and discovered buried wells of empathy within that have changed not only how I perceive my clients, but how I see myself as well. I would consider this to be required reading for anyone in helping professions. It will open your eyes and your heart to the struggle faced by a growing population of disenfranchised people who are living broken, bleeding and ignored in their search for release from their pain.

Wonderful characterization of four teens who suffer mental health issues. Privileged Vicky opens up and actually learns coping mechanisms from the others. Although they cannot always help themselves, they manage to support each other. Essential reading for any teen who suffers depression or deals with a family member or friend who does. Outreach bibliography included.

This book was purchased for my 13 yo daughter. The book keeps her engaged, however the topic is "heavy". It discusses suicide which may be too much for younger readers.

Not sure what to say. Read this book in two days. I could not stop. It was like spending hours in therapy. As I read I remembered things from my youth and as the characters learned about themselves I found myself understanding myself better. I am a bit drained but in a good way.

An amazing story about depression and the fight and struggle to understand. A sobering read that reminds day us all to feel feelings and talk and not judge

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