



Her Favorite Part of Him
by Sharon Cullars

Jay's ass was the beginning of their relationship. Standing in line behind him at a neighborhood Starbucks one Sunday, Keri had reached out to touch it, surprising herself. It was a light touch, but he'd felt it anyway. He jerked around, ready to lay somebody down, then caught the laughter in her eyes.

"Did you just touch me?" His face, not as perfect as his behind, was still compelling.

A blond woman in a parallel line peeked over, not even trying to hide the fact that she was listening.

"And what if I did?"

She couldn't believe she had done that. Even as she'd flexed a finger against him, her "good girl" doppelganger had mentally shaken her head, ready to smack some sense into herself for acting like a skank. Still, she had pursed her lips, not quite hiding a smile. And had been rewarded with a beatific smile in return.

"Yeah, now if the situation was reversed, and I had touched your ass, you'd be cussing me out 'bout now."

Little Miss Nosy's eyes were bulging, trying to get a glance at the object of Keri's attention and the subject of the conversation.

"I don't have to use language like that. I know jujitsu."

"Well, since I'm not the cussing type, either, and I don't know any jujitsu moves, I'm just gonna let you buy me a mocha latte with lots of cream on top...you know, compensation for sexually harassing me."

She'd laughed and obliged him the latte, and they had sat together in the Starbucks that cloudless Sunday, finding conversation easy, void of the usual discomfort of getting to know one another. But then she'd already touched his behind; that was bypassing two or three levels of discomfort right there.

That day, she silently told herself she was just enjoying an afternoon with a man who was not only good to look at, but who was good to laugh with. After all, she was somewhat involved already.

They slept together six days later and she broke it off with her somewhat boyfriend.

That was five years ago, almost to the day. And Jay's ass was still fine to her.

She loved the feel of his ass along the curve of her back. Firm and supple, it radiated heat through her flesh, warmed her body against the chill of the room. Sometimes, when he was deep in sleep, she stroked his mound, caressing it with an abandon she didn't allow herself when he was awake, when he would mistake her ministrations as an invitation. Not that she didn't love sex with him, but sometimes she just wanted to be alone with his body, while the rest of him was off somewhere wandering the landscapes of his dreams. The latent strength of his dormant muscles comforted her.

She reached behind her, crept a finger along his crevice. He stirred from his deep sleep, not fully awakened. His body stiffened in response to her touch, then relaxed, as it recognized its mate. He pushed back toward her, and she turned to spoon him.

"You know, this is totally ass backwards. You don't spoon me, I'm supposed to spoon you," he said, his voice muffled against the pillow.

"Sexist male bullcrap..."

"If you gonna cuss, do it right. It's not bullcrap, it's bullshit... Uhm, do that again."

She laughed against his back, let the vibration of it rumble through him.

She loved him. That was a given. And he loved her right back. And that was expected after five years. She kept waiting for the point when she would fall out of love. But it hadn't come yet. She wrapped her arms around him tighter, grasping him in the unconventional position.

He was quiet. She thought she heard him purring. Then he said softly, "You know I have to fly out to New York tomorrow. So, I was thinking we should celebrate today."

"This early?"

"What early? We can do something before I leave, then finish up when I get back."

She raised up on an elbow, looked down at his coffee-toned face. In the pre-dawn light, he looked a lot darker. "You got something big planned? Uhn, uhn, don't even try to deny it. We promised, nothing big this time. We're budgeting."

"We're always budgeting," he said in that damnably reasonable tone of his. That voice was always a prelude to her becoming unreasonable. But she held off this morning.

“But I thought we decided to put any money toward the house and not spend it on trivial stuff. I hope you didn’t go spending a lot. We’re going to have a lot more anniversaries, but this house is a big investment.”

He reached a hand up, pulled her lips down to his, effectively shutting her up with a kiss. It was one of those light treatments, just barely touching, but leaving a trace of moisture, teasing with a bit of tongue.

He let her go.

“You think I worry too much.”

“Way, way too much, baby girl. You worry about planting the flowers, but you never take time to enjoy them or smell them. It’s my bad for loving a woman with a whole lot going on...”

She sighed. “You make me sound like Superwoman.”

He turned fully on his side to face her. He traced a finger along the contours of her face. She didn’t have the angles that made his face so striking. Her face was a complex merging of circles and balls, round forehead, round cheeks. And yet it worked for her somehow. He definitely seemed to like her face. And the rest of her, as well. Too bad her ass wasn’t nearly as perfect as his. Cellulite was her bane.

“Not Superwoman. Just an extraordinary human being. One I want to take out and treat with a champagne breakfast at Alta Mira’s. Then maybe, a carriage ride along Nob Hill...”

“Uhm, really don’t like the smell of horseshit,” she smiled.

"All right, then, we can hire a limousine. Take a tour around the city like...well, like tourists. C'mon play some hooky with me today. I'll make it worth your while."

She was tempted.

"Then afterward I have something to show you...something I think you'll like."

Curiosity added to the temptation.

"But what about your office?"

"Mickey's going to be there, as will Linc and Ted. I think they can sell computers without any supervision from me. At least for a day. After all, I'm the boss, so I get to set the rules."

"Well, I'm not the boss of me, so I don't. I got to be there if a story breaks."

She saw his disappointment, touched his cheek slight. "Sweetie, I know it's our fifth anniversary, but just think how wonderful our tenth, fifteenth, twentieth are going to be in our own home. Especially with that sound system room you want."

He settled back on his pillow, looked pensively up at the ceiling.

"Well, I'm hoping in ten, fifteen, twenty years from now we're not just living together."

She sighed. "Once we get the house situation settled, then we can talk about marriage some more. Right now, I just want everything right with us before we make that move. I don't want there to be any money issues or other issues hanging over us."

He sat up again, his face aggravated. "How many times do I have to tell you that Carla is not one of those issues? It was over when I met you."

"And I understand that. I also understand that you two are friends. And that she's always going to have some piece of you that I can't have. And I'm cool with that. But I just don't like the idea of another woman in my marriage, friend or otherwise. I'm sorry. I know it's not you, it's me. I have to learn to deal."

He looked at her, grabbed her hand. "But we are going to do this one day, right?"

"Right."

"I mean, there are worse things you could do than make an honest man of me, right?" His smile glowed. Near perfect teeth to go with that perfect ass.

She leaned over to kiss him. Her kisses weren't subtle; she nearly swallowed his lips. "Honey, there's nothing better in the world to me than making you Mr. Keri Sparrow."

He chuckled. "OK, I think we need to go with my name."

"Yes, because Smith is so original."

"Hey, my daddy gave that name to me, and his daddy before him, and his daddy before him, and the slave owner before that, who actually was my daddy's daddy's daddy's daddy...something like that."

"Silly ass. Let me get up and shower. I got a news show to put together." Then she grumbled, "Like anyone's really watching."

"Stepping stones, stepping stones. One day you're going to be up there with Barbara Walters..." He rolled over as though he were going back to sleep.

"Yeah, the only way I'm going to be up there with Barbara Walters is if I happen to get on an elevator with her."

"Gloomy pessimist." He said against the pillow, his voice strained with a suppressed yawn.

"Damn optimist." She retorted as she carried her tired body to the bathroom.

"What did I tell you about that cussing."

By the time she had showered, pampered and dressed, he had gotten up and gone down to the kitchen to put coffee on. He wasn't due in the office for another hour. The privileges of being an owner.

He'd also scrambled some light fluffy eggs. And crisp bacon.

She really should marry him. She could eat like this for the rest of her life.

He sat down with his paper, looking through the real estate listings.

But they'd already picked out their house. It was near Pacific Heights, a beautiful Queen Anne. Most of all, it had lots of room.

A whole step up...actually several steps up...from the cramped condo they were sharing now with just enough room to bump into each other as they dressed. Not really much breathing space, something they both needed at times. Just like they needed to be up under each other at other times. She liked those times.

They had reached a well-tuned sync, a balance, a rhythm that allowed them to coast forward together. No looking back.

No holding on to what ifs and buts.

She drained her coffee, left her plate in the sink before quickly bussing him on the cheek.

"Luv you..."

"Yeah, ...back atcha..." he said without looking up.

"Romantic fool."

She left him sitting there, holding a buttered piece of toast in one hand, holding the Chronicle with the other.

Her man.

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"OK, we need to edit this a bit more." She and Ted looked over the film he'd shot at the bridge. A police chase that had ended with a three-car crash on Golden Gate Bridge.

"Well we can cut this part, but this is the money shot here. No way should we take that out." He was mesmerized by the shot. It was the decapitated head of the perp who had led the police on a 200-mile, 150-mph "excursion" through at least two counties and which had cost not only his life but two others as well.

"OK, we're not that desperate...not yet. Besides, we don't need the FCC after us. So let's just leave out the head shots and any other disconnected body parts you happened to catch on film."

"All right, but this could up the ratings."

"Sweetie the only way we're going to get high numbers is to close up shop and get a job at a bigger network. But since that's not our lot in life, let's at least keep our dignity."

"OK then," he sighed, capitulating as he always did because in the end, she was the producer and because he wasn't truly invested in a fourth-rate cable news show anyway. Community items and forth-rate guests interspersed with the occasional freeze-frame action story. They had actually lucked out with the crash site.

The first strains of a headache were just beginning to work their way up to the surface. She reached for a bottle of Aleve on the desk that held the editing machine. She definitely didn't need a headache tonight.

The thought of Jay mellowed her body somewhat. She thought about things she would do to him tonight...after a quiet dinner someplace.

She was sorry she'd had to disappoint him, but in the end, they would save some money. Carriage tours cost. Alta Mira's cost.

And it wasn't as though it was an official anniversary.

She didn't know why she was so hesitant about making it legal. As though paperwork would make what had gone before illegitimate. Or more like, it would hex what was working out so right.

Tom pulled out another roll. "OK, what about this footage Will brought in from that other crash-up this afternoon on 101 South? We could lead with this one instead."

Ted loaded up the editing machine while she dialed Jay's number again. Again, it went straight to voice mail. The clock was nearing six. Strange.

"Man, look at this. About eight cars, all totaled. Smashed up to hell all over the expressway."

Keri didn't feel like looking over the shots, even though she needed to before she left. They had already put together most of the show for 9:00, but there was still some more airspace. This accident could probably lead. If Ted's excited murmurings were correct, there were five more cars than the bridge smash-up.

She peered at the mini screen and saw that Ted was wrong. There were more than eight cars here and the scene was particularly gruesome. She counted five bodies strewn along the stretch of highway. Cones marked the designated area as state troopers re-directed the oncoming traffic.

A couple of the cars were sheared in half. A few others had back interiors that had been pushed into their front seats.

Among the vehicular carnage, a black limo took center stage simply because of its length. The door to the rear area was open and the long seat was half out of the skeleton of the car. A truck cabin abutted the rear; it had not stopped in time. The limo had been pushed into the cars in front at an incredible rate of speed. A chain reaction.

"OK, you know we can't show these bodies..."

"Oh, c'mon! It's nothing gruesome. No kiddies or mommies. Just a few dudes. Nobody's going to get up in arms about that."

"Look, I don't feel like arguing. I need to get out of here to meet Jay."

Another scene flicked on the screen. She had been reaching for her cell phone again, but she paused and took a closer look at the body uppermost in the camera's sight, it's back in full view. Several more frames brought the body in clearer relief.

She blinked, then blinked again.

She felt she was breathing, but she knew she wasn't.

Damn him. Damn him. Damn him.

He'd promised.

Or at least she thought he had.

She didn't need to see his face.

Light blue shirt, gray slacks. They were non-descript, no different than what a million men wore today.

But as she stared at the footage, she pushed the button to freeze frame it and studied the contours of the body. And she knew.

He was wearing the same outfit he'd been wearing that day in Starbucks.

But that couldn't be him. It couldn't be.

There was a reason he wasn't answering his phone.

He was back at the condo.

He was preparing for a quiet dinner. Just the two of them.

He would ask her to marry him. And she would say yes this time.

It was their anniversary.

And she wanted to live the rest of her life with him.