

Chapter 1

Hope



It was Tuesday, and Hope dragged herself into the office just like she had every day for the past year. She walked past security with her head down, stumbled into the elevator, and slapped her face a few times after the door closed. For some reason her morning pot of coffee wasn't doing the usual trick. She was late, and thankfully this meant that everyone was already at work and the elevator was empty. She was suffering from another sleepless night, a swollen head, puffy eyes, and worst of all . . . a broken heart.

She thought of the various routes she could take from the elevator to her office. If worse comes to worse, I'll make a mad dash for it, she thought. She wasn't ready to talk to anyone yet, and she certainly didn't want anyone to see her until she could carry on a normal conversation without crying. Besides, she was Vice President of Human Resources for EZ Tech so it wouldn't be long before they came in droves to her office

anyway—to talk, to gripe, to dump their problems and issues on her. She was part manager, part psychologist, part peacemaker, and part garbage can. It came with the job, and she accepted all of it.

She really did like helping people; however, lately she had trouble listening to their problems. As they would talk, all Hope could think about were her own problems. She read their lips, but all she thought was, If they only knew what I was dealing with. If they only knew about my life. If they only knew. . . .