

~ When I Lost my Heart...? ~

by Red Hope

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violence: absolutely none.

subtext: any subtext becomes main text here. there is no sex however.

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It seemed like such a warm feeling at the beginning; when I first met her, I mean. You always get that amazed, stunned sensation that just smacked you so hard when your eyes met theirs. I remember how that felt and it was about two years ago.

We met at some mall that I use to shop through when I was in high school. She told me to meet her on the second level, just near the food court. There were these huge pillars and I planted my little butt right on the edge of a pillar then just waited. I didn't realize at the time that I would be waiting for the rest of my life....

I slightly jumped when my cell phone vibrated in my pocket but I didn't wait to dig it out. When I flipped my phone open, I was greeted by her distinct voice.

"Where are you, Aimee?"

My stomach was already in small knots but all of them balled up into one great big one. "I'm just in the... sorta lobby area."

"Well are you on the side where Nordstrom is or the other side?"

"Other side," I quickly replied. Now I started to frantically scan around, looking for that familiar face.

"Wait, I think I see you now," she tormented me in her deepest voice.

My heart dropped and crashed into the huge knot in my stomach but yet I smiled when I saw her coming towards me.

"Bye," she teased then hung up.

I closed my phone too but I stayed seated against the pillar as she approached me. I was far too fearful I'd end up on the floor since my knees were rejecting the idea of

standing. But when she was upon me, I dropped my head back so that I could look up and meet her eyes.

"Hi," she greeted softly.

I smiled. "Hi, Caley." And just so I could try to rid of my nervousness, I rubbed the back of my head where my hair was short.

Caley had a cute, twisted smile on her face. "Sorry I was running late."

"Oh no... don't worry." I brushed it off with ease despite the longer wait had made me more nervous. "Thanks for coming out here."

"You did too," she reminded me.

"Yeah... I did." Then my smile tilted to one side because my head did too. I stared up her tall, lanky form and enjoyed her dark features and crystal blue eyes.

"So, you ready?"

Caley jarred me out of my staring and I realized I needed to move. This would be an accomplishment for me but I carefully forced myself up onto my feet then straightened up to my full five feet and four inches.

"Where to first?" Caley asked.

I shrugged and merely answered, "Wherever you'd like to go." I think that was my promise for this lifetime and I would see to that.

It didn't take long for several changes to occur not just between Caley and me but between us. Two solid months of seeing each other resolved to us becoming girlfriends and it was quite a record breaking relationship period. We burned for an entire two weeks before Caley saw to the swift ending of our relationship.

After two years of experiencing the Caley Factor, I still have yet to ever fully understand why she broke it off. I decided it was mainly due to her changes in her environment around and in her. Regardless, I gained the most experience from Caley because as she grew darker and darker that summer, I seemed to mature into a finer grain of white powder than she was sniffing. She forced me to inspect at every granule that was in me; no matter how deep inside of me it was it had to be checked, studied, and recorded. For that much, I thought I owed her everything and it was everything I put into her. She was my heart's eternal project and that mission began that summer, after meeting her, when Caley finally crashed into the rock bottom of her darkness.

"I need you, Aimee. I don't know what to do... everything is chaos."

I trembled when Caley's usually strong voice actually shook for the first time. I never imagined Caley would crash and burn this hard, never but she was human after all. "What can I do, Caley?" I frantically ran my small fingers through my short blond hair and continued in my pacing circle. I was gripping my cell phone as if it was gold. I was at work but I wanted to be in my car right now.

"Can you come here?" she asked me.

"When?" I quickly asked.

"The sooner the better." I could just make out Caley's shaky breath over the phone.

"I'll be there in two hours," I promised. "Are you still at your home with your mom?"

There was this long pause then Caley Jently replied, "No... mom is off with her new man."

I closed my eyes and mentally counted to ten before I continued the conversation.
"Just hang in there."

"I don't have anything, Aimee. My brother is here with his kid. I don't have any money so I can't feed them."

"Can't he get a job?" I countered.

"You know he can't," Caley refuted, "And my niece is too young. I don't know what to do."

"Its okay," I swore, "I'll be up there shortly. Just calm down." Then I finally heard Caley actually take a deep breath, a real one and it seemed like the first one she'd taken in months. "I'll leave here in ten. Okay?"

"Okay... thank you."

"Anytime," I promised and there was a faint smile on my face.

So I cut out of work without a care because every part of me was set on Caley and helping her. I raced up to my empty home and all the money I had left from this summer was last week's paycheck. I'd already spent most of my money on a motorcycle so what little left would have to help Caley. Yet realizing that there was emerJency money in the house, I rushed to my mom's dresser and fumbled through her drawers until I discovered the money she'd told me about tucked away. Now I was equipped with five hundred dollars and a mere three hundred dollar credit card but it would be a start to fixing Caley's world.

And as I recall, it did take at least two weeks to align Caley's world into what it somewhat use to be. Her refrigerator and cupboards restocked with food, week old dishes cleaned, reused laundry finally cleaned, and Caley used my car to get to her job that was so far from home.

I finally felt some sense of peace when Caley started to breathe again. I stood there with my hands on my hips just as Superman would have done after saving the day. I suppose I even expected my name on the headline of the newspaper but it was far from happening. As soon as Caley was in the eye of the storm, she was busy disregarding me again like an old habit too hard to quit.

Out of all those fourteen days, the last one had to be the hardest one. Caley had called up a friend that I knew little about and was completely new to my world but not so new to Caley's. Caley was busy in her bathroom, taking a shower and she'd called me into the bathroom.

I positioned myself on the toilet after putting the lid down. I mindlessly stared straight ahead at the wall so that I wouldn't look at Caley in the shower.

"What's wrong, Aimee?"

I grunted low to myself at Caley's dumb question. "Nothin', Cale."

"No, it's not nothing."

I could hear the water falling all over Caley and splashing against the floor. Then I smelled the scent of an herbal shampoo.

"Is it that Jen's coming?"

"No... not at all." Now I started chewing on my lower lip but I hung my head down.

"I told you that you can come."

"I know." I slightly shook my head at the thought of going to a strip club with Caley and Jen. Hell I found it even more ironic that Caley use to tell me she had little interest in going to strip clubs yet here she was getting ready for one. Nothing like getting cleaned up for a strip club.

"You're tired, aren't you?" she brought up.

I hated when she brought up whether I was tired or not because she seemed to think that my hours of sleep equaled out to exactly what mood I'd be in, all day. It wasn't possible the fact that I fully knew she was hiding a secret from me was upsetting me. She lied to me whenever it was convenient to her it seemed but I also knew she didn't want to admit to it. She was a goddess in my eyes, she knew it, and she didn't want to disappoint her follower.

"Yeah... I'm tired," I finally admitted because I knew trying to bring up her lie wouldn't go over well.

"Then you shouldn't go with us."

I finally turned my head in her direction; I didn't care if I saw her or not. I raised an eyebrow at her previous statement because I knew it was her way to push me out of tonight. I could already feel my teeth grounding against one another. I decided just to shut up at this point because I knew Caley would win either way. She was always the winner and always right.

"You should probably just go home and get some rest, sweetie."

I rolled my eyes at hearing that nickname. I never ever felt so sweet when she called

me sweetie; she knew how to time that nickname right. "I guess."

"Besides, you're not into... strip clubs."

"Neither are you huh?" I muttered under my breath.

Caley had great hearing though. "No, I'm not but... I thought it'd be cool to hang out with Jen."

I already hated that name and I didn't know why that girl's name left such a bitter taste in my mouth. I guess I didn't understand how this worm of a girl managed to consume so much of Caley's time. I made a mental note to ask Jen how she did such a trick... if I ever met the girl and remembered to ask her first before beating her.

Caley finished her shower and stepped out of it. She quickly put on her bath robe on to cover her beautiful body that I'd come to love so unconditionally.

I tilted my head up some and watched her begin to brush her long, dark hair back.

"We'll do something later this week huh?"

I chewed off a piece of my lip at Caley's hollow promise. "Sure, babe." I stood up at that point and walked out of the bathroom to leave Caley alone. I was greeted by seeing Caley's short-term friend sitting at the computer and screwing up something on the computer. I sat down on the bed and inspected the friend from the corner of my eyes. I really disliked this girl and I think she knew Caley's secret. I also hated the way that girl drove threw thirty mph zones doing about fifty. There's just something wrong with somebody that drove that reckless.

Caley appeared out of the bathroom and began hastily changing.

I sat on that bed and just watched. I could sense the anger slowly warming up in me and it would boil soon. My patience sometimes could be as short as my height. And when Caley was done clothing herself and caking her face in ugly makeup, she rushed for the front door with her friend behind her. I followed the pair out of the apartment and out of the building. They decided to take the friend's car since Caley's car wasn't in the best condition.

I, however, tossed my bag into my car after staying at Caley's for a few days. I faced my best friend and she offered me a warm smile.

I forced a fake smile onto my face. "Have fun," I whispered.

"I will," Caley promised. She then leaned in and gave me a long hug.

I held tightly to her strong frame because I knew it would be awhile before I saw her again. This would break us apart for another few months.

I arrived home that day just before sunset. I was exhausted emotionally more than physically. Caley could drain everything out of me and right down to my last reserves. My last reserves though weren't empty until the following day when I spoke to Caley

again. She'd gracefully sealed our silent pact when she told me her and Jen had fooled around that night when they went to the strip club, not that they ever made it to the strip club. I suppose they decided to make their own personal strip club.

So I confessed though that I returned to Caley like the pathetic lost puppy that I could be. She promised me she'd changed and I did notice the changes as we spoke. Her mom had welcomed her with open arms again and Caley seemed to be finding some sense.

I was relieved as much as angered when I discovered that Jen and Caley weren't an item anymore but not without Caley getting hurt in the process. I knew I would draw and quarter Jen if I ever met her and it would bring some kind pleasure to me. The fact that it would bring pleasure to me was what scared me. I was typically a soft person and my only weapon were words, my precious words.

Caley and I started to revolve around each other again. It was just her and I, nobody between us except for the occasional girlfriend of mine that faded in and out. Just something to occupy my time while I waited for Caley to see that I was right there before her.

Caley did somewhat discover that concept when she ended up in the hospital after her... accident, as we named it. Her accident she inflicted and sent her to the hospital for a couple of weeks with very similar patients with the same exact circumstances. I visited her too; I had to see her. I tried to ignore the bandages on her wrists and kept my eyes above her neck, focused on her defined and hard face.

"They think I could be out of here tomorrow," happily stated Caley.

I slightly smiled but I was relieved to hear that too. "I hope so."

"Will you stay at mom's... wait?"

I considered it then nodded my head. "I'll wait, Caley."

"You can stay in my bed. I'm sure Spunk will keep you company."

I slightly chuckled at the thought of the cute cat I endlessly teased. I watched her shuffle the deck of cards she had between her long fingers.

"They think I'm doing better," she quietly mentioned.

"Are you?" I peered up.

"Yeah," answered Caley. "I just really want to go home."

I reached forward and touched her closest hand. "I know." I glanced around the room. "I don't blame you," I added.

She laced her hand through mine for a brief second then quickly pulled back.

"Will you stay after I get out?"

I returned my focus to her and after brushing back a blond lock of my hair, I answered, "Of course." I received a warm smile from Caley.

It was thanks to Caley's accident that Caley broke down many of her walls towards me. We grew even tighter and I saw more flaws in her than stars in the sky but that was what made me so happy. My heart sunk deeper and I listened to so many people tell us we looked so good together when we stared into each other's eyes. Caley shivered when she heard people say that and I grew angry at them. I told Caley I was angry because I didn't want her to have to hear that people thought we should date. Yet in light, I realized I was angry because I hated having the fantasy be seen by so many others other than by Caley. What good would it do if they and I saw it and she never did?

For the first time, Caley sensed the same connection I'd had all along. When she told me she did, I couldn't believe she'd admit to it but I never led on that it meant so much to me. Maybe that was my mistake then since I took another girl's offer to be her girlfriend.

Caley and I were almost unofficial girlfriends and suddenly Caley felt as if I cheated on her. She threw a fit and I was suddenly black in her eyes, not white anymore. I lost her and became lost in my two month girlfriend. Caley never spoke to me until after my girlfriend and I broke apart then did she find room to push her pride aside.

"It was like you cheated on me," confessed Caley. She took a bite of her chicken sandwich and she noted I stopped glancing around the Chicfila restaurant.

"Yea," I quietly spoke, "I felt like I had." I chuckled some then shook my head. "I'm just never going to get a girlfriend again."

Caley rolled her eyes. She pushed her waffle fry through her ketchup. "You need to, Aimee."

"No, I have everything I've ever wanted right with you."

Caley lifted one of her dark eyebrows, that skeptic look of hers.

"I'm serious," I fought, "you give me everything I want."

"Well you're not getting sex," poked Caley.

I laughed at her joke. "No and sex isn't important to me... you know that."

Caley shoved a waffle fry into her mouth while muttering, "It is to me."

I smirked at her smart remark.

"Not that these new meds are helping with my drive."

I furrowed my eyebrows at her.

Caley sighed at me. "My meds kind of... kill my sex drive."

"Nun drugs then."

Caley shook her head at me but she grinned. "Something like that." She went quiet for awhile then softly said, "I kept waiting and waiting for you to drive to my house to apologize about things."

I swallowed and looked down at my box of chicken nuggets. "I thought about it," I admitted. "I just was worried you'd chase after me."

"You're always scared of me," noted Caley aloud.

"Sort of." I picked out a tasty nugget and dipped it in the barbeque sauce. "I just... I'm scared to disappoint you, I think."

"Yet I am the one that's always failing, Aimee."

I quickly shook my head. "You've never failed me."

Caley licked her lips then took a long drink of her soda. "I don't know what I'd do without you, Aimee."

"That's your fear of abandonment, Caley."

Caley slowly nodded at me.

"I'll always be here for you."

Caley looked down at her last waffle fry. She seemed to look for answers from it. "I can't expect you to always keep doing this for me."

I slightly grinned at her. "But you do."

Caley opened her mouth, closed it then quietly stared at me. "I don't."

I decided not to fight her anymore because as I always told myself, Caley is always right. And when she's wrong, she is even more right. Fighting against Caley was like fighting an entire Persian Army on your own and me being left with a poisoned arrow in my chest after it all.

Shit does happen but it's a shit to clean it up afterwards because it took me several, several months to clean it up between Caley and me. I tried so hard to show her I regretted ever dating somebody instead of standing by and waiting like always.

I poured my heart out to her for the first time in the longest letter I've wrote anybody. Amazingly, she never made a single effort to truly respond to any of my letter. I can only imagine to this day what she ever thought about anything I told her. But I was proud of myself for trying and not holding back unlike Caley's favorite past time.

Caley was labeled as one of the most complicated people by idiots up to

psychologists; they just couldn't see past her smoke screen. I decided a long time ago that she had to be the simplest and most uncomplex person on the face of this world. The answer to all of Caley's seemingly answerless riddles was simply love. She wanted to love and be loved in return and the best part was she never knew it and still may not to this day.

From childhood to present, Caley has been haunted by being left alone in her own darkness. She looked to her mother for unconditional love only to find a spider web and her father's own expectations that rocketed off to the moon. And Caley's friends, well they were too concerned about seeing what they could obtain from Caley and she let them... to a point. Sometimes I'm still a little unsure why she ever felt required to fulfill her friends' whims as if it was some way for her to make up for some past evil she'd never done.

So I may know the core of Caley and find some solace in understanding it but I have yet to understand why the smoke screen. In time, maybe the Caley Epiphany will strike me and I'll have the answers to curiosity but until then it became of little concern. Suddenly Caley became of little concern to me when she threw me into a fire.

That old amazed and dazed feeling I felt when she and I first met was obliterated when Caley finally revealed another of her secrets. For once in our time together, Caley wanted to date me again and try again but she never told me until later, until after the fact. Nor did she ever fight for me, ever and I am deceived once more by her. There were too many secrets between so called best friends, who would supposedly die and try for each other.

Just tonight, I found out exactly how little I fit into her life anymore. She never ceased to give me a heart attack once and awhile.

"How are you?" typed out Caley over the instant messenger.

I was surprised she was online and second that she would instant message me since I never called her back from a week ago. I merely typed back out, "I'm okay. You?"

"Wonderful," was Caley's instant reply.

"Grrreat." I then ignored Caley as I continued to talk to one of my ex's online. After awhile, I saw Caley signed off and I felt somewhat relieved. Just as I was about to save then close out the conversation, Caley signed right back on and I sunk down in my bed.

"I just thought I would let you know Jen and I are getting married."

I just mindlessly stared at her message. And as if knocking me onto the ground wasn't enough, she decided to further kick me while I was down from her first statement.

"And I wanted to know if you would come."

I just stared at Caley's two sentences in the chat window. Then I began to hear Caley's voice saying those sentences to me in my head and it repeated over until it pierced me.

I finally typed out, "Congratulations," to her. Then she gave me that same kick in the stomach again.

"Well would you come?" she repeated in the chat.

Suddenly I felt some sarcastic laugh bubble up in my stomach right where it all started. I dropped my head back some and started to laugh as tears rolled down the corner of my eyes. I couldn't think of a funnier joke than the ones that life could play such as this one. I didn't bother to wipe the tears away; too tired of wiping Caley tears away after all this time.

I responded with, "I honestly don't know."

Caley's quickly messaged back, "I really think you should consider it."

I shook my head at my laptop, a smirk on my face, and my teeth clenched together. I reached forward to the keyboard and typed out, "Why? What's left for me, Caley?"

"What do you mean by that?"

Suddenly my angry amusement turned into cold anger and I could have punched her if she was standing before me. Punched her so hard in hopes something that I did or said would actually get through her thick head. For someone that was rated a genius she wasn't showing much intelligence, I'd discovered.

With my hot temper leading the way, I hastily replied, "I can tell you haven't listened to a damn thing I have said in all these months and months."

"I thought we were supposed to be friends."

My anger was traveling up my stomach and through my chest now. "You don't listen, do you? You're so up yourself... you don't even hear much of what I say. Makes me so angry. You can't even be there for me." I sat there thinking about how many times I have needed Caley and how many times she's needed me. Each time she called for me, I stopped, dropped, and rolled for her without hesitation. When I called for her, she was nowhere to be found or too busy to fit me into her schedule.

"Why because I have a girlfriend and I'm happy?"

I laughed so bitterly. "Yeah, you got it figured."

"I don't understand why you can't just be happy for me."

Now my anger erupted from my chest and flew through my lips. How many times would I have to repeat myself to this brick wall? Yet as I sat there, staring at the conversation so far and rethinking about what Caley has told me about Jen, how she felt about Jen, and what everybody has said about them. I knew Caley would have to get married no matter how happy or unhappy she was with Jen and I was betting on the latter. I knew Caley better than she knew herself and no wonder why Caley always sought me out when she was at her darkest because I was the only light she could cling to at all. I was her unconditional love that she only needed when her tank hit

empty and she needed a refill. And right now, she didn't need any love from me because she was too deluded with hollow happiness.

The rest of the brief conversation, I tore into her about how she mistreated me over such a long period. Caley never saw nor really will ever see how she'd over used me. Caley's world was too black and white for her to see any of the shades of grey and I was forcing myself to accept that now. For me, I was either Caley's support system or golden trophy that she set-aside when I wasn't in use. She and I could never be the book definition of friends, especially since Caley had a totally different dictionary than everybody else out there.

In the last leg of our chat conversation, I began to realize that everything I've ever wished Caley to do she had been done within a few months and completely without my help. She seemed happy. She had a new car. She had a good job with benefits. The first time in a long time, she was out living on her own. She was in a serious relationship that was moving too fast but it was a serious one. And now, now she would be married to somebody that didn't know her and she'd been dating for six to seven weeks. That was true love... if I ever saw it because Caley was always right, always and forever.

To this day, I still repeat the conversation Caley and I had back in that summer when she and Jen first met. Caley had been on the phone in her room and I grew restless, frustrated at her lack of attention on me. So I picked myself up off the bed and left the apartment building and walked down the sidewalk in the warm night. Yet I didn't get far when I sensed Caley hurrying after me. I was slightly impressed that Caley would give a damn to follow after me.

Her tall form came up to my side just as I sat down on the curb of the sidewalk. From the corner of my eye, I saw her sit down beside me with her long legs stretched out in front of me.

"Why'd you leave?"

I didn't bother to look at her. "Just needed to get outside."

Caley's head bobbed a few times but she was still watching me anyway. "What's wrong?"

I hated, always hated how she asked me that because her and I always knew exactly what was wrong. I felt as if she was going back to her psychology classes from college and job where she was taught to ask her patients that question. It felt like Dr. Caley was on the job and shrinking me.

"Nothin', Caley." I finally looked at her.

Caley raised an eyebrow then turned away as she brushed back some of her dark hair. "There's something, Aimee."

"I don't know," I murmured and gazed down at my hands. "I think... I think I'm in love with you, Caley."

Caley now reached for her pack of cigarettes because the therapy session was getting too personal. "How do you know you're in love, Aimee?" Her rich blue eyes held me in place.

"It's not something whether I know or not... just something I feel."

"But how do you know?" repeated Caley.

How did I ever know? I've kept asking myself over and over whether I was ever in love with Caley. Often I answered my question with a fast yes but as time as passed and Caley's treatment of me continued, my definite yes transformed into a residing no. So I would consider why that had changed and it took much of my time, energy to resolve that.

From the beginning of our relationship, I set all of my wishes, dreams, inspiration, and loyalty into Caley. Without knowing it, my world revolved around her and she loved it as such. I was the moon traveling around the earth and our relationship would go between waxing and waning of full and new moons.

I made the mistake, never Caley. I was wrong, as usual. I set my heart on her and her life but I lost the bet. Caley won and I paid the heavy debt that was more expensive than all the jewelry of Tiffany's. No I was never in love with Caley but I did reside all my dreams in her and hoped one day she would see the fantasy of an us too. Yet that fantasy was dust in the trash and now my heart would find new dreams to make so it may be filled again. I knew that my heart would always carry one last hope of possibility with Caley yet that hope would always have such a minute power over the rest of me.

I realized I was letting go of Caley and I would take her power over me away from her. I no longer would let her use me or mistreat me whenever she felt like it. Thanks to her, she gave me the best shield against her and that was my anger. And if she feared abandonment from me then she would so have it as I abandoned all of my dreams of her because she no longer required them. But if it was one thing that could never change in any lifetime, it was my heart's love for her and what I would safeguard against all my anger and all of her punishments. Why I would ever do that, I wondered to myself. I did it because Caley would die otherwise if nobody loved her so unconditional as I did.

So after thirty poems, two stories, a hundred sixty-seven online chats, over twelve letters, ten cds, more than fifty trips, too many dollars, and uncounted tears I collected my heart from her. I no longer needed my Caley high and I would begin rehab. She showed me what I could endure and how amazing I could be. She met me as an insecure girl being raided by my weaknesses but through our travels she had forced me through a gauntlet of trials. Now I was a beautiful, secure woman that matured herself with no avail from Caley and Caley was left as the insecure girl being locked down by her old demons. I faded out of her black.

My heart would never beat for her again.

The End.