

After that weekend with Kat I felt raw and spent. I was exhausted from all of the emotion and yet I felt as though I had been freed from carrying all of those feelings inside for so very long. Kat had been sweet, kind, nurturing, and amazingly insightful.

Several weeks had since passed and I was grateful for the routine of work, writing and spending time with friends. Kat still called or emailed every day and I looked forward to hearing from her. We would talk for hours some nights, having dinner together on the phone, sometimes catching *The L Word* when it was new. We enjoyed just being together and not having the pressure of anything more for now.

She understood the process—the time it took to heal after a new revelation and how much it meant to just be in the moment. But I knew that she wanted more and I couldn't say that it didn't cross my mind a lot. But for the time being we remained close friends.

One Friday night I was looking forward to spending time with Sam and Jo at my place. When I heard the doorbell ring I was surprised that they would be arriving so early, but when I went to the door I was far more surprised to see Kat standing there.

“Oh my Goddess! Kat, what are you doing here?”

“Hey, angel. Just a little surprise I cooked up last night!” Kat was leaning up against the doorframe wearing a sexy pair of black jeans and a stunning silk white blouse. Of course her smile was electric. She wasted no time coming inside and closing the door. With Kat's arms around me I momentarily forgot that Sam and Jo were to arrive within a half hour. As Kat pulled away and looked towards the dining room her smile dimmed, seemingly almost disappointed.

“Looks like you are getting ready for company.”

“Yes, some of my friends are coming to dinner. Remember I mentioned it the other night?”

“Oh yes, now I remember. That's why you have three place settings. I have to admit, I thought maybe you were entertaining another woman until I saw the third setting. Do you want me to go over to the hotel while you have your friends over or do you finally want to introduce me to them?”

“Well, I think it might be time for you to meet my friends. One I have known a very long time. And I need to tell you something about her.”

Just as I was about to tell her about Sam, the bell rang again. Great, they were early after all.

“Oh well, I guess now is as good a time as any. Want me to get the door?”

“No, let me do that.” I rushed past her to the door wondering what was going to happen when Kat and Sam came face to face.

“Hey, Amanda!” Jo said as she pulled me into a big hug. They both saw Kat and Jo went right over to shake her hand.

“Hi Kat, how are you?”

“Great, Jo, how are you?”

“Really well, thanks! I didn’t know you were joining us for dinner.”

“Well, I surprised Amanda with my trip.”

“Great!”

At that moment you would have thought that two stars had collided; you might say that they each had been struck. They stood there looking at each other and then at me. No one moved for what seemed an eternity.

I finally swallowed hard and spoke up, “Sam, I want you to meet Kat.”

Kat, being gracious, went right up to her and put her hand out.

Sam just looked at her in disbelief.

“So, Amanda, where have you been hiding this little number?” Sam’s confident attitude was coming out more like a jealous ex-lover. She certainly knew how to let someone know she wasn’t pleased. I couldn’t believe it. Kat dropped her hand and put it around my waist as if she was claiming me.

“Sam!”

“Hmmm, so when were you going to get around to telling me about your latest conquest?”

“Sam!” I said in unison with Jo that time.

Kat was shocked. I knew that she recognized Sam and I was sure that Sam recognized her.

“Well, that was classy,” Kat said.

Sam’s eyes were burning a hole into her, I swear.

“Sam, this is my dear friend Kat.”

“I think we both know what kind of a friend she is, Amanda.” Sam’s eyes flashed, her hard edge razor sharp.

There it was again: her words spit out like nails, and that hard “Amanda”, not “Mimi.” She wasn’t the most famous woman in the room; she was a friend and she didn’t like the possibility that Kat was, in her mind, my lover.

“Come on, Jo, we’re leaving.”

“No, I am not going anywhere with you, Sam. What’s gotten into you?”

“I am not staying, Jo, so either come with me now or Amanda here can drive you home.”

“Fine, just go then.”

I swear, women were a pain in the ass. Guys got jealous and fought it out and bought each other a beer afterward. Women, oh no, we women had to snarl, growl and bare teeth. Sometimes, I wished that we could just go right to the making up, or at least having a beer!

“It is what you do best, Sam,” I said.

Now her glare was directed right at me.

“And what’s that supposed to mean?”

“You know how to leave, turning the spotlight back onto you when everyone isn’t fawning all over you. You’re being a spoiled brat and I don’t understand what the hell has gotten into you.”

“Maybe I am tired of the fact that you claim to be my friend but never tell me what is really going on in your life.”

Great, now they were all looking at me. Kat’s grip got tighter around my waist as she put herself slightly in front of me to take a protective stance.

“Well, so sorry that I don’t meet the standards of the Queen of Rock ‘n’ Roll.” Sarcasm under these conditions was second nature to me.

“What the hell is going on here?” Kat asked finally.

“Jo is Sam’s girlfriend, and Sam and I have been, well, we used to be friends.”

“So why is she acting like you are her girlfriend, or are you ex’s?” Kat looked from me to Sam and back again. She was filled with concern and curiosity.

Sam chimed in with “I thought you two were just friends.”

“We are just friends, very good friends, at least right now,” Kat replied, rather unhappily.

“Oh, I see. So she’s going to string you along just like she has me for so many years?”

“What the hell, Sam! I have never strung you along. You knew we were never going to be anything but friends since college. You’ve known that.” I was furious at this point.

“Are you, blind, Amanda? You couldn’t tell all of these years that I wanted us to be more than just friends?”

“But we talked about this, Sam, on many occasions! Why are you being so terrible?”

“Because I am just wondering what all of these other women have that I don’t?”

Well, there it was, out in the open. Finally she spoke the truth I had always suspected. Poor Jo was crumbling, I could see it in her eyes. She had never seen this side of Sam, but I knew that it was there. I had seen it before.

“You left, that’s why. You left in college and you chose your career. You left when I was at my most vulnerable. When I needed you, you left.”

“I never knew you needed me. You told me to go and then you didn’t even say goodbye to me when I left. For two weeks before you just stopped talking to me. I figured it was your way of letting go.”

This was not going well. Everything was spilling out all over the place and more than one of us was being hurt here.

“Well, I’m sorry. I couldn’t make it to see you off with broken ribs.”

Time seemed to stand still. Jo and Sam looked stunned and Kat just grabbed me into a hug.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Sam growled at me.

“Of course I told you to go. I didn’t want you to miss out on the opportunity of making it. I knew how important it was to you and the choice you made was to leave college and follow your dream.”

“But why did you stop talking to me? I needed you, Amanda, and you weren’t there for me in those early years. And what broken ribs? What the hell are you talking about?”

Jo looked at me and she knew what was coming.

“No, Amanda, don’t, you don’t have to,” Jo said with real hurt in her eyes and an understanding that I really wished she didn’t have, what no woman should ever know.

I’d had it with her. She was so self-centered. “What was I supposed to do, tell you, ‘Hey Sam, I have some broken ribs and look like a black and blue mess, but why don’t you come say goodbye, because you are so much more important right now?’”

“What are you talking about?”

Jo and Kat looked at each other as I broke away from Kat and went right up to Sam. Something came over me and I had had it. I was tired of hiding, tired of the lies, tired of being misunderstood, tired of explaining.

“I was raped. I had the shit beaten out of me and if you hadn’t been so caught up in you, ‘Samantha Stanley the Rock Star,’ you might’ve known that there had to be a reason I wasn’t picking up the phone or answering you. You see, Sam, it isn’t always about you.”

Sam stood there in shock. She looked like she wanted to kill someone, and I knew who she meant. “I’ll kill him, whoever did this to you,” Sam said. Her fists were clenched so tightly that her knuckles had gone white.

“This is why I didn’t tell you then. I knew exactly what you would do and your career was just beginning. I couldn’t have you getting in a fight and risking your contract.”

“So, I owe my career to you.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

“Is it, Mimi, really, is it?” Sam was clearly shaken now; we all were.

“Just let it go, Sam. Life turned out well for both of us.”

“Oh yes, all these years of longing worked out really well.” Now Sam’s voice was dripping sarcasm.

“I’m not sorry, Sam. I had a right to protect myself.”

“From who? From what?”

“From this. From you. From being your project. For you feeling sorry for me. I wouldn’t be the reason you didn’t go on that tour.”

“The tour that made your career,” Kat chimed in. We all turned to her, knowing that it was true.

“I owe you a lot, Mimi, but I never knew how much until now,” Sam said looking right at me, her attitude was softening palpably. “Did they ever catch the bastard that hurt

you?”

Well, I had gone this far. Now for the part that was going to hit home. But I couldn't lie now.

“It wasn't a guy.”

Sam looked confused, but Jo and Kat knew.

“What?” It wasn't dawning on her, not yet.

“It was Trisha.”

Sam's face dissolved into disbelief and shock. Tears welled up as her eyes met mine. “I am sorry, Mimi, so sorry. I had no idea.”

I went up and pulled her into a hug, wiping her tears.

“I know, I know. I am sorry I didn't tell you sooner, didn't trust you, but you have to understand, Sam, I didn't trust myself. It was so hard for me. Some days it still is.”

“Why didn't you tell me about Kat here?”

Kat was now standing by Jo, who seemed to need the support.

“Sam, you should know, of all people, what it is like being in the public eye. Kat and I are very, very good friends and we kept it low key. We wanted to be able to spend time together without being bothered. Just like you and I do.”

Sam went over to Kat and finally extended her hand.

“Man, I am really sorry I didn't make a good first impression.”

Kat shook her hand, “It seems like a lot has come out today; I understand.”

“It's nice to meet you. I am Samantha Stanley.” We all began to laugh as the tension broke.

“Nice to meet you, Samantha. I am Katherine Lucette.” Kat grinned.

“Well, now that we have all been introduced maybe I can salvage dinner,” I said as I headed into the kitchen with Kat in tow.

When we were safely out of earshot Kat whispered to me.

“And I thought I knew how to make an entrance.”

I could do nothing but laugh at that one. I was breathing easier knowing that I didn't have to keep either secret from Sam now.

The night went on with dinner and conversation revolving around which of Sam's tours Kat had seen and, of course, how we all had come to know each other over the years. It was pleasant enough, but I could tell that Sam was sad. She was nice to Kat, but she didn't seem to like her. Surely, they would not be seeing too much of each other.

It was apparent to me that Kat knew how to play Sam to keep her in line.

I was not sure why women got so jealous of other women's friends, but it happened often. It was as if they thought love was limited when, in reality, love was infinite. I would have never given up my friends in favor of a relationship. My friends were like a treasure and if you loved me then you knew how important they were and always would be. Unfortunately, this thing with Sam was not unusual and I knew better than to try and reason with her.

"Well, that was an interesting evening!" Kat said after Sam and Jo left and we finished cleaning up.

"Kat, I am so sorry. I had no idea Sam would react that way. She really is a lovely woman."

"I am sure she is, but I have to ask, do you ever think of us as more than friends, I mean, as a possibility in the future?"

"Of course I have thought of it, Kat. I still need more time, but as long as we stay honest and trust each other I can see it happening." Then I said, "You really don't believe I strung her along, do you?"

"Of course not. I understand completely. I understand that you sacrificed having her comfort so she could go on that tour. I know that first tour made her career."

"It was what I had to do at the time."

"We all do the best we can with what we know at the time."

"True."

We both needed to unwind and relax. It had been an evening I would never forget. We searched for a movie to watch.

"Hmmm, that was quite a 'Kat Fight' tonight!" I said, laughing.

"Yes, and it didn't even come from me! Let's avoid seeing Sam if you don't mind. I honestly don't think I could pull off another award-winning performance again—the being-nice part."

“I understand, no problem. That just means I get you to myself!”

“You sure are a spitfire when you want to be.”

“I will take that as a compliment,” I smiled.

“It makes me wonder what you are like when you are excited...and naked.”

“Kat!”

And with a rise and fall of her eyebrows she pulled me closer and we curled up together and watched the movie. Both of us had the same thing on our mind. When, when, when.