

## Twenty-Three - Forgiveness

I shut my front door gently behind me, hearing the lock click into place. My phone lights up with an Instagram notification, showing my home screen of Waverly and I in Greece last year. We both look so carefree and happy, bathing in the sun with cheesy smiles. A sob traps itself in my throat as I wonder how we started drifting so far apart. The reality of my life knocks me back into sober town.

Rylan was sweet enough to walk me all the way to my apartment, which I am grateful for. He is such a good friend to me, although I am worried that he likes me as more than a friend - or at least a hook up, which is awkward.

Deciding I need to make things right with Waverly now, I head towards her bedroom with a heavy heart. As I trudge along the hallway, I hear her giggling softly to a muffled, masculine voice on a phone. Not wanting to eavesdrop I knock on the door, which has not been pushed fully shut, allowing warm yellow light to seep into the darkened hallway. She turns and purses her lips as I push the door open a little. Sadness flashes in her eyes, and I notice with dismay that she has been crying, her face red and blotchy.

"Hey erm I have to go, she's back." Waverly whispers to whoever she is talking to before ending the call.

Well, that's a bit nerve-racking. Who has she been speaking to about me?

Silence falls between us as I stand there awkwardly.

"I'm really..." "Nell I'm so..." We both begin at the same time.

"Me first." I mumble. "I'm so sorry Waverly... I've been such a bitch and a... and a b-bad friend." I bubble, trying to keep the tears back but failing miserably.

"Oh Nell, it's ok, please don't worry. I'm sorry for getting mad with you." Waverly exclaims as she jumps up and pulls me into a warming hug.

"You have nothing to apologise for... I'm SO sorry Waverly; I never should have let my stupid unrequited love for Zander get in between us." I snivel as she rubs my back comfortingly.

Her natural apple scent calms me as I cry on her shoulder, hating what I've reduced myself to and devastated about the fact Zander doesn't want me romantically. On top of it all, I have a deep yearning for my parents. I miss them so much... It's like I've had a hole in my heart ever since they went to heaven. If only they were here with me now. Nothing compares to a parent's love.

"It's ok Nell don't worry about it, I'm here and everything's fine." She soothes me.

I feel relieved that we have cleared the air between us. I hate fighting with Waverly, as we are as close as sisters. We don't fight a lot, but when we do, there is usually an explosion.

"Thank you Waverly... I promise to be a better friend from now on, and I will never ditch you for a boy again." I promise as we come out of the hug, and I wipe my runny nose.

"How did it go tonight anyway? Did you see Zander?" She asks, and I pause as my heartbreak pounds in my chest at full force, feeling unable to speak with a lump of sobs trapped in my throat.

"It... it doesn't matter. How was... was your night?" I dismiss when I manage to grab the reign of my emotions.

"No tell me... What happened? Oh Nell, I can tell you're upset." Waverly asks in a worried tone.

"No it's... it's... Oh Waverly... It's over." I sob as I crumble into her arms again, my body turning weak as I shake with the force of my cries.

I don't know when but we sink to the floor, my head buried into Waverly's shoulder, probably getting my cakey make up all over her pyjama top. She simply holds me as I sob in an ugly fashion for all that could have been, but never will. Eventually I run out of tears and just feel numb, following Waverly blindly as she guides me into the bathroom and helps me get changed and ready for bed. We curl up together in her double bed for comfort that night, as I fall into a restless and troubled sleep.

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The next day I awake feeling and looking like crap... There is no doubt about it. I jerk awake to Waverly's early morning 'productivity' alarm, my body aching as I fell asleep in an odd position and a trail of spit dangling down my cheek. With a groan, I stretch out my back and bury myself under the covers grumpily. I am so tired and my brain is aching in my skull. I hear Waverly scrambling around to shut down the intrusion of noise whilst murmuring apologies. When the alarm finally turns off sending us back into silence we both roll over, trying to get a little more heavenly sleep.

However, as I remember all that happened last night and how I embarrassingly admitted to Zander that I love him, I just feel depressed and sleep is unable to claim me. Eventually I give up and get out of bed, accepting that today is going to be a difficult day.

Stumbling into the bathroom like a drunkard, my appearance scares me, as I look so dead with a puffy face and black eyes. Turning away I get into the shower, allowing myself to have a moment of weakness. I feel like my heart is bleeding out of my chest and being swept down the drain with the cascade of water. After fifteen minutes of feeling sorry for myself I pull it together, trying to be strong, and make my way into my bedroom to get dressed and put a face mask on, as I'm self-conscious but can't be bothered with makeup.

I need to try my very best to put Zander behind me and focus on my own life, getting my degree and placing all my attention on the people who do love me. It's his loss! I'll find my destined Prince Charming one day, but I'm in no rush. It feels like it could take months - maybe even years for my heart to heal and learn to love someone else though.

I start on making breakfast for Waverly and I, when she finally wakes up and joins me in the kitchen. I really fancy an omelette, so we start on making that together. We spend the morning thriving in each other's company, making plans and smoothing everything out between us. We are without fail going to the museums next weekend. Only the earth exploding will stop me.

After lunch my phone starts ringing, and my heart pounds in my chest as I wonder if it's Zander calling me. But when I look down, I see it's just my boss Ruby.

"Hello?" I ask, wondering why she's disturbing me on a Sunday. I'm sure I'm not scheduled today!

"Oh Nell! Thank goodness you answered! Can you come into work for a couple of hours this afternoon? We are unusually busy and it is only John and I working! Roxanne didn't show up which is very unprofessional of her!" Ruby rushes out in a flap.

"Oh... well I haven't heard anything from her! I'll check her apartment if you like."

"Don't bother, I'm done with that girl, she keeps going to voicemail! Please come in Nell, I'll pay you double your hourly rate!" She bargains.

Looking up at Waverly who is sat on the sofa looking worried, I mouth to her asking if it's ok (as Ruby is on speaker), and Waverly nods encouragingly. I could do with the money... So even though I want to be a hermit and ignore everybody, today I agree to go to work.

"Oh thank you so much Nell, I owe you one! I'll see you as soon as possible, gotta run!" She exclaims before the phone disconnects.

Once I look semi-presentable and have put a little makeup on, I hug Waverly goodbye and go to knock on Roxanne's door to see if she is in.

"Hello? Oh, it's you." Her roommate Sofia sneers, looking annoyingly gorgeous with her long black hair thrown up into a simple bun.

"Hello, sorry to bother you, I just wondered if Roxanne is in?"

"No. She didn't come home last night." She shrugs, crossing her arms over her chest pushing her eye-catching cleavage up even more over her black tank top.

"Oh, ok... So have you heard from her? Is she ok?"

"I don't know! I'm not like her babysitter or anything!" Sofia snaps moodily. Sheesh, someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed!

"Ok, well sorry to bother you. Have a nice life." I sigh, done with her rudeness.

"Whatever!" She rolls her eyes before closing the door.

As I wonder about the hallway I try calling Roxie again, but it goes straight to voicemail. I can't help but wonder if her disappearance has something to do with Isaac, as I'm not sure what is going on with those two, but they are certainly very... friendly.

**I hope everyone is staying safe during these difficult times! My heart goes out to those who have lost family and friends because of the corona virus. XX**

**Edited**

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