



# Tarese's World of Colour

Story Marilyn Collins

"Flowers, sparkles, lace, chiffons and beautiful fabrics... they all make my world a happier place to live in, just ask anyone that knows me!"

- Tarese Klemens

The world of second-year TAFE fashion student Tarese Klemens is today filled with feminine, free-flowing romantic gowns and colourful floral headpieces, all nature themed and styled by herself; a stark contrast to her life five years ago which was so black, dark and gothic – a time when she was in the mindset that she had no future or reason to live.

"With so many young people in this world in a dark place at the moment, I hope by sharing my story it will give them hope that there is light in the tunnel and there is a wonderful future and a career they never thought possible," says 24-year-old Tarese, who is completing the final stages of Applied Fashion Design at Tighes Hill TAFE.

Bravely, she shares her story, paying tribute to

an organisation here in the Hunter Region which turned her life around.

Tarese was brought up in a very remote area of North Queensland and in a sheltered family, where she was the oldest of eight children. All the children were home schooled and she was abused from as far back as she can remember.

She was not allowed to watch TV or read books, except true life stories so had never heard a fairy tale story. Birthdays and Christmas were not celebrated when growing up, so one year blurred into the next. As there was little social contact, Tarese was unaware that her family life was not how every family lived. She began self-harming at a young age and began the cycle of binge purging or starving herself as a means of coping with the unspeakable pain that had no outlet. >



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Tarese moved out of home at sixteen and into town, where she boarded for a time with a family. She desperately wanted to go to school but because of her upbringing she had nothing in common with any of the teenagers at school, making this environment almost unbearable. She attempted suicide many times and was in and out of hospital.

After facing many so challenges and believing her life had no purpose or hope, Tarese was referred by a hospital doctor to 'Destiny Haven' - a charitable organisation offering residential life development training.

Set in a peaceful Hunter Valley location between Clarence Town and Dungog, this special place of safety restores the broken lives of women of all ages wanting to reach their full potential and true destiny.

Destiny Haven has proved to be an awarded community asset to the local region, run by founders Janine Eperé and her husband Lewis, who jointly manage Destiny Haven, offering counselling, unconditional acceptance, support and training. The Eperés believe it has always been their life's purpose to create such a centre.

The Haven is a self-supporting, interdenominational organisation and a faith ministry, meaning that staff, both full-time residents and others, are all unpaid volunteers, and the centre is not funded by the government.

"By the time Tarese arrived at 'Destiny Haven' just before her 19th birthday, she trusted no one and there was nothing in her wardrobe but black," recalled founder Janine Eperé.

"She was angry and said nothing to anyone for about a month.

I was her therapist and the process of helping her find healing took patience and love and just letting her know that whatever she threw my way she was loved and accepted and I wouldn't give up on her."

"I must admit I was difficult to handle, yet no matter what I said or did, the Eperés gave me back unconditional love," recalled Tarese, as we sat at her kitchen table sharing a lunch she had kindly provided.

"I came to realise there was a reason for this," explains Tarese. "The women who come to Destiny Haven know that Janine and Lewis and the rest of the staff are there because they want to be, not because it is just a paid job. All the volunteers have a passion to see our lives changed.

"They don't work 9am-5pm or shifts with rostered days off, so there is always a continuity of care. We live together as an extended family, giving love and care to all. It took time before I knew I had been accepted into the family unit, as up until then I had been unable to trust anyone."

"I look at Tarese now and I am just so terribly proud of her; she is doing life and dreaming big and we at Destiny are just so privileged to have been part of her journey," said Janine.

"The process was not short. Tarese was with us for about 18 months and then moved in with friends of ours in town and continued to come out to Destiny Haven for three or four days a week to volunteer.

"Eventually, she began to believe that we were genuine and that we really did love and believe in her. She would say we are her family now, having been alienated from her siblings, and she comes out every week to stay at Destiny just to catch up and get her dose of hugs." >







During her stay at Destiny Haven, a volunteer showed Tarese how to use a sewing machine – she started making cotton shopping bags which were sold in the centre's gift shop along with Destiny Haven's homemade jams, relishes and stunning jewellery, the sale of which supports the group.

"I then ventured into making pyjamas of my own design and adding them to the range and making dresses for girls at the centre; it was something I found so stimulating and so rewarding," said Tarese.

"Fashion isn't something I necessarily went looking to find; it found me eighteen months ago. My passion for design rapidly grew to obsession. I love to take whatever I have in front of me and make something enchanting, something unique and something different that brings out the beauty in us. I capture that part within us that loves the soft, the feminine, the whimsical and ethereal. To bring a world of fairy tales and princesses to life in an often-monotonous world is something that I live to do."

Buoyed by her new-found confidence, Tarese applied to do the TAFE course in Applied Fashion Design. There were only three spots left in the course and 20 hopeful applicants, so she didn't think she had a chance of being accepted; but she was!

"I started sewing flowing feminine dresses and taking photos and posting them on Facebook.

Soon there were young photographers keen to be part of the process, either volunteering to do a photo shoot or borrow a garment to do so."


The colours of Tarese's world today are a vast contrast to yesteryear's – white and silver, floral shades in flowing fabrics are now part of her design collection.

This month Tarese showcased ten garments at the RAW Fashion Parade held in Newcastle, displaying her creativity and talent for design.

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Juggling TAFE assignments between working a part-time job waitressing and creating on her sewing machine doesn't leave Tarese much time. However, Destiny Haven is always on her mind.

"When I am more financial, I want to do something tangible to give back to them, even if it is in a small way, for giving me my life back," she says. "I am just so thankful."

Just to see her smiling face and such a positive attitude to the future, I am sure that's the only thanks the family of Destiny Haven wants in return. 

*Tarese Klemens is a young lady going places in the world of fashion, as she has the necessary belief and talent:*  
[www.destinyhaven.org.au](http://www.destinyhaven.org.au)