The Last Breakup

by JohnOConnor

Summary

Tori forces Jade to accept help after the last, big break-up. Who knew how it would turn out? (Other than us!)

Notes

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Note: I had this pretty much done months ago but RL, including moving to a bigger, better apartment, got in the way. I ended up fiddling with this later in the evening over and over again. Had to take a stand with myself to post it.

See the end of the work for more notes.

“Yeah? What do you want, Vega?”

“I… Wait! How did you know…?”

“That it was you? Oh my lord! Caller ID?” Tori could practically hear Jade’s eyes roll.

“Oh. Yeah. I guess… But I never see your ID when you call me so…”
“It’s not reciprocal, Vega. Now what the hell do you want?”

“I heard about… I heard about you and Beck and…”

After an extended pause, Jade quietly said, “Use your words, Vega. Or I’m hanging up. Three. Two. On…”

“OKAY! I heard about you and Beck breaking up.” She didn’t add again. “I was concerned and wanted to make sure you’re okay.”

With an exaggerated sigh, Jade asked, “Why?”

“Well, we’re friends. At least I consider you a friend.”

“I’m not your… Aauggh! Alright, I guess we are friends. Sort of. But… Oh, just leave me the hell alone!”

Tori stared at her phone once the call ended. “Alrighty then…”

A half-hour later, Tori rang the West doorbell.

The door opened to the exasperated expression on Jade’s face, “Jeez-us! Why the hell… Never mind, I actually expected it to be you. Just hoped you get the message from my hang up…”

“Well, if Muhammed Ali won’t go to the mountain…”

“How do you always seem to mess up these cliches…? Never mind. It’s just Muhammed. Ali took his Muslim name from the prophet Muhammed.” Jade shook her head but actually had a hint of a smile. Tori would take that, even at her own expense.

“Whatever, Jade. Look, I just want to help. Or, at least, be there for you.”

“Why Ah’m Toray…”

“Just drop it Jade. I don’t talk…”

“…Lahke thayet! I knooow…”

Jade looked thoughtful for a moment then sighed, “Guess you may as well come in. Let’s get this over with!”

Tori followed Jade into the house. There were times of yelling, silence, conversation, yelling, silence and eventually a longer, real conversation. During this on-going cycle, pizza was delivered. Tori found herself paying for it again.

Finally, after hours of talk and food, Jade started to cry and Tori was quickly there to hold her and let Jade cry it out.

After several minutes, the Goth pulled back. She eyed the mascara stains on Tori’s shirt with a small smile. Then she looked up at Tori, “Thanks. And…”

“Never speak of it! I know…” Tori finished with a laugh. Then she saw her shirt and glared at the other girl. “When are you going to get better mascara?!?”

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The next morning, after crashing on the old sofa in Jade’s bedroom, Tori left. But not before she knew Jade was better. And she felt better about the situation. Still, she hoped Jade’s repeated statement that the break up was mutual was true. She also knew, after the first two break ups, this was the real deal which is why she was trying so hard to help Jade as no one else seemed to care.

She called Jade later in the day only to have the Goth hang up. She tried again and, after a couple of hours, again. Then her phone rang and she heard another of many overdone sighs, as Jade stayed on the line. They talked and had long silent stretches then watched Saturday Night Live and laughed or ripped the sketches together - remotely.

Sunday, Jade surprised herself and Tori by calling the younger Vega. Without covering her identity.

“Jade? You unblocked your caller ID.”

“Correct.”

“Why? I mean, I’m glad you did but…”

“All that time on our phones last night must’ve irradiated my brain!”

“Jade!”

“Vega!” Jade yelled back along their phone connection. “I…ummm… I wanted to tell you I appreciate you spending all that time on the phone with me. I had a really…fair time.”

With a laugh, Tori replied, “You’re welcome, Jade.”

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Monday morning found Tori standing near Jade’s locker. She held a large JetBrew cup for the sullen girl. Seeing Jade walk in, she held the cup behind her and smiled a greeting.

“Ugh, cheerful already,” Jade muttered derisively.

“Jade, I got you coffee,” Tori said, holding out the cup. Being used to Jade’s moods, she ignored the girl’s jab at her mood.

“Black with two sugars?” Tori nodded smugly.

“Well, too late. Got one!” Jade produced a similar cup from behind her back.

“How did you…? I saw your hands and they were empty. Where did you…?”

Jade smirked, “Shut up!”

“That’s my line!” Tori whined. Then she asked, “What do I do with this?”

“Well, you could shampoo with…” Jade stopped at the look on Tori’s face. “Or you could just drink it.”

“I don’t like sugar in my coffee.”

“Hot and black?” Jade asked. Tori nodded. “Well, then we could swap coffees…”

Tori glanced at the cup in Jade’s hand, “Is that garbage coffee?”

“No. I knew you were going to buy me coffee so I… Hot and black. Like your men…”
“Thank you. And a reference from Airplane?” Tori smiled and said, “I’m impressed too.”

Jade nodded with a small smile.

“Wait, what if I didn’t buy you coffee?”

Jade showed her hand where two packets of sugar magically appeared in her palm.

Tori’s laugh echoed through the main hall.

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Lunch came up and Tori met Jade in the hall. “You ready to…?”

Uncharacteristically worried, Jade shook her head. “No. Not really. Maybe tomorrow. I’ll see you…”

“Wait. Let’s go to Nozu. Just you and me. I’ll buy.”

“Yes, you will.” Jade glanced at Tori gratefully and quietly added, “Thanks.”

That evening, Tori got a text from Jade.

-Thanks for today.

Tori replied, -My pleasure.

-Yeah it is.

-Say good night, Jade.

-G’night Jade.

Tori laughed. Jade caught her old Gracie Allen joke.

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Tuesday rolled around and found Tori and Jade swapping coffee again before class. The girls smiled at each other, both amused they were on the same wavelength.

Jade admitted, “I didn’t even grab sugar this time.”

Tori smiled her silent response.

This day, lunch was at Karaoke Dokey as the two shared platters of sliders and buffalo strips before returning to class.

“Jade, I love going off-campus for lunch but Festus’ truck is cheaper and…”

“Yeah, okay, I’ll pay.”

“That’s not what I meant. Neither is the lunch truck, not really. But we do have friends who want us to hang with them.”

“They want you, not me. I was always there because I was Beck’s girlfriend.”

“I call ‘Foul!’ You and Cat have been friends since grade school. You’ve known the rest of our gang
since at least junior high. And what about the long break-up? You spent time with us then. Not to mention, you’re fine in class with them.”

“First, Vega, this is not baseball! Second, Our Gang? We’re not a Hal Roach short. Third, it’s not one-on-five in class.”

Seeing Tori’s expression, Jade sighed, “Alright, I’ll try…”

That earned the darker girl a bright smile as Tori stated, “Jade, don’t worry. I’ll be with you all the way.”

“That’s what I’m worried about,” Jade replied.

“Ha-ha-ha, you are so funny,” Tori retorted.

Jade just grabbed the last buffalo strip.

That evening, Tori got a text just as she was about to collapse in her bed.

-Vega, I don’t understand why you… Never mind. Thank you.

-Jade, you’re Welcome. Sleep well.

-You too.

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Wednesday again started with the coffee swap.

Tori joked, “We’ve got to stop meeting like this…”

“Yeah, yeah…whatever.”

When Tori met Jade at her locker before lunch, she saw the tension in Jade.

“Listen, we don’t have to do this today. If you want to…”

“Gotta do it sometime, Vega. Like ripping off a band-aid.”

“But you told me you liked that.”

“Yeah, I do. When someone else has to suffer.”

Tori shook her head, “You are so twisted.”

“Yes, I know…” Jade purred with a wicked smile.

After getting burritos from Festus, they walked to ‘their’ table. Tori sat between Jade and Andre with Robbie, Cat and Beck across from them.

Andre spoke up first, “Jade, glad you’re back.”

“Yeah, its way cool!” Robbie said. Rex was about to say something when Beck slapped his hand over the wooden face.

“Yeah, I’m glad you came back too,” Beck added honestly.
“Jadeee! I missed you!” Cat got up and started to come around the table.

“Do not hug me or I’ll explode this burrito over your head!” Cat sat down with an ‘eek!’ and Jade set her burrito down. “And don’t call me Jadey!”

Tori shook her head but smiled. They were together again and it looked promising for their gang’s friendship.

Before the end of lunch, Cat asked, “Anyone want to see ‘Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs 2’ with me?”

Most of the table agreed to. “Sure, already saw ‘Gravity’ last week.” “I’m up for it.” “Why not?” “I’d love to.”

To no one’s surprise, Jade was the sole negative voice, “No way!”

But, also to no one’s surprise, Jade went along with her friends on Saturday to see the new Disney animated movie. Tori may have had some influence on the other girl but Jade was admitting nothing.

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As she entered her house, Tori’s phone buzzed. Without looking, she answered, “Hello?”

“Hey, Vega…”

Tori felt the smile appear on her face as she said, “Jade!”

“Very good, Vega! You win a Kewpie doll!”

“Weawwy? I awways wan’ed one…”

“God, you are a Kewpie doll!”

“Jade, you just said I was a doll!”

“No, I have the doll.”

Tori heard the sound she realized was a string being pulled and then “I’m Talking Tori and I’m evil…”

“Ha-ha! Very funny! Did you keep the Klingon dictionary too?”

“Nope. Sold it to Sinjin. You got SNL on?”

“Not yet. Gimme a…sec… ‘Kay, the TVs firing up…”

Since the gang went to the early evening showing of 'Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs 2', even with a stop at Lenny’s for a late evening snack with the gang, Tori was home just after 11:30. She missed the cold open and the first skits on 'Saturday Night Live' but was in plenty of time for Weekend Update.

“Hey, how did you get home before me?”

“Who says I’m home?”

Tori realized she didn’t hear that over her phone. “Jade?”
“Correct.” Jade slowly strode down the steps from the bedrooms, the custom Talking Tori doll in her hand. Tori shuddered at the sight, remembering Ponnie or Faun Liebowitz or whoever she really was. After all, Faun was an unseen character in ‘Animal House’ the Deltas used to get dates on a road trip. So either it was an alias or her parents were not as funny as they probably thought they were.

Back to the situation at hand…

“You stalking my room again?” Tori sighed, even as she was smiling at her former nemesis.

“You can’t stalk a room…”

“Well, you… You know what I mean!”

“Yeah, but nah. Trina has a lot of very interesting things in her room…”

“Eew, I don’t wanna know…”

“What? Like booze?”

“Weeeelll…”

Tori had to laugh. “I have some wine?”

“Wine? But you’re sweet, innocent Tori Vega. How did you get wine?”

“Aunt Sonya gave it to me for spending the weekend watching her little Onkeemo. Not that it was a bad weekend. Cute puppy, no Trina, you know…”

“Long story, bored already…” With an overdone sigh, Jade said, “Guess that’ll have to do…”

“Gimme a second. I stashed it upstairs so Mom and Dad wouldn’t make a deal out of it.”

Tori darted upstairs and returned with two bottles of white zinfandel.

“Don’t have any red wine?” Jade asked.

Tori huffed and got two glasses from the kitchen. “Take it or take it!”

With an exaggerated breath, Jade said, “Alright…” Her smile belied her apparent attitude. “Guess the folks are out?”

“Dad’s in Fresno for a cop conference with the CHP and Mom went along.”

“And the Air Raid Siren?”

“Boyfriend.”

“Trina? What did she do? Save her allowance for a hustler? Troll the looney bin?”

“Nooo… Actually, he’s a pretty nice guy she met at…”

“Shut up! Weekend Update!”

A little over an hour later, the girls were sitting together on the same section of the split sofa when
Jade demanded, “Gimme the remote!”

“Huh? Why?” Tori glanced over with slightly glazed eyes.

“Just give it to me…”

Tori handed it over and Jade immediately changed the channel to a local retro TV channel. The creepy opening to ‘Night Gallery’ was running. The guests were named then Rod Serling did his intro in front of a painting of a gunman in a coffin. The story title came up: ‘The Waiting Room’.

The story opened with a corpse hanging from a dead tree in a dark and windy night. A man on a horse, all in black, rode up, paused then continued on. Soon, he entered a saloon where classic movie and TV actors were playing cards. Gilbert Roland was behind the bar and Buddy Ebsen sat dealing poker with Albert Salmi, Lex Barker and Jim Davis. The rider, Steve Forrest, became the focus of the half hour episode (less the time for commercials).

When it was over, Tori shook her head, “That was really pretty cool! And really, nicely creepy.”

“Yeah, it’s one of my favorites. Ominous but subtle. Quite effective story telling. Serling really had a knack for that. Ever see the old movie ‘Requiem For A Heavyweight’? Based on a ‘Playhouse 90’ show or something from the 1950s. But it is really well-done. Then, of course, there’s ‘The Twilight Zone’. He even wrote the initial draft of ‘Planet of the Apes’ although the studio didn’t follow his adaptation from Pierre Boulle’s original novel. Too expensive… But I’m sure some of the movie is based on certain aspects of his story.”

“And I always believed you only watched gory movies,” Tori teased.

Jade stood up fluidly and gestured to herself, ‘I’m a multi-faceted girl.”

Tori laughed as she stood, “You aren’t leaving?”

“Can’t stand to be away from me, Vega?”

“No. I mean… I just think…” Tori replied, her voice unconsciously pitched a note higher than normal. “But you’ve been drinking and it’s late…”

“You are going somewhere with this?”

“Just stay here tonight. You can have the guest room and…I’ll even make coffee for you in the morning.”

“I expect nothing less,” Jade said with a small, grateful smile.

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After several weeks, Halloween rolled around. Tori was excited. It was one of her favorite dates of the year. “Jade, what are you going as for Halloween?”

“I don’t do Halloween. It’s amateur night.”

“But, we could go trick or treating…”

“What are you? Ten?”

“No but… Alright, what about the costume parties? Those can be fun.”
“Bunch of high schoolers drinking and smoking and acting stupid. Sex, drugs and rock and roll… Not for me!”

“What if I had a party at my home? Just the gang and a few others? Carefully selected, of course!”

“Costumes?” Jade sneered.

“Why not?”

“Okay, but I choose!”

“You choose what, exactly?”

“The costumes, you twit!”

Tori smiled, “Okay…”

A few days later, David and Holly left for several days. Only after admonishing their youngest daughter against any big parties. After the fact, Jade countered, “It’s not a big party…”

Tori relented and so Halloween, 2013 (which occurred on Saturday, October 26) was considered by many (especially the attendees) as the best Fall semester party.

Early that Saturday evening, Tori came downstairs flipping the yellow cape back and tugging the ‘scaled’, green shorts as she grumbled, “These shorts are too short!”

“Worked for Burt Ward…” Jade stated as she adjusted the red wig. “And I’m big enough to admit you have the legs for it.”

“Thank you,” Tori replied, blushing. Then she added, “Wow, Jade, you look great as a redhead!”

Adjusting a flowing red wig, Jade nodded, “Thanks, Vega. You look good as a youthful ward. Although Jill St. John did it better in the first cliff-hanger when she was the Riddler’s gun moll.”

Looking down at her costume, Tori nodded, “Yeah, she did look hot as Robin – before she ‘put on the mask’ and Burt Ward vamped the character. By the way, if you’re Batwoman, you need to be paler than your usual self.”

“I’m plenty pale and they make her too white in the comics. She’s not an albino so the lack of skin pigment is weird. And how don’t people see Kate Kane and know she’s Batwoman? It’s a worse disguise than Clark Kent’s glasses!”

Jade was wearing black nylon and leatherish, full-body costume with a red bat design on her chest and a black cape. With the mask she hadn’t donned yet, her red wig and relatively pale complexion, she brought the modern-day incarnation of the Batwoman to life. Tori was her sidekick – even if Batwoman didn’t have one – and was dressed as Robin from the classic camp Batman TV series.

Using the reflection from the patio doors, they stood together and Jade admitted, “We’d be a helluva Dynamic Duo. We might not fight crime but we’d stun the perps into drooling, horny morons…”

“What about Catwoman?” Tori smirked.

“It’d work there too. She has to be bi!”

The doorbell rang and they turned to greet the guests. Jade carefully adjusted the Batwoman mask and Tori pulled on the Robin mask before she opened the door to Burt in a sheet with far too many
holes and a bag with rocks.

“I’m Charlie Brown!”

“Clever,” Tori said,

Jade shrugged, “I suppose…”

“Cool costumes, ladies,” Burf replied as he pulled a pepper out of his bag of rocks and bit into it through one of the numerous holes.

There was another doorbell and Jade opened it to see Beck and Sinjin in NASCAR blue and yellow jumpsuits, complete with dozens of real sponsor patches. She just rolled her eyes as she let them in. Tori thought they looked pretty cool and actually wanted one, especially Beck’s navy blue suit – even though she’d never wear it.

Before Jade could close the door, Cat stepped up. She was dressed like Ariel with two shells strapped together to cover her breasts and a long tail, with an opening for Cat’s feet so she could walk – in small steps. Her fake red hair was even brighter than usual to fit the toon version of the old Hans Christian Anderson character. It was, easily, the most revealing costume of the evening but, later, Cat’s innocent demeanor diminished any lurid advances – along with Jade and her Bat-scissors.

“HI-I-I-I!” Cat called out.

Jade humphed like their teacher and said, “We’re all here in the room.”

Before Cat could react badly, another ring. Andre was let in – dressed as a Rastafarian. His own dreads augmented with a rasta wig/rainbow knit cap. “’Ey mon, I got your vibrations righ’ here, mon.”

Several other guests arrived. Then the last to arrive was Robbie dressed in a classic Trek uniform – a red shirt. He joked, “I figure if Jade’s gonna kill someone, I may as well dress the part.”

Robbie had gone through a major change during the previous summer. He hooked up with Meredith, the ultimate ‘Yes’ girl. He finally ‘became a man’ before he realized that she would agree with anything. Still, his confidence was seriously boosted to the point that Rex was rarely, if ever, seen anymore. He even dared to challenge Jade, who was too impressed to take umbrage with the boy. Some of the time.

The party was a success. Lots of music and dancing. Not a lot of booze and a minimum of weed – which Tori begged any smokers to take into the yard so the house wouldn’t smell like pot when her parents returned. Knowing her old hippy neighbors, Tori wasn’t worried about them calling the cops.

By the end of the evening, Tori, slightly buzzed on red wine, realized she had lost her mask sometime within the past hour.

“Oh no, my crime-fighting career will be…”

Jade stepped up, she had shed her mask s few hours before, and quietly said, “It’s okay, little Robin.”

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The morning coffee pattern maintained as the girls continued to grow closer. Eventually, the holidays rolled around.
Jade joined the Vegas for Thanksgiving as her mother had to leave for Portland early in the day so she could be ready for 8 AM meetings on Black Friday. Mrs. West said Black Friday had nothing to do with her legal meetings and they could’ve waited until the following week.

Her determined comment was “Bastards are going to pay extra for this!”

Jade laughed it off, saying, “Mom’s not good with dinner if it’s nor frozen or delivered anyway.”

When Tori asked her to dinner for the holiday…

“I’ll come, as long as Trina isn’t going to microwave the bird,” Jade told Tori and Holly. Both started to laugh and Jade found herself joining in.

Jade walked into the Vega home just after 2 in the afternoon to join David as they watched the Green Bay Packers play the Detroit Lions in the Lions long-time tradition of playing on Thanksgiving (a tradition dating back to the 1930s). The second longest tradition, the Dallas Cowboys hosting the Oakland Raiders, was pre-empted – in the Vega household at least - by dinner. The night game, the Pittsburgh Steelers at the Baltimore Ravens, was also ignored as the family watched a few newer movies.

Earlier, during the first game, Trina came in. After the gasoline bills started to come in, she had to stop commuting and live in a small apartment in Santa Barbara near the University of California campus. She moaned, “She’s here?!!”

“Shut up, Trina! She’s my friend,” Tori replied.

“Yes, she’s our guest,” Holly reminded her older daughter.

“And she’s the only woman in the house who appreciates football,” David added.

“Hi Trina,” Jade said in a fake, sweet tone as she wiggled the fingers of one hand at the HA alumni. Tori watched to make sure a certain finger wasn’t extended. To her relief, Jade restrained herself.

Dinner was fun. Trina and Jade were actually civil to each other, even laughing at stories that embarrassed Tori. Much as Tori hated that, she was glad they seemed to be getting along.

By the end of the evening, Tori was silently giving thanks for one of the most fun Thanksgivings she could remember.

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The next few weeks passed, much as they had before. Tori did seek out their favorite teacher.

“Sikowitz, can you set me up as Jade’s Secret Santa?”

“Oh no, the Secret Santa choosing is a sacred trust. I couldn’t possibly allow outside forces to impair my choosing…” Then he winked, so fast that Tori wasn’t sure it actually happened.

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Later that day, Jade approached their teacher, “Hey, Sikowitz! Wanna earn a finn?”

“Why Jade, you know I could never accept a bribe…” He snatched the five-dollar bill then asked, “So, what can I do for you?”

“I wanna be Vega’s Secret Santa!”
Even as his eyes glinted merrily, he merely said, “Done!”

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Early Christmas Eve evening had Tori was sitting on the sofa watching 'White Christmas' when there can the usual hammering on the front door.

“It’s open, Jade!” she called out.

“Your home security continues to astound me, Vega,” Jade stated as she walked in. Glancing at the Bing Crosby-Danny Kaye movie, she rolled her eyes. ‘Could’ve guessed… Actually expected it to be ‘It’s A Wonderful Life’. Anyway, here.’

Tori took the brightly wrapped package with a big smile. “Aaw Jade… You’re my Secret Santa? Again?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just…put it some place. That wrapping paper nauseates me…”

“Then it’s a good thing I used black paper for this,” Tori replied as she pulled a box from the depths of the huge tree and handed it to Jade.

Jade stood there stunned. She hadn’t expected this, even though she knew she should have. “I… Uh… Vega, I… Thank you.”

Holly walked in from the garage “Hi Jade! You here for the party?”

“No… I…have things to do…”

“Tori, you did invite her?”

“Of course I did Mom!”

“Mrs. Vega, I chose not to… It’s only Christmas Eve and…”

“Doing something with your family?” Holly probed.

“No. Mom’s back in Portland. The way this corp is jerking her chain, I’ll end up with a free ride for college.”

Tori put her hand on Jade’s shoulder, earning a stare at her hand from the pseudo-goth, before she said, “Then stay… Aunt Sophie and her girlfriend will be here. You’ll love her! And Uncle Julio and…”

“He own the restaurant chain?”

“Ha-ha!” Tori sneered. Then she added, “No.”

Holly spoke up, “Jade, you are always welcome. At any time.”

Over the past couple of months, Jade had ingratiated herself, not necessarily voluntarily, with the Vega family. The anniversary crash not-withstanding, David and Holly had come to accept Jade as a part of their extended family. Holly never let a chance go by without reiterating that to Jade.

Christmas Eve was not a formal dinner but a serve yourself buffet of nibbleys – like meatballs, mini-hot dogs in barbeque sauce, a vegetable tray, meats and cheeses with small rolls for mini-sandwiches. The guests were mainly family and very close friends – Jade didn’t acknowledge the honor she felt at
being the sole HA guest – other than Tori and Trina, of course.

“And I might even con my husband into letting you have a drink or two – spread out over several hours…”

“Booze? Vega, you never mentioned booze!” She turned to Holly, “I’m kidding about the booze but you did convince me. Especially if we hear more embarrassing stories of your daughter in her younger years…”

“Sophie will be happy to accommodate you, Jade,” Holly said.

“MOM!?!?”

Then Jade looked at the giant tree whose top was curled to the side by the ceiling. “One of these days, Trina is gonna get a tree that will eat her and everyone around her.”

“Can’t give it a rest? Even on Christmas Eve?” Tori complained good-naturedly.

Using the voice from the old Grey Poupon commercials – which predated their births by several years – Jade said, “But of course…

“You know, a killer Christmas tree could be a cool horror movie…” she went on. “Like that 'Robot Chicken' short with the Peanuts gang and the kite-eating tree…”

Hours of fun, family and food passed. Jade had to admit, to herself, she really enjoyed herself – far more than she expected.

Tori glanced up and said, “Jade, you know where you’re standing?”

“Huh?”

“Mom always hangs a sprig of mistletoe…”

With that, Tori placed her hands on Jade’s shoulders and brushed her lips to Jade’s.

“Um… I gotta… I gotta go…”

“I’m sorry, Jade. I just…”

“It’s okay, Vega. Don’t get your undies in a bunch…”

“Okay… M-merry Christmas, Jade.”

“Merry Christmas, Tori.”

Once she was in her car, Jade touched her lips. They were still tingling from that oh-so brief touch.

Moments after midnight, Tori’s phone chimed.

-Thank you, Tori. It’s beautiful!

-You’re welcome Jade. Did you wait ‘til midnite?

-Yes, Xmas Cop!

Tori laughed as she typed her reply.
New Year’s Eve and Tori hosted a party for her friends, and not just the ‘inner circle’.

“So, who you gonna kiss?”

Jade eyed Tori, “Huh?”

“Whoever you kiss at midnight on New Year’s Eve will be with you for the rest of the year.”

“Jeez… Just in case there’s any truth to that fairy tale, I’ll be in the bathroom. Alone!” Jade declared.

But as it neared midnight, Jade made a point of standing next to Tori. As the crowd counted down then yelled, “Happy New Year!”, Jade turned toward Tori and kissed her. Another brief kiss but one Tori would never forget.

In a low voice, Jade muttered, “Happy New Year…”

Tori could do nothing before Jade quickly left the house. But, for the first time in months, her texts went unanswered and her calls went to voice mail until she heard the notice that the voice mailbox was full.

Two or three dozen voice-mails a day from Tori couldn’t have helped.

Still she didn’t see or hear from Jade until school resumed.

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As usual, their spring semester started in mid-January and Tori was looking forward to it. Part was due to their upcoming prome, graduation and other senior year fun. But mainly she wanted to see Jade. It’d been just over two weeks since the Goth ran out of her house just after midnight on New Year’s Day.

Since The Kiss…

Tori was amazed how much she missed the other girl. She missed the everyday things they did, the unusual things Tori didn’t even imagine doing…

And the possibility of…

She stood near Jade’s locker, coffee in hand. When the dark girl entered, her face split in a wide grin as she held the coffee.

In an irritated voice, Jade asked, “What?”

“I have your coffee!” Tori said in a perky voice.

“Uggh…” Jade snarled, slamming her locker – dislodging one of her scissors which clattered to the hall floor – and started to stomp away. She stopped, grabbed the cup from Tori’s hand then stomped down the hallway, leaving Tori with no coffee.

“You’re welcome?” Tori then stooped and grabbed the red-handled scissors and shoved them back in the empty slot in the locker - the scream of metal on metal filling the hall. The sound matched the feeling in Tori’s heart.

And suddenly, Tori found herself back a year and a half, in terms of her relationship with Jade.
“No! No, I don’t accept this!”

With that, Tori strode down the hall towards Sikowitz’s class room. She was going to be late for her first hour class. But she hoped it would worthwhile.

As she walked down the hall, Tori actually found herself craving her morning coffee after several months of their early morning swaps. ‘I’ve become a caffeine fiend!’

‘Oh God, do I have a problem?’

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“Today, we’re going to discuss…subtext!” Sikowitz declared. He beamed widely then saw he was talking to a sea of stony faces.

“We did that last year,” Andre said.

On one of his increasingly rare appearances, Rex spoke up, “Yeah, you havin’ acid flashbacks, man?”

“Not acid, coconut,” Cat giggled.

“Alright, sh-sh-shhush!” The room grew quiet. “Now, second, I’ve already brought up several previous topics to discuss further. Not to dismiss them. As does any good teacher. Consider method acting, for instance…”

The class groaned. Method acting was a favorite of their teacher’s, so, of course, a hated method of the class.

“What was first topic?” Andre asked.

“That’s neither there or there…” Sikowitz waved the musician off then said, “So…”

“What about this subtext BS?” Jade asked, snarkily.

Sikowitz sighed heavily, “So demure and lady-like, as usual, Jade…”

Jade just sneered as the rest of the class tried not to snicker and arouse her anger.

“Alright! Jade! Tori! On the stage!” Tori jumped up and stepped quickly up on the raised platform. Jade slowly got up and followed.

“Okay. Now, like we did last year. As Andre so kindly pointed out…”

“My pleasure,” Andre snuck in.

Sikowitz glared at him but went on, “So, you will talk nicely to each other but, this time, your words will be harsh and…cutting.” He nodded then quickly added, “Oh, and no foul language.”

“Well, there goes the fun…” Jade lamented.

“One last thing, a happy ending!”

“Like at Madame Chang’s massage parlor?” Rex barked out a laugh. He only came to school when Robbie was feeling vulnerable and, after getting another ‘no’ from Cat about a date, he was feeling it. Still…
Robbie yelled, “REX!”

Sikowitz just puffed out air and shook his head. Finally, he said, “Action!”

In a sing-song voice, Tori said, “I am really growing to hate you.”

Jade aped Tori’s happy cadence and replied, “Not more than I despise you…”

“How do I hate thee? Let me count the ways… Ten, you’re a real…”

Jade looked at Tori with a worried expression. Then, in a real angry tone she said, “Um… I… Uh… That’s my thing…”

“EEEEHHH!!!” Sikowitz called out his game-show ‘buzzer’. “Jade, you lost the flow…”

With clenched teeth, she said, “Well, Vega… She… AAAAAHHH!!!”

She grabbed her bag and charged out of the room.

“Jade?” Tori yelled before she followed, not bothering with her bag.

“Okay, there is that. And so… Andre, Dierdre, up on the stage…”

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Tori found Jade in the farthest - third floor - rest room’s handicap stall. With a harsh laugh, Tori greeted her friend, “Hey, Ponnie!”

“Shut up!” Then she said, “What’s with the Ponnie comment? She was…”

“I know. I just… Joking to face the fear? Anyway…”

“You are so weird… And why are you following me? I thought leaving class would be enough to prove I didn’t need you!”

Tori responded sincerely, “Sorry, Jade. But listen, why did you run off like that?”

“The way you started to count down the ways you hate me…”

“But that was just one of Sikowitz’ classroom things… I was just going with…”

“Do not say ‘the flow’…” Jade huffed even as she eyed a spare roll of toilet paper resting atop the dispenser

“Jade, I…”

“No, counting down is my thing! Damn Vega! Why are you always trying to take things from me?!”?

“I don’t. Outside of some roles. And I think I earned those…”


“I never touched your…shit.”

“That’s not what I mean. I… Look, just leave me alone! I’m…”
“No!”

“No? N-no? You said no? To me?!?”

“Damn right! Jade, we’ve become friends since last year. Good friends. And I’m not losing that! I want my friend back. I want my best friend ba…”

“Best…friend?” Tori nodded. “I… I…don’t know what to say. Except for Cat, I never had a best friend… And Cat is…”

“I know, Jade.”

While Jade never stated she was Tori’s best friend, Tori still counted this as a victory in her pursuit of Jade’s friendship, as they left the women’s’ room and the school.

The next day, the coffee exchange resumed – even as no words were said to reinforce the pattern.

By Saturday night, they were on the phone, watching SNL together again.

The relationship slowly resumed and even deepened as the pair grew closer. There was speculation, naturally, but they were just friends – very close friends who were growing closer.

Soon enough, the HA Prome was upon the school.

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“We could do a duet,” Tori suggested. “We did pretty good on that fake date last year.”

“Yeah, well, I carried you.”

“You did not!”

“Yeah, I did.”

“You fibber!”

“Fibber?!? You wound me! I’ve been called many things in my life but fibber? I’m wounded…” Jade’s mockery continued, “And that ‘date’ was stupid.”

“I had fun.”

Not realizing she was repeating herself from the prome event the year before. “That makes sense ‘cause you’re you and fake dates are stupid.”

“Fine!”

Tori spun around and walked out of the school. Jade stared at the empty space left in front of her and shook her head then quickly followed her…friend.

Leaving the Asphalt Café for the student parking lot, Tori was walking fast. Jade had to trot to catch up and called, “Vega. VEGA!” No change in their progress so Jade yelled, “TORI! WAIT!”

Tori spun around and tersely said, “What?”

“I… I’m…sorry,” Jade muttered.

“What? I didn’t catch that,” Tori replied.
Jade sighed out through clenched teeth and grabbed Tori’s hand, dragging her to the muscle car her old man bought for Christmas the year she got her license. It wasn’t the ’Bullitt' Mustang she asked for but still a hot car – a ’77 Trans Am like Smokey drove.

She had joked that sometimes money can buy happiness.

In the confines of her car, Jade said, “I’m sorry. Some…sometimes I just…” She looked Tori in the eye for the first time since they left the corridor. This was a softer look than Tori had seen but her anger was growing from Jade’s statement. “Look, I’m not…good at being nice. I… I’m really sorry…”

That softened Tori’s expression as Tori smiled, “Yes, I know you are… Jade, I know we aren’t the best of friends but…we are friends and should be civil to each other.”

“Vega, you’re… Aw Jeez… You’re my best friend. Okay? Happy?” Tori had a huge smile on her face as she nodded eagerly.

“And, like I told you before, you’re mine… Jade, I just wanted to hear you admit it. I don’t want you to change. Now that I know how you feel, I’ll be cool if you wanna be ganky to me.”

“Vega, ummm… Thank you?”

“So… the duet?”

“I pick the song!”

“Of course, Jade,” Tori replied sarcastically.

“Why are you entertainment? No one wants to date you?” Jade snarked.

Tori sighed and replied, “What about you?”

“So, I’m picking the song…” was Jade’s non-response.

“Yes, you can pick the song.”

Needless to say, Jade picked the perfect song.

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That Saturday night, at the Class of ‘14’s senior prome, Tori and Jade, wearing each other’s dress from Tori’s infamous first prome, (This time, Jade in red with long black gloves and Tori in the matching green design). Tori asked Jade if she intentionally wore the same design in another color the year before.

“I was going to ask you the same damned thing, Vega,” Jade replied.

Tori snorted a laugh and stated, “Well, it doesn’t matter. We both look hot as hell!”

“Oh my God! Alert the media! Tori Vega swore!”

“Ha-ha-ha…”

Before long, the two stood on the performance platform above the Asphalt Café. They were about to perform with Andre playing the keyboards and his ‘band’ playing backup. With Jade’s lead vocals, they sang the old Andrew Gold song 'Thank You For Being A Friend'. After the first chorus, which
included Andre and his backup musicians, the girls alone shared the chorus until the end when Jade again sang lead vocals and Tori sang backup:

“And when we die and float away
Into the night, the Milky Way
You’ll hear me call, as we ascend
I’ll say your name, then once again
“Thank you for being a
“Thank you for being a friend (I want to thank you)
Thank you for being a friend (I want to thank you)
Thank you for being a friend (I want to thank you)
Thank you for being a friend
People, let me tell you about a friend (I wanna thank you)
Thank you for being a friend (I wanna thank you)
Thank you for being a friend (I wanna thank you)
Thank you for being a friend
“Whoa, tell you about a friend (thank you right now, for being a friend)
Thank you for being a friend (I wanna tell you right now, and tell you again)
Thank you for being a friend (I wanna thank you, thank you, thank you for being a friend)
Thank you for being a friend”

The crowd erupted in screams and applause. The two best singers in the school had killed the old song.

Both stood there, with arms around each other, as they beamed down on the prom goers. Tori leaned into Jade and said, “You will hear me call when we ascend…”

“You better…” Jade replied with a laugh.

Then, in front of the school, the city and the stars, she kissed Tori – who happily, lovingly returned that kiss. Then Jade muttered, “We have to be together every New Year’s.”

Tori smiled and eagerly nodded even as she kissed Jade before the giddy prom attendees and chaperones.

The shouts and applause and screams of approval amped up even more seeing the ultimate Odd Couple come together once again.

End Notes

1) I may have fudged the release dates of the movies mentioned but I wanted some that fit the group and were out in the fall of 2013 which I presume is the beginning of their senior year.

2) ’Thank You For Being A Friend’ was a 1978 hit for Andrew Gold but really became known, in an abridged version, as the theme of ‘The Golden Girls’. I based this version of the song on Gold’s original release that reached #25 on Billboard’s chart in 1978. Gold also had a successful career in music working with a veritable Who’s Who of ‘70s and ‘80s music – including Paul McCartney, Linda Ronstadt, Cher, Carly Simon, Neil Diamond, Jackson Browne and dozens of other solo and group acts.
3) Also, there were Golden Age versions of Bat-Woman and Bat-Girl. Even then, Bat-Woman was Kathy Kane, a rich heiress and Bat-Girl was her niece Betty. A new and separate Kate Kane – the Batwoman – came around in the early 2000s. A good character but her big claim to fame is that she was openly gay from the beginning. So now you know more than you ever cared to learn…

Even though I wrote this, I gotta wonder if Jade picked the new Batwoman intentionally – after all, sometimes stories get away from the writers.

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