Aspersions

by luellalux

Summary

Between his ascent to mega-stardom and her globe-trotting as one of Hollywood’s most sought after stylists, Tom Hiddleston and Liv Ames are a couple who are living a lifestyle that most could only dream of. But when their long-distance relationship of three years crumbles, their once picturesque romance quickly becomes tabloid fodder. Under the blinding glare of the media, true colors and a long-kept secret are revealed, casting doubt on the love they once knew and the intentions of people they trust most dearly.

Kristin Kreuk stars as the OFC, Liv Ames.

Reuploaded. I accidentally deleted the original while working from my phone... -_____-

Notes

Many thanks to my beta hiddle-stoner who has been so very kind to me and my little fanfic. Her feedback has really helped me refine points of this story that would have otherwise remained a bit too ambiguous for my taste. :)

Disclaimers: I don’t own anything except Liv Ames and the plot. Seriously, don’t sue, I have no money, just college loans. This work is 100% fictional.
December 2007

*Splitsville: Liv Ames Files for Divorce*

AFI front-man Davey Havok and stylist Liv Ames will no longer be squabbling over eyeliner or the flat-iron. The couple has called it quits on their two-and-a-half year marriage. The split follows allegations of Havok’s philandering while on tour, promoting “Decemberunderground”. Ames filed for divorce citing “irreconcilable differences” at a Los Angeles County, California courthouse on Monday morning. Whether the proceedings will be messy remains to be seen.

Friends of both parties don’t seem to be surprised by the split, particularly Liv’s best pal, Scarlett Johansson. When chased by paparazzi while doing her grocery shopping, “The Prestige” star responded to the news of her friend’s divorce with a resounding, “About damn time.”

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October 2008

*Just Married: Scarlett Johansson and Ryan Reynolds Wed in Tofino, B.C.*
In a rustic and relaxed ceremony with friends and family, Scarlett and Ryan said “I do” on the last weekend of September. Even amid their busy filming schedules, the couple was able to take the week leading up to their wedding to reunite and entertain their guests in Tofino, B.C., west of Vancouver. Unlike their much storied contemporaries, Ashlee Simpson and Pete Wentz who wed in May, the newly minted Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds kept their wedding details so low-key that no one but their nearest and dearest knew of it.

And it looks like they’re keeping trustworthy company, too. Liv Ames, Scarlett’s BFF who reportedly served as a bridesmaid, gave paparazzi the one-finger salute at Paris Fashion Week when they asked her to confirm if the “Vicky Christina Barcelona” actress had indeed tied the knot. Either she’s a very good friend or Liv’s still bitter about her own divorce that was finalized in June.

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March 2009

On the Radar: Liv Ames Opens Up About Divorce for the First Time

Nearly a year after finalizing her divorce from AFI rocker Davey Havok, Liv Ames sat for an interview with “Cosmopolitan”. The stylist, who now sports a longer mane, talked about her new look on love.

“Getting married at that young of an age really altered my understanding of the things people are willing to do for love. I just don’t think I am willing to be my partner’s shadow anymore. It took too much from me to be his [Havok] puppy. The right guy should be willing to do the same for me, not grumbling that he has to go to Paris or Milan to see me while I’m working. There has to be a give and take because I’m not going to fold for anyone anymore.”

When asked to address the Chris Evans dating rumors, Liv replied, “Ew no. Seriously, ew. Chris is like me and Scarlett’s [Johansson] brother. We’re so close that to think of each other that way is just gross.”

The new issue of “Cosmopolitan” hits newsstands tomorrow.

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January 2010

Fashion & the Famous: Benedict Cumberbatch at Burberry Prorsum in Milan

Benedict Cumberbatch, seen with stylist Liv Ames, attended the Men’s Burberry Prorsum show in Milan, showcasing Fall/Winter 2011 styles. The pair of close friends sat in the front row with Liv taking note of pieces that interested her client, Benedict. The “Hawking” star, who will return to BBC in the titular role of the network’s “Sherlock”, seemed much at ease with the stylist whom has been in charge of his red carpet wardrobes for the past few years. They were later spotted at the Gucci after party, mingling with the likes of David Beckham and Chris Brown.

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November 2010
New Couple Alert: Tom Hiddleston & Liv Ames

Hollywood’s favorite sassy stylist and part-time contributor to E! Entertainment News, Liv Ames has found love again—this time in British actor, Tom Hiddleston. Spotted at The Grove in Los Angeles, the new couple spent the chilly evening hand-in-hand as they strolled through the farmer’s market. Hiddleston, who recently wrapped filming in Dartmoor, England for Steven Spielberg’s latest project, has apparently taken advantage of the break in his schedule to see Liv.

While onlookers said that the Tom and Liv looked like any casual couple, friends close to the new couple say that things are getting very serious. The pair has plans to spend the holidays together and no doubt introduce each other to their parents and families. Are wedding bells going to be ringing for them in the New Year?

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May 2011

“Thor” Debuts in American Cinemas

The cast of the highly anticipated film “Thor” walked the red carpet of the El Capitan on Monday afternoon for the American premier of the latest project from the Marvel franchise. The star of the movie, Chris Hemsworth, was joined by wife, Elsa Pataky, and younger brother Liam. Tom Hiddleston, who plays Thor’s trickster brother Loki, arrived with girlfriend Liv Ames, followed by Idris Elba, who plays the all-seeing Heimdall. All the stars interacted with fans who waited patiently to meet with their heroes.

Chris and Tom were able to confirm that director Joss Whedon has called for them to assemble alongside Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Robert Downey Jr., and the rest of the Avengers to begin filming on the next chapter in the Marvel universe.

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April 2012

On the Radar: Benedict, Part-Time Cupid?

Though LAMDA alumni, Benedict Cumberbatch, isn’t keen on talking about his personal life, he didn’t hesitate to take credit for setting up the hottest British-American celebrity couple since Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson. In an interview with “E! News”, the “Parade’s End” actor recounted the night that he introduced “War Horse” co-star Tom Hiddleston to his stylist Liv Ames.

“Yes, that was all me, yes,” he states proudly. “It was a textbook ‘meet cute’ that I directed, of course. The entire room broke into song, the heavens opened up, and it was all sorts of romantic. I literally had to jump out of the way when they shook hands, it was electrifying. No, really though, everyone else in the room thought they’d stumbled onto a film set somehow.”

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February 2013
Marie Claire: Style Evolution of Liv Ames

2000 – 2002: Then, only a mere assistant to stylist Rachel Zoe, Liv blended easily into the crowd with her rather bland style.

2003: Liv’s game changing year. After leaving her role as Rachel’s assistant and meeting AFI front-man Davey Havok, Liv’s style took an edgy turn to punk rock while she snapped up clients like Scarlett Johansson and Mandy Moore.

2004 – 2007: In the span of these three years, Liv’s life and style became increasingly dark and gothic-inspired under Davey’s supposed influence. Serious “bad-girl” vibes going on here.

2008: Liv reinvented herself once again in what she dubbed as “minimalist chic” after splitting from her rocker husband. Her clean lines and silhouettes reflected a fresh start to a new, more mature chapter in her life.

2009 – 2011: After a decade in the fashion industry, elegance and high fashion finally began to bleed into Liv’s personal wardrobe!

2012 – Present: Liv continues to refine her look with brands and designers from her boyfriend Tom Hiddleston’s home country, England. Reiss, Mulberry, and Alexander McQueen are amongst her favorites.
Chapter 01

Chapter Notes

1.1: This chappie was again beta’d by hiddle-stoner, so let’s please have a round of applause for her! Also, please please please leave me a PM about this fic. I would really like to know what your thoughts are, as a reader. :) Thank you & enjoy ch 01.

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**ELLE: Monthly Stylist Profile**

*When a celebrity walks down a red carpet or does a press tour, they are dressed in the finest that fashion can offer at that very moment. But who is really responsible for what today’s actresses step out in? Their trusted stylists, of course! In this segment, actresses dish on their stylist. This month’s pick is Scarlett Johansson’s long time bestie, Liv Ames.*

**ELLE:** How did you get in touch with Liv?

**Scarlett Johansson:** “About ten years ago, when I was beginning to branch out to more mature roles, my agent put us in touch. She had been working with Nylon and just finished assisting Rachel Zoe with her first collaboration at Piperlime. We were both just beginning to step up our game at that time.”

**ELLE:** Ten years, that’s a life time in Hollywood.

**SJ:** “Practically a marriage! Liv and I have been through heartbreak and back, and so much other drama. She’s like the sister I never had, and I trust her like one too.

**ELLE:** Tell us about how she’s influenced your style?

**SJ:** “Let me just say, if it looks good, Liv probably put it together. If it’s terrible, Liv will come to the rescue somehow. But in all honesty, she’s taken a piece of my public image and made it a point to give me strength through style. Whenever she dresses me, I swear she has this idea that I’m a powerhouse in my own right and she uses that to help me make a statement. I love that about her.

**ELLE:** What does style mean to Liv?

**SJ:** “It’s who she is, it’s what she does. But she isn’t a snob about it, believe it or not, so she won’t preach to you about it if it’s not your thing. Liv has this way of making fashion an inclusive thing as opposed to exclusive. She wants everyone to look their best and express themselves. But if you’re her client, it’s personal. She wants her clients to be the best.”

**ELLE:** Where do you see Liv in ten years?

**SJ:** “Still knee-deep in celebrities decked out in Elie Saab for the next big red-carpet. And probably doing bigger collaborations too.”
"On the Radar: Stylist Spotted"

“Celebrity stylist Liv Ames was seen arriving at Los Angeles International airport on Friday afternoon. Dressed way down in trainers and dark workout clothes, the stylist did not hold a candle to her normally spot on fashion. Style seemed to be the least of her worries as it appeared that she was headed for London yet again. Since she began dating British actor Tom Hiddleston in mid-2010, the pair has been keeping love alive with several trips across the Atlantic, as well as vacations in far-flung locations. The pair were last seen at Cannes with Liv supporting her man at the premiere of his latest film “Only Lovers Left Alive”.

Long-distance relationships are nothing new for the stylist who first shot to fame while dating alternative rocker Davey Havok of AFI in her early twenties. Just as Ames’s career was taking off in the early 2000s, she spent much of her down time crisscrossing the states, as well as Europe and Asia to keep up with the ever-touring Havok whom she married in early 2005. These efforts had proved to be fruitless in the end when Havok’s cheating scandal came to light by Christmas in 2007…”

London – May 31, 2013

Clutching the bouquet of white roses that Tom had greeted her with upon her arrival, Liv Ames seated herself in the front passenger seat of her boyfriend’s car and relished the delightful fluttering in her stomach. Although they had just seen each other in Cannes last week for the premiere of his latest film, “Only Lovers Left Alive”, being able to see him again in less than a week was a rare treat by the standards of their particular relationship. And, on top of it all, he was picking her up personally instead of sending a car.

When he was finally able to finish loading her luggage into the back of his car, Tom slipped into the driver’s seat only to be peppered with kisses.

"Someone is certainly inspired today," Tom noted with a tone of delighted surprise, as if unaccustomed to such outright shows of affection.

"I. Am. Love. Starved," Liv replied, punctuating each word with a kiss.

He grinned broadly and caressed the side of her face with his hand. "Well, I think I can do something about that.” A naughty smirk flashed across his handsome visage. "But first, let’s get out of the car park and get some breakfast. People are starting to stare.”

Liv glanced through the windshield and spied a few passersby ogling them. Typical. Tom hadn’t bothered with a hat or sunglasses, which resulted in him being easily spotted. For a fleeting moment, she wished he wasn’t famous. She fought down the annoyance that bubbled up within her as they began their journey toward north London.

All this— the globe-trotting, the weeks spent apart, and the public attention— was their world. When they started their relationship, they knew it wouldn’t be easy since she was in Los Angeles due to her client base of celebrities and he was in London or otherwise on location due to his projects and contractual obligations. Her initial reluctance to admit any interest in him was met with Tom’s mix of sincere persistence and English charms. That, coupled with Benedict Cumberbatch’s work as
their unlikely cupid, eventually did Liv in.

After meeting at a dinner party hosted by their mutual friend Benedict, Tom spent his non-filming time pursuing the Los Angeles native. By the time filming wrapped on his part in “Midnight in Paris” in the summer of 2010, Liv finally gave in to dating Tom exclusively.

At first they tried their best to keep their relationship under wraps. But when pictures of a date night at the Grove in Los Angeles surfaced later that fall, there was no denying it any longer. From then on, Hiddlestoners blamed her for any missteps in Tom’s wardrobe, regardless of whether she actually put together the look for him or not. There were several jokes made about it including one made in the vein of “Mean Girls”. Karen’s line was changed to “So, if your girlfriend is a stylist, why do you only have four shirts?” to which Gretchen’s response was changed to “Oh my God, Karen. You can’t just ask Tom why he has only four shirts!” Kinder memes had pictures of Liv from her hardcore partying days with captions like, “She’s up all night to get Loki” or “Hiddlesconda tamer”.

Much to the displeasure of his Hiddlestoners, they made their relationship public at the red carpet of the Moet British Independent Film Awards (BIFAs) in December 2010. Initially she was met by abhorrence by his fan base. But thanks to years of putting up with the fans of her ex-husband, who were much more frightening than Tom’s in nearly every way, she was able to shrug it off until it waned at the end of 2011. There was still a bit of dislike for her, but it was nothing she couldn’t handle. Besides, she did not work for the approval of his fans—she was a self-made woman who labored to make her clients look daring and impeccable.

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After a leisurely morning filled with cuddles and kisses over breakfast at a hole-in-the-wall eatery, Tom brought Liv back to his place to decompress.

“Nooo,” Liv protested from the bathroom where she was crowding his counter with all her little bottles of toiletries. Tom had suggested that she take a nap while he unpacked her things for her. “I slept like a dog on the plane. Why don’t we go out for little while? Go shopping? I’m not tired, I promise.”

Tom moved to the large wardrobe in his room to put away Liv’s clothes in the middle drawers where she could easily reach it. “Come on, Liv, just a little kip. I’ll wake you up in time to get ready for Ben’s thing.”

Liv emerged from the bathroom with a pout. “But—Harrod’s for tea and Ladurée for treats!” She came close and snaked her arms around his waist from behind while he finished putting her clothes away. “You know how I love doing the whole tea and crumpets thing.”

Snickering, Tom turned in her arms and gazed down at her. “Love, it’s Saturday. It’ll be so busy with tourists and such on a day like this. How about after we get back from Anglesey next week instead?” She agreed and received a kiss in return.

“So, Ben’s thing,” Liv continued, reaching around Tom to fish out a tank top from the wardrobe so that she could change into something comfortable for her nap. It really was necessary, seeing as she hadn’t actually slept, but opted to work through the entire flight (which Tom knew, of course). “He called last week and said it was dinner and, what was it? Cirque le Soir afterwards?”

“He called you last week?” Tom asked, glancing back at her as he continued to tuck away the last of her clothes.

“Yeah, he needed some new looks. He practically burned through all the ones I put together for him.
for the Star Trek press and red carpets. And when I told him I’d be in town this week, he mentioned
dinner and drinks with the usual suspects.”

Liv watched Tom carefully for his reaction and hoped they wouldn’t start up that conversation again.
Though they and Benedict were all good friends, Tom had pointed out that his “War Horse” co-star
was at times a bit too chummy with Liv. But, to her defense, she and Benedict had a friendship that
pre-dated her relationship with Tom.

Scarlett Johansson, a close friend of Liv’s for many years, had referred her trusted stylist to Benedict
while working with him on “The Other Boleyn Girl”. With his star on the rise, and at the insistence
of his then-girlfriend, the actor enlisted Liv in 2007 to direct his press and red carpet wardrobe. From
there a friendship grew— simple as that.

Tom made some non-verbal noise of understanding and moved to grab her favored side-sleeper
pillow from the linen closet in the hall. “I took him out for drinks the other night. Poor bloke’s
single again,” he commented when he returned with her pillow.

“I hope he finds the right one soon. His thirty-seventh birthday is coming up, and that’s sure to send
him into full-on baby-snatching mode.”

Their conversation inevitably tumbled into work. Though he had initially planned to let Liv nap in
peace while he read over some scripts, he ended up laying down with her, chatting up a storm.

“Things haven’t slowed down even after the Golden Globes and the Oscars. Jennifer Lawrence
booked me for her ‘Catching Fire’ promotions and red carpets, and I’ve got some younger starlets’
PR firms and assistants flooding my office for looks since the Teen Choice Awards and the MTV
VMAs are in August already,” Liv said, drumming up her list of events with her eye closed for
concentration’s sake. Then she grinned excitedly, her eyes springing open. “Then New York,
London, Milan, and Paris for their respective fashion weeks in September and October. My head is
going to implode!”

To say fashion was Liv’s religion was quite the understatement. She blogged about it, spoke about
it, contributed to articles about it, consulted across the globe about it, and during her dating dry spells,
slept with it at her bedside.

“Racking up those air miles, aren’t we?” Tom grinned. “Try not to stress yourself out too much this
time, love.”

Liv scoffed, all joy instantly erased from her visage. “What’s that supposed to mean?” She expected
him to recoil from the tense moment, but was surprised when he replied almost too casually.

“Are you now willing to talk about it?”

Liv felt a knot rise up in her throat, prompting her to roll out of the bed and step away from Tom.
“No. I don’t. I don’t want to talk about it.” Her tone was defensive and defiant in equal parts.

Tom propped himself up on an elbow. “We need to stop avoiding this and talk about it. I was away
for a month to give you space. I thought things would be better by the time we met up in Cannes last
week. But were so frigid, I thought I’d need to leave you out in the sun to thaw.”

Liv gaped angrily at him. “Frigid? I’m sorry, you called me all last minute to get on a plane for
France while I was in the middle of putting together looks for Emma Roberts’ Nylon shoot, and I’m
frigid? Honey, if I was being frigid, your call would have gone to voicemail.”

The caustic words were considered textbook examples of Liv’s vehement temper when lit up.
However, Tom strived to remain level-headed and cool. Biting sarcasm was uncharacteristic of him, but it reared its head every once in a while when pressed.

“Alright,” Tom said calmly as he slid from the bed to stand opposite Liv. He licked his lips and ran a hand through his hair. “Look, we’ve avoided this talk for too long. We’ve been pretending that we’re okay for too long. We need to talk about everything, everything we’ve been sweeping under the rug.”
2.1: Thank you to hiddle-stoner who is probably sleeping right now—she was, again, very gracious and beta’d an earlier version of this chappie for me. :) Also, please leave some feedback in my ask, because I would really like to know your thoughts on the story and Liv.

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Chapter 02

Tom firmly stood his ground in silence. His eyes roved over Liv, who looked away the moment he put the words together and uttered them. He knew that she was avoiding the subject by the way she suddenly became cold almost each time they were alone. Though Liv didn’t want to admit it, Tom knew her well enough to spot her avoidance techniques.

“I’m not your enemy here, Liv,” Tom said calmly when it seemed that Liv would not give in to the discussion at hand. “I’m your boyfriend, your partner. We need to talk about this.” He noted the hardened look on her face and added, “Please?”

When Liv refused to meet his gaze, he swatted a hapless pillow out of sheer frustration. “This has gone on long enough, Liv. I mean it. We are going to talk—”

Liv’s head snapped up, her face tight with emotion. “What do you want me to say, Tom? Sorry I’m not willing to move to London for you? Sorry I’m not enough of a reason for you to move to LA? Sorry I lost our baby? What—” She had started off strong and cutting, but then she stumbled as the meaning of her words ensnared her. “What do you want me to say?” Tears escaped from her eyes. She swiped angrily at them, trying to refrain from hysteria. “Tell me, what do you want to hear me say?”

A dull pain struck Tom’s heart. With every question she uttered, the pain became heavier and heavier in his chest. This was not the conversation he had intended.

There was a great divide between them, one that had begun to rot at the very core of their relationship. They had come to a point in their relationship when they realized that one of them was going to need to make the sacrifice to relocate; either Tom would be coming to LA or Liv would be coming to London. The long-distance was draining on the physical, mental, and emotional levels, and they could begin to feel the beginnings of resentment towards each other for not being nearer. In an effort to save their relationship, they talked about moving in together. The only problem was neither would blink first on who would be doing the relocating.

Then, sometime in March, they discovered that a baby would soon make three. Rather than bring them together, the pregnancy further convoluted their problems. Tom insisted that she relocate to
London after the birth, while Liv ardently campaigned that she would stay put. When Liv suffered a miscarriage in April, all talks about relocating and moving in together came to a halt. And all through May, a chill settled over their relationship. Liv wouldn’t speak of it, and Tom couldn’t bring himself to press the issue. He figured that it was a lot for her to process and that, when she was ready, they would talk. So he gave her the space of nearly a month in which to think of herself, for herself. When he could no longer take the clipped texts and nearly silent phone calls, he sprang into action and whisked her away to Cannes for the premiere of “Only Lovers Left Alive”.

Though Liv came grudgingly, he stuck to the plan and did his best to woo her. His attempts were met with Liv behaving aloof and flat-out refusing to reciprocate any and all positive emotions he showered her with. He returned to London dejected, confused, and frustrated. Still, he tried again by meeting her with white roses (her favorite) at the airport today. Normally he sent a car to fetch her upon arrival, but he hoped that the personal touch of fetching her himself might give them a warmer start than Cannes. To his luck, it did. Now, however, things seemed to be falling apart all over again.

“Liv, darling, come now. Please don’t talk like that,” Tom said in a quiet voice. The moment of tears had passed, but she still looked ready to lash out at any given moment. He did not chance that it was yet the moment to physically reach out to comfort her, so he continued with his verbal approach. “I know things are terribly difficult right now with the distance and the miscarriage. But it all begins with the things we aren’t saying to each other. We have to calm down and talk reasonably. We’re not making a million sacrifices to keep our relationship, just to bicker and fall to pieces at every tribulation.”

When Liv did not object to his reasoning, he took it as a good sign and climbed over the bed to stand nearer to her. “I know you probably have a lot to say, so let me say my piece and you can have the floor. Is that alright?”

“Fine,” Liv huffed and sat back down on the bed where Tom joined her.

He looked into her eyes and reached for her hands. When she shrank from him, he sighed. “I know that the distance is weighing heavily on the both of us, especially the last few months. Trust me; I want to be able to see you every morning when I wake up and every night before I go to bed. I want to go to all those parties with you instead of letting you go stag all the time. But to move to L.A. is a huge thing to ask of me. I know it looks like Hollywood wants nothing more than to have me in their studios, but my future in there is not yet solidified enough for me to make the leap. I’m an artist and, like you, I have to stay close to the roots of my craft. Until I’m very sure I won’t get pigeon-holed in American cinema, I need to stay here in London to continue honing my skills.”

Liv tried to cut in. “But Tom, you promised—” Though she fell silent when he indicated that he wasn’t quite through.

“When you were pregnant, you know, I was stunned but incredibly happy. We didn’t quite have it figured out how we would manage the living situation even then, but I knew that somehow we would make things work like we always have. Wh-when you miscarried, I knew we would have a lot to work on. I didn’t realize just how much work.

“What I’m trying to say is that I get it, Liv. I get that you’re having a hard time with what happened. I am too. And I know that we’re both sick of the trans-Atlantic flying, the jet-lag, the syncing of schedules over time zones. Believe me, darling, I know that maintaining our relationship is exhausting. All I’m asking for is patience and understanding, and appreciation of everything that we’ve already done and accomplished together over the last three years.”

Liv exhaled slowly and loudly as if the breath she had been holding had prevented her from speaking
the entire time. When she locked eyes with him, he hoped to find some form of comprehension there. Unfortunately, he met with blunt disbelief.

“So you’re still not on solid ground with the idea that you need to come to L.A.?” She stood again and paced to the door of the bathroom before turning her back to lean against the doorframe and face him. “We’ve been playing with the idea of moving in together to bring us closer for the last couple months. But every time I think we’re making progress, you pull back and say it’s not time yet and that I should have more patience.” Fixing him an exasperated look, she continued. “That being said, I don’t really think there’s any reason for us to continue with this charade of having a relationship, Tom.”

Tom took to his feet in a flash. “Oh, for Christ’s sake, Liv! Stop it, stop it this instant with that talk!” he barked.

“Why? Because you know it’s what we gotta do?!” Liv retaliated. He saw a fire alight in her eyes, and he was tempted to kiss her and have his way with her right then as she leaned upon the doorframe. The context of the conversation, however, prevented him from acting on this one particular impulse.

“No, I can’t stand losing you just because you can’t have an ounce of patience. I know that I’m the one who’s going to make the move. I know you need me. But these things take time. You’re going to have to stick this out with me, love. Stop inciting a break-up just because it’s not happening quickly enough for you.” Tom said in a low but intense tone. “I need you to trust that I can do this, that I will make good on my word.”

“Baby, I do trust you but that’s not the point,” Liv scoffed, dragging a hand through her hair. “We’ve been doing long-distance for three years and we’ve done a damn good job at it. No one’s been cheated on and our careers haven’t suffered.” Then, unexpectedly, her features softened as she gazed up at him. “But we’re suffering. When I lost our baby, I needed you so much,” she began to cry again even as she spoke. “I needed you to just at least physically be there for me. You didn’t need to say anything. Just, I don’t know, maybe you could have held me and said we’d be okay. Something like that would have really helped, you know? But no, while you were in L.A. you were bouncing between meetings, an awards show, and a premiere. And then you were back in London before I could pin you down to talk.”

Tom swallowed thickly, remembering the events from April surrounding the day that Liv miscarried. The MTV Movie Awards, the Clippers game he went to at the invitation of a director, the “Iron Man 3” premiere; it all seemed so insignificant in comparison with what they were going through at the time, what she had gone through alone. In his defense though, most of what he had done were contractual obligations and the meeting with the director at the Clippers game was networking. Though his error could not be excused, it did not mean he didn’t feel anything at the time. “Don’t you think it was difficult for me to carry on like that in front of the cameras? Smiling, pretending everything was wonderful?”

Liv looked equal parts livid and incredulous. “Yeah, it must have been super hard for you to smile and blow up your fans’ ovaries while I was getting my uterus scraped during my post-miscarriage D and C*.”

Tom felt ready to throw something out of vexation. He maintained his calm for the moment but still ground out, “Must you always speak to me like that? I’m desperately trying to save us, but you keep pushing back at me with your tone.”

“Well, I wouldn’t be taking this tone with you if I wasn’t so miserable,” Liv spat. “I. Needed. You,” she pointed at him emphatically as she threw out the last word. “You dropped the ball, Tom, big
time. I didn’t need you to romance me in Cannes a month later. I just needed you, in the moment, to be around when I was going through all of that crap. It would have been a great comfort to me to reach out and feel that you were there for me. And you know how that would have been a reality? If you were there in L.A. with me like you promised.” Liv had stopped crying but her hazel eyes still looked like a dam that was ready to give out all over again. “Babe, you need to figure out this relocation thing fast or I promise you, we’re not going to last much longer like this.”

Tom turned away from her, his hands on his hips and his shoulders sagging forward a bit. They truly were at an impasse now; the self-same one they always came to. Tom knew the distance was the bane of Liv’s heart these days. But, given many of the scripts he was receiving from American directors had him playing a villain or something equally mundane, he was not yet comfortable with the idea decamping from jolly old England. It simply was not quite the right time in his career for him to relocate. Despite that, he knew it was now only a matter of when, not if, he would land a role that would truly make him a household name. It was only a matter of time and then he could make his move. Couldn’t she understand that?

“No,” he finally said after a long pause. Tom fixed her with a plaintive look but his voice was firm as ever. “No ultimatums. We’re going to work this out, I know we will. I’m going to go run a few errands so we can both have some breathing room.”

“I’ve had a month’s worth of breathing room, a couple hours won’t change anything,” Liv smarted.

Tom remained resolute and turned to face her again, his mouth a thin line of determination. “I will leave you to acclimatize yourself to the fact that I will not consent to breaking up under these circumstances. I’m in this for the long-term, Liv. So let’s rid the table of your ultimatums. I promised that I will relocate—it will happen if you just have a bit of patience.” Then he added in a clipped tone, “And do try to reduce the sarcasm. I feel it would be exceedingly prudent in us moving forward from this fighting that we’ve been up to our eyeballs with in the last few months.”

Then he turned his heel and left Liv alone in the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Note 2.2: *D and C is Dilation and Curettage.
Chapter 03

Chapter Notes

3.1: Thank you to hiddle-stoner.tumblr for beta-ing this chapter! She’s the best!!! We’re going to kick up the drama in this chapter but it will be nothing in comparison to chapter 4; hold on to your hats! :3

Disclaimers: I don’t own anything except Liv Ames and the plot. Seriously, don’t sue, I have no money, just college loans. This work is 100% fictional.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Paparazzi were already showering James McAvoy and his wife with camera flashes at the entrance of Nobu as they sprinted from their car when Tom and Liv’s driver pulled up to the restaurant. Following the couple ahead of them, they exited their vehicle and the phalanx of photogs descended upon them immediately. Though she was among the Hollywood elite and had walked red carpets with and without Tom, Liv still had a problem with being blinded by the camera flashes of the paparazzi. With her chin firmly tucked to her chest to shield her eyes, Tom kept a protective arm wrapped tightly around her shoulders as he made quick work of entering the restaurant with her. Polite though he was, this was a personal engagement and he didn’t much feel like stopping to smile for the cameras while Liv was relying on him to keep things smooth.

“You alright?” Tom asked as they made safely into the restaurant. Surveying her, his heart felt a little lighter when the beginnings of a smile began to adorn her features. But when she caught his eye, the smile faltered and she looked away again as they began to make their way to the bar.

“I’m fine, I just forgot how annoying those guys could be,” Liv replied with a nod to the paparazzi outside who were now hassling Tom Hardy.

Before Tom could pull her aside to inquire further, the most familiar drawl of Benedict Cumberbatch greeted them.

“Bastards always catch us having fun don’t they?”

“Maybe you should’ve picked a less trendy spot?” Tom suggested with a smirk while they picked their poisons.

“They’re really just here for me,” Tom Hardy piped up with a charming wink as he joined the group.

“God, if I had known this was going to be a sausage fest, I would have stayed at Tom’s place,” Liv jested wryly.

“You’re always welcome, love,” Hardy said, continuing his charms upon Liv.

“Easy mate, she’s taken,” Tom cut in with a grin before pressing a kiss to his girlfriend’s temple. He was relieved that she didn’t stiffen at his affections.

“God, I need a girlfriend. I’m getting too old to going be stag all the time,” Benedict mused as he led
them to a secluded area of the restaurant where James and a few others were already seated. “Liv, can you refer anyone? Preferably someone who’s feeling broody like me?”

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Dinner commenced in a vein of light-hearted humor. Shop talk was generally avoided as the thespians at the table were under contract and Liv’s clients required confidence as well. But soon Liv found herself in conversation with her host and old friend Benedict. It had been an open secret for the past decade that he was looking to settle down but was quite unlucky in love despite his many attempts.

“…What about Alice Eve?” Liv muttered quietly as Benedict fiddled with his wine glass. She was referring to his gorgeous two-tim co-star who was unable to meet up tonight due to professional obligations.

“She’s not interested in having children at the mo’ and honestly it’s a very professional relationship we have.”

“You’re really on the hunt for that baby-mama, aren’t you?” Liv chuckled.

Benedict offered her an honest smile. “Women aren’t the only ones who have a biological clock, Liv.”

“I’m sure the right one is coming along, Ben. Maybe you should sit still for a while. You’ve been on a dating spree and that doesn’t really send out the right signals.”

“You might be right,” he shrugged. He gave her a furtive signal to invite her for a smoke which she gladly jumped at without asking Tom.

They excused themselves quick enough to silently let the table know that it was not an open invitation. Though Liv was a non-smoker in general, the hours she’d spent with Tom earlier left her tense enough for a puff or two of whatever Benedict was smoking. And, considering she hadn’t had a smoke since before this year’s Golden Globes, she felt entitled to a little nicotine in Nobu’s back alley.

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“How are you holding up?” Benedict queried, peering down at her with concern. The last time they had spoken, Liv seemed despondent and weary. With good reason, seeing as troubles in her relationship with Tom was the highlight of that conversation. He took a deep pull from the cigarette that he lit for them and handed it over to her.

Liv sighed and cast her eyes to the heavens. “Terribly. I’m tired, what else is new?” She took her first drag of their cigarette and exhaled with a shaky breath.

“I suppose you’re nowhere closer to resolution than you were when we last spoke?”

The fact that Benedict was privy to the workings of Tom and Liv’s relationship was not really a surprise to anyone in their inner circle. After all, he was the one who introduced them at his dinner party three summers ago. Even if Benedict didn’t fully realize in that moment that he had been the catalyst to uniting his two friends in romance, he certainly realized it when Tom left with Liv at the end of the night. In any case, romance looked to be off the menu for the pair as quarrels and cold silences seemed to dominate their lives these days. Not to mention the added stress and tension of Liv’s unexpected pregnancy and loss earlier in the spring.
When Liv shook her head, Benedict plucked the cigarette from her fingers and said, very matter-of-factly, “Well, you have two choices.” He puffed the cigarette then continued, “You can either fight on and stick this out with Tom like he’s doing for you or you can cut your losses now.”

Liv rolled her eyes and paced in front of Benedict as he continued to smoke. “I know, God, I know. It’s just, I don’t know. Maybe he’s right. Maybe I should be more patient about the move.”

Her words stung unexpectedly, causing Benedict to snap, “Then what are we out here discussing, Liv? Stick it out with him or make the decision to leave. It’s simple.”

Knowing him just as well as he knew her, Liv didn’t flinch at his tone. He passed the cigarette back to her. She rolled it between her fingers for a moment before giving Benedict a humorless laugh. “I know. I know.”

All at once, memories he so strongly suppressed rushed back to the forefront of his mind. *Lipstick on his collar. Flirtatious giggling all the way to some hotel room. His heated skin upon hers.*

Benedict took a drag from the cigarette and let Liv take it back from him. He took his time before answering very carefully as he avoided her gaze. “It was the proper thing to do seeing as you didn’t know each other before that night. Why do you ask?”

“No reason,” Liv shrugged. “You played our cupid before, now you’re helping me figure out if I should break up with him or not. It’s interesting, that’s all.”

He tilted his forehead towards her, meeting her gaze with a tenderness he hadn’t shown her in nearly three years. “It was not my intent to play your cupid,” he murmured.

Benedict vaguely noted the ferocious blush that stained Liv’s cheeks as he closed the small distance between them. He took the cigarette from her hands and inhaled one last time from it. The taste of her lips, left behind on the tipping paper that lined the filter, seemed magnified in his mouth as he remembered all that had ever transpired between them before Tom entered Liv’s life. Then, taking her hand but never breaking eye contact, Benedict tucked the cigarette back into Liv’s hand, gently closing her fingers around the disposable cylinder.

“I wasn’t playing at all, actually.”

Benedict could almost see Liv’s mind working to process his words but he did not stay for the realization that his words would bring to her. The cigarette began to teeter then fall from Liv’s fingers as their grip slackened. He was long gone before the little stub hit the cement.

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**On the Radar : England’s Brightest Come Out to Play**

Benedict Cumberbatch played host to friends, James McAvoy, Tom Hardy, Tom Hiddleston and several others at Nobu in London on Friday Night. Fellow diners noted the large party left a generous cash tip before heading out to Cirque le Soir. Cumberbatch and close pal Hardy are rumored to have blatantly flirted with several women throughout the night. Club goers also reportedly saw Hiddleston getting handsy with his lady love, Liv Ames, before the pair crawled out of the establishment around two in the morning.
Liv awoke on Monday morning to the sound of Tom relieving himself in the bathroom. There was a short pause then he farted. While more noises ensued as he flushed and washed his hands, Liv burrowed deeper into the bed, taking up the warmth that Tom had recently left behind.

“You’re gross,” she grumbled the moment he climbed back into bed.

Tom pulled the comforter over their bodies and pulled Liv close to snuggle against his neck. “I know, but you still love me.”

At this Liv hummed in response. Breathing in his warm scent of sandalwood she traced his collarbones as they hid underneath his shirt, out, out to the middle where they met in a shallow dip at the base of his neck. They were due for a jog and some breakfast but she could tell they’d likely be in bed until hunger drove them out. In any case, they needed this; some honest to goodness quiet time alone.

After their rather heated discussion on Friday morning, they hadn’t spoken of the subject again. Per their custom, they let it lie for a while so that they could part-take in some normalcy in their life as a couple. It was no use to fight for days on end when they went to such great lengths to be together. When their blinding hangovers and the delicious soreness in their bodies finally dissipated on Saturday afternoon, they made a dash for Anglesey and arrived by nightfall. In the quiet of ocean-side town, they were able to reconnect with each other.

With both of them being public figures in their own right, rural escapes were, quite frankly, necessities if they wanted to stay out of the gossip rags. The first year of their relationship found them photographed in nearly every major city due to both of their exploding careers. Since neither was fond of the frequently misconstrued assumptions made regarding their relationship, they made an effort to throw the public off their scent by going off the beaten track.

“I miss you,” Tom murmured, threading fingers through her hair.

Liv nuzzled even closer, inhaling his scent again before whispering her response. “I miss us.”

Slowly, tentatively, Tom shifted away from her just enough so as to tilt her chin up that he could gaze upon her. His normally cool blue-grey eyes now burned a particularly deep shade of blue as he stared down at her; drinking in the powerful contrast of her dark chocolate hair against her smooth, barely tanned skin and the brilliant hazel eyes he knew so well. The intensity of his gaze was enough to herald a blush to Liv’s cheeks. The moment she broke eye contact to try and tuck her chin into her chest Tom pressed his lips upon her own. Though his advance was sudden, his touch was thoroughly gentle.

His hands came up to cup the sides of her face. His tongue cautiously dipped into her mouth. Then one hand pulled away from her face to take up one of her own, drawing it up between their chests. These were not the intense, predatory beginnings of the drunken sex they had upon stumbling into Tom’s house at two in the morning on Saturday (the breakfast table had a new wobble to it by the time they were done). No, this was the slow and sensuous opening act to something much more than sex.

Tom lips strayed to her jawline and down, down her neck to nibble at the sensitive patch of skin just at her collarbone. Her breath hitched as he tasted her skin. His hands sought out the hem of her tank top, fingers ghosting over her hipbone. She shied from him, hesitant at where they were heading. They hadn’t truly made love like this in so long. Sensing her reservations, Tom pulled away and searched her face. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing hard.
Caught somewhere between fight and flight, Liv prayed for calm. Why couldn’t this be their life each day? Why was it that these tender moments and their time together were only mere punctuations in the midst of lonely weeks? Why didn’t he see it this way? Life should be lived happily together. Not governed by time and it’s schedules and zones. Why couldn’t he see how desperately she needed him so much closer?

“Liv,” Tom breathed.

“Mm?”

“Look at me.”

She felt his hands caress her face and neck. An involuntary shiver rippled through her, causing her eyes to open. There they were again, his dark blue eyes roving over her, drinking her in.

“I need you,” he implored in earnest, almost desperate.

Liv opened her mouth to speak but no words came forward. She was in the cloudy waters between breaking up with him and the inexplicable pull of his great, unrelenting love for her, for them. So much of her yearned to tear herself away, for want of her demands to be fulfilled. But another part of her chided her to be patient, to continue loving him no matter their circumstances.

“Let me make love to you,” Tom breathed.

The words seemed to kindle something within Liv. She reached out to touch his face; her fingertips traced the curve of his brow-bone. In that moment she permitted herself to become lost in him one more time.

At the wordless consent, Tom gently rolled Liv onto her back. He brought his lips to hers again, kissing her with such mesmerizing intensity that she nearly melted right there in his arms. The heady rush that crashed over Liv as they lost their few pieces of clothing to the bedroom floor was like falling in love all over again.

Chapter End Notes

3.2: So, how was that? Let me know!
Chapter 04

Chapter Notes

4.1: My long-suffering beta hiddle-stoner.tumblr, let’s give her a round of applause for her help!!

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See the end of the chapter for more notes.

June 12, 2013

Another One Bites the Dust

Not even the most romantic of darlings can manage to keep it together, apparently. Liv Ames, E! News contributor and Hollywood’s resident style maven, and Tom Hiddleston, of the ‘War Horse’, ‘Thor’ and ‘Avengers’ fame, have called it quits. Insiders say that the split was a long time coming due to Tom’s radically fast-paced rise to fame since 2010 and Liv’s growing brand. To their fans however, it comes as quite a shock, considering how they couldn’t seem to keep their hands off each other at Cirque le Soir less than two weeks ago. It would, however, explain Tom’s strained behavior, yesterday, at the premiere of Joss Whedon’s “Much Ado About Nothing”. Fans at London’s Apollo Piccadilly Circus noted that he was not as interactive as he usually was and did not stop very long to smile for pictures per his custom fan service.

“They’ve been spending a lot of time apart” a source, who wishes to remain anonymous, says. “The relationship essentially ran its course and they made the mature decision to break-up before anyone got hurt. They’re still talking every day.”

In happier times, the former couple was frequently photographed in big cities like Paris, London, and Los Angeles to support one another at premieres and fashion functions. They were also often spotted trying to blend in at remote areas like Anglesey, Wales; night markets in Taiwan; and of course Liv’s hometown, Newport Beach in California.

Meanwhile, Liv is going on with business as usual back in Los Angeles and has been keeping mum on the subject. She was last spotted leaving a spin class with close friend, Scarlett Johansson.

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June 26, 2013

Shockingly Thin! Liv Ames’ Looking Skeletal in Paris

It looks like her split from Tom Hiddleston has taken a turn for the worse. Liv Ames who has set up camp in Paris once again for the next two weeks to view the Men’s S/S 2014 and Haute Couture S/S 2014 collections, was seen arriving at the airport looking starved. Hollywood’s favorite stylist is said to be suffering from an eating disorder related to the depression caused by her recent breakup.
Where she looked the picture of health only two weeks ago, Liv seems to have suffered a drastic weight loss.

“She is inconsolable,” a source stated gravely, “It finally hit her, albeit belatedly. Liv’s really torn up especially because, compared to her ex-husband Davey, Tom was her knight-in-shining-armor. He was very good to her. It’s a shame that they couldn’t make time for each other.”

Another source decries the claim that Liv is ill. “It’s a terrible photo of her, she’s just been off the plane! People are allowed to have a bad day or two and this one wasn’t related to Tom at all. Those pics don’t prove anything.”

Whether it is the breakup or if she simply didn’t feel like eating, it looks like Liv needs to get some help. Don’t pull a Jackie O on us, girl.

*_**_*

Paris – June 29, 2013

“Liv, I love you but seriously, if you make me take off these tights, I will strangle you with them,” Scarlett growled at her friend and stylist as she flipped down the skirt of her dress over the said tights.

“It’s the middle of the summer, take them off! Why do you even bother having me dress you if you aren’t going to listen to me?” Liv threw her hands up with a huff and continued, “And would it kill you to put on a few of the bangles I set out for you?”

The two friends were at Liv’s hotel suite where they were getting ready to attend the Kenzo and Candy Magazine closing party for the Paris Men’s Fashion Week. Scarlett, as Liv had come to expect, was resistant to her coaching at times—much as she was just now.

“Do I really need accessories with this?” Scarlett inquired, gesturing to her daisy print Kenzo dress.

“No, I set the bangles out for giggles,” Liv answered dryly.

They continued their playful banter with Liv ultimately giving in to Scarlett’s choice of legwear just as the latter’s boyfriend, Romain Dauriac, entered the suite to check on them. Mere minutes after Scarlett was whisked away by the French journalist, Liv finally allowed her staff to begin clearing away the racks of clothes that Scarlett turned down. In their haste to comply, they nearly flattened Benedict as he entered the suite.

“Guys, try not to kill Ben, please!” Liv hollered after her junior staff members as they raced out the door. “He still needs to pay his invoice from the ‘Star Trek’ project.”

“Glad to know, I’m nothing but business to you,” Benedict said after peeling himself from the wall he had adhered himself against in order to avoid being run over but thousands of dollars of designer pieces.

Liv smirked as she sat down in front of her makeup artist, Tyrone. “Gotta protect my investments, right? Nice Westwood, by the way.” She gestured at his leather jacket, which she had selected for his wardrobe some months ago.

Before Benedict could utter his thanks, Tyrone’s sharp admonition rooted Liv to her seat. “Move those lips one more time, honey, and I will paint a big-ass clown mouth on your face. I swear it. Bible,” Tyrone warned, swatting Liv on the top of her head with a lip brush. Then, with a glance, he addressed Benedict, “And once I’m done with Miss Mousy Diva, I’m going to powder that T-zone
Liv nearly giggled as Benedict reached up to his face self-consciously. “My T-zone is fine, thank you, Tyrone,” he replied ruefully, taking a seat within arms-length of Liv.

“Sweetie, you can fry an egg with the amount of oil on there,” replied Tyrone matter-of-factly while finishing the application of gloss on Liv’s lips and spraying her entire face with setting solution.

At Tyrone’s permission, Liv returned to full speech capacity. “Ben, just a little blotting and some powder. We’ve been at shows all day. A touch-up won’t hurt.” She patted his shoulder as she rose to get dressed in the bathroom with the help of her last remaining assistant, Dawn.

So Benedict sat patiently for Tyrone as his T-zone was rendered oil-free. He even let the make-up artist tweeze away a few errant eyebrow hairs before Liv appeared again, fully dressed in a leather Kenzo dress that was appropriate for the party—short and sexy.

“Yes or no?” she asked of Benedict.

He rolled his eyes. “Always yes, Liv. Come on we’re late!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Liv flapped a hand at him then turned to address her assistant Dawn. “Remind me to talk to Scott about the incident at the Lanvin show earlier today. That was so unprofessional of him to talk to Nylon’s fashion director like that. It could have damaged our relationship with them.” Dawn nodded in agreement and left with Tyrone in tow, leaving Benedict and Liv alone.

“What was that about?” Benedict asked while Liv finished up her look by fluffing her curls in the mirror.

Liv sighed and shook her head, spraying her chocolate curls over her shoulders. “You know my junior assistant, Scott, who I promoted to third senior assistant when my primary senior assistant left for British Vogue with my blessing?”

“Er, sure?”

“Yeah, well, Scott thought it would be super edgy of himself to say a couple nasty things about the Haider Ackermann show not knowing that the director of fashion at Nylon is an investor of that brand. The fact that Scott let his mouth get away from him like that makes me doubt whether I should have promoted him to senior after only a couple months with me. Not to mention, he’s turning out to be a big disappointment on the job, too.”

Benedict made some non-committal noise which Liv took to mean that her friend probably had no idea what she was talking about. Not that it bothered her; they were from different industries anyway. She grabbed her clutch from the bed and pulled on her heels. “If he keeps this lackluster crap up, I’m going to either demote him or exit him from the team completely.”

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As they climbed into a waiting car and set off for the Kenzo and Candy party, Benedict continued to listen as Liv talked mainly about business. After all, even if she was in Paris, she was here for work and networking, not for leisure. In that same token, he understood that their personal friendship had taken a back seat to their client-broker type of professional relationship over the course of the past few days, as it always did during times like fashion week. Benedict was in attendance at the shows with Liv for the simple fact that he was out of clothes for press tours and red carpets. And with the buzz surrounding a possible Emmy nomination and his three films that would debut at the Toronto International film Festival in September, he would need quite a few options with regards to clothing.
The designers themselves were eager to get Benedict into their clothes, too.

Reflecting back on how quickly Liv was able to come to an action plan regarding her assistant Scott, it did not surprise Benedict in the least that she was so decisive about her work and team seeing as she was quite the entrepreneur. What did surprise him was her own attitude around him given that he’d let slip that he had been quite serious about their old affair of years previous when she was in London a few weeks ago. She was still cool and easy-going as ever despite his admission. Then again, her breakup with Tom seemed to affect her very little as well. But they hadn’t exactly had much time to talk since that night at Nobu so he wasn’t quite sure what was going on in her head. Though he was sure he could chalk it up to the fact that she may be on auto-pilot—simply surviving circumstances in order to continue with her work—and that they would find time after the party to clear the air in their personal friendship eventually. Her uncanny ability to compartmentalize her life and emotions was a trait he admired in her very much. It served her especially well when she was going through that rather messy divorce around the time he had become one of her clients. He was always quite in awe at how put-together she could make her life look even as chaos reigned behind the curtain.

In any case, he felt a sense of regret for mentioning his old feelings for her. He had no idea what would have possessed him to essentially confess that their trysts behind his then-girlfriend’s back (Olivia Poulet) meant more than just sex. They had agreed to put it behind them as soon as Benedict knew how besotted Tom was with Liv three years ago. When Liv’s breakup with Tom became public knowledge, he feared that he must have confused Liv in her moment of weakness. He hoped that this wasn’t the case. He would surely be unable to look Tom or Liv in the eye if it turned out that he had a direct hand in the full break down of their relationship.

When they arrived at The Loisane Belle, the venue for the party, the paparazzi pounced and snapped their pictures. Benedict was careful to keep a platonic air between them, but when one of the photographers got too close, he was forced to place a hand at the small of Liv’s back to usher her ahead of him. Some part of him surmised what kind of leading caption would accompany that picture but pushed the idea aside to ensure that they made it in safely.

“God, there you two are!” Scarlett exclaimed as soon as they entered. “Humberto and Carol have been wanting to talk to you and Ben,” she explained to Liv excitedly. “They’re back at the bar.”

Liv thanked Scarlett for the intel and gestured for Benedict to follow her to the back. As usual, they were both stopped several times by artists and other celebrities. Benedict watched in mild amusement as Liv chatted with a Korean R&B artist, Taeyang, who was dressed in a monochromatic, “hypebeast” inspired ensemble.

“He’s one of the reasons why I love South Korea,” Liv giggled as soon as Taeyang gave her a respectful tilt of his head in farewell at the end of their short conversation. “Dresses down like a New Boy, sings like Usher, but obscenely interested in fashion. Exciting, I love it!”

They edged their way to the back where they found both Humberto Leon and Carol Lim, the creative directors of Kenzo, who waved them down with the widest of smiles.

“You brought the goods!” Carol chirped happily to Liv as she gestured to Benedict with her cocktail-free hand. “We seriously almost died when Liv told us you’d be coming. There’s word of and Emmy and Oscar nominations for you in the next few months.”

Benedict felt himself blush at the mention of his work. He ought to be accustomed to the resulting fruits of his labors—nominations, accolades, and the fervent fanbase—but he couldn’t bring himself to think of it often enough to get comfortable. “If they should come, I would be extremely flattered.”
“He’s just modest,” Liv giggled, her schmoozing in full-effect. “Anyway we loved the pieces from the show today. I mean, the first look? Seriously Humberto? Oh my God! And that…”

Pride filled Benedict as he watched Liv work her magic with Humberto and Carol. Her work with designers was collaborative and, in that cohesion, she thrived like no other. The press could say all they wanted about Liv, but they could never fault her for resting on her laurels or otherwise slacking off from her job. She was truly a hardworking woman if Benedict ever saw one. He could see the razor sharp intensity with which she regarded her business and how she, almost intrinsically, anticipated the needs of her clients. He supposed that one could say that Liv really cared about how her clients were perceived even if she was a business woman. If she didn’t then she wouldn’t have the loyalty of Hollywood’s finest in her portfolio of work.

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“Since you’re filming and I’m going to be consulting in Korea, I probably won’t be able to fit you for anything until like a week before Toronto. So for your events between now and the festival, you’re going to have to go with what you’ve got left from our past fittings,” Liv sighed, kicking off her heels upon returning to her hotel suite close to midnight. “Just please refrain from mixing more than two patterns in a single outfit. Actually, in your case, please just stick to one pattern.”

“Where’s the fun in a single pattern? I prefer three,” Benedict chortled teasingly.

Liv rolled her eyes, “You and Scarlett kill me.” She curled up on a couch in the sitting room of her suite while Benedict took up the armchair nearest her. “Please don’t do the striped shoes again. I’ll have an aneurism if you do that to me.”

Benedict shrugged but agreed to nothing, a detail Liv noticed but did not comment on. Her wit had died down significantly by now; several back-to-back sixteen-hour work days would do that to anyone. And with another week of fashion shows ahead of her, this time couture, she knew she had to save her small store of energy so as not to burn out.

“How are you, really?” Benedict asked softly, leaning toward her to invite her confidence.

Liv fought the urge to recoil. She knew he would want to know how she was coping, post-Tom, but she wasn’t sure if she had the brain power to do that. But the next time they’d see each other again would be at the Toronto Film Festival, so she removed her brain-to-mouth filter and let loose on Benedict.

“I’m a mess. God, I’m such a huge mess right now,” She dragged a hand over her forehead, smiling cheerlessly. “The whole break up with Tom was so horrible. When we got back to London from Anglesey, we were just screaming at each other and blaming each other for everything. I’m surprised that you didn’t hear us from around the corner,” she added, referencing how close Benedict’s house was from Tom’s. “It was just so bad that we were both almost mute from the arguing before we both folded.” Liv blinked rapidly, feeling the familiar sting in her eyes and the ache in her throat. “The entire week after that, I did that gross thing where I cry so much that I vomit. It was so nasty.”

“You’re not ill are you? I saw in the papers about—”

Liv rolled her eyes, “You sound like my dad. He sent one of my brothers to check up on me when he read that trash. I’m not anorexic. Just stressed. The tabloids are on my back but they should know by now that I’m not going to talk. It took me like more than a year to say anything about my divorce from Davey. Do they really think I’ll talk so soon?” The laughter that accompanied her words was so devoid of humor, she felt sure that she was making Benedict uncomfortable.
Benedict fixed her with a well-meaning grin. “Just making sure, Liv. You know that I only look out for your best interests.”

Her sigh came out relaxed as she squeezed his hand. “Thank you. And while we’re on the subject of tabloids, I’d like to let the record show that, no, Tom and I are definitely not on speaking terms. All of the stuff I left at his place in London came back to L.A. before I did. Our last communication was between my publicist and his. Luke ‘I-think-of-everything-before-you-do’ Windsor just wanted to confirm that I wasn’t going to sell E! News a breakup as an exclusive. I haven’t had any contact from his side since.”

She busied herself with removing her earrings, trying to avoid Benedict’s gaze. It was a small moment before he spoke in a low voice, one that made Liv meet his eyes.

“I don’t want to be presumptuous but, did I—erm, have anything to do with that?”

Liv shook her head emphatically. “No, no, sweetie. I pretty much knew that Tom and I weren’t going to part on happy terms, even before I boarded my plane to London. Things were already bad between us. He thought it was salvageable, I knew it was time to cut my losses. If we saw more of each other or if he could’ve just gotten off his butt to relocate, then maybe we would have been okay. But it was a good love, just not the right time or place. I’m just sad that it had to end like that.” She paused and fixed him a searching look. “But, Ben, really? Did you mean what you said that night at Nobu?”

She watched him shift, his discomfort evident in his posture but his facial features remained very much composed. “I, um, I didn’t realize how much I really cared about you as more than a ‘fuck-buddy’ until about a month before you met Tom.”

“But you were with Olivia still. You guys were doing fertility treatments. You and I explicitly agreed that we were just friends with benefits.” Liv was sure she was the picture of the disbelief she felt at that moment.

Benedict’s face tensed at her words. “I know what we agreed to. It was nice and convenient for both of us. Olivia and I were at odds with each other with all the money we were pouring into the treatments and you were happily swinging like any single woman your age. It fit for a time,” he bit his lip and exhaled heavily, “until it didn’t. When I realized how I felt about you, I made plans to end things with Olivia and see where things would go with you. But then the dinner party happened and you met Tom so I abandoned all plans right there and then.”

True understanding washed over her like a cold wave. The idea that Benedict had true feelings for her while she believed that they were simply having casual sex was something that she steered clear from when they had been involved. She was disenchanted from romance after her divorce was finalized in 2008 so she dedicated herself in her work and entertained a few flings whenever it struck her fancy.

Then in late 2009, after Benedict had been a client of hers for some time, Liv began to notice a certain tension with the Brit. That tension built upon itself until a late-night fitting turned into a full-fledged romp. To rationalize their guilt, they agreed that it was just a mistake made in the heat of the moment. A series of ‘mistakes’ later, they revised their rationale to something along the lines of “friends with benefits”.

Her affair with Benedict had been, of course, a clandestine one. His ex-girlfriend, Olivia Poulet may have guessed that there was something behind their closeness. But seeing as the couple had been going through fertility treatments to have a child, the actress perhaps turned a blind eye to it in face of bigger problems at the time. With regards to Tom, both Liv and Benedict agreed that it would be
unnecessary for them to divulge their little secret, no matter how curious Tom seemed to be about the background of their friendship. Wounding Tom with the knowledge of their affair would be the least of their worries if he ever found out.

Their past and her current situation aside, Liv knew where she stood with regards to any feelings she might have to Benedict. And, proactive as she was, she wouldn’t wait for another opportunity to make that very clear.

“Ben,” she began gently, “I hope you know that I really just need a friend right now. I’m a mess in my personal life so I just want to focus on my work and my friends and myself. I’m not, you know, looking for a little rebound or another relationship. I just need a friend.”

“Then you shall have it in me.”

Chapter End Notes

4.2: I know, I know~~ This chapter was heavy on the Liv/benedict dynamic, but we’ll have Tom add his two cents in a short bit. Let me know your thoughts on this chapter!
Author’s Note 5.1: My hat goes off to my very busy beta, hiddle-stoner.tumblr, you rock! This chapter is a lot shorter than the previous ones. It’s sort of an intermission of the things that happened over the summer as seen by the press/tabloids. By the time we come back to the story itself, in Chapter 06, it will be August. Anyone know what Tom was up to in August? That might give you guys a hint at what’s coming next. :) 

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

June 28, 2013

Paris Men’s Fashion Week Closes with Kenzo After Party

Benedict Cumberbatch and Scarlett Johansson were among the big name celebrities in attendance at Kenzo’s closing party on Friday night. With Beastie Boys’ Mike D at the turn tables, it was certainly the party to be at. Scarlett arrived looking demure in her daisy-print dress and leggings with her boyfriend, French journalist Romain Dauriac and partied through the night. Gal pal, Liv Ames showed up for a few hours with friend-slash-client Benedict Cumberbatch. The two matched in leather, were photographed looking more than friends when they arrived. Can anyone say, rebound?

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July 3, 2013

Benedict Bridges the Gap

Girls and boys who think they might actually have a shot at dating the newly single Tom Hiddleston, might want to take something, or rather, someone into account—Benedict Cumberbatch. As a mutual friend of both Tom and Liv, Benedict is keen on reuniting his two friends. Sources close to Benedict say that he’s heartbroken for them both and would like to do everything possible to “bridge the gap”, leaving many to surmise that there is more to the split than initially purported.

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July 8, 2013

Broken-Hearted No More: Tom Hiddleston Steps Out at Wimbledon with New Girlfriend

Seemingly in response to rumors of a budding romance in Paris between ex-girlfriend Liv Ames and “Sherlock” star Benedict Cumberbatch, Tom Hiddleston has officially moved on. The “Avengers” villain looked cozy with record label executive Jane Arthy at the Wimbledon Men’s Finals on Monday. Though the actor has not spoken about his split or his relationship with Arthy, Lorraine Candy, the editor-in-chief of ELLE UK tweeted a confirmation for the world to know.
July 9, 2013

Up All Night to Get Loki Tom!

He’s been a single man for only a month but Tom Hiddleston is not wasting any time. Despite yesterday’s reports about Tom getting serious with Jane Arthy, the thirty-two year old actor was seen leaving London’s Nobu restaurant with another woman, Sherlock star Lara Pulver. Photographed by paparazzi cuddling outside the restaurant before parting ways, Tom looks quite the happy bachelor.

July 11, 2013

Throwback Thursday, You’re Doing It Wrong

Can someone please tell Liv Ames that #ThrowbackThursday means posting a picture of something from the past? Not, say, posting a picture of a past husband as you’re presently having lunch with him. The E! News style correspondent posted a collage of pictures from her “business lunch”, as both their publicists stated, with ex-husband Davey Havok to her Instagram account. It was accompanied with a cheeky caption; “Does this count for #ThrowbackThursday ?”

Her ex-husband, whose song “Darling, I Want to Destroy You” (off of AFI’s 2009 album “Crash Love”) was reportedly inspired by their divorce, later tweeted his own contribution for Throwback Thursday. The collage, comprising of two pictures— one from the night they met at an after party for the 2003 MTV Music Awards and the other from today’s lunch-time meeting— was captioned “Full circle #tbt”.

The cringe-inducing social media posts from the former couple set fans abuzz with assumptions that the two may have rekindled their romance five years after their divorce. But, while we love a happy
ending, we’re going to have to pass on this reunion. A bit of advice, Liv; branch out in the romance
department. And by branch out we mean; 1) don’t date Benedict Cumberbatch your ex’s best mate;
and 2) don’t go back to Davey Havok your cheating ex-husband. #BestiesAreOffLimits
#RulesofFeminism #HeIsAnExForAReason #KeepItThatWay

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**July 20, 2013**

**Loki Terrorizes at Comic Con**

Norse God Loki stormed the stage at San Diego Comic Con, effectively rallying the entirety of Hall H to yield to his rule.

Tom Hiddleston, who will reprise his role as Loki in ‘Thor: The Dark World’ this fall, took the audience at Hall H by surprise. There was no press announcement that the classically trained actor would be turning up for the Con but, then again, Tom is no longer one who needs an announcement. Dressed in Asgardian attire and certainly wearing his will to subjugate all of Midgard, Loki literally stole the show from Marvel president Kevin Feige. After his performance to the 6,000-strong audience, ‘Avengers’ co-stars Chris Evans and Scarlett Johansson were quick to praise Hiddleston…

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**July 25, 2013**

**Nothing But Clear Skies for Benedict Cumberbatch**

Benedict Cumberbatch is certainly living the charmed life. Straight after a promotional tour in Japan for ‘Star Trek: Into Darkness’, Benedict was snapped snogging a Russian model, Katia Elizarova, in Ibiza. The actor, who was rumored to be dating Hollywood stylist Liv Ames earlier this summer, had served as a wedding officiant for two friends who chose to marry in the idyllic location with just their nearest and dearest to bear witness. As if his summer couldn’t get any better, Benedict also received an Emmy nod for his role as Christopher Tietjens in ‘Parade’s End’.

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**Los Angeles – July 29, 2013**

Liv threw her obstetrician a withering look. Despite his youth, he did not falter, but merely repeated his statement. To Liv, it was more like a death sentence.

“I’m still not permitting you to get on any flights until after your next visit. By then, if everything checks out, you’ll be in the safe zone with your pregnancy,” he reiterated frankly.

“Doctor Lee, I don’t think you understand what I do for a living. I’m growing my brand and I need to be in Japan next week. I’m meeting with Takasago International for my fragrance line. I can’t just cancel on them,” Liv said matter-of-factly. “Besides, I was flew from Paris to L.A. earlier this month even though I was already pregnant then and nothing bad happened.”

“That was before you even knew you were pregnant and before you were under my care, Liv. You’re lucky nothing bad happened,” he replied sternly.

“Oh, come on!” Liv implored, annoyance coloring her features.
Her doctor tucked his ball-point pen into a pocket of his white lab coat and fixed her with a dead-eye stare that reminded Liv of her mother when was close to the end of her patience. “I’m afraid I can’t authorize it, Liv. You had a miscarriage earlier this year which is why we’re doing bi-weekly checkups for your first trimester. We’re not going to take any chances with this pregnancy. You can get back to jet-setting after your three-month check-up.” He closed her medical folder as if to echo the finality of his sentence. “I’ll see you in two weeks.”

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Chapter End Notes

5.2: Steve Yeun (Glenn from ‘The Walking Dead’) guest starred as Liv’s obstetrician, Dr. Lee—just in case you wanted to put a face to the name. Also, for those who don’t know who Davey Havok is, please click the link in the article about him and Liv having lunch. :)

Sorry this chapter was so short. To be honest, I had a completely different framework for it. But there was just too much to write if I did every single scene. And, in comparison to what’s coming up, this would have been a filler chapter had it been written the long way.

But anyway, how ‘bout that? Liv’s got a bun in oven. :)
Chapter 06

Chapter Notes

6.1: My wonderfully patient beta, hiddle-stoner.tumblr was the first to read this and she remarked that it was an intense read. I wonder if you will agree with her after reading it?

Lots of action ahead, guys! I thrive on feedback so please don't forget to sound-off with your thoughts in the comments section.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

**August 1, 2013**

*A ‘Crash(ed) Love’* is *Resurrected*

Liv Ames arrived at Crossroads on Melrose for dinner with ex-husband Davey Havok, looking every inch the style goddess. Dressed in a colorfully patterned shift mini dress, she seemed much at ease as Davey, doused in an all-black casual ensemble, kept a lively conversation with her. The dinner, following almost after a month of being reported to have reunited under professional circumstances, did not appear to be work related. Fellow patrons at the vegan restaurant have sent in tips that support the notion that Liv and Davey have become an item once more.

“There was definitely a romantic vibe going on between them. Liv was glowing, and Davey kept taking her hand during their dinner,” reports a source who was not able to supply photographic proof.

A source from Davey’s camp claims that the “Miss Murder” singer is looking to woo his ex-wife back. Says the source, “He’s [Davey] is working hard to show Liv that he’s a changed man. She’s all he’s wanted for the past five years, and he’s willing to do anything to have her take him back.”

Liv, who split from long-term boyfriend, Tom Hiddleston, in June, has remained mum on the subject of her love-life. Even as she was linked to “Sherlock” star, Benedict Cumberbatch, she did nothing to address the reports.

Reps for both Liv and Davey have not returned calls inquiring of the relationship at press-time.

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**August 3, 2013**

*No Date, No Problem*

Tom Hiddleston was certainly a sight for sore eyes at the Audi Polo Challenge at Coworth Park Polo Club in Ascot, England today. Looking very dapper in his dark blue suit, the “Only Lovers Left Alive” actor’s charm radiated as he played the part of an audience member at today’s event. Despite setting tongues wagging last month when he brought music label executive Jane Arthy to Wimbledon as his purported girlfriend, then cuddled through a dinner the following night with Lara
Pulver, Tom attended the first day of the Challenge sans a date. It did not seem to bring much of a hardship for the actor, as he easily mingled with fellow thespians throughout the event.

Tom’s frenemy, Benedict Cumberbatch, was set to attend the event as well, but was a no-show. Benedict’s non-attendance could be attributed to avoiding Tom. It has been suggested that the two fell out over Benedict’s advances on Liv Ames in Paris only a few weeks after her break-up with Tom. While it seems likely that the two might not be as chummy as they were before, Benedict may have simply been overbooked. With his Emmy nomination for “Parade’s End” and his three films set to show at the Toronto Film Festival, the “Sherlock” star could have been made to choose between business and pleasure in this instance. Regardless, both actors are set to appear at the Toronto International Film Festival next month and will more than likely cross paths there.

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August 4, 2013

Liv Ames and Davey Havok: Giving Romance Another Go?

Despite claims that they are simply collaborating over stage outfits for AFI’s upcoming tour in the fall, Liv Ames and Davey Havok are spending an awful lot of time together in the last few weeks. The former couple, who separated in late 2007 and officially divorced in 2008, have been sighted all over Los Angeles. Most recently, the rocker was photographed leaving Liv’s home in West Hollywood shortly after midnight last night.

Though Havok had taken care to leave his ex-wife’s home while hidden under his black zip-up hoodie and a pair of sunglasses, he was positively identified by his tattoo sleeves, which were exposed as he sped off into the night. Neither Liv nor Davey have confirmed the unexpected reunion, but fans of the front-man are already decrying the sightings as little more than arranged photo-ops to lend some of Liv’s star power to her ex-husband’s album, set to debut this October. But if Thursday’s romantic dinner is anything to go by, we might be more inclined to believe that the pair are definitely rekindling the flame.

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August 5, 2013

Beverly Hills, Los Angeles

After a long day of interviews and press calls, Tom tucked into dinner in the dining area of his hotel suite while his publicist went over the following day’s itinerary. There would always be last minute changes to this iteration of the schedule, but Tom was grateful for Luke’s efforts to determine the most accurate picture of his day.

“… And I believe that is all you’ve got going for tomorrow,” Luke concluded as he closed the cover of his tablet, grinning in pride at his work.

“That all?” Tom responded with a raise of an eyebrow as he finished his meal. The list of engagements that his publicist went over was lengthy. But, with the second ‘Thor’ film set to premiere in the fall, this PBS promotional tour would be a light load compared to the one to follow. “I’d reckon we might be able to squeeze in a few more interviews, don’t you?”

“Yes, I’ll get on that straight away,” Luke agreed good-naturedly, and humored him by pantomiming a phone call as Tom showed him to the door. “Hello, Daily Mail? Yes, Tom will do that interview via Skype. He’ll answer anything you ask him, anything at all.”
Tom, opening the door to the outer hallway, chuckled softly, “Yes, let’s do a tell-all of my love life and—”

“Might want to clear that with your lawyers first. But I’m pretty sure they would counsel against it,” came a sharp voice.

At the familiar voice, Tom’s head whipped around to see Liv. Dressed casually in a pale silver maxi dress and black leather jacket, she leaned up against the doorway, looking amused.

Tom, at a complete loss for words, hardly processed the scene playing out in front of him as Luke got between him and his ex-girlfriend.

“Miss Ames, my client is through for tonight,” Luke said in a clipped tone. “He is not taking any visitors. Big day tomorrow— you’ll understand if we just—”

Liv drew herself to her full height, which still fell short of the publicist’s chin, and addressed Luke with an airy tone that belied the consequences of her words. “Unless you want me to exit through the front lobby, where the paparazzi are camped out, and have the photos speak for themselves in the press, I’d step aside, Windsor.”

“There’s no need for any of that,” Tom cut in, coming to his senses quickly enough to pull Luke back from blocking Liv’s path to enter the suite. “Luke, I’ll handle this. You have a good night.”

When Luke did not budge, Tom offered reassurance again. “I won’t make a mess that you’ll have to clean up. I promise.” Liv scoffed, but Tom ignored her for the time being.

“Alright,” Luke acquiesced. “Give me a ring in the morning.” Then he left without so much as another word or glance to Liv.

“I always knew he hated me,” Liv muttered as soon as Luke rounded the corner and was out of earshot.

Tom made no comment but curtly gestured for Liv to come into his suite. As soon as she crossed the threshold, Tom pinched himself in the forearm. Feeling the minute pain almost instantly, he inwardly cursed himself as she made her way to the sitting room. Liv was really there, radiant and commanding as always—so far from the frail image that the press had made her out to be in the weeks since they broke up. He had no idea how she knew to find him here, or what her purpose was. Where he could read her so easily eight months ago, before their relationship began its slow descent into ruin, he could hardly divine a reason for her sudden appearance now. All he knew was that the reason would not be a pleasant one by any means.

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Tom was a gentleman in every way possible. But considering the lateness of the hour and the fact that he had been through a taxing day of promotions, he was not in any mood to put on a friendly face for more company while he could be resting. Yet, despite that his company was none other than the woman who incited the end of their relationship two months ago; he still made an effort to be polite. After making an offer for a cup of tea, which she declined, Tom seated himself on the couch opposite Liv in the sitting room of his suite.

“I’m sorry for talking to Luke like that, it’s a reflex when I come face-to-face with a stubborn attack dog,” Liv said, trying to lighten the mood. When he only frowned in response, she switched tact. “Look, I’m going to make this short and to the point—”

“Yes, that would be much appreciated,” Tom replied, a slight edge to his voice.
“—I’m pregnant.”

Tom felt his eyebrows jump up towards his hairline, along with his blood pressure. He made a vain effort to stave off the biting tone in his voice as he spoke, but failed miserably. “Well—erm, congratulations,” Tom replied in a cold voice that much belied the shock he felt splintering his nerves. His eyes darted between her face and her middle for a beat. “You certainly haven’t been idle.”

Liv scoffed her disbelief. “And just who do you think the father is?”

“If the press is right, you’ve had two lovers this summer that the public knows of, thus far,” Tom snapped, the muscle in his jaw jumping as he glared unabashedly at her. “Flip a coin, I don’t care how you determine it.”

“It’s yours, Tom,” Liv spat venomously, her face twisting into a most unpleasant scowl.

“What—I beg your pardon!” Tom sputtered furiously as he rose from his seat. “Mine? Are you mental?”

Liv stood as well and answered him in a heated tone. “Are you? You’ve got to be on drugs to think that I’ve sleeping with either Ben or my ex-husband.” She advanced on him, making quick work of the distance around the coffee table that separated them. “You know that Ben’s my client, and with the Toronto Film Festival coming up as well as that Emmy nod, he was in need of options for all the press he’ll be doing. Davey, on the other hand, is looking to become one of my clients, as he’s going to be touring again this fall. Unlike you, I’ve been working my ass off all summer. I haven’t had time to look for anyone else, much less sleep with anyone, unlike you.” She threw him a look of deepest loathing as she finished her alibi.

He was sure that her point would have been valid to anyone who understood her line of work. But being that he was still wounded over their breakup, which he would never admit, Tom refused to see logic.

“Oh please, if anything, Davey is probably the father of your child. You live in the same city and the man still writes songs about you. And don’t even let me begin about the press on the pair of you,” Tom countered blindly. His long-stored, feral rage poured over any semblance of composure he managed to retain up until this point. “I mean, it makes sense why you were taking every opportunity to try and break up with me towards the end of our relationship. You two were probably fucking behind my back.”

Tom felt the sting of her slap before he even saw her hand rise to strike him. The force of her strike threw his head to side and left his cheek throbbing in its wake.

“You asshole,” she breathed, her lowered voice failing the hide the pain reverberating in every syllable. “I was faithful to you and you damn well know that.” Speech seemed to fail her for a moment, but then she uttered more jagged words. “I broke up with you because you came up with every excuse not to be here. I got tired of waiting for you to be ready. I got tired of being alone.” She turned to retrieve her purse from the couch she had been sitting on, but Tom quickly reached out and grabbed her arm, pulling her back roughly.

“You should have been more patient—should have loved me enough to stay! Was I not lonely as well? We nearly had everything—everything—right. You couldn’t even see how good we had it!” Tom bellowed, shaking in fury and unreleased grief as he towered over her. “But, no, the moment it became too much, you were gone. It’s always the easy way out with you. Problems with your husband? Fine, divorce it is, then. Problems with your partner? Give him an ultimatum in which
you know he cannot succeed in any scenario,” he growled. This would have earned him another
slap, but he used his free hand to capture her wrist before her hand made contact with his face again.

“The easy way out?” Liv hissed. “You have no idea what my marriage was like, so you don’t get to
talk about it or Davey, for that matter. About us, though? I gave you options. You wouldn’t
choose, so I chose for you.” She gave him a vicious shove, even for her slight form, and managed to
throw off his restraining hands in the process.

As Liv backed away from him, Tom knew he had gone too far in bringing disloyalty and her ex-
husband into the argument. Disbelieving though he might be in the case of the paternity of her child,
he knew better than to mention Davey. Liv’s ex-husband was a taboo subject, everyone knew that.

“Liv—” he growled threateningly. Tom knew she would try to leave again and he would be
dammed if he let this conversation end at her leisure.

But she cut across him before he could utter anything else. “Whether or not you believe it’s yours, is
not any of my concern at this point. Honestly, I probably should have expected this from you. I get
it. It’s been almost two months since we last saw each other, so you have your doubts. That’s fine.
I don’t care.” She crossed the sitting room to retrieve her purse, and when she faced him again, her
features were schooled into neutrality. “Consider this a simple FYI. I’m eleven weeks along and
I’m probably going to start showing in the next month or so. I wanted to tell you so that you
wouldn’t be blindsided by the media. Judging by your reaction, though, I should have probably let
you find out on your own.” Liv shouldered her purse and, with one last hateful glance at him, she
left.

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After taking the utmost care to slip from Tom’s hotel and into the night unnoticed, Liv arrived back
to her home in West Hollywood resolutely holding her emotions at bay until she was in the safety of
her bathroom. Bracing her palms against the counter of her sink she gazed up at her reflection and
willed strength to come.

“It’s okay, you’re okay. The worst is over—he knows now,” Liv said to herself resolutely, trying to
believe her own words. Tears threatened to come instead of strength. Drawing back from her
reflection, she gazed down at her abdomen. At eleven weeks along and not a hint of the small life
within her, she grazed a hand over her middle as she spoke gently. “We’re going to be okay. Don’t
worry; I’m going to make it right for you.”

Oh, the emotions she felt just now. Fury at Tom for his baseless accusation that she had cheated on
him while they were still together. Utter loneliness which threatened to consume her at every turn,
despite the efforts of the few who knew of her pregnancy. Pity and worry that her child would
mistake that it was unwanted in the face of her chaotic emotional state. It all churned within her,
bubbling up her throat acutely. Head spinning suddenly, she sprinted for the toilet and heaved
violently into it with only a moment to spare. Still, as she vomited—body shaking, skin clammy—
she fought against her desolation and did not cry. She wouldn’t. She couldn’t.

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When Luke, saddled with a leather messenger bag, let himself into Tom’s suite the following
morning, he was expecting to find his client preparing for the day’s busy schedule. To his dismay, he
found the more work than he was prepared to do with such little time to accomplish it. The first
thing he noticed was that all the lights were off and all the curtains were drawn closed, causing the
suite to be nearly pitch-black. The door snapped shut behind Luke too quickly, and he found himself
grasping at the walls for the light switch.
“Tom? Tom, are you awake yet? We need to be ready to leave in an hour and a half,” Luke called just as he switched on the foyer light. Receiving no response, he ventured further into the suite only to catch a strong whiff of cigarette smoke. He sniffed experimentally, and his olfactory senses directed him into the dining room. There, in the much too dim light that filtered in from the foyer, he found Tom sitting at the table. Before him was a nearly empty bottle of Jameson, a crumpled packet of Mayfair Kings, and an ashtray full of embers and stubs. What looked to be the last of the Mayfairs was cradled between Tom’s fingers as he sat hunched over the dining table, still dressed in the previous day’s clothes. Given his posture, it was difficult to discern whether Tom had simply fallen asleep at the table with his head in his hands or if he—

“She’s pregnant,” Tom muttered. “She’s convinced it’s mine.”

Luke was not quite ready for a titan bombshell at this hour of the day, but six in the morning would simply have to do. Crossing the room quickly, he had Tom’s dying cigarette stubbed out and the ashtray and Jameson out of the way before Tom could exhale.

“Liv? Liv is pregnant?” Luke queried, already on his iPhone to see if the press had caught wind of this news yet. Thankfully, not a single questionable paparazzi photo turned up. Yet. He deposited his bag into one of the chairs near Tom’s seat at the dining table to move more efficiently.

Tom lifted his head up and looked at Luke with bleary eyes that seemed suspiciously wet. “Yes. Eleven weeks along. Told me last night after you left. I had… grabbed at her, but she left after she told me.” Eyes unfocused, Tom slumped backwards into the back of his chair. “I don’t think it’s mine. In fact, I’m very sure she’s lying. It can’t be mine. It’s got to be that Davey bloke’s child. She must have been… cheating on me for some time now.” Tom closed his eyes and let the back of the chair cradle his neck as he tipped his face up. It was then that Luke saw the tear streaks that had long since dried from Tom’s cheeks.

Luke was torn. Either Tom was blindingly drunk, which he could deal with, or he was telling the truth, which would take much more effort on his part to clear up. Hoping upon hope that his client was merely inebriated beyond words, Luke bolted to the hotel phone and made calls to housekeeping, as well as room service. The room needed to be aired out and tidied before hair and makeup arrived to make Tom look camera-ready. Breakfast, with many servings of coconut water, would need to be delivered to the room so Tom could have enough energy for the day’s schedule. Glancing back at Tom as he made the necessary calls, Luke’s mind raced to compile a several situational iterations of emergency protocols that would cater to his client’s most uncharacteristic debacle. Paternity tests, hush money, and the like swam through Luke’s mind with the speed of the American Olympian, Michael Phelps. He pushed all these thoughts to the back of his mind, to be dealt with after Tom was fully functioning once more, and hurried to get his client in fighting form. It was surely going to be an arduous day.

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Tom, moderately refreshed from his shower and change of clothing, ambled into his room with his third carton of coconut water in the last half hour. Luke followed right behind him, reciting the amended schedule that had one less bathroom break. He was sure his publicist removed the break on purpose to punish him for that morning’s news. Tom made no argument however, as he tried his best to martial his thoughts to order. Fortunately, though he was that he did not drink on an empty stomach the night before, Tom’s mind still felt like scrambled eggs. Snippets of incomplete thoughts flitted in and out of his mind. Something about what Liv said the night before chased a glimmer of a rehearsed response he had at the ready should an interviewer inquire about his personal life. Then a favored thread of Shakespeare analysis lost itself within the words he’d read about Liv in the press and the rumor that she had reunited with her ex-husband. The latter thought made Tom’s mind
pulse with acidic rage at Liv, eroding his brilliant memories of her.

Luke closed the bedroom door behind him and pulled an orange prescription bottle from his trouser pocket. The pills within rattled as he worked the top off. “Just focus on the schedule and you’ll be fine. I’ll work on the Liv situation,” Luke placated as he pushed a pair of little orange pills into Tom’s expectant hand.

As Tom ingested the pills with his coconut water, he shrugged. “It’s not mine, there’s nothing to do.”

Luke pinched the bridge of his nose as he replied, “Forgive me if I do not simply take your word for it. But we’re going to need definitive proof. I’m going to need to contact her people and we’ll need a paternity test done, in utero, if possible. The sooner we can prove that it is not yours beyond a shadow of a doubt, the sooner I can work with the press to keep your name out of the list of possible fathers once she starts showing. Your reputation could take a significant hit if we were to deny that it’s yours only to have it turn out that it is. The converse might not be so bad; you might come off looking a saint.”

Tom shrugged again and took another swig of his coconut water before replying. “She said she was eleven weeks along, Luke. Liv miscarried just before the MTV Movie Awards in April. The next time I could have possibly gotten her knocked up was June when she came to London. If it were mine, she’d only be, I dunno, only eight or nine weeks along, by my count.”

“What about Cannes? Didn’t you two…”?

Tom scoffed, remembering that weekend that was fruitless on more than one level. “Not even close, she could hardly stand to be kissed by me, let alone anything else. I spent that entire weekend being rebuffed no matter what I did.” He cast a glance at his watch. “No, I’m fairly convinced that she’s been fucking Davey. It’s the only explanation at this point. She became so distant over the course of May. And his band’s got another album out this fall, probably with some song about her again. It’s a shame I didn’t piece it all together much sooner. I wouldn’t have bothered with trying to make things work if I had figured out that she had gone back to her ex-husband.”

Luke looked his confusion. “But why would she go back to him? Didn’t he cheat on her?”

“Bugger if I know,” Tom muttered. He downed the rest of his coconut water and tossed the empty carton into the waste bin. “Just handle it, Luke. And make sure I have enough of the other thing—the erm, Ambien, for later. I’ll take some after supper.”

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After dispatching Scott, her problematic assistant, from her office to clean up his latest mess, Liv gave a great sigh as she surveyed the emails she still needed to get through before her meeting with ‘Teen Vogue’. Before she could decide what to do next, her cell phone rang.

“Luke Wind-Sore-Ass” the caller ID announced across the screen of her phone.

Rolling her eyes, she considered letting it go to voicemail before she actually answered it.

“This is Liv,” she answered in an even tone, though she did not feel to be in any mood to deal with the publicist.

“It’s Luke. Do you have time to meet later this evening?” the publicist’s cool voice seemed to resound in Liv’s ear. “Tom told me everything. We will all need to sit down and talk about your situation as of now.”
Tom’s reaction to the news was nothing to make light of. Especially considering the fact that she was pregnant, it was not something Liv was keen to be on the receiving end of at any time soon. “Nothing to talk about, Luke,” Liv said in the same airy tone as the previous night.

“You mean to say that the baby isn’t, in fact, Tom’s?”

“I assure you it’s Tom’s,” Liv bit out, annoyed.

“Sorry, but made an interesting point this morning when we spoke. If it was his, Liv, wouldn’t you be around eight or nine weeks? Not, say, eleven or twelve?”

Liv could practically hear Luke’s knowing grin over the phone. What she wouldn’t do to see the look melt from that man’s face. Instead, she satisfied herself with enlightening the man who was just as plainly ignorant of a woman’s reproductive system as was his client.

“Well, sweetie,” Liv chirped in her head-tone voice, “I’d just like to point out that obstetricians count the weeks of pregnancy based on the first day of a woman’s last menstrual cycle. It’s definitely not based on the last time you had sex or the day of conception.” Then she switched gears and returned to her normal, commanding tone. “If you all are wondering if I’m doing this for money, I don’t want or need anything from Tom—go ahead and let him know that. I don’t care to tell the press whose child this is, either. It’s none of their business.”

“Fine,” Luke cut in before Liv could go any further with her point. “Just so that we can be sure on our end, can we get an in-utero paternity test?”

“God, you two really don’t know shit about the female reproductive system, do you?” Liv snapped, her temper flaring instantly at the mention of the invasive procedure. Of course, she had considered having the in utero paternity test after last night’s reaction. But after her brief online research presented the risks that greatly outweighed the benefits, she quickly retreated from that avenue. “Have you any idea how risky that could be?” Not waiting for an answer, Liv continued, “No, Luke. You guys can have as many paternity tests done as soon as this kid is born. But I will not authorize any testing in utero.”

“Liv, the sooner we confirm if it’s Tom’s, the sooner we can put an action plan together that will suit both of you,” Luke reasoned. “Wouldn’t you want to know?”

Liv let out a chuckle that was anything but humorous. “I love how you’re continuing to push along the idea that I’ve slept with someone else other than Tom in the last three months or even the last three years.” She sighed, fatigue beginning to take a foothold within her strength. “No, I know it’s Tom’s. You’ll have an opportunity to make sure of it when it’s born next February.”

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Returning to his suite at the end of the day, Tom felt nothing short of physically dead despite the fact that he felt mentally bidden to continue to turn over thoughts and ideas (thanks to the Adderall he’d taken earlier). Had it not been strictly instructed that he eat prior to taking his dose of Ambien, he would have dry-swallowed the sleeping pills and promptly crashed into his bed. As it was, he wanted to do at least one thing right within the walls of his personal life tonight, so he forced down a salad and some tea before taking the ‘little helpers’, as he liked to think of them.

Emasculating though it might be, Tom felt lost and angry enough to seek the help of a professional therapist when Liv left him. But, unable to keep up this the schedule that talk-therapy would entail, Luke suggested that he work with a psychologist instead. That doctor prescribed Tom with an anti-depressant, Lexapro, and sent him on his way. When the psychologist did not even bother to define
a regular appointment with him, the actor figured that the doctor was one of those ‘Yes-men’ that celebrities went to if they ever needed a prescription written. Soon after, Luke commented on Tom’s inability to focus and pressed some Adderall into his palm before an interview. An oral surgery amply supplied him with Vicodin. When he mentioned to Luke that he couldn’t sleep very well, Ambien was added to the group of ‘little helpers’. They all served some purpose; to either numb Tom until he was sure there was nothing else in the world for him to feel in regards to Liv, or help him focus and maintain his happy charm that the public found so indispensable about him.

If Tom’s frenzied schedule to the public’s demands of him was anything to go by, it would not really be a surprise that Tom was on prescribed medication to help him keep up with the grueling pace. But, seeing as he had quite the sterling good-boy reputation in his favor and never before dabbled in drugs, and the fact that his break-up with Liv was the very basis of it all, the resulting backlash and inevitable pillorying of his mental soundness would tarnish his image more quickly than a scandal of infidelity would. According to Luke, the public was more forgiving when it came to sins of the flesh as opposed to substance abuse or even allusions to drug use all together. Case and point being Robert Downey Jr.’s well-storied climb back to the top from rock-bottom being much more arduous than David Letterman’s dalliances with female staffers at his show, which hardly made headlines. Robert worked tirelessly to prove himself to the press and his fanbase that he worthy of their attention and loyalty while Letterman merely made an admission of guilt continued with business as usual.

As Tom crawled into bed, he vaguely wondered if he should have taken the Vicodin, instead. He rather liked the sensation of slowly being unable to feel and easing into sleep rather than the Ambien which shut off his mind rather bluntly. But as sleep overtook him, he reflected that there wasn’t much of a difference these days, anyway.

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Los Angeles – August 18, 2013

“Okay, so that puts us at two days before Toronto. I can do a fitting for you here in L.A, on September third and fourth before I head out for New York Fashion week which is from the fifth through the twelfth,” Liv said, eyeing the schedule her personal assistant, Rhea, had synced into her tablet.

Benedict, who was conversing with her via Face-Time, nodded. “Or you could just come to Toronto and do the fitting there. You can be my lovely date for one of my premieres.”

Liv rolled her eyes at the last suggestion Benedict made before responding. “Yeah, because I have so much time—hey, wait, that’s actually not a bad idea.”

Benedict did not look surprised. “Of course it is. I’m not lacking in substance, you know.”

“No, really,” Liv continued, scrolling through her calendar to see what arrangements could be made to accommodate the slight change in plans for the beginning of September. “Toronto is on the way, I’ll just take one assistant to there on the fourth, and depending on how much of the clothing works for you, I can jet out of there the same day, or first thing on the fifth, and still be in New York with time to spare. I wonder what the last flight out of Toronto to New York is…”

“Liv, just stay until the sixth,” Benedict pressed.

She ignored him and called Rhea into her office to make the changes. “I know you’re going to hate me for this, but I need you to add some flights to our itinerary. You and I will be going to Toronto either on the last flight out on the third or first thing on the fourth to fit Ben for the festival. Then
book something to get us from there to New York by the fifth. The rest of the schedules will remain the same.” Rhea noted everything, looking panicked at the last minute change, but made no arguments and was gone as quickly as she had come.

“Liv, come on,” Benedict tried again. “Take me offmute if you’ve put me on mute, please.”

Liv grinned at him as she waited for her new schedule to appear on her tablet. “I didn’t put you on mute, I just don’t think it’s a good idea for me to do a red carpet right now. Besides the fact that the press will go nuts again with a bunch of wild stories that we’re dating, I’ll be more than three months along by then. I’m probably going to be showing,” she gestured down at her still relatively flat abdomen. She probably had her half-Chinese genetics to thank for the fact that she did not look pregnant yet, despite the fact that she was closing in on the end of her first trimester. “Think of how that would look.”

“Believe me, I’ve thought of it,” Ben assured her. “And, frankly, I think you’re curtailing your life a bit too much simply because of the possible rumors that any of your actions might incur. If anything, this would throw the press off Tom’s scent when it comes time to play, ‘Who’s Your Daddy’.”

“Yes, because there’s only so many people it could be,” Liv said wryly. “And you’re just such a good friend who will allow for their image to possibly come under fire for supposedly fathering a child with your best friend’s ex.”

Benedict shrugged nonchalantly. “I wouldn’t mind, especially if it’s you.”

Liv’s cheeks colored at his words. He always had a way to sneak in the fact that he was still interested in her despite being pregnant and only having platonic feelings for him. “Ben!” she hissed, doing her best to keep an embarrassed grin from her face. “What did I say about being friends?”

“Sorry, must have gotten lost in translation,” Benedict replied cheekily.

“We both speak English.”

“Right, but us Europeans, we have a very different understanding of friends,” he said in mock seriousness, then returned to his playful tone. “So it’s settled, premiere is at 6:30 in the evening on the fifth, I’ll let my publicist know you’re coming.”

Before Liv could argue, Benedict ended the face-time session as if to cement their plans. Liv gave a small laugh as she called for her personal assistant and her first senior styling assistant to her office.

“Okay ladies, here’s our change of plans for September third through the sixth,” she said, addressing both Rhea and Dawn. “Rhea, we will take a red eye to Toronto on the night of the third to fit Ben for all of his festival press and red carpets. Dawn, you’re going to be in charge in New York until I get there on the morning of the sixth.”

“Wait, you want me to sit in for you at the BCBG and the Tadashi shows on the fifth?” Dawn clarified, not losing her composure despite the heavy task being assigned to her, which Liv appreciated and admired.

“Exactly, you’re on-point until I get there. Ben’s asked me to do a red carpet with him on the fifth, so Rhea, we need the first flight out on the sixth. From there, get a car to get us to the Noon by Noor show,” She paused as she surveyed her calendar, then spoke in a softer voice as she checked to make sure the door to her office was indeed closed. “And in between the Calvin Klein show and the closing party for New York Fashion Week on the twelfth, Dr. Lee has agreed to meet me in
Manhattan for my four-month checkup in the afternoon.”

Rhea nodded, “Yes, I’ve triple checked to make sure that all the arrangements have been made between Dr. Lee, his associate in New York, and our side as well. We are good to go.”

Liv let out a relieved sigh. “Alright, and if anyone asks if I’m pregnant?”

“Deflect,” both Rhea and Dawn answered readily.

Chapter End Notes

6.2: The article title "A Crash(ed) Love is Resurrected" is a play on AFI's 2009 album title "Crash Love".

Up next, the Toronto International Film Festival! Our main characters Ben, Liv, and Tom (BLT, as I like to call them) will converge in one city for the first time since the beginning of the story. A lot has changed since June and the press will be reporting on more than the films being showcased. :) Stay tuned!
Chapter 07

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note 7.1: I just wanted to make a note about the week-count about pregnancies. As Liv mentioned in the previous chapter, obstetricians count how many weeks along a woman is into her pregnancy by using the first day of her last period. This is why, when Liv mentions how far along she is, it may seem quite a long time (dating back to late May), but that is only because the first day of her last menstrual cycle occurred around that time. Also, this chapter is un-beta’d so sorry in advance for any typos and grammar mistakes... (eek!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

August 27, 2013

The Sweet Scent of Money

Liv Ames, who was seen arriving at Narita Airport in Japan on a business trip last week, can now add a fragrance deal to her long list of collaborations and projects. Together with Takasago International, Liv will be launching a perfume by the name of ‘Lila’ in time for Summer 2014. Lila, which means “beautiful” in Hindi is part of Liv’s actual birth name, Lila Vivienne Ames.

“When I started working with Takasago on my fragrance, I knew that I wanted it to be a reflection of me, something very personal. So when we were thinking of a name, I thought of using my own birth name because I’m not known by that name professionally. I feel like I’m sharing this part of myself for the very first time.”

No doubt, she also reflected on how much she stands to make on closing this deal. Hopefully, the venture won’t reek too much of failure when it is released exclusively through Sephora next spring.

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August 31, 2013

Returning to Her Roots

Labor Day weekend is looking to be a family affair for Liv Ames. The occasional E! News anchor ditched the Los Angeles heat in favor of her parents’ palatial home in Newport Beach’s exclusive Newport Coast community. Liv was spotted having jovial lunch at Fashion Island’s True Food Kitchen with her father, Harold Ames II, Hollywood’s most tenacious entertainment lawyer. The father and daughter appeared to be in good spirits, as they dined sans the rest of the illustrious Ames clan, so it seems safe to assume that Liv remains in her father’s good graces for now. They later joined the rest of the family for a small, private party at the Pelican Hill Resort.

Or perhaps this was just a show for good PR? It is rumored among political circles that Liv’s eldest brother, Harold “Harry” Ames III will be running for a seat in the House of Representatives next year in the 2014 election. Harry, a third generation lawyer along with his two brothers Darrien and Carter, will be the first in the Ames dynasty to run for a public office at this level. And while all the
other members of the Ames family have sterling reputations, Liv remains the black sheep for her past indiscretions, choice of career, and lifestyle. As such, political strategists might make an easy target of her in order to discredit Harry and his conservative views.

Despite being exceptionally gifted, Liv dropped out of Yale after one term and moved to New York to begin working for Rachel Zoe against her parents’ wishes. Soon after scoring her own clientele, Liv left Zoe’s tutelage and met rocker Davey Havok. The pair then eloped in mid-2005 shortly before Liv’s twenty-second birthday, effectively alienating Liv from her family. As if this was not enough embarrassment for Liv’s thoroughly proud, republican family, she moved hastily to divorce Havok after it was rumored that he had been unfaithful. Tensions between Liv and her family, particularly her iron-fisted father, have only recently thawed.

That Liv is being directed by her father to keep her nose out of any bad publicity in light of her brother’s bid for office, is not exactly a far-fetched idea. The current patriarch of the Ames family has been at the helm in ironing out Hollywood’s biggest scandals and is as formidable in the courtroom as he is in his private life…

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August 31, 2013

Los Angeles, CA

“Did you get my text?”

Scarlett jumped in her seat as a thrilled scream tore through the phone line in response to her casually posed question. She had just texted Liv a picture of her new engagement ring with the caption ‘You’re up for MOH again.’

“You’re engaged!” Liv cooed as soon as she gained her breath again. Scarlett imagined her best friend, who would no doubt serve as her maid of honor in her second wedding in the near future, clutching her cellphone in unbridled glee. “Oh sweetie, congrats, gong xi ni, mazel tov!” Liv continued exuberantly.

“Thank you. God, I would have told you sooner but this publicity circuit has been balls to the wall,” Scarlett began apologetically. “But I needed to tell you before I go public with the ring at premieres and stuff.”

“Don’t even sweat it, Scarlett,” Liv assured her, still obviously beaming at the news even if Scarlett couldn’t see her. “I know how it is. Oh, speaking of work, I just wanted to make sure we’re on the same page about Toronto. I’m going to miss you by a day or so but all your looks will be there waiting for you at your hotel since I will be transporting them myself when I’m there before New York Fashion Week.”

“Youup, got it,” Scarlett confirmed. “How is that Toronto thing going to play out, by the way? Does Ben know you’re not exactly sold on the idea about going to his premiere on opening night?”

Scarlett heard Liv heave a sigh before she responded in a tired way, “Honestly, as much as I want to support him, I think I’m going to jet to New York as soon as he’s suited up. I know he wants me to be at the premiere, but I’m actually really starting to feel preggo now. It’s only a matter of time before I start showing. I don’t want to give people a chance to speculate before I’m ready to announce that I’m having a baby—especially when I’m not on good terms with the father-to-be.”

“Honey, you’re going to be doing like four back-to-back fashion weeks right after Toronto and
you’re going to be stalked by paparazzi the whole time. You have more of a chance getting snapped looking pregnant at those things than you would if you were out for a couple hours in Toronto with Ben,” Scarlett reasoned. “Besides, you just look like someone who had one too many slices of grapefruit for breakfast,” Scarlett scoffed, poking fun at Liv’s naturally thin frame which had not seen any weight gain even with her pregnancy nearing its fourth month.

“Oh come on, you saw me for your fitting last week, I’m starting to have a little pooch!” Liv cried. Scarlett imagined her gesticulating wildly at the virtually non-existent ‘pooch’ in the general area of her abdomen.

“Anyway, you know I’m right,” Scarlett pressed. “Just go and have a little fun. Support Ben and catch an after party or two with him. After you have your baby, you’re not going to have as much time for that stuff, so you might as well do it while you’re free to do it.”

“You’re totally forgetting the Tom factor, Scarlett,” Liv pointed out. “He doesn’t know I’m headed out there and I don’t want to be unfortunate enough to run into him.”

Scarlett rolled her eyes. “I don’t think Ben would let it happen since he knows that Tom said to you when you told him about the baby,” she maintained easily. Apart from knowing that Benedict had some more-than-platonic feelings towards Liv, Scarlett knew he was fiercely protective of Liv in his own way. Not that Liv needed protecting but, considering her delicate condition, deterring any unwanted stress from Tom would be in Liv’s best interest as well as her child’s.

“You know, I’ll just figure it out when I get there,” Liv conceded. “Anyway, congrats again,” she added, returning to a vibrant tone almost instantly. “Hopefully we can catch up in person soon. Send my love to Romain and…”

**September 3, 2013**

*Tom Hiddleston Charms at 2013 GQ Men of the Year Awards*

*Decked in Armani, his most favored designer, Tom Hiddleston arrived at the star studded GQ Men of the Year Awards ceremony looking smart as ever. As he mixed and mingled among his peers and legends from different parts of the entertainment industry, Mr. Hiddleston clearly outshined many of the winners. To top it all off, he even had the coveted pleasure of bestowing the “Woman of the Year” award to none other than ‘Bling Ring’ star, Emma Watson.*

*However, owing to his demanding press schedule, Tom was unable to stay long after the ceremony or even attend any of the after parties. According to his press team, the star of Jim Jarmuch’s ‘Only Lovers Left Alive’ is due to arrive in Ontario, Canada for the Toronto International Film Festival tomorrow.*

*Tom will also be reprising, for the third time, his role as the villainous Loki in ‘Thor: The Dark World’ this fall.*

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**September 4, 2013**

**Toronto, Canada**

“..I always had a suspicion about the two of you. But I thought you had more honor in you, as a man, than to swoop in like some lecherous bird of prey scant weeks after Liv and I broke up. No, it seems that your sense of honor has left the Shire and made an “Unexpected Journey into
Benedict’s face hardened significantly at the multilayered insult dished out by Tom. “Apart from your excruciatingly out-of-place “Hobbit” reference, I must say that you are much more of a self-righteous prat than Liv let on,” he spat back with equal venom. “I thought she was merely exaggerating your pig-headedness when she relayed to me how you accused her of sleeping with me and her ex-husband in a single conversation. I see it clearly now, however, that you are striking anywhere at her character and anyone who was reportedly involved with her over the summer.”

Benedict willed himself to cool his temper, knowing full well that Liv could fight her own battles, but the rest of his anger spewed out at Tom like fires from Mount Doom. “Oh, heaven forbid even the thought that Liv’s second pregnancy should go full-term and she reveal that you are the absent father as that would certainly mar your image as Hollywood’s most eminent and genteel English thespian!”

At this, Benedict watched Tom’s face screw up in utter fury. There they were, little more than thirty-six hours from opening night of the Toronto International Film Festival, having a row at six in the morning in the gym facility of the hotel that both of them were staying at. Tom had just arrived to Toronto and, having slept the entire flight over, was energized enough to squeeze in a quick workout. Benedict, on the other hand, was trying to sweat out his nerves on a treadmill when Tom strolled in. Soon after acknowledging each other’s presence in the gym, curt greetings turned into a full-fledged argument regarding Tom’s treatment of Liv.

“As much as I am utterly incensed about this entire circus surrounding Liv’s personal life, I would never—never—,” he emphasized the repetition with a swift downward swipe with his hand through the space between them, “wish her to suffer another miscarriage, whatever it would mean to me,” Tom ground out. For a fleeting moment Benedict saw a look of wounded despair flit across Tom’s features. It was gone in the next moment as Tom threw a cautious look at the entrance to the gym over Benedict’s shoulder and his visage resumed its cantankerous expression. “In any case, I will not take responsibility to for something that she cannot prove,” Tom finished stubbornly.

“Who else could have gotten her pregnant, Tom? If she is nearly four months along, who else could it be?” Benedict snapped. “And don’t you dare stand there and continue to insinuate that she had been unfaithful in any way. You know her better than that.”

Tom gaped at Benedict as if suddenly realizing what he was discussing and with whom. “Why the hell am I talking to you about any of this? I get that you’re all close chums and that Liv’s got you up on a pedestal for being her most trusted friend and perhaps, at one point, I considered you a great friend of my own, but this actually has nothing to do with you,” Tom replied coolly, sidestepping Benedict’s question.

Benedict bit his lip as his guilty conscience reared in his mind. Surely Tom was onto something when he voiced his suspicions about Liv’s friendship with him. But that did not mean that the subject needed to be discussed right this very moment. No, Tom would likely send him back to London in nothing more than a children’s shoebox if Benedict admitted to having feelings for Liv, previously or currently.

Tom remained looking expectant at Benedict, the burden to answer being left upon the latter. It was then, in the space between looking at Tom in the eyes and taking a deep breath that Benedict knew that the correct answer should be. In hindsight he knew he would have done better to consult with Liv on the matter, but considering that he was saving their hides from further fury from Tom, this split-second decision would have to do.

“You’re allowing for this conversation to happen because of the fact that Liv and I are as close as we
are. Had she been carrying on an affair, logically, the two people who would know about it would be Scarlett and I. In the same vein of logic, if she was questioning the paternity of her unborn child, she would voice those concerns to the same two people she’s trusted for so many years now,” Benedict angled cleverly, his words shooting out at Tom at top speed. Then he gave a small, self-satisfied grin as he concluded, “You are hoping that I will somehow provide proof and assurance that Liv is pregnant with your child or otherwise tell you of some circumstance that would absolve you from any responsibility to her.”

Tom’s wordless reaction of unbridled surprise and his shabby attempt to hide the said reaction was everything Benedict needed to move forward with his plan of partial truths.

“It is in Liv’s—and her child’s—best interest that I tell you the two things she never confided in you,” Benedict said in a low voice, his face losing the grin that had graced it in the previous moment. “That is to say, what I am about to tell you cannot leave this room as it will surely condemn a man while vindicating Liv.” Benedict read the silent assurance of confidentiality from Tom and continued.

“Liv’s ex-husband was long hailed as a straight-edge, one who took no substances of any kind, alcohol or otherwise. It set him and his band apart and hailed a new era of rockers. I think that’s what drew Liv to him.” Tom pulled a look of annoyance which Benedict pointedly ignored as he continued, “It was only after they married did Liv discover that Davey wasn’t who he made himself out to be. He was actually quite addicted to prescription pills by the time they got married and hid his addiction quite well.”

At this, Tom scoffed. “How could anyone hide something like a drug problem from Liv? Nothing gets past that woman.” Benedict shrugged in agreement. “Logically, the Liv we know now would have. But, see, she was so naive and so besotted by him that she actually tried to save him from his addiction. She took him to see every doctor, carted him off to every drug rehabilitation program but nothing worked. After more than two years or marriage and countless failed interventions and trips to the emergency room to have his stomach pumped yet again, she finally filed for divorce. She did it to save herself because there was no way she would be able to save Davey,” Benedict finished, breathing heavily.

“So what, Ben? What do I care if her ex-husband was a junkie? What does that prove?” Tom snapped, looking irritable.

“The fact that Liv kept his secret all this time—when she could have used it to destroy him or make money off selling the story to the tabloids—shows that she cares about him and his well-being. All those rumors about Liv getting back together with her ex-husband are just rumors. Yes, they were collaborating on his tour wardrobe but they were also celebrating his sobriety, as they do every August,” Benedict explained. “Surely you’ve noticed how Liv somehow manages to disappear for a few days every August in the last three years you’ve been together? She goes to see him whether he’s in L.A. or off touring in Japan. Usually she doesn’t get caught by the paparazzi, like she did this year, but she’s more famous than ever with all the celebrities she’s working with and all those deals she’s been closing.”

Tom continued to wear his disbelief. “How the hell did you know all of this and she never breathed a word to me?”

“You forget that Scarlett referred me to Liv when she discovered my utter lack of fashion sense while we filmed ‘The Other Boleyn Girl’, Benedict provided. “We’ve been friends for more than seven years now. There are few secrets that Liv keeps from me.”
Tom seemed to consider Benedict’s words for a moment. “So you’re telling me that Liv definitely has not been sleeping with her ex-husband. She just, you know, keeps in touch with him because he’s a former drug addict and they still care about each other. They also like to celebrate his sobriety on an annual basis,” Tom summarized in a sickly sweet tone.

“Just because your parents divorced while you were away at Eton and made you a moody little prat for an entire school year doesn’t mean that all divorces fall into the same pattern of misery. Sometimes people can still be very civil, if not, cordial. I mean, are you sure you were dating Liv? Because you, of all people, should know what kind of person she is.”

“Yes, she is an unrelenting hurricane of a woman with absolutely no patience if things aren’t going her way!” Tom barked, clearly vexed at the mention of his parents’ divorce.

Benedict would have liked to retort but thought better of it. Glancing at the time on his watch he knew they wouldn’t get anywhere if he did not wrap things up very quickly. “Tom, the facts are right in front of you. The baby that Liv is carrying is yours. There’s no way it could be anyone else’s, not with how far along she’s into her pregnancy.” He saw that Tom was not fully convinced and frankly, he was not prepared to press the matter any further for tonight.

Gathering up his things, Benedict gave Tom a miserable wave and turned to leave. But just before he could open the door into the outer hallway, Tom spoke up.

“What was the other truth?”

“What are you going on about?” Benedict replied irritably, glancing back at Tom over his shoulder.

Tom stood where Benedict left him, arms crossed over his chest, looking expectant. “You said there were two truths that Liv has kept from me. I can only hazard a guess that, since the truth about Davey meant to provide proof that he is not the father of Liv’s unborn child, that the other truth has to do with proving the same about you.”

Benedict turned back to face Tom, willing his face to remain unreadable.

“Am I wrong?” Tom queried.

Squaring his shoulders very slightly, Benedict replied, “No, you’re not wrong at all.”

“Well?”

Benedict was not afraid of what he was about to disclose. He was not concerned for a moment about how it would make him look as a man. The only reason he hesitated to speak now, as Tom remained looking expectantly at him, was to fully appreciate the lengths to which he would go for Liv, to protect and exonerate her. He faintly hoped that his feelings for her would not go unrequited for very much longer, considering what he was about to do.

“You accused Liv, of sleeping with me as well, owing to the rumors spread while we were in Paris for Men’s Fashion Week.” Benedict began, his tone resolute. “But she did not; I promise you that as your friend. Even if she had, there would be virtually no way for me to get her pregnant.”

Tom pulled a look of utter confusion. “What do you mean?”

Sighing, Benedict shrugged. “Well, mate, apparently I can’t get anyone pregnant. My old girlfriend, Olivia Poulet and I found out about my, erm, fertility problem when we were trying to conceive in the last three years of our relationship. Olivia, Liv, and my parents are really the only other people who know about this.”
Tom looked utterly stupefied by the admission, effectively making Benedict feel slightly self-conscious.

“Certainly explains my acting in ‘Wreckers’ doesn’t it?” Benedict said with a humorless laugh, gesturing behind himself as if to point out the film from his body of work.

“Ben, I’m so sorry. I—God, I feel like a proper arse,” Tom mumbled.

“No, you behaved like one towards Liv,” Benedict disagreed ardently. “You owe her an apology at the very least.”

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In a vain attempt to get a few moments’ rest after his rather informative run-in with Benedict, Tom took to his bed. But his mind swirled as he began to finally understand why Liv never spoke much of her ex-husband either publicly or privately; and why she was so protective in her privacy of Davey despite the purported reason behind the demise of their marriage. However, the bombshell did little to distract Tom from the fact that Benedict made a distinct effort to prove that he was not the father of Liv’s child either…

Hours later, as the morning sunlight crept through the slits of the curtains of the windows nearest his bed, Tom considered the new options that Benedict’s information opened up to him. With the facts being what they were, Tom was sure that Benedict was not lying to him. To make up such a story about the true nature of Davey and Liv’s relationship and formerly married life as well as admitting something so personal of his own would be difficult to do on the spot, so all this must have been truth. This would mean that he was really going to be a father come the end of February because, as Benedict pointed out many times, there was no one else it could be.

He was going to be a father.

The full gravity of this realization crushed all the air from Tom’s lungs, effectively ejecting him from his bed.

He was going to be a father. Scrambling for his phone, Tom flicked through his calendar and began to count the weeks since Liv told him that she was eleven weeks along. Twelve, thirteen, fourteen…fifteen. Fifteen weeks. Tom exhaled the breath that had had not noticed he was holding as he slid down to the floor beside his bed. This meant that Liv was not only past the general risk period of losing her—their—child, but she was in her second trimester already. She was okay. Or was she? Was she eating enough or did the morning sickness prevent her from keeping anything down? Was she resting enough? No, he saw her several of her regular clients walk more than a few red carpets and events in the last month or so. Liv was clearly working her normal book of business, if not more…

He considered calling her. But realizing that he had no idea what to say or even any idea of what he was even thinking—

“God, is that the time?!” he exclaimed, catching the time on the screen of his cellphone. It was nearly eight in the morning and he was to have breakfast with Guillermo Del Toro at nine o’clock. But with all the press scheduled for the entire day after his meeting, this meant that he would need hair and makeup to be done before leaving to meet with the director.

As he rushed into the bathroom to ready himself for the day ahead, Tom made a mental note to get some Adderall from Luke. He was already well aware that, with Benedict’s bombshells and how own thoughts about his personal life rattling around in his head, there would be no chance in hell that
he would be able to concentrate on a single interview or meeting without some help.

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“Weren’t you able to get enough sleep last night?” Luke asked when Tom held out an expectant hand after the hair and makeup team had left his hotel room at a quarter to nine.

“Er, not really, I just had a lot on my mind,” Tom shrugged as he ingested the Adderall that Luke provided.

“So, while you’re in your meetings and interviews, I’m going to try reaching out to Liv’s people. I can’t seem to get a hold of her publicist or any of her assistants. She must have instructed them to ignore me,” Luke said as he and Tom rode the lift down to the lobby a few minutes later. “I’m still trying to see if we can’t get her to do an in utero-paternity test so we can determine a plan of action.”

“Let’s leave that for later, Luke,” Tom said decisively. “In fact, I want to talk to Liv first and get everything sorted out between the two of us.”

Luke gaped at Tom incredulously. “Sorry? For a second there, I thought you said you wanted to talk to Liv?”

“That’s right. I think it’s the mature thing to do.” When Luke looked mutinous, Tom continued, “I’m not asking for your advisement on this, Luke. That child she’s carrying is mine, apparently, and —”

“Wait, have you already spoken to Liv or someone on her team?” Luke cut across Tom.

“Erm, not exactly,” Tom replied, stepping off the lift and working his way through the busy lobby and out to the front of the hotel where he and Luke slipped into a waiting town car for their meeting with Guillermo.

“What does that mean, ‘not exactly’?” Luke fussed as Toronto whizzed by the windows of the car.

“I didn’t consider all the facts, at first,” Tom lied easily. “But, I’ve had time to think and now I know that Liv’s having my baby.” He paused to let it sink in—for himself or for Luke, he was not sure yet. “Can you find out when London Fashion Week is? She always goes so I will have a chance to speak with her then. I would have liked to catch her at the New Work Fashion Week, but since this festival and that Fashion Week run simultaneously, I will have no choice but to find her in London.”

Luke let out an exasperated sigh and conceded to Tom. “Fine, I’ll work on that,” he agreed, as the car slowed to a stop in front of a quiet little café.

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After much deliberation, where practicality and privacy won out, Benedict decided against halting his seemingly non-stop press schedule to retrieve Liv and her personal assistant from the airport. He did, however, ensure that she had a suite near his at the hotel they were staying at and that he could be reached around the time they agreed to meet for his fitting. Though, at this point, he wished most severely that his personal assistant had booked a different hotel for both of them entirely. It simply would not do for Tom and Liv is accidentally run into one another before Benedict could pull off the plans he had set in motion when he all but forced Liv to make a pit-stop in Toronto before heading to New York for Fashion Week. His plans notwithstanding, there was still the fact that the need might arise to carefully confess to Liv about what he divulged to Tom the other night. But that was a thought for a later time—determining her feelings for him was of more import.
As much as Liv strived to maintain a platonic friendship with him, Benedict casually dropped hints at wanting more than friendship now that they were both divested of any sort of romantic relations with others. Even when she confided her pregnancy to him a few weeks previous, it did nothing to deter his feelings for her. If anything, it rather intensified them, much to Liv’s chagrin. Where she had a laundry list of reasons as to why she would not embark on another relationship with him or any other man, Benedict only had a few words to say to that.

“Then tell me you don’t have feelings for me.”

Liv let out a sigh of utter exasperation as she swatted Benedict’s arm. “Seriously, can you just not?” Free from any press for the rest of the afternoon, they were able to squeeze in the fitting right before the festival pre-parties would begin later that evening. She adjusted the bow-tie of the tuxedo she was fitting on him as she continued speaking, “I mean, I don’t even know why you’re interested in me after all this time—especially now that I’m knocked up.”

Benedict maintained a seamless patience that he only reserved for delicate situations such as this one. “You know why,” he replied quietly as he gazed down at the top of her head; she was now fussing at an errant thread at the cuff of his dress shirt. “Perhaps it is my sincerity that you doubt.”

“Bingo.” Liv’s head snapped up as she spoke. “Can you tell me how you expect me to believe that you’ve loved me this entire time I was with Tom when you were with Olivia and all those other girls? And if you can somehow get me to believe that, then you can work on decamping from jolly old England to live in L.A. because I’m definitely never doing long-distance again.”

He countered her with a question of his own. “Can you tell me why you haven’t exactly declined my invitation to be my date for tomorrow night?”

Liv ignored him and appraised the tuxedo instead. “It looks good. I’ll have it sent out for cleaning along with the rest of your new looks.” She made to turn away to avoid his gaze, but he reached out a gentle hand, catching her wrist to stop her.

Heartbeat hammering through all his pulse points, he carefully drew closer to her as she gazed up at him with a tired but guarded sort of look. “I’ll tell you why,” he said, licking his lips nervously. “You feel something for me but you’re scared. You’re teetering upon whether I am sincere, exactly what you feel for me and everything else all at the same time. Because you know that if you can determine that what I feel is true then you would actually permit yourself to identify what you feel for me. Everything else, like ‘decamping from jolly old England’ and being pregnant with Tom’s child, would simply fall into place between you and me. You know well enough that there is little I wouldn’t do for the woman I love.”

“Yeah, I am scared. I’m terrified, Ben,” Liv breathed, her eyes an intense shade of green as she looked up at him. “This jeopardizes the credibility of my words to Tom as well as your friendship with him. I told him that there was nothing going on between us, but he hasn’t let up on giving you the cold shoulder all summer since that gossip about us in Paris ran in the tabloids. If we do this red carpet, that is a statement to Tom and the rest of the world that there is something definitely going on with us. Even when the paternity test proves that Tom is the father, he won’t want anything to do with it because we’d already be romantically involved.”

Benedict passed over the opportunity to enlighten Liv of the fact that he and Tom had indeed spoken the other night as was not sure if it would not contribute positively to the conversation. Instead he latched onto her last statement. “If he doesn’t, that is his loss, Liv. As I said before, you are curtailing yourself based on aspersions that may or may not be made about you, about the both of us. In any case, that child deserves to be wanted, by both parents—biological or otherwise. Who cares what the world thinks, what Tom thinks? We finally have a chance. Why should we let what
others think determine what we do?”

Liv pulled away from him with an unsteady half-step backwards. “Ben, what are you saying?” she asked, her voice nearly tremulous.

And there it was, the moment he had waited so long for. Trying to contain a premature feeling of utter elation, Benedict took her hands in his and gazed down at Liv with an intensity that would surely dissolve them both.

“If I was unable to forgive myself for letting you slip through my fingers then, I would not even be able to attempt to forgive myself this time around. And I think my longing to have children,” he said softly. “I am, in all candor, more in love with you now than I was the night I lost you to Tom.” Benedict paused for a moment to let the words take effect.

Much like their moment in June, as they shared cigarettes in the back alley of Nobu, he watched in carefully subdued glee as realization washed over Liv. This time, however, she looked less surprised and much more—dare he say it?—inviting, as if urging him to confide more to her. Then, when he could no longer bear it, his fingers seemed to thread themselves through her hair and settle on the nape of her neck. Another hand traced lightly on her soft jawline, tilting her chin up so that her lips would meet his.

The door of the hotel suite swung open to reveal Liv’s personal assistant, waving a pair of sewing scissors. “Liv, I’ve got the scissors! They were in—” Rhea stopped short of the scene, looking dumbfounded. Then, as quickly as she had come, she sped out, shouting apologies about never being taught to knock as a child. Before Benedict could register what had just transpired, Liv was already across the room, gathering up her purse and coat as she went.

“Liv, please,” Benedict began, starting after her.

She turned back to face him, her forehead knitted in distress. “I need to think, Ben. This is a lot for me right now.”

Benedict grew desperate to make her stay. “I meant it. When I said I loved you, I meant it,” he said earnestly.

Liv’s face softened as she reached up a hand to caress the side of his face. “I know,” she nodded. Then, with a kiss to his cheek she was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Note 7.2: My most humble apologies for my hiatus. I’ve been preoccupied with my mom’s health, a breakup (and the much needed therapy afterwards), and beginning the next stage of my education and career. I don’t know how often I can update but I’m hoping to follow this project through until the end. I hope you all can find a bit of patience for me… if not, I totally understand. Love and hugs to all of you!
Chapter 08

Liv’s mind was spinning. It could have been the fact that her morning sickness was more of the “all-hours-of-the-God-forsaken-day” variety and had been for weeks now; or that she had been worrying for several days if it would be so noticeable to her peers and clients that she would not appear at any of the shows for the first day of New York Fashion Week tomorrow; or that crippling fear that karma was coming back for her because she had come between Benedict and Olivia all those years ago.

Or, possibly, the fact that Benedict was not only in love with her, but he was fighting for her.

After a very slow walk back to her room from the thespian’s suite, Liv all but collapsed onto her bed. As she lay there, a hand upon her abdomen and another raked through her hair, Liv felt tears pool in her eyes. She shut them forcefully, squeezing the tears out. They leaked back, over her temples and into her hairline as she finally let out a soft whimper. Before she knew it, she was sobbing uncontrollably, tears spilling into her ears, her hair and even onto the duvet.

What was wrong with her? Yesterday she packed a few looks she was thinking of wearing to the red carpet with Benedict. Five minutes ago, she questioned the sincerity of his feelings. Now she was back to being confused and scared, still unsure of what to do, think, or feel. And she had no way of divining whether this was all hormones, feeling lonely, or something else…

Hiccupping and nearly retching from crying, Liv willed herself to marshal her thoughts, rein in her emotions. Her breathing not yet quite even, Liv asked herself, “If you weren’t so scared, what would you feel for Ben?”

No answer came to her. Liv tried again. She repeated it and repeated it until she was overcome with renewed sobs. This time she could not gain control of herself as easily. With rising sourness from the pit of her stomach she felt the initial heave of her body. She knew what was coming next. Almost a second too late, Liv bolted from the bed and snatched a nearby trash bin where she vomited the entire contents of her stomach. She retched at least twice more then, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand, she shuffled to the bathroom.

After ensuring that she had properly cleaned out the bin, she finally held her head up and looked in the mirror. Her reflection was haggard; blue eye bags, untidy hair, and pale skin-- almost grey-- from exhaustion. But she needed to answer herself, she needed to say it aloud.

“What do you feel for Ben?”
In the space of time where Liv drew breath to answer herself, her cellphone rang. Dropping her head in temporary defeat, she walked back into the living area of her room to fetch her phone.

Tom Hiddleston

The name along with an old photo she had taken in happier times flashed across the screen and Liv immediately recoiled in disgust.

“What the hell,” she muttered to herself, her mind speeding through possible reasons as to why Tom was calling her now of all times. Liv hesitated a moment longer but in a last spurt of equal parts bravery and recklessness, she tapped to pick up the call. “This is Liv,” she answered in a friendly and professional tone, as if to give off the air of one who had just picked up the phone without checking the screen.

“Er, hullo,” Tom’s voice came over in an abrupt manner, as if surprised by the greeting which was Liv’s full intention. “It’s er, me. Um, Tom.”

Liv let out an audible sigh, continuing her air of mistakenly answering the phone for a reason she did not know why. “Yeah, what do you want?”

Tom cleared his throat. “I just wanted to talk.”

Liv felt herself bristle. “I’m actually in the middle of something. I’ll have to call you later. Fashion week, you know.”

“Oh yeah, right,” Tom replied, sounding disappointed. “Can we talk when--”

“I’ll call you, gotta go. ‘Bye.” She hung up before Tom could get another word in. Staring at her phone, she bit her lip. This just was not an ideal time to have a cozy catch up chat with Tom, not right when she was trying to figure out how she felt about Benedict. But seeing as he was the father of her unborn child, it somehow felt like she owed it to him, the chance to talk-- just not right now. Ugh… no, no she did not owe him a conversation after the last time they spoke. In any case, at least she knew he was capable of civil speech again. How long that would last, Liv did not know.

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September 5th, 2013

Benedict’s Suite, Four Seasons Hotel, Toronto, Canada

“...Ben, just tilt your chin up about five degrees and keep your eyes on me,” Liv directed, as she checked the shots Rhea was taking with her phone. “Yesssss, perfect,” Liv sighed, giving Benedict a thumbs up to cue that he could relax while she selected the best shot to post to Instagram.

With roughly ninety minutes to go before the red carpet, Liv had Benedict dressed in a beautifully fitted black tuxedo for the TIFF premiere of “The Fifth Estate”. To complete the look the hair and makeup team had carefully parted and gelled his hair and powdered his face. He was ready for the cameras and the fans that were already awaiting his arrival at Roy Thomson Hall. Liv was also red carpet ready, having come into Benedict’s suite half an hour ago in a black lace and velvet gown that hugged her frame but gave an illusion of a slim midsection due to the peplum drop-waist design. And though neither had said anything about walking together on this red carpet, Liv showing up dressed to the nines was an agreement that they would, in fact be going together.

After making a final selection of which picture to post, Liv dismissed her assistant, leaving her alone with Benedict for the first time since the events of the previous day. He had his back to her as he
adjusted his tie in the mirror. They both knew nothing was wrong with it-- after all, Liv had put it on him herself. After a beat, Benedict finally turned around to face Liv, his hands clasped behind his back. But as he opened his mouth to speak, Liv forestalled him.

“Before we go, I want to say something,” she said in a rush, throwing her hands out as if to physically stop him from speaking. “Just hear me out.”

Their eyes met, sharpest blue seeking out sparkling green. Benedict nodded and nearly half smiled as if to encourage her.

Another beat.

Liv took a deep breath and dove right in. Her eyes did not leave his as she spoke. “You’ve been giving me a lot to think about. Not just last night, but over the last few months. I haven’t been fair to you. I even asked you to let us just be friends for now because I was so focused on my work and keeping my pregnancy a secret. Last night I finally gave myself time to think about you. And, the truth is, yeah I’m scared of what people might think of me, like I’m trashy or something. I mean, look at me-- I’m knocked up and apparently there could be three possible fathers,” she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper.

“But I’m more scared of not being true to myself, of not letting myself feel anything for you because of that fear.” Liv hesitated then pressed on in a voice more steady than she felt. “The first time around, I didn’t let myself develop feelings for you because you were attached and I was the other woman. I convinced myself that we were just fuck buddies who liked the thrill of sneaking around and that it would be worse if I let myself fall for you on top of sleeping with you.

“But I can’t lie to myself and I don’t want to hold back from you anymore,” Liv voice began to shake from the effort of keeping her emotions in check long enough to get the words out intelligibly. “I asked myself what I would do if I wasn’t so scared of what other people might think and what I would do now that I have a chance. And I knew, Ben. I knew that no matter how much I told myself that I only saw you as a friend, I knew it wasn't the truth. There's so much history there and so much we never got a chance to explore because you were with Olivia and then Tom came into the picture.” Her voice was brittle and her look so vulnerable despite her weapon of a dress and her war paint on her face. “I need to be careful for the sake of my baby, but I want to give us a chance that I should have waited on.”

At this Benedict cut in and closed the distance between them. His hands rubbed her arms in a comforting way as he spoke in a reassuring voice. “I would never have asked you to wait until I ended things with Olivia. And it’s almost better this way, there's enough of a gap between both our last serious relationships. Sure, it's a little complicated with a baby. But you know I can't have any of my own and I would love your child no less than I would if I could have children. We don’t have to really tell anyone about us and we wouldn't have to ever admit to anyone that the baby isn't mine. The fact that Tom doesn’t want anything to do with his child is awful for anyone to bear witness to, but they way I see it, his loss is my gain.”

Liv gave a sad laugh as a few tears spilled from her eyes at Benedict's words. “And you're not just being noble?”

Benedict shook his head emphatically. “We both know I'm not of the noble sort, really.”

Her heart lightened at the realization of their breakthrough in the last few minutes. The lead weight she had been carrying since Benedict's admission of loving her had finally lifted. Liv grinned up at him, the first true smile she had worn in months. “If it's okay with you, I'll just meet you at the premiere. I want to keep this quiet until you at least take me on a date or something.”
Benedict conceded easily, a smile adorning his own face as he gazed down upon her, the woman he had long since loved—finally within his grasp. “As many dates as you wish. And, you’re right about being discrete for now. I want to protect us against all speculation as much as I can.”

Finally overcome by the tumult of emotions she had been trying to keep at bay, Liv reached a hand up to stroke the side of Benedict’s clean shaven cheek. In the same breath, Benedict tilted her chin up toward him. Dipping his head down, their lips met, sending an electric current through the both of them. Liv let Benedict deepen the kiss, tilting her head to the side to allow his familiar and so-missed tongue access to her own. His other hand snaked down to her hip to pull to closer, flush against his own body.

Just as Benedict’s hand trailed towards Liv’s ass and the latter let out a low moan, there was a knock at the door. Instantly they broke the kiss and both stared at the door.

“Ben, your publicist is here to take you down to the car,” Rhea’s voice called through the hotel door.

Liv made to answer but Benedict gestured for her to go to the bathroom to check her lipstick and replied evenly, “Thank you, Rhea. Tell Karen I’ll meet her in the lobby.”

Upon ensuring Rhea and Karen we clear of the outer hallway through the peep-hole, Benedict checked on Liv in the bathroom.

“You leave first,” Liv muttered as she cleaned some of her lipstick off of him, her lower back against the bathroom counter. “I’ll take a separate car the the premiere and meet you inside the venue. Then we can head to SoHo house for the afterparty together.”

Benedict frowned playfully, “If we must. I’d rather we skip that and take you on that date I owe you.”

Liv chuckled. “The job says it’s a must.” She kissed him one last time. “Now go, you’ll be late!”

Grey Goose After Party, SoHo House

Arriving together at SoHo House under the radar was not difficult considering they arranged to be dropped off at a back entrance. None of their peers or associates would want to remain unseen tonight. Everyone wanted to be photographed entering or leaving the party at some point.

After snaking their way through the kitchen, Liv entered the party first while Benedict ducked into the washroom. Out of habit, she quickly picked up a glass of some vodka mixed drink that she had no intention of drinking. It was merely a prop. Several minutes later, Benedict emerged, laughing immoderately alongside Michael Fassbender whom he clearly just ran into at the washroom.

Pretending they each had not seen the other, they circled opposite ends of the main room that pulsed with music, allowing for event photographers to take pictures of them amongst completely separate groups of party goers. Some time after the clock struck eleven in the evening, Benedict casually strolled across the room where Liv was chatting animatedly with Toronto native, Rachel McAdams.

“...I would love to dress you for that premiere,” Liv was telling Rachel. “I’ll be leaving for New York tomorrow morning, so I’ll have my assistant book some time for us to meet when we’re both back in LA.” They air-kissed each other and ended their conversation, Rachel making her way to a nearby group where Jake Gyllenhaal was telling a set story to raucous laughter. Liv hung back, loitering near the hors d'oeuvres as Benedict made his way to her.
“Hey you,” Liv murmured just loud enough for Benedict to hear. Her smile was radiant to Benedict and she certainly had the glow of an expectant woman. That coupled with the victory he had won earlier that evening, made Benedict feel elated fit to burst. What he wouldn't give to whisk her away right that moment. But they had to play it cool, they were friends after all.

Leaning low to speak closer to Liv’s ear so he wouldn't have to repeat himself over the din of the party, Benedict suggested “Let's give it another hour or so?”

He felt Liv shift her footing and turn her torso towards him so she could respond just as quietly. Her caught a sensuous whiff of her white tea perfume as she spoke. “I'd say sooner than that. No one will really miss us.”

“I hope I'm not interrupting.”

The low voice was pleasant enough for anyone who didn't know Tom Hiddleston personally. However, measured coldness was detectable to both Liv and Benedict who very nearly jumped apart.

There Tom stood, looking positively dapper in a his own black tie outfit, his face fixed with a mechanical smile that practically screamed, “What the hell is going on here?”

Jumping to the defensive, Benedict reached forward for a quick hug and a cordial greeting. Not missing a beat, Tom returned the hug, knowing full well it was meant to keep up appearances for all parties involved. In the short time of the hug where Tom could see over Benedict's shoulder, he threw Liv a questioning look which she avoided by turning her head the other way.

“Didn't know you'd be at this party,” Benedict said evenly, positioning himself close to Liv, a hand on the small of her back. The gesture was not lost either Liv or Tom.

“I could say the same about Liv.” Tom replied, eyeing her middle section and the glass in her hand pointedly. “Aren't you supposed to be in New York for fashion week?”

Liv shrugged. “Ben had emergency,” she stated coolly. “I was already heading east so I made a pit stop to help him out.”

Tom raised an eyebrow. “An emergency? He certainly doesn't look to be in any immediate danger.” He paused, waiting for a reaction but both Liv and Benedict remained impassive. Then he pressed on, “But that certainly explains why you couldn't talk last night when I called.”

“Of course, she was taking care of my fashion emergency,” Benedict supplied.

Tom inclined head in understanding, though his expression clearly relayed that he didn't believe any of it. “Would you excuse us, Benedict? I too have a bit of an urgent matter to discuss with Liv here.” He reached out and pulled Liv by the hand.

Benedict started, his hand slipping from her waist. “No, you see we’re actually headed out. Liv can't be on her feet too long these days.”

Tom smirked. “Yes, seeing as she's pregnant with my child, I can certainly understand.” His smirk widened as much as Liv’s eyes did at this statement. “But I do have to discuss future arrangements with her. Won't be long.” Then he succeed and pulling Liv away. And by no discreet means, Tom led her through the party by the hand and into a secluded room beyond Benedict's vision.

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“What the hell is your problem?” Liv snapped as soon as Tom closed the Library door behind him.
“One second you don't want anything to do with my kid and even have the balls to tell me that you think it's Ben's or Davey’s. Next thing you're saying it's yours loud enough for other people to hear at a party.”

“If you had given me the time of day, we could have had a civil conversation about this,” Tom growled. “But you ignored me in favor of Ben and you're actually here at TIFF where you must have known I would be. We could have at least made arrangements to meet in person.”

“I don't owe you anything, Tom.” Liv spat.

“That child inside of you is mine, Liv. As its father, I have rights, same as you,” Tom hissed back.

Liv rallied at once. “It could be anyone's kid, Tom, as you painstakingly pointed out a few weeks ago. In any case, you don’t have any rights to this child until you have a blood test which I nor my doctor nor my father will authorize.”

Tom stiffened at the mention of Harold Ames, a powerful entertainment lawyer who disapproved of Tom from the moment they met. “So you've enlisted your father's help, have you?” He said in a calm voice.

Liv looked satisfied with the change of tone in the discussion. “I have. You know how my father is, Tom. He's always looking out for family,” she said smugly.

After the ugly fight they had the last time they spoke face-to-face, Liv had indeed sought out her father who was only too willing to help his only daughter protect herself and her unborn child.

“I see.” Tom said softly, looking at Liv as if he was seeing her clearly for the first time. “So you're going to play this as if you don't know who the father is. That would put me at your mercy until the the child is born.”

“I had no intention putting you at my mercy or even from keeping my child from you. If you don't remember, Tom, I came to you and told you myself. You know what you did that night? You made it out like I was some kind of whore or cheater with how you accused me that night. After everything I put up with for you and losing our baby earlier this year, I'll never forgive you for saying those things. You pushed me away for good.” And for what seemed the the umpteenth time in two weeks, tears pricked at the corners of Liv's eyes.

“I had to go to my father because you gave me no choice.” The tears nearly spilled over but Liv thought of Benedict and a small sense of strength blossomed in her chest. “You can send your petition for a paternity test to my father any time after the birth. Then we’ll talk future arrangements.” she finished stiffly and, striding to the door, left Tom alone in the room with nothing but his own misery and regret for company.

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**September 6th, 2013**

**Spotted: Benedict Cumberbatch Leaves SoHo House with Style Maker Liv Ames**

Following the TIFF premiere of “The Fifth Estate” Benedict Cumberbatch was seen leaving the Grey Goose after party at SoHo House in Toronto around midnight with his favorite lady friend Liv Ames. Though it looks like they could have been just two chums catching a ride together, party-goers at SoHo House reported that Benedict and Liv were seen canoodling in a corner shortly
before they left. Tom Hiddleston, a good friend and one time co-star of Benedict and former flame of Liv, was also in attendance at the party. Though, whether they crossed paths remains unclear. Sources say that Liv might be patching up things with her ex-husband but with the looks of things now, Davey Havok shouldn’t get his hopes up.

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**Airport Style**

Liv Ames showed off her amazing pins in slim cut Joe’s Jeans as she arrived at Toronto Pearson Airport at four in the early morning after supporting her rumored love interest, English Actor Benedict Cumberbatch at the Toronto International Film Festival. She teamed her designer denim with a loose grey top (designer unknown), a luxurious scarf from Marni and pair of black Ferragamo flats. Benedict, who took a break from his press commitments, personally drove Liv to the airport. The pair were seen walking to the ticket counter together and later embracing before Liv passed through customs. Liv is undoubtedly heading for a late start to New York Fashion Week which is already in full swing.

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**Tom’s Suite, Four Seasons Hotel Toronto, Canada**

By mid-afternoon Tom was fuming. He had awoken to a media blitz on Benedict and Liv that had begun brewing as soon as they had left the party venue. Swiping lint off from a suit jacket that he was to wear to yet another press call, he tried to master himself against the crest of his emotions.

Once Tom had finally gathered himself in the room Liv had left him in, she had already made her exit with Benedict. From what he could tell, they had tried to leave through the back and had gotten caught by paparazzi. Then in the morning, Benedict was seen taking Liv to the airport. Paparazzi then stalked Liv on the streets of New York as she walked to a cafe in between shows. The videos that splashed all over gossip sites all had paparazzi asking Liv a variety of questions on her love life.

“Liv is it true that you’re dating Benedict Cumberbatch now?”

“Witnesses say that you and Tom fought at SoHo House last night, can you comment on that?”

“Liv! Liv! Are you moving in with Benedict?”

“How’s Davey taking the news, Liv?”

This was not even the worst part. Somehow high-res pictures were circulating in the Tumblr underworld where Liv was seen looking gaunt after leaving SoHo House the night before and were accompanied by comments he wished he hadn't read.

“She's just #fuckingherwaytothetop and they're fighting over her slutty attention seeking ass.”

“Benny and Tommy need to come to their senses. She's not worth it, she isn’t even pretty.”

“That girl needs a sandwich and a plastic surgeon. And our boys need Lasik.”

“Hate this bitch with a mad passion. #totalCUNT”

Tom, though angry at Liv for now denying that he was the father and twice as angry at Benedict for being the one Liv turned to for comfort, could not stomach the vile way Liv was being treated in the press. People who didn't even know her, his own fans who claimed to love him, hated Liv. What
was worse, Tom had been the first to cast doubt on her character and did so to her face. The slap she
gave him that night in LA seemed to echo in his ears as he remembered her fury. He deserved that.

“But it’s rather obvious now, isn’t it?” Luke said after Tom confided what happened at SoHo House
to his publicist in the security of his hotel room.

“What’s obvious?” Tom asked, a bit confused at the lack of interest Luke was giving the situation as
the thespian fussed with his tie.

Luke fixed Tom with a most exasperated look as he replied, “They’re trying to keep you out of your
kid’s life so they can play happy families and up both their profiles. How does that look, a cute little
baby on her blog with Benedict and her cooing over it? Sells itself and forgives them both even if
they were sneaking around behind your back.”

Tom rolled his eyes. “For the last time, it’s not his, Luke! That child Liv is carrying is mine. Not,
Davey’s and not Ben’s, but mine. We’ve been through this already.”

“Yes but you won’t tell me exactly why you’re so sure now. My job is to plan a response for every
eventuality that I don’t already have a story and an alibi for. It’s a bit difficult if I don’t even have

“If I could tell you, I would. But I was told certain things in confidence and I’m going to keep that,”
Tom responded readily.

“You should have thought about that before telling me you were sure it wasn’t your kid she was
knocked up with.”

Tom sighed knowing that Luke was right. His rash actions right after Liv’s confession colored the
waters of all his future interactions with Liv, just as she said she would never forgive him so saying
those hurtful things.

He had allowed himself to be goaded on in his loathing and fury at Benedict and Liv respectively all
summer by the gossip rags built on flimsy or non-existent sources. But he knew when he was deeply
honest with himself, that this was his only way to cope with the breakup — to believe the worst of
the person he once cherished most in the world. As wild and out of character as the accusations
were, he allowed them room in his heart in hopes of pushing out the love and pain that resided there.
All it did, however, was produce the worst cloud of prolonged confusion and denial he had
experienced in his life. That confusion was made no better with discovery that Liv was pregnant,
Benedict’s very personal revelation, and ultimately coming to the conclusion that he was going to
become a father. Now that there was actual proof in front of him that Liv was actually moving on,
and with a friend who he had trusted against every suspicion to boot, Tom felt his emotionally
clogged heart sink to the pit of his stomach where it bore down with such an immense weight that he
suddenly found it painful to breathe.

Yet… something still did not quite make sense to Tom. Just two days ago, Benedict made a valiant
effort to clear his name, as well as Liv’s and her ex-husband’s name. He made it seem as if he was
defending Liv’s honor, as if he sought to reconcile Tom with Liv for the sake of their child. But if
that was the case, why was Benedict calling Liv for a supposed fashion emergency, going to parties
with her and taking her to the airport? And Liv was going along with it. Clearly this was a planned
move between the two so why did Benedict not mention this when they had run into each other at
the gym? Was this why Liv said she did not care if he believed if it was his child she was carrying,
because she already had Benedict waiting in the wings?

As Luke pressed a pill and a bottle of water into his hands, Tom turned the recent events over in his
mind, trying to divine the motive in Benedict and Liv’s actions up until now. But as he and Luke descended in the lift to the lobby and made their way out through the paparazzi and to the waiting car, Tom was nowhere nearer to a motive. There was nothing in his head other than that cloud of confusion. Then, as they neared the festival venue, he had no choice but to switch to public mode. Whatever train of thought he was on was put on hold as he screwed on his practiced dazzling smile for the waiting cameras and lost himself momentarily in the flashing lights.

Chapter End Notes

Hi... I was working on this chapter on-and-off over the past three-ish years since my last update. I just wanted to post this because I had it. I'm going to try and write on the next chapter but I'm working a lot lately and... I'm getting married (nice guy, really smart, really handsome). Anyway, I'll try to update some more, there's just a lot to cover.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!