



Wildflower Hill

A new novel by
KIMBERLEY FREEMAN

"A gorgeous story of family and secrets and the redemptive power of love." —Kate Morton, bestselling author of *The Distant Hours* and *The Forgotten Garden*
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O, The Oprah Magazine | From the December 2003 issue of O, The Oprah Magazine



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Photo: Kellie Walsh

In a song cobbled together from old journal entries, the singer found the words she needed to heal.

I'd been told I wouldn't be able to have a baby, so in 1975, when I found out I was pregnant, I was elated. But during my pregnancy, my mother was diagnosed with bone cancer. And when my daughter, Valerie, was born, she suffered multiple birth injuries and, as a result, was severely developmentally disabled. You should have seen us—a little trio of pitiful gals. We were just hanging on by our thumbs.

I went on the road and toured to earn a living, then I'd come home and struggle to hold my family together. I was completely depressed and closed off.

Remarkably, my mother lived for another 11 years, until the cancer metastasized to her liver, and was strong enough to be a wonderful grandmother to Valerie. My daughter is my love: she's my arm, my leg, she's such a part of me. But for years, I squashed my sadness over her disabilities and my mother's failing health. I was operating on autopilot.

I finally started to deal with my trauma; one of the most significant ways I did this was to start writing. Two years ago, I went to the home of one of my cowriters, Drew Yowell, to work on what would become the title song of my new album, "Natural Wonder."

It was almost a prayer: Please let me feel this way, really. The song is a kind of expiation, a cleansing of feelings that for years I couldn't resolve in my soul. I thought that I had too many challenges, that my life was just too difficult—I thought I'd never find peace. I was afraid to show any emotion, like a guard at Buckingham Palace. Now when I see people doing that I think, Fall apart—you've got to. When I finally let myself grieve, with support from some carefully chosen people, I started to save my life. "Natural Wonder" made me begin to recognize and accept my emotions: hurt, anger, guilt, and sadness. It was the first time in decades that I was honest about those feelings. When Drew and I put the words together, I let myself fall apart—and that's when I began to put my life together.

"A gorgeous story of family and secrets and the redemptive power of love."
—KATE MORTON, bestselling author of *The Distant Hours* and *The Forgotten Garden*

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