

# 1 **Cecily's story – Chapter One**

2 By Nancy Abra

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4 Slowly, methodically Cecily traced around the lifeless image on the old black and white photo.

5 Nostalgic emotions and memories flooded her mind. This photo was only one of many in her  
6 cherished album. Photos of loved ones, evidence of the long ago.

7 On each page of this album of thick matte black paper, carefully displayed, mounted photos secured  
8 by tiny triangular silver corners. The album, bound with metal posts, had an attractive embossed  
9 maroon coloured thick cover. Besides the photos, there were a few handwritten notes from her  
10 mother, she had received decades ago when she was young and came to Canada. Turning the pages  
11 of this treasured book was ceremonial, each item a manifestation of her past, her life.

12 The cup of tea on the side table beside her chair was now stone cold and the bright afternoon sun  
13 that had filled her small room earlier had dulled to dusk. A knock came at her door, shattering her  
14 thoughts. A young nursing home attendant popped her head in to announce that supper was soon  
15 going to be served in the dining room and that she would be back to collect her. Then left as quickly  
16 as she had appeared.

17 Cecily looked up and then reverently closed the album with a heavy sigh.

18 When Cecily could no longer manage in her own home, she reluctantly agreed to move. Her children  
19 helped to clean out her house, dispersing household items to other family members; what wasn't  
20 wanted went to donation shops and garbage bins. Her daughter, Margie offered her to come and live  
21 with them, but Cecily did not want to impose or be a burden on her daughter and her busy young  
22 family. She did not want to go to a nursing home either, but she really had no other choice. Besides,  
23 Cecily knew she would not be there long.

24 From closets, cupboards and dresser draws, her children unearthed old photos, letters, other little  
25 keepsakes of Cecily's life. Margie gathered up all her Mum's photos, cherished letters, and cards from  
26 family members in England and in Australia that spanned decades. There was an old autograph  
27 book, postcards of the manor house where her and her sisters worked, clippings from her village's  
28 newspaper in England during WW1 and WW2. Margie even found her mum's her official green card  
29 to Canada and immigration port of arrival card when she and her sister, Nellie landed in Montreal in  
30 1914. So many items, Margie knew were all precious to her mum. In the back of her mum's closet,  
31 Margie found an old dress box, the perfect size for these keepsakes, she thought.

32 "What are you going to do with those?" nervously asked Cecily, "You aren't going to throw them out,  
33 are you?" anxious that her special keepsakes will also be the victim of the trash bin.

34 "Of course, not Mum," answered Margie. "I will keep them safe. Trust me."

35 Still a little apprehensive, Cecily agreed for her precious mementos to go with her daughter. In her  
36 mind they were the only thing worth keeping. Her past as difficult as it was, was still her life.  
37 Margie thought her idea would make a lovely gift for her mum. She bought beautiful embossed floral  
38 paper and covered the old dress box she had found. On the top of the box, she attached a note in her  
39 scripted handwriting 'Mum's Memory Box' along with hand painting a couple flowers. She thought this  
40 box would make an ideal gift for her mother's upcoming 85th birthday.

41 The transition of moving to this nursing home had been difficult for Cecily but her staunch upbringing  
42 of 'keep calm and carry on' reigned. She did not let on to her family that she was struggling to fit in, to  
43 take part in the activities. She was doing her best to make it work but she was tired, tired of being  
44 congenial. Her memory box was her escape, and brought her joy when she was feeling lost, sad, and  
45 alone.

46 The young attendant's intrusion and announcement of supper, splintered Cecily's journey of her past.  
47 She reverently closed the album and returned it to its special box, making a silent vow to both her and  
48 to it, she would visit again soon.