

The week passed with very little hassle or incident, which was more than welcome for me. It was early that Thursday morning when the phone rang. Seeing that it was Sam on the caller ID, I picked up the phone quickly, as she never called that early.

“Hello, Sam.”

“I need to see you, Mimi, right now if you can.”

She sounded clearly shaken and I was sure that something was terribly wrong, judging by her voice.

“I’m still in my pajamas, but come on over.”

“I am here, actually, outside of your front door. I didn’t want to ring the bell and scare you in case you were sleeping.”

Now I knew that something was very wrong; my friends knew better than to just show up. And, knowing that I usually slept in the mornings and worked throughout the night, Sam must have really been in turmoil.

“OK, let me get to the door.”

When I got to the door I found Sam looking like she had not slept at all. Her face was puffy with unshed tears. I pulled her inside and into a huge hug.

“Let’s sit down, babe.”

I took her hand and we made our way to the sofa. I looked into those beautiful eyes and saw that she was completely stressed out.

“Sam, what happened?”

She had a very difficult time getting the words to come out. As she sat there the tears finally started flowing slowly down her face.

I held her hand and tried to figure out what was going on.

“Damn, Mimi, this is so hard. I had no idea it would be so hard.”

“What, Sam, what’s so hard?”

“It’s Jo. I am falling so hard for her and I am so frustrated that I have to be so careful all of the time. I didn’t realize it could be so gut wrenching.”

My heart was breaking imagining how hard it was for Sam, and yet I knew that Jo's pain was worse. I understood Jo's fear and how long it would take for her to feel comfortable again, and yet I saw right in front of me what it was doing to Sam. Somehow, it made me ache thinking what it must have been like for Cassie.

"I'm sorry. I know how difficult this is for both of you."

"I love her so much and watching her struggle like this is killing me. I can feel her relax when I hug her and last night I held her for a long time. It was amazing, and yet inside I was so frustrated because I have to think about everything I do with her. I can't just let it flow as it normally would. I don't want to scare her."

"Sam, the question you have to ask yourself is, do you love her enough to stick it out? It's going to take a lot of time and patience."

"I know that and I am just now seeing how long this is going to take. I love her enough, that's for sure; but it's breaking my heart. And, to be honest, I'm a bit frustrated having a beautiful girl in my arms and not being able to, well...."

"You can take care of your own needs yourself, you know." We both began to laugh after I said that.

"I suppose that's true, Mimi. I was so used to having girls around whenever the need arose, you know?"

"Yes, I know what you mean, but if you love her you are going to have to put her needs above yours until she can go further. I know how frustrating it must be but, I promise you, if you stick it out you will be amazed at what it's like once she is ready."

I felt awful inside knowing that Jo knew a bit more about my life, in one way at least, than Sam did. I couldn't tell her that I knew, really knew, the other end of this. I wasn't sure that this was the right time to bring it up. It might actually have made things worse because she would have been so upset with me for not having told her about Trisha all of those years ago.

"At least she was ready to let you hold her; that's a big step."

"Yeah, I know. It was really something. When I felt her relax I felt like I could protect her from the world."

"I understand." More than she knew, actually.

I loved that feeling of being held by a lover and longed for it again.

Damn, I started to realize how much I missed Cassie and how much I had to work on so that I could let Kat in more. I was so good at comforting, but it took so much strength for me to let another woman in.

“She told me a bit of what happened to her last night, and maybe that is part of what has me so upset today. I can’t imagine anyone hurting her; it is so frustrating. I just want to keep her safe and yet I know I can’t really, but every instinct inside screams ‘hold on tighter’. But if I do I will just scare her away.”

I took Sam’s hand in mine again and looked her straight in the eye.

“I think you love her more than enough to get through this with her. She is worth it and so are you. What waits on the other side of this is nothing short of pure magic. I know it’s hard because you have to deal with your own issues that this brings up. But, instead of hitting the bottle, you came to me and talked about it.”

“That’s true. Damn, it was so hard to let Jo leave last night. I wanted her to stay in my arms where I could protect her.”

“I know, but you have to let her go through her process, Sam. She needs to meet you in this as whole as she can be.”

“I think I might’ve scared her.”

“What happened?”

“I asked her if I could kiss her last night and she said, ‘Yes, just a kiss.’ It was like heaven, kissing her soft lips, but then she pulled away and wouldn’t let me hold her after that.”

“Babe, you did nothing wrong. She is testing out what she is comfortable with; give it time.”

“I don’t want to lose her, Mimi, but I hope I have the strength to see her through this.”

“You do, Sam, you do.”

I canceled my plans for the day and spent the morning with Sam. She fell asleep on my sofa and finally woke up around three in the afternoon.

She called a little after she got home. She had heard from Jo and wanted to let me know. Jo was doing fine and had felt bad that she had pulled away. By then Sam had been feeling confident again and had reassured her that it would all be okay; she wasn’t going anywhere. I would find out that later that night Sam would be in her studio working on a new song. I had a feeling that I knew who this one would be about.

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After Sam left I had to get ready for Kat’s arrival later in the evening. I knew that Kat

had something that she needed to talk about and now so did I.

After showering and cleaning up a bit around the house I decided to make at least one thing. I was a good baker so I figured some chocolate chip cream cheese brownies were in order. I knew that Kat had told me that she would take care of the food this weekend, but I also knew her weakness for chocolate. It was nice to have a special dessert that was Kat's favorite. Cooking relaxed me and the smell of the house would be just perfect when she walked in the door.

Kat sent me a text letting me know she'd be arriving a bit later than expected. I appreciated the fact that she was so thoughtful that way and I took it as a sign of respect. Since she was running late it allowed me to catch up on a bit of work.

When the bell rang I felt a rush of excitement run through me. I couldn't wait to see Kat. It felt good to be happy after all of the pain that I had felt lately.

As I opened the door I found not Kat, but Jo standing there with her eyes facing the ground.

"Jo, what a surprise!"

"Sorry for just dropping by, Amanda. I know that drives you crazy, but my cell died and I really needed to talk."

"It's okay, come in."

"Wow, you look amazing. Do you have a date or is this what you always wear around the house?"

"Kat is coming to stay for the weekend. We're not dating, we're just good friends. You know I'm not seeing anyone right now."

"Well, I don't know how she keeps her hands off of you, wearing things like that."

"Please, this is a sundress."

"You know, the sexiest thing about you is that you have no idea you are."

"You are amazing, Jo." I laughed, "Honestly, still a charmer."

"Well, I just call it as I see it. So, when does Kat get here? Am I interrupting?"

"No, you aren't interrupting. She will be here soon, though."

"Maybe I should go then."

"No, you need to talk; I understand. Besides, what are friends for? Let me just text her."

Jo made her way to the kitchen, obviously smelling the brownies. I went ahead and sent Kat a message so that she wouldn't be surprised to see Jo when she arrived.

"Hey, save Kat some brownies, okay?"

She poked her head out of the kitchen, looking at me with a devilish grin.

"She must be something special. You made your cream cheese brownies. Damn, I need to become a movie star."

"Good goddess, Jo, you know I would make those for you anytime!"

She came back to sit on the sofa with a glass of milk and two more brownies, looking at me as if she had just gotten caught raiding the pantry.

"So, what's on your mind, girlfriend?"

"I know you talked to Sam today; she told me. I just can't believe how wonderful she is being. Last night was tough. I am feeling so confused right now. Though, I have to say, since having some of these brownies I am not so sad anymore."

Then the bell rang and I knew that it had to be Kat.

"Let me get the door and we can still talk, okay? If you don't mind Kat being around."

"It's fine. I feel bad taking up her time with you, though."

"Don't worry about it; she understands."

When I opened the door there was Kat, arms full of flowers and food, and Chet, one of her bodyguards, holding her overnight bag.

"Hello, angel!"

"Wow, you are a sight! Hi Chet, just drop her bag there."

"Thanks, Amanda. If you need anything, Kat, you know where to find me." Chet was a dream, such a sweetheart, a huge man who took excellent care of Kat and I always felt very safe knowing he was right there. Her other bodyguard was Steve.

"I always want to bring him food; must be the mother in me."

"Well, angel, you can feed me anytime. Oh, my heavens, brownies! I smell brownies!"

I found myself standing in her wake, holding the food and flowers as she bolted right past me and into the kitchen.

“Hey, Jo, nice to see you.” Kat managed to say as she breezed past.

And with that I was left to put the flowers down and the food away.

“Mmm, you went by the Italian deli, you little devil. Kat, it’s just a few days, look at all of this food! Prosciutto, Italian beef, oh my, crusty Italian bread, provolone, salads, heavens what a feast! Oh my, and amaretto cheesecake. Damn, girl.”

She knew all of my favorite things, including that cheesecake.

“Ah yes, but nothing like these!” She proceeded to bite into a brownie while letting out a sigh of pure delight.

After putting everything away we headed back out to the living room.

“Jo, do you mind if I sit here with you or would you rather chat with Amanda in private?”

“I don’t mind at all, Katherine.”

“It’s Kat, girl.”

“Thanks. No, I don’t mind if Amanda doesn’t.”

“Whatever you are comfortable with is fine with me.”

“Well, as I was saying, I know that you chatted with my girlfriend today and she is being so wonderful, but I feel awful that I pushed her away after that kiss. It was so innocent, too, so soft and sweet, but that in itself scared me. I am so afraid of losing her.”

“Jo, you have to trust yourself enough to know what is right for you. Did you talk to her about it, tell her why it scared you?”

“No, not really. I need to tell her more, I know that. I can’t believe that the gentleness scared me. I mean, what is happening?”

“That’s perfectly understandable, really. You have to get used to being intimate again. Even the good things can touch us off inside.”

“She is so wonderful. But I keep thinking she could have anyone she wanted and she is choosing to be with me. I don’t want to lose her, and yet I can’t force myself to go any faster than I can.”

“I know, believe me. She is willing to give you the time you need, but you are going to need to let her in more so that she understands. I can’t tell her anything, Jo, you have to.”

Kat watched and listened while sitting close to me. She seemed genuinely concerned about Jo.

“Can I say something?” Kat asked.

“Sure, go ahead.” Jo looked at her.

“Any woman would be lucky to have you for a girlfriend. But no relationship is really built on solid ground unless you can open up and find comfort in each other. It doesn’t matter if it is lover or a good friend. Trust is everything.”

I found myself taking in what Kat had said, even as Jo listened intently. I felt incredibly lucky to have her for a close friend. I was learning a big lesson from my younger friend. Kat was right and the more one held back the less chance one had of getting closer and finding comfort.

All that I could hear inside my head were Kat’s words, “Trust is everything.”

“Thanks, Kat. Can I ask you, what is it like, being famous, finding trust in someone? I mean, knowing they care about you for you and not who they think you are?”

Of course Jo was inquiring because of Sam, who Kat still didn’t know about.

“That is the trick, actually, finding genuine friends that are there for you and you for them. It’s scary; you feel like you can’t really trust anyone, and then someone breaks through and just by the way they treat you when you are hurting you learn who you can really trust. Especially, when they don’t have any interest in being seen with you, when just the two of you is enough.”

Kat then took my hand and kissed the back as she continued.

“Like my angel here.”

Her kiss upon my hand was innocent enough but it sent a bolt of electricity through me unlike any I had ever felt, even with Cassie. I could only look at her and blush.

Jo glanced at me curiously.

“And you two are only friends. Amazing.”

“Well, we are taking our time and getting to know each other well. We have both been through a lot so no need to rush anything. But with the way this one cooks it is difficult not to want to ravish her like these brownies.”

“And with that I think I will leave you two to your weekend.”

We all stood up at once and Jo hugged me so tight that I thought I would break.

“Thanks, both of you, for taking the time to talk and to listen.”

“Anytime, Jo,” I said.

“Yes, it was a pleasure getting to know you better. Amanda has very good taste in friends.”

When the door shut, we were left to our evening, which was about to get a lot more interesting.

I turned and looked up into Kat’s beautiful eyes and saw her in a different light. Kat was truly a woman in every sense of the word, not a young girl.

“Trust is everything,” I said to her.

“Trust is everything.”

And with that she enveloped me in her arms and I wished that time would stand still so that I could always feel that way. I felt safe, and surely I was safe enough now to tell her what I needed to. I knew then, that even though it wasn’t going to be easy, I had to because trust was everything.