

## *How it all began ...*

*And I Believe* began nineteen years ago in the small town of Versailles, Ohio when thirty-four-year old Kate Turner returned home unexpectedly one cold, dreary Saturday morning in February to overhear her husband, Aaron, of eighteen years, talking on the phone with Angie Sims, his ex-girlfriend from high school. As the truth began to unravel, Kate found out that the two had been secretly talking to each other for a few months. One night, Aaron and Angie ran into each other at a bar, and Angie came on to Aaron. He kissed her in return, but he stopped before it went any further.

Distraught, Kate and her two young daughters, Jenna, who was ten, and Mia, who was almost four, went to stay with her parents while she tried to figure out what went wrong in their marriage to make something like this happen. Kate and Aaron had been together since she was fifteen and he was seventeen. Aaron was a fantastic husband and father. To those who knew them, they were the perfect couple. Aaron was an attorney at his family's law firm in town, and Kate was an art teacher in Russia, a neighboring town ten minutes from home. Aaron was around six feet tall, thin, and very handsome with a head full of dark brown hair and the bluest eyes. Kate was a petite five-foot-three-inch blonde cutie.

The two dated for eight years and were married a little over a year when Kate gave birth to Jenna. A couple years later, Kate found out she was pregnant again, but her happiness was quickly cut short when she suffered a miscarriage. Sadly, over the next four years, Kate suffered two more horrible miscarriages just like the first one. Losing her babies took a toll on Kate, and she became depressed and withdrawn. Month after month turned into year after year, and still Kate couldn't become pregnant. Just when she finally accepted the fact that she would never be able to have another child, she found out she was pregnant. After a cautious pregnancy, she gave birth to Mia. Unfortunately, her doctor told her that due to scar tissue in her uterus, she would never be able to get pregnant again. While she had always dreamed of having more kids, she was ecstatic to finally have another baby and accepted the news. Other than this, Kate always thought her marriage with Aaron was strong. Yes, they weren't as intimate as Aaron would like, but with two kids, who had time? She assumed this was normal for all married couples with children.

After a couple days staying at her parents' house, Kate thought for sure Aaron would beg her to come back home. But he never did. Instead, he told her he loved her more than anything in the world, but he couldn't *live like this* anymore. He accused her of falling out of love with him years ago and brought up how they only had sex twice a year, at the most, over the last three years of their marriage. Then he hit her with something she didn't see coming - he wanted a divorce.

Kate was devastated, and this turned her world upside down. She began shutting out everyone important in her life: her parents, her two sisters - Kellie and Kristie - and her lifelong best friend, Liz. They were all worried about her and didn't know what to do until early one cold, Friday morning in the middle of March, Liz showed up on Kate's doorstep, insisting that the two were having a girls' day. At first, Kate told her "no," but she soon realized Liz had her mind set, and she had no choice in the matter.

To Kate's surprise, it was exactly what she needed. After a day pampering themselves with manicures, pedicures, haircuts, shopping, and nonstop catching up and laughing, Kate felt unbelievably better. The day got even better when she and Liz went to Creekside, a bar in town, and celebrated St. Patrick's Day with all of their friends. Kate was having so much fun, even forgetting about Aaron for the moment, when a tall, good looking guy with dark brown hair and big brown eyes walked into the bar. It was Matt Richard, a friend of hers from high school. Kate had only seen Matt a handful of times since she graduated, but the two quickly picked up where they left off all those years ago. Matt was outgoing and funny, and the two reminisced about the good ol' days when she was a senior and he was a freshman in high school, and how he and his friends picked on her while she worked on her college portfolio during

their art class. She even shared the news about her and Aaron with him. The two ended the night with a hug, and Liz took Kate home.

The next morning, Kate was awakened by a knock at the door. There was nobody there, but on the mat of her doorstep was a self-help book with a note from Matt saying how the book helped him deal with the death of his grandpa, who passed away from cancer, and his dad, John, who died a few years earlier from a heart attack. Matt hoped the book could help her with her loss too.

Cozying up on the couch, Kate began to read the book. She quickly realized that Aaron's accusations were true. In the beginning, she was madly in love with him, but over the years she had fallen out of love with him, which is why she had no desire to be with him intimately. Even though Aaron tried to talk to her about this many times, she never wanted to discuss it. Instead, she ignored and avoided the problem. She also realized she took advantage of Aaron being a wonderful and doting husband, and she dominated their relationship. While this didn't excuse what Aaron did to her, it did make her realize she needed to take ownership for her part in their marriage falling apart.

Once Kate accepted this truth, her anger toward Aaron subsided, and she finally told him she was ready to proceed with the divorce. This is when things began to change for Kate. Instead of shutting out her family and friends, she began accepting invitations to do things with them. She even bought an old run down house that ironically was four houses away from Matt's mom's house, and she busied herself remodeling it. Turning the old house into a beautiful home was therapeutic and unleashed a new passion in her. Matt helped her with the remodeling. Soon, the two became even better friends. His love for life and happy disposition rubbed off on Kate, and in no time at all, she was back to her old self, but only better. This time she was truly happy and content.

A few months later and completely out of the blue, Matt confessed to Kate that he has been in love with her since high school. Kate was flabbergasted. Back then, all those years ago, Matt confided in her about a girl he really liked but would never reveal her name. He would only refer to this mystery girl as *the one*. Kate had no idea that all this time she was actually *the one*. Before, she played it off like she and Matt were only good friends, but after Matt's confession, she admitted to him that she was in love with him too.

For the next month, the two were inseparable. Kate became fast friends and close with Matt's family: his mom, Barb; brother, Luke; and sister, Jen. And they accepted Kate and her daughters openly and lovingly into their family. Kate and Matt's love for one another was undeniable. Everything was going perfectly when they received devastating news – Matt had pancreatic cancer.

"Shocked" and "scared" didn't come close to describing the way they felt. Not wanting to waste any time, they immediately started fighting the disease. After surgery and two rounds of chemo, they received even worse news – Matt's cancer was terminal. Even though Kate and Matt had only been officially dating two months, Kate had no intention of leaving him. She loved him so much and was going to be by his side until the end. The two cherished their limited time together, but unfortunately three months after his diagnosis, Matt lost his battle to the horrible disease.

Kate and all of Matt's family and friends were heartbroken. No words could describe their grief. His funeral was pure hell for all of them until the priest, Father Patrick – also a family friend and Matt's Godfather – read a letter from Matt...

*Father blinked away the tears as he pulled out a letter from his bible and looked up at the church full of grieving people, mourning the loss of Matt. He proceeded to put his glasses on, unfold the letter and read.*

*"September 16, 2007*

*It is the day after my 31st birthday, and soon I will be called to God's kingdom. Even though I am lying here dying, I wouldn't trade a single second of my life for anything. Things do not always turn out the way we want them to, but we need to take what we have been given and make the most out of it. That is what I did, and I am dying happy with no regrets.*

*I have something very special to share with all of you, something I asked Kate to keep a secret until now. A couple weeks ago when I was in the hospital, I received the most devastating news a person could get - I was going to die and soon. The second I heard this, I wanted to die right then and there. But God works in mysterious ways, and He didn't waste any time giving me hope to hold on just a little bit longer. It happened when Kate, who had just returned from having tests run after she fainted, gave me the most incredible news I have ever received. By the grace of God, she was pregnant with our baby. All I ever wanted in life was to be a father and a husband, and God was giving me this chance before I died.*

*My wish was then completed late last night when I asked Kate to marry me, and she accepted. Marrying my best friend and being a father have completed me.*

*Having said that, I have been blessed with a wonderful, loving family, and one of the last things I want to do is let each of them know exactly how much they mean to me.*

*Mom: First, I want to thank you for being the best mom a son could have. I am who I am because of you and Dad and the way you two loved and raised me. You are the most amazing person I know. I have always looked up to you and am very proud to be your son. If you love your grandchild the way you love me, he or she will be the most blessed child in the world. Once again, I love you, Mom.*

*Luke: Thanks for being a great brother and my best friend. You have always been there for me, and I don't know what I would have done without you. Every time I was knocked down, you picked me up, and every time I accomplished a goal, you would be the first one to celebrate it with me. You would do anything for me, and that means the world to me. Although I am very saddened to know I will not be here to raise my child, I feel completely at peace knowing he or she will have the next best thing, which is you. I love you, Luke.*

*Jen: I fell in love with you the first moment I laid eyes on you in the hospital. I remember staring down at this beautiful baby with a head full of dark curls and privately telling God that I would protect my new baby sister until the day I die. You have grown up to be such a beautiful woman, and I was never prouder than the day I walked you down the aisle. Jared is a great guy and loves you very much. You two are going to be wonderful parents one day. When you do have children, please tell them all about their crazy Uncle Matt.*

*My Leading Ladies, Jenna and Mia: I love you two girls as if you were my own flesh and blood. Your beautiful smiles and big hugs were the medicine that made me feel better every day.*

*Jenna: Please take care of Mia and your new brother or sister for me. Please tuck them in bed every night and tell them my goodnight prayer. Remember to give them a thousand butterfly kisses for me and tell them how much I love them. You are a very special young lady. Please always remember that and also how much I love you!*

*My unborn child: When God decided He wanted me to come to His kingdom, He created you to take my place here. I can't begin to describe how I felt when I learned I was going to be a father. You are truly a miracle from God and I thank Him every day for it. Always remember that Daddy loves you and will forever be looking over and protecting you.*

*Kate: My best friend . . . my soul mate . . . my beloved wife. There are no words to describe how much I love you. I have loved you since the first day I saw you, and I will love you for the rest of eternity. Please don't ever feel alone because I will forever be above looking over and protecting you and our family. Thank you for loving me, especially through the hard times. Always remember how much I love you!*

*Last, but not least, Father: First, I want to thank you for reading this letter at my funeral. I know you had some hesitation because you feared it would be too hard to do emotionally, but you agreed to do it anyway, and that meant the world to me. These last three months have been the most challenging and hardest times of my life, and I want to thank you for being there with me every step of the way. I know I wouldn't have been able to get through any of this without you. I also want to thank you for marrying Kate and me last night and agreeing to be our baby's Godfather. I am now at peace knowing that my child will have the same love from God that you gave me. I was blessed to have you as my Godfather, and I was blessed to have you as a father figure, but I was even more blessed to have you in my life from the beginning to the very end. I love you.*

*I now want to end this by saying to everyone that nothing is set in stone, and it is never too late. If you have broken something, you can fix it. If you have hurt someone, you can mend it. And if you love someone who has hurt you, forgive and love them anyway. Life is short. Don't take it for granted and enjoy every second of it.*

*The days and weeks to come are going to be filled with lots of pain and tears, but as long as you believe, you will always have me.*

*I love you all very much and remember I am only a prayer away!*

*Love, Matt"*

And this, my friends, is where *And I Believe* ends but where *Mattie* begins. I hope you enjoy! Jodie

# PART 1

## Chapter 1

Sitting in the bleachers at Mattie's high school graduation on the Sunday of Memorial Day, I beam with pride. I can't get over how much Mattie looks just like Matt. His eyes and hair are dark brown, and he definitely has Matt's fun and outgoing personality. He is the same height as Matt, around six feet three inches, and excels at football, basketball, and track. Just like Matt, Mattie is going to The Ohio State University, but he is going there to play basketball, instead of football, and he is studying to be a physical therapist.

Thinking of Matt made me remember when I told him I was pregnant with Mattie. It was the day Matt's doctor told us Matt was going to die, and we should call Hospice. The news was so devastating that I fainted right there on the hospital floor. With a goose-egg size bump on my head and one heck of a headache, they ran tests to make sure I didn't have a concussion.

The test results showed there was no concussion, but they did reveal something else. Something I definitely was not expecting. I was pregnant. To say I was *shocked* was an understatement, considering I was told I could never have any more kids after Mia's birth. But it all made sense why I had been so sick lately. I thought it was nerves over Matt's sickness, but instead, it was because I had a little baby growing in my belly. Matt's little baby.

During the drive home that day from the hospital, I wondered how I was going to tell Matt I was pregnant. He just found out he was dying and the end was near. Would the news make him feel bitter because he wouldn't be around to see his baby grow up? Or, would he be beyond ecstatic because he was finally going to be a father?

We had just finished a prayer session with Father and the rest of Matt's family when Matt and I laid down together in his bedroom for a nap. My mind was preoccupied, and I couldn't sleep. All I could think about was how was I going to tell him. I thought of every way imaginable. Do I surprise him? Do I come up with some cute and creative way? I had all of these ideas, but none of them felt right. Then, without giving it any thought, I leaned over and softly whispered in his ear...

*"I'm pregnant."*

*Matt, who was lying on his side facing me, instantly opened his eyes and stared at me. "What did you just say?"*

*"I'm pregnant."*

*He sat straight up, his brown eyes wide. "Are you serious?"*

*"Yes."*

*He continued to sit there staring at me as if he didn't believe me. "Really?"*

*"Yes!" I laughed.*

*He grabbed me in a tight hug and then began planting kisses all over my face and stomach. The kisses tickled, and I giggled, but I didn't stop him because I was ecstatic he was so happy.*

*"I can't believe this is happening. I can't believe I'm going to be a dad! You have given me the best gift ever. I love you so much. How are you feeling? What are we going to name it? I wonder if it will be a boy or girl. If it's a little girl, I hope she looks just like you," he said, pinching my cheeks.*

*As he rambled on, one cute question and remark after another, I thanked God for putting someone as special as him in my life and for making him the father of my unborn child.*

Now, eighteen years later, I still smile thinking about his reaction that day. Thinking about Matt, period, makes me smile. I love him as much today as I did the day he passed away. No amount of time can ever take that away. And even though Matt isn't here with us today, I know he is up above smiling down proudly as he watches Mattie. He would be proud of all three kids, for that matter.

I look over to my right at Jenna and wonder where the years went. She is now twenty nine years old, married with a two-year old daughter named Savannah and a baby on the way. She went to college to become a physical therapist, and she and her husband, Tyler, live here in Versailles in the house Aaron and I lived in when we were first married. She is such a beautiful girl with her long brown hair, dark blue eyes and dimples in her pretty smile. She grew up to be not only a great daughter, but also a great friend, and I love her dearly.

Sitting next to Jenna is Mia.

*My baby girl is all grown up!* I thought to myself as I watched her.

She was such an adorable little girl, but now at the age of twenty three, she is even more striking with her long brown hair with natural blonde highlights, her suntanned skin, and beautiful blue eyes. After high school, Mia went to college to become a graphic art designer. She now lives and works in Indianapolis, which is a city about two hours away from home. She isn't dating anyone serious, but is enjoying life as a young, single girl in the big city. She often talks about moving to New York City, but I know she won't. Living two hours away from us now is too far for her, and I know once she finds that right man and decides to start a family of her own, she will be back. There is something about this town. Kids want to leave as soon as they finish high school, but when it comes time to settling down and raising a family, there is no place like home.

Also here today are Matt and Aaron's families. I glance over at Aaron, who hasn't changed a bit and still looks like the same guy I started dating in high school. Aging has been kind to him, and he is still as handsome today as he was back then, with only a few gray streaks in his head full of dark, brown hair, a couple laugh lines around his blue eyes and cute dimpled smile. He still has the goatee he grew when we divorced nineteen years ago, and I have to say, I like it. I tease and tell him it makes him look rugged - like an older version of the country singer Josh Turner.

And then there is me. In a week, I am going to be fifty-four years old (*yikes!*), but I can't complain about the aging process. I thank my parents all of the time for giving me their good genes. I have the normal laugh lines (not wrinkles...I forbid myself from calling any lines on my face wrinkles), but I still feel and, for the most part, look like I did when I was in my late thirties. Yes, I do have some gray in my shoulder-length blonde hair, but nobody will ever see them thanks to my wonderful hairstylist, Tiffany.

Sitting here with my family, watching my baby boy graduate from high school, I can't help but think how time, along with great family, friends, and faith, really can heal all things. Broken hearts included. Thinking back almost nineteen years ago to the time when Matt passed away, I remember wanting to die. Matt was such a positive and upbeat person, and I was addicted to him. Like an alcoholic to beer. When he died, life had no meaning for me. But when a person has two children and a baby on the way, dying isn't an option. Matt made sure to remind me of this one night in a dream. At least, I think it was a dream.

## *Chapter 2 - 19 Years Earlier*

The days and weeks after Matt passed away were really rough. I felt so alone, as if part of me was gone. Physically and mentally, I was a mess. When I wanted to cry, I couldn't, and when I didn't want to, I would. People constantly stopped by to see how the girls and I were doing, which I deeply appreciated. But sometimes, I just wanted time to myself to grieve the loss of this wonderful man, a man whom I loved with all of my heart. But moments like this made me realize he was really gone, and I would freak out because I was all alone. Mia asked about him constantly, and Jenna was quiet and withdrawn. Everything in our lives was out of control, and I didn't know how to handle it.

It was late one Saturday night in November, and it had only been a month and half since Matt passed away. I had fallen asleep on the couch in the living room with a picture of him clenched tightly in my arms. The girls had long been in bed, and the only light was from the television playing an old sitcom.

"Did you feel me at the cemetery?"

The male's voice startled me, making me sit straight up.

*Oh my goodness! Someone broke into my house!* I thought.

I grabbed the candlestick on my end table and pulled my arm back, ready to swing. But then I stopped. I blinked and rubbed my eyes to make sure I wasn't seeing things because sitting right next to me on the couch was Matt, looking as real as real can be.

"Matt, is it really you?"

"Yes," he smiled.

My heart was beating hard and fast. Was this real, or was this just a dream? Hesitantly, I reached over to touch him, scared if I moved, he would disappear. When my hand reached his chest, I felt the warmth of his presence.

"You're really here!" I cried, throwing myself into his arms. The candlestick dropped to the floor.

Our chests were touching, and I could feel his heartbeat and smell his cologne. Tears streamed out of my eyes one by one. I never wanted to let him go.

"I miss you so much! Please tell me everything was a dream, and you never died," I said as I kept my head buried in his neck.

"Kate, I love you so much," was all he would say.

I pulled back and took in his presence.

He looked great - young, healthy, and just plain perfect. He was smiling and looked so happy.

"How are you feeling? Has the baby moved yet?" he asked, touching my stomach.

Feeling the warmth of his touch was wonderful.

"Just the other day, I felt a little flutter. Almost like a tickle," I said with excitement.

His smile got bigger.

"I can't wait until you have it. You have no idea how happy and excited I am that we're having a baby."

"Matt, is this real? Are you really here?"

"Did you feel me at the cemetery?" he asked again, ignoring my question.

"Was that really you?" I asked, remembering when I went to the cemetery for the first time to see his grave. It was cold and gray that day and as I stared down at his beautiful stone, I began to cry and didn't

want to be there anymore. I hurriedly went to walk away when, out of the blue, the sun came out. A warm wind began dancing around me, making me stop in my tracks. And then there, right in front of me on the grass, was a bright yellow rose tipped in pink. Our flower.

“Yes,” he smiled.

“I knew it! Oh, Matt, you have no idea how much I needed you that day. I seriously wanted to die.”

“I know, and that’s why I came.”

“It’s still really hard, and some days I don’t think I can go another day without you.”

“I’m so sorry for leaving you like this. I know it hurts and will for a long time, but you have to start living life again, especially for the girls and the baby’s sake. We’ll get through this, Kate. Remember, I’m always here. You just need to believe.”

“I miss you so much!” I grabbed him again in a tight embrace.

“It will be okay,” he soothed. “Here, lie down with me.”

He took the picture of him I was lying with earlier and laid it face up on the end table. He then gently brought me down on the couch and cuddled up close to me. I laid my head on his chest and wrapped my arms around him. It felt so good to be in his arms again.

“I love you, Kate,” he said softly, kissing my forehead.

“I love you so much, Matt. Promise you’ll never leave me.”

The next thing I remember is waking up lying on the couch with my arms wrapped around a pillow. I sat straight up.

“No!” I cried out loud.

The warm and loving feeling was instantly gone when I realized he wasn’t here, and the feeling of death and loneliness returned.

“Why God? Why are You doing this to me?” I cried, burying my head into the pillow.

But how could it only be a dream? My arms still tingled from our embrace, and the smell of his cologne was everywhere.

*Wait a minute! His cologne!* I thought.

Matt always wore the cologne Drakar, and my entire living room smelled of nothing but it. I brought my arm up to my nose and smelled my sleeve.

*Oh my goodness!* I thought as the sweet smell of his cologne filled my nostrils.

And that is when I noticed it - the candlestick that was lying on the floor where I dropped it. And the picture of him was lying face up on the end table where he placed it in my dream. Or, was it really a dream?



### Chapter 3

It was a couple days before Christmas, and the girls and I were visiting with my parents. It had been over a month since my dream, or whatever it was, with Matt. Sadly, I hadn't had another one since. Seeing and talking to him dulled my pain, but it also made me miss him that much more. I still couldn't shake the feeling that it was more than a dream, that he was actually there with me.

Either way, I caught myself purposely trying to sleep as often as I could in hopes he would come back to me. Even though he never did, I did get some much-needed rest and began feeling better. Well, my peace of mind, that is, was getting better. My stomach, on the other hand, not so much.

We had just finished eating supper and were all in the living room. Mom and the girls were on the floor wrapping gifts, Dad was sitting in his recliner reading the newspaper, and I was buried under a big soft black blanket on their couch.

"Do you feel okay?" Dad asked me.

I shrugged my shoulders from under the blanket. I was now four and a half months pregnant. Unlike my sick-free pregnancies with the girls, I was very sick with this one. Like clockwork, every night after I would eat, my stomach would turn sour, which usually ended with me making a trip to the bathroom. This time, though, I was fighting it.

"I bet you're having a boy," Mom said.

"I would love to have a baby brother!" Jenna said.

"A little grandson would be nice. Maybe I wouldn't be so outnumbered around here," Dad chimed in.

The thought of a little boy warmed my heart, especially if he looked and acted like Matt.

"I don't know what 'it' is, but I really hope 'it' quits torturing me," I said.

*Oh, no! Here it comes,* I thought to myself. Quickly getting up from the couch, I ran straight to the bathroom.

*Shoot! "It" won again.*

Bright and early on Christmas morning, as I was sound asleep in my warm and cozy bed, a very excited four-year-old woke me up. Even though getting up this early was the last thing I wanted to do, I did it anyways. Mia ran down the hallway straight into the living room, happily squealing the entire way.

Eleven-year old Jenna was already by the tree scouting out the gifts. All of the lights were off in the living room, except for the Christmas tree lights. It was cozy-looking and made me think back to the Thanksgiving and Christmas celebration with Matt, just a few months earlier. I touched the silver heart necklace he gave me that day and tried not to show on my face how much I wished he was here with us now.

"Why don't you two keep sorting the gifts. I'm going to make some hot chocolate," I said, hopeful they were too busy to hear the sadness in my voice.

I went into the kitchen and poured some skim milk into a pan. The milk was still lukewarm, so I hurried into the garage to get a Christmas CD out of my car. On my way back inside the house,

something out of the corner of my eye caught my attention. It was a light coming from outside my garage door windows. I looked out them and couldn't believe my eyes. I went back in the house and shoved my bare feet into my snow boots and grabbed my winter coat.

"I'll be right back. Please turn the milk down on low," I told Jenna.

I went out my front door, through the high piles of snow and straight to this little tree close to my mailbox. It was no taller than four feet tall. Running back into the house, I told Jenna to get her boots and coat on while I dressed Mia.

"What is it, Mom?" Jenna asked.

"You're never going to believe this," was all I would tell her.

The three of us trudged our way back through the snow to the little tree.

Jenna's eyes widened. "Is this for real?"

I nodded my head. "I think so."

In front of us was this little tree that I barely paid attention to, decorated with nothing but white lights and white ornaments. There were four different sized boxes wrapped in white paper. One was addressed to me, one to Jenna, another to Mia, and one for "Baby Richard." All were signed, "Love, Matt," except for the baby's gift. This one was signed "Love, Dad." I recognized the handwriting. It was Matt's! But, how?

Even though it was early in the morning, I went straight in the house called Matt's mom, Barb, after we unwrapped the gifts. Her voice was low and raspy.

"I'm so sorry for waking you up, but I have to know, did you put those gifts under the tree by my mailbox?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Those Christmas gifts to me, the girls, and the baby that were from Matt. Did you put them under the tree outside?"

"Kate, have you lost your mind?"

"You seriously have no idea what I'm talking about?"

"No, not at all."

I proceeded to tell her about the four mysterious Christmas gifts.

"Barb, it's the weirdest thing. He, or whoever did this, got us really personal gifts. The baby got a quilted blanket, with pictures of both our families on it that somehow perfectly matches the color I just painted its room. Jenna got a pair of Nike tennis shoes and Taylor a stuffed mommy bunny for her stuffed baby bunny, which is exactly what they both asked Santa for. And I got a wedding band that matches my wedding ring perfectly!"

"Oh my goodness!" she said, sounding more awake now. "I swear I had nothing to do with this."

"If you didn't do this then who did?" I asked her.

"I have no idea."

After my conversation with her, my mind was racing, wondering who could have done this. I called every one of my family members. None of them knew what I was talking about. I questioned Matt's brother, Luke, and sister, Jen. They had no idea what I was talking about either. I even went as far as to interrogate each one individually, staring straight into their eyes for clues, acting like I was a trained private investigator or something. I quickly came to the conclusion that it really wasn't any of them because they had the same look in their eyes as I did - shock and hope.

As mysteriously as the Christmas lights and ornaments appeared, they disappeared a few days later, as if into thin air. This saddened me because I constantly stared at the little tree from my living room window as if it was Matt himself. As sad as I was that they were now gone, there was a little bit of hope growing inside of me. Hope that Matt really was here with me as long as I believe.