

Part-Time Angel

Written by Skylar Marks

**“I dedicate this book to my family who helps me with everything,
and to Bella, who is more than real.”**

Chapter 1

“Go!” shouted my P.E. teacher. I was flying through the air. Actually I was running. The wind was in my face and I didn’t even know how fast I was going.

My name is Kathryn Vinson, but everyone calls me Kelly. I’m in seventh grade and almost thirteen years old. It’s my first day of school after summer break. It’s good old September and everyone is excited because it’s a new grade. The golden leaves were falling to the ground. My family lives on a little hill above San Ramon. California. We have a garden and my mom loves lavender so we have a lot of it. We have plum trees, pear trees, and even little green apple trees.

I have two brothers and an older sister, Nicole. Even though she’s 15, she still plays with us and helps us with our homework. She’s great. So are my brothers, but they can also be a pain. They’re always playing pranks on me and stuff. Once I threw Dave in the pond. He’s eight, and is usually the mastermind of the family pranks. It was funny seeing him flapping around in the water. He was all covered in pond weed and algae. I got in trouble, but it was worth it. He had played a nasty prank on me first. William played along, of course, being two years younger than his oh so smart older brother. He follows Dave around waddling after him like a baby duck. This is what happened.

We have a backyard with a swing and a pond. Frogs like to hang out in there and the water is practically green. I’m always outside. I love most bugs and I like digging for worms, but I hate spiders. We have a lot of them. So Dave spent all day collecting some of the scariest ones with William by his side. It was a Saturday, no school, so I had my overalls on. I was working in the garden. I had my favorite dark blue sun hat on and mom had just gone to the store and bought some flowers. It was hot. And it was basically a chore to be planting flowers in the scorching sun, so I got paid 10 cents for every flower.

“Come on Will! If you want to help, you got to keep up!” Dave yelled.

“I’m trying!” William called back.

Crazy boys I thought to myself. I dug into the wormy dirt. Then I dumped the plant into my hand, spread apart the roots and put it into the hole I had dug. I patted it into place. I took off my gardening gloves and wiped the sweat from my forehead. I heard some scuffling by the front door

but I proceeded to get some lemonade. As soon as I was about to open the door, Dave jumped out of the bushes and poured a huge bucket of crawly live spiders on me! They went everywhere! In my shirt, in my hair, but luckily not in my pants! I screamed! William clapped his hands in joy. "Nice one Dave!" he cried. But I was in luck. I was older than Dave so I took him and threw him in the pond.

The pond is kind of deep. It's about four feet deep to be precise. He went all the way down.

"Dave!" William cried, "Are you ok?"

By then I had shaken all the spiders from me, and I started to laugh when Dave came out. Even William laughed! Because Dave was covered from head to toe in greenish slime! A frog was on his head. It croaked and then jumped off. Pond weed hung everywhere -- on his soggy arms, wet shoulders, and sopping shoes. His shoes were green instead of brown and William and I were laughing our heads off.

"It's not funny!" Dave said angrily. He thinks he's too old to cry. He ran inside and slammed the door.

"Kathryn!" my mom bellowed. "Come inside this instant!"

"I'm in trouble, William," bending my head low. "But it was fun while it lasted.

"Well, at least you didn't throw me in!" he said.

"I would only throw you in if you did something really mean, like what Dave did." I explained. "Now I've got to go inside before mom comes out. Because if she comes out, it means double trouble."

So I went inside, and mom was scrubbing Dave in the bathtub. The water was slimy. Mom looked grossed out. Dave's arms were folded across his chest and he scowled and wouldn't speak to me.

After she was done scrubbing Dave we sat down face to face. In situations like this, we each tell our side of the story. Usually it has something to do with both of us being a little bit wrong so each person kind of leaves out their faults. But I wasn't going to this time. I was going to explain the entire thing. This is how mom works out problems. Not that it usually works because we interrupt and no one cares what the other person says. But, mom thinks it's genius.

Dave went first. The youngest usually does. “Well, Kelly went over and threw me in the pond. And when I came out the two of them were laughing at me! I can’t remember what happened before that.”

“Kelly,” my mom said looking mad, “looks like you’re in the wrong.” She said.

“That is *not* what happened! And he did not forget!” I protested biting down hard on my teeth.

“Then what happened!” mom yelled, frustrated and throwing her hands into the air. She thought it would be a quick trial.

“I’ll tell you!” I screamed. I was losing it but I didn’t care. “I was gardening like you said. I was hot and wanted some lemonade, so I walked towards the door, and Dave threw a bucket of spiders all over me! I was so mad that I took him and threw him in the pond. When he came out, he was so green and slimy I couldn’t help laughing! Dave acted mad and pretended to be the victim, but he left out what really happened.”

“Oh.” said my mom. She turned to Dave. He looked pretty guilty. “Is that the truth?” my mom asked him trying to stay calm.

“Yes” William interrupted as he walked in with his hands full of mud.

“Hey!” Dave said. “Whose side are you on?”

“Quiet!” my mom said. “And go wash your hands, Will!” she paused. “Dave this is your fault,” she said.

He glared at me. I was really going to get it later.

“But you should not have done what you did to your brother Kelly.”

“Yeah she should’ve,” William said coming out of the bathroom his hands dripping wet.

“Shut up!” Dave yelled at him.

“Dave cut that out and William go dry your hands.” My mom said.

And that’s how I threw Dave in the pond

“Kelly! Are you doing your homework up there! Or are you drawing?”

“Homework!” I called back. Trust me I would rather be drawing! Seventh grade homework is not fun! Especially with my grumpy old teacher. Her face looks like a dried fig.

That night I went to sleep looking at my little glass dove on the window sill. The moon was exactly on the bird’s beak and it looked like it was touching the moon. I got it when I was a baby from my grandmother. The bird always makes me feel peaceful and it’s my most prized possession. I smiled and went to sleep.

Chapter 2

An older 8th grade boy punched Dave in the eye at school today. William had a melt-down for Dave and then Mom told him to cut it out and to stop acting like a baby. Even though Dave can be a pain, I still love him! And believe me, I was mad at this kid! I would slap his face off for hurting my little brother! Luckily I knew him and I was going to make things right.

He was big with greasy brown hair, dark brown eyes and an evil smile. He was tall, fat and ugly. He usually wore a black leather jacket and his nails were filled with rotting mud. His teeth were so yellow it looked like he chewed slugs every day. He was the leader of the “bad boys” group. I was a little bit scared, ok I was deathly terrified. But he had hurt my brother!

I went up to him at the end of the day. “Did you pick on a little skinny kid in a blue shirt and brown board shorts?” I asked him. I felt a lump in my throat but I was going to finish this alive.

“Yah” he said like he was the boss. “And what are you going to do about it, toothpick!”

Toothpick? That was the worst thing he could call me? He wasn’t only disgusting, he was dumb and pathetic! “That was my brother!” I yelled at him.

He raised an eyebrow. I glared at him.

Then... POW! . . .

I was really dizzy and I walked home in a daze.

When I came home, I flopped down on the floor and mom rushed over to see what was the matter. At first she thought it was one of my “school killed me” jokes, but then she realized I wasn’t faking. I had a black eye, a bump on my head, and a twisted ankle from when I fell. My mom rushed to get the ice. After I was propped up on the couch, my head bandaged with an ice pack, ice on my eye, and my ankle elevated also with, you guessed it, an ice pack, my mom looked up the principal’s phone number and called him up and told him what happened.

My head hurt and my brothers were making “get well soon” notes. My sister stopped doing her homework and came to check out my injury. It wasn’t that bad and I was already feeling better.

The next day I had to skip recess and P.E. though because my head still felt a little funny. I couldn’t focus that well either, so I got sent home.

I sat on the swing hanging from the tree. I felt sad and I didn’t know why. Then mom picked up Dave and William from school.” Dad usually comes home for dinner even if he has a lot of work. My dad the type of guy that can always make you feel better. A kind of person you can’t stay mad at; one of those people you just have to love. We all sat down to eat. It was my turn to say the prayer. I said, “Dear God, Thank you for the food on our table. Please bless all of my friends and family and that mean eighth grade boy. If he’s that mean, he must be unhappy. Amen.”

After doing homework and watching a quick SpongeBob video, the kids went to bed. My mom came in to say goodnight. “Mom,” I said “my head hurts.”

“I know.” She said. “Sleep will help. Goodnight sweetie.”

“Goodnight.” I said back.

And I looked at my little glass dove. And again, I peacefully fell asleep.

Chapter 3

The air was crisp and the salty water was in my face as we sped out to sea in the boat. Some of the water splashed onto the palm of my hand. It was cold but full of life. William wanted to see the captain and Dave wanted to come along so dad took them to meet him. I stayed back with mom and Nicole. I had a sweater, pants, scarf and even a hat on because it was so cold. Nicole put her arm around me and I gazed into the distance.

The ripples of waves so far out looked like a tiny puddle and you were the one blowing, making waves like bubbles. In that moment, I realized I was just a dot on some planet in space. And every person thinks about themselves so much, they forget about everyone else. Maybe they don't like butter on their spaghetti, they want marinara sauce, well some people have so little food, that they starve and die. Or it could be that you feel you don't get enough allowance. Some people go to a hospital because they have a deathly disease and they can't afford the piece of paper to write their problem down on to get the appointment so they die too. We should be thankful for every second we're alive.

After lunch in the cabin below we got ice cream. Dave gulped it down and then got brain freeze. I couldn't help laughing.

"It's not funny, Kelly!" Dave said with a squinted face while holding his head.

"Yes it is!" William chimed in.

"Is not!"

"Is too!"

"Quiet!" mom said "We're on a boat!"

I giggled because why should we be quiet on a boat? We were in the middle of nowhere.

Dave glared at me. William stuck his tongue out at Dave. The captain was telling us facts about the ocean and its fish and such. I asked him a question. "How do whales communicate?" I asked.

"I'm glad you asked. Well, whale don't live anywhere around here but I know all about them." He replied. "Whales make a sort of humming sound. They usually do this when they're trying to attract a mate."

"Thank you for telling me." I said. Then he handed me a box with a speaker. "What's this?" I asked him.

"It's a tape of whales." He winked at me. "I think you'll like it."

The whales whined and whimpered. Then they hummed a sweet song. It made me relax.

It was getting late and William was tired. Dave was too. So, Dave and William curled up and fell asleep just as the boat pulled into the dock. Mom had to wake them up. Dad carried Dave and mom carried William. We drove home and it was about 10:00 pm.

That night I had the weirdest dream.

Chapter 4

I was standing. Just standing there. Somewhere. Then I started to get smaller and smaller. “What happened?” I thought. I had basically disappeared. I wasn’t noticed. No one seemed to care. Days went by. Nobody even mentioned me. I was heartbroken. Every night I would cry. I curled up and burst into tears. Finally after about a week, I ran away. As I walked through the grass, it was tall and above my head. The flowers were huge and seemed to whisper. The wind whistled and seemed to be telling me a message. It was almost evening. It was a starry night and I wasn’t even across our yard yet. My feet were moving inches every few minutes. I slept among the stars. I used a leaf as a blanket. But I didn’t realize I was getting even smaller every minute. The next morning I began to walk again. The world seemed to get bigger and bigger, then... I woke up. I looked around my room. It was dark. I was breathing steadily but hard. My heart pounded in my chest.

The next morning, I didn’t feel well. I didn’t feel sick, but have you ever felt that when you wake up you don’t really remember anything? I didn’t feel like Kelly, I felt empty and gone. Luckily mom understood how I felt and she said I looked pale. I didn’t go to school nor did I say much the whole day. I was quiet and sad. I told mom about the dream, as much as I could remember. “I understand.” she told me.

“But *I* don’t understand.” I said looking at her with glassy eyes. “So how can *you* understand when *I* can’t?”

Mom looked confused. I knew she wouldn’t get what I was trying to say. She never did. She was a great mom but she said I always had such a wild imagination; she could never keep up with me.

“Why don’t you take a nap? Get some rest.” she said. I agreed even though I wasn’t very tired. I wriggled beneath the blankets trying to get to sleep. I hoped I wouldn’t have another one of those dreams.

Chapter 5

My mom said to me the next day, “Kelly, I don’t remember the last time I went out to dinner just me and your father.”

“Yah, I don’t either.” I agreed half listening. I was feeling better. I was helping mom with some errands.

“Well,” mom continued, “we’ve decided that your father and I would go out once a week. And you and your brothers are going to have a babysitter.”

“What?” I said, “Why can’t Nicole take care of us?” I asked.

“That isn’t Nicole’s job,” mom said, “and besides, I think you’ll like the new babysitter.” She said smiling.

The next day the babysitter was supposed to come and Nicole was at a friend’s house... I have to admit, I was nervous. When she arrived, I was looking out the window spying. She had dark hair and a short denim skirt. She had a pointed smile and tons of make-up and eye shadow. She had painted, long, fake nails. I didn’t feel comfortable. Mom was washing dishes and she dried her hands on a towel and hurried to the door. “Hello!” my mom said warmly, shaking her hand.

“Hi, my name’s Victoria,” she said in a scaly voice. I shivered. She looked down at me. “You must be Kelly.” Victoria said with a sly smile. Mom nodded.

“Yes. Kelly is a nice girl. I would like you to meet her younger brothers.” Mom walked up to Dave and William’s room. “This is William. He is six. And this is Dave.” mom said pointing to him. “He’s eight.” Dave and William waved shyly.

Victoria walked over to them shaking Dave’s hand and patting William’s head. Then mom gave Victoria a tour of the house and the family rules.

When they left, I turned to my brothers. “Do you think Victoria’s weird?” I asked them.

“Why would you think she’s weird?” William asked.

“She is odd,” Dave agreed. “But she’s ok.”

Mom officially decided that Victoria was nice. To me that was a recipe for disaster. I was NOT happy. “What if she’s mean?” I complained to mom while she was getting ready to go out with dad.

“She won’t be mean!” mom said, “Don’t worry.”

But I worried anyway.

Victoria arrived at 5:00. And since it was a Friday, I didn’t have a lot of homework. I looked at my test. In my class, every week, we had a spelling list and a sheet we had of really hard words we were to study during the week. We also were informed of our next week’s math test we could work on during the weekend. But, usually a week was long enough to study for most of the kids. The children who had the You-have-to-get-perfect-tests parents studied like mad. I fortunately had parents who let me do my best at the things I did in school and didn’t push me to death.

I looked at the paper again. It said: Please have Parent or *Guardian* sign on the line. I guessed that meant Victoria. I walked up to her who was playing chutes and ladders with William and Dave. She was arguing with them and Dave had his arms crossed. “Um... Victoria, can you sign this?” I asked.

“What is it?” she asked.

“My test. I need my parent or guardian to sign here.” I said pointing to the line.

Victoria sat down in the kitchen and studied the paper. It said: seventeen out of twenty. “What!” she screamed. “What’s this?!” she hollered.

“My grade...Of the test,” I answered.

She frowned at me.

“You, young lady, are in BIG trouble.”

“Why?”

“You know exactly why! For the rest of the night you are going to study for next week’s test!” Victoria screamed. We were supposed to watch a movie that night, but I guessed that wouldn’t happen for me.

When I was supposed to be studying I crept down the stairs. Victoria and my brothers, were watching my favorite movie *The Sound of Music*, cuddled in blankets, eating popcorn, it wasn't fair at all. She was treating my brothers better than me and that was against a family rule. Then Victoria turned to me. "What are you doing out of your room?!" she yelled.

"Why does Kelly have to stay in her room?" William asked.

"Because, she needs to study for next week's test! She needs to get 100%."

"But mom never makes us do better than we can do," Dave interrupted.

"Well," Victoria screeched, "Your mom isn't here! And I say STUDY NOW!!!!!!!"

Well, that was pretty clear.

"I don't like you!" William said.

I went up to my room and "studied" till I fell asleep.

Chapter 6

The next day was Saturday. Mom, Dave, William, Nicole and I were driving to town. Dad was at work doing what he usually does. Financial planning. And on a Saturday! They don't get days off!

We had to run some errands. We were out of house supplies. The kids don't like the "errands" part. So, Nicole told stories and jokes to us. We had a lot of fun. William sat in the cart and Dave and I strolled along while Nicole pushed William in it and mom hurried around like a chicken with their head cut off.

"Ok. Ok um... duck tape, paper, journal..." mom said to herself. Nicole and I exchanged looks.

After mom was more relaxed, I told her about Victoria. "Yah!" said William enthusiastically, "She was forcing poor Kelly to do her studying, while we watched the movie!"

Mom agreed to tell her not to come back. I thought the day was going swimmingly well. But when we got back in the car, we didn't know we were in for a surprise. A bad surprise.

As we were driving home, the road had striped signs. In the middle of each sign, was a sand bag. There was a guy in front of us in a beat up truck, and he looked like a young driver. As we were on a highway, the cars were going fast. It was a small highway. Two lanes. All of a sudden, the guy in front of us turned a bit too much to the right and hit a sand bag. It burst open onto the street. Mom noticed the sand and tried to turn... BANG! We smashed into a pole. Cars flew by as if I was imagining. The side of the car that smashed into the pole was William's side. Dave was in the middle and Nicole was in front. One more car slipped on sand and I ducked but then the car hit my side of the car and smashed into me. The window shattered. I was half conscious. My eyes closed.

I heard an ambulance and felt being put inside. I heard Dave and William talking and mom shouting but it all sounded blurry. I opened my eyes as much as I could, and a tear fell down my face. It was too much pain for me to bear. As I breathed heavily I heard chattering and then everything went black.

Chapter 7

When I woke up the place I was in looked familiar. But it had seemed as if it was a long time since I had been there. *Is it the hospital?* I thought to myself. But it wasn't the hospital unless they had redecorated because the place I was in was beautiful! People floated, dancing in the sky. The ground was like clouds. Beautiful silky flowers blossomed on the trees. *They're perfect*, I thought to myself. Gorgeous winged people darted about the sky which seemed so close I reached up and tried to touch it. This sky (not like the one at home) was a majestic color. Someone who looked like an angel flew towards me. She had long, graceful wings and a stunning gown. It was silk and had tiny flowers embroidered on her dress. Her long blond hair was blowing lightly in the breeze. She was short, only about a foot taller than me, she looked like an older lady but she was very pretty.

The lady sat down next to me and asked in a kind voice, "Hello, are you new?"

"Y-yes." I stammered.

"Well please come with me. We have to get you ready to live with us up here."

"Up? And where am I anyway?" I asked.

"Why, you're in heaven."

I looked around. I knew it had seemed familiar! And the lady seemed familiar too. I walked along in my torn clothes. Still ripped up from the accident.

The lady introduced herself. "I'm Grace."

"Grace is your name?"

"Yes. Something wrong?"

"No nothing. You just look familiar. But are you an angel?" I asked amazed.

"Indeed," Grace said humbly. We came to a small room. It had baby blue walls and no roof which made it quite a comfortable temperature. The floor was soft and warm from the sun. Inside another angel sat in a small chair.

She had soft brown hair and delicate fingers. She had a soft smile like my dad's and round, kind, brown eyes. She was sewing the most beautiful dresses I had ever seen. They were made of pure silk and had delicate tiny flowers embroidered all over each one. Each one was a soft pastel color of purples, blues, greens, pinks and whites. The lady looked up and noticed Grace and I. "Oh! Hello! Are you new here?" she asked me.

"Yes." I said shyly. I looked around the room filled with clothes.

"What kind of clothes do you like?" the lady asked.

"Well I don't mind, whatever you give me is fine." I answered.

"I have some pretty dresses," she said.

"That would be fine!" I said "I like dresses, especially when they're beautiful ones like the ones you make." The lady smiled.

"My name is Patty. And thank you for the compliment!"

"Kelly." I said. Patty beamed.

"Kelly?" Grace said looking surprised. I nodded.

"Why don't you try this one?" Patty offered. I went into a place sort of like a dressing room. The dress was silky and white. As I put it on, I looked in the mirror and noticed two things. One, I had a small scar on my forehead, and two, I had wings! I could fly! I put on the dress and walked out. "It's beautiful!" I said.

"You keep it." Patty said.

"But don't I have to pay?" I asked confused.

"That's not the way heaven works." Patty answered handing me five more dresses my size.

After Grace and I thanked Patty, we flew to spot a bit like a house. It was round and friendly looking. It was soft and looked like it was made of clouds. The bright pastel green outside walls looked cozy and inviting. "This is your house. I'll live next-door if you ever need me," Grace said.

"Everyone eats together. Angels come when they are ready to eat. The food hall is open all day and closes around bed time." Grace explained.

I put away my dresses which I hung up, and sat on my bed.

“Why do angels eat and sleep? I mean aren’t they like immortal beings?” I questioned.

“Heaven works pretty much like your home. You eat and sleep like you normally would. But we have no money. You have to do selfless service to earn your place here.”

Before I could ask her more Grace needed to leave.

The blankets were a soft material, velvet and silk. I lay on my bed and remembered what had happened. I remembered mom and Dave, Nicole and William and...dad. I hadn’t gotten to say goodbye to dad. He wasn’t there when we crashed. If only I could see him one last time.

Tears fell down my cheeks. I buried my face into my pillow and cried quietly. Just then the sound of wings filled the room. I sat up frightened. I opened my eyes and perched on the edge of the bed was my dove from home. It was alive!

“Bella?” I said.

Bella was what I called my glass dove at home. I stuck my finger out. She flew right over and peacefully landed on my finger. She put her silky head on my tears. I smiled.

“I’m so glad I’m not alone!” I cried happily.

Chapter 8

I woke up the next morning, got dressed, and went for breakfast. My heart was heavy. I put fruit on a plate and cereal in a bowl. Poured milk and took a fork and a spoon. I also got a bowl of seeds for Bella. I sat down and started to eat. Grace sat down next to me. "I hope you don't mind me sitting here," she said.

"No. I don't mind." I said solemnly.

"What's wrong?" Grace asked.

"I was remembering my family."

"Do you mind telling me what happened?" Grace asked me. I paused for a moment.

"Well, my mom was driving and the car slipped on sand that was on the road. We slid and hit into a pole. Then another car hit into the side of the car I was on and I ducked and the car smashed me between the door and the seat. Then... well I went into an ambulance and then ended up here." I shrugged. "But I never got to say good bye to my dad. I wish I could see him again."

"You can. You're an angel." Grace said.

"How?" I asked, confused and excited.

"You can look down upon someone you want to see, but you can't speak to them. You can only listen to them because they won't be able to hear or see you."

"All right." I agreed.

Grace told me how to go down to my family. "Close your eyes and pray. You might feel a slight draft."

"So they can't hear or see me even if I want them to?" I asked her. Grace shook her head.

The first time I went down to see my family I felt like a ghost. Or maybe I was one! I saw Dave and William, Nicole mom and... dad! But...

they weren't happy. None of my family was in school or at work. They sort of just sat there. Mom was crying and dad was comforting her. I felt horrible. We were all happy as a family, even with spider fights and throwing my brother in the pond, but then I was gone, and I didn't think my family would ever be the same. It was all my fault. If I was still there, they would all be happy.

I began to wish I could rewind life – then I thought, maybe angels can! So I went back to ask Grace. “How did it go?” she asked me.

“Well,” I said, “Grace, I wish I could turn back the time.”

“Sometimes it seems like we should be able to do things like rewind our lives, but sometimes it's good to let fate take care of that.”

Every day we had to do, well I guess it was chores. Everyone did their part and nobody complained. I was an “angel” but I sure didn't feel like one.

There were other kids to play with but it wasn't the same as my friends back home. There were slides and a playground for the kids. It seemed like everyone had been here longer than I had. While the other kids played tag and capture the flag, I sat down alone. I felt like crying but I didn't want to in front of the other kids. I hadn't ever felt so sad and alone. *I wish I was home*, I thought.

After a while Grace had finished her chores and it was time for dinner. We went to eat. I just picked at my food. Grace seemed to notice I was uncomfortable. “You miss your family a lot. Don't you?” Grace asked.

“Yes I do.” I said sadly. I was holding in the tears as well as I could.

“You know,” Grace explained, “there is one more person that could help.”

But she wouldn't say more. She told me to wait a while, be patient.

Chapter 9

When I went to sleep that night, I thought about what Grace had said. Who was the helper and how would they help me? I sat up in my bed. I frowned. I wasn't going to believe some "helper" was going to help my problem. It was too big to fix. I stayed up kind of late crying and mostly thinking. Finally I went to sleep. As my eyes closed, I thought suddenly how lucky I was to have Grace.

The next morning, I went to Grace's house and knocked on the door. I knew she got up early. "Come in," Grace said.

It was a pretty house with pictures on the soft pink walls. It had chairs around the fire place and a kitchen. She had been sitting by the fire to keep warm. I guessed angels couldn't stay warm all of the time even though they were immortal. I could tell because her knitting needles were on the chair. Grace gestured me to sit and so I did.

"Grace," I said, "what was your life like?"

"Well I had a good life. My husband was named Charles and I had two children, Mattie and Dean. But you know people get old. Charles and I died of old age."

"Dean? Can you describe him?" I said.

"Yes. He was a kind man. He a sweet face and a beautiful smile. He had a loving kind heart and married a woman named Martha and had four children."

"Martha?" I yelled, "Grace, you're my grandmother!"

"Kelly? Why it is you!" she said giving me a huge hug. "Now we must get going!" Grace said, "It's not easy getting him to help."

"Him?" I asked.

"Yes." Grace said. "I'll need to come with you because it's easy to get lost. Stay with me and don't wander off." I nodded.

Grace seemed sad and I couldn't think why.

It was a long walk. On the way there we stopped by a green meadow filled with lush flowers. I ran around with Bella and she swooped down and put some flowers on top of my head. I giggled. We stayed there for about two hours. It felt so peaceful there but we had to keep going.

We walked for a while. Neither Grace nor I said anything the entire way. Then I saw a building up ahead. But it looked like a cottage. It had a rickety roof and an old wooden door. The paint on the walls were peeling with age. Even though it looked old and dirty, it looked cozy and warm. I started to go on a different path but then Grace's voice interrupted me. "That's it right there," Grace said pointing to the small building ahead. I seemed surprised.

We walked through the door and a welcoming voice said "Kelly! Grace! I'm glad to see you!"

"Hello!" said Grace seeming surprisingly happy. I looked in front of me. A jolly looking man smiled.

"Who are you?" I asked suddenly feeling extremely comfortable.

He didn't answer my question. Instead he asked, "So what do you want? You seem troubled." I suddenly told him everything. About the car crash, dad, and how much I wanted to go back. He nodded and thought for a moment. "Well, I can't send you back, not in your 'Kelly' life anymore." I hung my head. "But I *can* send you back as a different person and you could still be in the same family."

"Oh thank you!" I cried throwing my arms around him. Then he said one more thing.

"But Kelly," he said, "you'll have to be willing to start over and become a new person. You'll be reborn and renamed and you'll be totally different." I nodded in understanding.

More about how you'll have to give up this beautiful life as an angel to endure hardships for maybe a hundred years, just to be with your family again . . .

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Not yet," I said running over to Grace. I hugged her. "I'll miss you grandma!" I said.

"I'll miss you too, Kelly." Grace said hugging me tight.

“Maybe, we’ll still be able to talk.” She turned to the man. He nodded yes. I smiled, waved goodbye and sat on the floor, as I was told.

“Are you ready?” the man asked once more.

“Yes,” I said.

He put dust on me.

“Goodbye Grandma!” I said. But the sound trailed off

Chapter 10

I felt funny when I first saw light again. I felt small and helpless. *I'm in a hospital.* I thought, *but why?* Then it occurred to me. I was a baby! I was reborn. I looked up. *Mom! It was mom!* I did feel small, but I was back in my family.

It was a short trip from heaven to the new world. I didn't remember the ride being so quick. After a while, I was eating, well, drinking, and boy I was hungry.

Then I was one week old before you could say FOOD! That was what I liked. My main, my only course was milk and it tasted sweet.

One day while lying on the couch, Dave came up to me. His eyes were sad and I had never seen him like that. He handed me a toy. It was a soft rubber duck with cute eyes and a bright orange beak. It was my old duck from when I was a baby. Then he sat down next to me and stroked my head. "Can I feed Olivia mom?" he asked. *Olivia. That's my new name!*

One month old. No school. This is the life, I thought while noisily sucking on a bottle. I played with William when he wasn't in school. Dave and Nicole did homework while I played happily with William. He built block towers, played trucks, and legos with me. Mom made dinner and dad came home early from work now because mom had a new baby and because since Kelly had died I guess he wanted to hang out with the family more. I was happy to see him at 2:00. I went to bed and then everyone ate dinner. At night I would think about Grace. I would talk to her in thought, and sometimes I could almost hear her.

I grew fast. Every day went by quickly. I felt I was missing school even though I couldn't remember 1+1. Every day was a new day to discover. Things like what lived under the bed? I played, I ate, I slept and you know the other things. And I got bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

Then I was seven months and I started to crawl. I went everywhere. In the kitchen, in the living room, I knocked things over and I screamed and whined.

But there was something I noticed about our family that was more different than sadness. It was fear. Each step they took they seemed to look around, waiting for something terrible to happen. And when nothing of that

sort came about them, they took the next step repeating everything. My family seemed to live in fear and it was because of me, or who I used to be.

One day, I was crawling past Dave and William's room. I sat up and made baby sounds and pounded my fists on the floor. "William! Dave! Time for school!" mom yelled. Then mom picked me up and put me in the car. I didn't mind car-seats because Dave had told me that they keep me safe and that triggered something in my mind. We drove my brothers to school.

Mom and I went to the store and then went to playgroup. I hated playgroup. All these babies sat around me crying, whining, burping and spitting up. It was disgusting. But mom enjoyed talking to the other moms so I dealt with it. The babies whined and screamed so I did too. It was kind of fun after a while but it gave mom a headache.

After mom and I went home, I drank some milk and played in my bouncy-seat. Normally, I would have thought it was it was dumb, but it was fun to hear the rattles, and when I pressed a button, it played music. Then mom carried me to my room and I took a nap. At 2:00 dad came home. I crawled over to him. I yelled with joy and he picked me up. When I looked into mom, dad, Dave, William, or Nicole's eyes, they seemed different and afraid, devastated and horrified. I got so used to the solemn faces, I couldn't remember them any other way.

Soon I was almost one year old. Mom and dad were planning a party and I would get cake and presents. They were inviting old friends and family. As a baby, I felt different but yet the same. I was Olivia. Not Kelly. I grew and got bigger and I started becoming more aware of things and people and things around me. I loved to play with William and Dave in their rooms. I guess they liked to play with me. My family was loving to me but I knew they'd lost something they weren't telling me and, I knew what it was.

On my birthday, everyone came. Grandma, Grandpa, (from my mom's side) and old friends who I remembered from long ago. Well it wasn't that long ago, it just seemed that way.

We went to a small place where they had pools and wading pools for the little kids, and picnic tables. It was an old park we used to go to. Everyone was having fun and I thought to myself, *well, at least I get to have birthdays over!*

People were saying how nice everything was set up and the grownups were talking and the kids were playing and I, of course, was playing with

the babies. It wasn't as bad this time though because the babies were older and they didn't throw up so much.

Dave and William were playing with their friends and Nicole had two of her friends over and they were cooing at the babies. A big banner said: HAPPY BIRTHDAY OLIVIA in big letters and I was having a lot of fun.

Then it was time to barbecue the hot dogs and hamburgers. I always hated hot dogs but I was dying for a hamburger. I knew I couldn't have one though because I was only one. Then William and Dave "helped" me open my presents. They ripped open packages and handed me what was inside. Rattles, cups, rubber thing to chew on, stuffed animals, ducks, rabbits, teddy bears, everything. I was covered in presents.

When my brothers were done opening my gifts, William was mad that they were gone. "Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes." Mom said. "And it's a good thing too."

Chapter 11

Whenever mom went shopping she brought me along. And I often heard people saying, “I’m so sorry that your daughter died. It must be so hard on the family. Do want me to come make dinner for you tonight?” Or “She was a lovely girl and her fate is so sad. I could announce it at the church and we could pray for her to be in a good place?”

My mom’s eyes would just fill with tears and say “No thank you. I’m fine. We can manage.”

When I turned two, mom and dad invited some of my special friends and we had a pleasant baby party. I had a great time with cake and presents.

I went to play group and mom took a job. We now needed the money so dad and mom were working a lot. It was 2008 and things were hard for everyone. Nicole helped baby sit, and helped my brothers with their homework at night. My mom and dad came home late. Nicole was so great. I learned to say her name before Dave’s and William’s.

At three years old, I started out in a play group but it was more like pre-preschool. We were students in training. It was all day because we couldn’t afford a babysitter. It was a tiring year over all and when the New Year came and March came around the corner, I was glad to be four.

I started preschool. I liked the teachers, and the painting, and my friends, and the notebooks, and the spelling. I liked school for the most part and I had no problem standing up for myself. I had many comebacks and I could talk very fluently. I had good grammar. I think I picked it up from when I was thirteen. You see if something triggered my mind, like if I heard the first grade chanting grammar rules, I would remember them too. I loved recess and I was quite good at sports. I had lots of friends. I had a great year.

Now that I was five, I was more responsible. I was in kindergarten. I loved playing in the sand at play time and digging for marbles and pennies in the dirt. My two best friends were named Amber and Gloria. They went everywhere with me and we stuck together like glue. I loved them so much. We went together into the first grade. One day after school Dave pulled me aside. He was now thirteen. “I want you to have this.” He said handing me

Bella Kelly's little glass dove. I held it tightly and cupped it in my hands. Then I put it in a safe spot on my nightstand.

When I turned six and entered 1st grade I was the least afraid to go. We did drama and art class with Mrs. Dragonface, and had fun doing our first Christmas play. I was Mary and Freddie was Joseph. After the play some of the kids went up to me. "Did your sister really die?" they asked.

"Where did you hear that?" I said taking a small bite of cookie.

"We found out," a boy named Joe shrugged.

"It's not your business," I said angrily.

"But did you never meet her?" Joe said.

"Get away from me!" I yelled. They ran away and mom came over to me.

"What's wrong?" she said kindly. "What were they talking about?"

"Kelly." I said, and I walked away. I looked back to see mom's reaction. She looking frightened and terrified. I felt awful.

In second grade I had a little bit of homework. But I also started my first diary.

I went to my mom, ready yet not so ready, to tell her some news I had been dying to tell her for a long time. It was funny they had never in my life said one thing about Kelly, A.K.A. me.

"Mom," I said taking a deep breath, "I need to talk to you for a minute,"

"Ok, Olivia."

"Mom, I know I had a sister and her name was Kathryn." Mom looked puzzled. "Dave and Will didn't tell me," I said taking a deep breath. "I was Kelly and I came back." I finished with a worried look on my face.

My mom looked like she didn't believe me. Of course, I sighed. But then I realized I had made a big mistake because mom started crying frantically.

I put my hands over my eyes and wished and wished I'd kept my mouth shut.

Mom ran out of the room, tears streaming down her face. Dad and mom were talking and crying. Oh gosh! What have I done I screamed. Everyone

was screaming. The house was filled with a horrible scary feeling. Screams, yells, and cries filled the air. My heart pounded and came to a sudden stop. Screams and cries washed away and all led back to the crash. Sirens and darkness. *No! No!* I cried. But then it all went back again.

Chapter 12

I woke up to something weird. All of the cries and sirens were gone. I heard happy voices. William and Dave were chattering busily in the next room but they sounded a lot younger. I sat up and heard mom and dad talking. They sounded so happy. My family sounded different. I got up, looked in the mirror and screamed at what I saw.

“Time for school!” mom called sweetly. I gasped. I felt my face and blinked then I looked again. I was me. Real me! I was thirteen! I had my own face and my own hair and eyes.

“Coming!” I yelled back.

I pulled my hair. I wasn’t dreaming. I looked at my window sill. Bella was there. But in a different place than where Olivia had kept her. Had it all been a dream? Had I not ever been Olivia? I got dressed and put on my back pack. It was a Monday in September. I asked mom when I got downstairs, “Did we ever have a sister named Olivia?”

“Goodness no!” mom laughed her eyes full of life. “Now eat breakfast or you’ll miss the bus,” she said urging me to the table.

As I walked to the school bus I thought, *was it really real? Did I meet Grace?* All of a sudden a white dove flew by. I looked up at the sky, got on the bus and shook my head smiling. I thought I saw someone waving to me up there but it must have been an optical illusion. . . .Maybe.

The End

