

A Day In The Life
By Xaqtly

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This story takes place a number of months past where Zig Zag the Story is currently.

Saturday

James drifted slowly towards consciousness, sensing the first shards of daylight through his closed eyelids. He opened one eye to verify the existence of sunlight, then opened his other eye and lifted his head slowly. He yawned widely and noticed Zig Zag pressed against him, facing the other way. Her tail was motionless against his legs and her breathing was deep and rhythmic, suggesting to James that she wasn't ready to wake up yet. He turned slightly to get a better look at her and was taken aback by her beauty, just like he was every other morning. And just like every other morning, he reminded himself just how lucky he was to have her in his life. He smiled and without thinking began to caress the fur on her arm, moving down to the fur on her hip and her leg.

Zig Zag stirred slightly and moaned nearly inaudibly. James thought she must be having a dream when he looked down and realized where his paw was. He quickly removed his paw, abashed that he had inadvertently caused Zig Zag to stir. "No... come back," he heard her mumble. Not sure if she was actually awake or not, he hesitated for a couple seconds before gingerly placing his paw back on her hip. "Now stay there," she said sleepily.

Well that did it. James leaned towards her and placed his muzzle near her ear, while keeping his paw on her hip. "Good morning, beautiful," he breathed.

Zig Zag giggled and reached up to scratch her ear. "Your breath tickles," she said, and then yawned mightily.

James grinned. "That's not all I can use to tickle you," he said suggestively as he moved his paw up from her hip towards her stomach.

"Don't you dare," she warned, although James could hear the playfulness in her voice. His paw continued to move until it found a known ticklish spot and went into action. Zig Zag shrieked and burst into laughter, trying her hardest to remove James' paw from its target and failing. "I'll get you for this, Sheppard," she managed to say between laughter and gasps of air.

James stopped tickling and asked, "Is that a promise?"

"Oh, you bet it is," she stated matter-of-factly. She turned so that she was facing him and reached out with her paw to caress his cheek. "And you know I take my promises seriously," she said seductively as she looked up at him from under her eyelashes.

James felt his entire spine tingle, and he fell under her spell. He could do nothing but stare numbly at her, completely entranced. She reached behind his head and gently pulled him towards her. Their mouths drew together and she kissed him sensuously, making his

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head swim. Long moments later, she released him and he fell over onto his back, staring up at the ceiling. "What a way to start the day", he said to nobody in particular.

Zig Zag stifled a giggle, noting the effect she had on him. "Glad I could help," she said with a smile. "My wake-up call wasn't so bad either."

A grin formed on James' muzzle. "Sorry about that, I didn't actually mean to wake you up. But you know me, I can't keep my paws off you."

"I'll let you know if it's ever a problem," Zig Zag replied lightly.

###

Zig Zag got out of the shower and dried off, first with towels and then the fur dryer. She brushed her fur and hair into place, then walked back into the bedroom. She went to the closet and thought for a moment, then decided not to get dressed yet, reaching for her robe instead. She put it on and tied the sash in front, idly wondering what she and James were going to do today. They hadn't planned anything as far as she knew, and she didn't have to be at work. She didn't think James had to work today either, which left them free to do whatever they liked. Feeling invigorated, she opened the bedroom door and strolled purposefully towards the kitchen to see what James had been up to.

James looked in her direction as she entered the kitchen. He smiled and said, "Have I told you how beautiful you look today?"

"Not yet, but if you did I wouldn't complain," she said with a wink.

"You are the most gorgeous woman I have ever seen in my life", he said earnestly. "Would you like some breakfast?"

Zig Zag walked over to him and put her arms around his waist. She looked into his eyes and said, "Not if it means you're going to stop telling me things like that," and she kissed him lightly on the cheek.

James put his arm around her back and said, "I think I can manage to compliment you and feed you at the same time."

Zig Zag laughed at that and let him go. She leaned against the counter and said, "In that case, what's on the menu?"

"Fresh fruit, English Muffins, coffee, and you look positively stunning this morning," he said with a sparkle in his eye.

That caused Zig Zag to laugh again, and it made James happy. Hearing her laugh was one of the things he looked forward to whenever they were together, it had a calming and almost medicinal effect on him. Even after a frustrating day at work, her laugh could lift

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the weight of the outside world and allow him to concentrate on her. "Just something else to be thankful for," he thought to himself.

While James finished preparing breakfast, Zig Zag asked, "So what did you have in mind for today? Anything in particular?"

"Not a thing," he answered easily. "Why, did you have something planned?"

"Nope. Got any ideas?"

James thought for a moment, and asked, "Do you feel like getting out and doing something?"

"Yeah, I think I do."

She helped James bring breakfast to the table, and they sat down to eat. James took a bite and chewed thoughtfully. He swallowed and asked, "Anything in particular you were thinking about, or did you want to just get out for a while?"

Zig Zag ate her English Muffin and thought about that. There were some things she wanted to see, and questions she wanted to ask but she didn't know if it was the right time yet or not. "I'm not sure yet," she hedged.

"No problems there, you have plenty of time to decide," James replied easily. "I think I'll grab a shower after breakfast, and then we'll see where we stand, okay?"

"Would you like a scrubbing assistant today, Mr. Sheppard?" Zig Zag asked primly, a smile hinting at the edges of her muzzle.

James looked at her and smiled hugely. "Zig, you know how hard it is for me to turn down offers like that, but you just had a shower. It wouldn't be fair to get you wet all over again."

Zig Zag put on her best pouty face and said, "All right Mr. Sheppard... this time," and flashed him a wicked grin.

James smiled and thought, "I have the most incredible girlfriend on the planet."

James cleared the table when they were finished eating, and put the dishes in the dishwasher. He went off to the bathroom to take a shower, and Zig Zag wandered into the great room and sat down on the couch lengthwise, pulling her tail around to rest on top of her legs. She propped her back up against the arm of the couch with a pillow and thought about whether or not to ask James what she had been thinking about earlier. If it was still too soon there could be disastrous consequences. But if enough time had passed she would be able to see a part of his life she hadn't been privy to so far.

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She didn't relish the idea of pushing so far into his private life, but she had an overwhelming urge to learn more about his past. After all, he knew what she had done in her past, it was all out there on video. But then again, how would she react to James if he tried to push her for information like that? Not very favorably, she decided, and was thankful that James didn't push her like that. So how could she of all people do it to him? She was still trying to answer that when James entered the great room wearing a robe and looking refreshed.

"Hi, sweetie," he said, leaning over to kiss the top of her head.

Zig Zag swiveled and moved her feet down to the floor so James could sit next to her. "Sweetie? That's new, isn't it?" she asked him curiously.

"It just felt right. I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all," Zig assured him. "In fact I like it. Nobody ever called me sweetie before. I've been called a lot of other things, but never sweetie." Zig smiled at him and added, "And you're the only person I'd ever want to hear it from."

She grabbed the front of his robe and pulled him over to her, planting a passionate kiss on his lips. And just like every other time she did that, James felt like he had just been handed a live wire. He was fairly sure there was smoke pouring out of his ears when she finally let him go. Zig Zag watched him and smiled, appreciating the effect she had on him.

"Zig, you remember when I told you it wasn't every day that I lost track of my wits with a beautiful lady?" James asked a bit breathlessly.

"I sure do. You were so cute when I kissed you that night." Zig Zag smiled mischievously at him, piercing him with those gorgeous blue eyes.

James smiled, recalling how he felt as she had whispered 'call me' into his ear. "Well I take it back. I lose track of my wits with a beautiful lady every single day now, and I couldn't be happier about it."

Zig Zag's expression turned a little more serious, and she reached out to caress his face gently. James took her paws in his and kissed her. Zig Zag encircled his body with her arms, her paws gently ruffling the fur on the back of his neck as they kissed.

"You always know exactly what to say to me, don't you?" Zig Zag asked softly, her muzzle resting against his neck.

"Not all the time," James replied quietly as he held her. "But in this case it's just the truth, Zig."

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Zig Zag held him a little tighter and nuzzled his neck. "Would it be all right if we just stayed like this all day?" she asked.

"I certainly wouldn't mind, but I thought you wanted to get out today," he said gently.

"You're right," Zig Zag sighed. She kissed him on the side of his muzzle and sat back against the couch, settling for holding his paws in her lap.

"Did you decide what you wanted to do yet?" James asked a bit reluctantly. He really enjoyed Zig Zag nuzzling his neck like that.

"I think so, yes," she said hesitantly. "James, please tell me if I'm asking too much of you. The last thing I want to do is make you uncomfortable."

James blinked and nodded his understanding, but looked at her quizzically.

Zig Zag steeled herself against his possible reaction and continued. "I want to know more about your past, James. I'd like to know more about Beth and how you shared your lives together."

James sat and blinked at her. He had certainly never expected anything like that to come from Zig Zag, given her own stance on personal privacy. He wasn't offended or upset, just surprised. When he applied some logic to her request, he realized she must have had a good reason for asking because she would never have asked otherwise. He and Zig Zag had become very close over the months they had been seeing each other, and he felt very comfortable with her now. She already knew about the circumstances under which Beth died, so he didn't really feel like he had anything left to hide from her. Maybe Zig just felt that she needed more of James' past life in order for her to feel comfortable enough to reveal another of her own secrets to him. Whatever the case, James didn't see anything wrong with Zig's request when he put it into perspective.

Zig Zag was becoming increasingly worried at the extended silence from James. Had she gone too far this time? She tried to read his face, but he was lost in thought and his expression was neutral. "James?" she asked meekly.

"What? Oh, sorry Zig," he said quickly. "I was lost in thought there for a moment. So you want to know more about me and Beth?" he said, keeping his expression neutral.

"Yes... no... I don't know," Zig said, suddenly embarrassed. "I'm sorry James, I shouldn't have asked you that. I should know better."

"It's okay, Zig," James soothed. "You haven't done anything wrong. I don't have a problem with you wanting to learn more about me."

"Really?" Zig Zag asked hopefully, a smile returning to her muzzle.

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"Really," James replied, smiling. "So what do you want to know?"

"Well," Zig Zag began, "You said you used to live near my house, didn't you?"

James nodded at her.

"Do you think maybe we could go see your old house?"

James thought about this for a moment and got an idea. "Actually, I might be able to do you one better," he said, a thoughtful look on his face.

Zig Zag looked genuinely curious now, and he smiled at her.

"How would you like to meet Beth?"

###

Not a word was spoken as James drove his car through the cemetery, taking the route he had taken so many times before. This time was different though, he thought, as he glanced over at Zig Zag sitting in the passenger seat. She was looking out at the gravestones going by, a faraway look on her face. James wondered what she was thinking about, and thought that it took a lot of courage on Zig's part to agree to come here with him. But she had said she wanted to learn more about him and Beth, and this seemed like a good a way as any to prove to Zig that he belonged to her now.

He still loved Beth deep inside, and he would never forget her, but even Beth had known James needed to move on with his life and find a new love. James smiled at that, remembering how Beth had always been able to keep him on the right path. Her last words to him had been as insightful and selfless as everything else she said in life. James felt his throat tighten slightly and willed himself to calm down. In this place, Zig Zag needed him to be there for her, and he would be.

They arrived at their destination, and James shut the car off, let himself out and walked around to open Zig Zag's door for her.

"Thank you," she said as she took his paw and stood up. James closed the car door and took Zig Zag's arm in his. They walked arm in arm towards a field of memories solidified in marble and stone, carefully making their way through the final resting places of dozens of beloved husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. Zig Zag imagined she felt a chill through the noontime sun, and pressed closer to James. She began to think she shouldn't have agreed to come here, and decided she felt very out of place.

Before she could think any more about it, there in front of them was Beth's headstone. Zig Zag and James looked quietly at it for a few moments, and Zig Zag spoke.

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"Here lies Beth Sheppard, beloved wife," she read in a subdued voice.

"I loved her with all my heart, Zig," James said quietly. "I never imagined I would ever love anybody like that again until I met you."

Zig Zag looked at him, and he nodded slowly at her.

"Do you really love me that much, James?" she asked, her voice tighter than normal.

"I do, Zig. I wanted you to know that as much as I loved Beth, and as much as a part of me will always love her, my heart belongs to you now."

Zig Zag turned away from him to try to regain control of her emotions. "Thank you," she said with an unsteady voice. "You can't know how much that means to me right now." She turned back towards him and squeezed his arm lovingly.

Several long moments passed, then James said, "You know, I think you and Beth would have gotten along pretty well, Zig."

Zig Zag looked at him disbelievingly with a half smile on her face. "Really?"

"Sure," he answered. "You weren't very much alike, but you both had a good sense of humor and a desire to live life to the fullest. I know I always felt I was living life to the fullest when I was with Beth... and I feel the same way when I'm with you." He paused to look into her eyes and said, "Beth and I had a wonderful life together that was cut short far too early, but now I have another wonderful life with you. I love you with all my heart, and you make me indescribably happy."

Zig Zag threw her arms around his neck and kissed him ecstatically and at great length. He held her tightly and he felt like a great weight had lifted from him. He knew this was the right thing to do with his life, and he knew Beth had wanted it this way.

James and Zig Zag slowly released each other, and they looked back towards Beth's headstone. "She must have been very special," Zig Zag said quietly.

"She was," James agreed.

Zig Zag decided she had the answers she had been looking for. There would be no more lingering doubt as to where James' heart really was, and no more comparing herself to Beth in her mind. She smiled and actually found herself wishing she could somehow have known Beth, if only to gossip about James. She looked up and saw James still looking at Beth's headstone, so she kissed him on the cheek and told him she would go wait in the car.

"That's not necessary, Zig," he started to protest, but Zig Zag put her finger over his mouth and told him, "It's okay, James. You need some time alone just like anybody

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would. I don't mind." He began to protest again, but Zig planted her mouth on his before he could say anything. She stepped back and repeated, "It's okay," and smiled warmly at him, then turned back towards the car.

James watched her walk back to the car, then he turned back to Beth.

"Thank you so much," James said. "You always did know what was best for me, even if I didn't." He crouched down and placed his paw on her name. "I will always love you, and I will never forget you. Goodbye, my darling wife."

His throat tightened and he had to fight to keep the tears from coming. He stood up and took a few deep breaths to calm himself, took one last look at Beth's grave, then headed back to the car where Zig Zag was waiting for him.

###

Twilight encroached upon James and Zig Zag as they sat under a large oak tree in James' back yard. Rays of amber sunlight filtered through the leaves, mottling the ground around them in a kaleidoscope of shapes and warm colors. James was sitting with his back against the tree, Zig Zag in front of him leaning back against his chest. His arms were wrapped around her chest, holding her close to him.

"Thank you," Zig Zag said softly.

"For what?" James asked.

"Everything. For what you did today, for letting me into your life like that. It means more than you know."

"You're very welcome, Zig," James said with a smile. "I wanted to make sure you knew how much you mean to me."

Zig Zag turned to look at him and said quietly, "Well if I didn't before, I do now. I love you, James." She kissed him tentatively, then passionately as he held her tightly to him.

She slowly pulled away, gazing into his eyes and seeing all his love for her contained within them. She smiled and lay down on his chest, wrapping her tail around them.

Night fell slowly, determined to chase away the last remnants of reddish sunlight retreating to the west, and they found themselves looking up at the stars. It was a nice clear evening and they could see a number of constellations roaming the sky. Zig Zag was still amazed at how clear the sky was out here, and that she had never paid attention to the stars before she had met James.

"Do you remember what I told you about the stars?" James asked, a subtle grin on his face.

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In response, Zig Zag raised up and kissed him on the mouth quickly, causing James to laugh. "I guess you do," he said with satisfaction.

Zig Zag felt the chill night air settle into her fur. "Well, I think I've had enough of the great outdoors for one night," she said nonchalantly. "What say we take this inside?"

James agreed, and they got up and walked back to the house. It was dark inside, so James turned on a couple accent lights while Zig Zag went to the kitchen. "Do you want anything?" she asked from the kitchen. "No thanks Zig," James replied.

Zig Zag emerged from the kitchen with a cup of hot tea, and sat beside James in front of the fire he had started in the fireplace. Zig Zag closed her eyes and couldn't imagine her life without James any more. It was all so perfect, and she knew it was for real.

That was the most amazing part to her. This was no dream, no fantasy; it was reality, and James was as real as she was. The more she was with him, the more she wanted to be with him, and he had proven today that he wasn't going to run away and that she was a real and genuine part of his life now. She had never really been part of somebody's life like this before, and she was relishing the experience. "If only things could stay like this forever," she thought.

Zig Zag's thoughts wandered to what she and James had done today, and she felt she should tell him how much he meant to her, since he had done the same this afternoon.

"James?" Zig Zag asked tentatively.

"Right here," he said, and gently squeezed her shoulder.

"What would you think if I told you that ever since the first time I laid eyes on you, before we even spoke to each other, I felt a connection with you?"

James was surprised at this revelation, but didn't let it show. "I'd say I felt the same thing for you, Zig. I just dismissed the feeling at first because it seemed way too unlikely."

Zig Zag stared at James, not believing what she was hearing. "You did?"

"Uh huh," he nodded. "I had never met you before, and you were an unobtainable beauty who could have her pick of any man on the planet. I figured I never stood a chance even before we met."

Zig Zag kissed him on the cheek. "I couldn't help but watch you as you worked on our server that night," she said, fondly recalling the memory. "It was like I couldn't stay away from you. And then I asked about your fur coloring." She draped a paw over her eyes. "I can't believe I did that."

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James chuckled. "I'm glad you did. I thought it was a little odd, but I didn't mind telling you about it. Your personal interest in me spawned some very interesting dreams that night."

Zig Zag laughed at that. "Do tell."

James shook his head slowly, an embarrassed grin on his muzzle. "It wasn't nearly as interesting as what we've actually done together," he said bashfully.

Zig Zag looked steadily at James. She arched an eyebrow, clearly not satisfied with James' answer.

"Really, Zig. That dream was tame compared to what we do in reality. You'd be bored by it."

"All right. Maybe some other time," Zig Zag said with resignation. James sighed with relief.

"I heard that," Zig Zag warned playfully, a grin on her muzzle.

James leaned over and kissed her, and Zig Zag forgot what she was going to say next.

###

"As I recall, I made a promise this morning," Zig Zag intoned neutrally from the bathroom. James paused in his undressing, trying to determine what she meant by that. "I intend to make good on that promise tonight, so be forewarned," she continued.

Now James didn't know whether to be ecstatic or alarmed. He decided he would stay on his guard until he discovered what she was up to. He didn't have long to wait. After he had climbed into bed, Zig Zag appeared from the bathroom in a sheer silk teddy, one he hadn't seen before, and one that nearly made his eyes pop out of his head. He could do nothing but stare with his mouth open as she walked slowly and sensually toward him, her tail swaying provocatively behind her with each step.

"I've been saving this for a special occasion," she cooed. "What do you think?"

She already knew what he thought, but she wanted a reaction out of him because he was so cute when he was struck dumb like this.

"Uuuhhhh," James replied. "Uuuhh, I mean you're beautiful! It's gorgeous! You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen," he finished unsteadily.

"You say the nicest things," Zig Zag purred as she climbed on top of him and kissed him so sensuously he thought he would pass out.

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"What a way to end the day," he thought.