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Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:20:26 GMT

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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/9/2007 1:14 PM

Anna turned the page of her book. It was an old favorite, one she still loved rereading. Sitting by the pool in the late afternoon sun, she was relaxing. Everyone, including her, was still recovering from Virgil's party last night.

She was deliberately staying in sight of people. She knew from experience someone would feel the need to talk to her about something. She found people often wanted an outsider to tell their problems to, someone not involved or seen as neutral.

"Can I sit here?" The voice was tentative as if the speaker wasn't sure about the whole thing.

"Sure." Anna looked up, smiled, and returned to her book. The young lady sat down and set a sandwich, some chips and a can of pop down on the table. She started eating, looking thoughtful.

After a moment Anna directed a comment toward her new neighbor. "You're Kat, right?"

"Yes. And you're Mrs. Hanson." Kat started eating her second sandwich.

"Just Anna, please." She went on. "How did you like the party last night?"

"I had lots of fun. I danced with everyone and we all had a good time."

"Anyone special?"

For some reason this seemed to make Kat a bit uncomfortable. "No, not really. John is up on Thunderbird 5 right now." Kat fidgeted a bit then suddenly blurted out, "Do you think I'm selfish? I mean having fun while John isn't here?"

"Probably. Most human beings are selfish. It's a survival skill." Kat blinked at this. Anna went on. "You're, what, in your early 20's?" Kat nodded. "So you are just leaving your childhood and your birth family behind. You need to be a bit self-centered to do that. Or no kids would ever leave the nest. And you haven't found a new family to take your thoughts away from yourself yet. Unless you and John got engaged without telling anyone."

Kat blushed. "No, we're just friends. That's all. But, I felt like I was doing something behind his back, dancing last night."

"Did he know about the party?" Kat nodded. "Did he object to your going?"

"No. It just felt funny, with him not there."

"Ah. What I call 'guilt, the gift that keeps on giving'." Kat looked surprised. Anna went on. "Doing something you enjoy isn't being selfish. Didn't your mom ever do anything without your dad?"

"Well, with other women, yes. But this kind of felt like a date."

"Not like going out with friends after work?"

"I never went out with friends after work," Kat replied slowly. "I did after school, but that was with other girls."

"And since this was with a mixed crowd, it felt like a date." Kat nodded and took another bite of her sandwich. "Did someone ask you to go with them? Or was it a group invite?"

"Oh, it was a group invite. Virgil asked us all via email. And we girls all got together and picked out dresses."

"Then I suspect this is more that you aren't used to going out in a group with guys in it than guilt over having a 'date' behind John's back. Maybe a bit of sadness that he couldn't come but nothing else. Actually, if he had objected to your going, I would have been worried. The idea that someone thinks they have the right to control someone else's behavior is usually a danger sign. It's considered pre-abusive behavior."

"My mum wouldn't have gone without Dad."

Anna raised an eyebrow. "And I wouldn't go without my husband. I wouldn't have as much fun. But that isn't the same as feeling I needed his permission to go."

"Oh." Kat settled back in her chair to think about this.

Anna picked up her book again but put it down after a minute. "Was that why you felt selfish? Because you enjoyed yourself?"

"No." Kat was quiet for a minute then added, "My mum's been sick. I found out about it later. I hadn't even noticed."

"What's wrong with her?"

"She has a heart problem. She seemed tired last time I saw her but I didn't think anything about it. Now I find out she was hiding it from me and had to have surgery."

"Is she ok now?"

"Yes, but I didn't even notice!"

"Why should you have? Were you living at home?"

"No, I haven't for four years now. I went home a lot, though. I noticed she lost weight and seemed tired a lot. But I didn't think about it much. She said she was fine. We used to be so close!"

"And you aren't now? Or you would have noticed or someone would have told you?" When Kat

nodded with tears in her eyes, Anna went on. "Which one upsets you more, the fact you didn't notice or the fact no one told you?"

Kat thought about this for a second. "I don't know. I suppose they were trying to protect me."

"From what?" When Kat looked at her with surprise on her face, Anna continued. "Did they think you couldn't handle the news or was this part of the way they coped, by pretending nothing is wrong?"

When Kat hadn't replied after a minute, Anna decided to give her something else to think about. "Did you notice I have a heart problem?"

"You do? You look fine."

"Congestive heart failure. Walking up the two flights of stairs to the house is my limit these days. But I don't look 'sick', do I?" Kat shook her head. "My father died of the same thing. He retired early and spent three of the last five years of his life downhill skiing. The last two, he couldn't, but before that no one he hadn't told knew he was sick. I'm on the heart transplant standby list -- I'm not critical -- but I don't look, or feel, sick and I won't need a transplant for some time -- maybe never. With some types of heart problems the person looks sick right off. Other people never look sick at all. It depends on the type of heart problem and the person who has the problem."

"Why aren't you at home with your daughter looking after you?"

"Well, one: because I don't need looking after, two: because I'd be bored out of my skull in two days and three: because we'd kill each other. I love her very much and we're close but she's not a good babysitter and I don't need one. I'm an adult. If I need help, I'll ask for it." Anna looked at Kat for a minute. "Has anything bad ever happened to your family before?"

"No. I had some trouble with sexual harassment at my first job. I'm not naive!"

No, but you have been sheltered, I bet. "I didn't mean that as an insult. But let's see. In the past couple of weeks you've seen a woman you like badly injured, found out your mom was sick and you were left out of the loop, and, or so I've heard, had a fight with your boyfriend. Any one of these would be upsetting in themselves. How do these make you feel?"

"Upset."

Anna snorted. "You wouldn't be human if you weren't upset. I mean are you angry? Scared? Do you feel guilty? Depressed? Put-upon? Bewildered? All of these are normal reactions. So is feeling guilty for enjoying yourself at a party soon after getting bad news. Like somehow this makes you a 'bad girl'. You should be staying home and covering yourself with ashes instead of having fun."

Kat gave a soft giggle. Anna went on. "I'm not saying you should treat any of these things lightly. They may cause major changes in your life. But they are not all of your life, are they? Your world doesn't revolve around your boyfriend or your mother, does it?"

"No. Although, I really like John."

"Have you ever had a bad argument with a boyfriend before?"

"Not really. I never was this close with any guy before. My mum and dad have never fought."

"And how long have they been divorced?"

"They're not divorced!" Kat replied angrily. "They have a perfect marriage!"

"Kat, your mom and dad are human beings. The only way two people living together never fight is if they never talk to each other, or if one of them has completely overwhelmed the other. Or if they're both perfect. I know of only one person like that. He got crucified for it."

"Mum and Dad love each other."

"And I love my husband very much. But some days I'm tired and snap at him, or I do something stupid and he gets upset, or sometime we just miscommunicate. He has some habits that drive me nuts and I'm sure I have some that do the same to him. And we both have interests the other doesn't share. Part of a marriage is learning to get along after a disagreement. And to handle yourself not being perfect."

"What do you mean?"

"I make mistakes. And I'm not always great about apologizing. I'm working on it, but I need to remember I still fail."

"You seem to feel very strongly about this."

Anna suddenly looked sad. "Part of this is my reaction to the word 'perfect'. One of the first therapy groups I ever led has two sisters in it. One of their other sisters had talked to them about how they had the perfect family growing up."

"So?"

"Dad had sexually molested both of the sisters in my group."

"Oh."

"But what really got me was after about 2 years, I made the older sister see that her husband had been molesting their daughter. She immediately quit the group. She hated her mother for not protecting her, but did the same to her daughter. She said she didn't need the group anymore, her husband had just been released from prison and everything was just 'perfect' now. Her sister quit a month later. 'God told her to'. This figures into my definition of blasphemy."

"Couldn't you do anything?"

"I had to report that I suspected abuse. But that was all I could do." Anna looked at Kat. "I'm not

saying all marriages are like that. But 'perfect' is a cover up. A good marriage or any relationship takes work on both sides. And it is constantly growing and changing. Just like the people in it. Like any growing thing it gets messy and dirty. And sometime it hurts."

A sudden "Kat! Kat get wet!" split the air.

Kat looked up and grinned. "Hi, Josh. No, I'm not wet yet."

Joshua ran over and pulled at her hand. "Kat come! Get wet!"

Dom grinned at them. "Sorry ladies. Josh, don't interrupt the ladies."

"We were pretty much done. Kat, I think you're being kidnapped."

"And I don't think he'll let me go. All right, Joshua. Let's get wet." She took off her T-shirt to reveal the swim top underneath and walked with Joshua down the pool steps. He promptly tried to push her in.

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