



BNY: Be Near You

Richard Alfaro

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This light, sweet, and wholesome romance encourages learning from the past.

Not everyone gets the opportunity to pursue an unfulfilled crush from years past, but the protagonist in Richard D. Alfaro's *BNY: Be Near You* finds himself in that unlikely, yet welcome, situation. As this concise romance demonstrates, learning from the past proves a much stronger strategy than living in it when striving for a second chance at love.

On a business trip to New York, Kevin coincidentally encounters Melissa, an unforgettable crush from his college days, while helping his friend deal with a family medical crisis. Both Kevin and Melissa are successful doctors, and this similarity gives him an opening to speak with her more. Attraction blossoms between them as they get to know each other better. Unfortunately, secrets from Melissa's past and a few of Kevin's own bad habits present formidable obstacles on the path to love.

BNY depicts a sweet, wholesome romance. The novel focuses on emotions instead of physical sensation. Flashbacks reveal the origins of Kevin's infatuation, and insights into his current thoughts reveal a man fixated on winning a woman's heart instead of on getting into her bed.

Kevin spends copious amounts of time thinking of ways to confess his feelings and analyzing what Melissa's actions might say regarding her feelings for him. By lacking steaminess, the romance underscores its heart—Kevin's emotions stand out as obviously genuine partially due to the gentlemanly demeanor he demonstrates.

In the same vein, the book has limited drama. A minor disagreement pops up between Kevin and one of his friends in relation to his pursuit of Melissa, but this tiff receives very little attention and gets smoothed over within a few pages. Similarly, Melissa's ex-boyfriend reappears briefly but does not leave a lasting mark on the development of her romance with Kevin. The prose keeps a tight focus on the primary conflict, which allows the novel to remain trim and easy to breeze through.

Some of the omitted detail does create a sense of incompleteness, however. Most notable is the lack of follow-through after Melissa reveals her secret. Her pain comes from rather severe sources, but the novel does not elaborate any further on her recovery after the reveal. This lack of attention almost suggests that keeping the secret was more damaging than the truth behind it, which seems rather unlikely given the emotional barriers that truth causes her to put up throughout the novel.

Kevin learns from past mistakes—he occasionally reflects on how inactive he was during college and adjusts his behavior accordingly—and his love for Melissa matures as a result. Yet even though Kevin's character develops while he chases after Melissa, Melissa's character does not receive the same treatment since her story ends where his does.

The lack of heat and drama in *BNY: Be Near You* makes this book a notably wholesome romance. Fans of the genre

interested in something light yet heartfelt might enjoy flipping through its pages.

CAITLYNN LOWE (May 6, 2016)

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