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A Forever Love

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Chapter 1

Chapter One

Cecily loved New York, but she was really getting home sick. She'd lived there for four years now and it had been an experience. She met Mark when she went out to a club with friends and he swept her off her feet. He was the perfect guy. But after a few months she started to realize the traits she'd once loved weren't enough to cover the rest. He was rude and obnoxious to everyone and he was starting to get violent with her. She sat and watched him closely while they ate their dinner.

"What is your problem Cecily?" She started to shake from the nasty tone in his voice, but she calmed herself.

"Nothing. I'm just not feeling well and was wondering when we could go home?" He stopped eating and looked at her, the glare making her want to turn away, but she tried to stare him down.

"Does it look like I'm done?" He threw his fork down, picked his napkin off of his lap, wiped his mouth and tossed it on the table then flagged the waiter for the check. She knew when they left he was going to yell at her. He seemed to yell at her a lot these days. Times like these she really missed Grayson. He would always defend her honor. It would make her mad most of the time, but now she really wished he were here instead of Mark. They got outside and the valet had Mark's car waiting for them. Mark didn't even open her door for her.

"Thank you. That's very sweet," The young man gave her a huge smile, but it didn't last when Mark yelled at him from inside the car.

"Hey, jackass! She knows how to open a fucking door. Get in, Cecily!" She felt so bad for the boy she silently mouthed to him that she was sorry. He shook his head and gave her a sad smile. How could Mark be such a jerk? She was pissed and his behavior had been just about enough for her. No relationship was worth this much pain. He didn't even like her paintings, calling her adequate. Adequate. Cecily had always prided herself a strong woman. When did she get to this point where she would let a man treat her like this? She didn't speak the whole way back to Mark's penthouse. When they pulled into the parking garage she heard his sadistic laugh.

"So I guess you're going to sulk all night?" He didn't even wait for her answer before he got out of the car and took off for the elevator, not even waiting for her. There was an older couple coming out as Mark was trying to get in and Cecily cringed hoping he wouldn't be rude to them.

"Any damn day now, grandpa," he called out leaving the poor old couple to look at him, confusion marking their features. Cecily found herself once again wanting to apologize for Mark. She was always apologizing for his actions, but this was the last straw. She was leaving him. As soon as they got into the apartment she went straight for the bedroom and started packing her bags. Most of her stuff was in a storage building. Mark had asked her to move in with him three months ago and

almost instantly their relationship changed. Because of that she never brought any of her stuff out of storage. Not that he would have wanted it in his place anyway. Her taste was not as refined as his and he always made sure she knew it.

"What the hell are you doing?" She kept packing and not looking at him like he wasn't even there.

"I'm leaving. I've had enough of you being an ass to everyone you meet." She could feel her blood begin to boil. She was getting her strength back and it felt good. The feeling didn't last long though when Mark reached and grabbed her arm, jerking her towards him.

"And where is it you think you can go? Those losers you went to school with couldn't hack it in the city." He was right. There was really no one she could stay with. The reason she moved in with Mark in the first place was because her friends Kathy and Clare moved back to their home towns and Cleo moved in with her boyfriend.

"I'll go home." He shoved her back so hard she fell on the bed. He flipped her over and pinned her arm behind her back, causing her to cry out in pain as he put his mouth to her ear. She felt his hot breath against her neck. She tried to struggle to get away from him, but he just held her tighter till she thought he would break her arm. Her stomach tightened in fear and a rush of nausea came over her when she heard his cruel laugh.

"That's right. Run home to mommy and daddy. Only the strong survive here in the jungle baby so take your fat loser ass and go. I was pretty much done with you anyway!" He pushed away from her and left the room.

Cecily started to cry but she wasn't going to give him the pleasure of seeing her upset so she jumped up and grabbed her bags. All she wanted to do was get the hell out of there. She took his key off her key chain, threw it at him and ran out the door for the elevator. He was screaming and cursing at her and she could hear him even after the door shut. All at once fear, satisfaction, and numerous other feelings washed over her making her knees feel like rubber causing her to drop to the floor in tears. When the doors opened, she ran out. She just wanted to get out of the building as fast as she could. What was she going to do now? She didn't even own a car. She went to the front desk and asked if the porter knew where she could rent a car.

The young man at the front desk was always very nice to her. "Yes, Miss Martin, we have a rental car service. What kind of a car would you like?"

"Just a compact is fine if you have one, please." The look on his face told her he didn't, but he could tell by her tear-streaked face that he needed to help her. Mark could be down there any second and she had to get away.

"I'll tell you what, go have a seat in the bar and I'll find one for you." He gave her a sweet smile and she nodded then went into the bar to wait. This was all too much for her to handle and for the second time tonight she caught herself wishing Grayson were here. It had been so long since she'd even heard from him. Grayson was her best friend ever since they were babies. He was a wonderful guy and was always like a big brother to her. Cecily had a crush on him for the longest time, but he always just thought of her as his baby sister. He gave her the nickname Sissy when he learned to talk. Grayson would always protect her and there was a point when she was a freshman in high school that she started to think of him as her knight in shining armor after he beat up a guy that was being a jerk to her. He was so handsome and kind. Would it be odd if he became her boyfriend? Grayson didn't think of her in that way. The young man from the front desk brought her back to reality.

"Miss Martin, your car is here." She couldn't help but notice how cute he was. He had a very kind face and a sweet smile. She'd known him for months, but this was really the first time she actually looked at him closely.

She smiled at him in return. "Thank you so much. You didn't need to go to all that trouble for me."

"It was no trouble at all, really. Just return the car to your local Enterprise by noon Monday. If you need it longer, just let them know."

He reached for her bags and took them to the car. After he loaded them in the trunk, he gave her another kind smile.

"There you go. Now you have a safe trip." She waved to him and headed out of the city to Cold Spring. The George Washington Bridge seemed busier than usual tonight of all nights when all she wanted to do was get out of the city. It was about an hour drive up to Cold Spring and it was already late. Her parents would surely be in bed. She still had a key, but if she snuck in she might wake them. When she pulled in to the historic family home on Morris Avenue, she saw that the kitchen light was on. That could only mean one thing. When Cecily's mom couldn't sleep, she baked.

"Sweetie, you know it's always great to see you but why are you here so late?" It had been almost six months since she'd been home. Not since Christmas had she seen her family and she hadn't seen Grayson for over a year.

"I'm sorry mom. I guess time just got away from me. I should have come home sooner. What are you baking?" She asked, trying to change the subject.

"No way little girl, don't change the subject. What's wrong and don't say nothing. I can see it all over your face." Cecily never could hide anything from her mom so she busted out crying.

"Mark is such an ass. He's always pissed at the world and I told him I wasn't going to live that way anymore. He told me to take my fat, loser ass back to mommy and daddy. I can't believe I thought he was a good man. He even said my paintings were only adequate at best. I don't know when I changed so much that I would let a man treat me like that." Her mom didn't say a word, rather she opened her arms for Cecily to come into, just like she always had. Then she got each of them a big glass of milk and some warm cookies and they sat and talked. It felt good to be home.

Cecily had been through so much she yawned and realized she just wanted to get into her warm childhood bed and forget everything that had happened. She had some big decisions to make about where her life was going.

...excerpt....

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