

Chapter One

"Aunt Helee," Kelley whispered to the frail woman lying in the dark room. "Aunt Helee?"

Kelley felt her stomach drop.

No, no! she thought. *Today cannot be the day! I'm not ready for this.*

She rushed to her aunt's bedside. "Aunt Helee!" she shouted.

Her aunt's eyes didn't budge. Kelley felt the sting of tears forming in her eyes. She laid her head down on the bed and started to cry.

"Goodness, child," her aunt said. "Can't I take a nap without you thinking I'm dead? You interrupted a good dream! Me and a young Clint Eastwood were walking on the beach."

Kelley breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. "Sorry, Aunt Helee," she said, smiling. She wiped her tears away.

"What do you need, sweetie?" her aunt asked.

"I just came to see if you wanted some tea," Kelley said.

"Sure," her aunt replied.

Kelley kissed her aunt's forehead and went to the kitchen. Her hands were still shaking from the fear of thinking her aunt may be gone. Kelley knew it wouldn't be long now. She was trying so hard to be brave, but it was difficult. When Aunt Helee died, she knew she would no longer have any family left.

Kelley had been in the care of her aunt since she was 10 years old. Her parents were killed in a horrific car accident. It was such a tragic loss for Kelley. She had always been close with her parents; they were like the Three Musketeers. But thankfully, Helen—lovingly called "Aunt Helee" by Kelley—was there to care for her. Helen was Kelley's father's older sister and the two of them were very tight.

Aunt Helee had raised Kelley to be fearless. She was always so proud of her niece's accomplishments and encouraged Kelley to be the best she could be at whatever she did. It was because of Aunt Helee that Kelley was able to go to college—she paid for it all out of pocket.

Kelley loved college life. She decided to major in journalism. She saw herself as an investigative reporter, digging deep into the injustices of the world, and standing up for the underdog. After she graduated, Kelley started working for *The Bradley Herald*. She absolutely loved it. The hustle and bustle of the newsroom, the excitement of tracking down leads, and the swell of pride she felt when she saw her byline brought her indescribable joy.