



# Close to You

*Kara Isaac*

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A disgraced scholar running from her past and an entrepreneur chasing his future find themselves thrown together—and fall in love—on a Tolkien tour of New Zealand.

Allison Shire (yes, like where the Hobbits live) is a disgraced academic who is done with love. Her belief in “happily ever after” ended the day she discovered her husband was still married to a wife she knew nothing about. She finally finds a use for her English degree by guiding tours through the famous sites featured in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* movies. By living life on the road and traveling New Zealand as a luxury tour guide, Allison manages to outrun the pain of her past she can’t face.

Jackson Gregory was on the cusp of making it big. Then suddenly his girlfriend left him—for his biggest business competitor—and took his most guarded commercial secrets with her. To make matters worse, the Iowa farm that has been in his family for generations is facing foreclosure. Determined to save his parents from financial ruin, he’ll do whatever it takes to convince his wealthy great-uncle to invest in his next scheme, which means accompanying him to the bottom of the world to spend three weeks pretending to be a die-hard *Lord of the Rings* fan, even though he knows nothing about the stories. The one thing that stands between him and his goal is a know-it-all tour guide who can’t stand him and pegged him as a fake the moment he walked off the plane.

When Allison leads the group through the famous sites of the Tolkien movies, she and Jackson start to see each other differently, and as they keep getting thrown together on the tour, they find themselves drawn to each other. Neither expected to fall in love again, but can they find a way beyond their regrets to take a chance on the one thing they’re not looking for?

## Close to You Details

Date : Published April 26th 2016 by Howard Books (first published April 1st 2016)

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Author : Kara Isaac

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# From Reader Review Close to You for online ebook

## Chantel says

After reading this book I just want to stare off dreamily and remember all of the awesomely great parts of this story!

"Close To You" was a delightfully fun rom-com adventure. I loved every minute of it! Kara Isaac writing is quick, hilarious and heartfelt. I love how this story was centered on "Lord Of The Rings"! Whether your a fan of the books or movies or a don't really know much about them( ahem! Like me). The excitement that the characters had on the 'Lord Of The Rings Tour" tour was just down right contagious. It was entertaining seeing crazy situations Allie and her eclectic tour group would get into. Plus the fact that it's in beautiful new Zealand doesn't hurt either! Kara's beautifully descriptive writing about all the sites just makes you want to pack your bags and go on a tour yourself!

I loved the opposites-attract-chemistry between Allie and Jackson! I was a fan of them going in because I read " Can't Help Falling first ( another awesome book btw) but it was entertaining see how they first met. I found myself giggling with all the back and forth banter Jackson. But honey-child... this story also had the drama and emotional feels as well! Let just say I couldn't enough of this book!! 5 stars!!

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## Amanda Geaney (Christian Shelf-Esteem) says

Someone needs to turn this book into a movie! Close to You was the funniest and sweetest little romance story I've read. The Tolkien geekery was totally fantastic and Kara has left me with a strong desire to visit Middle-earth (New Zealand).

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## Abigayle Claire says

Finally reviewing this one. It's by far the most chick-flicky book I've ever read. But let's be honest, sometimes that's exactly what we need.

Even though the main characters could have felt cliché, they quickly grew on me as they were so well-written. Definitely some character growth! The romance was well done, as were the Christian elements. But it was a steamier romance than I usually enjoy reading (even though it remained clean). It was one of the best jobs I'd seen of dealing with pricklier characters' passive cursing. Everything felt real, not glib.

Honestly, it was the setting that made the book stand out. I mean ... who doesn't want to read about a Hobbiton tour?? I think it was my first time to read something set in New Zealand, and I definitely felt like I was there.

I can see why people like Kara Isaac. Touching, fluffy, and so easy to curl up and read straight through. I knocked one star because it didn't blow the mind and the romance was really a little much for me.

I recommend for ages 15+ due to the amount of romance.

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### **Rachel McMillan says**

I am going to review this one closer to its pub date!

But what a refreshing, sparkly voice, unique setting and relevant subject. I loved that it taps into the world's obsession with Tolkien and I loved that it featured a strong-willed, intelligent grad student as its lead.

Hilariously winsome.

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### **Beth says**

I'm so glad I finally took the time to read Kara Isaac's debut. I loved her two follow-ups, so I was eager to get to this one. Close to You is humorous, poignant, and a bit whimsical. I immediately warmed up to Allison, but Jackson was not so quick to get on my good side. I felt for Allison and the poor dynamics in her family and also related to Jackson's desire to make up for past failures. Yes, the romance is endearingly sweet, but their personal growth and development caught at my heart as well. The secondary characters are a flavorful bunch, and I especially liked Jackson's uncle. I also like how Isaac connects the story by characters - I recognized one from one of her other books, and I daresay, she deserves a story of her own one day.

Kara Isaac has become one of my favorite contemporary authors, joining the ranks of writers like Melissa Tagg and Becky Wade. I eagerly await whatever story comes from her next.

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### **R.J. Rodda says**

An utter delight to read. Witty, romantic and heart-felt. I even laughed out loud reading it, which is unusual for me. I loved the costumes, the Lord of the Rings references the characters and the repartee. Just fun to read as well as moving. The faith-mentions are well-woven in and gentle. I'm glad I read this.

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### **Angie H says**

I knew I was going to love this book right from the start. This book had me literally laughing out loud. I loved the banter back and forth between Allison and Jackson, not to mention the shenanigans they got themselves into. This book was about two very broken people who picked up the pieces and grew both personally and spiritually along the way. I absolutely adored this book, and I am not even a Lord of the Rings fan, and can't wait to read another book by this author.

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## Kathy \* Bookworm Nation says

4.5

This was an unexpected surprise!

Allie lives in New Zealand where she is a Tolkien tour guide. She takes enthusiastic Tolkien fans on tours of where *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* were filmed. Being a fan of the movies and books I was looking forward to this fun and unique setting. If a tour like this is real, it is definitely one I'd want to go on.

Allie has loved everything Tolkien since she was a young girl. When her life come crumbling down around her, she signs on as a Tolkien tour guide to hide out until she can get her life back together. After two long years, things still aren't moving along as quickly as she'd like. Then her new tour group arrives and with it one Jackson Gregory. Sparks fly from the beginning with these two! Neither probably makes the best first impression, but they have to put up with each other for the next three weeks. Neither expected for their feelings of animosity to quickly grow into something else entirely.

I really liked Allie, she's smart and her obsession with Tolkien was endearing. Jackson knows nothing about Tolkien or his books. He only agreed to this trip to try and win his wealthy uncle over as an investor and to try and fix the financial mess his life is in. He takes some time to get the chip off his shoulder, but then he just becomes a real guy who is surprisingly really nice underneath all his arrogance. I loved the scenes with these two. They have great chemistry and some of those embarrassing moments they share had me laughing out loud. I liked that this wasn't just a fluff read (not that there is anything wrong with those kind of books, I quite enjoy them), but both Allie and Jackson have a lot of personal things going on in their lives that really affect how they treat each other. I liked that they both grow as individuals throughout the story and how they help each other heal without even realizing it.

Overall, I thought it was a really fun escape. Ms. Isaac paints a picture of New Zealand that made me want to hop on the next plane and visit the beautiful country and of course go on a Tolkien tour. I thought it was well written and other than it being a tad long, I thought it was paced well. Kept me engaged and wanting to see how things would end up. Definitely worth reading. Can't wait to read more from Ms. Isaac, I love finding new authors!!

### Content

Romance: Clean (wouldn't have minded a few more stolen kisses!)

Language: None

Violence: None-very mild

Religious: Mild, not preachy

Other: Don't have to be a Tolkien guru to enjoy! Although, I will admit after reading this it did make me want to watch the movies again. haha

Source: Review copy

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## Melanie says

Let me start off by saying that I am not a Tolkien fan...just never got into those books or movies, but you don't have to be one in order to enjoy *Close to You*. The characters are endearing and the hero doesn't know much of anything about Tolkien (although he's trying to pretend that he's a true fan to his great-uncle throughout the story); so if, like me, you're not a die-hard Tolkien fan, you'll be able to relate to him. :)

I liked the setting and the whole aspect of the tour. I can see how it would be really fun to do something like that. The writing was very good and the ending was satisfying.

All in all, *Close to You* was a great read. I really enjoyed reading it and recommend it if you enjoy contemporary romance...and if you *are* a Tolkien fan, you'll probably love that aspect of the story.

\*I received a complimentary eBook copy of this book for my honest review. As always, all thoughts and opinions expressed are my own.\*

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## Madison says

This is a standout contemporary novel, hilarious, touching and enjoyable right to the very last page.

Allison Shire is working for a Lord of the Rings tour company. She is perhaps the most over-qualified tour guide ever, but this is where she must stay until the courts can annul her marriage to a charmer who was only after her money and citizenship and just happened to already be married. Jackson Gregory went from entrepreneur and businessman success story to disaster when his girlfriend stole his company's secrets and gave them to his top competitor. Now he has been dragged to the bottom of the world on a trip that sounds like a combination of everything he finds ridiculous. But he must impress his uncle with his Tolkien knowledge (which is actually less than nonexistent) and good character if he wants his uncle to invest in his latest scheme and hopefully save his family's farm and pay back what he owes to disappointed investors. Both Allie and Jackson have been severely burnt by love and life, but they can't deny the feelings that spring up on their trip through the great New Zealand scenery (although those feelings are mainly frustration and irritation). It just might take a miracle for these two to survive the trip with their hearts intact.

*Close To You* flips from charmingly amusing to downright hilarious. Everything that could possibly go wrong does, from falling into mud pits or getting lost in the rugged New Zealand wilderness. The interactions between Allie and Jackson are magic. From the you're-driving-me-crazy moments, to the ones where something lingers under the surface, I loved every minute of it.

It's been a while since I've read a contemporary that is so well paced. It felt long. And not in a this is boring, hurry up way, but in that it felt like the relationships developed naturally. Nothing is rushed, the characters are able to express a whole range of feelings, and the time it takes for Allie and Jackson to move from deep dislike to something more (with maybe a few twists in the middle) felt realistic and worthy. Both are determined to stay away from relationships. I love how their feelings sneak up on them. I also loved how this never happened in a way that was all 'I've given up on love but two seconds later I'm totally head over heels'. They both fight the slowly growing attraction each step of the way and there are plenty of arguments, sweet moments, hilarious stunts and pure frustration. Despite Jackson's initial arrogance I couldn't help feeling a little bit sorry for him. He is clearly out of his depth. And Allie makes a great heroine, smart and brave but

very weary after everything life has handed to her.

While I've seen the movies, I'm not a die-hard Tolkien fan. I had to look up a few references while reading, but both main characters are well and truly sick of all things Hobbit most of the time, so everything is approached with a blend of respect and humour, as well as a whole lot of disbelief, cynicism and eye-rolling. Perfect and very amusing.

The writing style is flowery, with plenty of metaphors, but it works in this rolling tale of love, literature and adventure. Aside from all The Lord of the Ring references there are many other cultural references to books, movies and TV shows.

Faith doesn't play much of a role in this book until later in the last half. Allie is a Christian, but feels distant from God due to her bad choices. Jackson's family are Christians and he was raised as a Christian but he hasn't had much time for God in between his business deals and past relationships. God is only mentioned in passing a few times in the first half of the book, but this increases towards the end of the book, where the characters find themselves turning back to God, choosing to follow his direction and ultimately trusting in his love and plans. It's a great balance, never preachy or overdone but nor is it lacking in any way for a light, Christian feel.

The end is absolutely perfect - a wonderful moment (and all the moments leading up to it). The characters worked so hard to get to this place and they totally deserved every minute of it. I loved how it was paced, how it wasn't easy or assumed or cliché or anything but brilliant.

I love that this is set in New Zealand. I love the abundance of pop culture and literature references. I love everything about all the Lord of the Rings aspects, from the fan devotion, movies, books, locations, quotes, characters and storylines, but especially that the book is not afraid to make fun and tease, never taking itself very seriously while still remaining respectful and authentic enough to please any fan.

The humour is what makes it a five-star book for me. It's a book I will go back and pick up when I'm down and needing something fun, making it a perfect Christian contemporary.

The publishers provided a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Find more reviews on my blog [Madison's Library](#).

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## **Staci says**

This debut was super cute! Among the humor were two hurt souls finding love even though they were definitely not looking for it. And the ending...wow...such a sweet, sweet ending.

The author writes with a great deal of humor and I found myself laughing out loud several times. For readers that are familiar with or fans of The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit, you will enjoy this novel even more than I could with having zero knowledge of the novels/movies. Likely, this would have been a five star read if I would have gotten all the references. But please don't let zero knowledge of Lord of the Rings/Hobbit scare you away. The novel is fantastic even if you know nothing about the Tolkien novels.

I look forward to reading other works by this author. I recommend this debut to fans of My Stubborn Heart

by Becky Wade.

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**writer... says**

**Can.not.wait. has become Do.not.miss.**

**5+\*s and <3 s**

One of the most FuN Romantic Comedies I have read,

Kara has a unique ability to capture time and place of her characters, yet keep them relating to readers across the globe.

The feisty Allison Shire, English PhD wielding Dr. turned Tolkien Tour Guide,  
has more life twists and turns than a road trip.

Her nemesis?

Dark and brooding, Jackson, deviously planning a financial coup of his Great Uncle Louis' wealth.

All in the name of Tolkien fandom.

{In



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4.5 rating.

If you know my taste is fiction, I don't very often venture into the contemporary set books. But this one just looked so interesting. I mean, guys, it's a romance that twists in elements of *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. Who knew such a thing would ever exist? Well, I'm here to say that yes, it does, and yes, I found it pretty awesome. It's like a Hallmark film meets Tolkien, giving you part romantic comedy with flutter feelings, and part Middle Earth geek feelings that warm the heart with fan-love. Add in that it has points of Christian faith, giving it depth, and it's just one of the most lovely little reads I've experienced this year. The author's voice, shown majorly through her main characters, is also very entertaining. The book, while serious in some aspects, abounds with humor that is sure to warm hearts as it did mine. And to top it all off, the book had such a different setting from most Christian fiction. I don't think I've ever read another book that takes place in New Zealand, with a heroine from there, and that just made the story all the more wonderfully unique. So yes, I overall enjoyed this book. The only thing I did not fully care for is that there was one scene where I felt the romance had a bit too much touch-feely. But other than that, nothing else begs to be complained about.

In conclusion, I think "Close to You" by Kara Issac is a winner, and one to add to your TBR if you like contemporary romance and Middle Earth. I give it a rating of four and half, and recommend to mature teens and adults. **But, please note, this book does not release until April 2016.**

*\*Thanks to the publisher through Netgalley for a free electronic advanced uncorrected proof copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not required to write a positive review.*

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## Meagan says

There's a lot that I liked about *Close to You*. It's set in New Zealand, on a Lord of the Rings tour, which is the kind of quirky setting that you don't see every day. The heroine is an academic whose career is hampered by personal problems, and I liked seeing how this capable, bright woman dealt with everyone else regularly underestimating her. I liked the hero's great-uncle and all his machinations.

What I was less excited about was how much the conflict of the love story relied on bad communication. Anyone who follows my reading knows that nothing drives me crazier than the Big Misunderstanding in a romance novel. If everything would turn out fine after one difficult conversation, that doesn't cut it for me. I need a real obstacle to overcome. And I need a hero who doesn't sulk every time one of those obstacles rears its head. A cute book, and not something I see every day especially in the Christian romance subgenre. Worth reading for fans of cute, quirky Christian romance, but not without its flaws.

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## Shantelle says

### 3.5 stars

*Close to You* by Kara Isaac wasn't exactly what I expected. (*I was thinking it was YA, when it is, in fact, about two adults.*) But I still enjoyed! It was fun, quirky, and filled with details about J.R.R. Tolkien and

Middle-Earth. Also included, were faith matters and some deep struggles.

A novel about a used-to-be Tolkien fan who's now a guide in a Tolkien tour, with a client who doesn't know the least bit about this author and his famous fantasy books, is a novel that cries out for me to open it! Allison Shire and Jackson Gregory don't have much in common, unless you count their betrayed hearts and shattered futures. When they are thrown together in a Tolkien-esque part of New Zealand for a few weeks, things are about to get exciting ... and complicated.

It was an interesting and fun journey. From the first page, you're pulled into this contemporary, yet intriguing, setting. And there's plenty of action and humorous moments.

I did have a couple complaints. One, I would liked to have seen Allie's faith grow more. Two, there were a couple incidents that bordered on inappropriate. Nothing obscene, but I just felt some characters weren't *exactly* living out their Christian walk with all purity.

But, overall, it was quite real. There *was* character growth. Things developed slowly. Even the romance, (*though when you count the actual days they were together was rather fast,*) felt like it took time to happen. There was no immediate kissing and declarations of love. The characters held themselves back from certain actions - knowing deep down the time wasn't right. I really appreciated that. Past immorality was confronted. Wrong choices weren't excused. So even though some of the themes felt a little edgy compared to what I usually read, everything was dealt with. Right choices were made. Characters decided to wait on God. There was a lovely bit of faith that echoed through *Close to You*.

One of my favorite aspects of *Close to You* was the Tolkien theme. Hobbits, elves, dwarves, and orcs! I learned new tidbits about J.R.R. Tolkien and *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* books/movies. And even *The Silmarillion*! It was all so fun and delightful and interesting. I felt like watching all the movies over while reading this book! And though old books intimidate me, I think I must give at least *The Hobbit* a try. So that was really cool. Great job, Kara Isaac!

Now I'm so excited about picking up a copy of *Can't Help Falling*! I'm ready for a *Chronicles of Narnia*-esque contemporary novel from Kara Isaac! \*grins\*

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