**HOW KELLEY GOT HER START IN WRITING . . .**

How long have you been writing?

I have loved writing since birth, practically. But I’ve only been writing to share since my first published short story—a horror story called “Wobegone” published in *Crimson* magazine in 2000. I’ve only been able towrite full time since October of 2013.

When did you realize that you wanted to become a writer?

I am book obsessed—have been since I was three years old. It has always seemed like such a natural progression, from being obsessed with reading stories to wanting to dissect them and wanting to create some of my own. New obsession!

Is being an author all you dreamed of, or did it just happen?

I feel like my life all around just happened, just keeps happening, and YES it is all I ever dreamed of. I work hard to keep it happening, though. I mean, once it starts. If that even makes sense.

What inspired you to become a writer?

People always talk to me like this was some sort of a choice. I’ve always loved stories, have read

obsessively since I was three, and because of this there are always stories in my head. The stories have to come out, somehow. It’s crucial to my mental health. So I let the stories out, and then there’s much less likelihood of a meltdown. Meltdowns bad, stories good.

No, seriously, when I read good writing it makes me want to make my own stories better. Other writers inspire me to write.

Who are your influences?

My biggest influence is most definitely my dad. He was this obsessive reader and adventurer who ended up opening the first-ever used bookstore (in the U.S. anyway. I think Europe has always had them). He traveled back and forth to that store—Salt Lake to Grand Junction and back—usually with his knees gripping the steering wheel and a book splayed across it, for years (true story), and he brought us any books we wanted. He also brought books HE liked, and shared those as well. My love for YA started with Madeline L’Engle (our books), and

for mysteries started with cozies by Nancy Pickard, Jill Churchill, and Julie Smth (his books) and graduating to more hard-boiled fare by James Lee Burke and Harlan Coben (also his).

He died in 2012, and I found out he, himself, had always wanted to write. I was heartbroken to hear of this unrealized dream. I hope I can do justice to those dreams, in memory and in honor of him.

What books have most inspired you, and who are some authors that have inspired your writing style?

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is a perfect book, in my opinion. But there are so many others—books inspire me because of the way the author turns a phrase, paints a picture or makes me hungry for the next moment. *East of* *Eden*. *Cat’s Cradle*. *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

Harlan Coben is the one who inspired me to write a mystery—I wanted to write something where the reader laughed a lot and didn’t know how the book would end. Dean Koontz has always inspired me because I think he’s such a great storyteller. My friend Shawn told me once to read *TickTock* because the rapport between the two main characters sounded a lot like my voice as a writer. I read the book and was so flattered to have a comparison made like that! Stephen King is, also, in my mind a genius storyteller. *11-22-63* had so many moving parts to it and he made them all come together in this amazing machine. Plus I feel he’s a romantic and a

feminist and an optimist—all wrapped up in this word package that can scare the bejesus out of you.

When did you begin writing, and what was the very first thing you ever wrote?

I have always loved writing, the way words can be combined in so many ways to create so many feelings. Stories can go anywhere I want them to go. Unlike life, which is much harder to control. I’ve always liked messing around with words—stories for my Barbie dolls, captions for my yearbook—but I didn’t really start working on fictional stories and poems until my college creative writing class. I wrote a sci-fi story while listening to “Unforgiven” by Metallica (betcha didn’t know I was a Headbanger from way back), and my professor, Charles Clerc, thought it was good enough to enter it into an L. Ron Hubbard short story contest. I didn’t win, but the

process of letting the story in the song inspire me to write a totally unrelated story was intoxicating.