

CASSIE'S LIFE

CASSIE'S SPACE BOOK 10



PK COREY

BLUSHING BOOKS

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CHAPTER 1



I thought after our girls' trip out west earlier this summer there would be time to rest and relax once we got home. But I'm beginning to feel life just doesn't work that way anymore. There are occasions when I miss the unending time Tom and I spent alone.

I was widowed early when my first husband died unexpectedly of a heart attack in his forties. He was twenty years my senior, and the marriage had not been a happy one. With his death, I was suddenly both wealthy and free. I immediately cut ties with my parents, who had forced me into that marriage, and began partying like there was no tomorrow. This went on for nearly five years. I suppose the only thing that kept me from flying off the earth was my friendship with my best friends, Sue and Annie, and their husbands.

Even these dear friends were having a hard time keeping me together until my wonderful Tom came into the picture. Tom fell in love with me almost the moment he saw me. I had done nothing in my life to deserve this wonderful man, but I was blessed with him anyway. We married after a brief courtship and with his love and

stabilizing influence, I not only survived that turbulent time, but have thrived under his loving attention for forty years.

I could easily paint Tom as perfect, but he does have a few annoying traits. He's bossy. He's domineering and he's terribly old-fashioned. I can't say I didn't know this when we were first married. Perhaps I didn't realize the degree to which these traits molded him, but I certainly knew they were there. I'm not complaining. When you weigh the good against the bad, there is no contest. As I said, he's not perfect, but he's perfect for me.

For a good part of our early marriage we spent most of our time alone. We visited with friends often and traveled with them for yearly, but our day to day time was spent with each other. I was completely fine with that. Talking with Tom was, and still is, something I cherish. I think he was the first person to ever listen to me and he still does to this day. That continued to amaze me. However, as we've gotten older we've realized the joy of living close to our friends. They're more family than friends and now that we live close, neighbors actually, those long times where it's just the two of us are but a fond memory.

Although she is the newest member of the family, Lily is the one who keeps us all straight these days. Lily came to us last year to care for Sue when she was ill. My description of Lily, as well as my feelings for her, often change drastically, sometimes on an hourly basis. She's a woman of color, in her early forties and the most energetic person I know. Within weeks she was indispensable to us all. She can be the sweetest, most loving, nurturing woman anyone could ever find. Then the next minute she is the most bossy, annoying, strict, opinionated busybody that ever drew breath.

Technically, all three families employ her and she cooks and cleans for us all on a rotating basis. But Lily seems to have a bit of trouble remembering that she's *not* the boss. She lives in Annie and Andy's mother-in-law apartment and Lily thinks Annie can do no wrong. She harbors no such illusions about Sue and me. She does her best to keep us out of trouble and we do make her earn her

money in that respect. And for all my griping and complaining, we all love Lily dearly and I know she loves us right back.

Sue and Steve moved here three years ago and Annie and Andy just six months ago. We all love spending a lot of time together. But these two wonderful couples aren't the only family we have. Tom and I legally adopted Ryan just as he graduated from college. That's the best time to adopt. We managed to miss the terrible twos, as well as much of the teen angst. One of my greatest joys is introducing him as our son after he had been just a dear young friend for six years. One of the finest things my son has ever done for us is marrying another friend of mine just a short time ago. Sweet Allie was our sixteen-year-old neighbor when we moved to the river five years ago. Now Sue, Annie and I have been friends for nearly fifty years, but Allie fit in with us old broads like a missing puzzle piece.

Only one thing about our friendship with Allie worries me. Sue's husband Steve often gives voice to my concerns when he says, "That poor child spends too much time with Grandma Moses and the Mosettes. She needs more young people in her life."

I usually chose not to dignify this annoyingly accurate observation with a reply. But I was aware of it and tried not to monopolize Allie's time. But happily, this situation changed just a few short weeks ago.