

The Adventures of Tequila Kitty: Chapter Two: Confessions of a Crazy Cat Lady - by Aimee Hamel *by Darren Cormier*

Chapter 2: Confessions Of A Crazy Cat Lady

It's always the dumbest, most obscure and unexpected little things that spark the long-awaited realization your life has become completely unreasonable. And it never happens early on, at opportune times when your dignity is still very much salvageable-- it just doesn't work like that. You only receive that unforgiving jolt to your ass bone courtesy of the first jagged stone to greet you at Rock Bottom when you're already way too far gone. I had that same jolt handed to me personally tonight by, of all things, vegetables.

I was sitting at my dining room table. Alone. Again.

Because, as usual, Teqs was three hours late for dinner and I'd resolved that I wouldn't wait any more than an hour and a half for him this time.

I stared at his full bowl of Fancy Feast beside me as I pushed cold food around aimlessly on my own plate. I was thinking how I wasn't going to put in the effort of getting him the good stuff anymore-- back to dry food he would go. I jerked my hand back from the table when my eyes settled over the edible art I'd created: Three slices of steamed carrots made for two eyes and a nose, with six string beans lined up on either side marking long green whiskers.

Just then Teqs crawled in through the front door cat flap with a guilty look etched on his muzzle.

I immediately got up and ran toward him like a mad woman, yanking my shoe off and chucking it at him.

“Tequila Kitty, what the hell have you done to me! Look at me! Waiting around for you like.. like I'm some pathetic little pet of yours! Whose owner clearly doesn't give a shit about her! You're the pet, goddamnit. You should be the one waiting on me! Oh my god, listen to me. What the hell am I saying?” I dropped to my knees and tears began to fall.

Teqs walked cautiously over to me, his claws defensively exposed.

“Don't cry, meow. I'm sorry I'm late. Boss had a couple of mice at his house he needed me to take care of before I came home, ” he said.

He took off his sombrero and playfully placed it on my head. “And really, don't be upset. You're fine. There's nothing wrong with loving your cat.”

He was right, there is nothing wrong with loving your cat. But there is something wrong with owning a different cat-print sweater for each day of the week, and there's definitely something wrong with your kitchen floor being completely hidden beneath enough cat bowls and litter boxes to feed an army of cats, which I basically had. I had a problem, and that problem was all thanks to Tequila.

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I wasn't always this way. It feels like just yesterday that I was on top of the world, one of the most smoking hot blonde knockouts California had produced, and not afraid to let you know I knew it. I

was living in Barstow and working in L.A. as a model when I met Tequila. I had been invited to a punk show in Corona by a friend of my agent who claimed he wanted to meet up and discuss a potential “business” deal. After he made a pass at me within the first fifteen minutes of my arrival, I had him swiftly removed from my vicinity and I decided to stay and enjoy the show by myself.

That was until I saw the most adorable little striped cat in a sombrero curled up in a seat at the bar. Cute animals were my kryptonite-- the only thing to make a no-bullshit independent woman go soft. I waited for him and his friend to leave the crowded bar and head for the door when I stopped him and suggestively asked him to come home with me, knowing I always get what I want. But I do love a challenge, and he declined, saying he and his friend had to leave for Vegas. He asked for a ride and I couldn't say no. I ended up having him drop me off at home, and I let him take my Corvette the rest of the way. I wanted a reason to see him again, and I had such an expendable income then, it wasn't much of a loss either way.

He did come back, about two weeks later. I had just gotten home from a photo shoot and was about to take a shower when my doorbell rang. I opened it to find Teqs, by himself, swaying drunkenly from side to side.

“Meow, I managed to keep the ‘Vette in one piece. You're welcome,” he purred, tossing the keys into my hand. He started hiccuping and I took the bottle of Cuervo from his paws before it smashed all over the front porch.

“Tequila, are you okay? Where's your friend?” I asked.

He brushed me off with a wave of his claw. “He's got a thing. Look, meow, I'll be honest with you. Vegas didn't go so well for me. I was up about \$5,500 for a good while, but I lost it all on a bad hand. I've got nowhere else to go. Do you think...?”

I cut him off, finishing his sentence for him. "Would you like to stay with me for a while? I could use some company around here, honestly."

"You sure, meow? I wouldn't want to impose." Just as the last words left his little lips he started dry heaving and I ushered him inside.

"C'mon, Teqs, the bathroom is this way," I said.

"I'm fine-- meow. It's just-- a hairball." he managed to choke out.

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That night we went out and purchased the "bare" necessities-- Teqs insisted he needed nothing more than these: litter box, food and water bowls, and a big jar of catnip. Toy mice and laser pointers were of no use to Teqs. As long as he had his 'nip and a handle of tequila handy at all times, he was stimulated and happy.

I had come up with what I thought was a suitable arrangement for us: he didn't owe me any money for the room and board. It was on me. In exchange, he would sleep in my bed at night, playing up his cutesy-cuddly-kitty side to my satisfaction. He was still allowed to drink and smoke; he wouldn't be Tequila if he didn't. But he would have to stop the gambling and partying, starting immediately. I was going to do my best to make Teqs a good house cat. My house cat.

He agreed without any objections, and the first few weeks were great. I continued modeling, and Teqs scored a job promoting some brand of tequila, going around to different liquor stores in the area as a spokesperson and giving out samples. It was the perfect job for him; people got a kick out of taking free shots from a cute little cat in a sombrero. The stuff went fast. And Teqs was always home at night to greet me when I walked in the door, nuzzling my leg then

jumping into his chair at the set table, ears perked waiting for dinner time. I poured some turkey gravy cat chow into his bowl while he rambled about his day.

"I'm tellin' you, they love me over there, meow. Boss is telling me I'm in line for a promotion within the next couple weeks, whatever that means." He dove into his bowl face first, going on when he came up for air. "Yeah, he says it's time the rest of Cali, maybe the world, got a taste of the animal promoter craze we started. I don't know if that means I'll be traveling? We'll see I guess."

"That's awesome, Teqs," I said.

I was genuinely happy for him, at first. But three weeks later, when his boss did offer him the promotion, things started going straight downhill.

The first problem was all the cats.

Now that Teqs' job required him to travel to bigger liquor stores around the state, and sometimes to other states, he started being inconsistent and coming home later and later. Some nights he wouldn't come home at all, and the next day I'd see him in pictures online, out partying and drinking.

When I asked him what that was about, he went on the defense. "Meow. It was for one of the promotions I was doing. Boss needed me to work the crowd a little at a club. Do you want me to succeed at my job or not? I thought you supported me getting my life back on track."

"I do," I said. "But I'm not sure that partying and drinking all night long is helping you get your life on track..."

Before the conversation could go any further, he changed the

subject. "You know what I think we need? For both of us?"

"What," I said.

"Another cat. Maybe a kitten. As much as I care about you, and as great of a roommate as you've been, I've been craving more feline interaction. I think it's instinctual. And it would be great for you when I'm out working late nights. You'd have another little buddy to keep you company--keep my spot on the bed warm for me," he said.

"I don't know about that, Teqs. The upkeep and everything... I still have a job too you know," I said.

"I know you do," he said, "but I promise there's no more upkeep involved than there is having just one cat. Trust me."

So that weekend, I went to the shelter, and I got myself another cat. In keeping with the liquor theme, I named her Ginny, Gin for short. She had a beautiful white and black coat with a brown belly. Teqs continued on his late night work grind, making it home in time for dinner maybe four nights out of the week. And for a while, Ginny filled that void just as he said she would. For me, that is. Him needing another cat for his own personal reasons was bullshit; he was never home and he never paid attention to her when he was.

After a another couple weeks, Ginny just wasn't doing it for me like she was at first; I missed Tequila. I called him on a break at work and told him how depressed I was feeling. He seemed to know just the fix.

"Meow, I know you might think this sounds crazy, but I think you need another cat. Everyone I know who has three has never been happier." It did sound crazy, but so was I. So I took his advice.

From that point on, it became a cycle. The more Teqs stayed out

partying and doing God knows what, the more cats I brought home. One night Teqs came home with a diamond encrusted collar, I assume given to him by another woman, and the next morning I went out and bought three more cats. I truly believed that when I reached a certain number, the pain would go away. But it didn't. And before I knew it I was a former model turned shelter volunteer. After so many visits to the shelter, I couldn't stand by and watch so many neglected cats with no home. I figured if I worked there, I could take home a majority of them and no one would try and stop me.

That was the first way in which Tequila made me crazy. The second, and maybe even worse than the first, was Tequila's jealousy issue.

For such an outgoing and flirty animal, he was extremely overprotective and jealous when it came to me and guys. My reassurances only angered him more.

"Tequila," I said one night after I'd told him a customer at the shelter had given me his phone number, "you know no man--or woman-- could ever replace you. You're my baby. But a woman has... needs. Which I'm sure you'd like to fulfill but it just doesn't work that way. You understand what I'm saying right?"

Teqs was already popping the lid of his second straight bottle of tequila; liquor could either calm or worsen his nerves--we'd see which one it was this time.

"Frankly, meow, I don't think I do. I protect you, I love you, I keep you warm at night. If some shmuck wants to take my place, he's gonna have to do it over my dead carcass," he said. "I've had enough of these guys trying to steal you away from me; it's time I put a stop to it."

"What guys?" I interjected. "Teqs, you are aware I used to be a model right? There were guys back then. Now... I haven't been on a

date in almost a year! No guy wants to date a girl who wears cat sweaters!”

“Hold on,” he said. “You don't like the sweaters...?”

Teqs was referring to the sweaters he'd had printed for me for every holiday since he'd been living with me. Each one was an obnoxiously bright knit with a silk screen of him in his trusty sombrero. When he first starting gifting them to me I tried not to wear them, but he caught right on and got upset with me. Since then I'd worn them at least once a week. At least.

I knew that was just one more of his ploys to keep me from dating. As if the other issues of me having a house full of cat condos and a repertoire of conversational skills that started and ended with my cats names and respective quirks weren't already achieving that goal.

It wasn't until I actually landed a date, and endured the humiliation of Tequila showing up in the middle of said date and ruining everything, that I officially decided the jealousy thing had to stop.

I met a guy by the water cooler at my gym, as cliché as that sounds, and we got to talking. I ended up asking him over to dinner at my house--I don't know why I ever thought that would be a good idea--and he accepted. I didn't tell Teqs for obvious reasons, and I planned it for a night I knew Teqs would probably be staying over his friend's house after a post-promo party.

The guy--Adam, his name was-- showed up right on time, flowers in hand, and I was swooning. I couldn't help it; it'd been too long. Everything went perfectly all night; I'd managed to hide all the cat paraphernalia in the garage so he wasn't freaked out. He had just finally put his arm around me during a movie when Teqs strolled in through the flap, pupils growing as soon as he saw a male was

present. It was quick, what he did, but the impact of it was lasting. He didn't even say a word when he saw us-- just continued his stroll over to where Adam's shoes were beside the couch, squatted over one, and did his business. When he finished, he looked straight at Adam and said, "Come back any time, dude. Love to have you."

If looks could kill, every one of that cat's nine lives would be used up when I was done with him. I threw him out that night. I couldn't stand to even look at him and his smug little face. Even when he was being an asshole he was cute, and that pissed me off the most.

I don't know where he went after I kicked him out-- maybe to another girl's house, maybe he walked the streets like a stray for a while to see how much he could milk out of people. All I know is I didn't see him for a while, and he dodged all my efforts to contact him. It wasn't until I ran into him at--where else-- a liquor store when I was buying wine for a work holiday party. I had been bumped up to management at the shelter, and I was in charge of the beverages.

Tequila was in line with a handful of nips of assorted types of liquor. I knew he couldn't be doing well financially if he was going for the mixture method. He tried to pretend like he didn't see me, but I chased him down in the parking lot.

"Tequila, stop. Talk to me. Where have you been? Why won't you talk to me?" I demanded.

"Meow, I don't have time for this... I gotta be somewhere," he said.

"Where. You don't look like you're dressed to 'be somewhere,'" I said.

"Just leave me alone. Look. You're better off without me. I deserved what I got for treating you that way after all you've done for me.

Look at me, roaming around like a stray, I probably have fleas I don't even know about yet. This is the life I should be stuck with."

I couldn't stand to see him like this. I didn't even respond. I simply walked over to the dumpster behind the store and picked up an empty beer box, tipping it sideways and gesturing for Tequila to climb in.

"C'mon Teqs. Get in, we're going home," I said.

"No... I don't think so. I can't," he mumbled.

"You know you can't resist a nice empty box," I waved the box around a bit more and he hopped in, our feud resolved at least for now.

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He continued to stay with me, but not much more than a week later I was already regretting it. He came home even less often than he used to, and he never gave me any information on where he was. Every night I was back to moping around in my deep depression, right up until that moment at the dinner table when I had the vegetable-induced revelation that I had reached a frightening level of crazy.

As I sat there kneeling in my foyer being consoled by my cat, I realized I couldn't fix my problems by sending him away. I was the one that had to get away. From all of it.

I packed my bags that night and left for Vegas. I had no idea at the time what I would do out there, but things fell into place quickly. I started waitressing at a club on the strip, slowly breaking back into the modeling industry since underneath all those sweaters, I still had my looks. I also started doing a stand-up comedy side show,

which I named “Confessions of a Crazy Cat Lady,” because if I couldn't laugh at myself and all the ridiculous shit I'd gotten myself into, then I was seriously in trouble.

One night, in the middle of one of my shows, I noticed a small sombrero floating somewhere in the middle of the crowd. It moved to the front row to take a seat and I realized Tequila was beneath it, with a pretty girl on each paw. He winked at me, and I was genuinely glad to see him happy, doing the things he did best.

If pressed to deduce a moral of the story from all of this, I'd probably advise anyone who spots a furry little cat in human garb sitting at a bar to look away, and never look back. But at the same time, should you really be taking advice from me? I mean, I shared milkshakes with my cats for god's sake.

