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SECOND CHANCE

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A Dell Book

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"Loving the Wrong Person," from *DAILY AFFLICTIONS: The Agony of Being Connected to Everything in the Universe* by Andrew Boyd.
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**When two people couldn't be more different . . .
the fun begins!**

SECOND CHANCE

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"Steel pulls out all the emotional stops . . . She delivers."
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"Call us sentimental, but sometimes we prefer the classic authors. Make it a point of pride to read *Johnny Angel*."

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

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ANSWERED PRAYERS	DADDY
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LIGHTNING	NOW AND FOREVER
WINGS	PASSION'S PROMISE
THE GIFT	GOING HOME
ACCIDENT	

To the lucky few who get a second chance,
and make it work.

And to my wonderful, wonderful children,
Beatrix, Trevor, Todd, Nick, Samantha,
Victoria, Vanessa, Maxx, and Zara,
who are my reason for living,
and the joy in my life,

with all my love,
d.s.

We are all seeking that special person who is right for us. But if you've been through enough relationships, you begin to suspect there's no right person, just different flavors of wrong.

Why is this? Because you yourself are wrong in some way, and you seek out partners who are wrong in some complementary way. But it takes a lot of living to grow fully into your own wrongness. It isn't until you finally run up against your deepest demons—your unsolvable problems—the ones that make you who you truly are—that you're ready to find a lifelong mate. Only then do you finally know what you are looking for.

You are looking for the wrong person. But not just any wrong person: the "right" wrong person—someone you lovingly gaze upon and think, "This is the problem I want to have."

I will find that special person who is wrong for me in just the right way.

—Andrew Boyd
Daily Afflictions

Chapter 1

The air-conditioning had just stopped working in the offices of *Chic* magazine on a blisteringly hot June day in New York. It was their second brownout of the day, and Fiona Monaghan looked as if she were ready to kill someone as she strode into her office after being trapped in the elevator for twenty minutes. The same thing had happened to her the day before. Just getting out of the cab on the way back from lunch at the Four Seasons made her feel as though the air had been sucked out of her lungs. She was leaving for Paris in two weeks—if she lived that long. Days like this were enough to make anyone hate New York, but in spite of the heat and the aggravation, Fiona loved everything about living there. The people, the atmosphere, the restaurants, the theater, the avalanche of culture and excitement everywhere—even the brownstone on East Seventy-fourth Street that she had nearly bankrupted herself to buy ten years ago. She had spent every penny she had on remodeling it. It was stylish and

exquisite, a symbol of everything she was and had become.

At forty-two, she had spent a lifetime becoming Fiona Monaghan, a woman men admired and women envied, and came to love when they knew her well and she was their friend. If pressed, she could be a fearsome opponent. But even those who disliked her had to admit they respected her. She was a woman of power, passion, and integrity, and she would fight to the death for a cause she believed in, or a person she had promised to support. She never broke a promise, and when she gave her word, you knew you could count on her. She looked like Katharine Hepburn with a little dash of Rita Hayworth, she was tall and lean with bright red hair and big green eyes that flashed with either delight or rage. Those who met Fiona Monaghan never forgot her, and in her fiefdom she was all knowing, all seeing, all powerful, and all caring. She loved her job above all else, and had fought hard to get it. She had never married, never wanted to, and although she loved children, she never wanted any of her own. She had enough on her plate as it was. She had been the editor-in-chief of *Chic* magazine for six years, and as such she was an icon in the fashion world.

She had a full personal life as well. She had had an affair with a married man, and a relationship with a man she had lived with for eight years. Before that, she had dated randomly, usually artists or writers, but she had been alone now for a year and a half. The married

lover was a British architect who commuted between London, Hong Kong, and New York. And the man she had lived with was a conductor, and had left her to marry and have children, and was living in Chicago now, which Fiona considered a fate worse than death. Fiona thought New York was the hub of the civilized world. She would have lived in London or Paris, but nowhere else. She and the conductor had remained good friends. He had come before the architect, whom she had left when the affair got too complicated and he threatened to leave his wife for her. She didn't want to marry him, or anyone. She hadn't wanted to marry the conductor either, although he had asked her repeatedly. Marriage always seemed too high-risk to her, she would have preferred to do a high-wire act in the circus than risk marriage, and she warned men of that. Marriage was never an option for her.

Her own childhood had been hard enough to convince her that she didn't want to risk that kind of pain for anyone. Her father had abandoned her mother when her mother was twenty-five and she was three. Her mother had attempted two more marriages to men Fiona hated, both were drunks, as her father had been. She never saw her father again after he left, nor his family, and knew only that he had died when she was fourteen. And her mother had died when she was in college. Fiona had no siblings, no known relatives. She was alone in the world by the time she was twenty, graduated from Wellesley, and made it on her

own after that. She crawled her way up the ladder in minor fashion magazines and landed at *Chic* by the time she was twenty-nine. Seven years later, she became editor-in-chief, and the rest was history. Fiona was a legend by the time she was thirty-five, and the most powerful female magazine editor in the country at forty.

Fiona had nearly infallible judgment, an unfailing sense for fashion and what would work, and a head for business that everyone she worked with admired. And more than that, she had courage. She wasn't afraid to take risks, except in her love life. In that arena she took none at all, and had no need to. She wasn't afraid to be alone, and in the past year and a half she had come to prefer it. She was never really alone anyway, she was constantly surrounded by photographers, assistants, designers, models, artists, and a flock of hangers-on. She had a full calendar and an active social life and a host of interesting friends. She always said that it wouldn't bother her if she never lived with anyone again. She didn't have room in her closets anyway, and had no desire to make room for anyone. She had enough responsibilities at the magazine, without wanting to be responsible to or for a man as well. Fiona Monaghan had a breathtakingly full life, and she loved all of it. She had a high tolerance for, and a slight addiction to, confusion, excitement, and chaos.

She was wearing a long narrow black silk skirt that fell in tiny pleats from her waist, as she walked off the

elevator she'd been trapped in for twenty minutes, on her way back from lunch. She wore a white peasant blouse with it, off her shoulders, with her long red hair swept up in a loose knot. Her only piece of jewelry was a huge turquoise bracelet that nearly devoured her wrist and was the envy of all who saw it. It had been made for her by David Webb. She was wearing high-heeled black Manolo Blahnik sandals, an oversize red alligator Fendi bag, and the entire combination of accessories and long, clean lines gave an impression of inimitable elegance and style. Fiona was as dazzling as any of the models they photographed, she was older but just as beautiful, although her looks meant nothing to her. She never traded on sex appeal or artifice, she was far more interested in the soul and the mind, both of which shone through her deep green eyes. She was thinking about the cover for the September issue, as she sat down at her desk, kicked off her sandals, and picked up the phone. There was a new young designer in Paris she wanted one of her young assistant editors to research and pursue. Fiona was always on a mission of some kind, it took a flock of underlings and minions to keep up with her, and she was feared as much as she was admired. You had to move fast to match her pace, and she had no patience for slackers, shirkers, or fools. Everyone at *Chic* knew that when Fiona shined the spotlight on you, you'd better be able to come up with the goods, or else.

Her secretary buzzed her ten minutes later to

remind her that John Anderson was coming in to see her in half an hour, and she groaned. She had forgotten the appointment, and between the heat, the lack of air-conditioning, and the interlude in the elevator, she wasn't in the mood. He was the head of the new ad agency they'd hired, it was a solid old firm that, thanks to him, had come up with some exciting new ideas. It had been her decision to make the switch, and she had met nearly everyone in the agency but him. Their work and their track record spoke for itself. The meeting was merely a matter of form to meet each other. He had been reorganizing the London office when she decided to hire the firm, and now that he was back in town, they had agreed to meet. He had suggested lunch, but she didn't have time, so she'd suggested he come to her office, intending to keep it brief.

She returned half a dozen calls before the meeting, and Adrian Wicks, her most important editor, dropped in for five minutes to discuss the couture shows in Paris with her. Adrian was a tall, thin, stylish, somewhat effeminate black man who had been a designer himself for a few years before he came to *Chic*. He was as smart as she was, which she loved. Adrian was a graduate of Yale, had a master's in journalism from Columbia, worked as a designer, and had finally landed at *Chic*, and together they were an impressive team. He was her right arm for the last five years. He was as dark as she was pale, as addicted to fashion as she, and as

passionate about his ideas and the magazine as Fiona. In addition, he was her best friend. She invited him to join the meeting with John Anderson, but he was meeting with a designer at three, and just as Adrian left her office, her secretary told her that Mr. Anderson had arrived, and Fiona asked her to show him in.

As Fiona looked across her desk to the doorway, she watched John Anderson walk in, and came around her desk to greet him. She smiled as their eyes met, and each took the other's measure. He was a tall, powerfully built man with impeccably groomed white hair, bright blue eyes, and a youthful face and demeanor. He was as conservative as she was flamboyant. She knew from his biographical material, and mutual friends, that he was a widower, he had just turned fifty, and he had an M.B.A. from Harvard. She also knew he had two daughters in college, one at Brown and the other at Princeton. Fiona always remembered personal details, she found them interesting, and sometimes useful to help her know who she was dealing with.

"Thank you for coming over," she said pleasantly as they stood eyeing each other. She was nearly as tall as he was in the towering Blahnik heels she had slipped back on before she came to greet him. The rest of the time, she loved walking around her office barefoot. She said it helped her think. "I'm sorry about the air-conditioning. We've had brownouts all week." She smiled agreeably.