Rising From Ashes:

“The Healing

Power of Becoming"

Amy Bragdon

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Dedication

To my mother, whose strength, humor, and unwavering love continue to anchor my life. Thank you Momma for showing me how to live to the full no matter what life brings our way.

To my father, the quiet warrior, whose steadfast care speaks louder than words.

To Julie, my sister, my warrior, my friend. You are resilience wrapped in laughter.

To Richard, whose faith, courage and resilience keep us grounded.

To Alex, whose light, laughter, and legacy live on in every beautiful redhead and every joke that is passed down to each of your grand children.

And to Nan, the trailblazer who taught me to open my heart and my home, and to always dance to my own rhythm.

To God, my rock and redeemer. The glue that holds our family together, the foundation of our strength, and the light that leads us through every storm.

Acknowledgments

To my mother, thank you for your fierce spirit, your humor, your chirpiness, and your strength through the battle with MSA. Though your words may be softer now, your heart and sass shine through louder than ever. You have been my daily touchstone, and your courage humbles me.

To my father, you are the quiet strength in the storm. You've stepped into every role with grace: caregiver, cook, cleaner, groundskeeper, husband, and friend. You never complain, and in your silence, you speak volumes of love. Building the sauna with you was more than a project; it was a memory etched in my soul.

To Julie, my sister and warrior, you've fought battles most will never understand, and you've done it with mascara on and jokes ready. Whether healing or dreaming of our future lives in Tuscany, I've been blessed to walk alongside you. I will always move furniture, heat meals, and pause the B&B, just to make room for you.

To Alex, my brother, the faithful, strong, always-funny inspiration. Your light lives on through your three redheads and now, your granddaughter. You left a legacy of love, and we feel you in every laugh and every story. You are still with us.

To Angela, thank you for being the keeper of Alex's legacy and light. You have loved fiercely and carried his memory forward not only for his girls but for our entire family. You've been a sister to me and Julie in the truest sense.

To Richard, my rock, my brother, a man of deep faith, resilience, and conviction. Your quiet strength grounds our family, and your laughter lifts us up. Watching your journey has been a reminder of God's faithfulness, and I admire you endlessly.

To Crystal, strong, steady, and faithful. You are the quiet backbone in your family, holding everything together when things feel like they're falling apart. Thank you for always showing up.

To Rob and his family, for the love and laughter over the past six years. Rob, you've stood with me through the pressure-cooker moments and

taken the brunt of explosions when they came. You stayed. You listened. You believed in me through it all.

To the friends and family I haven't named, but who were there, thank you. You stood in the gap when I had no strength left. Your prayers, texts, meals, visits, and laughter were lifelines.

To Pastor Chad, thank you for coming to the hospital and sitting with us until 1:00 in the morning. For praying, laughing, and reminding us who we are and where we've been. The memories of Africa, of childhood, and of God's faithfulness held us that night.

To Pastors Heidi, Wayne, and Brenda, thank you for your prayers, your care, and your presence during the hardest of seasons. Your ministry continues to ripple through our lives.

And above all, to God, thank you for being the Captain of this ship. For your mercy, your grace, your relentless pursuit of my heart. You have never left me, not once.

About the Author

Amy Bragdon’s story is a testimony of faith, resilience, and the beauty of becoming.

Raised in the heart of rural New Brunswick, Amy grew up in a busy, bustling home filled with love, laughter, and the scent of her mother’s cooking drifting through a house. The home that was consistently humming with life. Her father, a hardworking man at the AV Nackawic pulp and paper mill, and her mother, a multitasking powerhouse who managed to hold multiple jobs while raising their four busy children, not to mention all the neighbors and friends children along the way. This foundation showed how grit and grace can work together, and that true character is shown by doing your best even when things are tough.

Amy's heart for people, justice, and change was moved early on, especially by World Vision's work. At the young age of five Amy witnessed the work of World Vision on a TV commercial that has turned into a life of deep calling and purpose. Amy is now a Regional Engagement Advisor for World Vision Canada, serving the world by inspiring churches, schools and corporations across the Atlantic Provinces to make an impact for those in need around the world. But Amy is also a woman with many jobs. A top-producing Realtor who has combined her love of helping others with her professional success. She gives back with every sale through organizations like Habitat for Humanity, where she is also on the Board of Directors. Amy also donates

a portion of her sales to the YMCA Strong Communities Campaign, while dedicating many hours to volunteer work along the way.

Amy happily lends her voice to causes in the community that matter deeply to her.

Amy's clients quickly learn that she does so much more than simply assisting families in finding their new home; she also helps them build their future dreams, and hopes all while supporting local businesses and charities in the community.

At the core of Amy’s life is story. She is a storyteller in every sense, whether she’s writing from her sunroom, welcoming guests at her Airbnb, or sharing tales of her global travels. Her first book, Beauty for Ashes, invited readers into the sacred spaces of loss, faith, and healing. Her second book, Rising From Ashes: The Healing Power Of Becoming, is a deeply personal continuation, a tapestry woven with travel, trial, music, family, and grace. With over a decade spent sailing the seas aboard cruise ships and years devoted to hospitality, marketing, tourism, and philanthropy, Amy’s experiences stretch far beyond borders.

Her passion for culture, food, music, art, and people shines through every story she tells. Whether she’s dancing in the snow in Quebec, walking through the 9th Ward of New Orleans, or standing under cathedral ceilings in Paris, Amy captures the soul of a place, and the sacred thread that connects us all.

Her life mantra:

“The ashes provide the richest soil where your becoming begins.”

Her anchor:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

As this next chapter unfolds, Amy Bragdon remains a beacon for those navigating loss, longing for healing, or simply seeking the courage to rise. She is a realtor with a mission, a dreamer with a passport, and an author whose heart beats for beauty, even in the ashes.

Prologue: The Becoming Project

Some stories are born from triumph. Others from tragedy.
Mine?
It began in the ashes.

Not all at once, but slowly, like embers smoldering under the weight of dreams deferred and hearts cracked open by the unexpected.
There were hospital rooms and holy moments.

Laughter echoing in the dark.
And whispers of grace that met me when strength gave way.

This is not a story of perfection.
It's a symphony of survival.

Of losing what I thought I needed and finding what was really important.
Of consistently getting back up, not without pain, hurt and scars, but undoubtedly stronger.

It's the story of a daughter holding her mother's hand while time bends around them.
Of a sister building ramps, holding back tears, and laughing through the ache.
Of faith that didn't just move mountains, but climbed them, step by shaky step.

It's a story about letting go and leaning in.
Of travel that turned into more than just an escape; it turned into a new life.

From the canals of Venice to the cathedrals of Paris, from the bayous of New Orleans to the healing heights of Mont Saint-Michel. You will find the commonality in;
Faith. Food. Family. Love. The longing for Beauty and Becoming.

So come along with me, dear reader.
Through fire and water.
Through sadness and song.
With red dresses and prayers that were not heard.
Through dreams that were found again on cobblestone streets.

This is not only my story; it is also yours.
Because somewhere, in the ashes of your own life...
A new symphony might be about to start.

So get up, rebuild, and... become anyway.

Become anyway is the heart of this book. It says that we can change no matter how hard things get. It's about getting stronger because of the pain, not in spite of it.

During my journey, I lost my brother, had to deal with my mother's MSA diagnosis, and spent hours taking care of my sister as she healed. Each of these challenges gave me the chance to become stronger.

It wasn't easy, but I learned that even when life seems broken, there is beauty in the process of becoming. Whether it was during times of great loss or on the other side of the world, when I traveled to places that sparked something new in me, I learned that we can always rise.

The truth is, life will always test us. But in the face of it, we can choose to grow, to love, and to keep moving forward.

Become anyway is a reminder that no matter what life throws at us, we always have the power to keep growing, anyway.

I've often been called the **Queen of the Reframe**, not because life spared me from hardship, but because I learned to shift the lens.

You may not get to control your circumstances, the diagnosis, the loss, the fire, the heartbreak, but you can always choose how to see it.

That's the power of the **reframe**.

When my sister's accident changed the rhythm of our lives, I reframed it as an invitation:

To be present.

To serve.

To love more deeply.

When my mother was diagnosed with MSA, I didn't let despair take root.

Instead, I found beauty in the quiet moments, porch talks, road trips, the laughter that still managed to sneak in between medical appointments.

I couldn't undo the fire that took my home.

But I could rise from the ashes, literally and spiritually.

And build something even stronger.

Venice reminded me of that:

Scarred but standing.

Soaked in sorrow yet stunning.

And when I stepped into the red dress for that shoot,

I wasn't pretending I hadn't been through hell,

I was declaring that I had **reframed the fire**.

I had **become anyway**.

Because that's what resilience does.

It doesn't wait for ideal circumstances.

It grows through what it goes through.

You may not always get to choose what happens to you,

but you can always choose what happens *within you*.

And that's where the healing, and the becoming, begins.

“I had become anyway.

Because that’s what resilience does.

It doesn’t wait for ideal circumstances.

It grows through what it goes through.”

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Becoming 1

When the World Shifts: The Call That Changed Everything

"Life doesn’t warn you before it shifts; it simply does. And in that shift, we discover who we are meant to become."

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." — Jeremiah 29:11

It was a sunny Sunday afternoon when the phone rang.

I didn't know it yet, but in that moment, everything shifted.
"Your sister's been in an accident."

There are words that echo, that split time into before and after.

I stood, phone still in hand, heart pounding, already moving, truck keys in one hand, prayer in the other.

"Where is she? I'm coming."

But they told me not to. By the time I reached the scene, she'd already be in the ambulance.

"Just meet her at the hospital."

So I drove.

Faster than I should've, crying and praying and whispering her name like a lifeline between us.

When I got there, I stood outside the ER doors, waiting.

And then I saw the ambulance.

My sweet sister, broken, bloodied, brave, being wheeled inside.

I wanted to scream. I wanted to hold her. I wanted time to rewind.

But all I could do was whisper, "God, please."

***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." —* Psalm 46:1**

That verse echoed in my spirit. I clung to it like a refuge.

Because nothing makes you feel more helpless than watching someone you love suffer, and knowing all you can do is wait.

Inside the hospital, I was ushered to a waiting area, my hands trembling as I texted Richard.

We had to make a decision. Mom was in church, completely unaware. And with her MSA, stress was no longer just emotional. It was physical. It was harmful.

We decided to wait, to gather more information, to protect her heart. I'd break the news gently once I knew more.

But even as we made that decision, I couldn't help but feel the weight of it all pressing in.

Julie had been thrown from the back of a motorcycle.

She had a compound fracture in her femur. Broken four ribs.

Her big toe was crushed. Her face was marked with road rash and in need of stitches.

Fluid on her lungs. Bruising everywhere.

And yet… she was alive.

Alive.

It was the only word I could cling to.

The hours in the ER felt like years. They ran tests. Scans. Hooked her up to monitors. Nurses moved quickly, but time felt unbearably slow on our side of the curtain. Her body was broken. Her spirit was shaken. But her eyes, they still held that same fire. That same Julie.

Then the news came: she'd need surgery. Urgently.

They prepped her quickly. Too quickly. One moment I was holding her hand, and the next, I was watching her being wheeled away down a sterile hallway, fluorescent lights flickering above her.

I stood still for a second too long.

And then I did what I always do when my world tilts sideways: I called my people.

Pastor Chad arrived not long after.

No big entrance. Just a steady presence. The kind that doesn't need fanfare because it brings peace with it.

He sat with us in that cold hospital waiting room, hour after hour.

He didn't preach. He didn't push. He just was.

He prayed with us. He laughed with us. He reminded us of old memories, of our childhood, of church camp, of the wild joy of our Africa missions trip.

He helped carry the weight. Not by taking it away, but by sitting right in it with us.

That's the thing about true ministry. It doesn't shout. It shows up.

And that night, he showed up.

Julie's surgery took hours. We waited until well past midnight. And when the doctor finally came out—tired eyes, gloves off, relief in his voice, he said she made it through.

There's a silence that comes with relief. It's not loud or dramatic. It's the sound of breath finally exhaled after hours of holding it in.

That night, when Julie was wheeled back into recovery, pale but safe, we all knew, this was just the beginning of a long road to recovery.

But we had made it through the first steps.

And for that moment, that was enough.

The days that followed were a blur of beeping machines, hallway coffees, and uncomfortable hospital chairs that doubled as beds. Julie had made it through surgery, but her body was in shock. Bruised. Swollen. Hurting in places she didn't even know could hurt.

She was moved to the 4th floor, where wires and tubes seemed to take over the space, but not once did they dim her spirit. If anything, her sass grew louder the more her strength returned.

Riley, her daughter, and I tag-teamed our visits, doing what we could to make her comfortable, and when I say comfortable, I mean beauty queen level comfortable.

Because despite the road rash, the stitches in her face, and the bruises painting her body, Julie's biggest concern was clear: her hair.

"Can someone please wash my hair?"

And if she had the lung capacity, I'm sure she would've added, "And make sure it has volume."

And then came the leg shaving.

Yes. You heard that right.

Here we were, me and Riley, both looking like we'd been through a war zone, barely holding it together, emotionally wrecked, and Julie? She wanted silky smooth legs.

"I don't care if I'm hooked up to machines. Get me the razor."

Honestly? It was hilarious.

It was ridiculous.

And it was so Julie.

Those moments became our saving grace. The kind where you laugh until you cry, not because it's all okay, but because if you don't laugh, you might actually fall apart.

Through it all, we took turns being the strong one.

Some days it was me.

Other days, it was Riley.

And often, somehow, it was Julie.

After more than a week in the hospital, it was time for Julie to be released. And while that brought a wave of relief, it also came with a tidal wave of new responsibility.

I took time off work, there was no question. I needed to be there.

She couldn't walk. Couldn't lift her leg. Could barely sit upright without pain. So I did what I do best in a crisis: I sprang into action.

Within hours, I had a ramp built. I reconfigured the bathroom, moved furniture, and went tearing around the city looking for every piece of equipment she'd need: commode, walker, transfer chair, wedge pillows, ice packs, the works.

We transformed my home into a care center with heart. A haven.

One where she could heal safely, surrounded by love.

That first week, I stayed with her full-time. I cooked, cleaned, managed pain meds, changed dressings, washed clothes, adjusted pillows, and helped her with the most basic things. And while I was exhausted, I was also deeply grateful, for the time, for her trust, for the closeness we shared.

Our friends, family, and church community stepped in too.

When I returned to work, trying to juggle both of my full-time jobs and caregiving, meals started showing up at the door.

My sister-in-law suggested a meal train, and the response was overwhelming. Hot meals, snacks, soups, casseroles, fresh bread. Each delivery was a little miracle that whispered, you're not alone.

Julie gradually regained some mobility, first with a walker, then with crutches. And soon, the two of us ran the house like a dream team.

Evenings were our time. We'd sit, drink tea, solve all the world's problems, and map out our future lives in Tuscany or Southern Italy.

We'd laugh about the chaos. Dream about healing. Plan the next big adventure for when she was whole again, not if.

Because in this house, we never stop believing in the comeback.

We didn't have answers yet.

We didn't know how long the recovery would be, or what setbacks might still come.

But we had each other.

We had faith.

And in a world that sometimes spins far too fast, we slowed down long enough to hold the sacred.

The sacred of sisterhood.

The sacred of shared laughter through tears.

The sacred of choosing hope when it would be easier to give up.

In the quiet moments, when the lights were low and the house was still, I would whisper a silent prayer of thanks, for healing in progress, for miracles already unfolding, and for the God who walks with us through the fire and never lets go.

***"He gives beauty for ashes, strength for fear, gladness for mourning, and peace for despair."* —Isaiah 61:3**

We were living that Scripture all over again.

“Sometimes the greatest inspirations, and the greatest stories ever told, come from the ashes. They rise, fierce and unshaken, shaped by fire and faith. They don’t just survive, they become anyway.”

Reflection + Action Journal

A Companion to Rising from Ashes:

"The Healing Power of Becoming"

Becoming 1: When the World Shifts

Reflection Questions:

- When has your life changed in an instant? How did you respond in that moment?
- Who showed up for you when you needed it most?
- What role has faith played in your darkest hours?
- Have you allowed yourself to fully feel and process your pain, or have you been carrying it in silence?

Action Steps:

- Take a moment to write a letter to someone who supported you in a hard season. Maybe send it. Maybe keep it for yourself. Gratitude is healing.
- Light a candle and spend 10 minutes in stillness or prayer. Let your body breathe without obligation.
- Journal the one thing you wish you could say out loud but haven't. Giving it a voice is the first step to release.

Becoming 2

Broken Bones, Unbroken Bonds:

When Healing Isn’t Linear

"Healing doesn’t always follow a straight path. Sometimes the cracks are where the light gets in, and the bonds we build hold us together when we feel most broken."

"He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak." — Isaiah 40:29

The smell of something slightly overcooked lingered in the kitchen, and my phone was buzzing again. On one hand, I held my calendar, color-coded chaos. In the other, my phone lit up with reminders, texts, and another incoming call. My eyes scanned the day's agenda: a client walk-through at 6 p.m., a conference call with World Vision at noon, pastor meeting at 2 p.m., Airbnb booking request, and now... a call from the family to discuss Mom's MSA symptoms and the next steps in her care.

I stared at the blinking screen for a moment before answering, bracing myself.

"Hi Amy, we just wanted to talk through some of the new symptoms Mom's been describing. There are a few changes we're keeping an eye on..."

My heart sank, not because the call was unexpected, but because it confirmed what I already knew. Her condition was progressing. And I was already maxed out.

This was the season where everything felt like it was speeding up.

Real estate was in full swing, spring market madness. My phone barely stopped ringing. Clients needed answers. Listings needed polishing. Deals needed closing.

And at the same time, there was a new pressure rising at World Vision. A change in government leadership had led to a major shift in international aid. Funding was being pulled, programs reevaluated. Across the NGO world, the stress was suffocating.

My days were a blur of running, reacting, and rallying. And no matter how much I gave, I felt like I was falling behind.

I started snapping over things that never used to bother me. A missed call. An empty coffee pot. A simple question like, "What's for dinner?" and suddenly I'd feel tears sting behind my eyes or frustration bubble up for no real reason.

Rob was usually the one to bear the brunt of it. I knew he didn't mean to set me off, but sometimes he caught the edge of my exhaustion, the sharp side of overwhelm and grief. He'd gently ask if I was okay, and I'd respond with a 45-minute monologue about how I couldn't do it all anymore, how the weight was too much.

I knew I wasn't angry with him. I was overwhelmed, and overwhelmed had nowhere else to go but out.

Everywhere I looked, something needed me, someone needed me. And I love to help, to show up, to be the dependable one. But this season was different. It wasn't just busy. It was heavy. And even though I was running at full speed, I could feel the cracks forming.

I wasn't sleeping well. Meals became whatever I could grab between calls. I stopped playing the piano. I wasn't even singing in the car anymore, and that's when I really knew something was off.

The fatigue ran deeper than my body; it seeped into my soul. I had pushed and pushed, thinking if I could just organize better, work harder, squeeze in one more thing… maybe I could hold it all together. But it was coming apart anyway.

One evening, after a particularly long day of conference calls, client texts, and caregiving tasks, I sat in the quiet of the living room. The dogs were finally asleep. The house was still. And that's when I heard it, not an audible voice, but that unmistakable tug in my spirit.

God wasn't asking me to do more. He was inviting me to slow down.

That whisper settled in deep, cutting through the clutter of my mind:

"Be still and know that I am God." Not be busy. Not be perfect. Not be everything to everyone. Just, be still.

I sat there, breathing in the silence, letting the truth wash over me like balm. Maybe I wasn't meant to carry it all. Maybe it was okay to pause. To ask for help. To rest.

And in that pause, I felt the smallest flicker of peace return, and in that moment, I realized I was becoming anyway.

“Sometimes strength is in the surrender. Sometimes peace begins with permission, to rest, to breathe, to let go. And in the quiet after the storm, when nothing looks like you imagined, you become anyway.”

Reflection + Action Journal

A Companion to Rising from Ashes:

“The Healing Power of Becoming"

Becoming 2: Broken Bones, Unbroken Bonds

Reflection Questions:

- When have you been forced to slow down against your will?
- What did you learn during that season?
- Who have you cared for lately, and who has cared for you?
- How does joy show up for you in the midst of difficulty?

Action Steps:

- Reach out to someone who is currently in a healing or caregiving season. Offer support, even a kind text matters.
- Write out three ways you can better care for yourself this week. Then commit to one.
- Recall a funny or joyful moment during a painful time. Write it down. That memory is sacred and deserves to be kept.

……You have reached the end of this sample preview.

Rising from the ashes was never about escaping the fire… it was about discovering the strength to become through it.

Some stories are simply read. Others leave fingerprints on your soul. If this sample of *Rising from the Ashes: The Healing Power of Becoming* stirred something within you, click the link above to continue the journey of healing, resilience, faith, and becoming.

The next chapter is waiting for you.
Refined. Becoming. Appointed. Commissioned.