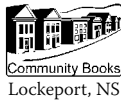


*Faith, Fate &
Friendships*

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The Rest Is Still Unwritten

Shelley Le Blanc



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To my family and friends, who encouraged me to finish and publish this book.

To Annie, who openly shared her story.

To Julian, my confidante, my husband, my best friend.

To children like Daniel, who are forced into an adult world too soon.

And to my parents, Marcel (1947–2000) and Maxine (1950–1988), who provided continued encouragement, inspiration and guidance, even from the other side.

Feel the rain on your skin
No one else can feel it for you
Only you can let it in
No one else, no one else
Can speak the words on your lips
Drench yourself in words unspoken
Live your life with arms wide open
Today is where your book begins
The rest is still unwritten.

Natasha Bedingfield, "Unwritten"

Foreword

You are about to read a true story. Although not her real name, Annie does exist. The names of many of the characters have been changed to protect their identity. My personal experiences described in this book are also factual events.

I have come to believe that a miracle occurs because you've allowed it to occur. My hope is that within these pages you will find comfort and inspiration and that one day you will discover your own inner power to change the course of your life and ultimately allow your own miracle to happen.

Shelley LeBlanc

Prologue

Awakened by incredible abdominal pain, Annie sat straight up in bed, glanced at the alarm clock, which flashed 3 am, and bolted to the bathroom. Experiencing violent stomach pain and having just barely reached the toilet, she began vomiting incessantly. Bent in two and in agony, her stomach emptied large chunks of a dark red substance into the toilet bowl. At certain times she would fall to the floor, having difficulty breathing, only to have another wave of nausea overtake her body, forcing more vomiting. “I must have had too much red wine,” she thought as she pushed the handle to flush the pink medley down for a second time.

The attack came with little warning, and the vomiting got increasingly worse as the night grew into dawn. She closed her eyes and prayed, begging God for mercy, for the pain to end. “This is insane!” she thought. She was still weak and

dizzy, but the retching did eventually subside for a short while. Standing up, her head heavy and throbbing, she looked into the mirror at the woman staring back at her, eyes hazed over, skin pale. “Death is staring me right in the face,” she thought to herself seconds before her body convulsed into more spasms of vomiting.

Annie knew she was severely ill, but on the few occasions she had sought medical help, her family doctor had dismissed her symptoms as a common cold or flu. So, as she had done so many times in the past, Annie forced herself to continue with her day. She methodically took a shower; she got dressed for work and applied her make-up, masking the ravages of the night before.

“I’m fooling a lot of people,” Annie thought as she sat with her colleagues and listened to a guest speaker. But her attempt to hide her illness from the others was short-lived when she was suddenly overcome with another wave of nausea. Jumping from her chair, Annie dashed out of the room towards the nearest washroom. “Lord help me,” she thought as she reached up to flush the toilet one last time.