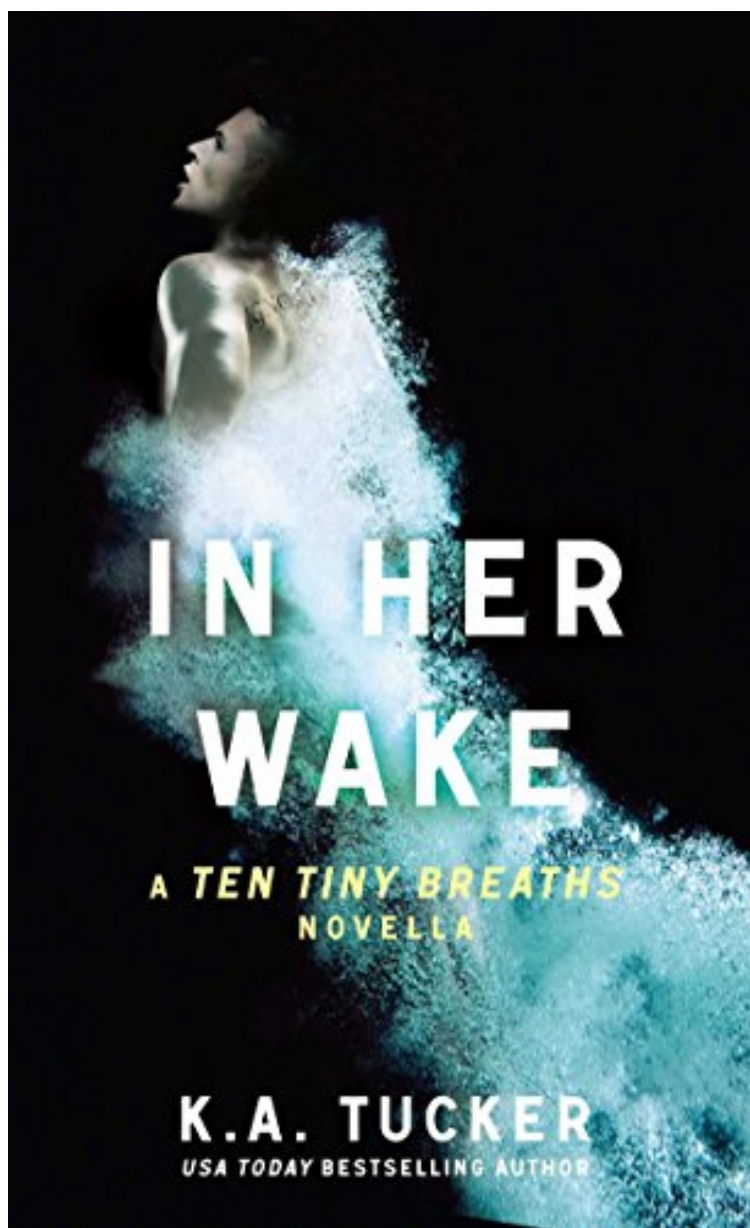


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# In Her Wake: A Ten Tiny Breaths Novella



*Par K.A. Tucker*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAuthors Note: Although it is a prequel, In Her Wake is best read after completing Ten Tiny Breaths.Before you knew him as Trent in Ten Tiny Breaths, he was Cole Reynoldsand he had it all. Until one night when he makes a fatal, wrong decisionand loses everything.When a drunken night out at a Michigan State college party results in the death of six people, Cole must come to terms with his part in the tragedy. Normally, hed be able to lean on his best friendsthe ones who have been in his life since he could barely walk. Only, theyre gone. Worse, theres the shattered body of a sixteen-year-old girl lying somewhere

in a hospital bed, her entire life ripped from her because of a case of beer and a set of keys. Everyone assures him that they know it wasn't intentional, and yet he can't ignore the weight of their gazes, the whispers behind his back. Nor can he shake the all-consuming guilt he feels every time he thinks of that girl who won't so much as allow him near her hospital room to apologize. As the months go by and the shame and loneliness fester, Cole begins to lose his grip on what once was important—college, his girlfriend, his future. His life. It's not until Cole hits rock-bottom that he can begin to see another way out of his personal hell: forgiveness. And there's only one person who can give that to him.

Extrait In Her Wake Chapter 1 April 26, 2008

Last one and then were heading out. You're kidding me, right? Derek's deep voice carries over the steady thrum of house music. He hands off an empty beer bottle to a passing buddy in exchange for two full ones, tossing one to me. It's what, he glances at his watch, only twelve. And we drove an hour to get here! Twisting the cap off, I suck back a big gulp, the fresh, cold liquid like icy relief on a scorching day. Even though it's April in Michigan and barely tipping the freezing mark outside, it's sweltering hot in here. I warned you that I wanted an early night. I'm hitting the books first thing tomorrow morning or I'm screwed. Four finals in three days. I'm screwed either way. That's probably why the Millers are going down so damn fast tonight. I'm definitely more relaxed than I was when we first arrived. You'll be home by tomorrow morning. Until then...

He gives his cousins living room—jam-packed with a blend of college kids and locals—a once-over, stalling on two blonds who look like they could still be in high school. If we don't head out soon, I'll be a write-off and you know it. It's no surprise that Derek's busting my balls to stay. He's never been one to miss a party. Normally we have to pry him off the keg. But I only agreed to watching the hockey game—the Red Wings are in the play-offs, after all—and somehow it turned into this. If it weren't my last Friday night in Michigan, I would have said no in the first place. Don't you have finals to worry about, too? Derek shrugs, taking another long drag of his beer and then settling his eyes on the brunette tucked into the tight space beside me on the couch. Michelle, I think she said her name was. She's pretty and sweet, and she's casually nudged her thigh against mine enough times for me to know she's into me. But, even though it's been six weeks since Madison came to visit me and I'm dying to get laid, I'm not about to cheat on my girlfriend. Especially not for a one-nighter. I ignore Derek's dumb smirk. Where's Sasha? He dips his head to the left. I follow his lead to where our friend stands toe-to-toe with a brawny guy wearing a blue Wolverines T-shirt, their lips moving fast and tight. If I had to guess, their little chat has something to do with our bowl game against the other Michigan college football team three months ago—which we won—and things are about to heat up. It doesn't help that Sasha wore his Spartans rule, Wolverines drool shirt tonight, knowing we were heading into U of M territory. Great, I mutter, dragging my six-foot-three-inch frame off the couch. The room sways and I stumble slightly, my foot bumping the tidy line of empties on the floor. I've had way more than I planned on having in the last four hours. Shit. I'm the DD tonight. I guess that means we're stuck here for a while. And I've probably just fucked myself over for finals. Wandering over to Sasha, I drop my hand on his shoulder, getting a good grip in case I have to pull him back. Sasha's no runt, only an inch short of matching my height and, thanks to an intense off-season practice schedule, just as built. He can handle his own. I should know; we've been roughhousing together since we were in diapers. We all good here? I eye the guy in front of him, an olive-skinned Latino with a unibrow and an intimidating scowl. I don't recognize his face from the field. Then again, we all wear helmets and I don't waste my time on anything but which number I need to take out. Sasha thrusts a hand through his shaggy brown hair—almost identical to mine in color—but doesn't answer me, eyes locked on the other guy. I've seen him like this before. It almost always ends up in a fight. Sasha? Finals start next week, I remind him. They'll be hard enough without swollen eyes and split lips. Plus, I can't be getting into a fight with my healing shoulder. Yeah. The word drags on Sasha's tongue and then he smirks. We're good. Just sharing some helpful tips. You know, the basics. Like how to throw a fucking ball to your receiver. I step in between them to serve as a barrier just as the other guy leans in. Thankfully, Derek's cousin, Rich—a big guy himself—strolls out from the kitchen then. Take it outside. I don't want my place trashed. Sasha's hands lift, palms out, in an act of surrender. Nothing to take outside. We're good. Slapping Rich's hand in a friendly way, he leads me away. But not before tossing a wink over his shoulder at Unibrow. I shake my head but I'm chuckling. You're a dick. You know that? When you've lived next to a guy for eighteen years, shared hockey pucks and bloody noses and secrets about rounding bases with girls in school, you can say that without repercussions. Sasha's the brother I never had. His smug smile hasn't faded. I know. And we probably need to get the fuck out of here now because I just gave that asshole the gears. He's gonna pummel me soon, no doubt. I'd hit me if I were him. Sorry, man. We're stuck here for a bit. I lost track of the beers. This sucks. I really just want to get home. Maybe Rich knows of a sober girl here that Sasha can hit up.

Maybe Ill drive, Sasha offers. Seriously? You good? That would make things easier. Yeah. Ive been chugging water for the past hour. Ive got finals to worry about, too. My body sags with relief. Come on. He jerks his head toward the door and holds his hand out. Lets go. All right. I slide the keys of my Suburban out of my jeans pocket. Its actually my dads SUV. We swapped cars over spring break so I can haul back the essentials when I head home for the summer. I toss them to Sasha. He has to dive to catch them, taking a few quick steps to regain his balance as he stands upright. Forgotten how to throw already? he mutters with a grin. Stay for summer classes! Sasha drops the SUV into fourth gear as the quiet, dark road opens up into a long stretch toward Lansing and our apartment near the Michigan State campus. Hes still pissed that Im going back to Rochester until July. When I told him, he didnt talk to me for two days. Weve never had a choice but to stay in Lansing, what with the football summer training schedule. But then I tore my rotator cuff in the last bowl game and had to have surgery to repair it over spring break, so Im out for the time being. Maybe for good. Secretly, Im happy to be going home for a while. Im even happier that I wont be pushing sleds uphill and running hundred-yard sprints every day at six a.m. As good as I am at the game and Im good, otherwise I would never have made a team like the Spartans in the first place I never held any ambitions to go beyond college ball. Still, Sasha and I have never been apart for more than a week. Nah... Madison would kill me if I changed my mind now. I let my spinning head fall back against my headrest and close my eyes. I could pass out right here. Maybe Ill get a half-decent nights sleep tonight after all. She can come visit, Sasha grumbles. Dereks loud bark of laughter erupts from the backseat. You actually wanna listen to Cole givin it to your little sister in the room next to you? Shut the fuck up, Maynard. I crack an eye to see Sashas knuckles white against the steering wheel. It took Sasha the better part of a year to come to terms with me dating Madison. Four years later, he still gets uptight with any conversation that even hints at his sister getting laid. Its just for a few months, bro. Ill be back at the apartment before you know it, I say, trying to ease Sashas ire. Well, I for one am happier than a pig in shit that youll be gone, Derek announces. When I let the guys know, Derek immediately jumped on the chance to take my room. He lives with his parents in a small house just outside Lansing and, though his folks are nice, I dont blame him for wanting some space. Ive known Derek for almost as long as Ive known Sasha. Dereks family lived with his grandparents three doors down from my parents for a few years while Dereks dad struggled to keep a job in the failing IT industry. Apparently my mom went to welcome them an apple pie in hand and me clinging to her leg and Derek greeted us in a pink polka-dot dress. By choice. I dont remember it, but Sasha and I sure as hell have teased him enough about it over the years. Im kind of surprised he kept in touch with us after they moved to Lansing. I chuckle. Have at er. Just leave it clean. Are you sure you want to agree to that, Cole? Sasha chuckles. Youve seen what he picks up. Hey now... Dereks warning tone only spurns Sasha on. What was the last ones name? Tia? Ria? Sia. Sia, Sasha echoes. That chick was Hi, my name is Tara. Im a paramedic. Can you hear me? You were in an accident. Were going to help you. Hi, my name is Tara. Im a paramedic. Can you hear me? You were in an accident. Were going to help you. Hi, my name is Tara. Im a What? The single word scratches my throat. I open my eyes to the dark sky hanging over me, flashes of red and blue light pulsing rhythmically within my peripherals. Wailing sirens assault my ears, both distant and approaching. So many sirens. A woman leans over me. She locks eyes with me and speaks in a calm voice. Hi, Im Tara. Im a paramedic. You were in an accident. Everything is going to be okay. Can you tell me your name? I pause, struggling to process her words. Cole. It hurts to swallow. Someone else is crouched beside me. I try to turn my head to see who it is, to figure out whats going on. But I cant turn my head. Just hold still, Cole, Tara says as something tightens across my chin. Its then that I notice the stiff brace wrapped around my neck. What happened? You were in a car accident, but dont worry. Were going to get you to a hospital real soon. An ambulances ear-piercing wail abruptly cuts off behind me as brakes squeak. How bad is it? Besides the pain in my neck, I cant feel much of anything else. We just need to finish securing your neck as a precaution, she explains, not answering my question, as the other person tightens a strap over my forehead. Car. I was in the car. Who was I in the... Sasha. Derek. Where are they? My eyes strain, first to the left and then to the right, but I cant see anything. Where are my friends? Everyone is being taken care of, Cole. Do you know what month it is? I have finals next week. Yes. I need to get back for finals. April. Good. Who is the president of our country, Cole? Bush. And how old are you, Cole? She keeps using my name. Why does she keep doing that? Twenty. Twenty-one in December. The other paramedic finishes working on the straps. Hands that I didnt realize were holding my head in place disappear as Tara offers me a sad smile. Do you remember where you were tonight? A party. At Richs house. I pause. Wheres Derek? Sasha? There are several paramedics on-site. Everyone is being taken care of. She calls out to someone unseen, Can we get

him out of here? A gruff yes answers and suddenly Im moving. Low voices and competing emergency lights surround me from all angles. I search with my eyes the only part of my head that I can move besides my mouth to catch a glimpse of something. Anything. But the straps pin me down tight. Theyll bring my friends to the same hospital, right? Theyll get the best care possible, Tara says, climbing into the back. Again, not really answering my question. Just as the ambulance doors are closing, a voice crackles over a police radio nearby. All I catch is D.O.A. before the locks click shut.

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