

A new beginning
To fill her soul
A place
Where she can be whole

Prologue

She moved with ease, grace and a desire to find a place, a life, a home. An adventure. She'd come into some money that afforded her the freedom to leave her familiar world behind. A world of sacrifice, endless hours of work in a good, caring environment, most of the time, but relentless, exhausting all the same. No spring chicken, she'd almost reached her sixth decade. A memorable milestone in a life well lived. She prided herself in her work ethic, her loving nature, her enthusiasm. She was loved, yet she did not have the love she'd longed for her whole life. She thought about her parents sometimes, both long gone. An only child, pampered, spoiled. Cherished. Her mother used to tell stories of her

childhood. One in particular danced around her mind more often than not. It seemed one autumn day on their way to the pumpkin patch, dressed as a turkey, aching to carve a few pumpkins, she confided to her mother she was in love. Her mother swallowed a laugh, said, “Honey, what do you know of love? You’re only eleven.”

“I know, Mama,” she’d responded. “It’s just life is so sad without a love.” And sad it had been. Well, not really sad, she’d loved, been loved, but never the burning passion her eleven-year old self wished for. Never ‘the’ love.

Surrounded by affection, she’d walked through life. Radiated the sweetest most giving energy. People flocked to her side, wanted some of that warmth to rub off on them. Generous with her light, sometimes she needed to hibernate in order to re-charge her batteries. Found refuge in sleep, in quiet, in books, in the early hours of the morning, her favorite time. That moment of darkness before the day was born brought comfort to her heart. She’d get out of bed, fire up the Nespresso machine, make herself a sweet milky concoction with two very strong, smooth shots of espresso. Sometimes she dunked a cookie in her cup, closed her eyes, savored the flavor of love. Food was love to her. She rejoiced, reveled in it. Filled the hole in her heart that wished for the elusive romance. It’s not that she did not feel complete. She was complete, whole.

She just longed for ‘the one’ to dance into her life. To dance with her.

She was shy though she would never be perceived as shy. Open, inviting. With everyone. Except, she was. Shy. Kept her heart hidden, shielded. Beautiful in an unusual way. Her light, her eyes, her soul sparkled bright, enchanting. Her body was not of this time. She had a little ‘extra.’ She joked, “more surface to love,” “look at all this deliciousness,” she’d say, mocking herself. Her motto, *I’ll say it first so you won’t hurt me*. Baffled her when people said she’d gained weight, as if she didn’t know. As if she didn’t live with herself every day of her life. As if she didn’t try to eat a little less, move a little more. The unfulfilled yearning would rear its ugly head only to be assuaged by ice cream, the dopamine for the heart, the soul.

Love, she thought. That ship sailed a long time ago. In a few months, well, eleven and a half to be exact, she would turn sixty. Nobody over the age of sixty ever found the love she longed for. Made her sad. Another one of her mottos, she had many, *there is no expiration date on a dream*. But was there? On this one? Maybe. If she could wish for something it’d be a younger, fearless version of herself with courage in her heart. Courage to leap with faith and wonder, courage to believe love was possible, for her. Courage to love... to love a man in the romantic all-engulfing meaning of giving herself wholly to someone. Without fear. Without reservation. But it was too late

now. Her dream had expired. But maybe there was another dream.

So she wished for something different.