

**AMETHYST EXCERPT:**

“Good morning, Andrew.” Carefully removing the cat from his arms, Amy gently placed it in the basket in front of her handlebars. Goldie nonchalantly began to clean her paws. “I heard you were back in town.” Amy looked him up and down. “Trying to work off the effects of soft city living?”

Still keeping eye contact with Amy, he bent to stroke Jess, now also smooching up to him. “City living, for me at least, is anything but soft. In fact my lifestyle is so hectic I’m feeling jaded of late.”

Amy eyed him. One thing he certainly didn’t look was jaded. Andrew always had been fit and always prided himself on his athletic ability.

“I’ve been working long hours for quite some time, and it’s caught up with me. To be honest I’ve come home for a rest.”

So that answered her silent query. She’d been dying to know just why he’d returned to their small hometown. “How long will you be staying this time?” She tried to sound disinterested. As though she really couldn’t care less if he stayed a day or forever.

He finger combed his windswept black hair. “That depends.”

“Ah, depends on how long you can stand to stay here in this back block, you mean.”

He glanced about. “At this stage of my life this back block, as you so quaintly put it, is highly appealing to a worn-out old city bloke.” With an absent gesture he massaged the juncture of his neck and his shoulder.

“How’s the shoulder?” she asked. “Still bothering you?” In his early football playing days his collarbone was broken, and he stubbornly continued playing with the bones grating against each other.

He shrugged. “Not a lot. Since the pin was inserted I only get the occasional twinge.”

Then, after a collision with a massive opponent left him in a crumpled heap on the field, he’d thrown in the towel as far as football was concerned. Unconscious, he was rushed to hospital with an injured knee. Soon after that, at the age of twenty-three, to the sorrow of his team mates, he decided never to return to football.

“How’s your knee?” With a glance at that part of him, she swallowed. He had just about the most perfect legs she’d ever seen on any man. Point was, everything about him was nigh on perfect.

He flexed his leg and shrugged again. “Since the reconstruction it’s been no real problem.”

Amy dragged her glance from him to her watch. If she didn't get a move on she would be late for work, and that would never do. Much as she hated to leave Andrew she had to go, for her boss despised tardiness. "I have to fly," she said. Jobs in the small town were hard to come by, and she enjoyed working in the bank. Mr. Mortimer, her boss, wasn't so bad. A friend of her father's, he'd encouraged Amy to attend evening classes to further her computer skills.

With a wave she hoped appeared careless, she pedalled off, the dog loping at her side, the cat still perched majestically in the basket. "See you around," she flung over a shoulder.

"You sure will," Andrew called after her.