

Our time away had felt like a fantasy. While in Sedona, where no one knew us, we could walk free, hold hands, and be close like any other couple could. I loved being with Kat in an environment that was breathtaking, spiritual, and relaxed. We came back recharged, refreshed, and ready now to take on this new dimension to our relationship. Lately we had been spending a lot of time at my home, even though hers was larger and quite lavish. The cats preferred to be at home and having both of us there was a treat for them. Everyone had extra cuddle and snuggle time when the two of us were around. Of course there seemed to be extra cuddle and snuggle time for the two big girls as well. Quite often Kat had to put Sam down from the bed gently when we wanted to have a little quality time. Of course, Sam the calico thought she should be invited to everything that involved her mother. As much as I loved Sam the cat, and Sam my friend, there were some things one didn't share.

I had to admit that I felt calm inside, something I had not felt in a very long time. Things were progressing with Kat in a very natural and easy way, at least most of the time. The times that truly annoyed me were when the press kept hounding her, or when the relentless phone calls never seemed to end. The phone would ring from morning until night. Finally, we both started turning our cell phones off at night since only very few friends had my home number.

We languished on the sofa one night after a delicious homemade dinner of baked Italian chicken, parsley noodles, and Kat's new favorite, Italian Caesar salad. She especially loved the homemade croutons and Italian dressing that was handed down to me from my grandmother from Italy. Since my mother passed away at such a young age my grandma had come to live with us for almost a year. It was because of the time I spent with her that I learned to really cook. She taught me how to make homemade bread, gravy, and how to truly season everything to perfection with fresh herbs and spices. She was an amazing woman, and one of my fondest memories was of her holding our new puppy on her lap and hand feeding him. I had always wanted a dog and after Mom passed away my father finally gave in. We named him Caesar because he was the runt of the litter. We gave him a strong Italian name to help him through. Grandma knew exactly what he needed: pasta and gravy of course. Until he died many years later he would always lie by the stove when the gravy was cooking. I had so many fond memories of my grandma and remembered her educating me about how what many called sauce was actually Italian gravy. I had always used both words interchangeably. My friends who were Italian heard gravy while my other friends heard sauce. I was enjoying my private trip down memory lane until Kat's voice brought me joyously back to the present moment.

"You look a million miles away tonight, angel."

"I'm sorry kitty, I was just thinking about my grandmother, Luisa. You know I loved her very much."

“She’s the one you learned to cook from, right?”

With a big smile upon my face and a lot of love in my heart I took Kat’s hand and kissed it. “Yes, she’s the one.”

“I wish I could have met her.”

“She would’ve loved you. She had such a big heart. That came through in her cooking, her music, in everything she did. If you didn’t have two helpings of everything she made she didn’t think you liked it.”

“I believe I know someone just like her.” We were both laughing now; it was true, I had turned into my grandmother!

“I’d consider that the greatest compliment in the world. If I’m half the woman she was then my life has been a success.”

Kat stretched out and pulled me next to her so we could snuggle. Just like clockwork Sam came around the corner and leapt up upon both of us. That was no small feat for a 20 pound cat.

“Well, hello beautiful.” Sam nuzzled right into Kat after hearing the word beautiful. I believe most women can’t resist being told they’re beautiful. Kat continued petting Sam as I snuggled as close as I could get to her. Not long after, the other cats came into the living room. They always wound up forming a line for their pet time. This had become quite a ritual for all of us, and no one was complaining.

“Do you ever wonder what we did before pet time?”

“I know a female other than Sam here who’s going to get some special pet time.”

I playfully hit Kat before I continued on. “Hmm sounds very interesting, I wonder if this woman will be in the mood?”

“Oh, if she isn’t at least Sam here is always in the mood for some pets.”

“I don’t think that’s fair, I can hardly compete with a cat.”

“Angel, no one has anything on you, believe me.”

“I like the way you think, young one.”

“I’m not that much younger than you.”

Smiling my sweetest smile I batted my eyelashes at her. We continued to dole out the pets to each loving kitty. Then, as usual, Kat got up to give them their nightly treats. She loved doing it when she stayed over, and that seemed to be most nights now. We

wanted to spend as much time as we could together. Being in touch now meant more than a text, e-mail, or phone call from anywhere in the city or the world. Being in touch meant feeling the other one, having dinner, laying together, kissing, bathing, showering, and of course, making love.

After tending to the cats she came back and took my hand, pulling me up from the softness of the lush sofa.

“Come on, it’s your pet time now.”

“Do I get a treat afterward?”

Laughing out loud and not missing a beat she continued “Oh angel your pet time is the treat, isn’t it?”

“I can’t argue with that.”

Just then, Kat’s soft lips were upon mine in a sweet gentle kiss that left my knees weak and heart racing. I loved the way she worked her hand through my hair while her other hand wrapped around my waist. She always seemed to take the lead and I was comfortable with that. We had an easy way about us, falling into a beautiful dance that only grew more loving, more passionate, more intense, and more comfortable. The only time she became uncomfortable was if I took the lead or when I lavished attention where her scars were. I kept trying to make her feel comfortable with them. I wanted her to know that I loved all of her. The flaws in a person were endearing to me. Her scars were as much a part of her as were her beautiful eyes or long flowing hair.

After a long night of making love we awoke to the sound of the birds chirping in the backyard. I loved it when the first light of dawn was peeking through the blinds and the birds were singing their morning songs. Life seemed perfect in those moments, especially right before Kat would wake and I would see her sleeping so deeply and peacefully.

Her eyelids started to flutter open and a smile came upon her face. She started stretching and Sam saw that as an invitation to leap upon the bed, right in between us.

“Well, good morning kitty and you too, Kat.”

“Mmm... good morning angel, good morning Sam.”

“I had a very sexy dream last night, or was that just you?”

“You always know just what to say, don’t you?”

“It’s a gift, baby.”

“And one that’s taken you far, I see.”

She pulled me down to her and kissed me quickly, just before I hit her with a pillow. We both headed to the bathroom and our morning ritual of flossing, brushing, rinsing, and then kissing. It was such a good thing I had kept the double sinks in the master bathroom. Cassie had used them, but not often. It was wonderful to have Kat here most of the time.

“I love that you get me, baby.”

“I get you, Kat.”

“I’m just not right until I get my teeth brushed, and mouth feeling fresh.”

We kissed again, and then decided to shower alone this morning. We both had a lot to do that day. My day included finalizing a new chapter in my book with my editor, as well as seeing Jo for lunch. She would be so excited to know that Kat and I had moved forward in our relationship. Kat had her final fitting and many details to go over, and of course, confirm with her handlers.

At least we both knew the day belonged to others and the reality of our lives, but the nights belonged to the reality of us now.

After Kat left I settled into my den office and rang up my editor. She was pleased with the latest chapter and only had a few changes she wanted me to consider. After discussing the changes I finished reworking the latest updates and sent it off to her. I looked around my den and was reminded of the wonderful friends I had in my life. It was a joy to see the many pictures of Sam and me, Jo, and of course others, including Kat and Cassie. I treasured the picture of my grandparents. Life was good and I felt free to love, to be loved, and to work as I always had in the peace and quiet of my home. I was grateful to Steve and the others who not only took care of Kat, but who also looked after my privacy now.

The drive over to the restaurant was easy, as most people were back at work after lunch. There was Jo, waiting for me in her sexy new car from Sam. I was happy to see her enjoying herself. She certainly deserved to be happy and Sam knew just how to make a woman feel wanted and loved. Even though it annoyed Kat, Sam still sent flowers to me. Jo didn’t seem to mind, but I almost thought Sam did it to get under Kat’s skin. They seemed to be competing most of the time. Inside I knew that Sam wasn’t about to stop being herself just because I had a girlfriend and so did she. She had sent me flowers our whole lives; it was something that I always treasured. She still enjoyed a good homemade meal every few weeks, which was her current excuse for sending the lovely blooms that would fill the house, along with the ones Kat would send.

I walked over to her car and we both entered the restaurant together. They always took such great care with us. Being a repeat customer for decades certainly didn’t hurt. After we were seated in our favorite spot Jo broke the silence.

“You look different today.”

“I do?”

“Yes, you do.”

“Maybe it’s my new dress?”

“No, it’s something else. Wait, you had sex!”

I started laughing, I couldn’t contain myself. How observant of her to come up with that so quickly.

“Who me? Sweet, innocent me?” I was batting my eyelashes in a very playful way.

“Wow. Oh Amanda, tell me everything. Okay, maybe not everything. When? Where? How?”

“If you don’t know the how by now I’m not sure I can help you with that, little one.”

Our usual waitress Bev came over to take our order. Jo ordered a California club sandwich which included guacamole on toasted sourdough bread. I was surprised that Jo actually tried something different. I thought about how I had tried something different myself the past weekend. I had a devilish grin upon my face that Jo noticed right away. She seemed eager for Bev to take my order now and get out of hearing range. Bev once had tripped the sheets with Sam, but I figured that was something best left in the past. It had been over 20 years since that had happened anyway. It was difficult to not run into a woman in this town that Sam had not been with at one time, or another.

“I thought she was going to be here all day taking our order. So, Amanda, it was last weekend, wasn’t it? Sedona seems to have that effect on so many. It must be because it’s so beautiful and relaxing.”

“And being there with a beautiful woman doesn’t hurt.”

“What’s Kat like, you know, in bed?”

“Let’s just say, she’s my type of woman, and knows how to treat a woman, in bed or out.”

“I’m so happy for you. She’s a lot like Sam I bet.”

“My cat?” I was of course teasing, though Jo didn’t pick up on that at first.

“What?”

“I was just joking Jo, really, catch on girl.”

“Oh, Sam the cat. Does she purr too?”

Our banter was light and playful. We both needed to just relax, blow off steam, and enjoy a few hours without the rest of the world intruding into ours, or at least our girlfriends' lives.

"I have to tell you, Sam really is amazing. She's still so gentle with me, never rushes me or expects anything of me. I love the way she takes care of me. It's fun being able to find ways to take care of her too."

"She's lucky to have you in her life."

"She tells me that all of the time. I've taken over all of the ordering for the house, groceries, laundry items, prescriptions, anything she needs or I need. It's a joy watching her discover that a new toothpaste is waiting for her, or that her favorite non-alcoholic beer is always there for her. I do enjoy spoiling her in my way. She does so much for me; I just hope it's enough."

"It's enough Jo, believe me, it's enough. Just being yourself, being with her and sharing your life together make it enough. She loves you so much. I know Sam, and I know when she's made a connection." I reached over and took her hand in mine. For a moment I paused and looked at our hands, hers so young, and mine reflecting the years of an older woman. It was something that always gave me comfort, to be able to tell how old a woman was by her hands.

We both were silent while we continued to eat our delicious lunches. The sun was shining through the half closed blinds as I gazed around. The light seemed to be casting a beautiful glow on the quilted chairs and plants throughout the restaurant. You knew you had a good friend when even the silent times were special and relaxed. I was on my second iced tea with lemon when Jo reached over and touched my hand.

"Thanks for being there for me; you've made it so much easier helping me understand Sam."

"I've had a lot of practice at it."

"She's lucky she has you for a friend, and so am I. But, Kat sure is the winner, finally getting you to succumb to her charms."

"Ah, is that what she did? I do understand what you mean about taking care of Sam, by the way. I love making sure Kat is taken care of too, she loves it when I cook for her."

"We all love it when you cook for us. You're the only one who can really cook."

"Kat makes great toast and scrambled eggs. Come to think of it, that's the only thing Sam can make also."

"Believe me, I know, that's why I do all of the ordering."

We finished up our meal and after sitting and talking over more iced tea we finally had our fill. It was time to head back to our homes, our girls, and our lives. When I heard the bells over the door sounding, I turned to see who had just walked in. I was again reminded of one Sam's conquests when I saw Bev's girlfriend Jen show up. Jen had also had a night with Sam. Jen was waiting for Bev to get off of work so I decided we better get our bill settled up quickly. We started to walk out to our cars and were met with the harsh full light of the afternoon sun.

"See you next Sunday for the awards show."

"I can't wait to spend it with you, Jo; it will be so much fun to share it together."

"Me too Amanda, sharing it with you, and of course Sam and the rest of the kitties."

As Jo got into her car I could hear her cell phone ring, and of course it was Sam checking on her. I had to laugh, it was only a few minutes later my phone rang and it was Kat doing the same thing. After I hung up with her my phone rang again right away.

"Hello, rock star."

"That never gets old."

"You always say that."

"I had a lovely lunch with your girlfriend."

"I know, she said the same thing. I have to admit I'm a bit jealous."

"Of Kat, still?"

"No, of Jo, she gets to see you more than I do."

"Oh Sam, we femmes get together a lot so we can gush over our girlfriends. And don't worry, every time we go to lunch we hear at least one of your songs playing in the background, so you're always close."

"Ah, royalties."

"Always thinking, aren't you?"

"About money, yes, if I'm not thinking about something else."

"I think I know what that is."

"I'm glad you and Jo are spending the Awards night together."

"It will be good for both of us while you and Kat go out and play."

“It’s work Amanda, you know that.”

“I know Sam, but yanking your chain has always been just too hard for me to resist.”

“You’re the best.”

“I know.”

“See you soon Sam, after the Awards are over. By the way, good luck, rock star.”

“Thanks. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Things felt right, all seemed to be going so well, and yet something was pulling at me. I couldn’t figure out what it was that didn’t feel quite right. I finally just decided it was the newness of recent events, and my newly found happiness with almost every aspect of my life. It was a feeling I wasn’t used too, but I decided I was willing to get used to it. I would miss Kat next weekend, but Jo and I would have a good time and once this event was over maybe Kat, Sam, Jo and myself could get some time to relax without so much fuss. Then again, maybe that was just a dream. Especially when your girl was the girl everyone thought they had a right to know everything about.