

From Coward To Warrior

Based on a true story

David Turner

Copyright © 2023 by David Turner

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

For Emma

Thank you to my family, first of all, for putting up with hours and hours of me talking about “my book.”

Thank you to my wife, whose encouragement made this book possible.

Thanks to Brenda Rose for all her editing help.

And finally, thank you to Jesus for being the one who held my marriage and family together when I had given up all hope.

*Although this is a true account,
many of the names in this book
have been changed to protect their privacy.*

The End

“By His stripes...” Isaiah 53:5

Running.

It had started out as a slow jog, but now I was picking up the pace. I was running along the sidelines of the track, down the red rubber surface surrounding the football field. Toward what, I had no idea. I found I didn't care. It felt good to be running, to finally be taking action, after all the time I had spent wondering what I would do in this moment. Wondering whether or not I had what it takes.

I had seen the thing I was afraid of in front of me, and instead of turning around and running the other way, I was running toward it. I was taking a stand. I was willing to fight for myself, for what I believed in, even to the death.

It's a strange feeling, being willing to give up your life for something. I never felt it before that day. It gives you courage. Grit. I believe it's what made America great, way back when.

Not long after I found out about the affair, I remember working up the nerve to call him. I had his phone number from a mutual acquaintance who emailed me his information months before, thinking that since our family was half-Fijian, “I might want to meet another Fijian.”

“Hello?” His voice was low and gravelly. I hated it already.

“Yeah, is this Nick?” I asked as nonchalantly as I could.

“Io,” he replied (*which means “Yes,” in Fijian*).

“This is David Turner. I'm only gonna tell you this once: leave my wife alone. Don't call her, don't ever text her again. Before something happens we both will regret.” I hung up, hoping that would be enough.

But it wasn't enough, not for him or me. There came a morning when I was sick of what was still going on, and decided to do something about it. Right after my first class of the day, I texted him that I wanted to meet. We agreed to meet after school that day at a coffee shop. I'm sure he had to be wondering what I wanted to meet him for. In my mind's eye, I saw myself walk up to him, swing a massive uppercut that would make Mike Tyson proud, knock him to the ground and stand victoriously over the body, like David over Goliath. The problem was, I had no idea what would happen next. Would the people around us scream and yell helplessly like in the movies? Would the cops come? Would I run away after that? I had no idea. All day long we texted back and forth, sizing each other up like a pair of boxers in the ring, wondering who would be the first one to throw a punch. Right at the end of the school day he texted and said that he couldn't make it. He had to go to work.

"No problem," I texted back. "Tomorrow then."

The next day came and I grew more and more nervous. At one point, I was washing two coffee cups at the sink during a school break. I had accidentally brought my wife's cup to school a few days earlier (it had a big "T" on it, short for "Titilia," making it unquestionably hers), and while drying it, I dropped it on the floor. It shattered to pieces. Right away, I heard the still, small voice in the back of my mind: "If you carry out this plan, it will shatter your wife in the same way."

That really tore me up. On the one hand, I felt deeply that I needed to settle the answer to the question: "Do I have what it takes?" I had been giving in to other people for so long. The man in me longed to have the strength and courage to say, "To hell with everyone, I'm doing what I think is right! And it doesn't matter if I'm the only one that thinks that in the entire world!"

But on the other hand, I had made a decision to save my marriage and my family. As much as I wanted to leave forever and never come back at times, I just knew I couldn't look my little 6-year-old girl in the eyes and tell her that her mom and dad would never be together again. It would break her heart. I wasn't about to be the cause of that. Now it felt like God was forcing

me to choose: break my wife into little pieces, or let go of the part of me desperately trying to hold on to the last shreds of my self-respect.

As the day wore on, the conflict within me intensified. I was on the part of the roller coaster where you go down really, really fast, right before the coaster goes through the loop-de-loop. My heart was in my throat as the final bell rang for the school day, and I walked quickly to my car and got in, intending to drive to the coffee shop.

Another text message. "Can't make it in time before work, but I can meet afterwards." I decided right then that it wasn't going to happen this way. What did he think I was, a pizza delivery service? I texted him back to forget about meeting, called him a coward, and told him I knew he was too afraid to meet anyway. Deleting the contact from my phone, I tried to put the whole thing behind me. I did a lot of that in those days: trying to move on and put the affair in the past forever, hoping that it was all over between my wife and him – usually only to find out that it was all one step forward, two steps back.

Time went on, but the question kept eating away at me. Would I give in to other people's wants as I had always done before? Would I continue to bow down at the altar of others' needs, always making sure they got what they wanted and never wondering about the cost to myself? I couldn't find a way to once again call cowardice wisdom, or worse, Christian charity. Somewhere deep inside me, my self-respect refused to die politely, quietly, nicely.

I decided to take action. Using a fake name on Facebook, I found out where Nick's rugby team was practicing, and later that evening drove out to the high school. I parked and walked to the football field, where a bunch of mostly big white guys were practicing rugby. I was proud of myself for not shying away from what I came there to do, in spite of the gnawing worry that me versus a rugby team would not end well for me.

The ball got kicked to the sidelines where I was watching and waiting. I took it as my opportunity.

“Excuse, I’m looking for Nick, does he practice here?” I asked the guy who chased over to get it.

The player looked up, slightly surprised. “Yeah, but we haven’t seen him out here for a while. New baby and all that.” Now he had a slightly suspicious look. “How do you know him?”

“Oh, gotcha,” I replied. “Just friends from church is all.” A quick lie, to cover up my true intentions. “Was in the area, wanted to stop by and say hi.”

And that was it. I went back to my car and drove home.

Except that wasn’t it, because I knew deep in my heart that the question of “Would I have what it takes?” still hadn’t been answered.

Up ahead of me on the track now was a group of men, rugby players. They were in the traditional post-game circle, either *rah-rah*-ing themselves for winning or sharing the misery of losing the game that had just ended. The numbers stood out clearly on the back of Nick’s jersey, a target I could aim for. I was really flying now, running as fast as I could.

I had come to the rugby grounds that day with a friend of the family, a youth pastor named Elijah from a church in Santa Rosa. Knowing what I had planned, I tried not to let him get involved. Sitting around with family members, I formed a plan: take a shuttle bus to the rugby grounds, find the team where he was playing, and then ... do whatever I was going to do. I wasn’t exactly sure what that was, but I knew that this time I was determined to see it through one way or the other.

So when Pastor Elijah had offered to give me a ride, saying he wanted to go watch the rugby too, I declined.

“No, no, that’s ok,” I insisted, “I don’t want to be any trouble. You go ahead and go if you want to. I’ll probably head over a little bit later.”

But he persisted, and I waited for him to give up, until pretty soon I gave up. A small part of me was glad he had been so persistent. I knew what was waiting for me at the end of this trip to

the rugby grounds. *Who knows*, I thought, *maybe I could use a wingman for this plan of mine*.

Little did I know that even in the midst of this back and forth, God was working, preparing Pastor Elijah to be there to help when I needed it.

After walking around the rugby grounds, something drew me to one team in particular. As I walked around trying to match the pictures I had in my head from Facebook with one of the men on the field, I ended up sitting on the sidelines of one particular game. One of the players was sitting out, and as I listened to his voice, I began to suspect that this was, in fact, Nick, the man who was having an affair with my wife.

I waited patiently for the game to end, then took a walk down the sidelines towards the group where the suspected Nick was. An older Fijian gentleman was walking towards me, apparently affiliated with the team in some way because he had on the same style of jersey.

I stopped him and asked politely, "Excuse me, but I'm wondering if you can tell me who number 59 is? I'm just curious because it looks like my friend but I'm not sure."

The old man looked puzzled for a moment, then answered, "Oh yeah, that's the one from San Jose. I think his name is Nick or something like that."

My suspicions confirmed, I thanked him. I walked back to where Pastor Elijah was watching and waiting by the sidelines for me, handed him my phone and asked if he would hold it for a minute, and took off jogging down the sideline again towards where the team was gathering. I was running toward an unknown destiny – but one that I knew I could finally be proud of. I had heard the answer I was looking for, had found the man I was seeking, and had not turned away. No shrinking back in fear, no going home wondering "what if?", no returning to self-doubt and self-loathing for months to come. No, I had clenched my teeth, set my face "as a flint" toward what I knew I needed to do, and ran straight towards the thing that I was afraid of, without stopping, without hesitating.

They say that at moments when you fear for your life, everything seems to go by in slow motion. Or sometimes when you're watching a movie, that critical moment comes where the

hero has to save the girl, and the movie changes to slow-motion as he miraculously saves himself, the girl, and the world?

Yeah, that didn't happen. As a matter of fact, the moment running down the track towards the rugby team that day went by in a blink of an eye. It took me longer to write this paragraph than it did to run down the track that day and into my destiny. A part of me knew that if I stopped to think, if I hesitated and analyzed, I would never find the courage to act.

Right before colliding with him from behind at full speed, I jumped into the air – elbows and knees pointed forward – and unleashed what I hoped was my fiercest war cry.

*Experiencing infidelity in your marriage?
Find yourself understanding exactly how*

David felt in the book?

*You can find a community of
people who feel the same way
at **fromcowardtowarrior.com**,
along with coaching and other resources
to help you not just survive it,
but thrive through it.*