

# For My Wife

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## Chapter One

*When you think of romance, of love at first sight, you remember the blond you ran into in front of the elevator or that long legged brunette secretary that would give you silent smiles every morning when you asked her if you had any new messages. Well, this is my love story. I didn't meet her at a bar scene, toss her my best pick-up line at a friends party, or even get stuck with her on one of those oh so awaited blind dates.*

*If you asked me as a six-year-old boy when I sat next to her that day if I knew from the time I saw her that she would be my soul mate I would have cringed at the mention of the word "love". Instead I would associate it with the little girls that liked to follow me around, and my mother's long kisses with my father. Love was a no-no word to a child that young.*

*Yet I sat next to her that day and somewhere in the back of my mind I fell in love with her. It was in Miss Wilson's first grade class that I met her. We'd been asked to draw a picture of our family on that first day, our teacher's way of saying she needed a break from our hectic activities. She sat Kayla and me at the same table. Otherwise I wouldn't have noticed her at all that year.*

*We both sat at the small table designated for coloring and other messy projects when I reached across for the blue crayon. Blue was my favorite color, probably still is today. After shuffling through our small stack of crayon stubs and discolored wrapper fragments without finding the blue I looked across the table at her.*

*"What's your name?"*

*"Kayla, what's yours?"*

*"Caleb. You have my crayon." I pointed to the blue thing she had in her hand.*

*"It's blue," she said looking up at me from under her long girlish lashes. "I need it to color the grass."*

*"Grass isn't blue dummy!" I reached over to take the crayon from her but she drew back.*

*"It looks better if it's blue. Regular grass is boring." She gave me a smile. Her front tooth was missing.*

*"If I give you the purple for the grass will you give me the blue?" I picked up the purple crayon. It was the nicest one we had in our little pile, clean and new from a fresh box of crayolas.*

*"Not until I'm finished." She went back to coloring her blue grass. I sat and watched as the blue crayon became smaller and smaller in her fingers.*

*"You're done!" I shouted, grabbing for the crayon.*

*"Am not! Now I have to color my brother. He has to be blue also."*

*"I want a turn..." I whined. I got up from my little chair and walked around to where she sat.*

*"Not until I'm done. I told you that already." She colored her brother's face. The crayon grew smaller still.*

*"You have to be done," I said, hoping from one foot to the other. She ignored me. Left with no other option I did the only other thing I could do. Reaching for the crayon I tried to grab it out of her hand.*

*"Hey! You're mean! It's still my turn!" She bit down on my hand and left marks that I would claim weeks later I could still see.*

*Jerking her hand away from mine she took the blue crayon and put it up her nose. "See. Now you won't take it. I told you it was mine!"*

*I crinkled my nose in disgust. I didn't want it now. Years later I would realize it was her that I wanted, from the very moment she stuck the blue crayon up her nose.*

## Chapter Two

“Caleb?”

“In here.” I pounded away at the keyboard of our computer. It was one of the only gifts I’d given her that I could actually say I’d bought for myself.

“What are you doing? Do you ever get off that computer?” She pushed my arms away from the keys and took a seat in my lap. Her sweatpants felt warm against the bare skin of my legs.

“Just typing some... I like this computer.” I grinned into the back of her neck. Her hair smelled so good, so inviting.

“I know you do. It’s like you’re having a love affair with that thing.” She brushed her hair out of her face and then leaned in to kiss my nose. This habit was one of the many things I loved so much about her.

“I would never trade you for a computer. Not in a million years.”

She grinned. “Prove it. Come jogging with me.”

I smirked and lifted her off my lap and into the air as I stood. “Your wish, my highness, is my command.”

### Chapter Three

*I didn't realize I was in love with Kayla until the summer we turned seventeen. Our fathers were close friends and had arranged for us to spend the summer at Lake Erie together. It was the summer I to this day can still remember down to the very last detail, down to the most minuscule.*

*"Dad!" I called up the stairs of the creaking staircase. It led to the upper floor of our cabin. "I'm going down to the lake with Kayla!"*

*I didn't have to wait for my father's consent to know I was free to go. I was free to go anywhere with Kayla, always had been. As I raced down the path of our cabin and through the woods to hers I thought of how things had changed between us. No longer did I think of her as my little sister, or my blue crayon as I had come to call her in the years we tasted life together.*

*When I reached their cabin I didn't even knock. I was a welcome visitor in her family's house. Kayla's mother was in the kitchen when I entered and told me she was running late and would be right down. I stood at the bottom of the stairs identical to those in our cabin and waited.*

*Her hair was up in a bun and she was wearing a light blue bikini as she came racing down the stairs. I felt as if the wind had been knocked out of me. When she realized I was looking at her she blushed and slowed her headlong flight. The towel she'd had draped over her arm she removed and quickly replaced around her waist. We were both self conscious at that age, she more than I.*

*"Ready?" I asked, a dazed smile on my face.*

*"Yeah," she said in a shy voice. Her fingers turned white from her tight grip on the towel. I followed her out.*

*We spent all day on the docks, or in the little boat our families had chipped in together to rent for us for the week. It was in that boat I realized my world revolved around Kayla.*

*She was sitting on the seat beside me, her leg thrown over the side of the boat as she dipped her large toe into the water. Strands of her hair had come loose from her bun and she had to brush them away from her face every few moments. Her hair had always irritated her.*

*“You think we’ll come back here next year?” She toyed with the material of her towel. It was still around her waist.*

*“I don’t see why not.” I looked down at her and she looked up at me. We shared a smile.*

*“I hope so. This place is so dreamy.” She blushed and I smirked. “Maybe you can drive us up here next year. Just the two of us the whole drive up, that would be nice. I think mom would let me do it also. That way we wouldn’t be stuck with our parents and their life lectures.”*

*“My parents are even worse than that.” I said with a roll of my eyes. “They kept asking me what I was going to do in life. I was about ready to jump out the window. At least the pain would have ended.”*

*Looking suddenly thoughtful Kayla sat up and turned to face me. “Have you ever really thought about it Caleb? What do you want to be? I think about it all the time. I’m still not sure myself. Maybe I’ll be a doctor or a lawyer. I want a job where I make a difference in the world.”*

*I shrugged and hit her playfully on the arm. “You’re not smart enough to be a doctor or lawyer.”*

*“Oh I’m not, am I?” She turned to me and pushed me smack out of the boat. Her resounding laughter followed. “That’s what you get for insulting your girl.”*

*“You’re my girl now, are you?” I said spurting water as I surfaced. She nodded.*

*“Then will you be ever so kind as to join me?” I grabbed hold of the boat and pulled it towards me. She landed in the water next to me.*

*“I hate you!!” She screamed, splashing water at my face.*

*“Same here.” I swam towards her with her soaked towel in my hand. “Here,” I held it out to her.*

*She reached in to take it and I kissed her, right then and there. She was my first kiss, and I prayed to God she’d be my last as well. I’d found my love.*

## Chapter Four

“You wouldn’t believe what happened to me today at work.” Kayla sat down to dinner opposite me.

“Okay, Okay. I’ll take the bait. What happened?”

“Jan announced she’s pregnant! Can you believe it? She hopes it’s a girl...” Kayla reached across the table and grabbed my hand.

“Is she going to quit the firm?” I gave her hand a squeeze. Kayla wanted a baby so badly it hurt her to think about it.

“Of course not. She has too much riding on it, just like me. She’ll take a few months leave and then she’ll be back in business. Men, I swear.” Kayla rolled her eyes and dropped my hand.

“Well how am I supposed to know? I’m not female remember? I don’t know how you guys work up there.” I motioned to her head. Her return smile was priceless.

“You’re not supposed to know us. It’s how we keep our mysterious power over you. It’s how we don’t drive ourselves crazy.” She picked at the food on her plate. Her appetite had been disappearing lately.

I chuckled. “I have to ask you something.” She looked up at my words and her eyes took my breath away. “I’m thinking about publishing a book.” I mumbled a little short of breath.

“Really? Is that what you’ve been doing up there on that computer all weekend? Writing a book huh?” I watched as she picked up her wine glass and took a sip.

“So? Think I should?”

“Caleb, you know you don’t have to ask my permission. I personally think it’s a good idea. What will it be about?”

I felt my cheeks get hot. “About us.”

Kayla set her glass down and stood up from the table. Coming around to where I sat she wrapped her arms around my neck and slid into my lap.

“You’re so romantic sometimes, you know that?” Her lips touched my nose.

“You know what?” I said standing and pulling her up with me. “I’m not very hungry tonight. Why don’t we give Jan a run for her money?”

“A baby?” Kayla squealed.

“Its about time, now isn’t it?” I smiled and kissed her so passionately I could feel every beat of her heart against my chest. It was glorious.



## Chapter Five

*There was nothing romantic about my proposal to Kayla. We didn't go out to dinner at a fancy restaurant. I didn't take her for a moonlit stroll around the park. We weren't up at the cabins on the lake. Contrary to all those would be proposals, we were arguing over a toaster.*

*"No Caleb! I told you from the start this wasn't going to work out. I'll look for my own place in the morning. I just can't live like this anymore." She threw up her arms and started for the door of our shared apartment.*

*At the door she turned and glared at me. "You sleep on the couch tonight. Don't even think I'll share the bed with you after today."*

*The door slammed in my face. I cursed and hit the wall with my fist. I couldn't believe she'd walked out on me like that. I'd never seen her this angry before. I'd never felt this angry before.*

*All over a stupid toaster I thought with vehemence. A stupid toaster! It wasn't like it couldn't be replaced.*

*"It was my great grandmother's!" I could hear her screams replaying in my head. "I can't ever just replace something like that Caleb! What the hell were you thinking?"*

*"It stopped working. You usually throw broken things away, sweetheart."*

*"I knew this would never work! I told you when you asked me to move in that this would never work! Now look at us Caleb! I can hardly do anything without asking your permission first and you kiss ass on everything you do!"*

*"Excuse me? I'm not the one who collects mountains of worthless items and stores them for later use. If I'm a kiss ass then you're a garbage collector!" I remembered pointing to the table she'd found at a flea market. I'd always hated the thing, it was just too big for our little kitchen."*

*"Oh I am, am I? That's it. I can't live here with you anymore. I'm moving out." Her words cut through me like a knife. Kayla leave? The thought made bile rise in the back of my throat.*

*"No, don't leave Kayla. I'll buy you a new toaster. I swear I will."*

*"No Caleb! I told you from the start this wasn't going to work out. I'll look for my own place in the morning. I just can't live like this anymore." And then she left.*

*Just like that I'd lost the one thing good and wholesome in my life. I felt like every vein in my body was getting smaller, withering and dying along with my heart. Swearing another blue streak I left my apartment and went out behind back to the dumpsters.*

*She found me in one of the dumpsters around one in the morning. I didn't even notice her approaching footsteps. I was covered in filth and my skin was crawling as I sifted through the contents of the garbage in search of her toaster.*

*"Caleb?" Her voice made me stop in my tracks.*

*I looked up over the side of the dumpster. Her face was still wet with tears.*

*"What are you doing? You're filthy." Her voice quivered with emotion.*

*"Looking for your damn toaster, what else?" I said so roughly that I watched her flinch. I was ashamed of myself then.*

*She let out a sad smile. Another tear rolled down her cheek. "You have a piece of spaghetti in your hair." She motioned to my head.*

*I ran a hand through my hair and produced the noodle. My stomach flipped. I couldn't believe I was digging through the garbage for a girlfriend who'd just told me she was moving out on me. "Thanks."*

*"Caleb, come here." She held out a hand and helped me out of the dumpster.*

*My clothes were absolutely filthy and I knew I stunk to high heaven. Yet she wrapped her arms around me and hugged me so tightly I thought my lungs would burst. Warmth flooded me inside and out.*

*"Marry me Kayla?" I blurted out against her lips. She wouldn't stop kissing me.*

*"Yes."*

## Chapter Six

When she walked in the door her face was so ashen my first thought was that something terrible had happened. “What happened? Who’s hurt? Kayla, are you okay?”

She gave me a shaky smile and sat down on my lap. We were in the office and the computer screen flickered in front of us. I could see her hands were shaking so I took them in mine. I held her close.

“Jan lost her baby. I was with her the whole time. There was so much blood I...”

“Oh sweetheart.” I ran my hand through her hair and kissed her neck, her cheek, and her nose. “You couldn’t have done anything more to help. It just wasn’t meant to be this time around.”

Sobs wracked her body. “She was looking forward to this baby so badly. She seemed like a different person. Caleb, when the doctors told her she’d lost the baby I was sure Jan would die right then and there. I was so ashamed of myself. All I kept thinking was that something like this could happen to me. What if we lose our baby?”

“Oh Kayla.” I wiped the tears from her eyes. “You’ll be fine. Besides, we don’t even have to start worrying about it until we know you’re pregnant. Calm down, everything will be okay.”

“That’s just it.” Her voice came out as a whisper. “I just found out today...”

I looked down at her shocked. “You’re pregnant?”

“I meant to come home early and tell you. I was on my way out when...Jan...”

I felt my heart swell with pride. She’d confirmed every reason why I loved her so much. “It’s all right. Don’t cry honey. Jan will get another chance.” My hand came to settle on her belly.

She sniffed back her tears and laid her hand over mine with a squeeze. Her eyes were sad and happy at the same time.

She fell asleep in my lap that way. While she was asleep I talked to my child for the first time. In more than one way I fell in love with her all over again.

## Chapter Seven

*I'd never taken anything for granted before that day. Otherwise I would have been forever trapped in a world of black and white. It was that day I saw gray. It was that day I realized the importance of the story I've been telling you so far.*

*You've read of when I first met her, of when we first fell in love, of when I first proposed. I intended for this story to have a happy ending. Today I know that won't happen. So this story takes on a whole new dimension. This won't stop me I won't let it.*

*Let me slow down and take a few steps back. That day, yesterday, I went to the doctors. It wasn't for any reason in particular. My job requires that we get a yearly physical so that's what I was doing.*

*My doctor had been more than a doctor to me. He was a friend as well. I'd been his patient since I was a boy, and he'd heard my life story told from the mouths of my parents and my tales over the years. When he came back with a worried look on his face I asked him bluntly.*

*"What's wrong? Don't tell me I didn't pass the physical."*

*"No, no, of course that's not it." He took a seat on the stool across from me. "It's your blood work Caleb. I'm a little concerned about it. I want you to go straight to the hospital to get it checked out. We have limited resources here. It's probably nothing, but I want to be on the safe side."*

*"If it was nothing you wouldn't be sending me to the hospital. Give me your honest opinion, what do you think is wrong?"*

*"I don't want to worry you if it's nothing—"*

*"As a friend if nothing else." I could feel fear bursting through the far reaches of my mind. There was something seriously wrong and I knew it.*

*"You have an elevated white blood cell count." He let out a long sigh. "There's no easy way to say this. I think you may have cancer." He hurried to continue, "Like I said. I can't confirm anything. You need to get to the hospital for further testing."*

*I nodded. My mind was numb. Cancer? Never in all my life had I dreamed about something like this. I left for the hospital with an uncanny feeling that my doctor's diagnosis was correct.*

*The blood work at the hospital confirmed my doctor's suspicions. The doctor at the hospital wore a mask of experience as he told me they predicted I had less than a year to live. I felt my world start to crumble around me. How could I tell Kayla? How could I explain to my unborn child that I wouldn't be there to see his first birthday? How could I – I couldn't, that was the answer.*

## Chapter Eight

“Caleb! Will you ever get off that stupid computer? I know you want to publish this book and all, but enough is enough.” Kayla clicked off the monitor on the computer screen and sat a glass of iced tea beside me.

I yawned and gave her a smile. My hand came to rest on her growing belly as had become habit over the last couple of months.

“Just think, only a few more months and we’ll have another mouth to feed.” I smirked and talked to the baby. “Isn’t that right? Just you wait, daddy will make sure you never forget him.”

“Lets go for a walk. You look like you need some sun anyways.” She laughed and pulled me to my feet. How could anyone not love Kayla?

“All right, all right. But then I get to spend another hour on the computer. Deal?”

“Not fair!” She called as she dragged me down the stairs and out the front door.

“You never get out of that room anymore. Pretty soon you’ll be a walking computer zombie.”

I took her hand in mine as we strolled down the block. We watched with awe as small children played on bikes and in parks. We exchanged glances when we saw two parents scolding their little boy. We laughed as we spotted the little girl sharing her ice cream with the neighbor’s dog.

“Just think,” she told me with a smile. “Pretty soon our little one will be joining the rest of these rowdy kids.”

“Lets hope he takes after his father and not his mother.” I said and then kissed her hand.

“So it’s a boy is it? What if it turns out to be a little girl? What will you do then?”

“I’ll give her a boyish nickname, that’s what.”

“We still need to pick out names you know.” Kayla ran a hand over her belly. “I was thinking about Tracy if it’s a girl. What do you think?”

“Tracy? I thought that if it were a girl she’d be named after my mother, Kim. Didn’t we agree on that? Or is my mind going years before my time?”

“I know we decided on Kim earlier, but now I like Tracy. Besides, I’m the mom, I get to decide.” She pecked me on the cheek as if to seal the bargain.

“So as the father of your child I have no say, now do I?” I chuckled and then addressed to her belly, “Do you hear what she’s saying? I hope you don’t act like this.”

“Stop!” she said with a chuckle. “I’m sure it can’t hear you anyways. Caleb, are you okay?”

“Yeah. I just need to sit down for a second.” I took a seat on the curb and Kayla sat down beside me. Worry clouded her features.

“Caleb, maybe –”

I kissed her words away. “You worry too much. I just want to enjoy the day for a little while.” I leaned my head against her shoulder and her worry disappeared as she stroked my hair.

## Chapter Nine

*Kayla was the first one to start to notice, as I knew she would be. She wondered why I started to wear an old baseball hat to work and even to bed at night. She noticed the way I had to sit down all the time and the way I constantly felt dizzy. She noticed the way I picked at my food, never eating, and the way I fell asleep earlier than usual.*

*“Caleb,” she said to me one night. “Maybe you should go see a doctor. I don’t think you’ve been feeling well lately.”*

*“Kayla, I feel fine. Your imagination must be playing tricks on you.”*

*“If you weren’t on that computer in all your free time then maybe you’d feel better.” She said crossing her arms over her large belly and turning away from me. “You even wear that silly baseball hat everywhere now. I just don’t get it. You don’t usually put things off like you have been, all for that stupid story.”*

*“I need to finish that story Kayla. I have a lot riding on it.”*

*“The hell with the story!” She cried out. “I want you Caleb, not a story. I want you...”*

*I kissed her and we made love that night. My head was thick with emotions for this woman I loved so dearly. How could I tell her our time was coming to an end? How was I to explain she would be a widowed mother? In my story, that’s how.*

*Kayla hated me for those months as I grew worse and locked myself away more and more often in front of the computer. She cried herself to sleep those nights when I stayed up late to finish yet another chapter on the story that was our lives.*

*I know I neglected her during the times she needed me most. I look back at those times and my heart almost breaks in two. I hope that reading this later she’ll understand. I hope she’ll realize that I’m speaking to her from the bottom of my heart in the pages of this novel. I hope...*



## Chapter Ten

“Take off your hat,” Kayla commanded in a voice not to be reckoned with.

“Kayla—”

“Caleb! Take it off!”

I saw her heart plummet in her eyes as I pulled the cap off. My hair was all but gone. I'd tried my best to hide it, skipping work to go in for treatments and appointments.

“You're going to the doctors, right this instant.” She picked up the keys off the table and started for the door. I grabbed her hand to stop her.

“Kayla—”

“No buts Caleb! You're going!”

“Kayla, I've been to the doctors.” I sighed and took the keys from her hand. I led her into the living room and sat her down across from me on the love-seat. “I want you to know I love you Kayla. I will always love you.”

“No! Caleb stop talking that way. You act like, like...”

“I have cancer honey. I've known for months. They gave me less than a year to live. I just couldn't bring myself to tell you.” I felt tears in the corner of my eyes. “I love you Kayla.”

“Stop! Caleb, don't talk like this! You're teasing me, this isn't funny.”

“I'm not teasing you sweetheart. It's true.”

“No, God no! We'll get you the best doctors in the world Caleb, I promise. I won't let anything happen to you. We can fight this.”

Tears streamed down her face. I wiped them away with my hand. “Don't cry for me Kayla. Remember me. Never forget me.”

“No, I won't let you leave me! I won't let you leave your baby. Oh god, the baby!” She grabbed at my shirt and cried into my chest. “You promised me nothing like this would happen. You promised!”

I took her face in my hands and kissed her, once, twice. "I'll never leave you. I'll always be there for you...here." I touched her heart.

"I want you to get a second opinion. They were wrong. I know they were wrong. Oh Caleb, I love you. I love you with all my heart." She wrapped her arms around me and we sat there, crying like idiots.

We fell asleep in each other's arms.

## Chapter Eleven

*From that point on she didn't complain about my being at the computer. Instead she left me to my hours of solitude sitting in front of a computer screen. Of course at any other time we were with each other, touching, always touching. Whether it was holding hands, kissing, making love, we were together.*

*Her belly grew bigger as the weeks passed and I prayed I would be there to see my child born. Yet I grew worse. I ached when I got up in the morning and sighed relief when I laid back down each night.*

*Dark circles outlined my eyes and no amount of sleep seemed to cure them. I found myself thinking about everything in a different respect. What would happen to Kayla, to our child, to their lives? As my health declined I tried to make arrangements for what would happen next for them. I made sure the house would be paid for, that my child would have money for college, that my family would help Kayla out in any way she needed.*

*I tried to memorize everything about her in those last few weeks. The way she hummed to the baby in her stomach when she thought no one was around, the way she tossed her hair when she turned, the way her eyes twinkled when she smiled.*

*I had hoped that I would see my child before my time arrived, but it turned out that it was not meant to be. Kayla sat with me that night, holding me close. I had insisted I wouldn't live out my final days in a hospital bed with tubes covering me. So I was at home where I was supposed to be, at home with my wife and my child.*

*"Sing to me Kayla. Sing to me the way you sing to the baby."*

*Tears flowed down her cheeks as she snuggled closer to me and started to hum. I rested my head against her belly and hoped my child could feel my love for him through her. I hoped it remembered that though I wasn't around I would always be with it over the years.*

*"Caleb." Kayla whispered to me as I started to fall asleep. "I love you. You are my heart and you are my world." I smiled at her words.*

*"I love you," I whispered as I fell asleep. I would always love her. She was my life and she was my world.*

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*Kayla, I love you. This is our story, but it doesn't end here. Remember that I always am and always will be with you every step of the way. Remember our blue crayon, remember our summers at the lake, and remember when I proposed. Remember when you got pregnant and remember when you found out that my chapter in your story was going to end.*

*Remember all this, but don't let it stop you. Move on. Don't let the past swallow you up. Cherish what we had together, but remember our child needs a father. Remember that life still goes on. Remember that you can find love again, if only in different ways. Don't let my memory stop you. Let my memory help you through thick and thin. Remember Kayla...*

*I love you.*

*For my wife,  
Caleb*

## Chapter Twelve

Kayla had tears in her eyes as she finished reading my story. “Does she ever learn to live without him?” She asked, wrapping her arms around my shoulders and kissing my cheek.

I looked up at her with tears in my eyes. “She finds a way my love. She finds a way.”

## Epilogue

*When my husband first wrote this story he said that my chapters were far from over. In his honor I add this last section to his book before it's finally published. It's been seven years since he passed away and his son Caleb grows healthy and strong with each passing year.*

*I want you as a reader to know that even after all these years I still think of my first husband every time I look at our son. I think of him every time I use the toaster, every time we go up to lake Erie for the summer, and every time the dog gets into the trash. I even remember him every time I walk by the refrigerator to find a new picture of the family taped up by young Caleb. The grass is always blue.*

*In honor of your memory, beloved husband, I publish your story – our story – and dedicate it to you.*

*For my husband,  
Kayla*