

Brandon Gets His Big Break

Chapter Nine

By

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It was 2019. Jane had found Amy in her private bathroom having a breakdown and subsequently Amy followed up to discuss Jane's well-being. This led Jane to suggest that the two start discussing each other's problems, to be each other's confidante. Amy enthusiastically agreed.

It was after 5 PM. The two had gotten all of the day's work out of the way. Jane felt strongly that they should wait until after all the work was done before having a 'bull session' (as they came to refer to it). She felt that they could potentially get too worked up to go back to work. Amy agreed. Jane further insisted that they don't drink during one of these discussions: alcohol would cloud their senses and they'd get less out of it. In fact, it could be counterproductive. Amy agreed to this as well but not as enthusiastically. She really imagined them talking over shots, or at least beer, at a bar.

Their first bull session took place at Jane office. She had the neighborhood deli deliver some food: sandwiches, potato salad, chips 'n dip, soda. She laid the spread out on the coffee table that was in front of the couch. She strategically placed a box of tissues with the food.

"But I do think this is like guys getting together after work to discuss their shit." Jane said. "We're being smart about it. We want to get something out of it."

"Is this instead of counseling?" Amy asked.

"Oh no...no. Elaine Gonzalas is amazing. She's a mental professional. She knows her stuff and can be insightful. This is, well...um, in tandem. We can each talk about what we've discussed with her in our personal sessions. Besides, I only see Elaine once a week. And I like to imagine that she'd talk to me about my stuff for free. But it's a financial arrangement and, yeah, that puts a damper on it. But therapy is important. I really urge you to discuss our conversations with her."

"Okay. I haven't had a girlfriend that I can talk to...really confide in...for a long time."

"Was it Linda?"

"No...this girl named Roz. I haven't seen her for five years. I've been bumming around...doing a bunch of office gigs. After I broke up...was *forced* to break up with Linda...I got involved with this kind of rough crowd...well, no, not rough...not all of them...really, there were only certain ones that I had to be careful around...but they were my middle school outsiders. Punks, goths, and gays. My boyish haircut and boy clothes got their attention. Before I rebelled...and started to dress like I wanted...I looked really prissy. Hooking up with that group was a lifesaver, really.

"Was Roz your lover?"

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“Yeah...it was a friends-with-benefits thing. I was way too raw to even consider romance...still am. But she and I had a sexual thing. We were exclusive for a long time. And I spoke to her...really confided in her...but never would have considered a romantic thing with her...even if I hadn't just been burned. I loved her but we were just too different. We were best friends for years. But Roz wasn't looking for romance. She was the kind of cynic that was en vogue then. Posturing but not dangerous. Linda was book smart: Roz was street smart...well as 'street' as a suburban white girl in middle school gets. But, yeah, she really became my closest friend after Linda.”

Amy took a sip of her soda and continued:

“But I really wanted to let you go first. Yeah...that's important to me. We'll circle back to Roz and my other shit. But...tell me about your survivor's guilt.”

“Okay...I really wanted to say something else first. Survivor's guilt is a thing. I want to talk about that. But I need to talk about something else first.”

“What is it?”

“Well.”, Jane was quiet for a time. Amy almost started to speak. “Well...I'm afraid...Amy...I'm always afraid. I mean...is someone going to shoot me? I mean...my parents were murdered...shot down like fucking dogs...for being Jews. When I was six, my family was at a community center...just doing wholesome family stuff...and this evil lunatic just opened fire on us. A couple years ago...'06...the same thing happened at another community center in Seattle. This evil fuck opens fire and shoots six women...women, Amy...and kills one of them. God...Amy...why...and yeah...will that happen to me? Just because...” Jane fell silent.

“How intense is the fear? Can you function?” Amy asked.

“Yeah...it really has been getting better...over time. Elaine has been great. I...um...really see a lot of value in a regimen of activity...I meditate, like you. I go to this Vipassana meditation place a couple times a week.”

“Wow...is it the Kadampa Meditation Center? I've been going there.”

“Nope. Not a full temple. Just a hole in the wall. But we should check out each other's place.”

“Hell yeah! What else are you doing to get a handle on your fear?”

“I'm a Reconstructionist Jew. [Reconstructionism](#) is a modern school of Judaism. My shul...my home synagogue...is [Kehillat Israel](#) in Pacific Palisades. I love it. They have weekly Shabbat services. And study groups...we Jews are big on study...a good women's group. And we're also big on social justice. The term is [tikkun olam](#) for 'healing the world'. I do all my volunteer work through them.”

“That sounds really cool. But...um...do you believe in shi...stuff like Leviticus?”

“Um...Reconstructionism, and this very different than more traditional forms of Judaism, believe that the Jewish religion was created by Jews. Basically, that's the truth of all religion...something that's man-

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made. I mean...we do not believe the Torah...the five books of Moses...is divinely inspired. Written by men. Still...It's our history, culture, and tradition. And...it's a source of Jewish ethics."

" 'A source of ethics'. Now...I'm not trying to be argumentative. But, please, tell me that you don't believe in bull..." , Amy's voice trailed off.

"You can say it."

"Bullshit...You don't believe in bullshit like [Leviticus 20:13](#)...that gays should be murdered?"

"No! Fuck you, Amy!", Jane exploded. It really grabbed Amy. Normally, Jane had a restrained and deadpan demeanor even when talking about her deepest concerns, like her parents' murders. "I told you that I'm bisexual. And I talked about having you meet some of my friends from the community. And you accuse of being an evil cunt?"

"I'm sorry...so, so sorry. That was wrong. I was just overcome for a moment and just...um...blurted that out. A lot of people want to kill me for who I am. My mom almost drowned me in the toilet because I'm gay. I...well..."

"Yeah...I know.", Jane said chastened and much more calmly. "A lot of people want to kill me too. Hell, my people's entire history is crazy, evil, fucks killing us. I'm both a Jew and a queer. There are people who REALLY want to kill me."

An unforeseeable confluence of events led Amy and Jane to become each other's confidante. This happened quickly. And this created a real bond between the two. This moment drove home a realization that greatly strengthened that bond. Each had very vivid firsthand connection with death that was born of psychotic bigotry. Each woman recognized that in the moment. Neither said anything because it was so obvious. Amy soldiered on:

"So...again...very sorry. What does Reconstructionists say about the Old Testament and stuff like that?"

"Not the 'Old Testament' that's Christian and I'm a Jew. It's the 'Torah', the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy."

"Yeah...right. Sorry."

I mean...it's like I just said...the Torah was written by men. So, we think the traditional halakhic system...and that's all the rules in the Torah... is incapable of producing a code of conduct. Rules of personal conduct must constantly be reinterpreted with an understanding of one's past. We go beyond the halakhic system...um, the legalism...because it can't enforced in the modern world...and a lot of it is scary iron-age BS, anyway. But we need to know it so that we know how we are evolving. I mean spirituality cannot be enforced...anyway."

As Jane spoke, Amy could not help but notice her friend's discomfort. Her mind flashed on that day a decade earlier. She and Linda were in bed having a weighty conversation. Linda's mom was the minister of the local Unitarian church. When she asked her girlfriend about the Unitarian concept of god, Linda ended up telling her that the Unitarians – and its sister denomination, Universalist – had a written policy to welcome gays since 1989. Although the two were together for months, Linda never told Amy this.

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This angered Amy: she had abandoned her mom's church and would have loved to be part of a religion that embraced her sexuality.

When she asked Linda why she did not tell her about this, she was told that the Unitarians had a policy to respect that a person has the right to 'the free and responsible search for truth and meaning'. Amy ultimately committed that phrase to memory. It was 180 degrees from her mom's church that taught that its doctrine was the 'inerrant word of God'. As a very young kid, she was trained to go out and harass people to convert. Her adult friend was struggling to talk about her heartfelt beliefs.

"I'm putting you on the spot. Aren't I?", Amy asked.

"No...we're talking about how I deal with the pain from my parents' murder. My faith is a big part of it. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about it...honestly. This stuff is very important to me and I'm afraid of the people who would hurt me because of it."

"I was thinking about when I was kid. I was trained to proselytize...to go out on the street and give people shit. I was nine or ten and giving adults a hard time. I'm ashamed of that now. But here we are, two adult friends having a heart-to-heart. And my friend is starting to get nervous talking about her beliefs. And I asked her about it in the first place. This is fucked up."

"Jews and Christians live in different worlds. Okay...okay. Here's the deal. Christians feel entitled. If a Jew were to hassle strangers like that, the shit would hit the fan. She'd be...deported."

"Really...deported?"

"Do you know what happened in 1492?"

"Columbus sailed the ocean blue' ...? That can't be it."

"No...sweetie...practicing Jews were expelled from Spain."

"You're shitting me."

"No...I wish I were. Ferdinand and Isabella issued something called the [*Alhambra Decree*](#). Practicing Jews were expelled so that they would not 'corrupt' the *Conversos*...Jews that had converted to Catholicism."

"No...I swear. I never heard this before."

"Yeah...I know. The Spaniards were afraid that the converts would revert to their Jewish beliefs. And half of the population of the Spanish Jews had converted. But it was not of their own free will. The Jews converted because of antisemitic violence like the pogroms of 1391..."

Jane had been staring straight ahead, not looking at her friend. She turned and faced Amy: the young woman was staring at her with a dumb look on her face.

"As a Jew, I have to study my history. That's why my Synagogue is so important to me. I have to know things. And, well...sweetie...Jews have been persecuted for hundreds of years."

"...By Christians.", Amy added.

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“Yeah.”

“God...I’m sorry.”

“You have no reason to apologize.”

“Yes...I do.”

Jane pursed her lips and nodded.

“Um...how many were deported?”, Amy asked.

“ Well...after 1391, the attacks continue. Another 50,000 converted by 1415 to avoid expulsion. Because of the *Alhambra Decree* and the persecution, over 200,000 Jews converted to Catholicism: 40 to 100,000 were expelled.”

Amy reached over to the coffee table and retrieved a tissue.

Jane continued:

“I’ve been telling you that my parents’ murder has left me fearful...and left me with survivor’s guilt. I’m not backing down from that at all. But there’s more. And...well...people are simply evil. At least...too...too many of them. My people have been persecuted, tortured, and killed, for countless generations. Before we are, we are mocked and degraded...called vile names. We are called...rats.”

Jane ate a loaded chip that she was holding, ate it, and took a sip of her soda:

“The *Alhambra Decree* was just a part of the [Spanish Inquisition](#).”

Jane stopped talking and stared at Amy.

“Um...please go on. I want to know more.”

“I want you to tell me about it.”

“I don’t know anything about the Spanish Inquisition. Honestly, this is the first time that I heard about it. Um...it kinda shames me...I was raised Christian.”

“You know...the internet is pretty vile. But it is really cool.”, Jane said as she motioned towards the PC on her desk. “It’s all there. I would totally be blown away if you went to the *Wikipedia* page. And you later came back to me and just start talking about it.”

“At next week’s bull session? We are doing this every week...right?”

“Yeah...every week. But...no. I’m not a teacher assigning you a paper or something with a due date. I think it would be amazing if you started talking about it. Let’s say....I come back from lunch, and you give me messages...like always. And you just start casually talking about it.”

“So...read the ‘Wiki’ and just start talking about it later? Sure...that sounds cool. I’ll do that.”

Jane responded with a jarring Fran Drescher impersonation:

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“That’s it...just read the ‘Wiki’? The page has links, and you can google ‘Spanish Inquisition’ for more. Just saying...sweetie.”

“Okay...okay...I will!”, Amy said brightly.

...And could you compare the Spanish to the other major Inquisitions: Portuguese and Roman?”, Jane asked in her ‘Joe Friday’ deadpan.

“Sure...I’ll know stuff...have something interesting to say. I’ll do good. I didn’t know that you did impersonations. Do some more!”

“I do have a nice little repertoire. And I like to pop one out occasionally for effect. I’m not frickin’ Billy Crystal on the on Late Night.”

“You’re ‘go-to’ is Joe Friday.”, Amy said with a laugh.

Jane smiled.

“Do you hate Christians?”, Amy asked.

“No. I feel that you have to judge people on their own merits. I’ve known a lot of Christians, and they were all lovely people. Of course, I’m a Hollywood agent...a Jewish queer woman. I’m dealing with a specific subset. I doubt that I would as comfortable with the Christian in...say...Green Borough, South Carolina. Especially if he knew my backstory.”

“You are drop dead gorgeous that would help.”, Amy interjected.

“Well, I’m a Gal Gadot lookalike and that might create a whole new problem...a very nasty one.”

Jane took a sip of her soda and continued:

“My point is that institutions are the problem. Don’t get me wrong...individuals do a lot of a lot of nasty shit: from lynchings during Jim Crow era to *Kristallnacht*. As a rule, when individuals kill or fuck up others in that organized manner, institutions whipped up their passion and coordinated them. It isn’t just the Church. I mean that it is an institution, and it is just a motherfucking manmade thing – fuck that *Rock of Peter* shit – and institutions are evil and bring out the worse in an individual.”

“[Matthew 16:17-19](#).”, Amy interjected in response to Jane’s biblical reference. She was very familiar with the term *Rock of Peter*: it was central to her mom’s church’s *inerrant Word of God* bullshit. It was because of that she ended up proselytizing on street corners at the age of nine. It was that which made her a smarmy little bitch...a tragic little street whore for Jesus.

“Right.”, Jane confirmed. “I have to be honest. I hate the Church...this manmade institution. It has been fucking my people over for countless generations. Just by knowing human history...my history...I am intolerant. It really pisses me off that this grossly amoral monster is preaching morality. Giving me shit about my healthcare or who I fuck...arrgh...insult to injury.”

Jane loaded a chip and ate it. She took a sip of her soda. Amy patiently waited, knowing that Amy had more to say.

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"I'm an adult. I don't like that I feel compelled to rationalize my sexuality. I shouldn't have to reassure the arrogant fucks out there that 'I'm born this way'. It doesn't matter if that's true or if I just have preferences. I'm an adult and I've fucked a lot of adults...men and women. And, I shouldn't have to reassure the fucks by saying 'Love is love'. A lot of it was recreational. In fact, fuck your 'Love is love' shit. I'm an adult and my sex life is none of the fucks' business. As long as I'm taking care of my health business, and dealing with those consenting adults honorably, it's my life. Fucks are trying to control me: they are trying to control you. Don't let them, Amy.", Jane deadpanned with her signature clipped delivery.

Amy nodded.

"Wow...I can't believe how much I'm swearing.", Jane said.

It was true. Jane rarely swore. She most certainly didn't swear during office hours. On the day that Jane hired her, she gave a speech where she explained that she ran her business with a sense of 'organizational conservatism'. She explained that hers was a woman run business. The reality was that there were a lot of people who wanted to diminish her life's work. In fact, they wanted to take her down completely. She did not swear during office hours. As it would give those enemies ammunition. At this point, Amy was not socializing with Jane outside of the office. That was going to change that evening. As the two spent more and more time together, Amy would realize that Jane normally didn't swear much but was nonplussed by other people swearing.

Jane was, not surprisingly, worked up by the conversation. Overall, Jane maintained the same deadpan – nearly robotic – delivery with which she delivered her hiring day speech months earlier. At that time, her new boss' demeanor made Amy flash on 1960's TV show *Dragnet* and the character Joe Friday. Jane's cool demeanor and her thoughtful, well-organized, comments structured their first bull session. Amy realized that it would have been a bitch-fest if they talked over shots at a bar.

This isn't to say that Jane did not lose her composure that evening...she did.

Jane continued:

"Human institutions magnify the worst in the individual. Now...individuals collectively create them. That means that those institutions are reflecting the depravity of the individual. That shit will drive you crazy. It's best to say the institution is the practical source of concerted evil. The Nazis. KKK. Stalin. Mao."

"What should I do?", Amy asked.

"Educate yourself. Learn about the horrible things that are done to groups of people by institutions: religions, governments, and corporations. Not only my people...Jews. But...Native Americans, Blacks, queers, of course, and others."

"I will."

"I believe that fascism is on the rise in this country. This is 2019. With Trump, things are getting really bad really fast. It wouldn't surprise me if...um. I don't know...if Florida were banning books in school libraries and whitewashing slavery in classrooms in five years."

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"That is pretty out there.", Amy said.

"Yeah...it is. But...these are scary times. Educate yourself, Amy."

"I will."

"I've never have shared these opinions with a non-Jew. I mean...I can talk about this stuff with certain friends from temple. But... a non-Jew? No. I never even talk to Elaine about this stuff. You're a special young woman, Amy."

Amy was unsure how to proceed.

"How do you handle it?"

"I told you...my Judaism. That's why I practice...because I must. But I know that deepens their desire to kill me. By practicing...I am telling them that I don't believe in their fucking, bullshit, Jesus. I'm sorry...was that too much?"

"No. You can't possibly say 'too much'. You can say anything."

"Um...okay. I...um...lost family in the Holocaust. I can't even imagine all of my ancestors that were destroyed over the centuries. Fast forward...I saw my parents gunned down for being Jews. When I say that I'm always afraid....I know that it sounds paranoid...It isn't. Now....with Trump...it could happen again. I'm afraid...Amy...afraid that they'll round us up again....It happened in the '30s in Germany so why not now in the States? I'm afraid of dying horribly."

Then she broke down. She started to cry uncontrollably. She fully bent at her waist, her head thrusting to her knees. She folded her arms and braced her upper limbs between her knees and head.

Amy scooped over so that her body was touching Jane's. She wrapped her adjacent arm over friend's shoulders. She started to say something supportive. But realized anything that could say would be hopelessly banal...trite. Instead, she lowered her head over Jane's head. She rested her cheek against the back of her friend's neck. She started to cry as well. And then they rhythmically heaved together.

After a time, Jane gently slapped Amy's thigh. Amy straightened up.

"I...ah...have to clean up.", Jane said.

She got up and walked to the bathroom. She subsequently came back and was wiping her reddened face with a paper towel. When she was about to sit down, Amy said:

"I need to clean up as well...sorry."

Amy subsequently returned and resumed her spot next to Jane.

"I need to practice. Otherwise, the hate would circle me and isolate me. I can't let it. I think Jim gets that now."

"You *think* that Jim gets it?"

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"I think so."

"...About the Holocaust?"

"He knows that I lost family."

"...Your intense fear about the rise of Fascism?"

"I'm sure he does."

Amy moved her hands upward and covered her face with her open palms.

"Jesus Christ, woman. Please don't make me drag this out of you. Does he get it?"

"I'm sure he does."

Amy lowered her hands. She turned her head and looked Jane in the eyes.

"You...think he gets it...you're sure he does. This is total fucking bullshit. I haven't met this guy yet. But I know that you're sharing your life with him. You love him. That means that you don't want to lose his love. Maybe...you're afraid that it would overwhelm him. If so, it means one of two things: either he doesn't deserve you or you don't deserve him. Are you afraid to say it? Are you?"

"No...I'm not afraid. I'm..." Jane trailed off.

After waiting a period for Jane to start talking again, Amy exploded:

"No! No! No! Fuck this! Talk to him!"

Amy was genuinely shocked at how she lost it. She wondered if she should apologize but decided against it.

"I will. I just need to..."

"No...no...no. That isn't good. He has to understand. And you have to be open up completely with him. You felt comfortable opening up to me because you saw me vulnerable...having that breakdown...and you felt that you could then be vulnerable. Great. But that's not how life works. You have to be open with the people in your life. You can't wait for someone to have a breakdown."

Jane leaned over and grabbed a tissue. She wiped her eyes and blew her nose.

"Amy...we're in the same boat. You've been in Hollywood for months. And you only have one friend...Andrew...and you just have coffee with him after a sitting at that Buddhist place. That's because you are isolated by the fear, the anger, and the hate. I get it. Your mom beat you...she tried to kill you. She destroyed your relationship with Linda. That bullshit church filled you with self-hate. You have to confide fully with the people in your life as well. But, first, you have to get some people."

Amy grabbed a tissue.

"I know. I...know. I'm being controlled...by, as you put it, 'fucks'. You are as well."

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“Seems to me that we found some focus here. We both have to get our shit together. Each of us has to help the other to get her shit together. That’s the point of these bull sessions.”

Amy could not form a thought. Finally, she heard herself say:

“Do you believe in God?”

“I’m [Reconstructionist. We believe](#) God is not a being, but rather a power or force that works through nature and human beings. So...she – and that’s all me, I like the feminine pronoun – is not a deity but that which you experience when you’re a good person. I honestly believe in God, but she just is not the most central thing to my Jewishness. That would be my cultural identity and doing good...that being *tikkun olam*. Of course, I do believe that by embracing my Jewish Identity I experience God...so maybe she is.”

Jane exhaled and continued:

“I have to go back. Do you get what just happened? I just had this huge breakthrough. My focus really has to be connecting with the people in my life and telling them about the fear and my thoughts about life. Tell them...everything. I’ve been seeing Elaine for years and she’ll tell me to be more open about things. But she only tells me that I should. You got in my face a bit and I needed that. You cried with me...mourned with me...comforted me...you gave me a needed kick in ass. I will need that again...do not hesitate. Fuck, Amy. I know that I’ve known you for only months: I feel closer to you than anyone else in my life.”

Jane had completely returned to her Joe Friday demeanor.

“You feel closer to me than Jim?”

“Honestly...yeah. Look, I’m in a committed relationship with Jim. He’s great for me. I love him. This is completely separate from that. I can’t deny what just happened, happened. Or...the other night. This is on a separate track from Jim. We do have a connection, Amy.”

Amy sat quietly for a while. She stared straight ahead. Then she turned her head, making eye contact with Jane. She said:

“Yeah...I get that. I feel...um...bonded with you as well. I mean that. There has been a couple people that I really felt completely comfortable with...Linda, Roz...and both of them were fully open with me. God knows that you were. Honestly, you’re the first person that I’ve been this comfortable with outside of those two. Other people? No. You’re right. I feel so goddam isolated.”

Jane took Amy’s hand and said:

“Um...really? Am I like Linda and Roz? Someone that you can fully open up with?”

“Yes. Hell, yes. That night...when I fell apart...I was walking because I was utterly humiliated. You stopped me by sharing your deepest stuff. Boom. You just drop it. Because you wanted to help. I was going to split and never see you again. Another person would have let me walk, been relieved to see me

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go. But you wanted to stop me and get me talking. I get it. Yeah, I feel completely comfortable with you.”

“About your sense of isolation...Have you ever been involved with a religious group? I know that you’re into meditation, but have you ever been part of a church or something? Something with a communal aspect? Not something that was forced on you but something that was freely chosen?”

“Yeah...Unitarian. Linda’s mom was a minister at this church. Well...Linda told me about it, and it blew my mind. I didn’t think that anything called a ‘church’ could be so cool. After the shit hit the fan, I could never bring myself to be a part of a congregation...and dredge up all the shit. But I like them a lot. If it weren’t for the rough memories, I’d be a Unitarian.”

“Let me be clear. Were you ever part of a congregation?”

“No. One day Linda and I have this really momentous talk...super intense. She ends up promising me that her parents would talk to me about the church. Yeah...I was psyched to join. Linda was pushing me to come out to her parents. We’d come out together...as girlfriends. I was hesitating...big time. It was so different than mom and my people. But I wanted to do that also.”

“It sounds like none of it happened.”

“No. The shit hits the fan soon after that. Mom tries to kill me in the toilet. I was forced to break up with her because mom was crazy...murder crazy. If she found out about Linda...she would have tracked her down and killed her. So...no conversion to the Unitarians and no coming out to her parents.”

“You were in school for years after that. No contact?”

“We tried a phone relationship but that didn’t last. The plan was just to have a phone thing until we turned 18. That so didn’t work. I just could not risk being physically near her. ‘Cuz mom might somehow see it: it might get back to her. I was toxic. Since we’re trying to be completely open, Jane, I think that still. If I were responsible for her death...”, Amy fell silent.

Amy covered her mouth with her hand and gagged. After a beat, she exploded in tears. Jane handed her the box of tissues. Amy ripped the remaining content out of the box and threw the shell away. Jane silently got up and went to the supply cabinet. As she sat down, she placed the fresh box on the coffee table. She scooped over and put her arm around Amy’s shoulders. After a time, the crying began to subside. She wiped her face with a tissue. After a time, she was composed. She looked ahead in silence.

Jane gave Amy’s shoulders a squeeze and said:

“Keep going.”

Amy turned her head and looked at Jane.

“So...mom dies in 2013. I inherited a nice chunk of money – nothing over-the-top – but a nice bit of savings. Same year that I turned 18. Linda was with another girl: Roz told me it was time to move on. Now – as you know – I’m a touch typist, on 10 key my KPH is 12,000 with 98% accuracy...thank you. My high school offered Mavis Bacon’s typing course. I took it. Now...this made mom very happy. She was all

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onboard with technical training...but was highly suspicious of anything else. Our relationship was very strained at that point. I had renounced her god and religion. Now...I was careful to keep my and Linda's relationship on the 'down low'..."

"The 'down low'...huh?", Linda retracted her arm from around Amy's shoulders and grabbed her drink.

"Yeah...I recently saw an episode of *Law & Order: SVU* where Ice-T's character talks about that. Yeah...in middle school, Linda and I are having our relationship but are being discreet. Then the two of us come across the poster at *Spencer's Gifts*..."

"The 'Buffy' poster..."

"Yeah...and I kinda snap...and start rebelling...first the poster and then I get a boy's haircut and start cross-dressing – T-shirt, jeans, tennies – and the shit hits the fan..."

"Okay...I need to backtrack. Why did you take a touch-typing class? So...this is after Linda and you're rebelling. High school rebels don't do 'Mavis Bacon'..."

"I was rebelling by planning to go to college and being some kind of scientist. My crazy mom thought science was evil...a plot of the Devil...and I wanted to stick it to her."

"Have you been to college?"

"No. I gotta backtrack. This really bonded me to Roz. After Linda goes to shit, I fall into the outsider group. These people *never* studied. That included Roz...I don't know how she finished without repeating. She was smart enough to be valedictorian but...nope. And I explained that studying was my way of rebelling. And...she loved it. While she would never crack a book, she forced me to study. Kinda a maternal figure. Actually, it was a D/s thing. She was the dom but in a good and caring way. I needed it."

"Was she the mother that Doris wasn't?"

"Yeah. Absolutely. We were exclusive. I'm thankful for that. She was firm but was so sweet and cool about it. You know? It lasted from middle school to the end of high school. The sex...um...was very different. It was very tender with Linda and...vigorous with Roz. The stuff with Roz became...more complicated. Bottom line, I was as close to her as Linda. She obviously liked that I needed guidance and a mother figure."

"You never considered her your girlfriend?"

"It really was a mother-daughter relationship. That might sound weird. It wasn't. I liked the fact that she was my mother: I needed that at the time. I mean we were exclusive for years, but it was never a girlfriend thing. I filled a need in her life as well. It was a totally different energy than Linda, every bit as meaningful."

"She was like a mom, and you needed that. Did you love her?"

"Completely. It was the love that someone has for her mom, in a healthy family. Of course, I can only imagine what that is like. I never thought about growing old with her...like with Linda., Amy laughed. "It

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got to the point where she would talk about how proud she was of me and how I was going to do great things when I moved away from her.”

Amy took a deep breath and exhaled. She concluded:

“I would have killed myself if not for Roz.”

“Okay.”

“There’s more. If it weren’t for her, I would have gone to hell...ah...metaphorically. Those guys were heavy druggies and Roz definitely partook. She maintained personal limits: she was disciplined. It really was weird that she was an outsider. She made sure that I said ‘no’ much more than ‘yes’. Peer pressure was not a problem. Roz was well established in the group: everyone knew that...well...I was her sub. When Roz told me to not snort that line or not take that pill, there were no questions. But I did say ‘yes’...and to more than just weed. I would have developed a serious drug problem...possibly died...if not for her. She was all about ‘you’re going to show your crazy bitch of a mom up by being a lawyer or something’. When I was 18, Roz told me that it was my time to grow up and move on. Despite hanging with the ‘punks, goths, and gays’, I was on an academic path. My teachers were *freaked out*.”

“Roz told you to move on?”

“Yes. Roz was the best kind of dominant. There was no power trips. Because of what happened with her and her mom – and I’ll tell you that part of my story later – she wanted to give someone the care and love that a kid needs. She felt that way when it started. She was so damn clearheaded, even in middle school. I understand why she was an outsider – and please ask me later – but that still blows me away. She could have been a psycho bitch. And I was so fucked up when things started, I would have gone with that bitch. Roz raised me. I’m not 100%, maybe 75. I’d be below 50 or dead if not for her.”

Amy concluded:

“I thank God for Roz.”

“You never went to college like Roz wanted...why?”

“Without Roz, I felt lost. She was just being a good mom and kicking me out of the nest. Now...that cunt...mom...sorry...died in ’13. I had a little bit of money. I traveled around the country for the past five years; It’s been like that show from the 70’s...*Kung Fu*. I’m kinda just searching. I like Buddhist shit...I’m enjoying myself sexually...just taking time to work things out in my head. I’ve been doing these receptionist and secretarial gigs...trying not to spend my inheritance. Okay...I need to shift gears...”

“Whatever you want.”

Amy talked more about Doris, her break-up with Linda and how became involved with the outsiders.

“So...did you like this? Was it too invasive or weird?” Jane asked.

“Oh...god. I loved this. I really did.”

“So did I...it was very beneficial.”

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“We just scratched the surface...ya’ know.”, Amy said. “We have a lot to unpack. And you’re right. We need to get each other to be more open with others. I’m psyched...are you?”

Jane nodded.

“C’mon...give me a hug.”, Amy said.

After they hugged, Amy said:

“Now...let’s drink. Do you want to go to a bar? Can you recommend a place?”

“Sure. Let’s go to [The Bayou](#) in West Hollywood. It’s a gay bar with a nice dive bar feel.”

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