



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH MELISSA TAGG



### **Here to Stay**

by Melissa Tagg

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### **1. What inspired *Here to Stay*?**

*Here to Stay* really grew out of my first book, *Made to Last*. In that book, there's a side character named Blake who pretends to be a celebrity's husband. He started out as a goofball and a charmer in that story. But the more I got to know him as I wrote *Made to Last*, the more I realized he had a story of his own waiting to be told. There's a lot more to him than his funny (and cute!) exterior.

### **2. So what's Blake up to if he's no longer playing a celebrity's pretend husband? (In other words, what's this story about?)**

The story starts out with Blake finally getting up the nerve to face his past and return to his hometown. He's sick of playing nomad and wants to find some semblance of stability and normalcy. By contrast, the other main character, Autumn, feels like she's been trapped at home forever. All she wants is to have her own adventure.

When Blake returns home, he's offered a full-time job on the condition that he coordinate and successfully pull off their little tourist town's biggest annual event. To do so, he needs Autumn's help. She's already deep in the throes of trying to fix up her family inn to impress an investor. If she can do so, she might finally be free to pursue her own dream job in Paris. So despite their Hatfield & McCoy-esque family history, they pair up to help each other.

### **3. Is there an underlying theme to this story?**

As I started writing *Here to Stay*, I thought it was a story about finding purpose and hope when life doesn't go the way you envisioned. And that's in there. But the more I got into the story, the more I realized this story is really about dreams—the dreams we have for ourselves and the dreams God has for us.

At first glance, Blake and Autumn seem to have completely opposite dreams. One wants to discover home and find a place of belonging. The other wants travel and adventure. Too, Autumn finds herself in a quandary when the dream she's always had collides with a new dream that's just walked into her life. What does a person do when that happens? Which one do you choose? And what happens when sparks fly between a pair whose dreams couldn't be more different?

### **4. This book is a contemporary romance with a heavy dose of humor. Is there a reason you write in this genre?**

Well, I love to laugh, and frankly, I think romance can be one of the funniest things ever. There's just so much opportunity for funny encounters, witty banter and awkward LOL moments. But I also really believe both humor and romance can pave the way to the truth. Laughter pulls us into a place of openness; romance tugs on our vulnerabilities. So for me, romantic comedy creates a great and natural space for exploring universal themes and spiritual truth.

### **5. Authors tend to put at least a piece of themselves into their stories and characters. Did you do this in any way with *Here to Stay*?**

Definitely! I'm a combination of Autumn and Blake, actually. Like Blake, I love home and the idea of making a life for myself near my family. But like Autumn, I adore travel and adventure and seeing new places. I often feel torn between those competing desires. Also like Blake, I have a thing for flying planes. Okay, truthfully, I've only had the opportunity to fly a plane once—for just a couple minutes. But that one lesson was enough to hook me. And like Autumn, I love me a yummy crepe!

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