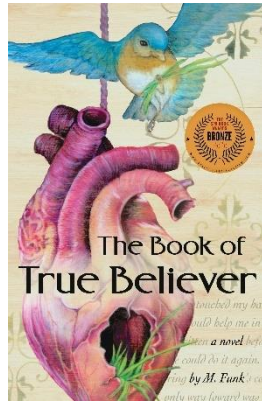


Excerpts from *The Book of True Believer*



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Page 103 . . . Love as a verb

“As a noun, the emotion of love ebbs and flows naturally. The sea-changes of our feeling states are as sovereign as the tides. As a verb, love must be mindfully (vigilantly) cultivated. It takes effort to develop the will to love—to act with kindness, be respectful, forgive, and commit, even when it feels impossible.”

Page 116-117 . . . The nature of good fortune

“Good fortune does not strike me as a difficult thing to move. When it does come along, it floats like a stray helium balloon and alights like a bird. On the periodic table, I imagine it fits somewhere between the elements of serendipity and pure chance.”

Page 129 . . . Honoring the perspectives of others

“Sometimes I’m tempted to deny things I haven’t seen with my own eyes. But I’m starting to realize that some people are endowed with the gift of exceptional sight—whether it be foresight, insight, vision, or experience. Some (like me) are privileged to behold the world’s wonder and beauty, while others are obliged to witness more than their fair share of ugliness.”

Page 130 . . . Anger only serves one purpose

“Anger often presents as a secondary response to another, primary emotion: fear, shame, guilt, or worry. That’s why it’s so easy for anger to escalate to rage. But anger only serves one real purpose in our lives: to combat injustice.”

Page 153 . . . How to listen to others

“. . . Pure listening is possible only when I empty myself of self and become an open vessel. There must be room inside me for others' thoughts, attitudes, and feelings before I can imbibe them. Also, self-consciousness is an obstacle to self-emptying. When I'm too focused on myself, that preoccupation depletes the finite quantities of energy and attention I have to share with others.

“Attention is a precious resource, often in short supply. People want to be seen, heard, and understood. When I meet this demand with my own eyes, ears, and mind, there is no limit to our depth of connection.”

Page 155 . . . Grief related to physical pain

“A doctor once recommended that Mom make an appointment with a psychiatrist. She never did. Her troubles were physical, she declared. It was a waste of time and money to chase down shadows of things past. But I wasn't so sure. I couldn't help but wonder if somewhere beneath her tenacious facade lay a tangled heap of grief.”

Page 170 . . . The riddle of intimacy

“Intimacy, now there's a word with a wealth of underutilized dimensions . . . its greater worth may be found in this riddle: name the means by which one embraces tightest without touching and plunges deepest without spilling a drop of blood.”

Page 171 . . . People look at others as reflections of themselves

“Human bodies are opaque. When we look at each other, our eyes explore the surfaces, not the depths. We search for what is familiar and favor it over what is foreign. In fact, we tend to look for ourselves in the reflections of other people. We are a bunch of walking, talking mirrors that gravitate toward the ones that show us favorable impressions of ourselves and recoil from the ones that expose our shortcomings.”

Page 184 . . . The consequences of meddling with fate

“Doubt grows louder when it's quiet.

“Did we meddle with Fate?

“Did we make enemies with the Powers that Be?

“Perhaps the people that Jeremiah Promise delivered from death were not meant to be saved. For that, there would have to be consequences. Defiance of the natural order wreaks havoc on body and soul.”

Page 191 . . . The value of pain and suffering

“As I sat before the flickering blaze tonight, I thought about the endless cycles of elation and disappointment that I’ve been through with Jeremiah over the last year. He has heated, cooled, trampled, and twisted my heart so many times that it has begun to transform into a new sort of metal—an alloy of hope and discouragement more durable than either on its own.

“Perhaps suffering doesn’t want to be pitied or suppressed. Like heat and flame, pain serves a purpose. It is an agent of change. Fire may be fearsome, but it is also bright. It’s a guiding light that shows us what the darkness tries to hide.”

Page 243 . . . Peeling wallpaper is like peeling away illusions

“Did you know that peeling away misconceptions is like stripping old wallpaper one layer at a time? One doesn’t even realize how many coverups there have been and how the room has slowly become more confining over time until she begins scraping away and finds more layers underneath.

“There is a fundamental flaw with this sort of undertaking, though—namely, that the determination to get to the bottom of something, once ignited, is not easily extinguished. It tends to catch on other elements in the room—the carpet, trim, furniture, and fixtures. If one is not careful, she may find herself scrutinizing the room’s size, purpose, place in the house, and perhaps the very concept of a home. She may even question the jurisdiction in which it resides and the illusion that her life ever satisfied her at all.”

Page 277 . . . Faith in oneself is essential

“Some kind of faith is essential to this process, of course. Our world is rife with chasms and pitfalls. Without bridges of belief to span the gaps, we would eventually reach impasses in every direction. Faith is the way forward—whether it be in stone, mortar, science, or God. Faith in someone is optimal, but faith in oneself is essential.”