

*His Guiding
Hand*

KARLA CHRISTIAN



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His Guiding Hand
by Karla Christian

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REMEMBERING

The oil lamp glowed in the darkness, casting flickering shadows on the wall. A soft moan interrupted the quietness, followed by a sudden cry of pain that seemed to echo around the room. A young woman rose quickly from a chair in the corner and hurried toward the bed.

“Aunt Kate?” said the young woman softly. “Aunt Kate, can you hear me?” The only response was moaning and then Aunt Kate began thrashing in the bed. The young woman reached out to still the flailing arms, and for a moment, her touch seemed to quiet the woman’s restless movements. There was a soft knock at the door and a young man carrying a medical bag entered the room.

“Has there been any change, Miss Hayes?” he asked in hushed tones.

With fearful eyes, Clarissa Hayes looked back at him. “She doesn’t seem any better,” she said. “I just wish my Uncle Alex were here.” A sob escaped before Clarissa could stifle it. “I just don’t know what to do.”

The man leaned over the bed and with his stethoscope listened to Kate’s heart. Clarissa waited quietly as he examined Kate and checked her vital signs. Then he placed the stethoscope around his neck and shook his head.

“Her heartbeat seems strong and steady. And as far as I can tell, the baby’s heartbeat is also strong. Now when did you say your aunt was due to deliver?”

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“Oh, I can’t remember the exact due date, but I know she has at least another month to go.”

“I see,” said the man thoughtfully. “Well, Miss Hayes, let’s just watch her a bit longer and if you notice any change, just come and get me.” He paused at the door and turned to Clarissa. “I wish I could stay with you, but there are other patients that need attention.”

“I understand,” Clarissa said. “I just can’t believe this is happening.”

“We’ll keep an eye on her and do the best we can. Remember, I’m just a few steps down the street if you need me.” Then he softly closed the door and Clarissa heard his retreating footsteps. She touched Kate’s hand once more before returning to her vigil from the corner chair. She placed her elbows on her knees and covered her face with her hands. The last few hours had seemed like a nightmare. She sighed in despair and leaned her head back on the chair, remembering the day’s events ...



Clarissa awoke to sunlight streaming through her bedroom window. She stretched lazily, savoring the last few moments of rest. She rolled over onto her stomach, propped her chin in her hands, and looked out the window to get a better glimpse of the spring morning. From her second-story window, she saw the garden below and smiled indulgently, knowing how hard her aunt had worked to make the garden a place of beauty. The anticipated rain-lilies, rock roses, bluebonnets, foxgloves, and honeysuckle would be quite a contrast to the flat and barren land that surrounded the house.

She could still remember how excited she had been when her uncle, Alex Hayes, had returned from St. Louis with his beautiful bride, Kate, by his side. Uncle Alex had become smitten with Kate when she was the teacher at the one-room school in Progress. Clarissa was thankful for Kate’s kindness to her and how she inspired her and other students to hunger for knowledge. Although Kate wanted the children to learn as

Remembering

much as possible about grammar, mathematics, and science, she also wanted them to learn about the Savior and how they could have a personal relationship with Him.

Clarissa remembered when Kate took her to her first church service that snowy Christmas morning. She could still remember the softness of Kate's hand as they entered the door. She still marveled at the peace she felt when she entered that small church sanctuary.

Everything began to change for the better when Kate arrived in town. Her open friendliness and vibrant spirit worked its magic on the west Texas town of Progress. It seemed as if Kate brought light into every place she entered and spread gladness to those she came in contact with.

Clarissa had been so hopeful that her Uncle Alex would start liking her pretty teacher. She even talked him into inviting Kate to the Hayes home for Christmas that first year. After the Christmas holiday, Clarissa just knew that Kate and her uncle cared for each other. She was excited beyond belief thinking how wonderful it would be if Kate lived with them and they could become a real family.

However, her Uncle Alex abruptly left town and did not return for several months, leaving Clarissa and Grandpa Hayes behind. At the end of the school term Kate announced that she was going home to St. Louis. Clarissa cried for days, not understanding exactly what had happened. And then, when she had given up all hope, Uncle Alex arrived back in Progress with Kate as his bride. Oh, how ecstatic she was when they told her that Kate would now be her aunt and would be living in the Hayes home from now on!

Clarissa had lived with her uncle and grandpa since her parents were killed in a carriage accident. Although they were kind to her and offered her whatever she wanted, she still missed having a woman around. It was wonderful to have a woman's influence in her life.

And it had been wonderful! Laughter resounded on a daily basis. If Kate wanted something, she would pick at Uncle Alex