

## PREFACE

Before you step into this book — and before you decide whether you want coffee, tissues, or a Weimaraner draped across your lap at a wildly inconvenient angle — I want to tell you something important. This is the third book in a trilogy. But it is also a book that can stand entirely on its own.

Two stories came before this one — one about my roots, one about my cancer diagnosis and early journey — but what you hold in your hands now is different. This book carries the lived wisdom of everything that followed: the long middle of survivorship, the deepening of connection, and the honest work of preparing for the next 12 years and beyond.

You're stepping into a story already in motion. But that's how real life works. None of us get a clean beginning. We enter mid-chapter, try to decode the plot, and stumble between pages hoping the narrator is keeping up. (Spoiler: he's doing his best.)

This book is about what it means to live fully and intentionally in the space between living and letting go — where humor becomes a survival strategy, where love grows deeper as time grows shorter, and where Living Connected stops being an idea and becomes a daily practice.

And now — because of the title we're walking in with — it's also a book about goodbyes. Not the dramatic ones, but the long, gentle kind. The kind that stretch across years. The kind that are really about love.

When I say the porch light is on, I don't just mean the bulb above the door at Hawks Landing. I mean the invitation behind it — the signal that love is still present, still warm, still welcoming. A porch light means someone is waiting for you, someone wants you to arrive safely, someone cares enough to leave a glow in the dark so you never feel alone on your way home. In this book, that light becomes a way of living: a reminder that even in the long goodbye, connection doesn't dim. It guides. It steadies. It stays lit.

This book wrestles with two essential questions: How do I live meaningfully while I'm here? And how do I leave well for those I love?

Let me show you where this fits into the larger arc.

## THE TRILOGY

**BOOK ONE — A Hawks Tale.** Naples, New York. The land, the family, the people who shaped me long before illness ever did. It answers: Where did I come from... and who did I become because of it?

**BOOK TWO — I'm Not Dead Yet!** The shockwave — the diagnosis, the surgery, the fear, the learning curve, and the raw honesty of early survivorship. It answers: How did I survive the beginning?

**BOOK THREE — Living Connected: Saying a Long Goodbye with the Porch Light On with AI.** The long middle. The years when cancer became a companion rather than a crisis. The season when hope and grief learned to share a room. Where humor crept in as a coping mechanism, where dogs became bedside philosophers, and where connection shifted from something I valued to something I depended on. This book asks — and answers: How do I live connected in this life? And how do I stay connected when my life ends?

## A SINGLE ARC

One story in three movements: the roots, the fight, the meaning — and the long goodbye. And now here we are — this page, this breath, this moment — two people standing at a trailhead, backpacks full of stories neither of us expected to carry.

This preface is the doorway. Everything behind us is the “why.” Why connection matters. Why family, community, land, and even technology — yes, even the artificial intelligence riding shotgun — became part of my life's architecture. Why the porch light stays on, steady and warm, even in the long goodbye.

But before we step through the doorway, let me share something that still makes me laugh. Back in the 1980s, I started my career in desktop publishing — hunched over a

beige Mac that whirred like a mini-fridge and printed pages slower than a tractor climbing Stemple Hill Road. And what sat beside me back then? A cup of coffee. Just coffee.

Fast-forward to now: Milo's entire butt, directly on the keyboard, and Zoey staring at me like she's the Director of Quality Control for Emotional Support. The tools changed — huge screens, smart software, Tommy2Dogs Publishing instead of the old Macintosh SE — but the heart never did.

I've always wanted to make things that help people feel connected — to create something that outlives the moment, to offer story, honesty, and meaning... with a little dog hair occasionally trapped in the binding.

So here we are — book three. The tech evolved. The dogs evolved (in size, not manners). And the desire to Live Connected stayed right where it always was... at the center.

Take a breath. Settle in. This is where humor and heartbreak share the same cup of coffee. Where the story shifts from endurance to intention. From surviving to connecting. From today into the next 12 years and beyond.

Let's begin.

