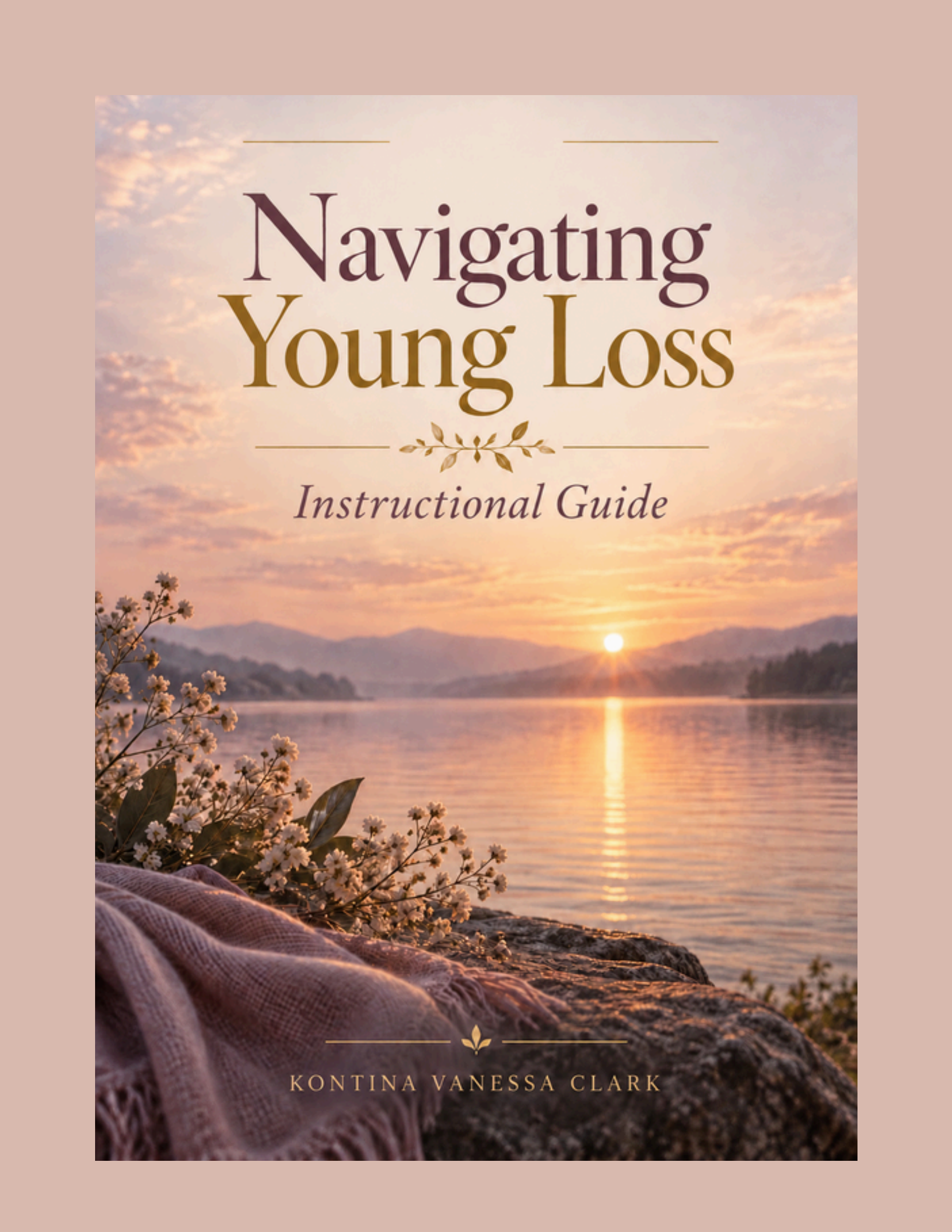




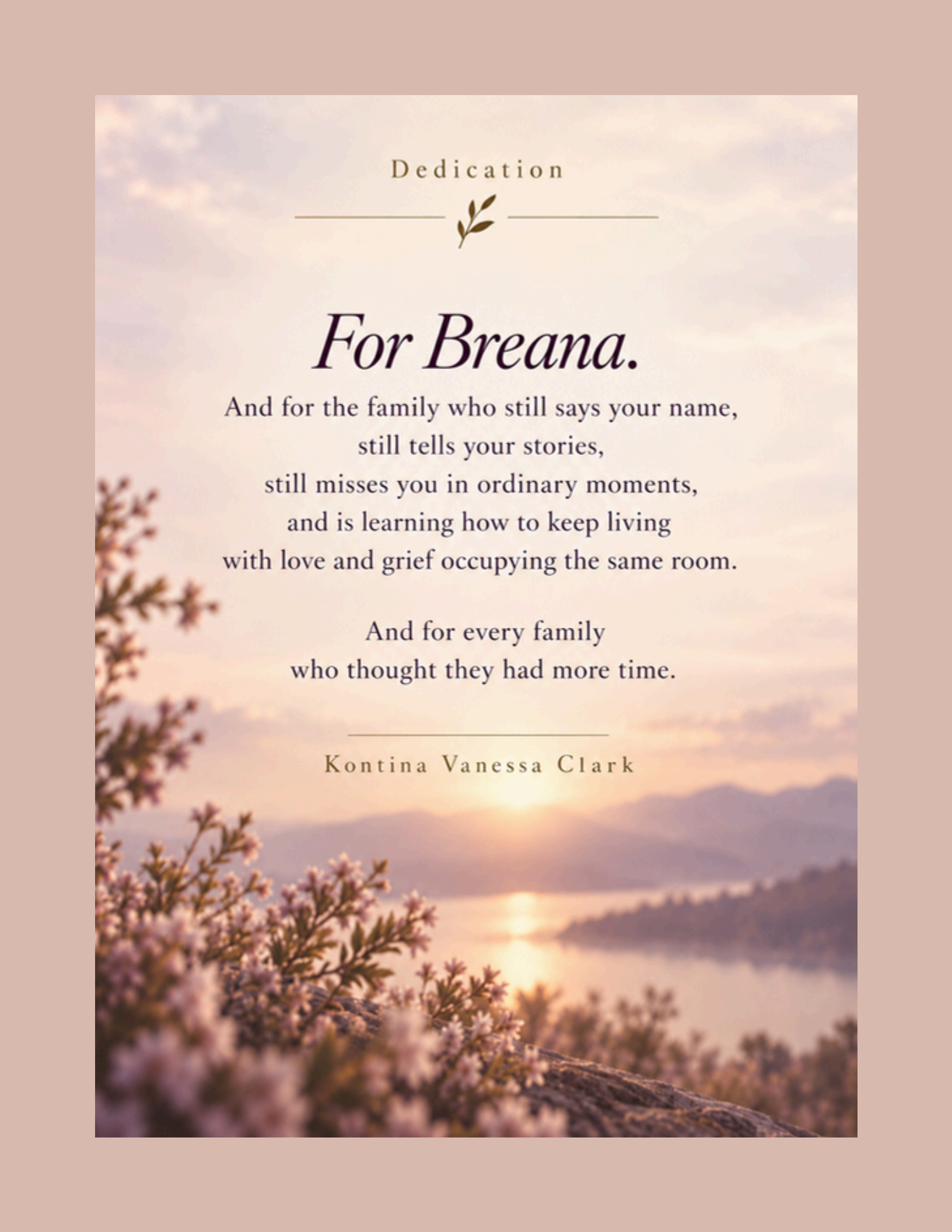
Navigating Young Loss



Instructional Guide



KONTINA VANESSA CLARK



Dedication



For Breana.

And for the family who still says your name,
still tells your stories,
still misses you in ordinary moments,
and is learning how to keep living
with love and grief occupying the same room.

And for every family
who thought they had more time.

Kontina Vanessa Clark

A Note Before You Begin



There are some losses that divide life into before and after.

Before the phone call.

Before the diagnosis.

Before the hospital room.

Before the funeral.

Before the empty chair.

Before you had to learn how to speak about someone you love in the past tense.

Losing someone young is one of those losses.

When my daughter Breana died at twenty-eight years old, our entire family lost the same person—but we did not experience the same loss.

I lost my daughter.

Her brothers and sisters lost their sister. Her grandparents lost their granddaughter. Her cousins lost someone with whom they had shared childhood, history, laughter, celebrations, and plans for a future they assumed would include her.

And then life kept moving.

Birthdays still came. Holidays still appeared on the calendar. People went back to work. Children went back to school. Bills still needed to be paid. There were groceries to buy, appointments to keep, places to go, and responsibilities that did not disappear simply because someone we loved had.

That may be one of the hardest things about grief:

The world keeps moving when a part of yours has stopped.

I created *We Were Supposed to Have More Time* because families need a place where every person's grief is allowed to exist.

You do not have to grieve like your mother.

You do not have to grieve like your brother.

You do not have to cry when everyone else cries.

You do not have to be ready to talk because someone else is ready.

You may want to tell stories every day. Someone else may barely be able to say their name.

One person may need photographs everywhere. Another may need to put them away for a while.

Neither response automatically means someone loved more or loved less.

Grief is deeply personal—even when the loss is shared.

And grief can affect more than your emotions. It can change the way you think about family, safety, the future, relationships—and even God.

You may love God and still wonder:

Why did You allow this?

Why didn't You heal them?

Why did they have to die so young?

What was the purpose of all those prayers if this was still going to happen?

How am I supposed to trust You after this?

There is room for those questions here.

You do not have to pretend that faith makes loss painless. Scripture is filled with people who lamented, questioned, wept, wrestled, and cried out to God. Faith does not require you to hide your heartbreak from Him.

Sometimes faith after loss looks strong.

Sometimes faith looks like worship.

Sometimes it looks like anger.

Sometimes it looks like sitting quietly because you do not have words.

And sometimes your entire prayer is:

God, I don't understand. Please help me get through today.

That prayer counts too.

This guide is not designed to rush you toward closure. I am not convinced that love this significant needs to be closed.

Instead, these pages are about learning how to carry love differently.

They are about discovering how to remember someone without believing that remembering requires you to stop living.

They are about making room for grief while slowly making room for life again.

Read this guide from beginning to end if that helps you. Or don't.

Go directly to the section that sounds like where you are today.

Put it down when it becomes too much. Come back next week.

Write in the margins. Cry over a page. Share an exercise with your siblings. Work through a question as a family. Sit with one sentence for a while.

There is no prize for finishing quickly.

This is a Sacred Pause.

A place to acknowledge what happened.

A place to say what hurts.

A place to remember.

A place to question.

A place to breathe.

And eventually, a place to begin discovering how life can continue without requiring you to leave the person you love behind.

Breana's life and our family's grief helped give birth to these pages. But this resource is for your person too.

For the son.

The daughter.

The brother.

The sister.

The grandchild.

The cousin.

The step-sibling.

The niece.

The nephew.

The friend who became family.

The person whose death still makes something inside you say:

We were supposed to have more time.

You were.

And I cannot promise that these pages will explain why you didn't. But I hope they remind you that you are allowed to grieve what you lost, honor what you had, wrestle with what you do not understand—and still, little by little, learn how to live.

Take your time.

There is room for you here.

— KONTINA VANESSA CLARK



How to Use This Guide



*There is no right way to move through grief,
and there is no right way to move through these pages.*

You may want to read this guide from beginning to end. You may find yourself going directly to the section that speaks to what hurts today. You may read a few pages, close the guide, and come back weeks later. All of that is okay.

*This resource was created to give you
and your family room—not pressure.*

Use it privately when you need space to process your own grief. Use it with your siblings, parents, children, grandparents, or other family members when you want to understand how each of you is carrying the loss. The exercises can become conversation starters, journal prompts, family check-ins, or simply questions you sit with on your own.

As you move through the guide:

- **Go at your own pace.** Grief does not follow a schedule, and neither should this guide.
- **Start where you need to start.** You do not have to read the sections in order.
- **Pause when something feels heavy.** Put the guide down. Breathe. Pray. Cry. Take a walk. Come back when you are ready.
- **Write honestly.** The reflection pages are not about giving the right answer. They are a place to tell the truth about what you miss, what you fear, what you are angry about, and what you need.
- **Allow other people to grieve differently.** Someone else's response to the loss may look nothing like yours. Different does not mean wrong.
- **Use the family exercises when the time feels right.** Some conversations may be healing immediately. Others may require time before everyone is ready.
- **Bring your questions about God with you.** You do not have to resolve every spiritual question before you can continue believing, praying, or seeking Him.
- **Reach for additional support when you need it.** This guide can support the grieving process, but it is not a replacement for professional counseling, medical care, pastoral support, or crisis intervention when those are needed.

Most importantly, do not turn healing into another assignment you have to complete.

You are not trying to finish grief.
You are learning how to live with a loss that changed your life.

Some days you may feel like you are moving forward. Other days an ordinary smell, song, photograph, date, or memory may make the loss feel brand new.

*That does not mean you have gone backward.
It means you loved someone who mattered.*

So take what you need from these pages. Leave what you are not ready for.
Return when you need another place to sit with what you are carrying.

This is your Sacred Pause.

There is no deadline here.
Only room to grieve, remember, question, heal—and keep living.

— Kontina Vanessa Clark





Inside This Guide

A gentle overview of the journey ahead.

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 1 | We Were Supposed to Have More Time | 7 | God, Why Did You Let This Happen? |
| 2 | One Loss. Many Different Grievs. | 8 | When Grief Changes the Family |
| 3 | When You Lose a Son or Daughter | 9 | The Firsts Nobody Warns You About |
| 4 | For the Siblings Who Are Still Here | 10 | You Are Allowed to Keep Living |
| 5 | When You Lose a Grandchild | 11 | How We Keep Them With Us Without Getting Stuck |
| 6 | Cousins, Step-Siblings & the People Outside the Immediate Circle | 12 | What to Say When Someone in the Family Is Struggling |
| | | 13 | When Grief Needs More Support |



*Each section closes with a Sacred Pause—
space to reflect, process, pray, and breathe.*



You Are Not *Alone*

Grief can make you feel like the world stopped, but you're expected to keep going. This guide was created to remind you that healing is possible, support matters, and you don't have to carry your grief alone.

Whether your loss is recent or years ago, this pocket guide offers compassionate insight, practical tools, Scripture, and gentle encouragement to help you navigate the hard days and honor the love that remains.

*You can grieve deeply and still live fully.
There is grace for both.*

HEALING DEEPLY.
THINKING BIBLICALLY.
LIVING COURAGEOUSLY.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kontina Vanessa Clark is a nurse, author, speaker, and founder of The Kovac Collective. Through her writing, teaching, and creative work, she helps women heal deeply, think biblically, and live courageously after life's hardest seasons. She is passionate about turning pain into purpose and creating spaces where healing and hope meet.

Kontina Vanessa Clark ♥

FOUNDER | WRITER | CREATIVE | KINGDOM BUILDER

STAY CONNECTED



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KOVAC

THE KOVAC COLLECTIVE

KINGDOM-ORIENTED VISION AND CREATIVITY

*"There is beauty
on the other side
of grief."*



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HEALING PEOPLE. IMPACTING GENERATIONS.