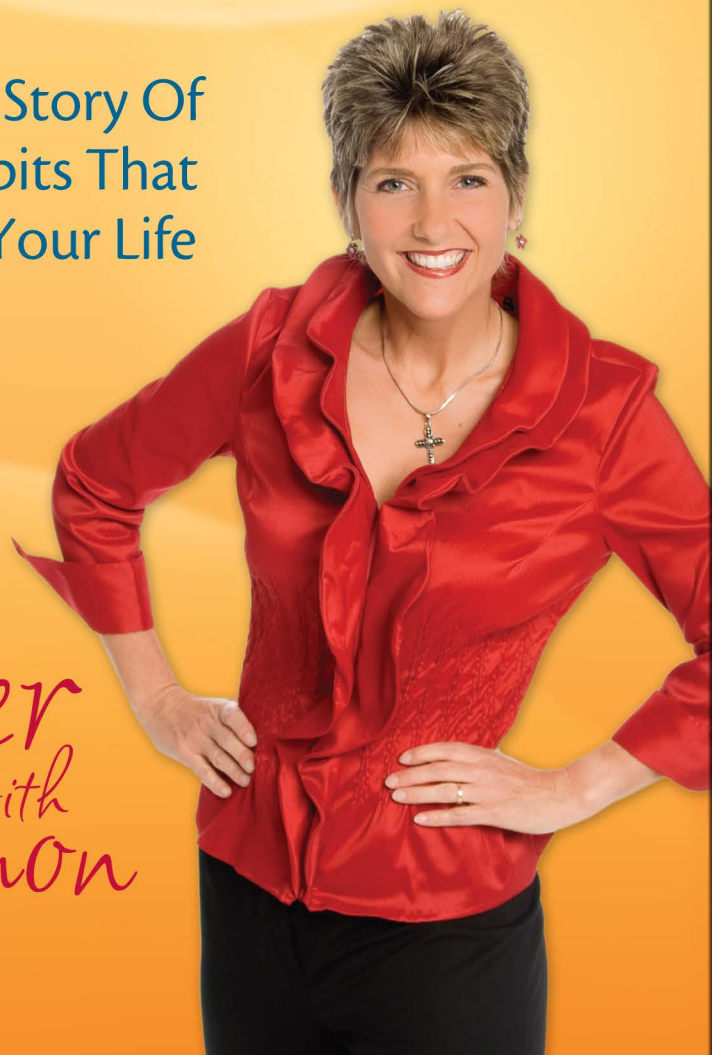


DIET FREE™

Novel

The Inspiring Story Of
The Eight Habits That
Will Change Your Life



*Water
with
Lemon*

Zonya Foco, RD and Stephen Moss

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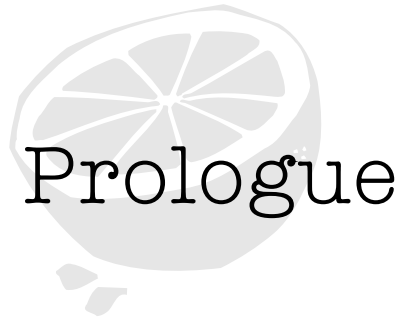
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This book is intended as a reference to healthy eating and exercise. It is not intended as a substitute for any treatment prescribed by your doctor. It is recommended that everyone receive regular checkups from a medical doctor and inquire specifically about nutrition and exercise recommendations. If you suspect that you have a medical problem, by all means, see your doctor.



Prologue

“I have been transformed,” Karen wrote in her journal. “The Power of One Good Habit took me from fat to thin. Unhealthy to healthy. Self-conscious to self-confident.”

She paused, reread what she’d just written, then underlined the words *thin*, *healthy* and *confident*.

From the back lawn came a shout, then laughter. Karen stood and stepped to the patio door to check on Gabe, her five-year-old, and was about to take her seat again when she caught sight of her reflection in the glass. All she had on was a pair of jeans and a T-shirt, but even after four years she was still thrilled to catch a glimpse of how she looked. And it had happened so easily, she thought. Without dieting! Simply by taking one small step, then another, and another.

That was all Fowler had asked of her. An incremental, consistent movement toward better health, toward losing weight. “Let the Power of One Good Habit slip into your

world," he'd said. "Let each habit build on the next. Let the process be gradual, thoughtful. Let it become a *part* of your life, without intruding *into* your life."

He had talked about courage. Just the amount needed to learn what there was to learn. Then he'd placed his eight simple habits into a nest of creativity, promising, "That's all you'll ever need."

And he was right.

Karen smiled, remembering how she'd first resisted, then reluctantly agreed to listen to his words. Only that. Just listen.

And then the eight habits took hold.

"Thank you, Fowler," she whispered. "For showing me the way. For giving me back my life."

She returned to her desk and lifted the pen once again. But she didn't start writing. Instead she found her mind drifting back to how the transformation of her weight, and her life, had started.





The screen door slammed behind Karen. She hurried toward the dark woods at the back of the lawn, her six-month-old son crying in her arms. After a couple of steps she couldn't catch her breath. Halfway across the yard she slowed to a walk. And at the white oak that marked the beginning of the woods beyond her lawn's boundary, she stopped, pressed her shoulder against the tree, and fought for air.

The door behind her banged open and Gary stepped onto the porch, his belly hanging over the waistband of his red boxers.

Karen, struggling to calm Gabe, turned to face him, thinking, *This time he's going to have to beg to get me back! Promise to stop calling me names. I know I'm overweight, but that's not the cause of every problem we have!*

But Gary yelled, "You can say whatever you want, Karen! I don't care anymore. You're a fat cow and you make me

sick!" He stormed back into the kitchen. The door slammed shut behind him.

Karen watched through the kitchen window as Gary took a few steps, seemed to change his mind, then lifted her purse from where she'd slung it over the back of a chair. He turned to face the window and, holding the purse high, yelled, "Running into the back wasn't a good idea, Karen, especially without this! 'Cause now I'm locking you out!" Then he slammed the storm door, slid the bolt and turned off the porch light, leaving the yard in blackness.

Karen was stunned. For a moment all she could do was stare at the door. Then she cursed softly, and clamped her jaws. Taking a deep breath to calm herself, she lowered her head to Gabe's. *Okay, Gary, you know I have no place to go. So you're waiting, expecting me to knock at the door, ask to be let in. Even apologize for standing up for myself! But that's not going to happen. I'll stay out all night before I give you that satisfaction!*

And with this, she turned toward the woods.

In the six weeks she'd lived here, she had never before gone beyond the perimeter of the lawn, had not yet found the time to see where her town-house community met the farmhouses and barns of a passing era.

I don't have to go far, she reasoned, her determination rising. Just far enough so Gary will have to search for me when he starts to worry. Force him to bend a little. All I need is a place to sit, and I'll wait him out!

The night was warm, the sky brilliant with stars. Karen, quickly winded again, kept her pace slow and let the rocking motion of her steps lull Gabe to sleep. She made her way through the woods until she came to a clearing where a split-rail fence lay forgotten. With Gabe in her lap, she sat next to one of the fence posts. Once more she struggled to regain her breath.

But now a familiar knot began to ache in her gut, a knot that had been tightening for years, clamping down with each pound gained. She sighed, hating the feeling, and realized

that after sixty extra pounds, the knot had finally twisted into hopelessness.

Then she heard a man's voice call out, "Courage!"

The word, a sudden shout in the night, startled her. It was as if her own spirit were urging her on, demanding strength. It came again: "Courage!" She held her breath, waited for more, then heard, the tone softer now, "Hey, boy. You see something? Is something there?"

A large dog bounded toward her from the trees. It stood barking on the other side of the fence until the voice commanded, "Courage! Get back here!"

The dog obeyed instantly, but the next moment Karen was blinded by a bright beam of light. She lifted her hand to shield her eyes. The light dropped to the ground. Gabe began to cry.

Karen blinked, tried to focus. The light, now held low, moved toward her. She could make out the outline of a man. He stopped about fifteen feet from where she sat, and once again lifted the light, though this time only until it illuminated the fence and Gabe. With her instincts on edge, Karen waited, thinking, *If there's even a hint of trouble, I'm running!*

But the man switched off his flashlight and gave a cautious greeting. The distance between them was too far for Karen to make out his features. He stepped closer, to just beyond arm's length from the fence and, dropping to one knee with the dog beside him, said, "Sorry about the light. We didn't know anyone was here. I hope Courage didn't scare you. He wouldn't harm a flea."

"It's okay," Karen answered. "We're fine."

The fence crossed Karen at chest height, creating a buffer. She rocked Gabe, quieting him again, and took a good look at the man.

He was lean. Lithe. Nearing or just past fifty, Karen guessed. His hair was thick and unruly and his cheeks were covered in a day's growth of stubble. He wore a pullover and a dark multi-pocketed vest, and jeans that were tucked into work boots. On his head was a lantern.

The man said, "My name's Fowler, and this is—"

"Courage," Karen said, the word sounding weak coming from her, not at all the way it had sounded when snapped out by the man.

Fowler grinned.

Karen smiled back. Then, realizing that if she could make out Fowler's features so clearly, he could do the same to hers, she immediately lowered her head.

It was the thickness of her face she'd grown ashamed of, the roll of her second chin, the swell of fat that had become her waist. She suddenly wished she'd found a cave to hide in and not this clearing, so no one would see she was wearing Gary's old Bulls sweatshirt because her shirts had again gotten too small, or that she wore sweatpants because the only pants or skirts she could get around her were those fitted with elastic waistbands.

"Courage and I were just out gardening," Fowler said.

"Gardening?" Karen again raised her eyes to Fowler's, looking for the joke in his expression, but saw none.

"It's what I do," Fowler said. "Garden. Often at night. Then I write about it in magazines." For a moment the only sound was Courage's breathing. Then Fowler continued, "Lacewing. Lacewing larvae. I was checking how they're doing on the hostas."

"Really," Karen replied, not sure what to make of this conversation.

"Yes. Lacewing larvae. It's a good insect. We buy them—gardeners, I mean—and put them where there're mites. I don't like chemicals. Never have. Don't like anything I can't pronounce."

Karen nodded, going along with what he said although she had no idea what it meant.

"I put a whole slew of them on my hostas," Fowler continued, more animated now, "and they've done an excellent job. Better than I expected. And I'm out now because I can see them more clearly at night, the plants and the bugs and what they've done, because of my lights, the intensity of my

lights. This one," he said, lifting his flashlight, "and this one too," he added, touching the lamp on his head. Then he removed it and held it out toward Karen, as though for her inspection. "This is the kind they use in mines. You know, down in the shafts. Keeps your hands free." He smiled broadly. "Works well here too. In my world."

"I would never have thought of that," Karen said. "It sounds like you've got it all figured out."

Courage pushed a wet nose beneath Fowler's chin and nudged his neck. "And Courage likes to come with me," Fowler continued, "to keep me company. Isn't that so, old boy?"

"He's a beauty," Karen said, stretching her arm out so the dog could sniff her hand. "Shepherd, right?"

"Shiloh Shepherd, the biggest, most affectionate shepherd there is. A really special breed."

Karen gave the black and gray dog a gentle rub behind the ears. She said, "We had a dog when I was growing up. For years she was my best friend." Then she added, "Oh, sorry, I'm forgetting my manners. I'm Karen, and this is Gabe. We're your neighbors. From over there, just past the trees. We've been sort of . . . locked out." She said nothing else, giving Fowler a brief, forced smile, and was grateful when he didn't ask for details.

Courage whined lightly and again nudged Fowler's neck. Fowler stroked the dog, saying, "You want to go back home, don't you?" Turning to Karen, he added, "His best friend's in the house, and he hates to leave her for very long." He hesitated. "Are you two going to be all right out here?"

"Oh, yes," Karen replied, trying to sound as if she meant it.

Fowler looked unconvinced. "The house is just a stone's throw from here," he said. "The least I can do is offer a locked-out neighbor a chair to sit in and a cup of tea."

Before Karen had a chance to respond, Fowler stood, propped the flashlight under his chin and, with a little grunt,

lifted the old fence rail off its post and placed it aside, creating a doorway.

Then he held out his hand.

