

## DELETED SCENE (early draft) – Serenity Space

### Kat and Abra

I sat across from Abra in Serenity Space Saturday morning, determined to enjoy it before the Melanie Invasion. She was definitely going to give birth here and I was dreading it.

Glancing around the Womb, I tried to take it all in in its natural state, unwilling to picture what Melanie might do to it once she got here.

Kneeling in front of the table, I lit two ginger eucalyptus scented candles and settled into a nearby beanbag chair. I smiled as I sunk into the chair, wiggling my butt to get just the right settling for my long legs.

"You seem much improved," Abra said, stretching out her arms in front of her, her back perfectly straight and horizontal to the floor.

"I am. I guess. I miss Manny but I'm handling it." I ran my fingers through my hair, massaging my scalp and neck. I was spending more time at the Y with the girls and had been busy at Abra's Midwifery, especially with plans for Diane and Jeff's baby. I eyed my mom, who was wiggling her fingers to get things going. I wanted to tell my mom about my revelation, how I knew Libby was lying. How the moment I knew, it was like a whole part of myself burst open like a flower in bloom, a part that had been hidden before, or maybe just not ready to come out yet. Ever since that day I'd felt stronger and more confident. When I saw Manny I was less concerned about what he thought about me and more concerned about how he was doing. I'd even sent him an apology about how I'd acted. A real card, not an e-mail or instant message.

"Got your card," he'd said at school a couple of days after I sent it. "Thanks."

Of course I wanted him to say we should go grab a cup of coffee and talk about it. I was bummed out that he didn't. But it was also okay in a strange way. I was alive and thriving without him. I was starting to see myself as someone worth knowing, worth caring about.

"I ran into Libby in the bathroom last Friday," I said, plunging right in.

"Did you hurt her?"

"Funny, Mom."

"It's one of your dad's old jokes. Blame him."

"You don't have to give it a life, Mom. I blame you."

Mom laughed and stretched her body up toward the ceiling, her fingers reaching high.

"So, Libby wants me to believe that the baby is Manny's." I glanced at my mom, trying to detect a reaction. Her face betrayed nothing. She didn't look at me, just kept her eyes up at the ceiling.

"And do you?"

"You know, she had me for like, two seconds, but then I knew she was lying. It was the weirdest thing, Mom. It was like it was in my bones or something. I just knew."

Mom smiled at me. "Good for you." She began her slow descent back to her toes. "So, how do you feel?"

"Good," I said, pushing my feet out in front of me and reaching for my toes. It was hard for me to watch someone else stretching or exercising and not participate in some way.

"What about Libby?"

"What about her?"

"How do you feel about her?"

Great, I wanted to say. I feel great that we both know she's a big, fat liar. If she lied about this, she probably lied about other things and if I can hold on to that truth, I won't get sucked into Libbyville again.

"Fine," I said.

"Fine?" she repeated. "Doesn't this realization that she lied about Manny change anything?"

I lifted the weights in silence. I had a feeling I knew where she was going with this and I didn't like it. Couldn't she let me wallow in this superior feeling for a few minutes longer? Did I have to start thinking about Libby in a way that made her human?

"I'm enjoying the moment, Mom. Don't ruin it."

Mom laughed as she reached for the sky once again. "I'd say your conscience is ruining it, not me."

"Why can't you let me bask in my victory for even a few minutes?" I held the weight against my chest for a second before lowering it to a ninety-degree angle. My muscle started to strain within seconds. I watched it quiver slightly under my skin, felt the burn begin to spread.

"Bask away, honey. No one is stopping you from basking." This was the down side to having Abra for a mother. She was always thinking about her own life, her own motivation for things, and how to change for the better, and she expected me to do the same. But it took all the fun out of dissing someone or getting one up on them.

I scowled as I lowered the weight to my thigh. I lifted the other weight in my left hand and repeated the hold.

"Well, I guess that's about all I'm going to get, eh?" Mom said.

"Yep. And by the way, don't schedule her when I'm around."

Mom sighed, long and deep. "I wish you'd have a more compassionate attitude toward her, Katima."

I didn't tell her about my small brush with pity yesterday, the way I'd almost seen Libby as a person, and not just this slutty bitch who was born to make my life miserable. I needed to hold on to the Libby I knew. I knew what to do with that Libby. Any other kind of Libby scared the hell out of me.

"I'll work on it," I said, hoping the sarcasm wasn't too obvious. "Oh, and I may need some time off. Christy and I are going to start interval training."

"Intervals? Already? Isn't the race in August?" Mom leaned to the left, stretching her side.

"Yeah, but it's not the Ironkids, Mom. This is the big leagues." I pulled both weights up at once, as if to emphasize my point. I watched my biceps tighten and bulge slightly as I lifted the weights to my chest.

Mom paused, both legs up in the air, like she was practicing a synchronized swimming routine. "This race means a lot to you."

I nodded, launching into a ten-minute description of the course, my strategy, and what I still needed to work on. Along with my work at Abra's Midwifery, training for the tri, having this goal, was the only thing keeping me sane without Manny and all this Libby stuff.

"Well, the committee picked the right girl to give the Athlete Outreach Award to," she said after I paused to take a breath.

I grinned. I had put myself there without Manny and was feeling better about it. And maybe we'd be back together by then, who knows?

"I can't wait to see you up there accepting your award," Mom said. "We should go shopping

for a dress."

"A dress?" I wrinkled my nose. "Shouldn't I wear some warm ups or running pants?"

"Good try but no go, Katima." Mom shook her head. "I'm sure eveningwear will be the order of the day." She rubbed her hands together, eyes light.

"Great," I said. I hated dressing up. It accentuated my height and my wanna-Bs. "Just don't go crazy with this, okay? I can probably borrow something from Christy."

Mom snorted. "She's five inches shorter than you. It would look ridiculous."

I was grateful she didn't mention that the five inches Christy lacked in height were bouncing nicely around her chest.

"I guess you're right," I said. "But nothing too foo-foo. I'm an athlete, not a fairy princess."

"I know, I know," Mom said, eyes gleaming, no doubt with images of chiffons and ruffles all over me.

I looked away, my eyes caught by the flickering flames on the meditation table. "It'll be just fine," I said loudly, as if to convince myself.

Mom looked relieved. "Now that's a healthy attitude."

"That's me," I said. "Miss Healthy Attitude."

Mom rolled her eyes but I just laughed, picturing myself accepting my award in a tasteful black dress, Manny drooling over me in a corner, unable to stay away as I made my way through a throng of adoring fans.