

**Hope,  
Faith,  
Soccer**

**By Carley  
Phelps**



## Prologue

There I was sitting impatiently in the front seat of my father's car. We were coming home from StarCraft Middle School (my school). It was Friday afternoon and I was so excited about my best friend Amanda Kelly's skate party that night. I had a brand new outfit for the party. There was going to be games, cake, skating of course, and a pizza! The red light turned to green. My dad was in the left turning lane, and "BAM!!!" Out of nowhere a huge blue truck came right around the corner.

"That was a close one," I was thinking. My dad drove on. He stopped at a congested light. He was a little hesitant around that area. I didn't know why he was. The light turned green, he drove the car 45 miles per hour the normal speed limit. Everything was a blur. I had no sign of what was happening. "CRASH!" I heard my dad saying "It's going to be ok, stay strong. I could hear the sirens getting closer. "Load them in the truck, quick, hurry!" said the paramedic. I was breathing extremely hard. My dad was too. I heard the sirens go on again, except this time I was in the ambulance. There was someone standing next to me with a blood pressure tool on my arm. He was talking to me but I couldn't understand what he was saying. We arrived at the hospital, people started to crowd around me. I didn't know why at the moment. Me and my dad were on two separate gurney stretchers. They took us into

separate rooms too. The man took me and the woman took my father.

It finally began to get dark and I had just started to stop crying. I began to get quite sleepy too. I was thinking in my head “I want my daddy, I want my daddy, I want my daddy so bad!” Then I fell asleep.

In the morning I go to reach for my glass of water and then for some odd reason my arm wouldn't move. After that happened I knew exactly why, I had lost my arm in the car accident. “Why do bad things happen to happen to good people “I thought. The one thing that I just couldn't stop thinking about was where is my daddy? Is he ok? Did he loose one of his arms? One of the paramedics walked pass the door and I got his attention. I asked him if he knew where Kenny Dell is and if he is ok. The man said that he is perfectly fine. It is a blessing that he's ok I had said, since my mom left me and my family at 5 years old he wouldn't be able to take care of me, himself and my brothers. Can he come in and see me? The man said my dad would come in a few minutes. A couple of minutes later my father walks into the room, he races toward me and gives me the biggest hug in the world, making sure he didn't hurt my arm.

## Chapter 1- Jasmine Rose

As I walk into the kitchen of my house my puppy Bobbie jumped on top of me almost making me lose my balance. My dad calls from his bedroom “Casey can you get breakfast ready?” “Yes sir” I said. I go to the red cabinet where we store all food. I get the bread out of the cabinet and struggle to open it. (I only have one arm) Then Rocky (one of my brothers) comes into the kitchen and opens the bread for me. “I’m trying to make a peanut butter banana sandwich for breakfast” I said eagerly. Rocky finished making the sandwich for me. “Thanks” I said. After I ate my breakfast I went to my room to get dressed for school. I pick out a gray shirt and khaki shorts. It’s pretty hard to even getting dressed but I do not want Rocky helping me do that! I go to the bathroom and put my hair in a ponytail. “Dad I’m ready to go”

“Are your brothers ready?” I hoped in the car and waited about 3 minutes until my dad got in the car with my 3 brothers.

When we got to the school my best friend Amanda Kelly was waiting for me at the school entrance. We always wait on each. “Hey Amanda” I called out.

“Hey” Amanda said. Amanda and I do every possible thing we do together. Amanda has my back and I have her back. While Amanda and I were talking together the biggest brat and bully named

Jasmine Rose walked past Amanda and me. Jasmine looked at me and burst out laughing. Amanda zipped straight up to Jasmine and said

“Why are you laughing at her? Can you just back off for once?” Jasmine actually did back off a little bit that time. I think you might have made her nervous!

“Thanks for having my back all the time” I explained.

“Oh it’s nothing” Amanda said “You always have my back when someone is rude to me, so why shouldn’t I have your back all of the time. The bell rang. Amanda and I went to first period that was math.

“I hate math” I said glumly. It’s so boring. P.E. is second period, reading is third, then it’s lunchtime, and the last period is science. In science we always do really amusing experiments. When we arrive to P.E. Mr. Nielsen was there to greet us. “Casey today we will be playing dodge ball, can you do that or do you need to sit out so your arm doesn’t get hurt.”

“I think I can play.” I suppose. Amanda and I go sit down in our assigned spots.

Unfortunately Amanda sits on the other side of the gym, so we don’t get to see each other as much in P.E. Jasmine sits next to me and a very cute boy named Tyler, (I think Tyler likes me.) Things don’t always work out with Jasmine and me. Jasmine has an enormous crush on Tyler too. So sometimes Jasmine and I have some competition.

Amanda started to count.... “One, two, three, four, five...” I always feel uncomfortable when we do arm stretches because after all, I only have one arm.

“It’s time to play some dodge ball!” screamed Coach Nielsen. He divided the teams into two. Thankfully Amanda and I are on the same team and Jasmine was on the other, Tyler is on my team too! Coach blew his whistle. That meant it time to start playing. Tyler threw the first ball and it hit Jennifer (A nice girl) on the leg. Katie is Jennifer’s best friend, so she threw one back to get revenge on Tyler. Tyler ducked down to where it barely missed his face. “Oh boy” I thought. Jasmine has a ball and is staring me down like a ferocious cat that is trying to catch a mouse.

In a split second Jasmine threw her ball like a bullet straight at my face. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Tyler zipping toward me. Instantly he leaped right in front of the ball, making sure the ball didn’t touch me at all! “Tyler, you just saved me from having a black eye. Thanks for sacrificing your face so my face wouldn’t get hurt!” You could tell that Jasmine felt really stupid. Tyler would have never done that to Jasmine. Jasmine’s face turned pink like a pig.

For the rest of the day, I started to get to know Tyler a lot better. He is so sweet and we have more things in common than Amanda and I. Amanda got pretty jealous of Tyler and me. The day ended slowly, but today I didn’t want school to end.

“Ring” there is the bell I told Amanda. Amanda always walks home in the afternoon and Tyler rides purple bus home.

“By” I yelled to Amanda and Tyler. Tyler and Amanda said by back to me. As I waited for my dad to pick me up, I glanced over and I saw Jasmine walking over to me.

“You know the only reason that Tyler did that for you is because you only have one arm, right.” Jasmine tried to convince me. Thankfully my dad’s golden Toyota pulled up around the corner. Before she could say one more word I zipped to my father’s car immediately.

“How was your day at school sweetheart” my dad asked while he was making sure I didn’t bump my arm that was gone.

“Fine” I said. We are heading home, the only reason I know that is because we take the same path home every day.

Once we arrived at the house, I walked in my room and turned on the TV. And I put a hilarious show on called Modern Family. I also got a chocolate chip granola bar, which are my favorite.

After about twenty-five minutes passed my dad called out “Casey you need to come do your homework.” So I turned the TV off and went into the kitchen.

“All I have for homework is three paragraphs to read that are about the three colonies, Plymouth, Jamestown, and Roanoke. I hoped right to it. Those

three paragraphs were so boring I thought I was going to fall right asleep. I had to answer five questions about the three paragraphs. The questions were super easy. I finished the quiz in about fifteen minutes.

## Chapter 2- Soccer

I know I have to get ready for soccer practice in a couple of minutes so I went ahead and got my shirt, shorts, shin guards, socks, and cleats on. As I am walking outside, Ty one of my brothers came soccer ball around before your practice?”

“Sure” I told Ty. We can use my ball. Ty went back in to his room and pulled out his soccer ball. Together Ty and I trotted outside. It was so hot it felt like I was in an oven. I got a few yards away from Ty so that we could pass the ball to each other. Ty is always very hesitant around me when we play soccer or any active game or sport. I know why... he doesn't want to hurt my nub. Sometimes I show off and do really interesting moves on Ty. One time I did the Mara Dona against Rocky and I schooled him. He defiantly was not taking it easy on me, even though he says he was. Ty and I were outside until my dad came and told me it was time to leave for soccer practice. I zipped to the car and Ty, Rocky, and Caleb stayed home by them self's. Once we arrived at the soccer field my coach said I was late even though I was there fifteen minutes early. His name is Coach Chris, he's always kidding around with my team, but especially me. I don't have an amazing soccer team, but I would rather just have a great time and not be really serious about playing. My team members kept flowing on to the field. The last person to come was a really shy girl named Marissa, people call her Mars. It is

five twenty and that means that it is time to start practice.

“Everyone pass the ball with a partner.” I was walking slowly toward Mars while Coach was still talking. I like to be partners with Mars because she doesn’t have a lot of friends and she is really sweat. Mars and I have our space around the field and started to pass the ball. We also have to dribble the ball throw cones after this

Practice slowly began to come to an end. “Its time to scrimmage.” Coach Chris screamed. “Casey, are you ready? Be careful.”

“I will.” I got to my position witch is right wing. Mars and the rest of the team got into their positions too. Mars might not be the best skilled player on the team but she sure can run lightning fast. So that means that she plays mid field. Kaley is on the apposing team of Mars and me. For the scrimmage Stephanie is also on the other team. Julie is on my team along with Mars. Coach Chris blew the whistle, it is time to start the scrimmage. Stephanie’s team started off with the ball. She passed it to Kaley and she dribbled all of the way to the “18 box”. I stepped in to the play and quickly stole the ball from Kaley hoping that Mars would go out for the pass. Mars did go out for the pass and she is wide open! Instantly I passed the ball across the field Mars outran Kaley and Stephanie! She kept dribbling until she was in the “16 box”. She shoots and then she scores!

“YEAH” We won the scrimmage!  
“Nice job Stephanie and Kaley” Both Mars and I said. Practice is over. “Hey, does anyone want to go to dinner with my dad and I” I asked

“I’d love to” Stephanie told me.  
“What restaurant are we going to?”

“Do you like Beef ‘O Brady’s?”  
Julie already left so I guess she cannot go. Beef ‘O Brady’s has the best chicken tenders in the whole entire world!

“Kaley, Mars, do you two want to go to Beef’s?” Stephanie anxiously screamed.

“I have to go home to my babysitter.” Kaley said glumly.

“I convinced my mom to let me go.” Mars said very enthusiastically. That’s great news.

“My dad said that you two can ride with us on the way to Beef’s, if you want to.”  
Mars and Stephanie rocketed over to their parents to ask.

Mars was the first one to come up to me “I can ride with you!”

“I can ride with you too!”  
Stephanie shrieked across the soccer field.  
Meanwhile Mars’ dad and my dad are talking to each other nonstop.

“Let’s go everyone.” My dad told Stephanie, Mars and I. Everyone hopped in the black Toyota. I sat in the middle of Mars and

Stephanie. Mars sat on the left and Stephanie sat on the right of me.

Once we got to Beef's, it was crowded inside. We have to wait fifteen minutes. The lady at the counter handed my dad a buzzer. When the thing buzzes that means that there is a table open for us. It took Stephanie's parents a long time to get here, but it took Mars' dad twice as long as Stephanie's parents to get here. Finally after almost twenty minutes the buzzer buzzed. The lady took us in to the back and there is one large table for the grown-ups to sit at. There was one booth for the three of us to sit at. Stephanie's little sister sat at the grown-up table because she is nine months old, her name is Lucy, and she is adorable. I ordered Coke, Mars ordered Sprite and Stephanie ordered Sweet Tea. The lady came back with our drinks and asked us if we are ready to order.

"Chicken Tenders with fries please." I told the nice lady. Mars ordered a Ham Cuban. Stephanie ordered potato skins. Those are both are really good. Our food came out right away. I prayed for our food before we ate. I ate some of my French Fries right away. It was almost the best meal I had ever had in a very long time. After everyone was finished I was getting tired and I could tell that Mars and Stephanie were also getting tired because they stopped talking a lot. All of the parents paid for our food and then we went outside. The parents were still talking as we went outside. Once the parents stopped talking, Mars and

Stephanie went to their cars to head home and I went with my dad.

### Chapter 3- What happened to my brother?

Once we got home, my dad and I went inside. Caleb and Rocky were in their room watching “Fear Factor.” Dad suspiciously said, “Where’s Ty?” They both looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders. They had no idea where he was. Dad looked in Ty’s room and he wasn’t there. He then began to panic and raced through the house looking for Ty. No signs of him anywhere. “I remember Ty mentioning something about a party that I said he couldn’t go to because I didn’t approve of the boy who was throwing the party,” dad said. The boy who was throwing the party had recently been arrested for selling drugs in his basement. Immediately dad hopped into the car and told me, Caleb and Rocky to not go anywhere and he would be back in as soon as possible. Dad decided to call the police. When dad called, he described the boy who had recently been arrested and asked where he lived. Dad figured out that the boy lived on a dirt road in the middle of nowhere.

As dad was driving along the dirt road, three police cars zip past him like lightning with their red and blue lights flashing and sirens blasting. Dad pulls over to the side of the road so the three police cars could pass. It appears they are going to the same house where he thinks Ty could be. Dad pulls up to the house along with the three police cars and finds Ty lying on the ground. The police officers jump out of their car with their guns

in hand ready to fire. Dad leaps out of the car and sprints over to Ty. Dad screams for help. “Someone help my son, he is bleeding. Where is the ambulance?” One of the police officers runs over to Ty and calmly asks many questions. “Can you hear me? Can you see me? Can you move your arms and legs?” Ty answers yes to everything except he whispers, “I can’t move my arm. He had a gun. That’s all I remember.” Out of the corner of his eyes, dad saw two boys being handcuffed. He recognizes the one boy who had been arrested a few weeks before. The ambulance arrives. They quickly pick Ty up and lift him onto the stretcher and dad follows the ambulance to the hospital. When he arrives at the hospital, he finds out Ty is going into surgery immediately to remove the bullet from his arm. He had already lost a lot of blood. Dad began to cry and prayed his son would be okay. A few hours later, the doctor’s came out to talk to dad. They explained that Ty was okay but they were not able to remove the bullet. It was too risky to take the bullet out because it was stuck inside the bone. If they removed the bullet, he might not ever be able to bend his arm again. Dad was relieved that Ty was okay, but scared that the bullet was still in his arm. Dad calls home to check on me, Caleb and Rocky. He begins to tell us what happened. At first I started to cry, but dad promised me he was going to be okay.

At 10 p.m. the next day, dad and Ty came home. Ty’s arm was wrapped in a bandage

from his shoulder to his wrist. I ran up and gave Ty a huge hug. I was so relieved my brother was okay. Dad and Ty were exhausted so they both lay down on the coach. Dad turns to Ty and says in a stern voice, "Son, what happened and why were you at that party when I warned you not to go?" Ty quietly says, "I'm sorry dad, I shouldn't have gone to the party."

"Well then why did you go?" dad responded. "I was on my way to pick up my friend Jake to see the movie Jack and Jill, when Faith called and said she was terrified. She said she was at a party and there was a guy with a gun. Since she didn't have a car, I told her I would come pick her up right away. When I got there, Faith was waiting at the front of the house for me. I was trying to be a good friend and help her out. I didn't realize it was the same party you told me not to go to. I promise I had no idea. When I got out of my car, a guy walked up to me that didn't know who I was. He asked me my name and when I told him, he thought I was going to report him to the police. He told me to leave and not tell anyone what was going on. Faith whispered in my ear that he has a gun. The last thing I remembered was hearing a gunshot and falling to the ground." Dad asked, "What happened to Faith?" "I have no idea. I am so sorry dad," Ty cried.

## Chapter 4- Humiliation

We arrive at school the next morning Amanda was waiting for me in the usual place. The bell rings and we race to the gym for P.E. Amanda asks me about how my soccer practice was yesterday. I told her soccer practice went very well but the rest of my day was a disaster. We walk around the track during P.E. and I explain the whole story about my brother. She was shocked and thankful he was alright. Coach Nielsen blows his whistle and everyone sits down on the bleachers. Coach said we are playing a game of softball. We divide into teams and unfortunately Amanda is not on my team this time. Amanda always has my back when people make fun of me. Amanda understands how hard it is for me to play softball and usually helps me, but not this time. Amanda's team is winning three to two and there are two outs. It is my turn up to bat. My heart begins to race as I step up to the plate. Softball is not my favorite sport. It's hard to swing the bat with only one arm, but I know I can do it. Strike one. Strike two. Now my heart is pounding, it's all up to me if we win or lose this game. The ball comes at an angle and curves back towards me, with one arm holding the bat, I swing with all my power and the bat slips out of my hands and into the bleachers. Everyone's laughing, except Amanda. Game over. Amanda's team wins three to two. I felt all alone. The laughter surrounded me and got louder and louder. One boy fell on the

ground holding his stomach because he was laughing so hard. Everyone was pointing at me. My teammates were yelling at me because we lost the game.

Amanda runs over and gives me a big hug. I was fighting back the tears of humiliation. I didn't want anyone to see my cry. I didn't want anyone to know how upset I was. Inside, it felt like my heart was broken into tiny little pieces. Amanda says, "Don't listen to them, they don't understand, but I sure do. You will always be my friend, no matter what happens." All throughout the day, the kids at school were harassing me about what happened at P.E. Word spread fast throughout school about what happened.

The school day ends and my dad is the first car in the line to pick me up. Boy was I glad to see him. Dad joyfully asks, "How was your day, sweetheart?" I answered, "I don't want to talk about it."

## Chapter 5- The Phone Call

When I got home, the phone rang. I ran to answer the phone, "Hello." It was Tyler. Thoughts raced through my mind about why he was calling. What if he was calling to humiliate me even more? What if he was going to ask me why I threw the bat at P.E.? What if he just needed help on our Math homework? I waited for him to say something. Tyler finally said, "I saw what happened at P.E. today. I heard everyone laughing at you. Are you okay? I was calling to say I am sorry for not standing up for you. You are my friend and I should have told my friends to stop, but I didn't. I just want you to know that I will never do that again." I didn't know what to say. No one except Amanda knows how I feel about Tyler. I have had a crush on Tyler since the second grade. Tyler then stutters, "Dddo yyyou want to go see a movie with me this weekend?" I feel like a bright light is shining on my face and my smile was as big as the sun. I tell Tyler that would be awesome. I ask him what movie he would like to see. Tyler says, "Whatever movie you want. You can choose the movie." I hang up the phone and scream, "Dad, guess what, I am going to a movie with Tyler this weekend!" Dad says, "Who is this Tyler guy? I don't know anything about him." I explain to my dad that this is the same boy that I have had a crush on since Mrs. Stuart's second grade class. Dad then remembers Tyler and

says he is a good kid. So I ask, “Dad, can I go please?” Dad says that is fine.

My brother Ty overhears our conversation. “I had to wait until I was fifteen before I could go on a date. How come she gets to go when she is only thirteen? That’s so not fair, dad! She always gets her way.” Dad says, “Casey has had a tough day and Tyler is a very nice boy. The girls you wanted to date at thirteen were wackos. Maybe if you had wanted to date a nice girl at thirteen I would have considered letting you go. You chose some strange girls to like at that age.” Ty tells dad it’s still not fair and he’s tired of me always getting a special treatment because of the loss of my arm. I didn’t know what to say so I didn’t say a word. I was too excited about my date to worry about what my brother was thinking. “I was going on a date with Tyler Moore!” I have waited five years for this day to happen. This was a dream come true.

## Chapter 6- The Weekend

The weekend is finally here. What am I going to wear on my date with Tyler? Dress? Shorts and a t-shirt? Skirt? I pick out a purple skirt with blue glistening sequins and a short sleeved blue t-shirt. I pull my hair into a pony tail with a purple bow. I wear my blue flip flops because I always wear flip flops when I am not in school. My dad walks in and says, “You look beautiful, Casey.” My dad always says that when I get dressed up. The doorbell rings

and I nervously walk downstairs with my hands shaking. Dad says hello and waves to his mom. Dad begins to ask a lot of questions that are embarrassing to me, like where are you going? When are you going to be back? Dad whispers to Tyler, “You better take good care of my daughter. She is my one and only little girl. I would be lost without her.”

Tyler’s mom was waiting in the car. We get into the car and drive to the movie theatre. On the way, Tyler’s mom is not very friendly. She says mean things about me only having one arm. She says, “Your life has probably been terrible since the accident.” I didn’t even know how to respond. I wanted to tell her to shut up and say I am just a normal girl trying to live a normal life but I look a little different. I am tired of being treated differently. I want to be treated like a normal thirteen year old girl going on a date with another thirteen year old boy. Why can’t people just worry about their own life and not be critical of other people who are different? Tyler says, “Mom, please stop talking!”

Tyler’s mom drops us off at the movie theatre. Tyler buys our movie tickets. He buys us popcorn and a coke and we are ready for the movie to start. Tyler says he is sorry about the way his mom treated me. He says she sometimes doesn’t think before she speaks. I told him it was okay. I am used to it. As long as Tyler doesn’t treat me like his mom did.

The movie was very funny, but I wasn't paying too close attention to what was happening because I was nervous about my first date. Tyler's mom was waiting in the car outside when the movie was over. As we were walking out to the car, I saw Jasmine Rose walking towards us. She also likes Tyler and I know she is not happy to see me with him. Jasmine walks right up to me staring at my nub and says, "That disgusts me!" Tyler looks right at Jasmine and says, "Quit bothering Casey. Worry about your own life, not hers. She's here with me and it doesn't disgust me at all. Let's get out of here Casey." We walk to the car and Tyler's mom drives me home. Tyler's mom apologizes for what she said on the way to the movie theatre. I told her it was okay. When we get to my house, Tyler walks me to the door. I went inside and thank him for taking me to the movie. I say to him "I hope we can do it again and I will see you at school on Monday."

## Chapter 7- The Sermon

It's Sunday morning and I wake up and get ready for church. I wear a white dress with a rose on the left side. We leave the house to go to church. When we arrive, the church was full of people. I am excited when I find out Pastor Mike is preaching today.

The scripture verse Pastor Mike is talking about is from Psalm 139:13-16. The verse says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." I thought to myself, "Wow, this is the perfect verse for me to hear right now." The first worship song we sing is also one of my favorites by Francesca Battistelli, "Free to Be Me." As I listen to the words, it reminds me of my life. This amazing song talks about God having great plans for my life even though sometimes I can doubt His plan. It also talks about how sometimes life isn't easy, but God still loves me.

As Pastor Mike preaches, I feel like the whole sermon is meant just for me. I am sure other people feel the same way. This verse reminds me that God loves me just the way I am. I haven't felt loved by

others recently other than the love from my dad, Amanda, my brothers and Tyler. I feel a lot better today now that I have heard from God's word and I am reminded that God has a plan for my life and loves me.

When I stepped out of the doors of our church today, I feel like a completely new person. I give my dad a big hug and tell him how much I love him.

## Chapter 8- A New Casey

Monday morning arrives and I am excited about going to school because I have a fresh new start. I met Amanda and together we walk slowly to P.E. “Today we are playing soccer,” says Coach Nielsen. Today is going to be a good day. Amanda looks at me and we both smile. She and I both know how much I love soccer and I am confident about this sport because I play it almost every day after school. Coach Nielsen asks me to be one of the captains so I get to pick my team. My first two picks are Amanda then Tyler. Jasmine was on the other team. Thank goodness.

The starts and I am playing right wing which is offense. Amanda passes me the ball and I dribble the ball around two people down the right side of the soccer field. Tyler was on the left side and I crossed the ball to him. He shoots the ball lightning fast into the goal. It bounces off the goal post and Amanda was right there to receive the ball. She strikes the ball with her head right into the goal. We all jump up and down in excitement. Five minutes left in the game, we are tied five to five. The other team has possession of the ball. Sally, another girl on my team, steals the ball from the other team. She passes it down the field to another player on our team. He passes it to me and I did the Mara Dona move where one foot is on the ball and I spin around and pull the ball back toward me to prevent the other team from getting the ball. Then, I quickly

make a decision and shoot the ball into the goal. It goes right past the goalkeeper and into the back of the net! We win the soccer game and this time I am the hero. No one was laughing at me today. They were cheering this time instead. I felt like a new person today on the inside and out.

I see Jasmine walking in the halls at school later today. This time she didn't say or do anything mean. It almost looked like she smiled at me. I think Jasmine is warming up to me. It was a great day!

## Chapter 9- I Can't Wait!

My birthday is on July thirteenth and today is July eleventh. I cannot wait another second! On my way to school my dad kept bugging me about my birthday being only one day away and he knows that I can't wait for it come! "I love you, see you after school." Dad said as I am struggling to get out of the car. "I love you too."

Amanda and I walked to P.E. together. The whole day seemed to be going really slow. I wish that my birthday could come a lot faster. We have a ton of home work to do. The school day finally came to an end! My dad is always the one to be first in line to pick me up, but today he was really late. I go into the office and call him and he says that Rocky is not feeling well. My dad has to pull Ty out of his school early because he can not come and pick me up.

Finally I see Ty's little blue pick-up truck come around the corner. I hopped in the front seat. "How was your day at school?" Ty asks me. "It was good but very, very, very, SLOW!" I said. We arrived home and as we walk inside I see Rocky lying on the couch. "Where's dad?" I asked Caleb who was sitting next to Rocky. "He's at the store getting more medicine for Rocky." As I walk to my room I hear Rocky start to moan. I feel really bad for him because he almost never gets sick.

In my room there is stuff scattered everywhere around me, like a wrapper from a fruit-roll-up, my outfit from my date was laying in the corner, a dirty

pairs of socks, my soccer poster that had fallen off of the wall, and a lot more things. If my dad comes home and sees my room like this he will go nuts and tell me I can't do anything else until my room is spotless. First, I pick up the wrapper and throw it away. Then I put my clothes and socks in the laundry basket. I think that I did a pretty good job cleaning. I am really tired from cleaning and it was only five o'clock so I made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for me, Rocky, Caleb, and Ty. While I am making the sandwiches dad walks in and I immediately run up to him and give a ginormous hug. "I haven't seen you all day!" I scream with love. My dad kind of pushes threw me a little to give Rocky his antibiotic. "Take this pill Rocky," dad says sternly. My dad is never happy when any of us get sick because if we are he is surely going to get sick also. "Good night you guys." I say with a yawn. "Why are you going to bed so early?" dad asks confused. "Well, I cleaned my room which was very tiring and I also want tomorrow to be here as soon as possible so then my birthday will come even faster!" I explain excitedly. I jump into my bed and lay down with a big smile. I start to dream about how wonderful my fourteenth birthday will be.

## Chapter 10 - The Surprise (One Day Later)

“Good morning.” dad says as I skip into the kitchen. I made myself a special breakfast because for some reason he didn’t. It is a special tradition to made breakfast for everyone’s birthday. I made myself a frozen waffle with sausage and strawberries on the side. Then I got in the car and my dad followed me. We arrive at my school and my dad still didn’t even say a word about my birthday. “Well at least Amanda will remember my birthday,” I think to myself. As I walk up to the school Amanda was waiting there as always. “Hey,” she says. Together we both walk to the gym, we are really early today. For the whole rest of the day she never mentions anything about my birthday. She didn’t even say “Happy Birthday” not one single mention of it. Did she and my dad forget my birthday? I have never in my life forgotten her birthday or my dad’s. Today is very strange and upsetting. I feel like crying but I hold back the tears. I guess today isn't going to be the best birthday ever.

The bell rings and everyone is dismissed from class. Thankfully, today my dad was the first in the carline. Rocky is not sick anymore so my dad is probably in a better mood today. I got into the car. My dad still never acknowledges that it is my birthday today. My dad pulls the car into the garage. He quickly sprints as fast as he can inside, while I am still unbuckling in the car. I glumly walked inside the house where it was really dark.

My brothers are probably sleeping and my dad probably had to go to the bathroom badly and didn't want to stop to turn them on. I cautiously enter the house and I turn the lights on. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY CASEY!!!" everyone cheers! Mars, Stephanie, Kaley, Julie, Coach Chris, Rocky, Ty, Caleb, my dad, Tyler and his mom, Amanda and her mom, Nana and Papa were all there. At the table I see a big square cake that says "Happy Birthday Casey!" It has purple and blue icing and sprinkles. There are garnet and gold balloons and streamers everywhere. (I am a huge FSU fan) All my family and friends gather around and give my a hug birthday hug. My brother as always gives me fourteen swats to the bottom. No one forgot my birthday after all. What a relief! Maybe this is still going to be the best birthday ever.

My family and friends and I sing, dance, and laugh together. We all play "Just Dance 3" on the Wii, even dad. I think the game is malfunctioning because somehow he beats me. My dad could use a few dance lessons. My brothers tell me my birthday present from them is waiting for me outside. I anxiously run into the backyard to see what they got me. In a split second, out of the bushes, I see my three brothers standing there with tons of water balloons in their hands. The rapidly fire the water balloons at me like a machine gun loaded with water. "AAAHH!" I screamed in fright. "Holy Cow, that is a big surprise!" I scream. I definitely did not see that coming. I saw a bucket of

water balloons so I sprint over to them. I grab a handful of balloons and sneak up right behind Ty, “SPLASH!” I soak Ty from head to toe. Then I turn to Rocky “CRUSH!” I also soak Rocky right on his stomach. Caleb is next, “BOOM!” perfect aim at his leg! At this point, everyone is soaking wet and having a blast. My friends and family come outside to see what’s going on. My brothers and I attack everyone from behind the shrubs with water balloons. It’s an all out water balloon war!

Dad whistles for me to come inside. He said he has a big surprise for me. I can’t imagine what else he could possibly do to surprise me even more. My dad brings me into my bedroom where a small cardboard box is lying on the floor. As I got closer to the box, it starts to wiggle like a slinky. What in the world could this be? The closer I get, the stranger this gift seems. Something coming from this plain brown box begins to make odd sounds. Dad told me to close my eyes and cradle my arms. The next thing I know something tiny, furry and soft is laying in my arms. Then I feel a wet sandpaper like tongue licking my face. Quickly, I open my eyes and fall in love with the adorable little puppy in my arms. Dad says to me, “This puppy was at the animal shelter about to be put to sleep because no one would adopt her.” I ask my dad why would anyone not want to adopt this beautiful sweet puppy? “Well sweetheart, this puppy is special because God made her a little different” my dad says. “I don’t see anything different about her at all.

She looks completely healthy to me” I say to my dad. My dad tells me to put her down and let her walk. When I put her down, I notice something special about this little girl. She hobbles across the floor over to my dad. He picks her up and shows me that she only has three legs. My dad also says the reason he picked her out is because she reminded him of me. She is the perfect puppy for me. I am going to name her Dream. She reminds me that I should always have hope and never give up. We are both special in our own way.

This is by far the best birthday that anyone could ever have. I will never forget this day for the rest of my life. Dream is my precious new puppy that gives me hope.

## Chapter 11- Jasmine

A few weeks later at school, I pass by Jasmine in the hallway. Jasmine doesn't say a word to me. It almost looks like she is smiling at me. I quickly turn away because I am afraid she would say one of her usual rude comments. Not one word. That day at lunch, Amanda and I sit down at the same table as Jasmine to eat our lunch. As I was pulling my chair out to sit down, I hear Jasmine say hello. I think she must have been talking to someone else so I look around to see who she was talking to. No one else is sitting at the table except me and Amanda. She is talking to Amanda and I! With a confused look on my face, I say hi back to Jasmine. I really think Jasmine is warming up to me. Jasmine says to me, "Look, Casey, I know I have not been nice to you at all since the third grade. I know I have been mean and rude. I shouldn't have acted that way towards you. I know you look different, but I shouldn't treat you differently. I realize now that some things are more difficult for you to do and I have been making things even more difficult by treating you the way I do. You are really just like everyone else, actually even more special. Do you think we can start over?"

After all these years, I am speechless. Jasmine has never spoken kind words to me ever in my life! I look over at Amanda and her mouth is hanging wide open and her eyes were as wide as the ocean. She couldn't believe what she was hearing

and neither could I. Amanda and I turn to each other in amazement. My first thoughts are how can you possibly be nice to me after all these years of bullying me at school. I don't say it out loud, but I almost can't forgive her. Then I realize the right thing to do is to forgive Jasmine even though she doesn't really deserve it. It seems like Jasmine really meant every word she just said. Still confused, I say with a smirk on my face, "I forgive you, Jasmine. Even though you have been mean all these years, I am glad you finally realize that I am just like all the other teenage girls at this school like you. Thank you for apologizing to me. It means a lot." Amanda and I get up from the lunch table and throw away our trash. Amanda and I walk away with a big smile on our faces. I feel a spark of happiness inside of me that has never been there before.

## Chapter 12- Graduation

It's hard to believe I am already graduating from high school. The years have passed by so quickly. Jasmine and I became good friends. Amanda is still my best friend in the whole world. Tyler and I have been dating for the past three years. His mom adores me now. Tyler treats me like a princess.

The big day is here. Graduation. As I am putting on my cap and gown I think about all my years of middle school and high school. Dad is crying as I am getting ready. "Everyone get in your positions." Miss Stephenson says. My dad quickly runs out to his seat. The curtains slowly come up. Amanda and I are both shaking from head to toe. "Hey, are you ready for this?" I whispered to Amanda. "Not really!" Amanda jokingly whispers back to me making sure no one could see her lips moving. "Casey Dell," our principal calls. I graduated number one in my class. I am really nervous about my speech, but I have my notecards in case I forget something. I nervously walk up to the microphone and begin to speak. It feels like I have butterflies in my stomach and my heart is racing like a racehorse. When I opened my mouth, I stutter trying to get the first words out. I begin, "My fellow graduates, I am honored to be here right now. Not only have I overcome many obstacles, but you all have too. When I was in the middle school, my dad and I were in a tragic car accident. As you can, I

lost my arm in this accident. I could have given up all hope, but I am proud to be standing here today speaking to you as proof that all things are possible. We all go through difficult times, but we have to learn to never give up and believe in yourself. There were times when I wanted to give up because my life was really hard, my family, faith and hope guided me through those times. My best friend Amanda was always there for me along the way before and after the accident. If anyone treated me differently after the accident, Amanda always had my back. I hope all my fellow graduates are really successful in college and life. Thank you.”

## Chapter 13- Florida State University

A few months after my high school graduation, I begin packing my things for college. Dad starts crying again! He says, “You will always be my baby girl.” Part of me is looking forward to college, the other part of me is not wanting to leave my dad. My brothers have been away at college for several years now. Caleb is at Duke University. Ty is attending University of South Florida and Rocky is at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. Dad tells me everyday how proud he is of me. The best news of all is that I am playing on the Florida State women’s soccer team. Coach Mark came to watch me play soccer when I was in high school. He thought it was amazing how well I did considering I only have one arm. He said from a far distance that he couldn’t tell that I was even missing an arm. He was very impressed with my soccer skills. He said he couldn’t wait for me to join his soccer team. He says that the team would be honored for me to join them. I have to admit I am a little nervous about playing college soccer.

## Chapter 14- The Game

It is a warm sunny afternoon in Tallahassee, Florida and the soccer fields are dry like the desert which gives you serious red rashes if you slide tackle on the field. Playing right wing in college is nothing like playing high school soccer. The girls are as tough as nails. Getting ready for our third game of the season, I stretch my muscles with the rest of my team. The last thing I need is to pull a muscle in my legs. My legs are the key to my soccer future. I look over into the stands and see my dad smiling cheering me on as he does during every game.

I get into the right wing position, once everyone was on the field, the referee blows the sharp sounding whistle to begin the game. FSU is ranked number five in the country and we are playing the number three team, the North Carolina Tar Heels. No one is expecting us to win this game, but we are. The intimidating looks from the Lady Tar Heels make our team a little less confident than we were before the game. I have to admit, we are not playing our best, but the score is still three to three. The Lady Tar Heels are as fast as lightning and as aggressive as a cheetah attacking a zebra. Number 21, a North Carolina defensive player illegally comes from behind and slide tackles me. “Whack” I fall to the ground and hit my head on the hard green grass. No whistle. The referee didn’t see anything. No foul was called. As I am laying on the

ground, I see everyone the trainer running onto the field. He helps me off the field. Coach comes over and says to me, "Casey, I don't want you to finish this game. I want you to rest so you are ready for the our next game." The game finally came to an end. We won! That means that our team moves on to the finals! I am disappointed, but didn't argue with coach. After the game, my dad and I go get pizza with some of the other girls on the team.

## Chapter 15- Finals!!!

My dad and I drive over to the FSU soccer field. Today is the day that I have been waiting for my whole entire life. Both my dad and I walk on to the field were I am going to be playing. “Lord, please watch over Casey, give her the strength and courage to play soccer. Make her shine like the sun. I pray that she knows that you are with her at all times, Amen.”

“Thank you dad, while I am playing I will remember every word you said.” I see Coach Mark drive up in his black SUV. As he is walking up to me he yells “Hey Casey, you are here awfully early, the game doesn’t start until ten o’clock and it is only eight o’clock now.

“I like to get here early to warm up and stretch to prepare for the game,” I say as coach walks over to me. Time passes and more and more people from my team and the other team start arriving. The opposing team is University of Florida. They are ranked number one in the country. Finally, the rest of my team arrives. We all grab a partner and start to pass the ball back and forth. Brianna and I start to pass with each other. About fifteen minutes later the referee calls for the captains. Today Coach picked Alexis and I to be the captains! I have only been the captain three times this year. What an honor! We lost the coin toss. Everyone jogs onto the field and I get into my

position. The referee blows his whistle and UF kicks it off. By half time, the University of Florida is up by one. The score is now five to six. There is only ten more minutes left in the game! I thought to myself “We can do it, I know we can. All things are possible through Christ who gives me strength.” No one notices, but Brianna steals the ball from the opposing team and has a clear path straight to the goal. She takes a really long shot while the goal keeper isn't paying any bit of attention and makes the shot! Now the score is six to six, the next goal will win the game.

The ball is right next to our goal keeper. Our goal keeper makes an amazing save. She immediately gets up from the ground and punts the ball down in my direction. I run onto the ball and pass the ball to Abby, I run around another player. It's a give and go! She passes the ball back to me and there is nobody on me, so I dribble the ball as fast as I can. I try to shoot, but the ball hits the post! I quickly follow the ball and rip it into the corner of the net! I scored! A couple of seconds later the referee blows his whistle. The game is over! We won the Finals! “Casey, you just won the whole game for us! You are a really talented player, especially when you have one arm! We won the National Championship and I got the MVP award for the game.

## Chapter 16-Inspiring

A few months later, I get a invitation to the ESPY awards. To my surprise, I have been nominated for the Most Inspirational Female College Athlete. I think to myself, “Me, the most inspiring female athlete. How can that be? I didn’t realize I inspire anyone?” The day of the awards ceremony, I can hardly focus on anything because I am so nervous and excited. As I wait in the audience for them to announce the award, I see my hands shaking. The announcer then calls out the people nominated for the Most Inspiring Female College Athlete. I then hear my name called out as the winner! The announcer has the certificate in his hand and the clear, glass trophy that has the word INSPIRE written across the middle. In amazement I walk over to the announcer, shake his hand and grab the trophy and certificate in my one arm. “I want to thank everyone for nominating me. I know that all of these amazing athletes deserve this award as much as I do.”

