



IN
EVERY
LIFE

A NOVEL

REA
FREY

IN
EVERY
LIFE

A NOVEL

REA FREY



HARPER MUSE

In Every Life

Copyright © 2024 by Rea Frey

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published by Harper Muse, an imprint of HarperCollins Focus LLC.

This book is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogue are drawn from the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by HarperCollins Focus LLC, nor does HarperCollins Focus LLC vouch for the content of these sites for the life of this book.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

[[CIP TO COME]]

Printed in the United States of America

\$PrintCode

For Joe and Anna, welcome to the other side.

HARPER
MUSE



“In the end, we learn that to love and let go can be the same thing.”

—Jack Kornfield



HARPER
MUSE

Prologue

I'm a wife.

I stare at my exhausted but happy reflection in the bathroom mirror and try on the unfamiliar word: *wife*. I'm a wife! Ben and I got married yesterday, and now we are in Hawaii for our honeymoon.

I can hear him humming a song he wrote for the latest Marvel movie soundtrack while he unpacks our suitcase.

"Wifey?" he calls affectionately from the bedroom.

I flip off the light and step into the suite's living room, nearly gasping once again at the startling oceanfront view. "Yes, husband?"

"Do we think a Speedo is appropriate for the beach?" He dangles a tiny strip of fabric he wears for triathlons.

"Oh, most definitely."

He laughs as I enter the bedroom and sling my arms around his shoulders, feeling the heft of him. Though we've been together only two years, we've packed so much into our relationship, it feels like we've always been together. After seven adventure races, five triathlons, one ultramarathon, and visiting four countries, we've set a blistering pace for what we want, which is really just one wild, adven-

turous life. Somehow getting married seems like the biggest adventure of all.

“Three things,” I say to him now.

“You, me, this,” he replies instantly. He stares deeply into my eyes, and I run my fingers through his thick hair.

It’s a game we play. At any given moment, we must name what we are grateful for in a world that sometimes leaves us grasping to find something good.

“Your turn.”

My entire being radiates with a happiness greater than my body can contain. I know it’s not a small thing—to start a life with someone—especially in this day and age. But with Ben, it doesn’t feel like a risk. It feels like coming home. I think about what I’m grateful for: We both love our jobs, have a good friend group, are healthy and happy, just booked several upcoming trips, bought a new condo, and have our entire lives ahead of us. I’m not sure I can narrow it down to just three.

“Our wedding, this suite, and definitely that Speedo,” I say, eyeing the slime-green bathing suit balled in a tiny wad on the king bed. “Maybe not in that order.”

He kisses the joke right from my lips. I melt into him, wondering what it will be like to kiss Ben like this for the next fifty years. “I love you, Harper,” he whispers in my ear after he finally pulls back.

“I love you too.” I snuggle into a hug.

After a lingering moment, he slaps my butt and turns away. “I made dinner reservations,” he says. “Five o’clock. Hotel restaurant. Senior citizen hour, baby!”

“You know me so well.” I love eating dinner early. When I was growing up, dinner was always on the table by five, and the habit

stuck. As a high school art teacher, I'm done with work well before dinner and I love to cook. Ben's work as a film composer, on the other hand, often keeps him trapped in his studio late into the night. When he can, he eats early with me.

Before I can ask him to model that Speedo, all the color drains from his face as he places a hand on his stomach.

"Hey. You okay?"

He swallows and closes his eyes. "I just got really nauseous for some reason. Oh man." He grips his stomach harder.

"Here, sit down." I lead him to the bed and rub his back. I try to remember what we ate on the plane. Chicken, maybe? As I think about it, though, Ben has been complaining about his lower back and stomach for the last few weeks. I assumed he was overtraining.

Something like panic traverses my skin as I look at him, pale and suddenly sweating. Ben never gets sick.

"I need to go to the bathroom," he says. The door shuts, and I can hear him retch into the toilet.

"I'll call down and get you a ginger ale." My fingers shake as I stab the button for room service.

"How can I help you, Mrs. Foster?"

My eyes well with tears at hearing Ben's last name, which is now my last name. Harper Swanson Foster. My new identity. I tell the woman what we need and hang up. I sit on the edge of the bed and try to rationalize what's happening. It's probably nothing. Just something he ate. But there's a deeper feeling, some sense of *knowing*, that I can't shake. What if it's not just something he ate? What if it's serious?

Ben emerges a few minutes later, clutching his stomach. "Wow. I haven't thrown up in years. I think I'm dehydrated."

REA FREY

“Why don’t you rest for a little while? See if it passes?”

Before I can grab him water or a cool rag for his head, his knees buckle and his eyes roll back in his head. Everything slows like someone has pressed pause on my life. I can’t move. I can’t speak. Instead, I only gasp as my strong, healthy husband crumples to the floor with a sickening thud. His head bounces violently against the carpet.

I’m too stunned to catch him.

What is . . .



I'm going to be a widow.

That word—*widow*—still catches me off guard. It seems like a word reserved for someone who has lived a long life—someone with kids, grandkids, and decades of memories. Someone who is closer to the end of their journey, not the beginning.

Ben says something I don't hear. His hair is growing back, highlighting green eyes laced with flecks of gold. I focus on his thick black lashes, the cleft in his chin, the way his eyes crinkle when he's looking only at me. It seems like yesterday that we got married and had our whole lives ahead of us. What I wouldn't give to go back.

"What did you say?"

"I said, I have a crazy idea."

I fumble for a response. "Define crazy." I nurse my beer and stab another tortilla chip into the guacamole before shoving a fat glob into my mouth. It's Taco Tuesday, but Ben's plate sits untouched, his once sturdy body hollowed out and sucked dry from doctors, chemo, endless treatments, and flimsy hope in sterile hospital rooms. Still, there's a glimmer of mischief in his eyes that tells me he's up to some-

thing.

Though we're in pajamas, in our condo, in the middle of the city, with some terrible reality show blaring in the background, it feels like what he's about to say is important and I should listen. I cross my legs and feel a little lightheaded from the beer.

Ben places his warm, large hands around my own, his skin pale where it had once been browned from the sun. The chemo made him sensitive to the sun (and a million other things), so even though he's stopped treatment, he has to be careful. "I want you to just listen first. Listen to what I have to say before you say no."

I laugh. "How do you know I'm going to say no?"

He drags his thumb back and forth over the skin of my hand until it burns. "Because this idea, while totally *brilliant*, is also really, really crazy."

"Out with it, Foster." I feel a giggle bubbling up my throat in anticipation. This is the most normal conversation we've had in weeks.

"Okay." He takes a shaky breath and rubs a hand across his stubbly head. "I want you to find someone else . . . before I go."

The giggle I've been suppressing bursts from my throat until I feel hysterical. He doesn't respond, doesn't laugh in return. "No," I say, squinting at him. "What is it, really?"

He levels me with a look, and I swallow.

"You can't be serious." I glance at my watch, a present from Ben for my last birthday. He had it engraved to say, *You're the only woman who makes me forget about time*. The hysteria turns to outrage, and I shift, spraying tortilla chips onto our comfy fort of pillows and quilts. "What is this really about?" I rack my brain. Has *he* met someone else? Is he tired of me? Is this some lame attempt at distracting me from what we both know is coming?

After our honeymoon, we took Ben to get tests, and then an oncologist delivered words you never want to hear. Ben has stage four advanced pancreatic cancer . . . the type of cancer that often doesn't present symptoms until it's far too late. The tumors were too big to remove and had already spread to his lymph nodes and liver. The chemo couldn't shrink the masses enough to even attempt surgery. So, despite all the treatments that made him feel sicker than the cancer, here we are, facing the end.

"Harp." He pats the stack of pillows on the floor, our lazy pallet for food, because Ben gets too exhausted sitting upright at the table and is more comfortable on the ground. Sometimes he falls asleep mid-bite, or curls up in my lap, and I stroke his short hair while he naps for hours. And then I cry, trying not to drip tears and snot onto his cheeks.

I move closer to him and cross my arms. "Explain."

"I've been thinking a lot about this. I know you are an independent, capable woman who most certainly does *not* need a man, but I want to do this for you." He looks deeply into my eyes until I want to scream. "I want you to be okay when I'm gone."

"Well, I'm *not* going to be okay," I say. "You're dying."

That word is an affront. Ben is one of the most vibrant humans I know. The man you want beside you in a physical emergency. The friend you ask to help move furniture. The guy who goes for a thirty-mile bike ride and then plays a pickup basketball game with friends. How can he be dying?

"But you're not, Harper. I want you to live your life." He threads his fingers through mine and searches my eyes while tears fill his own. "I want you to find love again."

My nostrils flare, and I rip my hand free, gathering my long, au-

burn hair into a bun and securing it with a rubber band from my wrist. “Have we met? I don’t want anyone else but you. I barely like people. That’s why I waited almost thirty-five years to get married in the first place. You know this.”

“This is precisely my point. We both know you won’t ever find someone if I don’t find him for you.” He produces a composition notebook he’s been hiding under one of the pillows and flips it open, stabbing the page. At the top, it says, “Master Plan: Find Harper Someone to Love Before I Go.”

Tears spring to my eyes as I see the numbered points beneath it.

1. *Get Harper to agree to my crazy idea.*
2. *Once she is done telling me I’m an idiot, explain crazy idea.*
3. *Come up with a time line for crazy idea.*
4. *Find dates for Harper.*
5. *Find dates for Harper who don’t make her want to gag.*
6. *Find dates for Harper who aren’t sociopaths, psychopaths, or just lame.*
7. *Find the one for Harper, who can make her laugh and take care of her the way she has taken care of me.*
8. *Remind her that I will be watching from beyond the grave . . . so she better not love him too much.*

“Ben.” Tears stream down my face faster than I can flick them away.

“Look, if the situation were reversed, you’d do the same for me,” he says. “Right?”

I bark out a laugh. “Absolutely *not*. I’d want you to love me and

only me and be miserable for the rest of your long life.” I grin through my tears, because we both know that isn’t true.

“Just think about it, okay? That’s all I ask.” He reaches for my hand again, and I let his fingers entwine with mine, fingers that have held mine as our whole big, shiny plan for our lives was decimated by the dreaded *C* word. These are the hands I held while saying vows, fingers I’ve kissed through chemo and doctors’ visits and making love.

I can’t tell him I’ll think about it, because there’s nothing to think about. I want to scream. I want to tell him this is not okay. I want to explain that our love story, in my mind, is still unfolding, so no, Ben, I am most definitely *not* open to finding someone else.

As my outrage gains momentum, just to spite him, I vow, right here and now, to never love another man as long as I live.

Sensing I don’t want to talk anymore, he turns back to his plate of food and tentatively takes a bite. My heart aches, as it so often does, in seeing his lack of appetite, not just for food, but for life. That hunger used to define him, define *us*.

How can someone so excited by life suddenly be on the tail end of it? It doesn’t seem fair. I bite back my pain. No pity party today. Instead, I tuck back into my tacos, though my appetite is gone.

“Three things,” Ben says softly now.

I lower my plate and look at him. “I’m not in the mood.”

“Too bad.”

“Fine.” I adjust to look at him. “Tacos, tacos, and more tacos.”

He laughs. “Fair enough.”

“You?” I ask.

“Tacos, of course.” He ticks them off on his fingers. “Being here with you. And meeting your new future boyfriend.” He nudges me

REA FREY

with his shoulder.

In response, I smack him lightly on the arm.

“Careful,” he says. “I’m fragile.”

Though he’s joking, I feel like crying. “No, Ben,” I say, turning back to my food. “You’re not.”

2

It's been two days since Ben issued the challenge of finding someone else to love, and I hope by pretending he didn't say it, he will let it drop.

But Ben is someone who needs a project. As if losing his fight with cancer isn't all-consuming enough, he wants to ensure I fall in love while he's still here. I haven't even tried to explain all the reasons that will never work, how it isn't physically possible to fall in love with someone while you're still madly in love with someone else. That it will be years before I probably feel even an iota of normal, and the last thing on my mind is finding a new husband.

I make coffee, leave Ben a note, and head out for work. Today is the last day of school before summer. While I wanted to take a leave of absence at the start of Ben's diagnosis, he insisted I keep working so I could have some semblance of a normal routine.

"Kids put life into perspective," he often says.

To which I always reply, "Have you ever met a teenager?"

Truthfully, I adore my students. They give me a sense of purpose and have kept me motivated this past year while Ben endured treat-

ment.

I take the elevator to the main floor of our building, say good morning to our doorman, Randy, and step outside. It's a perfect Chattanooga day, not a cloud in the sky. I lift my coffee to my lips and take a big gulp, indulging in a fleeting moment of joy. This happens sometimes. I can appreciate the smallest things—a chirping bird, the glistening water of the Tennessee River, the majesty of the Appalachian Mountains—and then I feel bad, as if I can't be sad about Ben *and* happy about life. Ben insists these moments are the moments that matter most, because he finds beauty everywhere now too. Before cancer, we were both moving so fast, working hard and making future plans, and now that's all been wiped away. It's been one of the most surprising effects of his diagnosis, how we are both finding glimpses of beauty in the grief.

"Hey, hey." Jenna falls into step beside me, and I realize I passed the front of her building without even slowing for her to join.

"Sorry." I stop, turn, and give her a hug. She smells like flowers. "Lost in thought."

"Gee, I wonder why."

We both laugh, because if I don't laugh, I will cry. Jenna has been with us during the entire ordeal and is one of the few people who doesn't treat Ben with pity. She still jokes around, busts Ben's balls, and tells him to get it together when she stops by and he's too sick to get out of bed.

"So did you know?" I ask. I don't even say what I'm referring to, because if she does know, I'll be able to tell.

"I know nothing." Her cheeks redden as she tucks her wild, curly hair behind her ears. Jenna teaches French, knows five languages, has a gorgeous partner, Wren, and two hairless cats. She's sharp as a tack,

and her answer tells me everything I need to know.

“Wait,” I say. “When did he come up with this stupid plan?”

She shrugs. “You know Ben. He needs something else to focus on besides . . .” The truth hangs between us. “I told him it was ridiculous, but when has he ever listened to me?”

“Good point.” I laugh.

“Well, if you think this idea is insane, just wait until you talk to him and Wren.” Wren owns the Terrington art gallery downtown. For years, she’s encouraged me to take my craft more seriously, though I always claim I don’t have enough time. At first, it was because of work, then it was because of Ben.

I stop her. “What do you mean?”

“It’s not my place to say.”

“Really, Jenna? You’re going to just dangle that carrot?”

“Yep.”

At the high school’s entrance, I hold the door open for her as a crush of students barrel inside before the morning bell.

“Have a good day!”

I roll my eyes as she heads off to her classroom. What are Wren and Ben up to? I stand in the foyer and listen to the chatter around me as I make my way to my classroom.

My seniors stripped their work from the walls earlier this week. Before they flood in for first period, I stare at the husk of this room, which has contained so much creativity this year.

The walls are studded with putty and nothing more. The room seems cold and bland without their wild, colorful, abstract creations clogging up every available surface. Though I claim not to have favorites, my seniors are easily that, mainly because they remind me of what’s possible in the world.

They pile in now, excited about the last day of school. I let them grab their supplies and tell them we are doing one last project, which is free choice.

Once they settle down and find their rhythm, I close my eyes for a moment and hear the quick swish of brushes and graffiti pens being shaken and pressed to fresh canvases. There's the *tap, tap, tap* of bristles in water, the long, smooth strokes of thick acrylic, followed by the stray cough or sneeze. When the kids are locked in and focused, not distracted by their phones or each other, the energy swells. I absorb the vibration of it now, that strong creative force of being in the groove while time disappears.

Though I teach art, I pretty much gave up on my own dreams because my one big shot didn't happen in New York. An image flashes through my mind that stops me cold: of me, the gallery, of *him* . . . but I promptly swipe it away, like always. That is the past. I know now, more than ever, that there is no point in playing the what-if game.

Classes whip by, one after another, and before I know it, it's the end of the day. I gather my supplies and rush through the hallways, waving at kids, wishing them a good summer, and absorbing all the raucous sounds of young teenage life. Seniors whoop through the halls, excited to be free from this place for good, with its metal detectors, security guards, and active shooter drills. School, like so much of the world, has become such an unpredictable place.

At the teachers' lounge door, I feel the familiar curl of excitement at the promise of summer. No matter how old I get, it's still my favorite season. The moment I think about it, I remember what could happen this summer. This might be the summer I lose Ben. This might be the summer my whole life changes. This might be the

summer I become a widow.

Before I can let those thoughts go, Jenna yanks me inside the lounge and starts chatting my ear off. The emotions from the day leak out of me slowly, like a gently pricked balloon. I am tired. I want to see Ben. Instead, I plaster on a smile and spend time with my colleagues.

But my brain keeps drifting away. When I leave here for the summer, I am stepping into an unfamiliar world in more ways than one.

Though I am excited for the break from work, I also know that what I'm facing with Ben will no longer be a hypothetical anymore. I won't have work to scurry off to. I won't be able to morph into Harper the teacher and bury my problems for seven hours every day.

Instead, I will face it head-on—this new reality of losing my favorite person.

The big question isn't *if* anymore . . . it's when.

Instead of getting drinks with everyone after work, I rush home to be with Ben.

I know I will have a life full of after-work drinks, dinners, and parties ahead of me, and he does not. Thankfully, no one gives me a hard time when I skip out.

“Hey, hey.” I step inside our condo and immediately smell vomit. “Ben?” I rush to the bedroom. The covers have been shoved back, rumped, as if in a rush, and there’s a wisp of viscous bile on the floor. I follow the sluglike trail to the bathroom, where I find Ben, head deep in the toilet bowl. He raises one hand limply.

“Hey, babe.”

I kneel beside him, feel his cheeks to see if they’re warm, and rub his back in gentle circles. “Why didn’t you call me?”

He swipes a hand across his mouth and sits back. The fatigue on his face is about so much more than getting sick right now. It’s been a year of not feeling well, of being so engrossed in every symptom, *every* second of the day, because a simple cold could morph into an infection and kill him faster than the cancer. For a man who rarely,

if ever, got sick before his diagnosis, this is a cruel way to spend his final months of life, and I wish there was something more I could do to make him feel better.

But there is, a voice reminds me. *His idiotic idea*. “Is it something you ate?”

He nods. “Probably. I was feeling pretty good and might have gone a bit overboard with lunch. I’m okay, though. Feeling better already.” He places a hand on his stomach and sighs.

I press the back of my palm to his forehead now that he’s sitting upright. He doesn’t feel warm, and I instantly relax. The fact that he was feeling better this morning is a good thing. He’s still learning his limits with what he can eat, however. Though his doctor suggested palliative care, he doesn’t feel ready yet. And because he’s not doing any treatment now, he’s pretty much on his own.

He closes his eyes. “How was your last day?”

“It was sweet.” I want to pounce and ask him about what Jenna said, but I need to make sure he’s not going to be sick again.

“Good, I’m glad.” His eyes stay closed as he offers a small smile.

The toilet water runs between us, bubbling and then settling as I contemplate how to ask him about Jenna without seeming insensitive to how he’s physically feeling. But I know myself; if I don’t get it off my chest soon, it will drive me crazy.

“When did you tell Jenna and Wren about your big idea?”

His eyes snap open and he shifts to look at me. “So she told you.”

“What I really want to know is what she was talking about when she said you and Wren had something to tell me?”

“Oh. That.” He winces. He exhales and then closes his eyes again.

“Wren and I were chatting and thought it would be an interesting idea for you to pursue your art for a while.”

“What does that mean?”

“Like, maybe quit your job and try to make it as an artist?”

I wait for the punchline, but there is none. “Oh, sure,” I say as I adjust my back against the tub. “I’ll quit a job I love, lose my health insurance *and* benefits to chase some pipe dream. Seems totally rational.” He’s hit a nerve, and we can both tell.

Ben knows most things about my life, but he doesn’t know how hard I fell on my face after trying to do just what he’s suggesting in my twenties. It’s a time in my life I don’t like to revisit . . . for more reasons than one.

“Look, if I’d decided to teach music instead of going after my dream, how would my life have turned out?”

“But it worked out for you,” I insist. “You got your lucky break. I didn’t. And I happen to love my job.”

“Do you?”

“What, because teaching art can’t be enough for me? I can’t be happy with what I’m doing? I’m supposed to want more?”

“When you’re as talented as you are? Yes.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” This is the second time in as many days that he’s pressing buttons, and I want to know why.

“It means that you’re hiding!” His voice bellows in our tiny bathroom. “You’re in a comfort zone. You’re not really happy!”

Both of us sit in stunned silence. Ben rarely raises his voice, and never at me. I place a hand on his arm. “Ben, where in the world is all this coming from? Needling me about my job? Wanting me to find someone else?”

He looks at me with tears in his eyes. “Because I cannot leave this world without knowing you’re okay.” His voice has dropped to a whisper. “I want you to have your dreams. I want you to spend your

life with someone. I want you to have everything, Harper.”

My tears match his. “Don’t you see that I already do?” Even with the inevitable end looming in front of us, I wouldn’t trade a single day of being with him for anything.

“Ugh.” He exhales and draws his knees to his chest. “I’m sorry. I’m an idiot. I’m just panicking.”

“You’re not an idiot. Well, on second thought . . .” I nudge him and that gets a small smile. “Look, Ben. I get it. I do. Everything feels like it’s out of your control. But you can’t control the outcome of *my* life too. That’s for me to figure out, okay?”

Instead of responding, we sit in silence, something that is happening more and more the sicker he gets. It makes me realize how quick we are to fill the quiet in everyday life, how we jump over each other to talk without really listening. I’ve learned more about my husband from the silences between us than any meaningful conversation. I used to avoid them, afraid of what I might find there, but now I welcome them, because it forces both of us to face our feelings.

“I just want you to consider it,” Ben finally says.

“Which part? Finding someone else or pursuing art?”

He smirks. “Well, both, ideally, but maybe we could start with art?”

“We’ll see.” I don’t tell him that ship has sailed—that after a brief stint of going all in, it was clear I was meant to teach, not paint. Plus, even if I wanted to pursue art, the world is a very different place than it used to be. I’m not an Instagram influencer or a TikTok star, for one.

He rolls his head toward me and smiles, his eyes crinkling in that exact way I love. “It’s a start.” He gingerly caresses my cheek, then grips the edge of the tub as he struggles to stand. I help him, and once

we are upright, he pulls me into a hug. The outline of his bony ribs jab my palms beneath his shirt. My fingers dance over them, counting them under my breath. It seems like yesterday that I was holding him in our honeymoon suite, my arms caressing well-developed muscles. Now I feel I could break his bones if I squeeze too hard.

“Do you feel up for a short walk around the block? Maybe get some fresh air?” When we first met, we’d take our bikes and ride the long, winding road up Lookout Mountain. Cars would honk in admiration as they chugged upward to visit Rock City, while we cranked our way up the punishing incline. At the top, we’d have a beer and stare at the astonishing view as the mountain breeze cooled us. Now he gets winded walking from room to room.

“Maybe in a little bit. I think I’m going to rest a while.”

“Okay. I’ll make us some soup for later.” I kiss his forehead and tuck him into bed, turning off the light as I leave. I stand in our condo, which was once so full of life, and now grows quieter and darker each day. I know the end is coming; I can feel it in my bones, and despite all of our talks and preparations, I am not ready to say goodbye. In many ways, we are still getting to know each other. How can it already be over?

I swipe the tears that come and decide to go on a quick walk myself while he’s resting. Maybe I’ll even walk down to my studio, like Ben suggested. Air it out. It’s been a while. I slip on my shoes, take the elevator down, and step outside.

The Chattanooga heat warms my face as the mountain wind ruffles my hair. We live right by the pedestrian bridge, and people are out, riding their bikes, walking their dogs, holding hands. No matter how dismal it gets in our condo, when I step outside, I am faced with the fact that life constantly moves on, that there will be life after Ben,

even if I don't want it.

I step onto the bridge and smile at other pedestrians. I pause at one of the blue benches overlooking the water and sit.

Ben constantly tells me how stoic I've been through all of this, but what I don't tell him is that I am absolutely terrified. Besides my grandparents, I've never lost anyone close to me, especially not a lover. And Ben is so much more than just my partner; he's in my marrow. He's part of me. I can't imagine a day without him, much less a lifetime.

What if I do end up all alone?

I close my eyes and begin to cry, wiping my eyes behind my sunglasses as I stare at the glittering water and the pulse of life all around. Down below, people are sprawled in the park on colorful blankets, a few kids going round and round on the carousel. I probably need to find a support group soon, open myself up to other people who are going through the same thing. I let the emotions pass and stand, then continue across the bridge.

I think about when we first met, which was less than three years ago. Everything seemed so easy then, the world at our fingertips. I truly believed that anything was possible and that our lives were just getting started. It boggles my mind how much we've been through in such a short time.

But as I've learned, today is all that matters. I'll continue to take it one day at a time, until Ben has no more time left.

About the Author



Photo by Kate Gallaher

Rea Frey is the award-winning author of several domestic suspense, women's fiction, and nonfiction books. Known as a Book Doula, she helps other authors birth their books into the world. To learn more, visit www.reafrey.com.