



An Unforgettable Christmas

Ginny Baird

When Sam returned to the living room, he found Angie standing before the big, plate-glass window overlooking the snowy rear lawn and forest, with the purple-and-blue outline of the mountains in the background. It had mostly stopped snowing, with the air being dotted by just the occasional swirling snowflake.

“It’s gorgeous,” she said in a whisper.

He walked up next to her. The view really was breathtaking, but not nearly as beautiful as the woman beside him. “Yeah.”

She turned to face him, and he fell into her gaze, tumbling down, down, down into that dark-brown warmth that made his soul yearn and his heart ache to know her better. Had he ever known love? Real love? The all-consuming, life-changing kind?

“It’s a shame I didn’t spend much time here,” Sam said, reflecting on how pristine his condo appeared. From their gleaming state, it was fairly obvious that

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he'd scarcely used his appliances, and the furniture still appeared brand new.

"It's true, you were pretty much married to your work." Angie bit her lip as if she regretted her choice of words. But they resonated with Sam in a special way, making him wonder if he'd ever considered settling down with someone. Creating a different sort of life.

"Married," he muttered thoughtfully. "Hmm."

She shyly hung her head. "It's just a figure of speech."

Sam reached out and righted her chin in his hand. "I know," he said gently.

Angie covered his hand with hers, pressing his fingers to her cheek, and it heated beneath his touch. Sam longed to slide his hand into Angie's silken hair and tenderly bring his lips to hers. One gentle kiss was all he'd need to die a happy man.

"I was a crazy kind of guy, wasn't I?"

"What do you mean?"

"Crazy not to notice how exceptional you are."

Angie's skin took on a rosy hue and her chin tilted up toward his as Sam found himself moving nearer.

"Was I seriously that self-absorbed? All about work?"

"You were successful."

"What does success mean?"

"You'll see when we get to the store."

"Something tells me I couldn't have done it without you." *What's more, I wouldn't have wanted to.* His heart stilled at the startling *déjà vu*. He was certain he'd said that to Angie before. Or, at least, that he'd intended to.

"Sam."

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“You helped me, didn’t you?” he asked her. “Pushed me to be a better man. Kind of like you’re doing now.”

“No. I didn’t push.” She drew in a breath. “I just suggested...”

“Improvements?” he asked huskily.

There was a flicker of light in her eyes. “You remember?”

“You mentioned it that first night at your apartment. Back when you said you were always right.”

“Well, I was wrong.”

Angie licked her lips, and Sam’s heart pounded. “About?”

“So many things.” Her voice was feathery light, less than a whisper.

“And now?”

They were standing so close he could draw her into his arms in one swift move. But would Angie want that? Or would Sam be overstepping his bounds?

“Now, I...” Angie stepped back self-consciously, answering him in tone and deed, as his hand slipped from her cheek. “Think we’d better get going.”

