

After discovering that Kat had some deep emotional scars of her own, I just lay there wondering how I would approach this with her. My heart ached from the knowledge of what kind of pain one felt to find release in cutting. Having been through this with two other friends, I knew how tough it was for them to stop.

I noticed that one of the scars on Kat was made fairly recently; some of the others might have gone back years.

As Kat awoke I moved slowly to untangle myself from her. We were both stiff from lying in the same place for so long. She smiled at me so sweetly.

“How are you doing, angel?” she asked through barely open eyes.

“Better, so much better. Thank you, Kat.”

“Your trust means everything to me, Amanda. Thank you for sharing with me last night.” Kat gently touched my hand, “Let me clean up in the kitchen and make us some breakfast.”

“You *never* cook. Are you kidding?”

“Hey, I do know *how* to cook; it’s just that around you I feel a bit inept by comparison.”

“Wow, okay, if you’re offering, who am I to stand in your way?”

I wondered idly what breakfast made by Kat was going to taste like. Of course, after having fallen asleep without eating the night before, it could taste like cardboard and I wouldn’t care...much.

“So what are you going to make?”

“That’s a surprise—to both of us. I have no idea what you have in the fridge, so I will just have to make it up as I go.” She gave me that sweet smile again, kissed my forehead, and went off to the kitchen. I couldn’t help noticing how graceful Kat was as I watched her walk away. Her body so toned and tan, she was utterly stunning. Her clothing, scant as it was, hid her scars.

A few minutes later I had a cup of chamomile tea placed in front of me and it was wonderful. Well, at least she knew how to make a cup of tea.

Another 20 minutes passed and Kat came in beaming; I could tell that she was proud of herself. She had a tray made up with fresh fruit, scrambled eggs, and toast. Very nice, I thought to myself.

“It is so nice to be able to do this for you, Amanda. You always take care of me and never let me do anything except bring flowers.”

“Thank you, Kat. It isn’t easy for me to let someone take care of me. I guess it makes me feel vulnerable in a way. I am better at giving.”

“I know, angel.” That smile of hers could totally melt me.

We talked about the night and about how much I missed my mother, but also about how it felt really good to tell her and to get that off my chest, so to speak.

We decided to take our showers, get dressed, and do some work. I had some writing to catch up on and she had her script to go over. I remember wondering as I sat at my desk whether I should give it a day or talk to her that night about what I had discovered. Approaching this subject wasn’t going to be easy. I didn’t want her to run off on me. We had just shared something so delicate and if I chased her off now I would be devastated.

I wasn’t sure how I would bring it up, but somehow I knew I had to find a way.

The phone rang. It was Jo calling, so I picked it up.

“Hi Jo, how are you?”

“Fine, thanks. Listen, I know you are under a deadline this week but do you have a few minutes to talk to me about something important?”

“Sure Jo, no problem.”

“Well, you sure kept Sam a secret, didn’t you? I couldn’t believe it when she told me you two have known each other since high school. The look on my face must have been priceless.”

“Oh come on, you know how I am. What was I going to say? ‘Oh, yes, by the way, one of your favorite singers is one of my oldest friends?’”

“Well, at some point you would think it might have slipped out,” she said laughing. “Really, Amanda, what do I do about this? She is so amazing, hot, and, of course, talented. I can’t imagine why she wants to take me out. After all, there are so many women out there who would die to be with her.”

“I think Sam is ready to really settle down and she is looking to date now, not just pick up some girl. She is very talented and she has a heart of gold. How do you feel about her being so much older?”

“I never even thought about it. Age isn’t relevant to me; I need to know if she’s patient or not. Do you know what I mean?”

“Yes, I do. Are you asking if you think she might be willing to date you without having sex for a long time?”

“Well, you know firsthand how long it has taken for me to get to the point where I would even consider dating. Then throw a rock star into the mix. I just don’t know. I mean, I am flattered, excited, scared, and confused.”

“I understand, Jo, really, I do. It’s up to you if you want to pursue this with her or not. If you just want to remain friends with her after you have lunch then that is fine, too. She makes an awesome friend.”

“Amanda, I hate to ask, but I have to know, um...” I could see what was coming next, “Were you and Sam ever lovers?”

I smiled, “No, Jo, we were never lovers. We kissed a few times in high school, but it never got past that.”

“Wow, okay, well I guess I really just want to have lunch with her and then I’ll see if I want to tell her more about what to expect if we start dating. If we do, will you talk to her for me? Tell her what she is in for?”

“I can talk to her in general terms,” I said gently, “but I can’t talk to her about you in that way. It wouldn’t be appropriate.”

“Could you at least remind her of what you went through?”

“Jo... she doesn’t know what I went through.”

That fact kind of embarrassed me the more I thought about it. Sam was one of my best friends, but if I had told her at the time she would have killed Trisha; I just knew it.

“Gee, Amanda, you really do keep so much to yourself. I can’t believe Sam doesn’t know.”

“Let’s just say the circumstances were not the best and leave it at that.”

“I am going to go to her place next Saturday for lunch, so I will talk to you after that.” She paused, “uh, hey, is it safe to go to her place?”

“Yes, she has a few bodyguards there all the time, so you don’t need to worry about anything. Her home is gorgeous, just a few miles down the road from mine. You’ll love it. But don’t expect her to whip up a gourmet meal; it will be takeout, but very good takeout,” I laughed.

“Cool. Okay, I have taken up enough of your time. Thanks for listening. I know I am going to need a lot of guidance on these next steps.”

“No problem, Jo. I care about you very much and I promise to be here for you.”

After we hung up I heard Kat in the other room looking for something. I found her looking through the CD collection I had managed to amass over the years.

“You are so interesting, angel,” She said to me.

“Why do you say that?”

“Because you have more CDs than I ever could and you have them in alphabetical order,” she laughed, clearly thinking that I was way too organized.

“Oh well, with a 300-disc changer it helps.”

“So tell me, are you a big fan of Samantha Stanley, by chance?” Her look was very inquisitive.

“Why do you ask?”

“Well, I see all of her CDs here and a few demos, not to mention a few inscriptions. I feel kind of hurt; you didn’t want my autograph but you have hers.”

“You know you’re crazy, right? A friend gave me those as a gift and, as you can see, I have all of Sophie’s and Melanie’s CDs too. So does that mean anything?” I was in defensive mode, “Well, other than the fact that I have great taste in music?”

Oh my, Amanda, I thought to myself, hold it together. And it wasn’t a lie; Sam did give me those as gifts. Keep justifying the half-truth here.

“And your taste is very diverse, too.”

“Sign of a creative mind, Kat.”

“Yes, I agree.”

“So, how is the script coming along?”

“Well, it is a good one. It will really take a lot of digging deep to play such a tormented character, but I relate to her in some ways, which makes it easier.”

“I am going to start the Alex CDs if you don’t mind.”

“No, that sounds good. I really like ‘Introduction’ and ‘Honesty’. I saw her when I was in London a year ago. She was amazing.”

“Well, now I’m jealous!”

I settled next to her on the sofa and asked her about the shoot, how long it would be, and when she would be coming back. We talked about the other actors and actresses that were involved. It sounded like quite a cast.

“So, I imagine you will have Lisa doing your makeup as usual, right?”

“Oh yes, she has been with me from the very first movie. I always insist that they hire her.”

“Well, that explains a lot.”

She looked at me inquisitively.

“Why do you say that?”

I figured that this was my chance to open her up. She was either going to continue cutting or she was going to run off. Or would she actually stay and deal with it?

I moved closer to her and put my hand on her knee.

She smiled at me. “Oh, decided we could be more than friends, have you?”

Then I lifted her shorts and put my hand on her scars. I looked into her eyes and I could see that she knew right then that I wasn’t coming on to her. With genuine fear in her eyes she just froze.

“Because Lisa is the only one you trust who knows how to cover the scars that are self-inflicted.”

She wasn’t happy. I could see anger rise in her eyes. She moved my hand and turned cold, distant, and utterly unlike herself.

“Screw you, Amanda,” she said as she stood up to move away from me. Kat was extremely tense, her arms were folded tight against her body.

“So, you cut and run; you never deal, do you?”

“Oh, like you have done so well dealing with your mother and whatever else you hide.”

Her words cut through me like a knife. She had me there. That was the problem with getting close to another woman: she knew exactly where to pour the salt on the deepest wound.

She knew that she had hurt me, especially after the previous night. It had been less than 24 hours and, already, sharing that with her had landed back in my lap with a resounding thud.

“I’m sorry, Amanda, I’m so sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“What, you shouldn’t have said the truth? I know you’re right; I am not going to deny it. But if I have to face my past, what about you?”

“I don’t have that much courage.”

“Please, Kat, you have to stop cutting.”

“I can’t. I stopped, really, I did. But recently I just felt under so much pressure with this movie and all. So much rides on me; sometimes the stress gets to me. I just have to get through the shoot.”

“Kat, please consider what you are doing. The longer you keep this up the harder it will be to quit again.”

“Please, Amanda, just let me be. Just forget it.”

“No, I won’t just forget it.”

Then I went to the kitchen, to the drawer and I got what I was looking for. I wanted her to know exactly what she was doing to herself.

I handed her the knife.

“Here,” I said.

Her eyes pooled with tears. She looked stunned. I continued, “If you are going to continue to cut yourself then you have to do it in front of me.” I was firm. My voice sounded almost cold to me.

She picked up the knife defiant, but betrayed by a trembling hand. She raised the hem of her shorts and started to make the cut, looking at me, wanting me to stop her. I refused; she had to find the will inside of herself to stop this. She cut barely an inch across and stopped. Shaken, she looked up from the thick trail of blood oozing down her tan thigh.

“Now it’s my turn,” I said to her.

As I took the knife from her hand her eyes opened wide with shock. She tried to grab the knife. “NO!” she cried.

“What makes it right for you and not for me? Do you think your pain is any deeper than mine?”

“Please, God, no! Amanda, don’t.” Tears streamed down her face as she begged me to stop.

I began to lift up my dress when she smacked the knife out of my hand. She pushed me and held me down. Crying, shaking, the blood from her self-inflicted wound dripping on me.

She was an actress. She was 30 years old. She was one of the most beautiful women in the world. She was also my best friend and she was in the kind of pain that she had never faced before. But at this moment, in my living room, she was coming face to face with the mirror no one had ever had the courage to hold up to her. I struggled against her, but her damn fitness regime made her stronger than I.

Her tears fell onto my own face and I read genuine fear in her eyes. She knew me well enough to know that I would have done it if I could have just gotten to that damn knife.

“I’ll stop. I’ll stop. Please don’t do this,” she was scared. Desperate.

She collapsed onto me, finally rolling on her side away from me. She wouldn’t look at me, so I kept my hands on her waist, holding her from behind. I held her in my arms as she cried. I couldn’t hold her close enough.

“It’s like, until you no one really cared about me for me. And now that you know this, I can’t even imagine what you are thinking.”

“Please, Kat, let me see you,” I said to her while stroking her hair. At last, she turned but buried her head in my chest. Our roles had reversed; now I was the one comforting her.

Finally, we both needed water and we got up. I went to the kitchen and came back and handed her the water, along with a few tissues. She took them but still wouldn’t look at me. She did allow me to hold her close again. We stayed that way in silence for a long while. She seemed so fragile right then, like fine china in my arms. I kissed her forehead and finally said, “You can tell me anything, sweetheart. I will never judge you.”

“I don’t want to go through it again, the past, talking about it. What he did. I was so young. I didn’t know.”

“I know how hard it is. Honestly, I do.”

“It is different for you. You weren’t...,” She couldn’t say it.

“Well, I do understand that, believe me. I don’t like it when I have to explain something by delving into my past history. It’s painful and it brings up old wounds.”

“Exactly. But you have told me about your mother. This is so different,” she said to me.

“There is so much more, Kat. You have no idea.”

She finally looked me in the eye and we both knew that we could either keep piling dirt on the past or exhume it and deal with it.

“Do you have a counselor you worked with, or still see?”

“Yes. Actually, she is based here in Phoenix, but she used to come to LA when I was seeing her for sessions. She used to split her time before taking over here several years ago. I still talk to her on occasion. She warned me that I might start up again, and she was right.”

I looked at Kat, knowing for the first time that she and I were opening up in a deeper way at the same time. I took her hand and asked, “Do you think it’s time to give her a call?”

“Can’t you help me, Amanda? You are a counselor.”

“Yes, but I want to remain your friend. As your friend I can be of more help to you. A counselor who knows your history already has a relationship with you. That is priceless if you trust her. And, I am being a bit selfish.”

“How?” She looked at me, confused but clearly interested.

“Because I need to tell you what I have been through and maybe together we can help each other.”

“So, I guess this puts that whole should-we-be-lovers question on hold?”

“Kat, it takes me a long time to feel comfortable enough to open myself up like that. And it requires that I share some information with you that is hard for me to do. But if you are willing to work on your issues, and let me share mine with you, then maybe someday in the future we can talk about that again. For now, you need a friend who won’t sexualize the relationship and so do I.”

“Can we still hug?” She looked hopeful.

“That’s a requirement.” I smiled at her, hugged her, and handed her the phone. “Make the call.”

She got her wallet and pulled out a business card. It was one I recognized right away. It was from the Women’s Center and it was Jackie’s. What a small world it was.

“Would it be OK if I met her here? It would make it so much easier.”

“Of course, but Kat, there is something I need to tell you.”

“Sure, anything.”

“Jackie was my therapist, too.”

That one sentence told her more about me than I was able to tell her yet. In that



moment she realized that I must have had an idea of what she had been through. She looked at me, tears beginning to form in her eyes, and said, “I am so sorry, angel, so sorry.” She took my hand and then she hugged me tight.

Jackie’s specialty was counseling women who were abused, sexually abused. From that moment on we both understood how fragile our past could make us, and yet, how strong we each were for at least surviving it. Now the question was: Did we have it within us to move forward, to help each other see the strength we saw in the other? And yet, be gentle enough to love each other through the fragility of it all?