

saint mary's press

Better Than Natural

and Other Stories

Lisa Calderone-Stewart
and Ed Kunzman



*Better than
Natural
and Other Stories*

That First Kiss and Other Stories
My Wish List and Other Stories
Better than Natural and Other Stories
Straight from the Heart and Other Stories
Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories

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and Other Stories***

**Lisa Calderone-Stewart
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We dedicate this book to the next generation:

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The precious gift of faith that we were given we now happily hand on to you—in fulfillment of Jesus' desire: "The gift you have received, give as a gift" (Matthew 10:8).

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Preface

Life is filled with opportunities for sharing stories. We share stories with classmates at school, with friends at parties, and with relatives at family gatherings. We read stories in books, watch stories on television and in movies, and write stories for English class. We even read stories in chat rooms on the Internet and swap stories by e-mail.

Whenever we listen to good stories, we find ourselves responding in a variety of ways: we laugh and we cry, we tremble in fear and we sigh in relief, we shake our head in disbelief and we nod in agreement. We respond in these ways because good stories are like mirrors: they give us a reflection of ourselves. The joys and sorrows of the stories' characters reflect our own joys and sorrows: we laugh and we cry from the heart because we recognize ourselves in the tales being told.

Some of the most meaningful stories that people share focus on growing up. These are stories of going to school and playing sports, of losing friends and finding new ones, of falling in love and breaking up. These are also stories that try to deal with the big questions of life: What kind of person do I want to be?

Where is my life going? How do I relate to my family? What kinds of people do I want for friends? How do I make difficult decisions? What do I really believe in? Who is God?

This book is a collection of stories about young people. The characters in these stories experience wonder and struggle, hurt and forgiveness, failure and success, tears and laughter, learning and relearning. In other words, these stories are very much like your own. You are invited to use them as mirrors for looking at your own life.

After every story in this book, you will find a set of questions to help you take a deeper look at yourself. The title of this set of questions is "Seeing Your Own Story." When you think about the issues and events in your own life that the stories reflect back to you, you can begin to see yourself in a new light and learn more about the unique person you are.

After the reflection questions is a section called "Seeing the Faith Story." This section is designed to help you make connections between what you are discovering about yourself and what it means to be a believer in God, a Christian, and a Catholic. The questions at the end of this section can help you view your own life through the eyes of faith.

This book is one in a series of five. The other books in the series are entitled *That First Kiss and Other Stories*, *My Wish List and Other Stories*, *Straight from the Heart* and

Other Stories, and *Meeting Frankenstein and Other Stories*. Each book in the series presents several opportunities for you to discover more about your own story, to examine your own issues, and to search for your own answers about life, God, and faith.

It is our hope that once you see your deeper self through the mirrors of these stories, you will continue to reflect on the important matters of life. We believe that life becomes happier and more meaningful when we take the time to be reflective. A word of caution: Looking into the mirror of a story may become an exciting, lifelong habit!

Better than Natural

Just the thought of Brianna going out with Kevin makes me want to yell and curse! For over two years, she was *my* girlfriend—and it took him only two weeks to steal her from me! How did he do it? Was it his blond hair that attracted her, his family's money, his big car, the fact that he's the quarterback and she's the cutest cheerleader? I've asked myself these questions for weeks now, and I still haven't come up with a good answer. The only thing I know for sure is that I've never been so hurt in all my life.

Two Saturdays ago, when I saw Brianna and Kevin together at a movie, I was so upset I had to leave the theater. On the way home, I passed Kevin's car on the street and almost snapped off the antenna. I had it in my hand; had it bent toward me; and then somewhere deep in my brain, I heard my Dad arguing with me: "Even if you never get caught, Dan, you'll always know what you've done." "But, Dad," I said in my brain, "do you know what he did to me?" "Yes," he replied, "but if you break his antenna, then he'll do something to get back at you. And then you'll do something

bigger to get back at him. There's no end to getting even, Dan, until somebody gets hurt or dies." As I released the antenna, I kicked the tire, and then I ran all the way home.

Last Friday, while I was on the sidelines at the football game, I heard Brianna screaming with the rest of the cheerleaders: "What do we want? A TD. What's that? A touchdown!" The very next play, Kevin was sacked fifteen yards behind the line of scrimmage. When he didn't get up immediately, the coaching staff ran out onto the field to check on the superstar. I smiled to myself: What will Brianna think of her big man now?

A few minutes later, Kevin got up slowly and hobbled over to the sidelines; all the team except me quickly crowded around him. From a distance, I looked over everyone's shoulders right into his eyes. I was about to sneer at him, when I suddenly remembered what my grandmother told me the day I beat up the neighborhood bully: "I saw a dogfight the other day, Danny. All that growling and clawing and biting—it's a natural thing to fight when you're mad! But we can do better than natural, don't you think?" Screwing my face into a smile, I nodded at the fallen quarterback. "I hope your ankle will be all right, Kevin," I shouted. How tough it was to be better than natural!

This afternoon, Brianna stopped me after English class to wish me a happy birthday. I