



## **The Woman Who Wasn't There: The True Story of an Incredible Deception**

*Robin Gaby Fisher, Angelo J. Guglielmo Jr.*

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**The Woman Who Wasn't There: The True Story of an Incredible Deception** Robin Gaby Fisher , Angelo J. Guglielmo Jr.

It was a tale of loss and recovery, of courage and sorrow, of horror and inspiration. Tania Head's astonishing account of her experience on September 11, 2001—from crawling through the carnage and chaos to escaping the seventy-eighth-floor sky lobby of the burning south tower to losing her fiancé in the collapsed north tower—transformed her into one of the great victims and heroes of that tragic day.

Tania selflessly took on the responsibility of giving a voice and a direction to the burgeoning World Trade Center Survivors' Network, helping save the "Survivor Stairway" and leading tours at Ground Zero, including taking then-governor Pataki, Mayor Bloomberg, and former mayor Giuliani on the inaugural tour of the WTC site. She even used her own assets to fund charitable events to help survivors heal. But there was something very wrong with Tania's story—a terrible secret that would break the hearts and challenge the faith of all those she claimed to champion.

Told with the unique insider perspective and authority of Angelo J. Guglielmo, Jr., a filmmaker shooting a documentary on the efforts of the Survivors' Network, and previously one of Tania's closest friends, *The Woman Who Wasn't There* is the story of one of the most audacious and bewildering quests for acclaim in recent memory—one that poses fascinating questions about the essence of morality and the human need for connection at any cost.

## **The Woman Who Wasn't There: The True Story of an Incredible Deception Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Woman Who Wasn't There: The True Story of an Incredible Deception for online ebook**

### **Maciek says**

This short book which can be read in one or two sittings, though the story it describes is anything but short: the astounding story of Tania Head, the woman who on 9/11/2001 was at the 78th floor of World Trade Center 2 (The South Tower) when United Airlines 175 hit that floor, making her one of the very few who survived the direct impact. Badly burned on her arm, she managed to escape from the tower, crawling through rubble, witnessing the horror first hand. Her fiance, Dave, didn't make it: he was trapped in the North Tower as it collapsed. Tania joined a survivor support group and became very active, even negotiation access to Ground Zero for survivors, which was something they didn't have before. She became the guide at the site of the attacks, recounting her story in vivid detail, introducing herself as a person who survived it. Important political figures such as former NYC mayor Rudy Giuliani current major Mike Bloomberg and even state governor George Pataki have been captivated by her story. She made speeches at colleges, at support groups. Thousands of people have been moved by her story, and she became a survival authority; the representant and voice for those who lived through and after the 9/11 tragedy, coping with her own experiences and helping others survive theirs.

Only her story is completely, entirely made up. Tania Head was not at the towers when the planes hit. Her real name is not even Tania, but Alicia; Alicia Estevez Head. She was not a US citizen; her claims of degrees from Harvard and Stanford are without support, as there is no record of her being a student at these institutions. Merryl Lynch, the firm where she claims to have worked in World Trade Center has never heard of her; her supposed husband's family has never heard of her, either. What is striking most of all is the fact that she was not even in the country at that time. She was studying in Barcelona at a business school just a week after the attacks, and her classmates cannot recall her talking about losing her fiance or showing any recent injuries. She told them that her injured arm had been a result of driving accident, and another time that it was a result of a horse riding accident. She first visited the U.S. in 2003, where she adapted the persona of the most incredible of survivors.

Tania's remarkable fraud shows no sign of being done for financial purposes, and indeed she has done good for the community of survivors, such as the granting them the access to the site of the attacks. However, the book reveals ugly details about her slowly but steadily growing to be in control of the group, and treating others as her stepping stones to fame; throwing out members of the group who put her story in possible danger, and forcing another member to listen to audio tapes from her therapy where she was telling the story with screams and shouts, bringing back the terror to that person in vivid detail. Tania/Alicia was an ugly person, a fraud of the biggest sort, stealing not money and wealth, but friendships and emotions, taking attention away from those who have been really hurt and putting it on herself. How could any other survivor match her story? She took parts of their stories and formed the biggest, most tragic and most incredible story of them all. People wanted to believe her, wanted to support her, and she wanted exactly that.

The complexity and depth of the deception of Tania/Alicia is remarkable; she seems to have appeared out of nowhere in 2003, dressed up as the 9/11 survivor. But what about her former life? How could anyone who knew her not notice her, since she was in television, newspapers and other media? She does not seem to have any contacts aside those she made in the survivor's group, not a sliver of her former life hanging around her immaculate fraud dress. This is the most incredible aspect of the story. How could a person who relished being in the spotlight not have anyone see her for what she was? How could she manage to put this

masquerade going for so long, in the age of the internet? Did she not realize that sooner or later someone will be suspicious about her story, her not wanting to talk to reporters and will engage in an investigation, and that then her whole new life will fall apart?

The BBC did an excellent documentary on this issue, titled *The 9/11 Faker*. It can be watched on YouTube and I recommend it.

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### **Sarah says**

Two years after the attacks of 9/11, a survivor named Tania Head started posting to survivor's forums online. She was one of only 19 people who had been above the point of impact in the South Tower of the World Trade Center and survived. Her remarkable story of escape -- her arm nearly torn off, her assistant decapitated, the fireman who led her to safety as the tower collapsed, her days of unconsciousness in a New York City burn unit -- was made all the more heartrending by the fact that her husband died in the North Tower.

In a short period of time, her forceful, magnetic personality, combined with her amazing story, made her the face -- and the heart -- of the survivors' network. She helped found and became the beloved president of the World Trade Center Survivors' Network and lobbied successfully to have the 9/11 survivors recognized on par with rescue workers and the victims' families. She gave tours of Ground Zero to visitors and dignitaries such as Rudy Giuliani and Eliot Spitzer. She was instrumental in the saving of the "survivors' staircase," which had been slated for demolition. She got the survivors admitted to the official anniversary ceremonies.

In time, though, discrepancies in her stories started to be noticed. She grew increasingly paranoid and wary of the press and started to have something of a split personality, being unimaginably cruel at times to other survivors -- people who were supposed to be her best friends. Eventually her story was entirely discredited, and in September 2007 the New York Times revealed her to be a true fraud -- she had not even been in the United States on the date of the attacks, and not a single part of her story was true.

I know a couple of people who I believe to be pathological liars, and as bizarre as their fabrications are, this blows them out of the water. Perhaps the strangest part of the story is that Tania Head made no money off of her deception -- her motivation has never become known, but she received no monetary benefit (and, in fact, spent sums of her own money on the survivors' cause) and collected only acclaim, concern, and love.

I couldn't put this book down. The first part of it goes into Tania's (fabricated) story in great detail. The reader knows from the beginning -- from the title and the information on the book flap -- that none of it is true, which makes it even more compelling. The amount of research about the attacks that Tania must have done in order to concoct her story had to have been astounding. By the time I reached the end, I couldn't decide whether I should be angry, sad, disgusted, or some combination of all of the above. What would *ever* lead someone to do something like this? Did she do it out of cruelty to the true survivors? Was her own life so sad and meaningless that this was the only way she could feel loved and appreciated? Mostly, though, I felt betrayed right along with the real survivors.

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### **Patty says**

I was disappointed that most of the book details her lies, delusions, manipulations and fabrications, and only one chapter tells you the truth about the woman. I wanted to understand better who she is, and why she did it, as well as how she could get away with it for so long. It needed an extra chapter at the end to explain that.

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### **Claire Cameron says**

Interesting account of the story, but it stopped short of delving deeper into the psychology of lies. This was not the intention of the authors to do so, rather it is what I would have been interested in. It is certainly a page turner. I read it in one sitting.

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### **Alex Cruse says**

Wow, I literally devoured this book in an afternoon. An amazing true story about Tania Head, a woman who said she was on the 78th floor sky lobby in the South Tower of the World Trade Center on 9/11 when it was struck literally head on by one of the hijacked planes. While she manages to extraordinarily survive, her fiance dies in the North tower. The book weaves her story from the genesis of her writings on online support groups for the forgotten victims of 9/11, the survivors. As Tania makes amazing headway for the survivors of 9/11 her tale begins to unravel until it all falls apart and the truth is revealed. You will feel all the feels when reading this. I went in knowing a bit about Tania Head, but I was still spellbound by how incredible and enraging her web of lies was. I would highly recommend this if you enjoy historical non-fiction, 9/11 history, and/or true stories of incredible deception.

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

There seems to be a compulsion in some people (and it's growing in the digital age where false information can so easily be shared and believed) to lie about being involved in traumatic events. I've encountered a few online, from people claiming to have survived the Sandy Hook Shooting to people who swear in the name of God himself that they were evacuated from Pripyat during the Chernobyl Disaster of 1986. One quick click on their internet profile usually reveals the exact opposite. *Why* though do people do it? Psychologists have guessed that it's a result of being desperate for attention, or maybe not even intentional, but instead an involuntary response to hearing about a historical tragedy that was particularly disturbing.

Tania Head claimed to be a 9/11 survivor who lost her husband in the World Trade Center Attacks.

For reasons I'd rather not mention, I know that anyone involved in 9/11 was negatively changed and traumatized for life. It's a painful scenario to even consider - victims that day either burned to death, or plummeted 100 floors down to New York's streets in a desperate attempt to escape. Tania Head, the subject of this book, did something absolutely abhorrent and disgusting. She lied about being a 9/11 survivor, and staged an elaborate hoax in order to worm her way into a forming network of other people who'd either truly survived themselves, or lost family or colleagues in the attacks. Oddly enough, Tania had nothing to gain other than attention. She received no money and even donated her *own* money to the other survivors. Her life, and why she did what she did, makes for a compelling true crime novel featuring a complex mystery of deception, psychology and America's struggle to find hope in the aftermath of chaos and horror.

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### **Alysia says**

Even though I watched the documentary before reading the book, *The Woman Who Wasn't There* was still compelling and interesting to read. Mostly because no matter how many times you hear a story like this, you'll never stop being shocked that it actually happened.

The idea of anybody pretending to be a 9/11 survivor isn't far fetched. Some people demand more attention than others and will do anything to get it. But to pretend to be 9/11 survivor, head up a survivor's network, invent a marriage with a man who actually died, and carry on for over 5 years? It seems too calculatingly evil to not be straight from Lifetime movie.

Learning about all of the things Tania did before it was revealed she was a fraud actually made me conflicted. Tania did amazing things for the survivor's network. Former friends and members cited that she was the reason that they found the will to live again. Her best friend at the time, Linda, even said the Tania represented the presence of God on 9/11 to her. She honestly saved a lot of people.

On the other hand, Tania used her position as the queen of suffering to bully and manipulate the other members of the network and the people she considered her friends. She even edged out one of the founding members of the survivor's network because she thought he was being too intrusive.

People like Tania make me raise this question: If a bad action results in a good outcome, was it really bad at all? Did Tania's lying, determination, and narcissism, justify the means? I don't have an answer.

Nowadays, a con like this wouldn't fly. The internet is just too all knowing. Her husband, her job, her tale could be fact checked in about an afternoon. I'm also not surprised no one cared to question Tania until the very end. From outside the survivor's network, to question someone who claimed to be a 9/11 survivor so soon after it happened was insane. No one would be so terrible. People couldn't comprehend it. From inside of the survivor's network, to question Tania meant cutting your lifeline to salvation. Tania was their God. If she wanted you gone, you were gone. Your support, your friends, they would side with Tania.

The only thing that bothered me about the book was that it didn't delve very deeply into Tania the person. The book read more like a long article about what she did, rather than who she was and why she would do it. It was minor, but that would have sent this book over the top.

All in all, a great book about a crazy situation. Would highly recommend.

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### **Jae says**

I found this to be a very bizarre book. Not bad, but not at all what I was expecting given the title and the promotion around it. What I expected was a story, from the journalists' point of view from beginning to end, about the unmasking of a faker who for years had pretended to be a 9/11 survivor: a depiction of exactly what they did to uncover her deceptions, descriptions by her one-time friends how it felt to be betrayed by her, philosophical discussion about whether she was a typical "con man" or whether she had actually convinced herself of her lies. Most (though not all) of that was there eventually, but it didn't even start until

the very final 20% of the book.

Before that, what you got was the faker's fake story, mostly told from her point of view, as if it had really happened. I suppose the intention was to give the eventual deception all the more impact, but since no one reads a book entitled "The Woman Who Wasn't There: The True Story of an Incredible Deception" without knowing about the existence of the deception, it seemed like a very strange narrative choice.

Still worth reading, though, if that's your thing, and I don't regret buying it. I just wish I could have learned more of the details of the unmasking rather than having most of it glossed over and crammed into the last few chapters. I'm interested in the stories of 9/11 survivors *too*, but it's the unmasking of a faker that really intrigued me enough to read the book in the first place.

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### **Mjdrean says**

I was about to give this book 3 stars until I realized it wasn't the writing I didn't like--- it was the woman in the book. The writing is worth 4 stars. The woman needs, needs? Needs everything, a spanking, a psychiatrist, a man, a year in jail, an intervention, a reality check. She doesn't need gall. There were so many victims from 9/11 and now she's left those victims victimized all over again. Conning runs in her family evidently, her father and brother spent time in a Spanish prison for fraud. Shame on her.

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### **Sera says**

Interesting story about a woman who successfully faked being a survivor of 9/11 for 5 years. Excellent depiction about the rise of the survivor movement generally after the tragedy had occurred, and I found the story of "the woman" to be quite fascinating, because I couldn't believe that she was able to perpetrate the hoax for so long.

My only criticism of the book is that we didn't get to know "why" she did it. Was it a result of self-narcissm? Well, sure, but I was really hoping that there would be more context about her motives than that. I can't blame the authors, who didn't speculate what those motives could have been since they had no facts to answer the question; however, it does weaken the ending of the book a little bit.

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### **Kamille says**

I have watched two documentaries about Tania Head. In both documentaries, I walked away feeling a little sad for the woman. Clearly, she was/is dealing with mental issues.

After reading this book, I have no sympathy for Tania Head. She lied her way into a position of power. She interfered with the mental well-being of actual survivors. She used and abused her position of power. She manipulated people who trusted her and cared for her. I don't even want to think about what she did to the family of the man she claimed to be her husband or the Crowther family.

I enjoyed the book, only because I was into the mystery of this woman. I didn't find out too many facts that I didn't already know from watching the documentaries. There was little biographical information about her,

same as in the docs. No explanation was offered as to why she did what she did. The book was well-written and short. An easy read. Great story with a lot of holes, obviously.

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## **Speranza says**

I found that there was much more to this than a simple story of deception. It addresses so many other phenomena that we have given names and attributed qualities to and are unable to see as anything else than what we know.

### **INVENTED REALITY vs (F)ACTUAL REALITY**

In a world of internet and virtual communication, our perception of reality has been changing at a fast pace. But an invented reality that is incorporated into actual reality is a concept that leaves many of us aghast. It is called deception and we all know deception is bad, right?

Tania Head is a remarkable woman. One needs guts to invent a story and make it public for the world to see and scrutinize. One needs a pinch of madness as well.

Alicia Esteve (aka Tania Head) lied about being a 9/11 survivor, lied about losing a loved one, invented a love story with a man she never met and, most unbelievable of all, she lived this lie for years in front of myriad prying eyes. She became the poster-child of a significant even in world history and reveled in the attention. She would tell her story to anybody who would listen and she displayed symptoms of post-traumatic stress, bouts of depression and survival guilt.

Was she really that good of an actress?

She probably was. However, I can't help but feel that the only way Tania Head could have sustained her lie was to live it. To *believe* it. I am fairly certain that after a time Alicia Esteve became Tania Head in her own mind. She did live through it all; she did have a great love that she lost; she did struggle with the consequences of everything that happened. In the end, she did help a lot of survivors through their pain. She fought relentlessly for their rights, as many of the survivors themselves testify. Or did she? Did this really happen? If there was no Tania Head, if Tania Head was the invention of a sick mind, how was she a part of the 9/11 survivors' organisation, how did she become its president, how did she chaperone New York's most prominent men around Ground Zero?

Did Tania Head exist or did she not? Where does invented reality end and where does actual reality start?

The story of Tania Head is the story of everyone. If we look deep down, we might find that most of us have little invented realities that we live, secretly or openly, that give us guilty conscience or a purpose in life. Or even happy memories! For who is to say what reality really is?

### **GOOD vs BAD**

The true intentions behind this deception will probably never be known. Not even by the deceiver herself. As with anything, I doubt that there is one single thing that made her do what she did. It started out as a lie and the ball kept rolling until there wasn't any stopping it. Whatever the initial thought, it is unlikely to have much to do with the final outcome. Whether it was a way to kill time, to feel important, to gain sympathy, in the end it turned out to be a life story. Furthermore, it turned out to be a life-changing story. A story of

survival, of stoicism, of heroism. The eternal story of good defeating evil...until, in a split second, it became the story of evil violating good.

After the truth has come out, the general feeling has been of shock and betrayal. But the question remains of what would have happened if it had never been discovered? Would Tania Head have become the villain she is portrayed as today or would she have been canonized as the ultimate survivor? Is she bad because she lied to everybody or is she good because she helped so many people throughout the most horrific time of their lives?

Where is the fine line between **good** and **bad**? Is there a line between them? Are they two different concepts at all?

## **TRAGEDY AS A NECESSITY**

September 11 has become an emblematic date in history. For all the suffering and unimaginable horror it brought about, this day now is an integral part of USA's identity. It is often made reference to; it is still talked about; it is learned about in schools. It is a milestone of the past, the way many wars, disasters, dictatorships are.

And, as with any grand event, it became a tribune for all kinds of human emotions to be played out publicly. It created its heroes. It had its villains. It had its victims, both the dead and the living. It killed many lives, but gave purpose to many others.

It gave Alicia Esteve a reason to wake up in the morning.

In the wake of tragedy, many people thrive.

In a way, Tania Head was a collective image of all human faces that 9/11 represented. She was a victim of her own folly, a hero for some, the most devious villain. In her, like in everything, good and bad, true and false were inseparably intertwined – the same way she was with her fiancé who perished in the North Tower. Or so she claimed.

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## **Nancy says**

Such a sad story on so many levels. Well researched and written with compassion for all those who perished, responded, and yes, those who survived. We must never forget.

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## **Carol says**

This is one of those OMG books. All I can say is it's a good thing that I knew the outcome going in.

I'm giving this 4 stars but this is not a story that warrants "like" I'm not going to say anything more but would love to read or discuss this book with a group. This would allow an exploration of the psychological make-up

of the people whose stories are told.

One thing I really liked about this book was how the authors laid out the story. They could have chosen to do it in a far different way. It was also heart rending to hear the stories of the 9/11 survivors and how little they were considered in the aftermath.

Some reviewers found the story appalling, some found some redemption in it. I am still weighing the whole.

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### **Maureen Timerman says**

What a compelling heart-wrenching story. You feel the pain that Tania Head experienced. Her world fell apart on the morning of September 11, 2001, she almost lost her own life, and she did lose her beloved Dave, her husband/fiance. She recounts her horrific tale many times in this book, how could you survive all that she has lost?

You hear about the angel in the stair-well, with the red-bandana that helps save her life. She in turn helps fill in a void in his parents life, and brings them some feeling of satisfaction on hearing how he helped her. She becomes the head of the World Trade Center Survivor's Network, and she becomes a life line to so many in need. She leads the group in helping save the "Survivor's Stairway".

She becomes best friends with Linda Gormley, among others, and when she gets stressed, she treats them terribly. There are several others, that I was worried she was going to put them over the edge, and yet most just were in awe of her. In the end she is a total FAKE! So many people loved and trusted her! Tania actually has a gift of drawing people toward her.

This book will linger with you long long after you have turned the last page. You will wonder how someone could live with themselves faking such an unimaginable horror.

I received this book from the Publisher Touchstone, and was not required to give a positive review.

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### **Tami says**

Unbelievable!! Incredible! What the??!?? I couldn't put this book down.

Not knowing the background or having heard anything about the story, I was taken in and couldn't believe the ending, even knowing the title of the book!! The authors tell this tale so clearly.

It's the story of a woman, Tania Head, who claimed to be in the towers on 9/11, her harrowing rescue and will to survive, the loss of her husband in the other tower and her struggle to live afterwards. She builds a foundation for Survivors and an avenue for those affected to be listened to, comforted, and a big support. In the end, AFTER 5 YEARS, she is found to be a fraud, is kicked out of her network but is able to freely go about New York and back and forth from Spain without any repercussions. Inexcusable!

I am just floored by Tania's actions and by the response of some of those afterwards. I guess a bit more forgiving than I would be. When you mess with people's true experiences and emotions, that is a crime!! Granted, Tania did a lot of good for the Survivor's Network and got them recognized as other victims of 9/11 but she preyed on so many people's raw emotions. And was such a bully to those who really tried to love her and help her. She was a BULLY!! Honestly, I think she should be prosecuted for something!

She should also be given an Oscar for criminals. She well-played her part, did her research, and acted real well, faking all those around her with her emotions. Incredible!! I can understand how she wasn't caught for so many years. 9/11 is such a sensitive, raw subject. Who is going to doubt other's stories and emotions? But how she is free to go about and prey on another tragedy, is beyond me. She should be behind bars and if we can't prosecute her for something, she should at least be deported and never allowed back into the country!

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### **Juliana says**

I don't think a book has made me so angry in my life. This woman took advantage of real survivors and victims, telling them that she was in the South tower on 9/11. Her story was SO vivid that nobody thought to question her until 6 years later. Somehow, she became the celebrity amongst the group and was constantly in the spotlight.

This book is well written and so detailed that you think that maybe she wasn't lying about everything. As time goes on, she becomes more and more suspicious. Things don't add up. She makes so much about herself and pulls others down with her. She didn't just blatantly lie to the survivors of 9/11 but to the mayor, numerous tourists, AND survivors of the Oklahoma city bombing. I was in total shock and can't understand why she kept intentionally digging her grave deeper and deeper.

Even after solid proof that she wasn't there, she refused to give in. This woman is a piece of work and completely despicable for doing this to real survivors. Absolutely disgusting.

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### **Anita Dalton says**

This book was sort of entertaining but at the end of it all, the authors knew nothing about Tania Head other than that she decided to play a 9/11 victim and tell all kinds of unlikely lies. These lies brought her to the forefront of the 9/11 survivor movement and made her a star of sorts.

The book explains what she did and how a handful of people became her pets as she scammed and lied, but at no point does this book ever explain Tania Head. We ended up knowing remarkably little about her real life. We got snippets from her childhood but we know nothing about Tania or her motivations.

Of course, Tania herself was unwilling to discuss anything. But when you can't get enough information to write a book you don't write a book. The reactions of a handful of people whose lives we know very little about don't really complete the picture. The reaction of one high school friend who was able to tell us very little about Head wasn't enough. All we know is that this strange little woman scammed people, which could have been covered in a Vanity Fair article.

Most important is that we never really get the reaction of the family of the key victim in this - the man Tania said she married, a man who died in the attacks on 9/11. This man never knew her, and she used his name openly in the public as her husband. It was a key part of her scam. Out of sensitivity to the family that was dragged into this ridiculous charade, they do not discuss the man, his family, their reaction or anything that would give a real human face to the harm Tania Head did.

I can understand that. I really can. But as I said above, if you don't have enough information to write a compelling narrative, you don't write one.

So we have 287 pages, very short chapters, of a woman telling lies no one should have been able to believe. She is telling them to an audience whose lives ultimately mean nothing to us other than respecting their experiences on that horrible day because they're just foils to a woman whose lies never really could stand in the light of day. We know nothing about Head or her motivations other than that she must have a lot of charisma in order for people to have bought her crappy lies. We know nothing about the impact on the survivor community other than the handful of one dimensional side players who played a foil to Head.

All of this is problematic when you realize that none of Tania Head's lies were worth a damn. This was not a woman who could weave a seamless narrative. She was extremely obese and indicated that a young man carried her out of the building. She said her arm was hanging by a few ligaments and was in the hospital for weeks but could not speak of the doctors or the nurses who helped her. She described the man she claimed she was married to as either her husband or her fiance. She never produced items for a 9/11 memorial museum that she promised. Not a single person who survived remembered seeing her in the Towers. And of course, the company she worked for never, ever heard of her. And yet she got away with this narrative for years. And we don't know why because the pictures of Tania are not of a woman whose appearance speaks of much charm and the descriptions of her speeches don't really seem like they would have much resonance.

The most annoying element of this book is that in most books wherein we are treated to the unfolding of a scam, we get to see how someone uncovers the scam. In this book the hoax is unraveled by the New York Times because they finally asked all the questions any sane person should have asked. But we are not privy to the process the reporter went through as they uncovered Tania's lies. One of the most compelling elements of a book like this and we are not permitted to see it as it happens. We get all the lies and all the people buying the lies that no reasonable person would have bought and we don't even get the catharsis of watching as it unravels for Head. That's a problem.

And all of this is even more problematic if you are looking at paying \$26 for a book that cannot tell you most of the story you need to know in order to give a crap.

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### **Donna says**

This is a fascinating story, and in the hands of better writers it could have been a great book. Instead, it's a lumbering linear narrative which gets more tedious the longer it goes on. We know going into the book that Head was a fraud, but there's no insight into WHY Head needed to insert herself into the 9/11 tragedy, nor any investigation into the life she was actually leading while she hoodwinked everyone. If she wasn't working for Merrill Lynch as claimed, just what was she doing? Did she have a job? How did she afford a swank Manhattan apartment? She claimed to have gone to Sri Lanka to assist with rebuilding after the tsunami - did she? Unfortunately, none of these questions are answered or even addressed. At 304 pages, there's a lot of repetition and many over-dramatized dialogue sequences, as if the authors are stretching thin material into an acceptable length for a book.

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### **Debbie says**

This was a somewhat difficult book for me to read since I had worked in the World Trade Center and know

people who died that day. I was not there on September 11th, but I counseled people who were - and largely because of my work with survivors, I was interested in this story.

I found it to be much better than the documentary. This book is riveting, and - though it covers a span of several years and contains a lot of details - it's a pretty fast read. There is no answer to the question of why Tania Head did what she did, but I didn't expect that there would be. It's not as simple as good vs evil and nothing is tied up with a pretty little bow. She is clearly a very complex person who had a very large impact on many survivors.

The other people are presented in a way that made me feel I knew them. My heart went out particularly to the long-suffering Linda, but also to the others who were fooled and taken in by Tania's deception. I loved the ending - I thought it was much more satisfying and fitting than the way the documentary ended.

For me, some of the descriptions were just a bit too familiar, so I had to stop and start this book several times. Because I could easily imagine the inside of the World Trade Center offices and surrounding area, some of the visuals were hard and I needed to take a break. I do not believe it's too graphic or disturbing, though. I really think that most readers will find it interesting and well worth their time. It's a fascinating story about an interesting, clearly psychologically-damaged woman as well as the struggles of men and women who woke up on September 11th not knowing that their lives would be changed forever.

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