

Those moments after that first kiss with Kat were sweet and very romantic, yet I couldn't let it get much further, not after Ellen's death. Having sex was a normal reaction to the death of someone you knew. You wanted to prove that you were alive and sex was one of the best ways to do that, to feel something, but I wasn't going to go there with Kat. I couldn't, not like that. I never wanted to remember our first time that way.

Kat completely understood when I explained what had and so we just sat, snuggled, and talked for a long time. Eventually we ordered pizza and watched one of my favorite movies, *Contact*. I thought a lot about how a woman's hands can heal and yet at the same time can bring such destruction. To trust in someone is gift.

The rest of the night was easy between us and I was grateful that she was so understanding. We went to bed and I felt blessed to have her hold me in her arms all night. Being surrounded by the softness of the down quilt and smelling the freshly cut flowers in the room left my senses reeling. To appreciate being fully alive came at a price. There was a part of me that felt awful for feeling so happy about Kat and me. I still felt the loss of Ellen but somehow it balanced out deep inside. I didn't want to waste one moment in the past or in regret. It was now, this moment with Kat that I wanted to embrace and hold in my heart forever.

The next morning I awoke to find Kat watching me in a very loving manner.

"Hey."

"Hey, angel."

She snuggled up closer and kissed me sweetly and lightly.

"Mmmm, I could get used to that."

"So could I, baby girl."

"Oooo, that's new. I like that!"

"Here, and I thought you loved 'angel'."

"Well, you can't expect me to be an angel all of the time now, can you?"

"I was hoping you would take those wings off occasionally with me," she grinned.

"You can bet after that kiss last night and this morning I will be very happy to hang up my wings for a while."

We cuddled up and lay there in silence for a long time, but it was a comfortable silence, the kind between two women who truly understand each other.

“Breakfast, my dear?” I asked Kat, knowing that she would be hungry by then.

“Why, I think that would be perfect!”

I was thinking how much I loved living in Arizona. I especially loved Phoenix as I went out to pick the oranges right off the tree to squeeze for our morning juice. The sun was warm upon my skin, but it felt so good this morning. I looked up to see Mummy Mountain looking majestic in the light. It was a sight I had witnessed my whole life and yet today it took on a special meaning. It would be etched into my memory as I looked back inside and saw Kat smiling out at me through the sliding glass doors. I walked back inside into her warm embrace before completing the task at hand preparing our meal. I brought out croissants and tea as well. While we sat and ate our breakfast, I thought about how easy and joyful it was to be with Kat. As I watched her, I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to make love with her for real. My dreams of her were now playing out in the reality of my life. All thoughts of Cassie seemed far away and that, in and of itself, felt strange.

We didn't talk about when it would happen but we both knew that we wanted to be with each other. It would take a little time for me to get away from the sadness of losing Ellen before I would feel that it was appropriate, but I knew it would happen, and probably sooner than later.

Kat left around two that afternoon and we agreed to take a night off from each other since she had lines to learn and I had to catch up on some work to meet my next deadline. But we made plans to spend the next night together.

It wasn't too long after eight PM that Sam called in a panic.

“Mimi, I am sorry if I am interrupting anything. I really need to talk to you.”

“It's okay, babe. What's going on?”

“I think I made a big mistake.”

“What happened?”

“Last night Jo came over and she was so affectionate and kind of forward. I just figured she had relaxed enough and we made love for the first time. At first it was amazing and exciting, and I was very gentle with her. But then, right after, she cried and wouldn't let me touch her. She just wept and finally fell into a fitful sleep. Mimi, what the hell is going on?”

“Okay Sam, settle down. Where is she now?”

“Out on the back patio. She’s just sitting in a deck chair by the pool staring at the sky. Damn, Mimi, I am so stupid. Why did I let that happen?”

“It’s not your fault. She had a rough day yesterday and what you experienced with her was death sex.”

“What? Who died?” Sam was clearly confused. Jo obviously hadn’t told her about Ellen.

“A client.”

“Damn, why the hell did she react like that?”

“Sam, everyone deals with death in a different way. There is no right and no wrong way. Jo needed to feel alive and sex with you was the way she did it.”

“Great, so now what do I do?”

“Talk to her. Tell her you called me and I told you about Ellen—that was the client. Tell her you understand and that you don’t want this to pull you apart from her emotionally. See if you can get her to hold your hand and just start over.”

“Are you kidding me?” Sam was incredulous, “Like, all over again?”

“Afraid so, kiddo. I told you this was a long road and it will be two steps forward, one back. Hell, sometimes two steps back. But Sam, you know she is worth it.”

“Yes, I know that but, geez, we were doing so well together and now this.”

“I almost made the same mistake with Kat last night. I came so close to letting our first kiss turn into death sex and thankfully I realized that I couldn’t do that. But Jo is so young and she didn’t realize what was happening.”

“Hell, I’m older than you and I didn’t realize what was going on.”

“But you didn’t know. How could you have known that was what was happening?”

“That’s true. I’m really scared, though. I love this girl with my whole heart and I don’t want to lose her.”

“I don’t think you will, Sam. Just be gentle with her and be willing to meet her on her terms, as fast as she can go. This shouldn’t set you back that much once she settles things inside of herself.”

“I don’t know what I would do if I didn’t have you to talk to about this.”

“You know I will always be here for you, dear.”

“Thanks, girl. Well, I’m going to head out to the pool with her favorite lemonade. At least I know she will like that.”

“You are an amazing girlfriend. She is truly lucky.”

“Thanks, Mimi. Talk to you later.”

“You’d better.”

We hung up and I thought about how lucky I was that Kat and I didn’t go there last night. It would have been so easy to do so.

I went back to work for a few more hours and decided I had had enough around 10:30 PM. I headed to the kitchen to make a little something for dinner since I had worked right through it. Working in such a colorful, well equipped kitchen was something that brought me tremendous peace. I wanted something light. A sandwich sounded good, and Sam had me thinking about lemonade so I made a pitcher and poured myself a tall glass. A few minutes later I was comfortably ensconced in the sofa, watching the previous week’s episode of *The L Word*. I found myself aching a bit after watching Helena have sex on screen. Since Marina had left in the first season, Helena had become my choice for a roll in the sheets, so to speak. Though I loved Alice, I was too much like her to see her as a lover, being that we were both pillow queens. I always adored women who were referred to as macho femmes or femme tops. And Kat certainly fit that description.

Kat was definitely femme but very much in control and extremely protective. Because she did a lot of action roles she kept very fit and had no problem taking the lead in almost everything. We were a good balance for each other in many ways, but I was still nervous about what we had not yet experienced with each other. And yet, for all of my doubts I also knew that my experience was not exactly lacking. Would my dreams of Kat be sweeter than the reality? Would her thoughts of me be more fantasy than reality?

The phone rang, jarring me out of my wandering thoughts.

“Hello.”

“Angel, I need to talk to you.”

“Okay, kitty, I’m here. I can tell something’s wrong. Talk to me.”

“It’s this part—the scene we are shooting last.”

“OK, I know what you mean. It’s pretty raw emotionally.”

“Yes, I am so glad you read the script.”

“Of course, I was happy to.”

“I don’t know, angel. Every time I run through it I get very upset and, don’t get mad at me, but I just get the urge to pick up a knife.” Kat’s voice was shaky. Clearly she was nervous, almost frightened.

Silence. I knew that she still had to fight this; she would always have to fight it. Some days would be easier than others, months would go by and she would be fine, but then she would hit a bad patch and each hour would be a struggle. Loving Kat meant loving all of her and this was part of it.

“When do you shoot the scene?” I tried to speak in soft tones wanting to reassure her that she wasn’t alone. The last thing I wanted to see was another mark on her beautiful skin.

“In about a month.”

“Do you want me to come over?”

“Yes, but I think it best if I come there since you will be spotted right away. I can get out of here without the ratzi seeing me.”

That was the part I hated about her being famous, the constant pain of photographers thinking that they owned her. Granted, I had been through it with Sam, yet now it seemed so much worse. Or maybe I was just older now and my patience in that regard was waning.

“I will see you in a few.”

“I will be waiting, kitty.”

“Thanks, angel. I love you so much.”

“I love you too, sweetheart.”

She arrived in about 20 minutes, which was actually pretty good considering what she had to go through. I took her into my arms and held her close. We went to the bedroom and lay down. She snuggled into my chest and cried it out, which was much better than if she was cutting. After a bit of time we spoke about how to deal with the way she was feeling. The first thing she did was to call her security people. She informed them that she wanted a new security system at my home so that when she was there we were both assured our privacy. As much as I protested she just took charge and said that it was a done deal.

“I want us to be as comfortable and safe as I do at my own home. The money isn’t an issue. Don’t even think twice about it.”

“Okay, but we need to discuss this role. Kat, you have to let me help you get through this. I am so glad you came to me and didn’t cut, but how are you going to be during the

next four weeks?”

“I will get through if I know you will be there the day I shoot it.”

“In Los Angeles?”

“Yes, that’s where we are shooting.”

“Wow, I haven’t been there in a long time.”

“I know, but I need you. Please think about it.”

“Only if you can close the set and promise me we fly in and out the same day.” She knew by my tone that this was non-negotiable. My privacy was something I had cherished all of my life. I had seen what the lack of it had done to those close to me and I wasn’t going to pay that price, not for Sam, not for Kat, not for anyone.

“Yes, we can do that. I already told the director to close the set for that scene. You know, it’s so difficult. It’s such an amazing part but I don’t think I can do it unless I go that deep.”

“You are putting yourself through hell to do this.” I looked at her with complete understanding. It was something far too many women had lived through. Yet, most of them weren’t putting it on screen for the world to see.

“And you are riding it out with me.”

“Yes, of course I am but Kat, let’s put off anything more than kissing until this is done. It’s too much pressure on us both.”

“Agreed.”

She was smiling now. “I can’t believe you agreed to go with me.”

“I love you, silly. Of course I would be there for you.”

“I love you, baby girl.”

There was such sweetness in our relationship, but because of what we had both been through in our lives there would also be sorrow. Life was full of balance and finding it was the challenge, the gift, and the joy. Appreciating the sweetness was a lot easier to embrace after all of the sorrow we had both been through.