

# 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.”*

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