

Tara Shannon


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Sorrow to Success

BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT
IMAGES AND PHOTOS PROVIDED



▲ This is the drawing that was shared from Tara's Facebook page without her knowledge, permission or signature, 17,000 times overnight.



Tara Shannon, creator of Rabbit and Bear, became an overnight sensation in 2020 when “I’m afraid,” one of her drawings that she had posted on Facebook, “went viral,” being shared 17,000 times in one night. Now she has four books published and is working on more.

An artist living on the Bruce Peninsula, Tara Shannon has a life story that shows tragedy turning to triumph. Between 2009 and 2013 she suffered a miscarriage, the breakdown of her marriage, the deaths of both of her parents, a diagnosis of thyroid cancer, and the termination of her position at work. She also had to deal with childhood abuse, and a late-in-life diagnosis of ADHD and autism.

In the fall of 2010 things started to improve when she met her current husband, who is an ecologist for the Bruce Trail Conservancy, and his two daughters. Last year, she and her husband moved to a home on 25 acres of forest and alvar that she finds inspiring for her creative work. On her property, she points out that “not only Black Bears roam, but so do Snowshoe Hares.”

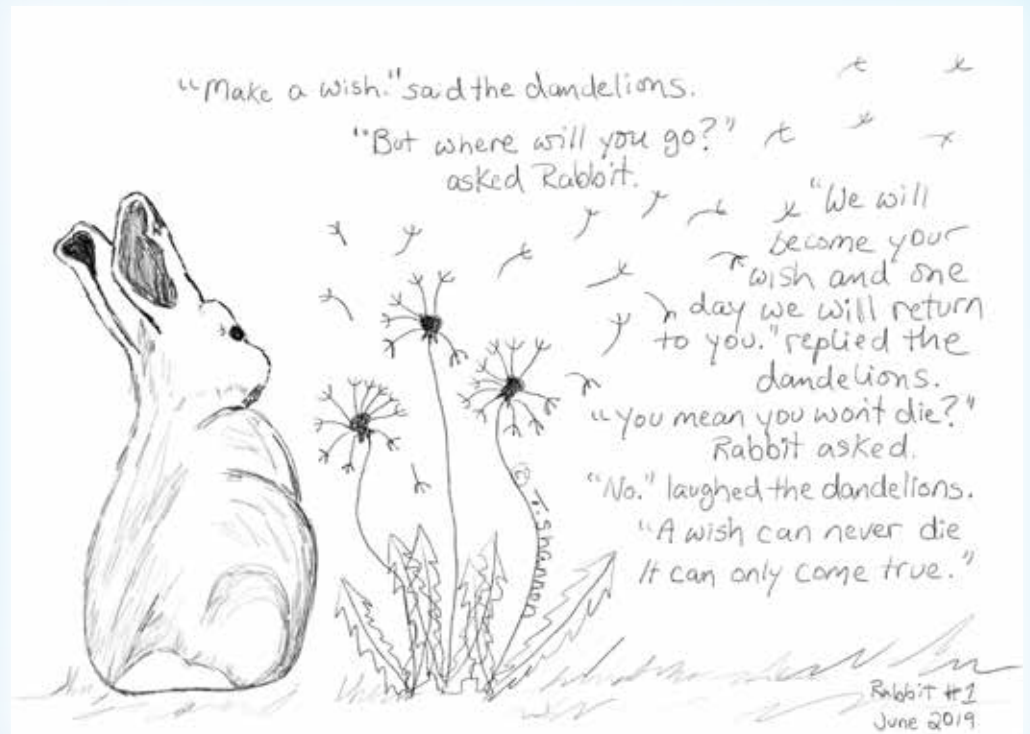
She explains “I created Rabbit, not yet Bear, in spring 2019 to bring hope and comfort to myself while I processed my own feelings of grief, loss, anxiety and depression. Drawing and writing Rabbit and Bear, writing poems and stories, help me to relax, find and keep my bearings, and process my thoughts and big feelings.” Tara says she looks at Rabbit as the younger, questioning version of a person, and Bear as the older, wiser version.

Dealing With Loss

“Not surprisingly, I see my parents and grandparents in Bear, with the things they would try to pass on to me,” she adds. “I also see the child I lost in Rabbit. They have become my way of having back something of what I lost: my parents and my child. The questions expressed and answers given are the things I wish I could pass on to my child and the things I still wish I could hear from my parents as I navigate the world without them. Being able to see my thoughts and feelings expressed through writing and drawing has always helped me understand them better.”

Tara shared her drawings on her Facebook page, and one day in March 2020 she saw that her “I’m afraid” drawing had been shared by a page she didn’t know. Her signature had been removed from her artwork. The next morning her drawing had been





▲ Tara's dogs head home through the snow of the Bruce Peninsula.

"It's time to go," said Bear.
 "But where are we going?" asked Rabbit.
 "Forward," said Bear,
 "we can't stay here anymore."
 "So much has happened here though I don't know
 that I can move on," said Rabbit.
 "You can stay if you want," said Bear,
 "but life won't wait with you."
 "It won't?" asked Rabbit.
 "No," said Bear, "besides, up ahead there might be
 something wonderful."
 "You think so?" asked Rabbit.
 "I think," said Bear,
 "if you stay here, you'll never know."



shared 17,000 times. People wanted to know who the artist was, and she became busy responding to questions and learning to protect her work.

"I even saw my image shared in an online newspaper article from Singapore," she says. A publisher called Wintertickle Press invited her to create a book of Rabbit and Bear drawings, and before Christmas 2020, *Rabbit & Bear Make a Wish* was published.

So far, almost 13,000 copies have been sold worldwide.

Her Facebook followers now number more than 292,622 people. Her reach is in the range of three to five million people a month. Her Instagram followers are around 10,000.

Tara continues to create drawings and in 2022 her second book, *Rabbit & Bear Return with the Light*, was published in softcover. This

book is described as a graphic novel that "delves deeper into the human existence as we quest to find meaning. Dealing with themes of purpose, loss, grief, depression, the book brings its reader along for the ride, letting them know that finding and sharing light is not only possible, but probable with the help of friends and insight."

A third book is a collection of poems and short stories

called *Gather the Stars and Hang the Moon*. Her fourth work is *Gather the Stars and Hang the Moon Journal*, a blank book of inspirational bits of Tara's poetry, intended to let users respond as they want to on the page.

Tara's books are available in Lion Head, at The Shops at 84 Main, which is one building containing three stores, The Dandy Lion, Aunt Donkey's and Murdle's Mercantile.



◀ Tara with her first two books.

I have felt no greater pain
than the moment when your
heart ❤️

Stopped beating.

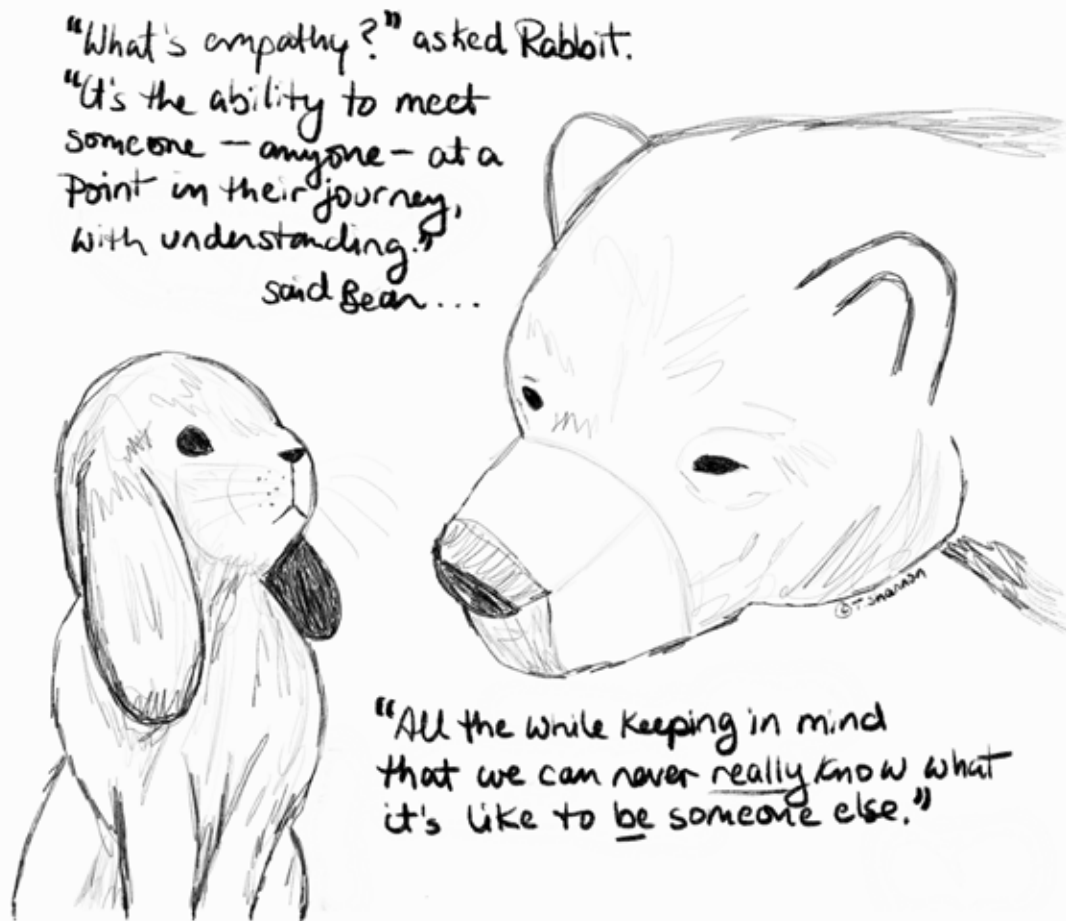
And mine
carried on...



Signed copies of her books are available exclusively at this location. Her books can also be ordered from Amazon, Indigo, Coles and Chapters.

The Future

Tara reports that as a survivor of thyroid cancer, her health is now okay, as she has annual tests and is being carefully monitored by her doctors. "Life is all new from what it had been



10 years ago," she adds. "I'm happy and grateful to be here. My healing, mentally and physically, will be ongoing. That's just the way it is. And, I'm happy to share that journey, ups and downs included, through Rabbit & Bear and my other writing."

Future projects include a new Rabbit & Bear book and two novel-sized pieces that she's working on, one of them likely a Young Adult novel that includes a dragon, which she began writing in 2019.

The online store at tarashannon.pixels.com offers an astonishing number and variety of products featuring Rabbit and Bear, including wall art, throw pillows, holiday ornaments, towels, coffee mugs, tote bags, jigsaw puzzles, notebooks, clothing and even more.

For more information on Tara Shannon, see the website tarashannonwrites.com and Facebook, Instagram/Threads/TikTok as @tarashannonwrites. **NEV**





▲ Bear and Rabbit cozy up with all four of Tara's current books.



▲ The first Rabbit and Bear book. Autographed copies are available in Lion's Head.



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