Just
Desserts

A Karma Court Short

By Amber Scott
Smashwords Edition
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Dear Reader,

Everybody needs a little guilty pleasure! Don’t worry, I won’t tell.
“Just Desserts” is the first of Karma Court Shorts, serialized extras and companion to the
Stupid Cupid aka “Fling” series, as my thanks for all your love and support. Millie Match, the
stupid cupid herself, is both adored and detested.
Let’s see exactly why, shall we?
Hugs, Amber Scott

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The point in time wherein the departed Kiki Kent becomes Millie Match and her whole
world turns into love, love, freaking love.

…

“Do you think she’ll remember you?” Felina Lavine whispered, peering over Natalie Rose’s
left shoulder.

Natalie slowly shook her head, her gaze fixed on the statuesque blonde in the holding area
looking deliciously nervy. Maybe Natalie would wait just another minute or two before entering
so that Kiki could fidget in the acid wash pink jumper a bit longer.

“Why the ugly jumpsuit?” Felina asked, no longer craning for a better view.
“I hoped she might hate it,” Natalie said, moving away from the window to lean against the wall. Not a real wall, she knew that. This was heaven, or the great beyond, nirvana, whatever a soul liked to call it.

The wall was only here because Natalie put it there. Just as she’d put Kiki’s glaring pink jumpsuit on her and the designer ice white skirt suits on herself and Felina. Natalie tossed her pale blonde sheath of hair past her shoulder.

“I hoped the cardboard-like feel of it would irritate her skin and make her want to tear it to small pieces and burn it.”

“Wow. Bitter much?” Felina’s green eyes flashed with humor and a little fear. “She really must have hurt you in life.”

Natalie ground her own teeth, hoping to edge the memories back. “I wouldn’t call it hurt. But, she deserves everything she’s going to get.”

Karmic law. What comes around goes around. And here in Karma Court, what went around gets dealt back by the party who was wronged. In this case, Kiki had wronged Natalie. Severely. Natalie hadn’t fully appreciated the higher self’s methodology until this moment. Of course, when she’d died, she’d had to face all her own wrongs and make them right, too. But her community service teaching crafts every week to a wily group of blue haired southern women had turned out to be something she cherished.

Her time had been hard at first, but worth it. “She’ll come out of this a better soul,” Natalie purred. “My sentence for her will be a gift.”

Eventually. If Natalie knew Kiki Kent, it would be one long and difficult road to that gift.

The sheer possibilities left her giddy with anticipation.

Felina snorted. “Yeah, well, don’t hate me for thanking Goddess I didn’t wrong you in life. I don’t know if I’m completely curious right now or totally dreading the punishment you’re about to deal her.”

“Oh, please. Don’t fall for that angelic face.” Still alabaster, still doll-like yet sultry right down to her Marilyn Monroe mole. “Trust me. She deserves every moment coming her way.”

“What did she do to you?”

Natalie brushed imaginary lint off her cuff. “She did nothing.” Kiki Kent had been Natalie Rose’s boarding school roommate their junior year and over the course of their nine months living in the same breathing space, Kiki had treated Natalie as though she could not even see her.

At first, Kiki had made awkward small talk, conversationally hunting for common ground. There was no common ground, try as Natalie might to offer some up.

“What are your parents like?” Natalie had said once.

“Miserable,” She’d replied so casually. As though she was contemplating what to have for lunch. “And absent.”

Natalie hadn’t known what to say.

Or do in her presence.

Where Katherine Eleanor Kent looked and moved like Aphrodite, Natalie felt more…Herculean. She fought to stay strong, on her own again. Relatively good at making friends. Smart enough. She could handle Kiki.

One morning, Natalie had asked, “Are you sleeping alright? You look tired.”

Kiki had narrowed her eyes and titled her head. “Do I? Hmm.” She’d returned her attention to her yogurt and granola.

“Yes. I know the first few weeks away from home are hard for me. I just thought that, maybe…”
Kiki rose from her seat and walked to her room.
Natalie hadn’t known what to think. Be offended, or worry more?
She’d fought her demons off at first. And staring everyday at the physical perfection she’d never be was fine with Natalie. In fact, she secretly loved to watch Kiki move. Even the indifference Kiki expressed toward her didn’t really matter.
Roommates weren’t required to become fast friends. Right?
Yeah. She was fine. At first.
Then bulimia quietly snuck back into Natalie’s life. A late night call from her mom here and there. An exam she didn’t feel prepared for.
Everyone expected her to hold it together.
One little extra helping too many at dinner, easily relieved in a campus bathroom on the stroll back to Jamison Hall led to another. Then another. And another. Until every day, the circles under her eyes darkened a deeper violet. Until Natalie made her sickness obvious. Technically, it’s called a cry for help.
Natalie’s cry grew to a silent scream, reserved for Kiki Kent alone. Like a dare. See me now? How about now?
Wolfing a whole bag of Lay’s chips then heading to the bathroom. Loud heaves, watery eyes, runny nose. She’d brush her teeth, come back to the living room that joined their bedrooms and find Kiki paging through Cosmo as though she was still alone in the room.
If that year hadn’t ended and Natalie hadn’t been forced to go home for the summer, how much worse would her depression, her health, have gotten? Natalie never blamed Kiki for looking the way she did. She never flaunted it.
Kiki’s inability to even ask, to give Natalie even a single, uncomfortable or worried glance.
That is how she’d wronged Natalie.
Even now, the memory sent bile up her throat, scratched her heart raw.
Looking back now, Natalie wondered if Kiki had a speck of love in her heart. Not even enough to acknowledge another soul’s screwed up existence with a speck of empathy. Or disgust.
Or fear.
Instead, Kiki had felt nothing. “Absolutely nothing.” Natalie’s focus snapped back to the present. Her Karmic detainee tugged at the neckline of the jumpsuit.
Good. Let her squirm and wonder what in the world was happening to her. Let her pray it was all just a really bad dream.
Natalie reached for the door she’d put in place; Felina reached out, barring her from opening it. “This whole courtroom drama scene you’ve concocted seems extreme.”
“How can you call it extreme? You don’t even know what I’m sentencing her with,”
Felina’s bright eyes held to Natalie’s a moment, searching for something. Answers? Assurance? Natalie couldn’t tell. But when her peer soul’s gaze dropped away, Natalie realized she’d been holding her breath in anticipation. Felina didn’t know the arsenal Natalie had at her fingertips. Felina hadn’t wronged a soul in her last life. But heaven had taught Natalie the rules for situations like this. Not just with her own service, but hoping this very opportunity would come her way, Natalie had paid attention. And had asked a lot of questions. In little to no time at all, she’d earned her way up the Karma court ladder, counseling victims on appropriate
Fixing a tight smile to her now beautiful face, Natalie entered the room, feeling Felina following. She assigned three more generic bodies—sedate, older men—to join them. Why not make the room feel a bit more full, after all, because this would be her only chance to put things right. Kiki Kent would come to understand what desperation was. She would be forced to see people, really see them and to help them. Even the seemingly un-helpable.

Especially those.

The door shut with a snick and Kiki sat up at attention, finally noticing they’d entered the room. “Who are you?” she asked Natalie and Felina and the three projections who filed in. “What’s happened to me?”

The panic in Kiki’s voice should have touched Natalie. She always imagined that sound and how it would somehow speak to her. Instead, it turned her even colder toward her former roommate. Taking her place at the massive oak desk, Natalie spoke softly, “Katherine Eleanor Kent, you are dead.”

Kiki blustered. “What?? Um, no. You’ve made a mistake. I’m very much alive.”

Natalie half expected Kiki to remember her even though she looked entirely different now in her heavenly form.

Kiki only plowed onward. “Sure, apparently I got slipped something in my drink and clearly I decided driving might be a good idea but I promise you, once I call my attorney, and a blood test is ordered whatever went wrong will be completely and entirely cleared up.”

Heat rushed up Natalie’s neck, blooming in her cheeks. “I don’t think you understand. You did not get slipped a drug. Katherine, you are not incarcerated. You are dead. This is heaven.”

Kiki cocked her head to the side and though her mouth moved to speak, it also seemed she couldn’t find her words. Even the finger she pointed at Natalie and “the court” waffled, her hand trembling. At last, Kiki showed some emotion. “Trust me, I’ve been to Heaven and this is a far cry from it.” But her voice wavered.

Satisfaction welled up Natalie’s chest. “I’m not here to convince you, only to hand you charges against you.” The beauty of it all was that Kiki would not specifically know why she’d been punished, who she’d wronged, until after she’d learned the lesson. And at that point, with Karma back in balance, Kiki would be thanking her. Apologizing to her. “And my ruling.”

“If I’m being charged with anything, I want my lawyer.”

Natalie suppressed a smile. “Katherine Eleanor Kent, you are facing charges in Karma court. You are hereby accused of gross indifference during your twenty-nine years of existence in human form.”

Kiki’s gaze skittered around the makeshift room then pinched she her own arm. “Okay, seriously. Is this some bad reality show where celebrities get humiliated? Don’t you realize Candid Camera is lame?”

Felina stifled a laugh. Natalie pinned her with a warning look. It shut her up. “This is not a reality show. Do you know what Karma is Kiki?”

“You mean besides the Karma salon that ruined my hair with a bad perm in 1985?” Kiki crossed her arms under her breasts. A slight dip of cleavage peeked from the unzipped neckline of the jumper.

Natalie resisted the urge to make the material even coarser or changing the electric pink to a deep pea green. Leave it to Kiki to look good in anything. “Karma means what you give, you get. It is the natural order of the universe. The balance of light and dark, emptiness and fullness.”

“Or a really bad Boy George song.”
How did she manage such utter coolness in her voice when Natalie could see her pulse thumping hard at her throat? “Be that as it may, you are here for sentencing.”

“By designer angels? Well, at least God has good fashion sense. I love that you’ve ditched the shoulder pad thing. Hate that trend.”

Natalie’s own pulse jerked at her throat. “Katherine Eleanor Kent you are hereby sentenced for life to re-uniting lost soul mates.” With a flick of her wrist, Natalie cast seven slender gold bangles onto Kiki’s arm. Seeing the proof of her sentence dangling there nearly sent her into giddy giggles.

Kiki glanced at the bangles, her eyebrows shooting upward. “Uh, ouch? Gee, don’t punish me anymore, pretty please?”

Natalie nearly sprang from behind the massive oak desk prop she’d mentally manufactured. Felina’s muffled laughter didn’t help. Where were the sobbing cries? The pleading? The desperation Natalie hungered to witness?

“Protocol dictates I spell out what your sentence entails. Kiki Kent, you will have to not only locate, but match two soul mates, with love, seven times over, with no earthly help whatsoever.”

Something bold flashed in Kiki’s big blue eyes. She sent Natalie a look that asked, and? She had no inkling how severe, how long or impossible a matchmaking sentence was! So be it.

Let her figure it out.

Kiki’d been beyond resourceful in life. She’d certainly be in afterlife as well.

That lovely face of hers had gotten her everywhere in life. Well, not anymore. Natalie’s heartbeat changed its tune. The panicked staccato kicked over into an exhilarated allegro.

“You will no longer be known as Katherine Eleanor Kent aka Kiki Kent.” Joy spread through Natalie’s chest. She nearly cackled with delight. “You will be henceforth known as Millicent…Match.” With a confident sweep of her arm, Natalie changed the blonde beauty. She shortened her by six--no, seven inches. She shrunk Kiki’s breasts just so, plumped her ass up by four pants sizes and transformed her platinum tresses into bouncy brunette curls.

Perfect. A cool calm settled over Natalie. Tension in her shoulders eased out.

Even better? Seeing Kiki’s fear grow by degrees as she changed, the shock painting her face as she twisted to try to see her nicely rounding curves. Her hands darted over her changing body. Her mouth fell open on a gasp. Becoming nice, average girl-next-door beauty that would certainly help Kiki well and truly learn the meaning of love, of empathy.

So, this is what that whole revenge is a dish best served cold thing meant.

Natalie felt cold.

Icy and replete.

She rose from her judgment perch, Felina and the projections following suit. “Good luck with that, Millie.”

Outside the door, Natalie came up short. “AJ! You scared me.”

AJ didn’t move from his lean against the virtual wall. He didn’t even blink. “You went too far, Natalie.”

Bristling at her mentor and longtime crush, Natalie waited for Felina to leave before replying. “I don’t think that’s for you to say, AJ. You can’t know how badly she wronged me.”

“How many times have you counseled victims on their rights, on the perils of revenge? How many times have we successfully convinced victims to instead forgive and then witnessed the transformative power of it?”
His dark eyes didn’t feel like velvet on her face. They were hot, but not in the way she longed for. They blazed with anger.

“This will help her. This will heal her. You’ll see.”

“No. You went too far. The length is too long. You shouldn’t have changed her appearance and identity.”

Realizing she’d kept the sedate male judges at her side, Natalie let them dissipate into puffs of smoke, hoping it would demonstrate her acquiescence. “I thought her beauty would hinder her progress.”

“If that were true, you would have been better to keep her beauty. Because if your logic holds, that added challenge would improve her learning curve. No. I think you changed her out of anger.”

He was right. She hated how true it was. “I’ll change her back.”

“Too late.”

“It’s never too late. How often do we uphold that rule?”

“You don’t understand what you’ve done,” AJ said and came to stand in front of her. His eyes softened and he tucked a tendril of hair behind her ear. “I only know part of what Kiki did to hurt you so much and I am sorry she did.”

His nearness made her thoughts swim, as always. She had to make him understand. “If she had helped me, had acknowledged how sick I was, so much pain could have been prevented.”

“You’re blaming her when you couldn’t see what she was going through herself.”

She snorted. “Through what? Raging popularity and easy A’s?”

AJ shook his head. “No. I can’t share her experience with you, but I suspect if you allow yourself to remember that time, without pain painting the images, you’ll know.”

Natalie drew in a breath. The disappointment in his tone was killing her. “What can I do?”

“You can hope she gets it right. Otherwise, you’ll face her Karmic retribution yourself.”

A shiver raced up her belly. The image of Kiki’s indifferent face staring her down, a punishment hanging between them frightened Natalie almost as much as the idea of letting AJ down. “I’ll fix it. I swear.”

“No. You won’t. But I will.”

The courtroom walls Natalie had created faded away to energetic nothingness. “What do you mean you will?”

“I’m returning with her.”

“No! AJ, you can’t. We need you here. You do so much good here.”

“You’re my responsibility. I shouldn’t have left you to this on your own. I should have sensed the anger that remained buried inside of you.”

If she could cry, tears would be streaming down her face. She took in his darkly handsome angel face so many swooned for. How could he leave?

“If you go back…if she fails…you’ll be forced to reincarnate.”

“Too many things could go wrong if I don’t. Too many lives could get put off course and the Karmic balance would be due by you, Natalie.”

Natalie fought against the pain. “Why you? Who will run about Karma facilitations?” Or, was there something he wasn’t telling her? “You make it sound like it isn’t up to you at all.”

He couldn’t just walk away from this—from her. Could he? Did she mean so little to him?

“To keep you safe, to keep you here, I’ve made a deal.”

The way his gaze changed, she recognized this wasn’t a matter for debate. “With higher powers?”
He only shook his head, as though he couldn’t say. If she’d thought for even one moment she’d lose AJ by sentencing Kiki, she’d have walked away. She wouldn’t even have pulled the pink jumper gimmick. “I thought you’d never choose life again.”

He regarded her a long moment, sorrow in his eyes. “I didn’t think I’d find a reason to. Can you feel the piece inside of you that broke with your ruling, Natalie?”

No. The break within her stemmed from something else entirely, but she couldn’t tell him that.

“Above all else, I wish you to feel whole again. And for me to as well.”

Natalie knew the phrasing by heart. AJ taught every Karma counselor that same sentiment. They shared it with victims to help them forgive and move on. Every time it fell from his perfectly kissable lips, she’d fallen a little more for him. “But that doesn’t make any sense, AJ?”

Her heart trembled. “Why would my ruling have leave you broken, too?”

“It’s what I mean to find out.”

And she’d inadvertently bound him to the one woman it would hurt most seeing him in time with. He was right. She’d gone too far. “Will you be back?”

He half smiled. “I’ll have to. Soul mating is a tall order for any new cupid. She’ll need a lot of assistance. Unseen help. This means I will need help, too.”

A measure of relief washed through Natalie. “So, you’ll exist with her, but return here? When will you reincarnate?”

“Once Kiki—uh, Millie—has earned her way out of those gold cuffs you gave her.” He leaned where the wall once was, making the wall appear again.

A smile tugged at Natalie’s cheeks, although she’d inadvertently handed him to her enemy. But, if she strategized just right, he just might need her for a very long time.

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**Praise For Play Fling…**

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It turns out playing Cupid isn't a fun gig, it’s a punishment for the romantically challenged. And Millie is the most challenged of all!

Pull the string...
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An Interview with Amber Scott and the anti-heroine some love to hate, Millie Match:

Amber: Millie, you know I adore, right?
Amber: LOL. Okay, okay. Yes, you do seriously amuse me. You remind me of a really cool chick I used to know. She used to be my best friend, in fact.
Millie: Oooohh. Do tell! And please, if you could include the part about how I am not based on this person or any other?
Amber: You aren’t based on her. Or anyone! You just showed up in my mental waiting room, dingling the bell and elbowing through. But then. You know that. I get why you’re asking, though. Not everyone…um, shall we say…votes for Millie?
Millie: They hate me.
Amber: Not hate, per se. You just create a strong reaction is all. That can be a really good thing.
Millie: Uh, strong is putting it mildly. “Insipid?” “I’d like to throttle her?” Let’s not paint the fence fuschia here Ambykins. They’d slash my tires if I had any. Which I don’t. Because I’m stuck in every small town America Heaven can find with little to no cash to spare. Sickwads.
Amber: Is that part of the whole Cupid as punishment thing?
Millie: Oh. You think life sentence matching the friggin impossible with true love wasn’t enough? I wouldn’t be surprised at all, but apparently, no. I just can’t keep a decent job. All me. And, I’m still waiting to hear why? WHY this?
You know, Amber. I know you know. You have to tell me. And I don’t mean all that “a life lived in gross indifference” bullsheatah ruling handed down by those imperious angels. I mean, how do I get out of matchmaking hell?
Amber: I do know. But… I can’t tell you. Hey, you wouldn’t believe me if I did. It’s one of those figure it out on your own or it won’t take things.
Millie: If it won’t take anyways, tell me, dirty author! *fakes a strangle*
Amber: *grinning* Hmmmm….Yeah. I guess that’s logical enough. Okay. The answer is love.
Millie: ….okaaaay? Can I say duh here?
Amber: LOL. Yes, you can. Remember, I actually do adore you. What I meant was you must learn love in order to be freed of the Cupid sentence.
Millie: Please don’t tell me this means I have to pull some “you love me, you really love me blah, blah, blegh.” Love is overrated.
Amber: Really?
Millie: Trust me.
Amber: What about AJ?
Millie: Pshhh. AJ? You already know allll about AJ. You are there for every dizzy, breathtaking, put-your-mouth-on-me-please moment. It’s all I can do not to twist my hair, pop bubble gum and not attack him. Lust? For sure. He’s lust incarnate. But let’s not call my DNA screaming at me to claim a piece of his as love.
Amber: Isn’t attraction deep tied to love, though?
Millie: No. Attraction makes you stupid. It blinds you. I can’t lose him. I’ll never make it out of this sentence without AJ.
Amber: What makes you think you’ll lose him?
Millie: Oh, the plot thickens! Are you saying I won’t lose him? Huh-uh. None of that. Spill it author.
Amber: ssssss….Can’t. Sorry.
Millie: Fine. But don’t think I’ll forget this. Anyways, who needs love or lust. What I need is to go back to being me. Before I lose my mind in this body. Having Brooke for a friend made it bearable, you know? I know I’m not easy to like, let alone love. But she did. Or, does. I hope. And after all the crap I’ve seen long before this whole cupid gig, I can promise you, friends will be there when no one else will. No guy, no family, will stick it thick and thin like a friend.
Amber: I completely agree. For now. *smiling*
Millie: Cheeky bitch. *winks*

BIO:
Amber Scott talks to herself.

Sure she claims it’s her muse, Milla, and her inner critic, Charles, who respond, but really, these split personalities are her. All those characters in her mental waiting room are just her, too.

With all that wild conversation going on, it’s no wonder she burns dinner!

Amber started writing romance novels during her first born’s ‘nap-ortunities’ and fell in love with the whole business. Right down to what font works best on a title page.

Her addiction to chocolate gets her through the rough times and her husband and two young ones have learned to live with imaginary people.

Thankfully, all this makes for some HOT, fun, adventurous reads!
Discover more about Amber Scott at her website http://AmberScottBooks.com on Facebook and on Twitter @amberscottbooks.