



Karen KINGSBURY



SOMEDAY



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Someday

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To Donald, my prince charming

In this sad season of losing my dad, you have been a rock for me, precious love.

Working quietly behind the scenes to fill in when I'm on deadline or when the kids need a little extra help with schoolwork and checking in on me more often than before. You understand the great loss we're all experiencing, the void among us now that my dad's smile is forever gone from the here and now. But the thing that showed me again why I love you so much is something you did just this morning. My mom's birthday is tomorrow, and you knew it. With my dad gone less than a month now, and with me on deadline to finish this book, you stopped by the florist, picked up a bouquet of flowers, and wrote my mom a two-page letter, telling her all the reasons why you loved my dad and all the ways that you would be there for my mom now that Dad is gone. The amazing thing about being married to you is that your love has a way of multiplying. It's no longer about the many ways you find to love and cherish me, but how you love our family . . . and our extended family. Here's the thing . . . you really are my prince charming, Donald. I mean it. I love you more with every passing day, understanding as we settle into these middle years that time is not a guarantee.

Today is a gift, and tomorrow is uncertain. And so I treasure these beautiful, loving days, looking forward to our intimate moments in a quiet walk or laughing over something only we would understand. The ride is breathtakingly beautiful, my love. I pray it lasts far into our twilight years. Until then, I'll enjoy not always knowing where I end and you begin. I love you always and forever.

To Kelsey, my precious daughter

You are eighteen now, a young woman, and my heart soars with joy when I see all that you are, all you've become. We prayed that through the teenage years you would stay true to who you are, to that promise of purity you made when you were thirteen, once upon a yesterday on a bench overlooking a sunlit river. But I never dreamed you'd so fully hold true to that promise. You look forward to that far-off day when you can share with your future husband the gift you've saved for him alone. But in the meantime, you trust God that with Him, laughter and friendship and dancing and singing and spending time with your family are enough. More than enough. Honey, you grow more beautiful—inside and out—every day. And always I treasure the way you talk to me, telling me your hopes and dreams and everything in between. I can almost sense the plans God has for you, the very good plans. I pray you keep holding His hand as He walks you toward them. And when you sing out across that stage a few months from now, Papa will have a front row seat in heaven—proud as ever. Just remember that. I love you, sweetheart.

To Tyler, my lasting song

I know this has been a tough season for you, dear son. You and Papa were kindred spirits in so many ways. Just tonight, you came in and sat beside me. “I miss him,” you told me. “I miss listening to classical music with him and talking about old movies and dreaming aloud about the next big play.” You leaned your head on my shoulder. “I miss him a lot.” My precious Tyler, I miss him too. But among the ways God has comforted me, there is this—you are so much like him. In you I see his zest for life and love of family, his appreciation of a strong singer, and his passion for theater. You even look like him, the way he looked as a high school boy. Hold on to all you remember about your sweet papa, Ty. Love like him and laugh like him and cherish life the way he cherished it.

I’m proud of you, Ty, of the young man you’re becoming. I’m proud of your talent and your compassion for people and your place in our family. But two things will stand out when I look back on this time. The way my heart melts when you sing “Proud of Your Boy” and the earnest look in your eyes when you told me last week that maybe—just maybe—you’d want to be a teacher like your dad. A drama teacher, of course. Giving kids the skills to be successful onstage. You’re fourteen and six foot two, Ty, no longer my little boy. But even as I see the future in your eyes, I’ll treasure my memories of all the stages of your life. Especially the season where we were all so blessed to have Papa. However your dreams unfold, I’ll be in the front row to watch it happen. Hold on to Jesus, Ty. I love you.

To Sean, my happy sunshine

Today you came home from school, eyes sparkling, and you told me you’d tied the school record for the high jump at track practice. The fact that your mark didn’t count because it wasn’t in a meet didn’t dim your enthusiasm even a little. As you recounted your jump, I was struck by how much the story symbolized everything about you, Sean. You’re so happy, so optimistic.

You won’t have Papa cheering for you from the sidelines anymore, dear son. But you’ll have me and Dad and Grandma and a family who couldn’t be more proud of you. Sean, you have a way of bringing smiles into our family, even in the most mundane moment. I pray that God will use your positive spirit to always make a difference in the lives around you. You’re a precious gift, Son. Keep smiling and keep seeking God’s best for your life. Make sure the bar’s set high—not only at track practice. I love you, honey.

To Josh, my tenderhearted perfectionist

Watching you work on your book report the other day, I saw again what always amazes me about you. Your work is so careful, so detailed, I wonder sometimes

if I should remind you to be a little easier on yourself. But I've discovered something this semester about you, Josh. You're a wonderful writer! How it thrills my heart to see the creativity you work into every story—even a silly old book report. Whether in football or soccer, track or room inspections, you take the time to seek perfection. Along with that, there are bound to be struggles. Times when you need to understand again that the gifts and talents you bear are God's, not yours. And times when you must learn that perfection isn't possible for us, only for God. Even so, my heart almost bursts with pride over the young man you're becoming. You bear your papa's name as your middle name, and I believe with all my heart you will do it proud in the years to come. You have an unlimited future ahead of you, Josh. I'll be cheering on the sidelines always. Keep God first in your life, and who knows . . . one day maybe you and Alex Smith will be teammates. I love you always.

To EJ, my chosen one

We had a family meeting the other night, one of those talk sessions you kids sometimes tease us about. The subject was a reminder that sitting around the dinner table each night are the very best friends you'll ever have—your sister and brothers. And also that everyone needs to pitch in more. We talked about giving 100 percent, because someday far too soon, when all you kids are grown and in families of your own, you'll need to give 100 percent always. That's what love looks like. In the days that followed our family talk, Dad and I were thrilled to see that you truly stepped up your efforts at helping out. We'd see you standing at the sink, washing dishes and singing a happy song, and you'd grin at us. "A hundred percent!" you'd say. EJ, I pray that you hold on to that very small lesson always. It's a lesson Papa believed in too. You're a wonderful boy, Son, a child with such potential.

Every day, every season, just give 100 percent, okay? Because God has great plans for you, and we want to be the first to congratulate you as you work to discover them. Thanks for your giving heart, EJ. I love you so.

To Austin, my miracle boy

It's been a month since Papa went home to heaven, and still every night when I tuck you in, you cling to me and whisper the same thing. "I feel empty without Papa. He should be here, Mom." And always I tell you the same thing. "You're right, honey. He should be here. We have to remember everything special about him so we don't ever forget." Papa loved you, the way he loved all of us—with his whole being. He loved sitting in his van next to Grandma, watching you play baseball for the Reds, and no one grinned bigger when you ripped off another huge hit. But he loved more than your performances. He loved the

quiet times when you sat next to him and talked about your day. I know that's what you're missing most right now, and I understand. I'm not sure the missing part ever goes away. I can only tell you that our quiet times together are what I love most too. You're my youngest, my last, Austin. I'm holding on to every moment, for sure. Thanks for giving me so many wonderful reasons to treasure today. I thank God for you, Austin, for the miracle of your life. I love you, Aus.

And to God Almighty, the Author of Life,
who has—for now—blessed me with these.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the writing of this book, my father, Theodore C. Kingsbury, suffered a massive heart attack. He lived eight more weeks before going home to heaven on September 14. I was at a Tyndale dinner the night I learned about my dad's heart attack. Far away from home, in Atlanta with my two oldest children, I stepped out of the banquet room and into a kitchen hallway. There, I dropped to the floor and began to weep.

After a few minutes, I had no choice but to return to my table. Despite the beautiful entertainment happening that night compliments of Mandisa, those around me knew I was suffering. By the time the evening ended, I was surrounded by many, many great Tyndale friends. Ron Beers and Karen Watson were there, as were so many members of the Beers Group. Also Randy Alcorn and Vonette Bright and others.

That night, my friends at Tyndale became a family. They prayed with me and hugged me, and as I returned to my hotel room to prepare for an early flight home, I had the overwhelming sense that God had heard our collective cry for help. In the days that followed, we held a bedside vigil over my dad, and his initial prognosis—that he would never come out of his coma—fell to the wayside after the first two weeks.

My dad woke up and was alert and cognizant. Though he had a tracheostomy so he could breathe, we were able to communicate and share hours of precious, unforgettable moments. I told him how grateful I was that he was my dad, and I thanked him for believing in me as a writer from as far back as I could remember. I told him if it hadn't been for him, I never would've stayed with writing.

I also had hours when we talked about the Lord and about heaven. My dad loved Jesus very much—he still does. He was sad about saying good-bye, but he wasn't afraid to die. He told me that. I even asked that if he reached heaven before me, could he give my only brother, Dave, a hug for me? In those amazing eight weeks, absolutely nothing was left unsaid.

For that, I have my friends at Tyndale to thank.

This book was due in their offices at the end of July, two weeks after my dad's heart attack. But with my father in the ICU through the end of August, I couldn't focus on my book long enough to write a single chapter. I needed my dad, needed to be with him and talk to him and play hymns for him. I needed to be there with my mom and sisters, filling his room with the sweet presence of God so he wouldn't have a single moment of fear or loneliness.

My dad used to tell me he had just one fear. The fear of dying alone. That didn't happen, and here I want to thank my friends at Tyndale for giving me a chance to be there with my dad until the end.

Dad . . . in my mind, John Baxter will always have your face. You can't imagine how much you are missed.

Also thanks to my amazing agent, Rick Christian, president of Alive Communications. Rick, you've always believed only the best for me. When we talk about the highest possible goals, you see them as doable, reachable. You are a brilliant manager of my career, and I thank God for you. But even with all you do for my ministry of writing, I cherish most your prayers. The fact that you and your wonderful wife, Debbie, are praying for me and my family keeps me confident every morning that God will continue to breathe into life the stories in my heart. I could never find the words to truly thank you.

A special thank-you to my husband, who puts up with me on deadline and doesn't mind driving through Taco Bell after a baseball game if I've been editing all day. This wild ride wouldn't be possible without you, Donald. Your love keeps me writing, and your prayers keep me believing that God has a plan in this ministry of fiction. And thanks for your help with the guest-book entries on my Web site. I look forward to that time every night when you read through them, sharing them with me and releasing them to the public, praying for the prayer requests. Thank you, honey, and thanks to all my kids, who pull together, bringing me iced green tea and understanding about my sometimes crazy schedule. I love that you know you're still first, before any deadline.

Thank you also to my mom, Anne Kingsbury, and to my sisters, Tricia, Sue, and Lynne. Mom, you are amazing as my assistant—working day and night sorting through the mail from my reader friends. I appreciate you more than you'll ever know.

Tricia, you are the best executive assistant I could ever hope to have. I treasure your loyalty and honesty, the way you include me on every decision and exciting Web site change. My site has been a different place since you stepped in, and along the way the readers have so much more in this ministry of Life-Changing Fiction. Please know that I pray for God's blessings on you always, for your dedication to helping me in this season of writing. And aren't we having such a good time too? God works all things to the good!

Sue, I believe you should've been a counselor! From your home far from mine, you get batches of reader letters every day, and you diligently answer them using God's wisdom and His Word. When readers get a response from "Karen's sister Susan," I hope they know how carefully you've prayed for them and for the response you give. Thank you for truly loving what you do, Sue. You're gifted with people, and I'm blessed to have you aboard.

Thanks also to my forever friends and family, the ones who rushed to our side as my dad's health declined and as he eventually went home to heaven. Your love has been a tangible source of comfort, pulling us through and making us know how very blessed we are to have you in our lives.

And the greatest thanks to God. The gift is Yours. I pray I might use it for years to come in a way that will bring You honor and glory.



FOREVER IN FICTION



A SPECIAL THANKS to Jane Drummer, who won Forever in Fiction at the C.L.U.B. ETHAN auction. Jane chose to honor her friend Ethan Blaine Teeple, age four, by naming him Forever in Fiction. Ethan was diagnosed with cancer just after his first birthday. Since then he has waged a constant fight for his life with the smiling optimism that can only come from a very special child.

Ethan has blue eyes and blond hair. He is friendly, forgiving, patient, and quick-witted. Make-A-Wish Foundation provided Ethan and his family with a magical trip to Walt Disney World, his very favorite place. When Ethan's in the hospital, he likes painting pictures and creating with Play-Doh. He doesn't like staying in bed, and often he and his IV pole have to be chased down the hall by his nurse Lindsay, a special friend. Ethan believes he's engaged to Lindsay and that he'll marry her when he's all grown up. He knows which tubes belong where on his little body, and sometimes he'll inform the doctors if something isn't connected right.

When Ethan's out of the hospital, he loves playing outside—especially T-ball—and spending time with his family—older brother, Trevor, and his parents, Gary and Autumn Teeple. Ethan treasures every moment and continues to battle his disease as this is going to print. Please pray for Ethan and his family.

Ethan's character in *Someday* is that of a sick boy struggling for life. His bright sunshiny presence in Brooke's life prompts her decision to volunteer her time to help reopen the crisis pregnancy center in Bloomington.

Jane, I pray that Ethan is honored by your gift and by his placement in *Someday* and that you will always see a bit of Ethan when you read his name in the pages of this novel, where he will be Forever in Fiction.

Also, thanks to Molly McCabe, who won Forever in Fiction at the Doernbecher auction. Molly chose to honor her niece, Paige Tagliaferri, age six months, by naming her Forever in Fiction.

Paige is a bright ray of light in the lives of her family. She has blue eyes and dark blonde hair and the cutest button nose. She has a bright smile and is the daughter of Megan Tagliaferri, an interior designer, and Jeff Tagliaferri, a produce salesman. Paige loves classical music, particularly Mozart and Beethoven. She was born on Cinco de Mayo and is an excellent traveler.

I chose to make Paige's character that of a young baby under the care of Dr. Brooke Baxter. As a fictional character, Paige's birth was very much planned and replete with difficulties. She is—in *Someday*—a healthy, happy baby and the greatest picture of a life much wanted, much prayed for. Her presence in Brooke's life causes her again to consider the importance of reopening the crisis pregnancy center so all babies would have the chance little Paige has in *Someday*.

Molly, I pray that Paige is honored by your gift and by her placement in *Someday* and that you will always see a bit of Paige when you read her name in the pages of this novel, where she will be Forever in Fiction.

Finally, a special thanks to Diane Geer, who won Forever in Fiction at the Upper Valley Christian School auction. Diane chose to honor her late husband, Louie James Geer, age fifty-seven, by naming him Forever in Fiction. Louie was diagnosed with cancer in 2003 and eventually lost his battle with the illness. His family chose Forever in Fiction as a way of honoring the love and wonder of his life and the way his memory lives on in the hearts of his family and friends.

Louie was six feet tall with a strong build, dark brown hair, and blue eyes. He had a great sense of humor and was very social, kind, generous, and hardworking. He was married to Diane Geer for twenty-five years, and together they had two children—Jamie Anne and Kelly Marie. Louie loved British Columbia, especially Vancouver. He was good at business, an active man who owned his own tour company. In that line of work, he was an excellent host, fun to be with and always bringing a smile and a laugh to his customers. Louie was a strong Christian family man who loved God and put Him first in all things. He is dearly missed.

I chose to make him the fictional deceased father of actress Randi Wells

in *Someday*. Randi is struggling in a lot of areas of her life, and it sometimes brings her perspective to remember the kind, gentle Christian man her father was and the role he played in her life when she was younger.

Diane, I pray that Louie is honored by your gift and by his placement in *Someday* and that you will always see a bit of Louie when you read his name in the pages of this novel, where he will be Forever in Fiction.

For those of you who are not familiar with Forever in Fiction, it is my way of involving you, the readers, in my stories, while raising money for charities. To date this item has raised more than \$100,000 at charity auctions across the country. If you are interested in having a Forever in Fiction package donated to your auction, contact my assistant, Tricia Kingsbury, at Kingsburydesk@aol.com. Please write *Forever in Fiction* in the subject line. Please note that I am able to donate only a limited number of these each year. For that reason I have set a fairly high minimum bid on this package. That way the maximum funds are raised for charities.



CHAPTER ONE

JOHN BAXTER MADE his decision as his family was leaving the hospital.

Elaine had shared with him and his family a moment of deep tragedy and deep love, a time that had bonded them beyond any other shared experience. He held her hand as they walked silently to the car. In a few hours, everyone would meet back at the Baxter house for dinner. They needed to be together, needed to share about how the brief life of little Sarah, his granddaughter, had touched them, changed them.

But in the meantime he couldn't shake the feeling inside, the certainty that he wanted Elaine in his life not only in moments like this but always.

Elaine's car was parked near his, but before she went to it, she stopped. "You're quiet."

He smiled and a calm worked through his soul. He was worn-out and weary, but he was no longer discouraged, not after what he'd witnessed this afternoon in his daughter's hospital room. "Just thinking."

Elaine would be joining them for dinner after she spent a few hours at home. They all needed some downtime. But the look in her eyes told him that she would stand in the parking lot all day if he needed her. “Wanna talk about it?” She angled her head, her eyes soft.

John could feel the warmth in his heart shining through his eyes. “God’s bringing some of the details into focus. About how much I need you.”

She looked surprised and touched and maybe a little shy. “That’s a good thing.”

“We’ll talk more about it later.” He hugged her, and they said their good-byes.

When John was alone in his car, the decision in his heart took root, writing itself across his soul and changing his picture of the future. The drive home seemed longer than usual and marked by a new sort of thrill and loneliness. He entered the old house, but instead of tossing his keys on the counter, he stopped and leaned against the doorframe. Every inch of the place still held memories of Elizabeth, the way it always would. He walked up to their room and hesitated at the photo of her on his dresser. “You were there with us today, dear. I felt you.”

He gripped the dresser, and his thoughts drifted back to earlier today. Before he left the hospital, Ashley had shown him Cole’s picture. The artwork by his eight-year-old grandson had brought him the same much-needed comfort as it brought Ashley and her husband, Landon. Nothing could be more fitting than the image of Elizabeth holding little Sarah in heaven, taking care of her until they could all be together again.

He moved to the card table he’d set up at the end of his bed. Elizabeth’s handwritten letters were spread across it, more organized than before, and on one end was a stack already copied. The project had outgrown this space, so later tonight he’d move it to the dining room. When he was finished copying, he would have six sets of her letters—one for each of their children. Each yel-

lowed letter carefully opened and reread had filled his heart with Elizabeth's presence and made him miss her more than ever. But now the emotional, painstaking process was nearly behind him, and he was almost ready to put the letters into scrapbooks and pass them out. He had a feeling there was something in Elizabeth's words that would make a dramatic difference in each of their adult children.

Even with baby Sarah's funeral planned for later in the week, he would focus his energy on the letters. It was time, and it was the right thing to do. When he was finished, he would finally have closure, finally have walked through everything left of the woman he still so dearly loved. He would need that closure because of the decision he'd made an hour ago. The decision that one day very soon he would take the step he had been certain he would never take.

He would ask Elaine Denning to be his wife.



Dayne Matthews gripped the wooden railing of his back porch and stared out at the distant water. Even with the sorrow from earlier today, the sun sprayed a blanket of light across the surface of Lake Monroe. From inside the lake house he could hear the soft voice of his wife, Katy, talking to her agent again, trying to keep the conversation short.

This wasn't a day for business deals.

He squinted against the shine of sparkling lake water and lifted his eyes to the deep blue sky. No matter how many Hollywood roles he'd played, regardless of all the emotion he'd conveyed and seen acted out across the big screen over the years, he'd never seen anything like the strength and faith of his sister Ashley.

The events from a few hours ago came to life again—the call from his father, John Baxter, asking them to come quickly, and the way he felt walking into Ashley's hospital room. His family—Brooke,

Kari, Erin, Luke, and their spouses and children, the people he'd missed out on all his life until recently—filled every possible space, circling Ashley's bed.

Of course, Ashley and Landon had known for months that their unborn baby girl wouldn't survive more than a few days. Anencephaly was merciless that way. The miracle everyone prayed for wasn't an unexplained healing but rather what happened today in the few short hours of Sarah's life.

The screen door sounded behind him, and he looked over his shoulder. Even on a day marked with so much sadness, his heart still found room for the familiar awe. Katy Hart had actually married him, agreed to put aside her private life in Bloomington, Indiana, and join him on his public journey of fame.

Now if only they could survive the ride.

He turned and held out his arms. "C'mere."

Her steps were slow, measured, her expression lost and distant, as if the brief life and tender death of their niece Sarah had drained her. When she reached him, she eased her hands around his waist and laid her head on his shoulder. For a long time the only sound was the cry of a lone hawk in a distant tree.

Finally Katy drew a shaky breath and stepped back so she could see his eyes. "We can do it . . . right, Dayne?"

He let himself get lost in her touch, in the sweet caress of her voice. "Do what?"

She sighed. Her expression held fear and determination in equal amounts. "Use the next four weeks to remember what matters. Before the world tries to tear us apart again."

Four weeks. That's all the time they had to savor a semblance of normalcy in Bloomington, to enjoy their lake house and remember the reasons they'd fallen in love. Just four weeks. Frustration built in a hurry and took the edge off his good feelings. He set his jaw, and for a moment he looked past her to the hills beyond their home. What had he been thinking, encouraging her to star in a movie opposite him? As if that weren't enough fodder for the

tabloids, in less than a month they would face the debut episode of the reality show based on their shared movie experience. Both the show and their upcoming movie had been moved from a January release to the upcoming fall debut. His agent had explained the schedule change best. "Right now, no one's hotter than you two. The studios realize that." Everyone with a dime to make was counting on the conflicts between Dayne and Katy, racy headlines that during the filming had brought them to the breaking point.

But that was before they returned home to Bloomington. Here, finding love was as natural as breathing. Amid the sprawling country fields and rolling hills and endless sky, love had returned like a summer breeze, washing over them and assuring them that everything would be okay. And how could it not, in the company of the Baxters, surrounded by more love than Dayne had known in all his life?

"You're not answering me." Katy's expression softened, and sadness added to the mix.

He brushed his cheek against hers. "I wish it were four *years*."

"Or more." Katy rested her head on his shoulder again. "There's no way back, is there?"

She was talking about their upcoming movies, the fact that in a couple of months she would fly to London and he to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. For ten weeks they would be separated, fulfilling their obligations while the rags took shots at them. A heaviness settled over his heart.

"Ah, Katy." He held her close. The faint smell of her perfume, her skin, filled his senses and heightened the subtle urgency in their hushed tones. "Someday, maybe. When all this is behind us." He didn't say it, and she didn't either, but what if they never made it to that far-off day? What if his world grabbed hold of him, and her world grabbed hold of her? And what if they found themselves pulled so hard toward distant shores that they lost sight of the promises they made on a beach in the Mayan Riviera what felt like a lifetime ago?

They talked about someday often, especially since they'd been home from Los Angeles. Someday, when they'd say good-bye to Hollywood and acting and every aspect of the celebrity life. When they'd settle down in Bloomington and maybe bring to life again the Christian Kids Theater group Katy missed so much. A time when they'd have walks on the shore of Lake Monroe, Sunday supper with the Baxters, and babies of their own. The picture grew and swelled and filled Dayne's heart and soul because nothing could be better.

But they had a war to win between now and someday, the war they'd welcomed by agreeing to do the reality show. *For Real* was supposed to be a white flag, a way of giving in to the paparazzi without being swallowed whole. But the camera crews didn't land on the set of their recently wrapped movie looking for happily-ever-after scenes. They stirred conflict from the beginning, creating headlines that screamed of doubt and unfaithfulness.

And the show hadn't even aired yet.

Dayne kissed her forehead. "What did your agent say?"

"He wanted to make sure I had a passport." She sounded tired. "I told him I did, of course. Because of our wedding."

For a heartbeat the world fell away, and Dayne could see all the way to the center of her soul, the way he had once seen her before the tension of the past few months. "It was beautiful, wasn't it?"

She smiled. "Sometimes in my dreams I see it again, playing out so real I can smell the ocean air."

He nuzzled his face against hers. "Too bad you couldn't get your movie switched to Cabo."

The sun was setting, casting shadows across the deck and underlining the difficulty of what lay ahead. "It'd be hard to shoot Big Ben from Cabo."

"True." He placed his hands on either side of her face and touched his lips to hers. Their kiss was slow, with a hesitancy born of the tension that had marked the recent weeks. But it kindled a passion that knew no bounds, and after a while, their breathing changed and a knowing filled her eyes.

“I love you, Dayne.” Her whispered words betrayed the intensity of her feelings, the way her body responded to his.

Even in the worst of times, their marriage had been marked by a physical love that seemed almost divine—a gift from the God they both believed in, the God who Dayne prayed would keep them together in the coming months when it might look easier to walk away.

“I love you too.” He held her closer. “Don’t ever stop saying it, okay? And I won’t either.”

Katy hesitated. “I won’t. . . . I won’t ever stop.” She kissed him again and spoke close to his ear. “Let’s go inside.”

He swallowed and eased his fingers between hers. As they went in, as they walked past the kitchen and down the hallway toward their bedroom, Dayne still wasn’t sure about the someday they dreamed of. But for now they had something else, something that here and now maybe mattered more.

They had four weeks.

A WORD FROM KAREN KINGSBURY

DEAR FRIENDS,

What an emotional journey it's been, trying to bring to a close my series on the Baxters. Especially this installment, which was written in the weeks after my dad's death. My dad always told me that one day everyone would know what a wonderful writer I was. But having him in my life made me know for certain that life was about so much more than writing.

My dad was a firm believer in life. I told you that last time. But he was also a believer in miracles. That's why none of us were overly shocked when he survived his heart attack in what could only be described as a miracle. You can read about it on my Web site at www.KarenKingsbury.com.

Clearly because of what we went through with my dad, the idea of miracles was on my heart like never before. I've heard from thousands of you who told me how glad you were that Ashley's baby didn't receive a miraculous healing at the end of the last book, *Summer*. It wasn't that you wished bad things for poor Ashley. But you wanted a real story, a way of seeing God's hand at work even when life doesn't go the way we want.

I'm glad you were happy with that ending. It was the only one I could've written, knowing the powerful God we serve and the very real certainty of heartache all around us. And so in this book, I had the chance to bring to light the fact that even in death, God can work miracles. We've seen that a number of times in people close to us and in our community. With the passing of my dad, we saw it personally.

God is at work, even in our storms.

The story of Ashley and Dayne and Luke all finding their somebody by the end of this book was also one in which I felt compelled

to talk about the battles of life. The deaths and illnesses, the broken relationships and ruined finances. God tells us in 2 Chronicles that we don't have to fight our battles alone. He'll go before us.

Isn't that the greatest news? For those who love Christ, wherever you go, you're protected. The battle is won, no matter how grim the situation seems.

At our house, we love when Donald takes out his guitar and everyone gathers around to sing songs of praise to God. We'll sit outside on the front porch or gather in one of the kids' bedrooms. Between songs, Donald often has one of the kids pray, and as the hour progresses, the heart of each of the kids becomes more tender. Sometimes a few of them will have quiet tears as the time wraps up. Why? Because victory comes in praising God.

Now, about the Baxters. I know. . . . I know. I hear from you, my faithful friends, many, many times each week. "Please," you write, "don't let the Baxters end! You can't stop writing about these people."

Believe me, I'm as upset about writing the final chapter of *Sunset* as you are. And so I've decided to keep the characters alive in a different way. With the conclusion of the Sunrise series, after the final book, *Sunset*, releases, I will start a blog on my Web site and in my monthly newsletters. One day you might hear from Ashley and another day from Dayne. John will weigh in on his new marriage, and Katy will share the joys of being a first-time mother. There won't be whole chapters or books, but you'll be kept aware of how the Baxters are doing and what's happening next.

And of course there will be more stories, more families and issues and emotionally driven characters and plots in the years to come, God willing. I have so many stories in my heart, so many times when we will meet again between the covers of a book. So stay posted.

Also, if you chose to start a relationship with Christ for the first time while reading this book, please get ahold of a Bible and read the book of John. Mark it and highlight it, underline it and memo-

rise it. Scripture is the strongest weapon we have as we march into battle with God at our side. Then find a Bible-believing church where you can grow in the love and knowledge of our mighty King.

If you're unable to find a Bible or you can't afford one and if you've chosen now to start that life-saving relationship with Christ, then send me an e-mail. In the subject line simply write, "New Life." Include your address, and I will send you a Bible.

As always, you can find out more information and sign up for my newsletter on my Web site. I have contests in the works and journal entries about my life as a Christian wife and mother as well as my ministry of fiction. In addition, you can find photos of soldiers who need your prayers as they serve our country. My contact information is there as well. Don't forget: I love hearing from you!

On that note, find a song and sing it as often as you can. Oh, and if your parents are still alive, call them and tell them you love them. Today, while there's still time.

Until we meet again, in His light and love,

Karen Kingsbury

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Were you surprised that Katy and Dayne agreed to film movies in separate countries so early in their marriage? What did you expect would happen?
2. What did you think about Ashley's determination to find meaning in her baby daughter's short life? Have you ever looked for a miracle in a situation that didn't go the way you'd hoped? Explain.
3. Talk about Brooke's change of heart toward life. What events spurred her interest in reopening a crisis pregnancy center? Does your town have a crisis pregnancy center? If so, what do you know about it?
4. Read 2 Chronicles 20. If you don't have a Bible, you can find a copy of this chapter online at www.Bible.com. What do you think this Scripture says about the battles of life? According to these verses, what role does God play in the battle?
5. Again according to this section of Scripture, when does the victory happen for God's people? Have you ever experienced a time when you overcame a problem by praising God? Explain.
6. Were you surprised by Ashley's healed relationship with Brooke? Why did that happen?
7. Have you ever struggled with a sibling? Talk about that struggle and explain how you were able to find common ground again or how you might reconcile.
8. The photograph of what seemed to be Dayne and Randi was almost enough to convince Katy her marriage was a