

***OUTRAGEOUS
COURAGE***

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Kris Vallotton and Jason Vallotton, *Outrageous Courage*
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OUTRAGEOUS COURAGE

***What God Can Do with Raw
Obedience and Radical Faith***

**KRIS VALLOTTON
& JASON VALLOTTON**



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Foreword

There are few people in the world I admire as much as Tracy Evans. To put it more accurately, there are few people in the world I fear as much as Tracy. I realize that may not sound biblical to some, or even healthy, yet the most honest expression of my heart is “I fear God in Tracy.” It is not because she has an intimidating presence or imposing personality. She always comes as a servant to all. But she is one of the most thoroughly converted individuals I have ever met. Her life is an offering, continuously poured out for the glory of God. She is what I call “God-possessed.” *Everything* is about and for her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. No exceptions.

Outrageous Courage is a brief record of Tracy’s very full life. But even that is a gross understatement. It is really about God, His love for people, His goodness and His incredible work in and through one yielded vessel. It is certainly not about a perfect person. That becomes clear pretty quickly. It is about a perfectly wonderful God who is capable of doing infinitely great things through finite people. That is the brilliance

of Tracy's story. And that is the brilliance of this book. It is filled with intrigue, danger, faith, miracles and God's mighty deliverances.

There is no question, it is God who is amazing. But those who walk in this level of obedience look a lot like their Father—*amazing!*

I was moved when I saw the title for this book. It does not seem possible to come up with a better title for a book about Tracy than *Outrageous Courage*.

Never has there been a time where supernatural courage is more needed than today. It is no longer optional. One of the most wonderful, almost unexplainable byproducts of reading this book is that people will grow in courage. These kinds of God stories impart something wonderful into the heart of every hungry person who reads them. They supply the people of God with a fresh understanding of God Himself, as His ways are revealed in His works. They also invite us to embark on a similar journey, just to see how outrageously the Lord is prepared to touch humanity through any yielded vessel willing to be used to display His extreme goodness. I am convinced that books of this nature are some of the most important books being written.

I have watched Tracy's life for more than thirty years now. She has been consistent from day one. Her growth is astonishing, especially when you see the environment she willingly places herself in, time and again. She illustrates that the greatest growth in Christ happens not in a sterile, classroom-type environment, but in the dirty places of this world, where life and death are everyday realities, where if God does not intervene, we will fail, even die. This is the lifestyle Tracy has chosen to live. It is the lifestyle of His greatest pleasure.

Outrageous Courage will not disappoint. Read it hungry, and you will finish it hungrier. It does more than satisfy; it

launches the reader on a quest—a partnership for something new. It is bound to be used by God to raise up a new breed of believer—loving, simple, relentless and filled with faith; for nothing is impossible with God.

Many thanks to Kris Vallotton for insisting that her story get written. While Tracy continues to live a full expression of the Gospel, she has lived more for Christ in the years recorded than most people could live in several lifetimes.

Bill Johnson, pastor,
Bethel Church, Redding, California;
author, *Hosting the Presence*,
and co-author, *The Essential Guide to Healing*

Acknowledgments

Sincere thanks to Kris Vallotton, Jason Vallotton and Allison Armerding. They made the dream of this book a reality. May the Kingdom of God continue to advance, until the King Himself comes!

Tracy Evans

Introduction

The Adventures of Tracy Evans

It all began one summer day nearly thirty years ago, when I heard a motorcycle pull up outside our little country church in Weaverville, California. I bridged the threshold of the church door just in time to see a young, skinny tomboy awkwardly hopping off the bike. Little did I know that the course of my life was about to be altered forever.

“Hi, I’m Tracy Evans,” she said with a warm smile.

I extended my hand to greet her. “My name is Kris.”

We exchanged pleasantries for a few minutes, but Tracy seemed guarded and uncomfortable as our conversation grew more personal. I found myself quickly intrigued by her. She seemed a little mysterious . . . the thought actually crossed my mind that I might be meeting a secret agent or a spy. Something about the way she carried herself captivated me. I bombarded her with questions to try to figure her out; she must have felt as though I were interrogating her. She managed to duck most of my inquiries, but this only fueled my curiosity.

Despite her private manner, before long Tracy and I became very close friends. She spent many evenings at our house, where we talked about God deep into the night. I had never met anyone so hungry to know Jesus. She seemed possessed by the love of Christ. And although she did not look tough or hard, she was the bravest person I had ever met. Tracy literally had no fear of death. Hanging around with someone who truly did not care if she died was a challenge, to say the least. She would go out in the middle of the night and look for transients under a bridge or in some dangerous alley just so she could talk to them about Jesus. I mean, the girl was nuts! Many times she would lead people to Christ and then take them home to her humble, one-room apartment and let them stay there. She would stay at our place, so we would often wake up in the morning to discover that Tracy was sleeping on the couch in our front room.

Every day was an adventure with Tracy. She was not only brave; she had the kind of faith in God that I had only read about in the Bible. Living around her was like hanging out with David and his mighty men. Consequently, miracles happen through and around her nearly every day. The truth is, I would not have believed her stories if I had not witnessed many of them myself.

Eventually, Tracy gave her apartment to the homeless and moved in with our family. She shared a bedroom with our two young daughters and had a huge impact on all our children. In fact, when Jaime was fourteen years old and Shannon was twelve, Tracy talked us into letting them smuggle Bibles into communist China—just one of the countless terrifying situations she put us in with her exploits.

“God will protect the girls,” she argued at the time. “And if they die, they’ll be giving their lives for something that really counts!”

Of course, Tracy never thought these feats were a big deal, which only served to make me feel like a coward. Our daughters, however, shared Tracy's zeal. We never tried to talk them into some radical adventure; they were the ones pushing us to let them go! On their way home from China, they called to try to talk us into letting them spend the rest of their lives helping the Chinese people. I finally had to put my foot down to get them to come home. To this day, Jaime, Shannon and our son Jason are all in full-time ministry—a tribute to Tracy and her adventures.

Through the Years

Many years have passed since that fateful day when that young, courageous gal came into our lives, but nothing has changed with Tracy. A couple of years ago, the phone rang while I was in church. I looked at the caller ID and realized it was Tracy calling from Africa. I slipped out of the sanctuary to answer her call.

“Hi, Tracy! How are you doing?” I pressed.

“I'm doing fine,” she replied joyfully. “But I called to ask you to pray for my Mozambican friends.”

I could hear a “zinging” noise in the background, so I asked, “What's that noise, Trace?”

“Oh, that's what I'm calling you about. There's a riot outside our house. The police are shooting at everything, and the bullets are flying in all directions. All my Mozambican staff are lying on the floor, scared to death that they're going to die,” she explained, her calm tone oddly dissonant with the facts she was communicating.

“What! What the heck are you doing?” I shouted.

“I'm sitting at the table, drinking tea with one of the other missionaries. But I need you to pray for the town because

they're in full riot. The police are shooting hundreds of rounds into the air to scare the rioters off. But the rounds that go up eventually come down, and some people have been killed. The situation is escalating right outside our door. Would you pray that God would give them peace, please?"

"Tracy, get your butt on the ground," I insisted.

"I'm fine," she replied with confidence.

I prayed for her and hung up the phone, shaking my head.

Making Waves

Tracy Evans's life has had such an unbelievable influence on me, my family and my friends that I wanted to introduce her to the world. Her courageous exploits remind me of people like George Washington, Winston Churchill and Joan of Arc. Short of biblical characters, I struggle to find anyone with whom to compare Tracy and her passion for God. (I am sure there are some such people, but I do not personally know any.) I have been threatening to tell her story for more than a decade, but Tracy has resisted drawing attention to herself. Even after giving me permission to tell her story, she has worked hard to deflect any praise away from herself in this book. After months of wrangling with her, I finally convinced her that God would be glorified through her real story and that many people would be inspired, encouraged and transformed by her life.

My son Jason and I decided that in order for Tracy's story to have the kind of impact on others that it has had on us, it needed to be told in the first person—in her own voice. You will therefore read Tracy's stories in her own words in chapters 1 through 11. Our team recorded and transcribed more than a week of interviews with Tracy, which we then composed into a literary account. Jason and I worked hard to

make sure that both the facts and the “mood” of all Tracy’s stories and exploits were accurate and complete.

I believe her story has the potential to be the next *Pilgrim’s Progress*—a graphic depiction of the journey of discipleship that can teach and inspire everyone who reads it. Instead of being an allegory, though, this book and all its stories are true and unembellished. We hope and pray that Tracy will have the kind of impact on you that she has had on all of us. Put on your seat belt and let the journey begin!

1

Taken Hostage

It was a moonless night. From the beach, my companions and I gazed long at the starry sky looming over the South China Sea, seeking to discern the smallest wisp of a cloud or the tiniest ripple of waves—any sign that another typhoon would descend as I attempted to cross the channel from the Philippines’ capital island of Luzon to Oriental Mindoro.

I had decided this would be my last go at making a sea voyage during the harrowing Philippine typhoon season. Nearly all my cash was gone, spent on two aborted ferry rides that would have made most people stick to terra firma for life. Few hours of my life have been more horrific than those I spent clinging for dear life to a pole, deafened by the eerie din of groaning steel and screaming winds as wave after wave swamped the deck, flinging passengers and debris all over the place. The first ferry barely found its way back to land, but we had been blown so far off course that I had to hitch a ride back to our original port. The other ferry ended up marooned on a sandbar till the storm passed and fishing

boats could come to our rescue. Yet I had decided to give the crossing one more try. This time I had thrown in my lot with a few men who wanted to deliver a load of thatch to the island. We had chartered a motorboat (much faster than a ferry), agreeing that at the first hint of a storm, we would turn tail and head back.

The Milky Way shone down unhindered by any cloud and sparkled back up at us from serene, glassy waters. The tide was at its highest, covering the sandbars that would otherwise hinder our passage to the open sea. It was all clear. My companions and I climbed aboard with our luggage and the load of thatch and chugged away in the still night. As the miles of sea peacefully slipped beneath us, we relaxed and began to chat and laugh, enjoying the starry beauty all around us.

After a few uneventful hours, we saw shoreline stretching out before us. As we began to close the last few hundred yards between us and that white line, suddenly the boat rose and fell. A sandbar swell. Then another. Then . . . a big one. The kerosene lantern launched free from its post, spilling and igniting kerosene all over the bottom of the boat. In seconds, the flames caught the load of thatch and roared to life, engulfing the boat in a raging inferno.

There was nothing for it—I abandoned ship. The South China Sea is known to be sharky, but I had to take my chances. When I came up for air, I saw figures silhouetted against the flames, still trying to get the burning thatch off the boat. “It’s no use!” I yelled. “It’s too late! Jump!”

One by one, the men plunged into the water. As the last remnants of the boat burned and sank away forever, we swam together toward shore—and toward another fire. Someone had seen our flaming boat and kindled a beach fire to help us find our way through the dark night.

Apart from the skirt and shirt I was wearing, everything I owned—my backpack, my Bible, my guitar, even my flip-flops—was now at the bottom of the ocean. My companions were no different, and one had suffered nasty burns. But we were all alive.

The island people who met us on the beach helped us drag our half-drowned selves from the water, brought us to the fire to dry off and gave us food and dry clothes (I was twice as big as most of them, which made the latter a bit of a challenge). The only thing they had for the burnt man was homemade moonshine, which he gratefully sucked down until his pain became bearable. But when we asked the islanders about how to get back to the capital island, they said they could not help us. Apparently, our boat burning was a bad omen about our fortunes at sea. After my experiences in the previous few weeks, I was almost inclined to agree with them.

A couple of our new island friends did offer to guide us to the nearest town—an eleven-day walk through the jungle. We set off the following week. Thanks to the rainy season, the ground was soft under my bare feet. I was the only woman and the only Westerner, and I was definitely the least seasoned for long jungle treks. Despite having weathered extreme conditions and a barrage of illnesses in the previous five years, while serving as a missionary medic on a garbage dump outside Manila, I was still unprepared for the likes of this jungle challenge. We walked until I could not walk anymore, made a meal of whatever our guides could find (mostly tropical fruit and grubs) and stretched out on the jungle floor to sleep.

In the morning, I awoke to find my body aflame with insect bites. It seemed every mosquito and bug on the island had been invited to a banquet hosted by my twenty-nine-year-old flesh. Somehow they found even more to chew on the next night. By the third morning, I could not find a square

centimeter of skin that had not been bitten. My eyes were swollen slits, and my lips were enormous. But I pressed on, shuffling into town on the eleventh day—a bloody, filthy, miserable mess.

My shipmates and our guides soon bid me farewell and left to find their way home. I approached some villagers and introduced myself in Tagalog, the national language. Despite my appearance, I was still discernible as a white woman and therefore was a novelty, so they were curious about me and what I was doing in their town. I explained that I was a missionary. They happily nodded. They were Catholic, they said, and it just so happened that I had arrived on the very day one of their family members was having his firstborn son christened. “Come with us!” they invited.

A little later, I found myself dirty and bedraggled amidst a procession of family members and their neighbors, all immaculate in their Sunday best. After the baptism, the family invited me back to their shack for dinner. At the baptism, I had noticed a confusing mix of Catholic and indigenous practices common among the island tribes, so I asked them if they knew the good news of the Gospel. As I had anticipated, they had never really met Jesus. I introduced Him, told them what He had done for them and invited them to know Him. All twelve family members prayed with me to receive Christ.

“Stay with us,” they all said. “Stay and teach us more.”

How could I refuse? Besides, I had no other option. Almost overnight, I became not only a member of this family of twelve (you grow close to twelve people pretty quickly when you all live together in a one-room hut!) but also one of the town. Word spread that I was a kind of nun who had come to serve them, and that worked perfectly for me. I freely began to talk about Jesus with everyone I met. The little church

meeting in our home soon overflowed with new believers, so I started a second, and then a third, in other homes.

One day I visited the town prison and met the warden. He gave me *carte blanche* to minister to the prisoners. Being a medic, I also began treating people wherever I could and managed to track down some donated supplies from a hospital in one of the bigger towns farther inland. Before long, I had gone completely native—I lived with the people, ate with them, dressed like them and was becoming more conversant in their language. It was exhilarating. The months flew by like a dream.

One day I was sitting on a bus, on my way back from the bigger town where I had picked up more medical supplies. As I mused over the events of the day with satisfaction, suddenly, without warning, I had a vision. I saw myself escaping a warlike scene and leaving my new family and beloved town. I could not believe it.

“Really, Lord?” I asked Him. “But everything is going so well.” I was simply shocked. It could not be right, could it? I decided to sleep on it . . .

. . . only to be awakened the next morning by gunshots ripping through our village. The unmistakable sound jerked me from peaceful sleep, and I knew at once what they meant. *They’re here!* I thought.

The villagers had told me all about the Communist guerrillas lurking in the jungle. Occasionally, the distant rumble of their machine guns had reached our ears. But until that morning, they had never yet breached the Philippine national military lines set up between us.

Crouching in my hut, I could hear the distant screams of the villagers as the guerrillas roused them from their homes, announcing that they were now in charge. The rebels soon arrived at our house. My native dress could not hide my Western

face. They quickly recognized me as American and hauled me into their commandeered headquarters for questioning.

Stories raced through my mind. I had heard that these rebels depended much on the support of smaller villages such as ours. One of their favorite tactics was to attack a military envoy and steal their weapons and uniforms. Then, disguised as the military, the rebels would pillage the village, raping and looting as they went along. Afterward they would return to the jungle, don their rebel gear and reenter the same village, this time posing as heroes who had just defeated the evil military and had come to offer the people their protection.

These rebels were not to be trifled with. My one hope was that I could somehow convince them that I could help them win favor with the village and that I could assist them medically. I needed to prove myself much more valuable to them alive and untouched than otherwise.

The guerilla commander and one of his men started my interrogation. “Who are you? You CIA? What’re you doing here?”

“I’m a medical missionary,” I replied. “I’m American, but I am not CIA. I’m here doing some medical work, and I’m the only one providing Western medicine in the town. If you hurt or kill me, the villagers will blame you for taking away their only medical provider.”

I went ahead and made my offer: “I can tell that many of your men are sick and wounded. They’re malnourished.” I pointed at the dirty bandage on the commander’s leg as I spoke. His movements clearly showed that he was in considerable pain. “You have a wounded leg. I can see that if you don’t get treatment soon, it will go gangrenous. You’ll either lose your leg or your life. Then what? I’m a medic, though, and I can help you.”

The commander nodded to the other man, and they left the room to talk it over. All I could do was pray. I had ignored God's warning to leave, and I knew I was sitting in the consequences. I apologized and asked for His mercy, committing my life once again into His hands.

Finally the men returned. The commander said, "We'll keep you—if you take care of us."

Thank You, God. "I will," I said. "But I also need to continue caring for the villagers. They'll help you if you let me help them."

"How do we know you won't use all your supplies on the villagers?" the rebels countered.

"I'll keep track. I promise to treat one of your soldiers for every ten people in the village. But I must be the one in charge of the supplies. If you take them away, I cannot help you."

The commander considered, and then nodded yes.

"I also lead three churches here," I added. "The villagers will respect you if you let us continue to meet and worship."

Another nod. Apparently my offer to save the commander's leg was having a positive effect on our proceedings. But he still had more questions for me. By their drift, I discerned that he was hoping I might be useful to them as a bargaining chip with the military. I was not too sure about that . . . I was a lone white girl with no money and few connections. I was not even registered with the American embassy in Manila. But I was happy to let the rebels think otherwise.

At last the commander sent me home with armed guards, agreeing to let me stay with my family in the village under house arrest. It was not like I could have run far anyway—we were on an island. After I explained the arrangements to my family, I set out for the guerillas' quarters to start making good on my end of our deal.

When the rebels saw me approaching, clutching my bag of supplies, they sprang into action. Sneering, one shoved his machete in my face. “What do you think you’re doing here?”

“I’m your new medic,” I said, holding up my bag. “Your commander sent me here to help you.”

The rebel grabbed the bag and tossed it to his companions, who began rooting through its contents and throwing hostile looks back at me. “We’ll see,” he said. “If you’re lying, we’ll rape you—then we’ll kill you.”

I could see that most of these fierce-faced guerillas were no more than teenagers, mostly likely pulled from Catholic villages just like this one. So I squared off with them and said, “So you’re going to rape a nun, huh? What are you going to say to God about that?”

That line of reasoning somehow worked with them. The leader put his gun down, took my bag from his friends and gave it back to me.

“All right,” he said. “You can help us.”

The men needed help. They were all teeming with parasites, and many were wounded. One by one I cared for them, offering the Gospel along with bandages and medicine. Over time, several rebels prayed with me to receive Jesus. A few months later, some of them even escorted me to Oriental Mindoro’s capital city to pick up some Bibles. But with every brick I laid to build trust between me and my captors, I was conscious that one false move on my part would tear it down in a heartbeat.

When we could, my family and I talked about possible plans for my escape. As long as things seemed to be going along all right, though, I avoided the topic. Such talk was very risky. I knew I would only have one chance to escape; if I were caught, they would make an example of me and I would be killed. I did not want to endanger my family or

the other villagers by involving them in an escape plot. Yet as I neared my one-year anniversary on the island, it became increasingly clear that I needed a plan.

The military had begun to seriously escalate its attacks on the rebel guerrillas. The rebels offered me up for a hostage exchange, only to find, as I had suspected, that I had no value to the military whatsoever. My medical supplies also dwindled rapidly as the military blockaded the delivery roads from the capital city and more and more wounded rebels in need of care returned to the village. My value to the guerrillas was depreciating, and at the same time, they were growing more reckless and unpredictable as the surrounding tensions mounted. They began getting drunk almost every night, often breaking into fistfights. Hatred, fear and violence hung palpably in the air.

Finally, my family took me aside and said, “Tracy, you can’t stay. You have to try to escape. Please let us help you.”

They had a plan. After hearing it, thinking it over and praying, I agreed. We picked a night, made our preparations . . . and waited.

On the appointed moonless night, I quietly said my farewells and blessed these precious ones who had truly become my brothers and sisters. Then it was time. While some of my family members created a diversion for the rebels standing guard outside our house, I crept out of a back window and took off running into the blackness toward the town prison. A men’s prison, we reasoned, was the last place anyone would look for a white woman. I ran the entire mile as fast as I could. My friend the warden met me at the prison gate and brought me inside, once he made sure that I had not been followed. We lay low for a couple hours, until one of the prison guards arrived to escort me to a little boat destined for the capital island.

The guard and I arrived unseen at the beach just before dawn. The sea was still, just as it had been on that fateful night one year before. I climbed into a waiting boat, and as we pulled out, I waved to the prison guard, one of the many islanders who had risked their lives for me that night. I was leaving as empty-handed as I had come . . . but with a story of God's remarkable faithfulness that would strengthen and encourage me for a lifetime.