

## HEALING PASSION

### Chapter 1

### Want An Autograph?

Katherine and I met a few years ago at a fundraiser for rape abuse victims.

She certainly was a stunner, but not knowing much about her, I really didn't care how beautiful she was. I had learned that a beautiful woman could have nothing but that going for her. If a woman wasn't intelligent or well-rounded as a person, caring about nothing more than herself, then even breathtaking beauty could never make up for those missing qualities.

I saw her across the room. She smiled at me and, being polite, I smiled back. Suddenly I found her next to me. She looked at me with the most expressive eyes and for some reason asked me, "Would you like an autograph?"

I laughed and looked her right in the eye and said, "No, would you like mine?"

She started laughing and, not missing a beat, slyly said, "Yes, I think I *would* like your autograph, but only if comes with your phone number."

I knew right then and there that I had met another intense woman, someone not afraid to challenge me.

We started to talk about why we were at the charity event. There were constant interruptions as people hounded her, asking her for autographs. So I excused myself saying, "It was nice to meet you."

"You aren't leaving, are you?"

"Yes, it looks as if you have a fan club here."

"Can we get together and have lunch? I am only in town for a few days. I have so enjoyed talking with you."

"I'd like that," I said. "But, I tell you what, why don't you come for dinner? I am sure a home cooked meal would be a better alternative to restaurant food."

She looked relieved. "You have no idea how wonderful that sounds. I am on the road all the time and never get anything as special as real home cooking."

"Well" I grinned, "you have my autograph and my number. Why don't you call me and I'll give you directions."

I had no idea at the time that, because of our chance encounter, our lives would change

so dramatically, forever....

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Katherine didn't waste any time. She called that same night from her hotel.

Of course, not really knowing who she was, I had done a little sleuthing on the Net that night. I was happy that I had already accomplished this by the time she called. She was a very well-known actress, having appeared in some action flicks and romantic movies. I was impressed with the listings of her humanitarian causes. But I had never seen any of her movies.

Having grown up around wealth and some fame I was not impressed by what someone did. This was going to be interesting to entertain someone from the Hollywood scene. Hadn't I already been through enough of this with Sam?

Katherine had seemed lovely and intelligent, but who knew? I hoped that she wasn't expecting me to be impressed with her career. I never cared about what people did for a living; just how they acted and how they used their position in life to help others. Apparently, even though she was only 30, she had developed a true interest in both local and global causes.

The caller ID on the phone read "Westin." It had to be her. "Hello?"

"Hi. Amanda? It's Katherine. We met today at the charity event," she said almost shyly.

"I seem to remember" I laughed, "it's nice to hear from you. How was your day?"

She almost seemed stunned by the question. She hesitated, then uttered, "Wow, I just realized that no one ever really asks me that."

"Well, that is sad, girl. I'm sure you have people in your life who care about how your day was."

"Actually, lately I am beginning to think it is only about what I can do for them. But don't get me wrong, I'm still blessed. You are just so sincere and caring. I'm not used to it."

"Well, welcome to my world," I said, laughing.

We started talking about her life, what countries she had visited, and how crazy her schedule was. She seemed genuinely grateful to have someone listen to her. Somehow, I didn't think that any of her fans knew what a sensitive woman she was in person. Professionally, she projected such a guarded persona. Even so, I admired the way she

had talked to people at the benefit. She was kind and sweet and never seemed bothered by the attention she received.

We talked for over an hour before I had to leave for an appointment. She seemed disappointed that I had to go, but I assured her we would do plenty of talking the next night. We made plans for her to come to dinner, and I came away from the conversation thinking that she was intelligent, interesting, and somehow fragile, if you really knew her.

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Katherine was right on time. She truly was one of the most breathtaking women you could ever meet. Her long dark brown hair was hanging loosely around her face, about six inches past her shoulders. Standing there in faded jeans and a simple black T-shirt, she had flowers in her hand.

“I love a lady who knows how to treat a woman!” I said, grinning.

“Something smells amazing,” she said with a genuine look of happiness in her eyes.

“Thank you for the flowers,” I said taking them from her.

“No, thank you for the dinner invitation. I am thrilled to be able to spend time away from the media, and all. So, what’s cooking?” she asked.

“That is my sauce that takes eight hours to simmer; I made it the other day. We are having manicotti, salad, homemade mozzarella biscuits, and a special dessert.”

“Are you Italian?”

“Oh yes, you could say that.”

“I love Italian women, so warm and passionate!”

I smiled at that comment because I have also found it to be true. It would be so interesting to find out what she was like, aside from her movie life.

“You have no idea,” I said with a devilish grin. I must admit I am a big flirt, always was.

“It was so nice of you to come to the fundraiser yesterday for the Women’s Center. It is a place that really has helped so many women who have been raped get back on their feet,” I said.

“I feel very connected to the issue. I love women, and anything I can do to help is really just what I should do, you know what I mean?” she said warmly.

Again, I smiled at her. “It is so nice to talk with someone right off about things that matter. Small talk has never been interesting to me. I really appreciate your compassion and taking the time to be so nice to those fans. You set a wonderful example.”

“Thank you. I think you are the first person to make me blush in a long time,” she said as she followed me into the kitchen. I took to the task at hand arranging the flowers.

“How could you have known that I like pink? So many lovely pink flowers here.”

“Let’s just say I made a guess. You strike me as a very feminine woman, which is, of course, lovely to be around.”

Well, I certainly couldn’t argue with that.

Standing by the stove she asked, “Could I be so bold as to ask to taste your sauce here?”

“Afraid I’m going to poison you?” I said, laughing.

“Oh, how could you say such a thing?” She started laughing once she realized I was joking. I watched as she raised the spoon to her full lips licking the sauce with her tongue before putting it completely into her mouth.

“Oh my God,” she exclaimed. “That is the best thing I have ever tasted. You might have to marry me.”

“Wow, it must be good!” I laughed again.

We had an easy way between us, as if we had known each other a long time. It was very sweet.

“Let’s sit in the living room,” I said. I took the flowers with me and set them on the newly refinished coffee table. I had kept my mother’s living room tables, among other things. This particular table had hanging leaves that opened to accommodate trays of food, in this case, flowers.

As we settled on the overstuffed lavender sofa she touched my arm, “Thank you so much for inviting me. This is just amazing to relax. You really have a very comfortable home here, very welcoming.”

“I try to do that.” I said, “I want people to feel relaxed and comfortable. Please feel free to take off your shoes. I love to be barefoot.” She smiled as she kicked off her shoes and curled her legs under her.

Her eyes were a beautiful greenish blue, like nothing I have ever seen before. Her shyness returned, which was kind of shocking. I wouldn’t have thought that this world

traveler, here, would have been shy. Maybe it's just the effect I have on people.

We spent a lovely evening together laughing and discussing so many different issues. It was so pleasant. I wasn't used to being around a woman who could have an intelligent discussion about so many different subjects. We ate casually in the living room and I was treated to her lovely little noises as she ate. She kept telling me how wonderful it was and was almost moaning in pleasure every time she took a bite. Apparently, I didn't realize that I was that good a cook.

Finally she wondered, "OK, I have to ask: What is the special dessert?"

I smiled devilishly and asked her, "Do you like chocolate?"

A big smile came across her face. "Almost as much as sex," she responded.

I returned an even bigger smile, "Chocolate mousse pie sound good to you?"

I thought that she was going to jump up and down, she was so happy. "Wow, I haven't had that in years. Oh my, yes that sounds wonderful."

"You are one sensuous woman, aren't you?" she said, her eyes looking directly into mine.

"Yes, that is true."

We talked endlessly, well into the morning hours. It had been an enjoyable visit, very relaxed, and I was grateful.

As I walked her to the door she asked if she could hug me. Not being one to turn down a beautiful woman asking for a hug, I, of course, said that she could.

She looked down, put her arms around my waist and drew me very close to her. I could smell her perfume and she seemed to be smelling my hair. She whispered in my ear, "Thank you so much," almost with a cry in her voice.

"Of course, my pleasure," I whispered as she was still hugging me. She didn't want to let go; she melted into me. Finally, I broke the hug and looked up into those green eyes. I wiped a single tear from her cheek, concerned, "What, Kat?"

That got a smile out of her. "No one calls me Kat; I like it when you say it. I just don't want to leave, but I have to. Can I call you tomorrow?"

"Yes, of course you can," I said to her, smiling.

"Thanks, Amanda," she said, her smile growing steadily bigger.

She walked out the door greeted by her security guard and a waiting car, looking back at me as if she would have rather not go.

My heart ached, as I knew that the road she had chosen wasn't an easy one. She talked of how she never knew if people liked her for her, or for who they thought she was. She was so kindhearted, strong, and yet, fragile. My heart went out to her, thinking maybe, just maybe, I had made a new friend. But only time would tell.

Not two minutes later my phone rang. I looked at the caller ID, but didn't recognize the number. Usually I wouldn't pick up, but for some reason I did. "It's tomorrow," I heard Katherine's voice say.

"Yes, it is...." I said as I talked to her while she headed to her hotel.

"I just wanted to thank you again. You have no idea how much it meant spending time with you tonight," she said. Little did she know that I might have an idea, having been through this for years with Sam.

"We'll do it again next time you're in town, OK?"

"I think that might be sooner than you think, and I am still calling you tomorrow," she said.

"Ok, Kat, sweet dreams," was the last thing I said to her that night.