

Sam and Jo were struggling to keep their relationship together after all that had happened that night at my home a few weeks before. So much had been revealed about Sam's true feelings for me and what she had longed for. Jo was having a hard time accepting that Sam could ever really love her fully since it was obvious that she was still holding on to the fantasy that we might ever be a couple.

So Jo came to me, the woman for whom her girlfriend had been pining. It felt strange to be there for Jo given that I was the woman her girlfriend had never let go of in that way.

We met at our favorite lunch place, *The Quilted Bear* in Scottsdale, where they had the best and longest salad bar in a truly lovely setting. The large, quilted chairs enveloped one in softness. It was a place I had been frequenting since I was in college. I enjoyed the tranquil setting set off the street. The staff always remembered me and the service was second to none.

"Hi, Jo," I said as I embraced her in a warm hug.

"Hi, Amanda. Thanks for meeting me here."

"Well, it is our favorite place now, isn't it?"

The hostess led us to a table by the window. When we were comfortably seated, I reached across the table and took her hand in mine. "How are you, really?"

"To be honest, it has been hard. I am finding it difficult to trust her. I love her, Amanda, but how do I know she can really give her heart to me when she still longs for what might have been with you?" Jo's bloodshot eyes betrayed her lack of sleep and the tears she had shed.

"Jo, we all have women in our life that we wish could have been more, but in the end never were and probably for good reason."

"I know, even I still wonder about Jane sometimes, but I don't expect myself to be pining away for her in twenty years." Her tone became almost indignant at this point.

I felt a lot of compassion for Jo. I had no idea how to tell her that there were some women we would always wonder about. Yet, that was just a part of life and since the heart's capacity to love was infinite we could find ways to open up to another and love deeply.

"Even if Sam does still long for me, those feelings stem from what we were to each other when we were not much younger than you are right now. Neither of us is the same person anymore; we have grown, changed, loved, lost, and hopefully learned a few

lessons along the way.”

Jo smiled at me then and somehow I thought she found comfort in knowing that, yes, Sam and I had both changed so much. Sam had a fantasy of what we could have been, but I was confident that in her heart she knew it could never have been. And if we had taken that route we would have been exes now and probably would no longer have been very close at all. I went on to discuss this point with Jo, explaining how life just worked out the way that it was supposed to, even if we didn't want to believe it.

The rest of our lunch that day was very relaxed as we spoke of mutual interests, such as our favorite import singers and bands. Jo was a big fan of Alex Parks and Melanie C, so we gushed over how amazing their music was and how damn hot they both were. It would be interesting to look back on that conversation later since we had both kissed Sam; inarguably the hottest lesbian rock star.

As we got ready to leave Jo put her hand on mine, motioning me to sit back down.

“Yes?”

“Amanda, I know why Sam still feels the way she does about you.”

“What do you mean?”

“You've only gotten more beautiful with age. I have seen the pictures from when you two were younger. And your gentle femme nature sure attracts girls like Sam.” She grinned, “Hell, girls like myself and, I'm sure, Kat.”

I didn't know what to say at that point; I felt my face reflecting every shade of red imaginable.

“My, I don't know even know what to say to that.”

“I just wanted you to know that even though you don't see it, we do, and maybe that's what makes you so attractive. You don't realize just how wonderful you are.”

“Jo, I'm just me; I don't pretend to be anything else.”

“I know. I just wanted you to know that Kat would be damn lucky if you decide to date her.”

“Thanks, Jo, that means a lot to me.” With that, I stood up and gave her a great big hug. “It will be alright. Don't give up on Sam. She has a big heart.” I took her face in both my hands and looked her right in the eye, “Remember, there is a big difference between feelings and fantasies. Don't let fear get in the way.”

Maybe I should have been taking my own advice at that point. I had been afraid even to dream about Kat, though it was getting harder and harder to push thoughts of her away,

especially when lying in bed at night.

I decided to take time for myself after lunch and take a drive to Sunset Point. It wasn't all that far, though I did consider making the further drive to Sedona, but decided I would settle for the Point. I needed to get out of town, just breathe the air, and sit and ponder what was happening in my life. The drive, of course, reminded me of Cassie and the many trips we used to take up to Sedona together. It was magical getting out of town, heading to Red Rock country, drinking in nature at its finest.

I felt so much. The loss of Cassie, the fear of starting something new, the lure of the fantasy of a new lover, and my feelings were becoming clearer by the day. Kat and I had grown closer and closer. My fear revolved around ruining the friendship that we both counted on for so much now. Life was full of risks and rewards but how did one know what to do when dealing with matters of the heart?

As I approached Sunset Point I slowed to pull into the overlook area. It was stunning as always, the high desert mountains, the colors, and shadows of dusk just starting to appear. The clouds were light and the beauty embraced me like a warm hug.

So much had happened over the past year. It was amazing to think back on it all and to realize that I had some more choices to make now that would affect the future dramatically. Was I ready for a relationship with Kat? How would I repair my relationship with Sam? I was grateful that Jo was mature enough not to blame me for Sam's infatuation with the past.

Women were complicated creatures. I knew that because here I was, one of them. We saw things sometimes through our emotions, sometimes devoid of them, but it always seemed to come down to our heart.

I stayed at the Point for over an hour watching the sunset and finding some inner peace again. As I drove home I called Sam and told her I was coming by.

The trip to Sam's place seemed to pass too quickly. Here it was—time to deal with the aftermath of the feelings that had been released. Her fantasies, my feelings too, and now the fear I had of losing her friendship if we didn't talk this out.

She answered the door quickly and gathered me up in her arms. "I am so sorry, Mimi, so sorry."

"I know, Sam, I know."

She led me to the living room, where we fell onto the sofa and sat looking at each other for what seemed to be several minutes before either of us had the courage to start.

"I don't want to lose you, Mimi."

"Well, I don't want to lose our friendship. We have been so close for so long. You know,

you still know things about me no one else does.”

She smiled at that revelation. “You mean me and your agent?”

“Yes that...and there are other things.”

“So, you haven’t told Katherine that you’re a best-selling author yet, have you?”

“No, to this day, only you and Jack know my pen name.”

“Why not tell her?”

“Because I want people to love me for me, not for some notion of who they think I am. Besides, that was a long time ago.”

“I bet you’re still getting royalties though.”

“Yes, just like you are from the songs you recorded, what was it, 20 years ago now?”

“True.” Sam smiled, “I’m glad I still know some things others don’t.”

“You always will.”

“Mimi, I really am sorry I was such an ass that night.”

“Well, you couldn’t have raised the bar much higher.” We both laughed, and the tension started to melt away.

“Honestly, Sam, I never led you on, never meant to. And all that I kept from you was to protect you at the time. We wanted different lives, and I knew you well enough to know you wouldn’t have gone on that tour if you had any idea of what had happened to me.”

“After thinking about everything for awhile now, I do know that I’m amazed that you did that though, sacrificed so much.”

“Or perhaps I was a coward. I knew I would’ve just fallen into your protective arms and let you take care of me. And that wouldn’t have been fair to either one of us.”

“How were you a coward?”

“Because I couldn’t let you love me like that. I was too scared to be loved—to let love in again—especially after such a shock. We had something so special and I needed your friendship more than I needed a lover.”

“I think that makes you incredibly strong, not cowardly.”

“Well, maybe, but I am feeling the coward now.”

“Because you haven’t let Katherine in too far? Well, at least physically yet?”

“Yes, still getting comfortable with the thought of it.”

“Are you kidding me? She’s absolutely gorgeous!”

“You know what I mean...with all that comes with it. I don’t know; it’s a lot to think about.” I sank deeper into the sofa feeling very exposed.

“Well, from the way she protects you, Mimi, I wouldn’t worry about it at all. Just take a chance and let her in.” Sam reached out for my hand taking it in both of hers. She was always very gentle with me when she could sense my emotions welling up inside. It was a part of her that was truly endearing.

“It just brings up so much, not so different than what you are going through with Jo.”

“Well, I know you had Cassie and that there have been others, so didn’t you get over what happened?”

I looked towards the mountains fixated for a moment on the intense beauty surrounding me. I didn’t know how to answer, except as honestly as I could without breaking down in tears.

“No, you never get over it. You learn to live with it, you adjust, and you learn to trust at some level again. But, get over it? No, not really. And Kat will have to be patient with me, take it slow, and I will have to go through learning all over again to let her in. It is easier, much easier because of Cassie, but still it is difficult.”

“I am sorry, Mimi, so sorry. I wish I could take away the pain. I wish I could take away Jo’s pain; it’s fucking heartbreaking, actually. Wanting to make it all right and all I can do is be supportive and hold her when she gets frightened.”

“That’s everything, Sam. You have no idea what it means to feel safe in a woman’s arms. It’s everything.”

“So where are we now, Mimi? Can you forgive me?”

“Yes, but you need to get over this ‘what-if’ thing. You know I love you and, believe me Sam, I have thought of it too over the years, but we are past that stage. We are too close as friends to go there. I can’t lose you as a friend. It isn’t because I wasn’t attracted to you, Sam. You know darn well how I feel, but my need for the friendship was too strong to ever betray.”

“All those one-night stands.” Sam shook her tousled head, “I swear, Mimi, I would’ve traded them all for one night with you.”

I looked at her with one eyebrow raised.

“Really? You want to think about that again?”

We both laughed as she pretended to mull it over, “Okay, well maybe not *all* of them, but most, really.”

“Sure, Sam, I believe you. *Not.*”

And with that we were back to our old banter. The easy way we had between us had been rekindled. Sam and I were old friends who, yes, had been more many years ago. But at this point I was grateful that all we had done was dance, kiss, and cuddle.

Then my mind drifted to all of the times Sam had sang to me, for me and only me. Sometimes it was in front of an audience and sometimes it was in private, but it always melted me. She would always be the one whom I would adore, love, and hold precious. We had a shared history and a balance between us that was truly magical.

I headed home not long after seeing Sam. As I walked in the door I heard the phone ring. I looked at the caller ID and picked up immediately.

“Hello, Kitty Kat.”

“That still gets to me,” she said laughing.

“So how are you, sweets?”

“Good. Just missing you and wondering how things are?”

“Things are okay, actually. I had lunch with Jo and then took a drive to Sunset Point to clear my head. On the way home I stopped by Sam’s place.”

“Oh my, how did that go, angel?”

“It was good. We worked it out as we always do. We will always be friends.”

“I’m glad you finally talked it out. I know things were a little strained after that night.”

“Yes, and things with her and Jo are taking time but they’ll work it out.”

“Well, angel, I have some news.”

“Oh yes?”

“I have decided to buy a house in Phoenix so that I have a cover for being there so much.”

“Wow, that’s great, Kat! I’m so happy.” My feelings were that of happiness, yet deep inside I was nervous wondering if we were ready for this. Kat moving to Phoenix would

have consequences we couldn't even begin to know of until it happened.

"I am glad you feel that way. I was kind of nervous telling you."

"Why, of course, I would love it if you had a home here and I take it that means you would base out of Phoenix?"

"Oh, yes, no keeping two homes for me."

"Wow, Kat, that is wonderful."

"So, you know I am going to want your help picking out the house and decorating it, right?"

"Why, I would have been insulted if you didn't ask!"

"Good, I am just so elated. It will be wonderful to be closer to you and not have to catch a plane to get something from home."

"Good point. I am thrilled, Kat, just thrilled."

She knew what I meant and I knew what this meant. This was going to move us forward; it had a life of its own now. I was scared and elated at the same time. My heart was racing like a kid with a new toy at Christmas.

"Well, angel, I will call you later to say goodnight."

"Okay, Kat, and ..." I hesitated, but she did not.

"I love you too, angel."

"I love you, Kat."

And with that my emotions exploded, and my fears abated. For the moment I let my feelings lead right into my fantasies.