





# I'M NOT AFRAID *of fear anymore*

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*For Mikey, my parents, Ana, Demis and Emma, my  
faithful companions in both adventure and battle.*



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## *Foreword*

In the same way a tightrope walker faces the thin rope, we face this thing called life. In his hands is the pole that helps him keep balanced. On one hand, paralysing fear weighs heavily, on the other, the beauty of life. Before a large spectating audience, we face conflicting self-perceptions. In one way, we are protagonists in an important story which many will watch. In another we feel alone and abandoned, faced with a danger that no one else can understand because they haven't been through it. A step in any direction could be a dangerous move. I don't want to be scared but at the same time I can't live while ignoring it. I desire to live full of illusion but I can't avoid the distressing thoughts that scream inside of me. In the end there are only two options: finish with a standing ovation or in a great tragedy.

How many times have I felt like I was falling?

Many.

There are countless occasions in life where we believe that we won't be able to go on. We even

convince ourselves that we aren't capable of taking the next step. And so, how do we keep on juggling this tricky balance?

The fixed point of faith, that's our reference, and that which fixes our gaze on destiny and on the One who is with us, even when we can't see Him.

In this book, the author, through her most personal experiences, shares her intimate and in-depth insights, the invisible coaching she has gone through in solitude, as well as the battle of the mind that must be won and the perseverance that it takes in both the good and the bad times to keep walking in faith.

Here you will find answers based on the author's own journey, and how she faced difficult and diverse situations. In these pages, Esther opens up her heart. Her story becomes a close-up account to which we must pay careful attention, given the fact that many of us may find ourselves reflected in our own struggles. This book exemplifies just how a period of struggle can be turned into a beautiful testimony, full of purpose.

Each and every one of us deal with difficulties and unexpected news, that's why we need to listen to real-life stories of people who overcame.

*Loida Muñoz Olmo*  
*Social and Political Entrepreneur*

*Introduction*  
*Fight of the Giants*

Living is an exciting adventure, but there are moments in which life can darken with the arrival of some kind of giant. A fear, be it real or fictitious, that we have to deal with. A problem or situation which causes us pain and suffering.

These giants take on very different forms and create a different reaction in each one of us. Mine, those which have made me tremble the most, are: fear of loneliness, anxiety, and my sister's cancer.

For others, it's the loss of a loved one, waiting for a dream which isn't coming to pass, depression or a toxic relationship. And at times, all we can see around us is that. That which we want and don't have, or that which we have and don't want.

When this happens, life's normal rhythm can become overwhelming, and nothing we do can soothe the wound or the emptiness that burns in-

side us. Obsession becomes a roommate, and the present becomes increasingly dull.

Despite being accompanied, we can end up feeling pretty alone. At times it's because we don't dare to share our circumstances with anyone, and others, because those around us do not see our giant as big as we do.

Instead of shouting for help, we put on a mask and continue in silence, not knowing how to fight. All the weight on our shoulders. Without realizing that the more we close ourselves off, the more power the giant gains. That is how fear acts when uncontrolled. If we don't manage to dominate it, it will dominate us, and convert us into its slaves.

That's why it is necessary to find the appropriate weapons for dealing with it and to learn to use them effectively. This is why I want to share with you the weapon that helped me overcome anxiety and face my sister's illness.

During that time, I ended up at the point where I was asking myself if living was even worthwhile. The present was overwhelming, and being happy again seemed like an impossible dream. That was until faith appeared - expert in making us see what cannot be seen and in connecting us to the Creator. It was faith that gave me my life back.

Although today trials and tough circumstances continue to arise, fear no longer paralyzes me like it did before, because I have proven that faith is much more powerful.

Perhaps you too are going through a difficult time- you think that no one understands you, or you are even questioning if moving forward makes any sense. If this is the case, this book is for you. Many of us cross the same desert and when we exchange our experiences, we feel understood, gain a different perspective, and find a solution where before it seemed like there wasn't.

After all, we're all more alike than we think. We all have a heart beating in our chest. This is why I want to share my story, in the hope that you don't fall into the same lies that I did, and that in these pages you can find some of the answers you are searching for.

Just open your eyes.



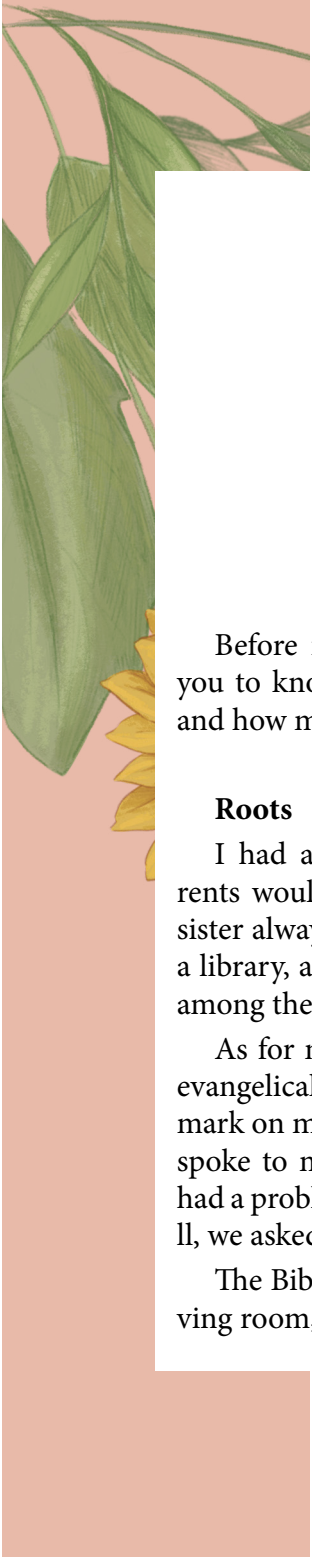
What some folks call impossible, is just stuff  
they haven't seen before.  
—*What Dreams May Come.*



**I**

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**THE  
HEART  
THAT  
BEATS**



## Chapter 1 *Identity*

Before introducing you to my giants, I'd like you to know a few things about me. Who I am, and how my life was before.

### **Roots**

I had a happy childhood. Every day my parents would tell me that they loved me, and my sister always played with me. My mom worked in a library, and I spent many evenings there buried among the books, which I loved.

As for my dad, he was and is the pastor of an evangelical church, something which has left a mark on me for sure. Since I was little, my parents spoke to me about God naturally. Whenever we had a problem at home, no matter how big or small, we asked God for help.

The Bible was a book that was always in the living room, the bathroom or in my own bedroom.

Both my mom and dad read it, not as if it were a novel or a theory manual, but as a book in which they found hope and direction. My dad spoke passionately about God, as if he were talking about his best friend, and my mom always carried verses in her coat pockets and would put them around the mirrors in our house as well. She said that reading them did her well.

My sister Ana, who was six years older than me, would spend her days singing. She loved music and I remember that she would make songs with her guitar that spoke about God. It's because of all this, that for as long as I can remember, the figure of God has been present in my home. And we have experienced it very closely.

I always received weird looks in class when talking about my dad's profession. In Spain it is not very common. Many thought we belonged to a cult. Some would tell me they knew what we believed because they had seen it in *The Simpsons*, and others would ask what the differences were in my beliefs compared to the Catholic Church. As time went by, my classmates would often ask me questions in private about my faith, the existence of God, life and death, suffering, and the life of Jesus. And I always liked talking about it.

Since I was a child, I have preferred being around people instead of being alone. My parents say that I was always searching for things to do,

and would get grumpy if there was no plan, something which still occurs to this day.

When I turned eight, I was given a diary, and I began writing about my daily life. The content wasn't particularly interesting, but it really strikes me seeing how in these years, a good part of my essence was already being shaped. In this diary, I wrote about how much I loved my family and friends, the places I went to, and how much I wanted to jump on a plane and visit other countries.

### **Teenage years**

I have really good memories of my childhood and teenage years. Although, like everything, things weren't perfect. Something that always affected me was my weight.

Ever since I was little, I have weighed an extra few pounds, and I had a complex about it. I couldn't always buy the clothes I wanted, and, occasionally, I would receive a hurtful comment. As I got older, I would tell myself that I'd start eating healthier, but in the end, I never followed through and would end up mad with myself.

When my teenage years arrived, I began to feel more and more envious of the slimmer girls. I thought that their lives were easier than mine. They didn't have to do anything extra for a guy to like them, to be beautiful, or feel good. Oh how wrong I was!

With time, this feeling of frustration with my body grew stronger. I started to think that because of my shape maybe no guy was going to notice me, which was a lie.

And even though I had many reasons to be grateful, at times I only focused on what I didn't have. I mistakenly believed that by having a boyfriend and a few pounds less, my life would be perfect, and I wouldn't have any problems.

Now, when looking back, I realize how deceived I was and the damage those thoughts were doing to me. Being skinnier does not equal being happier, neither does having a partner mean you will be more complete.

As time moved on, I gained more assurance as a woman and felt proud of what I was achieving, although these thoughts were deep-rooted in my mind.

My college years were very significant for me, and I fully enjoyed them. I went out almost every day, had a good group of friends, liked what I was studying, traveled to many places, and grew as a person.

### **Trips**

In the last year of college, I went on Erasmus to Rouen in France. That was my first time living alone and being out of my environment for such a long time. I needed to know who I was outside

of my bubble and prove that I indeed could stand on my own two feet. I still feel the excitement of freedom and euphoria that I felt on the train from Paris to Rouen, with all the suitcases, on my way to a destination that I wasn't familiar with and that would be my home for some months. I needed to spread my wings, see where my limits reached, and test myself. I wanted to discover what I was capable of. I was excited to learn French, make friends from other countries, go to the supermarket and start cooking. I also wanted to test my faith in the Lord and see if, outside of my world, it was genuine.

I lived in Galois, a residence on the college campus. My room was barely 40 meters squared, although to me it felt huge. From my window I could see students making their way to class, people riding their bikes and friend groups sitting in the park. Just beside the residence there was a square full of small artisan businesses where some families would sell local fruit and veg in the mornings. I loved seeing what the produce was called in French, observing how the sellers acted, and, above all, the distinctive smell of freshly baked bread that came from the *boulangerie*.

In the residence there were people of all nationalities, and we made plans daily. We ate, we danced, some drank a little too much, and we explored the city together. Aside from this group, I also made French friends with whom I could practice

the language and visit picturesque locations that the locals went to.

I also started going to a church and, much to my surprise, I met a lot of people the same age as me who were also Christians. Away from home, my faith continued being real and sincere. At the start, my friends in the residence didn't understand why I woke up early on Sunday mornings to go to church or why I read the Bible, but as time went on, many began to show an interest in knowing more about God.

Some of them would come to my room so that I would ask God to help with a certain issue that was bothering them. Others came because they said they felt a peace there, something which I knew didn't come from me. Multiple friends even started to read the Bible with me as they had many questions which they wanted the answer to.

All this made me believe even more in the veracity of the Bible, because even in the college world, where everything is relative and the existence of a Creator is rejected, still so many students are searching for something more and have this need to make sense of the purpose for their life.

This period helped me to live my faith with more freedom. A freedom based on a personal relationship with God the Creator, which is birthed out of genuine love and not out of rules or traditions.

A faith which doesn't depend on a place, a phase, my state of mind or the people around me.

Additionally, on a personal level, this experience marked me forever. Arriving in a new city, learning a new language, making friends, finding my place and being myself while using another language all made me gain so much confidence in myself.

Later, back in Spain, I got the opportunity to spend a period of time in Rome, and another in Dublin. In Rome, I did a six-month internship in a communications agency. Italy had always been one of my favorite countries in the world, and so being able to learn Italian, make friends there, discover secret spots in the Eternal City and travel the country surpassed all my expectations.

However, I found this time more challenging than my Erasmus as I no longer had teachers to help me. I had to find my own way.

Through some friends, I found a room in a shared apartment with four other girls. There were only two bedrooms and in mine there were three of us. Nowadays if I had to share my room with two more people I would say no, but at that time I didn't care, and in fact my two roomies became my family there. One girl was Brazilian and the other was Polish. We always made plans together and we laughed a lot. It seemed like we had known each other our whole lives, and even though Ita-

lian wasn't our first language, we managed to understand each other pretty well.

The apartment wasn't the prettiest in the city. It was in the San Lorenzo neighborhood, an area close to the center where students would gather to throw parties and pre-drink. Our block was covered in graffiti and the glass on the doors was broken. The smell upon entering wasn't very pleasant and a few neighbors advised us not to return home alone at night. It clearly wasn't a very promising area. Despite this, we never had any problems and the district had many places with live music, artisan shops and open spaces for taking a stroll.

Just across the street from where I lived there was a (completely unconventional) evangelical church. This church met in a jazz bar which the owner rented out on Sunday mornings. The place was spectacular, and although it was small, it had a lot of charm. The walls were black and red. It was full of musical instruments, portraits of famous musicians, and there was a stage at the back. As soon as I entered, I noticed that there were a lot of people around my age, and many approached to say hi. I felt really comfortable.

This place turned into my home throughout my time in Rome. There were designers, singers, entrepreneurs, architects and many students passionately living out their faith in God. Every Sunday, church was a celebration. I loved it.

I also learned a lot in the communications agency. The office was located on a very picturesque street in the San Giovanni neighborhood. I would walk there, and during my daily commute I passed by cathedrals, two Roman aqueducts, and a lovely park bordered by an ancient wall on the left-hand side. The roads were made of stone and were always full of people riding vespas. The buildings were orange, terracotta and yellow in color. Each one had the typical brown wooden windows that appear in paintings and Italian movies. Most days, if it didn't rain, there would be men playing dominoes, and there was always an older gentleman reading a book on the same bench. I nicknamed him "bookman" and, now and again, I would sit by his side to read my book and chat with him since he was really sweet.

The office was in a very beautiful building with large windows overlooking the street. From above, you could hear the conversations of passersby and almost daily there was a loved-up couple who got angry and argued, something I found particularly amusing.

During my stay there, I was mainly involved in design work. I have always preferred public relations and copywriting, but design was an aspect in which I felt quite limited. At the start, I would go to work feeling very nervous as, even though it was work experience, I wanted to do a good job and show that I could be a good publicist. I was scared

of not meeting the mark and failing. Although it was difficult at the beginning, it was an enriching experience, and my boss proposed an extension in my time with them. This certainly helped me gain confidence at a professional level.

Later on, I returned to Seville for a year to study a master's degree in international relations and do another internship in an advertising agency. When there wasn't long left to finish the course, they awarded me a scholarship with which I could go to Dublin to complete work experience for the master.

Within a week, I had bought the tickets and organized everything for my journey. My mom happily came with me for the first couple of days. It was summer, and the city looked beautiful. The buildings were decorated with flowers, you could hear live music everywhere, and when evening would fall, the sky would stay pink for hours as it wouldn't get dark until after 11pm. Despite the fact it was almost always cloudy, it was a cheerful city, full of life.

As many young people traveled there to study English, it was super easy to make friends, and in a short space of time I met people that I felt very comfortable with. For this reason, upon finishing my masters I decided to stay there for a year and perfect my English.

In just a few weeks, I found a job in a bookshop in the center, just in front of the main university,

Trinity College. The shop had two floors. There was a stationery zone, one for souvenirs and another for books. Irish music was played on loop in the background to catch the tourists' attention. We wore green uniforms for the color of the Irish flag and the place smelt like wood.

Although my English wasn't bad, it was so difficult for me to understand what the customers were saying, especially when they would ask for book names. At times, instead of a book, I thought that they wanted tobacco and, when reaching them a packet of cigarettes, I'd receive confused looks. Other times, without meaning to, I'd give them incorrect information. I remember one time a customer asked me for a book on the history of Trinity College and I, not understanding what they meant, led him to the door and pointed out the university. The gentleman thought I wanted to kick him out!

Despite this, people were pretty patient with me and, perhaps because of my accent, they found it funny.

It wasn't the job of a lifetime, but it was where I had the most fun. The Irish are very approachable and have a rather ironic sense of humor. They are always joking around, and, like Andalusians, they know how to laugh at themselves. I would spend the whole day laughing. At times, in front of a customer, I would have to hide myself behind the

counter because one of my colleagues had played a prank on me and I couldn't hold back my laughter.

Another thing was that, being Spanish, I was able to greatly improve my English, and whenever a group of French, Spanish or Italians came in, the bosses would call for me to assist them.

My house was only a twenty-minute walk from the store. The journey from one end to the other was beautiful. Upon leaving work, I would walk up Grafton Street, one of the main streets in the city. It is always full of musicians playing, people buying, and tourists taking photos. From there, I would arrive at St Stephen's Green, a park with ponds and wooden bridges which in spring is filled with colorful flowers. At the end of the park was Leeson Street, where my house was.

I lived in a privileged area, in a typical Dublin Georgian-style house. The "only" downside was that I lived with nine other people. They were from Brazil, South Korea, Venezuela, Italy and Argentina. We were all more or less the same age and made many plans together. I also found a church through which I met many people who later became family there.

In Dublin I felt secure. For the first time I had a permanent, well-paid job after almost two years of scholarships and internships. I could pay all my bills, go out often and save. I was finally independent.

Although I was happy in many aspects, at the same time, I felt a little lost. In the previous years, I had lived through many experiences away from home and learned a lot, but I still wasn't sure where I was going. I wanted to find a job where I could develop myself professionally and, above all, I wanted to find a partner for life.

A few months after arriving in Ireland, I fell in love with a boy, but the relationship didn't come to anything, and I took it badly. As I approached my thirties, not having a partner became increasingly difficult, and the negative thoughts I had had about it as a teenager intensified, which began affecting my own identity.