

THE BEST
is
YET TO COME

TARA R. ALEMANY



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The Best is Yet to Come refers to actual people and events. Events, locales and conversations have been reconstructed with as much accuracy and detail as possible. In order to maintain their anonymity, in some instances the names of individuals and places have been changed.

The e-mail excerpts throughout the book are actual quotations, shared without alteration.

WestBow Press books may be ordered through booksellers or by contacting:

WestBow Press
A Division of Thomas Nelson
1663 Liberty Drive
Bloomington, IN 47403
www.westbowpress.com
1 (866) 928-1240

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ISBN: 978-1-4908-1030-0 (sc)

ISBN: 978-1-4908-1031-7 (hc)

ISBN: 978-1-4908-1029-4 (e)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013917803

Printed in the United States of America.

WestBow Press rev. date: 11/04/2013

This book is about finding hope against all odds, even in the darkest of situations. We all face pain, disappointments, heartaches and struggles in life that can sometimes lead down a seemingly hopeless path of deep devastation; yet Tara shows us there is always hope. Through brave and inspiring honesty about her own difficult personal experiences, she shows us that hope is always within our grasp if we make the choice to embrace it and that, no matter our situation, the best really can be yet to come.

Ivan Misner, Ph.D., NY Times Bestselling
Author and Founder of BNI®

When the doctors place paddles on your heart they do it to shock you back to life. Sometimes that is exactly what we need spiritually—a shock back to reality.

Grieving is healthy, wallowing in remorse and regret is hurtful—to yourself. This book will lovingly and gently shock you back towards wholeness with one simple and seldom used technique . . .

HONESTY. Tara gracefully walks you through her pain and shows you how to find the BLESS in any mess so you can graciously let go of the hurt and gratefully move toward healing.

Barry Spilchuk, author of *THE cANCER DANCE*

The Best is Yet to Come is an inspiring masterpiece. Its message will give you a whole new perspective on God's plan for your life. Tara is a remarkable writer and a gripping storyteller who will keep you enthralled to the very last page.

Arvee Robinson, The Master Speaker Trainer,
international speaker and author

Inspiring! Tara uncovers how one can trust God and self in the face of real testing. Through her story, she illustrates how we each can overcome the difficulties in our lives and come out stronger in the end.

David Horsager, best-selling author of *The Trust Edge*

Tara R. Alemany systematically communicates spiritual strength and mental discipline as she fueled and guided me from heart to head and back again. I am forever grateful to her for sharing her open-hearted journey embracing the magic and mystery of Self-Love, Love of another and God's Love.

Carol Metz Murray, transformational
change agent, speaker and business consultant

When a relationship finds its genesis in God, and is based on a three-way relationship with God in the middle, death provides a temporary interruption, but no more than that. For here is a story of the love between two people that is only waiting for its final reunion . . . and that part of this story remains on hold.

Rev. Dr. Clive Calver, Senior Pastor of
Walnut Hill Community Church, Connecticut
and former president of World Relief

Through *The Best is Yet to Come*, Tara reminds us that God often says “yes” and we take it for granted. Sometimes God says “NO” because he knows that what we are asking for is not in the best interest of those affected. It is at these times that the child in us asks “Why not?” The book flows from the life of the author with wonderful anecdotes of the joy of meeting Frank and the emotions that followed.

Dr. Michael C. Redmond, PhD,
psychoneurologist, reverend, speaker and author of
How To Be Happy and Master Your Work Life Balance

Tara shows us through her story how to avoid turning against God during trials, but to keep Him on our side—trusting that He ultimately knows what is best for us.

Haley Hatch Freeman, professional speaker and author of
A Future for Tomorrow: Surviving Anorexia,
My Spiritual Journey

The Best is Yet to Come is delightful, then heartbreaking, then inspiring, in its portrayal of the revelations a sovereign God uses to demonstrate His love, both in and for Tara and Frank.

It is the true story of how a Quirk leads to Serendipity, and that ultimately turns out to be an unexpected Grace! An overlooked “feature” in an e-mail program starts a relationship that only God could use to bring the Joy, Comfort, and Reassurance of His presence in the lives of two people who might not have found it on their own.

Yes, I will admit that halfway through the book I was shaking my head, asking “How could You do this? You’re supposed to be a loving Father!” But by the time Tara finishes telling their story, I’m drawn even closer to Him, and I think you will be too!

By all means read and share this wonderful story!

Howard J. Tuckey, author of *Mattie’s Place*



DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to anyone who has stood at a crossroads with a friend and waited patiently with them as they decided which way to turn.

Mark Gerber, you've been that person for me. Your friendship means more to me than I can say. Your steady, kind and gentle presence helped a broken heart to heal and a spirit to dream again. This year would have been much emptier without your support and encouragement. Thank you for being there for me and believing in me, even when I doubted myself.

Without you in my life, this story would have been incomplete.

*I'm a success today because I had
a friend who believed in me and I didn't
have the heart to let him down.*

~ Abe Lincoln



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Where to start? There are so many people who had a hand in bringing this book to light.

Thanks to the Word Weavers Berkshires group for your encouragement, critiquing and support as I got started on this book. Carol Barnier, you've been the voice of experience and reason for me. Your guidance and early input have been invaluable to me, as has your friendship. I'm truly grateful. And to James Early, my editor, thank you for having the courage and integrity to point out problem areas in the story. The resulting work is much better, thanks to you.

I'm grateful too for the Lead Change Group led by Mike Henry Sr. You rallied around me when I needed you most, despite the fact that we'd never met in person. You'll never know how much your support, love and care mean to me. It transcended the bonds of our virtual connection and had a deep and lasting impact on me. Special thanks to Chery Geggelman, who made it a point to reach out, stay in touch, and support, listen, pray for, encourage and remind me that I wasn't alone. Consider yourself hugged, lady!

To Larry Leech, and Linda and Len Lisak, thank you for making a stranger feel like family, and standing by me when I needed it the most.

Cyndi Nisly, you reminded me that it's more important to celebrate Life than to live in the past. Thank you for bringing the party to me when I couldn't come to the party. I think it's time for chocolate cake!

To my instructors and friends at Northern Star Karate, what can I say except thank you for giving me the extra push I needed to get back on my feet again. Tang Soo! I'm especially grateful for Al Thierfelder, who simply understood. Your words during my black belt promotion ceremony have lingered with me, Sir. Thank you for being sensitive to the deeper significance of that day for me. I couldn't have asked for a better teacher, encourager or friend.

Thanks too to Jill Thompson for reminding me every week that God could handle my anger, as well as everything else I was and wasn't feeling. Having you walk with me through this journey of faith has been one of God's greatest blessings to me.

To my sister, Rachel Dickinson, and her husband, Brian, I pray that you have many happy and healthy years together. While we each became engaged around the same time, you've been able to fulfill that promise to one another. May you continue to be kind and caring toward each other, and experience a lifetime of love together.

As for my children, Eliza and Timothy, I'm so very proud to be your mother, and I'm sorry for the pain I put you through as you watched my life (and as a result, your own) spiral out of control. I know I can't ever "make it up" to you, but know that I love you both, beyond measure. Always remember . . . I'll love you forever, and I'll like you for always.

To my father, Enoch Alemany, thank you for your love and support. It still warms me to think of the phone call when I first told you about Frank. Your first question was whether or not you'd be able to intimidate him, because that's what fathers do. Seems we'll have to wait a bit longer to find out the answer to that one, but thank you for reminding me that I'm your little girl, no matter how old I get.

Lastly, there is one who tilled the soil of my life, planting seeds that took root in God's time. You never gave up, despite my repeated rejections of what you had to offer. Thanks, Mom! You are precious

to me, Christine Freeman. I can't say where I'd be today without your example as a Christ-follower who demonstrates what faith is all about while walking the little way. I certainly would never have endured the painful experiences laid out in this story without the steadfast love of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom you introduced me.



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PROLOGUE

Have you ever experienced a situation where life as you knew it completely changed? That's the position I found myself in during the latter half of 2011. Over the course of four short months, my life went from stable, uninteresting, mundane, but secure, through the roller coaster ride of new love to the devastating effects of unexpected loss.

This is my story. It's a love story set in the Internet Age, but what love story isn't these days? More importantly, this story reflects how God still moves in the world, even when we struggle with what He is doing.

Perhaps for you the name "God" has too much religion associated with it. Please don't let that stop you from reading this book. If, for your own comfort, you want to substitute "God" with "the Universe" or "Life" or whatever else it is that you believe in, feel free to do so. The lessons shared in this book are universal. They are part of the human condition when living with loss.

I refer to the time that began with these events as my "year without walls." I'm not talking about physical walls, but the mental and emotional ones that we erect to keep ourselves safe. As you journey through this story with me, I'll share the lessons I learned and the incredible blessing that comes from truly connecting with others without the hindrance of barriers.

These lessons don't just apply to those mourning the loss of a loved one. Grief comes in many shapes and forms. You may be

mourning the loss of a job, a career, a home, a marriage, a business, a dream or any number of the other setbacks that take place in life.

Hopefully, as you read my story, you'll start to see how simple changes in perspective can help you take a devastating loss and turn it into the foundation of something new and powerful in your life. As Vivian Greene is quoted as saying, "Life's not about waiting for the storm to pass . . . It's about learning to dance in the rain!"

I look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Tara R. Alemany
Sherman, Connecticut
14 January 2013



SURPRISED BY FRANK

Within a few short days, it became difficult to tell where he left off and I began. I wasn't looking for love anymore. I thought for sure those days had passed me by. Then, I was surprised by Frank.

Our time together became a microcosm of the life we wanted to have, running at full speed.

It's hard to say where it all began, but I *can* pinpoint a specific series of events that was clear and obvious. So that's where I'll start.

There's an online group in the area where I live called "ReUseIt." The ReUseIt Network helps get material goods from people who have them, but don't want them, to people who want them, but don't have them. Simple enough . . .

I had an old broken-down push mower. It was beyond repair, but could potentially be used for parts or a student project. Before taking it to the dump, I wanted to see if anyone might want it, so I sent an e-mail to the group with the specifics about the mower.

Part of the group's guidelines dictate that you can't include links or attachments in any posts you share. This protects the membership from viruses and unsafe or unexpected content.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about the e-mail system I use . . . It's inexpensive. As such, it reserves the right to do things I don't necessarily like, but never thought twice about before. For example, when I press the Send button, it adds a little three-line, text advertisement to the bottom of my note. Invariably, one of those lines

is a link to further information, but because it's added after I send the note, I never see it.

So, when I posted my offer on July 1, 2011, I was completely surprised to see it rejected on July 2! The moderator of the group, Frank, sent me the guidelines for using the site, prefaced by a two-word reason for the rejection. *NO LINKS!*

I actually had to scroll through the note several times before I even saw it buried in with all of the other text. I couldn't figure out why I'd been sent the guidelines at all. At first, that's all I saw.

I knew there was no way my response would be as short as his direction, and he'd kindly provided his phone number in his signature. I considered writing my reply, but realized it would take significantly longer to explain that way, and it seemed like a two-minute phone conversation would easily resolve the issue. While I'm not a "phone person," I picked up the phone, dialed the number, and proceeded to introduce myself to the man on the other end of the line.

I explained the situation to him. He politely explained the rules of the group to me one more time, just in case I didn't understand them from the e-mail. Then he agreed to remove the link himself this time, but warned me not to let it happen again.

Conversation over, right? Wrong! Somehow in the few minutes we spoke, he picked up on a detail or two about me and he wanted to learn more. The questions were innocent enough, but led to more things to discuss.

What I thought would be a two-minute conversation ended up lasting an hour. So much for brevity . . . But on a Saturday afternoon, I had the time to spare and I sensed he was lonely. I thought I was just being kind by allowing the conversation to take its course. After twenty minutes or so though, I started to realize, *This guy is kind of neat. He's got a great sense of humor. He's intelligent. I like the way his mind works. We have a lot of interests in common.*

We talked about movies, his dogs (Falcore and Bear), my cat, places we'd been, careers we'd had, and so many other things. I told him about being a martial artist and pursuing my black belt in the coming spring.

He was trying to remember an actor's name, but couldn't. So, he finished stating that he was sure he'd remember it at 3:30 in the morning, and he'd let me know. I joked that he really didn't need to, as I expected I'd be sleeping then.

The next morning, I awoke to an e-mail from him. The subject line of the e-mail was "Promised 0330 announcement," and it started "Hey Grasshopper" (a nod to the nickname David Carradine's teacher gave his character in the 1970s television show Kung Fu).

The note provided the promised missing name, touched on some of the things we'd talked about the day before, and ended with:

I really enjoyed talking with you today—you made my day,,,,,Falcore is indifferent to the cat, but Bear wants to know more. Does she cuddle? Cook? Date older men (he's 3 ½).

Falcore is female, and Bear is male, as is my cat, Brody. In my response to his inquiries, I ended with:

Bear may be disappointed to learn that the cat is older than he is, and is a boy. Brody is about 4.5 years old now, and is a sweetheart. Yes, he enjoys cuddling. Last I knew, cats don't find cooking necessary, although he does have a discerning palate.

If Bear's questions are a veiled method of learning more about me, well . . . I'm not dating and haven't been for the past 12 years. While I've been busy raising my kids and earning a living, it's not just that. 14 years ago (in August), I was born again in Christ. My one and only dating relationship as a Christian didn't quite go how I'd

hoped, and I realized I needed to take some time and figure things out first. Things like, what does a dating relationship look like in the context of a Christian faith compared to the way I'd been doing things all my life prior to that? I also realized I needed time to straighten things out in my heart and mind regarding past failed relationships. That time gave me the opportunity as well to identify what it is that I want out of a relationship, and what qualities were key to find in a potential partner, which certainly takes a lot of heartache out of dating. I won't go out with someone unless I've already seen some of the key qualities displayed.

I quickly figured out that one thing that was lacking in most of my past connections was friendship. So, I'm not jumping into dating anyone, although I am open to getting to know people. (I even have a profile on a Christian dating site, although little has come from it.)

For the most part, I consider age to be simply a number. I have friends spanning from 100-years-old to friends who are still in their teens. But my ex-husband is significantly older than I am, and thus left a bad impression of dating older men. I'm open to God's leading in my life, trusting that He knows the perfect person for me (not a perfect person, but The One He made with me in mind). If he turns out to be older, so be it! I'm okay with that. The only way I'll recognize it though is to get to know him as a person (not in the context of romance). I know what I want in the last man I give my heart to, and I know what God wants for me. So, I think I'll recognize him when the time comes.

If Bear really wasn't interested in all that, you don't have to read it to him. :-)

I expected that my response was closing a door. Little did I know that it was the key to opening his heart!