

AVALON by Vanessa Morgan

EXCERPT

Around three o'clock that night, Avalon was fed up with the strange man in his bed. He plonked his rear down on Gilles' pillow, complaining fretfully in his ear while tapping him on the face.

After nearly an hour of incessant wailing and poking, more drastic measures were required. The new solution: pushing Gilles out of bed.

Avalon succeeded.

Climbing back under the covers wasn't an option. Unable to sleep, Gilles got up. "I guess I didn't pass the test."

"Give Avalon some time. Maybe he was just irked because you took his side of the bed."

But Gilles had already understood that this wasn't going to be a one-time event.

For several minutes, Gilles and Avalon sized each other up. Then Gilles said, "I'd better leave the two of you alone now. It's clearly what the little guy wants."

I swear I could see Avalon smirking when Gilles put on his jacket and left.

Instantly, Avalon leapt onto me, and compensated for the evening before. He entered a kiss-induced trance. This cat was all about exclusivity, and when granted that exclusivity, his love was immense.

"Are you really that happy that Gilles is gone?"

In reply, Avalon looked at me with swoony eyes and purred loudly, then swatted out his paw to urge me to continue to pet him, which I did.

A phone call interrupted our tender moment. It was Gilles.

"There won't be any train to Brussels for hours," he said. "Is it okay if I come back to your place for a while?"

"Of course." His return would offend Avalon, but I couldn't possibly leave Gilles outside in the rain for several hours.

As soon as Gilles appeared at the front door, Avalon's pupils widened to a pitch black.

Let's see who's the boss here, he seemed to be thinking.

Being a cat of action, Avalon went through his usual attention-seeking routine: making a selection of irritating noises, scratching the wallpaper, and pushing objects to the ground.

When that didn't work, Avalon opened Gilles' overnight bag and threw out a piece of clothing. His eyes so dark and evil they could be gateways to hell, Avalon stared at his adversary and waited for a reaction. He then pulled out a box of gel wax. Again, he looked up at Gilles to make sure he understood that all this bungling was meant to get a message across. A third object followed, then a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, until there was nothing.

Hell-bent on winning the game, Avalon took Gilles' coat in his mouth and towed it toward the front door. There, he used his right paw to tap the keys hanging from the wooden doorframe.

Avalon's message couldn't be any clearer: there was room for only one man in my life. A feline one.