



Dragonfly YOU

Feeling
Your Way
Through
the Pain of Loss

Alexandra Stacey



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FEELING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE PAIN OF LOSS

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DISCLAIMER

PLEASE READ AND UNDERSTAND
BEFORE CONTINUING

None of the views, advice, or claims made by Alexandra Stacey are intended to replace those of a registered, qualified, accredited mental health professional.

What follows are the personal observations and experiences resulting from a personal tragedy and subsequent self-healing by one individual.

What works for her may or may not work for you. Use your discretion when deciding on a course of healing for you.

It is strongly recommended that you consult with your licensed therapist or personal health care provider. All medications and therapy should only be used under proper supervision.

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Life Is Loss

Life has a way of choosing challenges for us. Nobody gets to coast through this human experience without collecting some battle scars. Rich, poor, thin, fat, tall, short, gay, straight, young, old, black, white, and everything in between. We all suffer deeply at some point.

Some of us are better at coping, some have more resources, some of us surprise ourselves.

But no matter what life throws our way, nothing hits us harder than loss.

Having to move on *without* - that job, relationship, opportunity, accomplishment - is bloody hard.

Having to move on without your *person* is impossible.

When life takes a turn we didn't expect, didn't want, can't understand, and can't fix, we are forced to accept a role we never asked for. The future is not what we expected. It's a blank canvas that we now have to fill at a time when our energy is depleted and our hope is gone.



We have no choice but to keep swimming when every kick is painful, every stroke exhausting, every breath excruciating.

Because the loss is so much more than just losing a person.

It's losing everything that our person brought with them.

... their people ... their energy ... their ideas ...
their support ... their laughter ... their help their
activities ... their love ...

Their essence was woven into every nook and cranny of our lives. We miss them with every thought and action, through every single day.

Loss like this changes a person on the deepest level. You will never be who you once were. Your life will never be what it was. It will never be what you'd expected.

Others think they understand. Most don't want to. You, now that you've crossed that line, have no choice. You understand too well.

Feel the Loss

You now belong to a club no one wants to join. As a widow, you are now seen quite differently. Defined, actually, by a single word.

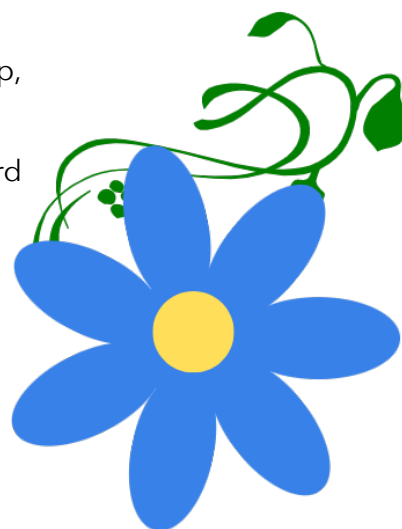
And the majority of people you will encounter each day will have absolutely no idea what to say to you. No idea how to help you.

And most of the time, what they do say not only does nothing to help, but triggers astonishingly powerful negative emotions.

The five stages of grief (the Kübler-Ross model) that we have all heard of is a misnomer. The whole denial/anger/bargaining/depression/acceptance process was originally used to describe the stages experienced by the dying, not the grieving.

People who insist that you're obviously in the denial stage and think that they understand how grief works are so far off the mark as to be laughable. If that sort of thing could be laughable.

The fact is, yes, throughout your grief, you will feel these feelings, experience these stages. But in no particular order. More than once. Probably more than a few hundred times. And there's a good probability that they'll hit you more than one at a time.



There's also a whole lot more that you'll feel that's not listed there.

Guilt. Regret. Hopelessness. Confusion. Pain.

Fatigue. Burden. Darkness. Fear.

Well, pretty much every dark ugly emotion we possess, actually.

It all amounts to the same thing, though.

You will feel a profound sense of loss. You will feel sapped of your strength - physically, emotionally. Often spiritually. And you will feel a very distinct loss of hope.

Your mind will scroll through laments of why bother? why me? why him? now what? I can't...

All of this is normal. Feeling none of this is normal.

Because there is no normal. There's no manual that walks you through this. There's no *real* help. There's no easy way out.

The reality hits you and you realize that you have no control, no power, no hope, no purpose.

It is the worst feeling possible. Unimaginable to those who haven't felt it at this level. Impossible to fully describe.

Because at this point, this pain isn't so much what you *feel*, as it is *who you are*.

Feel The Pain

And yet, somehow, we're still here.

No matter how much you wish it were you. No matter how much you want to be done. No matter how much it hurts, for some reason, you're still here.

How can it be possible to feel such pain and still be alive?

And that is the key.

The only reason you feel the pain at all, is because you loved.

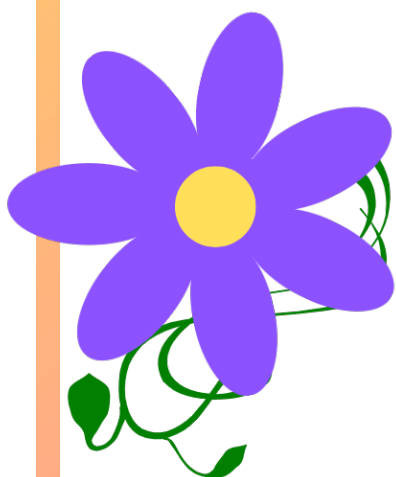
Think about it. You watch the news and hear that a body was found. Someone died. The story barely registers. You hear the details, probably don't even take notice of the name. You take a moment to think about the family. Then the dog barks and your life returns to normal.

Done. Just like that.

But not just like that when it was *your* person.

Your person, whom you loved, who was a part of you, who loved you. Your person who you trusted, respected, laughed with, made plans with. Your person who held you up and held you close.

The pain that you feel in losing them is equal to the love you had - and will always have - for them. You cannot have love without risking the pain. You cannot have the pain without having had the love.



They go together. The yin and the yang. The light and the dark.

The day may come when you welcome the pain. Time will pass and you will be afraid of losing your person completely - their memories begin to fade, their faces blur, you can't remember their laugh. But when you think of them, the pain hits all over again, like it did in the beginning. And with that pain, comes the love you felt.

That never fades. It's always right there.



Feel Good

Before any of this happened, we had feelings. Good and bad.

And oh, how we love the good feelings.

The laughter. The happiness. The moments of joy.

Excitement. Anticipation. Accomplishment.

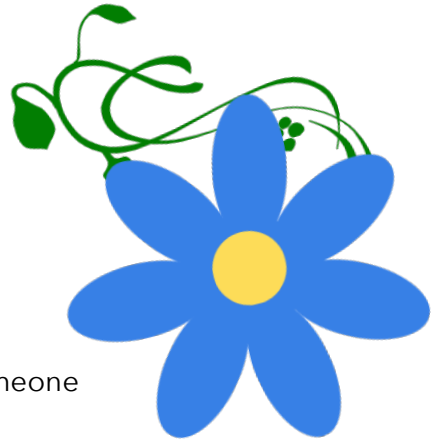
The sun on your face. A child's laugh. A good meal.

You wish those moments could last forever. You stop to feel those feelings, soak them up, and try to never let them go.

We take pictures and tell stories. Music sparks a memory. A scent can take us back in time.

It's easy to feel good.

And Yes, Feel Bad



But what about the bad feelings?

What do we do with those?

We avoid them!

Don't cry. Shake it off. Get over it.

Nobody wants to feel bad. And nobody wants to be around someone who feels bad.

We don't know what to say. We're uncomfortable. There's definitely something better we could be doing.

Don't waste time being angry. Life's too short. Live every day as if it's your last.

Why do we do this?

Who decided that everyone has to be happy?

And what does that do to us?

Ignore the bad emotions. Control them. Swallow them down.

Like a poison.

Too many think it's a weakness. If you can't manage your emotions, you're weak. Less than.

But the reality is that it's like sweeping dirt under the rug. Sure the floor *looks* clean. But all that mess is still there, hiding, under the carpet, eroding the fibres slowly, every time someone steps there. Eventually, with enough dirt and time, the carpet will wear through and everyone will see the ugly gaping hole left behind.

Pretending like we don't have bad emotions is doing the same thing. We are poisoning ourselves over time. We're not doing ourselves any favours.

As much as we need to express our positive feelings, we need to find ways to express the negative ones.

Our emotions and our spirits aren't just connected; they are ONE.

Our thoughts and experiences create emotional responses within us. Our souls, the part of us that lives inside our bodies, are made of pure energy. And energy is nothing but emotion.

Positive and negative. Just like a battery.

Disconnect the negative end and there's no power.

Shutting down our negative sides does the same thing. It stops our life energy from flowing cleanly through us.

Allowing ourselves to feel our negative side as much as we do our positive gives our spirit balance. It replenishes us. It recharges us.

No, it's not a fun thing to do. But it's part of caring for ourselves.

Taking the time to feel our negative emotions actually creates the control we seek.



Get Ready

People don't like to see people cry.

It's a sign of weakness, and nobody should ever cry in public.

This is ridiculous. Whoever started this train of thought should be tied to the rails.

Crying *should* be as common and acceptable as laughing. Period.

And in a perfect world, it would be. But we don't live in a perfect world. So we have to make some adjustments.

We're going to *plan an emotional breakdown*.

Anger, sadness, despair - whatever it is that is controlling you. Prepare to *feel* it. Fully. Deeply.

You are going to indulge the negative emotion. You're going to let it consume you. You're going to let it loose.

You're going to need to get safe.

Find a private, safe place where you can make noise, fall down, and act out without anyone interrupting you.

Your bedroom, the shower, your car, off in the woods.

Wherever that place is, make sure that no one can hear or see you.

If that's impossible, talk to your people. Explain that you are going to have a pre-planned, controlled, intentional and intense emotional outburst. There will be yelling, screaming, crying. There will be loud noises. Maybe the sound of things falling, or breaking.

It may be scary.



But insist that you are safe, you're okay, and you need to do this.

Give them a time frame. At least an hour. Probably more like 2-4 hours. Maybe more.

But insist that they are not to disturb you. They are not to phone the police. They are safe. You are safe. But they need to let you vent.

It's a good idea to set up a safe word with family members - especially children*** - to help them gauge the level of your outburst.

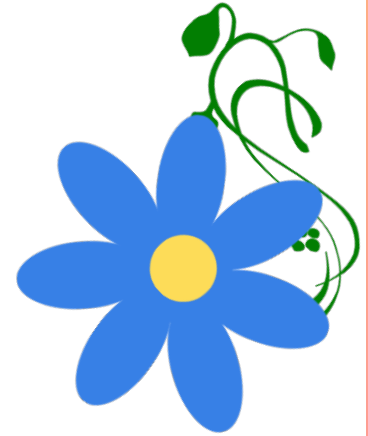
It's okay to tell them, "Okay, if I scream '**popcorn**,' then you can call an ambulance. Everything else is just me being angry and sad at the world."

For most of us, crying and screaming will carry us through the worst of this.

But for some of us, this won't work without a physical outlet as well.

There is a LOT of energy created by pent-up negative emotions. And it's going to come out.

If you feel the need to throw things, or break things, plan for this.



Punching pillows, beating the bed, tearing a 600 count sheet in half. All good outlets.

Throwing knick knacks, breaking furniture, shattering windows? Not so good.

Vacuuming in a rage - lifting furniture, moving it around, man-handling a heavy vacuum? Good.

Driving in a rage? Not good.

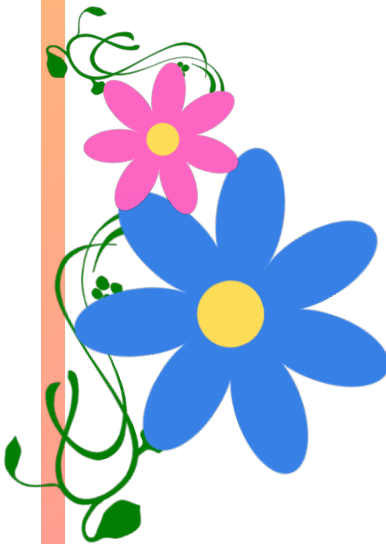
You get the picture.

Plan to expend that energy in a safe and acceptable way. It's okay to act out physically.

Waking up the next day to a trashed living room does no one any favours.

And of course, it's never okay to hurt someone.

Get away from them. And if you can't do that, get them away from you.



*** A Note About Kids

Many of us have to weather our grief with kids in tow. We're constantly helping them with their grief, but often at the expense of our own.

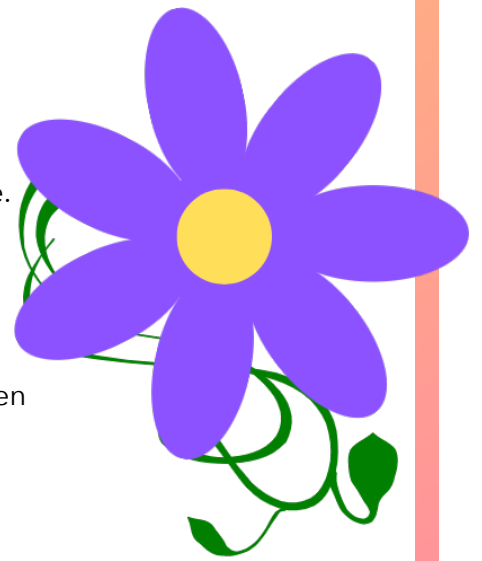
If it is possible to arrange to have the kids out of the house with a trusted caregiver while you let go, do it. Better that they're not there.

But let's face it. Life happens. And sometimes there's no holding off when things get too bad. And this often leads to overreactions and hurt feelings where our kids are concerned.

Better to teach them how to 'vent' safely and in a healthy matter, even if it scares them at first, than to continue to try to contain your negative emotions. Which we all know, just makes things worse.

Even with the youngest of children, those who are sad without even knowing why they're sad, you can teach them to cry and vent in a way that is healthy and safe. Lead by example.

"It's okay for Mom to be sad and have a meltdown. Here's what that looks like. Just like it's okay for you to be sad or angry and have a meltdown. Let me hold you while you cry."



Now Cry

Here's how I explained it to my kids. The TMI is necessary...

So you have a body and the body needs to eat. You feed it when you get hungry. No big deal.

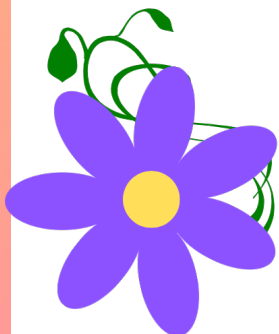
But after a day or two, you start to feel some pressure in your belly. It gurgles a little. Feels like things are moving in there.

The pressure builds until you have no choice but to take notice and prepare for the results of your input.

You pick your favourite bathroom. Make sure it's free. You get your phone or your book or whatever makes you happy in there. Dress or undress in whatever fashion works for you. You lock yourself into the peace and privacy of your space and you go about your business.

Some time later, you emerge with a smile. You feel better. Lighter. Cleaner. Maybe even a little hungry.

You listened to what your body needed, and everything went smoothly.



You felt the need to poop, so you went to the bathroom and pooped.

What you didn't do was think to yourself, 'Hmmm, I really need to poop. I think I'll go to the mall.' And then find yourself riding down the escalator with poop running down your pant leg.

It sounds so obvious, but this is exactly what we do when we need to have a good cry!!

'Gee, I'm feeling kinda down lately. The doc asked my how I'm doing and it took everything I had not to cry right then and there. Only one tear leaked out. I think I'll go get my hair done...'

And then we wonder why we're sitting in the salon's chair bawling like a baby in front of everyone for 'no reason.'

We need to recognize the signs of an impending meltdown. When we tear up easily. When we're getting angry at the little things. We're yelling at the dog. We're sleeping more than usual. Or less. Eating too much, or not enough. We don't want to look in the mirror at the ghost of a face that looks back at us.

There are signs. Learn what yours are. And when you see them, plan to have a good cry.

Get that shit out!



The chemical makeup/structure of tears changes depending on their origin. Photo credit: Rose-Lynn Fisher (source in comments)



And it is shit. It's poison.

This is a picture through a microscope of different tears. I know that tears are different because I wear contact lenses.

I can laugh til I cry, charlie-horse my cheeks, and wet my pants, and never a problem with my lenses.

But just a couple of tears from a sad scene in a movie, and I have to throw the lenses out.

There is something in sad tears that doesn't happen in happy tears. And that something feels like glass shards in my eyes when trapped in a porous contact lens.

Whatever that something is, is poison.

It doesn't have to be a lot. Heck, 200mg - that's one piece of a *gram* that's been divided into five pieces! - of a pain reliever can take away my headache. Even a trace of poison in tears, removed from the body, can make a huge difference in how you feel.

I am no doctor. But I think I'm onto something here...

The tears have to go hand in hand with the words.

Use your words to make it worse.

We whine something crazy when we cry. Kids don't; they just cry.

We adults like to announce our troubles.

"I can't do this!"

"Why me?"

"It's not fair!"

Go for it! Squeeze out every last drop of nasty tears!

Express your deepest, nastiest, harshest offences. Put words to your complaints. Describe your pain.

Make it hurt.

More.

Because you're aiming for PAIN.

This hurts. Physically. Mentally. Emotionally.

Your face will cramp. Your fists will seize. Your body will tighten into itself.

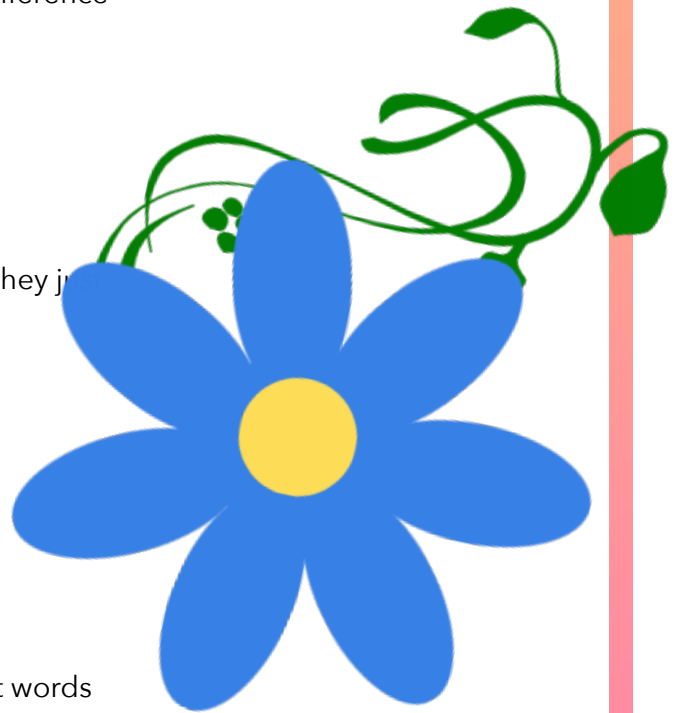
It's supposed to hurt. You won't like it.

But you'll be okay.

The act of crying, of expending the energy, shedding the tears, feeling the pain, and putting words to the problem, is a basic physiological human need. It's a tool that's built into our bodies that we, for whatever reason, refuse to use. Or at best, don't use fully.

Practice. Learn to cry with intent.

Master this skill!



After-Cry Care

You gave it everything you had. You yelled, you screamed, you cried.

You blamed anyone you could blame.

You swore oaths. You threatened. You begged.

You gave up.

And now, there's nothing left.

No more tears to shed. No more words to utter.

You can only cry so much. At some point, it stops.

And you are exhausted.

Your face aches. Your eyes are burning. They're swollen and red.

Your body is sore, as if you just ran a race.

You want to sleep.



Wipe your face with a cold wet cloth. Slowly, carefully, gently.

Breathe.

Take a long, slow drink of cold water.

If you take pain relievers, a mild dose might be in order.

Sleep. Rest.

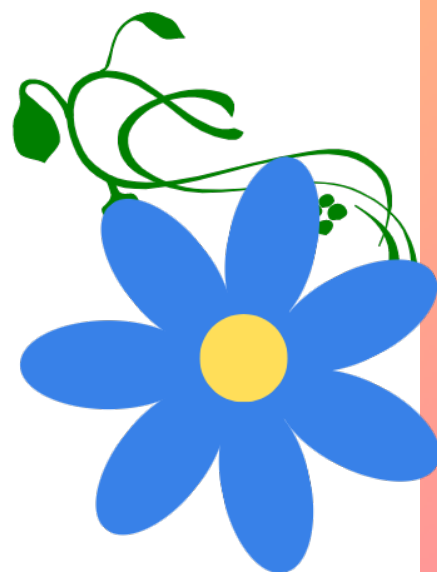
You need to recover.

Your body and mind have been through a trauma. You have purged yourself of a great burden.

When you are fully rested, come back to life slowly. Eat if you're hungry. Keep your environment quiet, calm.

Let yourself feel the freshness of your heart. Breathe deeply. Let the energy of the world around you warm you. Let your body recharge and fill with the strength that only comes after a deep cleansing of the soul.

The Cry Cycle



This will happen again.

And again.

In the beginning, its almost constant.

As you travel through your grief - and make no mistake, there is no way through but *through* - you will feel the build up of negative energy, and you will have to rid yourself of it repeatedly.

But you will get better at this.

You will get better at recognizing the signs. Your meltdowns will become shorter, and farther between.

You will begin to feel like you're in control of these emotions.

Because you are.

No longer do your emotions control you. You are in charge. You decide what you express to the outside world.

You begin to enjoy your good feelings, because you've earned them; you've paid for them with the bad ones. You don't have to feel guilty about feeling happy anymore.

This doesn't mean that you feel better, or less, or that you've forgotten your loss. None of that actually happens, really. Ever. At least not the way we expect it to.

But it means that, in the time between meltdowns, you can take a break from the weight of the negative feelings.

There's only so much you can cry.

Seriously.

If you give into it, cry with intent, repeat the mantras that hurt the most, stick your finger in the wound and make it hurt. Give it everything you have. Then take the time to recover, to heal. You will find that the in-between times are not only bearable, but can be enjoyable.

You will begin to feel alive again.

You will begin to heal.

When You're Ready

Down the road, you will begin to feel alive again.

But there is a good chance that the lessening of the burden of grief brings with it the fear of the future.

What will you do now? Who are you now? Where do you go from here?

You may find that you don't know who you are anymore.

You may find that you want to do more, be more, but have no idea where to start.

You may be afraid of what the future holds. Afraid of moving forward.

You may find that you're just as lost as you were the day this all started.

But there's something inside that says, I want more. There has to be more.

When that happens, it's time to Dragonfly you.

A symbol of transformation, change, healing, adaptability, and self-realization, the dragonfly can show us the path to a new self. A self that is brimming with strength, purpose, and certainty.

When you're ready to do more, to be more, we're here. To help you create a life more fulfilling than anything you could have ever imagined.

www.DragonflyYOU.com

Turn the worst thing that ever happened to you into the best thing that ever happened to you.



The Author

Alexandra Stacey is the Canadian author of the emotionally charged novel, A Road To Joy.

Herself the widowed mother of five, Alex has lived the lessons she shares. Having to help her kids through their grief, at the time, meant putting her own healing on hold.

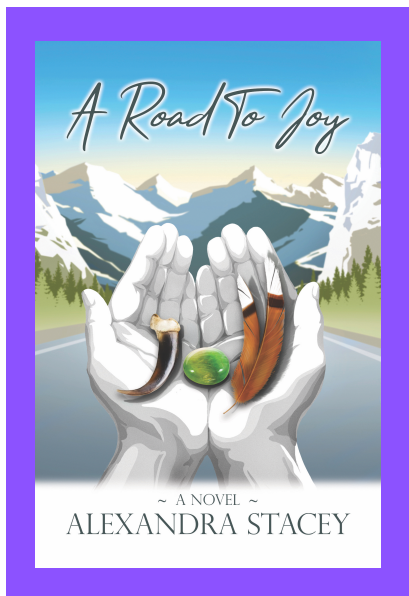
Eventually, turning to writing, she was able to fully explore and examine her own needs and feelings.

Her journey back to the land of the living has led her to accomplishments and challenges she had never before considered.

She has finally come to accept that there is nothing she can do to change things. She must navigate her life alone, without the love and support of her late husband.

But with that acceptance, came the realization that, if things have to be the way they are, then she has managed to turn the worst thing that ever happened to her into the best thing that ever happened to her.

She shares those lessons now with others who find themselves at the same crossroads, at DragonflyYOU.com



The story of a widowed mother of five who wakes up one day, throws caution to the wind and runs away from home.

Her month-long journey across Canada is fuelled by an intense grieving rage and a determined plan to end the pain of it all.

Interrupted by Nature-inflicted adventures along the way, our widow discovers the power of Overwhelming Gratitude and the secret to creating the Joy that makes life worth living again.

Inspired by true events. And somewhat embellished.

Available through the website in paperback, Kindle e-book, and Audible formats.

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