

Fogged Up Fairy Tale Excerpt

(Eight) Dee-lish

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2001 - Dover, New Hampshire

No one replaced my roommate, PIB, during the last two weeks of rehab. My last day arrived. I had played the cracked egg game long enough. Celinda kept on me about how my first drink led to the next drink. At first, I did a great Juan walk, a hard slide, as I made my way to single and group meetings. With heavy sighs and eyes pinched with pain, I went from one made up story to the next, describing my struggles with alcohol. Every day I played the part of an alcoholic. After listening to a few lost souls, it was easy to follow along and understand their torments.

When I arrived at my last group session, big Dorris gave me a nudge and smiled. Everyone clapped when I plopped into the empty chair, again, next to Celinda. She grabbed my hand, pulled me closer and patted the top of my hand with her other one.

Celinda addressed the group. "Brand is leaving us today. She has found the source of her pain that has triggered her desire to drink." She then turned her focus to me. "We wish you the best in your pursuit of a new beginning." She leaned over to hug me while everyone clapped and hooted.

Not wanting it to continue, I waved my hands like a fan in front of me and said, "Thanks. Thanks. I appreciate it. I know I won't be alone fighting my demons." I swept my arm from left to right and continued. "You will all leave here and do the same." This prompted more hooting and clapping.

The group session ended with some cake and coffee. They wrote "Brand" in whip cream on top of the cake. I felt a sting of guilt for some of the lies. It hadn't been my intent. Anger was the driving force behind the things I had done, and alcohol just so happened to have been involved when I attacked Blondie. In my attempt to smother the guilt, I went around to hug everyone and let them know how much they changed my life. Really, they did. Every person we meet somehow alters our lives forever. Our lives will never be the same as they were before meeting that person.

After I had returned to my room, I gathered my belongings in a duffel bag and a picture of my mother. Her picture next to my bed helped me survive all the emotions that plagued me. Irritated by anger, like a piece of hair in my eye, I blamed Whiskey Dick and Blondie for ending up in rehab.

I glanced around the room for the last time before leaving. Workers and other patients patted me on the back, congratulated and wished me well. The sun was hot that day. A June surprise after days of rain and below normal temperatures. No one came to pick me up. The center was miles from Peterborough. Besides, there was no one to call. The couple of friends I had were dealing with their own troubles, and so they had scattered throughout the country. It was why I had been alone at the bar, staring at the bottom of many beer bottles. It was why, after all I had lost and the troubles I had to make amends for, the numbness still remained. Outside the walls of rehab existed a world that had forgotten about me. There was no place to call home, and nobody to call—period.

Out the door, my legs raced each other until I reached the street sidewalk and turned right. I had no reason to turn right. I guess right is never a bad direction to follow. The rehab was near a residential area buried in trees and bushes. Overhung (can't say that about Whiskey Dick) trees

swiped the top of my head as I walked down the street. I'd change hands to carry the duffel bag with an occasional swat at the trees when one would smack me in the face. My jeans, white creases in the front seat area and a hole at the knee, struggled to stay on my hips. The food hadn't been too good at rehab. The Chris Daughtry T-shirt I had lived in that past month revealed sweat between my breasts and underarms. I could feel my face coloring from the sun, and knew I must look pathetic with my weeping willow hair.

With each step, I felt a pang of seclusion. Even though in treatment, solitude was a good listener, there were people around as reminders that I wasn't alone. I carried the weight of sorrow and desperation when I walked down the street that day. The thought that I had no one, that I was a loser constricted every nerve. I wanted to cry. I wanted to scream. I wanted my mom back. My loneliness shifted to anger.

When I approached a corner, free of greenery, I saw a car out of the peripheral of my eye idle next to me. I didn't turn my head to find out whose car crept along with me. I wondered what direction I should take. Because the driver remained quiet as they followed, I finally stopped a few blocks down to see who and what they wanted. My eyes drifted from the front of the car to the back, my mouth partly opened. In front of me was a 1969 Convertible Corvette with the top down, black interior and red exterior, and a *dee-lish* man in the driver's seat.

I wiped my face, put my hands on my hips, and squinted to focus on the man of my dreams ... I mean the man in the car. "Is there something I can help you with?" Because I let my nerves get the best of me, my words came out as if they were assaulted—not much strength and confidence behind them.

He didn't seem to notice. "Not really. I thought you could use the help."

Damn! He could have helped me out of my clothes.