



## Almost a Great Escape: A Found Story

*Tyler Trafford*

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**Almost a Great Escape: A Found Story** Tyler Trafford

**Winner of the W.O. Mitchell Award, the Wilfrid Eggleston Award for Non-Fiction, and the Alberta Readers' Choice Award**

Following his mother's death in 2004, Tyler Trafford discovers an album of old letters and creased photographs that reveal a mother he never knew, a man he's never heard of, and a love affair doomed by class and circumstance. The letters are from Jens Møller, a Norwegian pilot who trained in Canada during the early days of World War II, one of only three prisoners who would make it home after The Great Escape.

In *Almost a Great Escape*, Trafford takes us on a journey of emotional discovery and dramatic disclosure as he reconstructs his mother's life, from her youth as a wealthy Montreal debutante to her final days as a broken but unbent casualty of a loveless marriage. His search for answers takes him across Canada and then across the ocean to Norway, hoping to learn more about the mystery of this secret relationship. Written with a fluidity fueled by heart-wrenching honesty, Trafford's unconventional memoir confirms that while you can survive your past, you can never escape from it.

*Almost a Great Escape* includes photographs as well as excerpts and reproductions of telegrams and letters Jens sent from England and Stalag Luft III.

## Almost a Great Escape: A Found Story Details

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# From Reader Review Almost a Great Escape: A Found Story for online ebook

## Linda says

I wish I'd liked this book better. The problem was that the whole damned family was so unlikeable. The author, Tyler Trafford loved his mother (who seemed to be a totally erratic and incompetent mother) but despised the rest of his family. I couldn't help but think that Jens Muller made more than one "Great Escape", once when he escaped the German POW camp and once when Tyler's mother, chose another man to marry

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## Catherine Thompson says

When Tyler Trafford's mother Alice died, she left him a peculiar and perplexing legacy: a Campbell's Soup box filled with letters and photos he didn't recognize. Who was this Jens Muller who signed love-filled letters with "Your Jens"? Alice had never spoken of him. Trafford began to explore this hidden part of his mother's life, and discovered an amazing story: Jens, it turned out, was one of the three men who made good the "Great Escape" from Stalag Luft III. And he and Alice had met and fallen in love in Montreal.

I was attracted to the story by its connections to World War II, which is an interest of mine. *The Great Escape* also happens to be one of my favourite movies (though I have problems with how the Canadian PoWs were erased/Americanized--there *were* no Americans held at Stalag Luft III).

Trafford bases his writing on the letters and his memories of his mother, and includes excerpts from Muller's own unpublished account of the escape operation: Muller in fact was in charge of making the bellows that pumped fresh air into the tunnels as they were being dug, and he made the stamps for forging their documents for the outside, among other things. Some of the stories Trafford writes from his mother's perspective, and thus are necessarily fictionalized. The whole is an exploration of love, of various kinds.

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## Mike Vendetti says

I had the good fortune to narrate this amazing story as an audiobook for Tantor Audio. It will draw you in, and you won't want to put it down.

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## Patti says

This one pulled me right in.

It is so many things - a book about secrets, love, lost love, war, family, dysfunction - but above all a wonderful story of discovery. In discovering a past his mother never spoke of, Trafford finds out about himself. We look at our own hands or eyes and see how similar they are to those of the people in our family. But what about how we feel, think and respond to the world around us? In opening a cardboard soup box of

secrets Trafford discovers how the pieces of himself fit together. I have heard him say in an interview that the book wrote itself and in reading this book I can believe he is being absolutely sincere. Once he found his mother's secrets he had no choice but to let the story come through him. I was enthralled, I laughed aloud, I cried and I rejoiced.

One of the best I have ever read.

Check out the mazing "trailer" for the book, what a movie it would make.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ605Y...>

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### **Doriana Bisegna says**

Who knows what you can find out about your loved ones if you just look a little further than what has been shown to you while they were alive. This is the story of a son's search for his mother's true love after being left a box of correspondence between them during WW11. An amazing story, told in a quirky prose yet so heartbreaking and sincere. Again, this story touched a nerve with me due to my own mother's story and how one decision can change the course of your life. I truly admire the author's perseverance and his quest for the truth and for answers. His search confirmed the love his mother had for him and for teaching him to always live your own life...don't live the life that is expected of you but the life that you expect to live for yourself! This story left me breathless!

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### **Lori says**

A memoir? A book of wishful thinking? An apology? I just don't know what this book is actually trying to be...as a result I found it insubstantial and unsatisfying. Interesting bits; yes. Cool tidbits about 1960s Calgary and area, 1940s Montreal and a very tenuous link to a famous WWII story turned into a fiction about a 17-year old girl's One Big Thing? Then a sour and sad and troubled marriage/family in which the author was and apparently still is a complete outsider? This book just made me feel sorry for Tyler. I certainly hope he feels better having written this book but I'm not convinced it needed to be shared with the world.

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### **Pat says**

An interesting memoir of the author's mother, Alice Tyler, and the secret war time love affair he discovered 60 years later after her death (through letters and an album she created and saved). Her love, Jens Muller, was one of the only 3 men/POW's who safely escaped and made it home from "the great escape" from Stalag III (brought to life in the Steve McQueen movie of that name). Just as interesting was the secondary story of the author's childhood and adventurous upbringing in Calgary/Springbank/Canmore, Alberta then boarding school at age 13 (never to return to live with his family) and the subsequent deterioration of his mother into alcoholism and health issues. He realized that despite his feelings of rejection, she had orchestrated his great escape. All the while, this story is told in a quirky and engaging style using strings of thoughts/descriptors that really bring alive Alice and their life together. Our book club met the author this week and had him join us for our discussion---very interesting and illuminating!

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## **Loraine says**

It would have been a crime if this book had never been written, if this story was never shared. I heard this author speak about his book and he actually had the whole audience spellbound with his story. I bought the book right away and started reading because I just had to see how it all turned out. I suspected, however, that it may not have enough substance to live up to the expectation. Was there enough to fill a book or would there be a lot of filler material?

With that prejudice in mind, the first 50 pages seemed to bear it out. I had trouble with the writing style and some of the story-line. But still I had to keep going; the story was just too intriguing to stop. 24 hours later, I am rating it with 4 well-earned stars.

It was an experience that kept me interested all the way through. It actually was more than I expected, a surprise gem.

If I have withheld the fifth star it is because of his writing style. It took me at least 200 pages, most of the book, to get remotely used to it without snagging along in his non-hyphenated adjectives. By the end, though, it was almost endearing, as personal and unique as the author himself. I think he explains it in a way, without really explaining it.

I quite loved this book. It is wonderful and rich. Beautifully done.

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## **David says**

I'm afraid that it may take a poet to do this book justice. I remember checking at points to see if this was a novel. I had wondered how he could know some of these things as they seemed so intimate. I got to understand by the time I finished the book. This book doesn't actually tell you all that much about the Great Escape. However, you get to know a couple of men and a few women in an interesting way. I grew to love and admire them all through the course of the book. I found I was quite moved, but I can't see to get out a decent coherent description of all I read. It feels much too intimate and delicate to try and convey the story in any summary I might try and make. The writing seemed ordinary, even simple, yet I was profoundly impacted by the book. This is a surprising find. Perhaps my Canadian heritage and my love of the Great Escape helped warm me to the book. What I can say is that I gobbled up the book with surprising speed.

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## **Susan says**

Last week it was rated #1 in Calgary in Nonfiction. I laughed, cried, muttered, exclaimed etc. Randy and I both read it in less than 24 hours word for word. Enough said.

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## **Karin Adamczyk says**

Very sorry to report, but I hated this book. I have been forcing myself to continue and am now giving up on page 69 of 114 in Consequences. I feel it is badly written -- so bad, I kept wondering where the hell I was all the time. I feel it's a shame that what could have been so interesting was instead a chore to continue reading.

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## **Paula Groves says**

I could not get through the the first 2 chapters

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## **Leggere A Colori says**

Il romanzo sembra la sceneggiatura di un film, ma in realtà è una storia autobiografica affascinante ed emozionante come poche.

Il lettore vive un'emozione dopo l'altra rimanendo incollato al libro per sapere cosa succederà dopo, cosa scoprirà Tyler e soprattutto inebriandosi di quell'amore che trasuda dalle parole delle lettere dei protagonisti.

**Continua a leggere su** <http://www.leggereacolori.com/letti-e...>

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## **Calgary says**

When I started the book, the author's writing style and the way he laid the book out both distracted me, and irritated me a bit. But the story was incredibly poignant, with so many threads that could be contemplated, that I persevered and soon became accustomed to it. On second reading, I hardly noticed its eccentricities, but found it even richer than first time around. With the little he had to go on, I think Tyler did an amazing job of crafting a wonderful story. Love, lost love, mystery, adventure, family, tragedy, war, heroism ... what is missing?

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## **Karen says**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was an interesting and intimate look at a family haunted by the past and also the ambitions of its members. It is a brave look at the often difficult relationships between the generations of a family. However, what makes this story unique is the relationship of a Canadian woman to the second world war and one of the most famous events of that war - the Great Escape.

This is a work of great poignancy, not a happy story with a happy ending, but a real one. It reminds me of Irish music that makes you cry as it causes you to appreciate the beauty in our humanity. A story that lifts you out of the everyday and helps you to realise that every family has its depth of heartache as well as courage.

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