

It was a good week for Kat and me. Yes, it was difficult and emotional but, in the end, enlightening for both of us. Jackie came to my home to see Kat and had really helped her get back on her feet again. I was proud of her for not letting it get out of hand and accepting Jackie's help. Jackie had been so grateful that Kat was dealing with it and not starting a full series of episodes again. Falling further in wasn't an option now; digging further inside was. She needed to find what had come up now that had to be looked at, reevaluated, and let go of as best as one could do.

Every night we slept curled up together. Most nights I would hold her in my arms while she cried herself to sleep. It was agonizing to watch her go through this. But I knew the process well, and I would much rather have been holding her than ever have to see her take up a razor or knife again.

Thursday was so hard. Kat opened up to me and told me a bit of what had happened to her as a child. I was so moved by how much trust she seemed to put in me. After breakfast she laid her head on my lap as I ran my hand through her hair. That always comforted me and it seemed to comfort her as well.

"I want to tell you some things."

"Anything, Kat."

"I can't look at you right now, so I am just going to lie here."

"OK, sweetheart, it's fine, I understand. I'm here for you and nothing you could tell me will ever change how I feel about you."

"Thank you, angel, but I am still so scared and ashamed," she hesitated.

Then she went on. "I was devastated when my father divorced my mother. I was 12 when it happened. He just abandoned us. My uncle, his brother, used to come over to check on us and help out." She stopped talking and I could feel the tension in her body. I squeezed her shoulder and started rubbing her back to help her along.

"I am here. Go on when you can."

Her tears started again. "Several times that summer he came over to watch me while Mom went out to run errands and, and..." She stopped talking again.

I knew what was coming, but she had to say it. For some reason it had to be said by the person who experienced it. If I could have done it for her I would have. My heart was breaking while my own tears were starting to fall silently. I stroked her hair. "It's OK, you are safe now. I am here. Tell me what happened, sweetheart."

“I couldn’t stop him. I tried to, I did, I really did.”

“Kat, you did nothing wrong, nothing. It’s not your fault.”

“He would just touch me and feel under my clothes saying the most awful things to me.”

She continued, “My father left and my uncle molested me that summer. It was the worst time of my life. I couldn’t tell my mother, I was so ashamed. That’s the summer I started cutting.”

Her breathing became labored as she turned around and curled up in my arms. I kept stroking her hair, holding her as close as I could, kissing her forehead and letting her know over and over that she was safe now.

I spoke to her gently and in reassuring tones with soft words, letting her know how sorry I was and, again, that she was safe. She finally had the courage to get it out, to speak her truth and allow herself to be comforted. It was at that kind of moment, when we were most vulnerable, that if someone loved us through it we began to heal. If someone could love us, knowing the worst that we felt about ourselves, then that was when the deepest healing really began.

That weekend came quickly, or so it seemed. That Friday I sat down with Jackie and we talked for a while about where I was in my life now and what I saw with Kat in the future.

“I think you two are really good for each other right now as friends. I wouldn’t let it get past that yet, though,” Jackie said to me.

“I agree, and I told her that I needed time to think and that I would be a much better friend to her if we didn’t sexualize things right now.”

“I’m proud of you, Amanda. You really know how to put what is good for her, and ultimately you, first.”

“Thanks for coming to the house, Jackie. She has such a hard time when she goes anywhere, being followed and all.”

“This was certainly easier than heading over to LA; that’s for sure,” Jackie laughed. “You know what you are dealing with here. She is lucky to have you for a friend right now. Maybe more later on.”

“I do love her, but I am not sure if it is more than as a friend, though every day it gets harder to see her as just a friend.”

Jackie smiled at me.

“Well, if I were lesbian or bisexual I would certainly see why women fall at her feet!”

She paused, “I am sorry that Cassie won’t be able to run the Tucson office anymore. She will be missed.”

“What?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I would’ve thought that you’d heard by now that she’s taking time off—probably getting back to her roots. I think she is exhausted and needs a break.”

“She hadn’t said anything to me.”

“I am sure she will. She is probably trying to get things wrapped up for her replacement. I will go now, but if either of you need anything this weekend call me. And I hope you two just enjoy yourselves over the holiday; you both deserve it after this week.” Jackie gave me a big hug.

I remember standing there puzzled over what was happening with Cassie. It wasn’t like her not to tell me about big things happening in her life. I would call her after Kat left on Tuesday and find out what was happening.

Jo was having lunch with Sam the next day. That would make for an interesting day for her and for me, as I surely knew that I would be hearing from both of them afterwards.

I went out to the living room, where Kat was learning her lines, and sat next to her. She put down the script and gave me a big hug. I liked it when she held me and was affectionate. I felt safe in her arms. I also relished the times when I could hold her and comfort her.

“Thank you for being there for me, angel. I am not sure anyone else would have stood up to me like you did,” Kat said sweetly. She kissed my forehead and looked into my eyes. My heart surely melted.

“Thank you for asking about my mother. It was about time that came out and I dealt with it better. I guess we both have to remain friends at the very least.” I laughed and continued, “We know too much about each other now.”

“I am glad I talked to you yesterday, told you what I did. Thank you for not judging me.”

She smiled and squeezed me tighter. I looked down and noticed that my hand was lying on her thigh, and I could see the scars. I placed my hand over her scars, looked into her eyes and then leaned in to kiss her cheek.

“I am so proud of you, Kat.”

“You know, Jackie said I didn’t have to talk about what happened with anyone else, but that it would help to heal further if I did. Of course with someone I trust. Wonder who she had in mind.”

Smiling at her I said, “I wonder.”

Then I started thinking that I owed her the same.

“Kat, I know I need to discuss things other things with you, too, so you understand me better. I am getting tired of holding this all in. I think I am tired of being scared, of not feeling safe enough deep inside.”

“I know exactly what you mean, angel, exactly.”

“Yes, I know you do.”

The phone rang and I looked at the caller ID and saw that it was Jo. “Hi, Jo. What’s going on, babe?”

“Hi, Amanda. Listen, I have something I need to get to you. Can I come by?”

“Hold on, Jo, I have company this weekend.”

I wasn’t sure if I wanted Jo to meet Kat, especially since she was going to be seeing Sam the next day. But Jo understood confidentiality so maybe it would be okay.

After hitting MUTE I asked Kat what she thought. She was more than happy to see Jo since she already knew her from the charity work at the center, anyway.

“Okay, Jo, why don’t you come by? We’re just hanging out. Look, I don’t want to surprise you with the bodyguards outside.”

“Oh, I already know, Amanda. Remember who does the confidential filing for Jackie?”

I had forgotten that. Of course the files were coded, but she knew Jackie’s system; someone besides Jackie had to know it.

“Well, then you don’t mind keeping this to yourself, if you know what I mean?”

Jo laughed, “I don’t really think I would want to be the one to tell Sam that I met the one and only Katherine Lucette the day before meeting her for lunch. Besides, Amanda, you know I go for the older hot rocker types, anyway.”

“I’m sure she’ll be happy to hear that.”

“Does Kat know about Sam?”

“What do you think?”

“No. Okay, I have your back. So, Amanda, spill, are you seeing Katherine? I just have to know.”

Laughing I said, “I’m looking at her right now! Seriously, though, right now we are just friends, but it might be deeper.”

Kat smiled at that and grabbed my legs. “Hey,” I yelped.

“Yeah, right. Sounds like you two are just best buddies.”

“Jo, stop it.”

“Hey, are you two close?”

“Yes, why?”

“That’s good. I’ll be there in about a half hour.”

“Okay, see you then.”

Kat and I were listening to Sam’s CD when Jo arrived and I thought to myself, sometimes life is stranger than fiction. Mine always seemed to be that way, anyway.

Kat answered the door for me, leaving Jo standing there with her mouth hanging open.

“Come on in.” I grinned, “I’m over here.”

She entered and finally said hello to Kat.

“Hi Ms. Lucette, nice to see you again.” Jo was obviously star-struck.

“Hello Jo, it’s nice to see you, too. But truly, I am not that much older than you so please call me ‘Katherine’.”

“Okay, thanks.”

I got up to give Jo a hug and she held on tight.

“Hi sweetheart, how are you?”

“Good. I’m sorry to just call and come over like this, but I have something for you. And I got the impression it was important.”

She handed me an envelope with handwriting that I was familiar with: it was Cassie’s. Great, why don’t all of my girlfriends come out and stop by, write, or call today?

“Thanks, Jo. Where did you get this from?”

“From Julia. She and I have become friends since I started working at the center.”

My heart sank. Julia was Cassie's live-in girlfriend. I hoped that this wasn't something nasty. Julia had always been pleasant whenever I met her at a function, but I couldn't blame her for not really liking me. She had accepted Cassie's and my relationship, but I was sure that she would have preferred that Cassie end it.

"I appreciate you bringing it over."

"Do you want me to stay while you read it?" Jo inquired. She was fidgeting and seemed eager to get the letter into my hands as quickly as possible.

"You already know what's in it, don't you?"

"No, neither does Julia. But I got the impression that things are changing all around."

"Thanks, Jo. I think I would like to open it alone if you don't mind. If I need anything, Kat is here."

Kat put her arm around my waist and said, "Of course I am, angel."

"Okay, well I should be going. It was lovely to meet you outside the office, Katherine."

"You too, Jo."

"Have fun tomorrow." I winked at her and although she smiled, I saw a sadness in her eyes. She knew more than what she was telling me.

"Thanks. Bye, Amanda. Call me if you need anything."

With that the door closed and Kat and I sat back on the sofa. "Would you like me to go in the other room so you can read your letter?"

"No, you don't have to. Sometime I want to tell you more about Cassie."

"She's the woman you still see on occasion, right?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure you don't want me to go in the other room?"

"I don't know."

"I will be in the other room for now. If you need me call me, okay? I will go check my email and see how many friends are trying to reach me."

"Thanks, Kat."

I just sat there looking at the envelope.

Every instinct told me that this was it. I just knew in my heart that this wasn't going to be good. I opened up the envelope that would change my life again, just like the day I met Cassie so long ago changed my life forever.

It was written on her signature light blue paper with "Cassandra" embossed in an elegant script font at the top.

*Dearest Amanda,*

*I apologize for my inability to do this in person, but if I took one look in your eyes I would not have the capacity to do what I must now. I have never in my life met another woman whom I admire, love, or care for in the way that I do you. Your compassion is the deepest I have ever seen. After all you have been through, you turned it around and found ways to help others. I watched you go from a scared young girl to a beautiful woman full of life, love, and grace.*

*You walked the tough road to finding happiness again. Being a part of your life and your healing has been the most beautiful thing I have ever experienced.*

*I know we couldn't stop loving each other in every way even after we'd moved on to dating others. But, at this point in my journey, I must take time to be with Julia and give her what she needs the most. I need to be hers full time and I am even taking time away from the office down here to travel with her for awhile.*

*I know we both said that if one of us ever needed to do this the other would understand and let go. But, honestly, I never really thought this would happen. I figured you would be the first one to find some woman you wanted to be with full time.*

*I hope that you will be open to seeing and opening up to other women as you did with me at one time. I cannot tell you how lovely it was for me. I know you keep so much inside, but there are women you will be able to trust who will love you for yourself as I have. I know you are scared to let others know about your past. Remember dear, how it feels when women open up to you. Why would you withhold that experience from someone else?*

*I know this will come as a shock and I am sorry. The last time I was there and we made love will be forever etched into my heart, mind, and spirit. I only hope you know just how much it pains me to walk away now.*

*I thought of keeping in touch but I think that would only make it worse. If you want to, write me a letter as I have you, but I will understand if you don't want to. Your poetry over the years told me how you felt, I never doubted it.*

*I just need for you to know that because of you, it feels as though at one time our souls touched and I will never be the same. I will always love you, and I still do. I will never love anyone else the same way.*

*Remember our times together, and please, my dearest, don't close up or walk away from love when it opens its arms to you again, and it will. I still have my half of the heart pendant, and it will be with me until the day I take my last breath.*

*No one, not time or even death, can steal from us the time and moments we spent loving each other. I am forever grateful for ever having the privilege of holding you, loving you, and knowing you.*

*Always in my heart the deepest love for you,  
Cassandra*

Tears were streaming down from my eyes and my throat hurt. I felt I couldn't speak. Ironically, Alex Parks' song "Cry" came on over the stereo and I thought, how appropriate.

I looked up to see Kat enter the room. She saw the tears and came right over to me. Without saying a word she held me close as I cried over my lover, my healer, my best friend telling me goodbye. It felt as if my world had just gone dark and I felt so deeply that I would never, ever again find the kind of love I had with Cassie.

I couldn't speak, I couldn't stop crying and I couldn't believe my love was walking away after all of these years. Deep inside it felt like losing my mother all over again, because she had meant so much to me. Through it all, Kat just held me, her blouse soaking up so many of the tears that didn't make it onto the tissues.

Now I heard Melanie C singing "Better Alone" and I thought to myself, somehow the goddess seems to be picking the soundtrack to my life right now.

And then, in a moment of utter clarity from out of my sadness, I realized that I wasn't alone without Cassie. I was lying in the warmth of Kat's arms, and Sam, Jo, and Jackie were just a phone call away.

So, as she had done my whole adult life, Cassie had managed to teach me something again in our final parting. I wasn't alone, but I felt her loss so deeply that I wondered if the tears would ever stop falling or if my heart would ever be whole again.