The Major and the Consultant
by ddagent

Summary

A collection of prompts originally posted to tumblr focusing on Serena Campbell and Bernie Wolfe. Stories include everything from AUs to missing scenes. Each chapter will have its own title and pairing in the description.

Notes

anonymous prompted: "DEMETER: "Protect and Serve"-AU where Serena gets stabbed instead of Fletch."
The hospital room was too cold; the air conditioning making the room feel like the middle of winter. More than once Bernie had adjusted the sheets around Serena’s still form, not wanting her to get cold. She picked at loose threads; double and triple checked the leads running from Serena’s form to the monitors by her side. The stench in the room was overpowering. Not of death, or antiseptic gel. But the flowers and bouquets sent from everyone who wanted to wish Serena Campbell a get well soon.

She had been stabbed with a screwdriver and had undergone two lifesaving surgeries. Get well soon was an understatement.

Two raps on the door joined the percussion of Serena’s heart monitor. Bernie turned away from her dearest friend long enough to watch Henrik Hanssen enter, quietly closing the door behind him. He folded himself into the visitors chair beside Bernie, casting his watchful eye over his consultant and former right hand.

“Any change in her condition?”

“None.” Bernie’s tongue felt like sandpaper. When was the last time she’d actually had a conversation with another human being? “Her stats are good. She should wake up any time now.”

Hanssen nodded. He glanced over the room; gaze lingering on the extravagant bouquet of flowers Edward Campbell and his new wife had sent Serena. Elinor had stayed for all of a day, unable to stand the antiseptic smell. Jason visited when he could, leaving every night to return to an empty house; a carer now standing in for his Auntie Serena. No one visited her at night. No one but Bernie.

“When was the last time you slept in a real bed, Ms Wolfe?”

She shrugged. “I think I slept in the on-call room a few nights ago.”

“Mister Di Lucca informs me that you have not left hospital grounds since the incident.”

“Not true. Went to the corner shop for a packet of fags just this morning.”

She could feel Hanssen’s hawkish eyes on the back of her neck. What was she supposed to do, leave Serena? Abandon her in this too quiet, too cold room and let her wake up alone? It was bad enough she was still needed for her shifts down on AAU where Bernie couldn’t help but compare every patient she saw to Serena; how she needed to be there for her not them. But she knew that Serena would never forgive her if she left their ward in shambles. So she kept AAU running smoothly; kept their office tidy. Not a half-eaten sandwich or apple in sight. Bernie would clean and tidy and even give up cigarettes if only she just woke up.

“You should rest, Ms Wolfe. I can stand watch. As soon as she wakes, I will call you.”

Logically, Bernie knew she should. Get a good meal inside her; get a decent night’s sleep. But she shook her head, unwashed blonde curls tumbling out of her ponytail. “I’m not leaving her.”

“I understand.” Hanssen got to his feet, a hand lingering atop Bernie’s shoulder. “I have asked Mister Griffin to step in and take care of AAU, at least for the remainder of this week. As much as I empathise with your situation, Ms Wolfe, you are not in a fit state to take care of both AAU and Ms Campbell.”
“Fine.” She’d find time to get some sleep, find time to eat something other than a sandwich from Pulses. Have a shower, wash her hair, call her children. She’d step back onto the ward and come right back to Serena. She was used to this life. She just wasn’t used to the waiting. “Whatever you need to do, Mister Hanssen.”

“I thank you for your understanding, and for your cooperation. I think she’s rather lucky, don’t you?”

Bernie’s head snapped like an elastic band, fixing Hanssen with a glare. “I’m sorry?”

“I meant no disrespect, Ms Wolfe.” Hanssen looked at Serena with a soft smile, weary eyes. “But to have someone who loves her as much as you love her...I would consider Serena Campbell a very lucky person indeed.”

Love. Bernie wanted to challenge Hanssen but her lips were rough and dry from disuse. She wanted to say I don’t love Serena. But her actions had - as always - spoken louder than her words. Refusing to leave her side, refusing to let another surgeon operate on her. Letting her anger out and having to be restrained by both Fletch and Raf to stop her from hurting James Fielding. Everyone in the hospital would know by now how she felt.

“Everyone but you,” Bernie whispered, thumb brushing the back of Serena’s hand. “Probably should have told you first that I love you.”

As if saying yes, Berenice, you really should have done, Serena’s hand twitched. A slight jerk, thumb caught in the hospital sheets. Bernie leaned forward, hope overwhelming her. Wake up, Serena, please wake up. As if in answer, her hand squeezed Bernie’s. Weakly, at first, but then with the strength Bernie had seen during their arm wrestling match so many weeks ago.

Finally, Serena opened her eyes. “You look like I feel.”

Bernie laughed; clutching Serena’s hand so tight she feared she’d fracture bone. “Welcome back, Campbell.”

She had missed that smile. It was gentle and tired but it lifted something inside of Bernie. She would be okay. Some more time in hospital, perhaps a few weeks in rehab. But Serena Campbell would be okay. They’d go back to their ward together; forever clean and tidy just like she’d promised. They’d have many more glasses of Shiraz, this time with no smoke breaks as Bernie would give up cigarettes. Just like she promised.

She’d do anything for Serena. As long as she was okay.
"Dial M for Major" [Serena is Bernie's physical therapist]

Chapter Summary

anonymous prompted: "berena AU: after Bernie gets blown up she needs physical therapy and surprisingly enough, Serena Campbell is her new doctor. Serena has to deal with grumpy Bernie (who just wants to get fit so she can go back to the army), while both of them fall for each other, and their goals change along the way *wink wink*"

Hope you enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I could ‘fall’ down the stairs,” Bernie suggested, dunking her chocolate hobnob in her tea. “Or, or, I could slip in the bath tub. Accidents at home are very common. What do you think?”

Jason looked up from the advertisement for a new laundry detergent, frowning at Bernie. “I don’t see the logic in trying to injure yourself.”

Bernie nodded, accepting his point, realising that it would be difficult for Jason to understand. “Well, you don’t want me to move out, do you? Injuring myself is the only way that I can stay.”

“But if you told Auntie Serena that you’re in love with her, you wouldn’t have to leave. Then we could still be a family.”

Bernie sat back in her armchair, soggy hobnob falling into her cup of tea with a plop. Telling Serena Campbell that she was in love with her was not as easy as Jason’s tone suggested. For starters, Serena was straight. Her last two boyfriends were proof enough of that. Secondly, there was Bernie’s own position. A washed up, divorced army medic who had only recently been able to walk without her cane was not exactly a great catch. Finally, there was the fact that for the last year and a half, Serena had been Bernie’s physical therapist. First rule of medicine: don’t date patients.

A repeat of World’s Strongest Man came back on the television, stealing Jason’s focus from her. She was grateful for the reprieve. “Don’t worry, I’ll think of something.”

“I hope you do. I don’t want you to leave.”

“I don’t want to leave either, Jason.”

This place was home. Her own armchair, her own tea cup. Her own pad and pen when they watched Countdown together. Bernie couldn’t imagine leaving all this and finding a one bedroom flat just for herself. Couldn’t imagine leaving Serena.

Serena. Bernie heard her key in the lock, turned from the television set to see her walk through the door, laden with grocery bags from Sainsbury’s. Serena dumped them on the floor, hung up her coat, and joined them in the living room. Bernie followed her path to Jason first, watching as she gave her nephew a quick kiss to the cheek. She then made her way to Bernie, hand lingering on her shoulder.

“Everyone alright?”
Jason gave a non-committal nod. Bernie smiled at her, and was rewarded with a beaming Campbell smile in return. “Just fine. Need a hand with the shopping?”

“Only if you’re up for it.”

Bernie gave a firm nod, kicking herself as she realised what she was doing. “I think I can manage.”

Grabbing a couple of plastic bags, Bernie followed Serena into the kitchen. They were light in her hands; Bernie having regained a lot of the upper body strength she’d had during her time in the army. She was able to carry the bags from the car to the house, walk in the park without her cane. She’d even had a kick around with Jason in the back garden just the other week. That had been the kicker. The last straw. Seeing them in the garden together had made Serena realise that Bernie no longer required full time, live in care.

So she’d handed in her notice.

“So,” Bernie broached as she unpacked a few bottles of Shiraz. “Any news on the job front?”

Serena shook her head. “No luck just yet. But it’s always easier to find house calls than live in care. Now that Jason is staying here, I’d rather not take anyone else in.”

“I was the exception.”

She smiled. “Well, you rather came with the house, as it were.” True. Bernie had been staying in Serena’s guest bedroom for a few weeks when Jason had moved in with them. Those first weeks were rough. An angry, injured medic and a young man with Asperger’s had been a recipe for disaster. But they’d made their way through. Now she had to leave. “How about you? Any luck finding a place?”

“There are a couple of flats I can afford. Maybe we could go next week to look at them?”

Serena leaned across the kitchen island and squeezed Bernie’s hand. “Of course. Although, there’s no rush. We can do this at your speed.”

Bernie would rather not move out at all. But now that she was almost back to fighting form, there was no reason for her to stay. I need to find a reason to stay. “Serena, I don’t want to be a bother.”

Immediately, Serena dropped the oranges she had been unpacking and rushed to her side. “Your back?”

She hated herself for doing this. “My back. Would you mind?”

“Not at all. It’s what I’m here for.” Serena patted her hand. “Take your shirt off and meet me in my bedroom. I’ll just make sure Jason is settled and then I’ll give you a nice massage, alright?”

Bernie nodded, trying to hold herself back and not run up the stairs. It wasn’t entirely a lie. Her back had been tense lately; a product of stress caused by her impending move and the end of her relationship with Serena. Even thinking about it made her back twinge. When they’d first discussed the end of their arrangement, Serena had insisted that they’d still see each other. For a month, maybe. Then we won’t see each other at all. No breakfast together, reading The Lancet over tea and toast. No going to the cinema or listening to Radio Two and Serena teasing her when she didn’t know who was singing. No more Serena.

Sitting on the edge of her bed, shirt in hand, Bernie realised she was losing her best friend. And there was nothing she could do to stop it. Not really.
“Cheer up, might never happen.”

*Shows what you know.* Bernie picked her face up in an attempt at a smile as Serena crossed over the room to join her. “You’ve been carrying yourself differently the last few days; lot of stress in your shoulders. Want to talk about it?”

Bernie shrugged. “It’s all change, isn’t it. Change is painful.”

Serena made a *hmm* noise before settling down behind Bernie. She heard the cap of the massage oil. “Change isn’t *always* so painful, you know. Sometimes it can be exciting. A little scary, perhaps, but it can lead to exciting things. Things you’d scarce imagined.”

“Like getting blown up by an IED.”

“Like making new friends.” Serena’s oiled hands pressed against the small of Bernie’s back. She didn’t hold back the moan at the sensation. “That’s it. *There we are.* Tell me if somethings too painful.”

Bernie bobbed her head, closing her eyes as Serena’s thumbs dug into a torturous spot. She could handle pain easily, always had. But the relief of Serena’s hands on her skin was almost *orgasmic*. It wasn’t a coincidence that several of her fantasies had begun with Serena giving her a massage.

Serena gently undid the clasp of her bra so she could make a few sweeps along her spine unhindered. Bernie held the cups in place, leaning back into Serena’s touch. “No one does this like you, Serena.”

“I’m sure there are *far* more qualified masseurs in the world, Bernie.” *Not in this part of the world.* Serena was the best. After her accident, determined to return to the army as soon as possible, Bernie had wanted the best. *And here she was.* “But I appreciate the vote of confidence. Once you move out, I think you should get a massage every week to keep yourself loose.”

“What night’s good for you?”

Serena chuckled, both of them quickly falling into laughter. But that laughter died as soon as it had begun; the elephant that had moved in soon after Serena had handed in her notice suddenly rearing its ugly head. “This isn’t easy for me either, you know. But we both knew it was coming.”

“Did we?”

Serena pulled away from Bernie’s back, wiping her oiled hands on a towel whilst Bernie quickly redressed. Together they sat on the end of Serena’s bed, her hand clutching Bernie’s. “Do you remember when you first moved in? You were *desperate* to get better and get back to the army. You couldn’t wait to be at the stage you are now.”

“I know but…” *I fell in love with you. You changed everything.* “Serena, I…”

She wanted to get out the words, felt *I love you* on the tip of her tongue. She searched Serena’s eyes for any sign that she felt the same, that her feelings were reciprocated. They were dark and sorrowed and more than once they stole from Bernie’s eyes to her lips. She wet her mouth, Serena’s eyes followed. *Could she…did she…* Bernie knew she couldn’t say the words, not yet. So she acted instead.

She kissed Serena.

Firm, forceful; her hand lingering against the line of Serena’s neck. She pulled away all too soon,
wanting to gauge Serena’s reaction. She was smiling. “About bloody time.”

Serena grabbed two handfuls of Bernie’s shirt and dragged her forward, slanting her mouth across hers. Her lips were hot, insistent, stealing breath after breath and kiss after kiss. Bernie had seen Serena’s lips nearly blue from the cold; red stained from lipstick and Shiraz. She’d had them pressed to her cheek in greeting and to her forehead when she was sick. She’d fantasied about that mouth and she’d seen that mouth curled into a smile. She had thought about Serena’s lips for months and now she worshipped them. Light kisses, playful kisses. A swipe of her tongue to taste the coffee on her skin. A nip of teeth to hear that moan caught in her throat.

Bernie could kiss Serena forever. But they didn’t have forever.

As their lips parted, Bernie held Serena’s face in her hands. “I don’t want to move out.”

“I don’t want that either.” Serena stole another kiss, her eyes sparkling as she looked at her. “I want you to move in. In here.” She patted her bed just in case Bernie missed her point. “As my…if…you…do you? Want that, I mean.”

Bernie nodded, resting her forehead against Serena’s. “I do. Very much, Serena Campbell, very much.”

Massage forgotten, Bernie gathered Serena up in her arms and pulled her back against the sheets, desperate to kiss her until both of them forgot the hour, the day, the week. Jason had been right after all. There was no need to throw herself down the stairs or slip in the bath tub. And if she ever did get injured again, her girlfriend was the best physical therapist in all of Holby City.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Feel free to request more prompts for this collection at ddagent.tumblr.com
"Cracks in the Foundation" [Bernie and Serena have trouble living together]

Chapter Summary

delightfully ambiguous prompted "Artemis: Bin days".

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So, this is the new house.”

Serena pushed open the front door, stepping back to let Ric cross over the threshold. She watched, hesitantly, taking in her new home through his eyes. The knock of the linoleum floor under his boots. The cream paint that clashed horribly with the new furniture in the living room. The large framed photograph of Ellie on the wall, accompanied by smaller snapshots of Charlotte at her graduation; Jason and Cameron camping together in Wales. A pleasant house, if not yet a home.

“Do I get a tour?”

Serena laughed nervously, hand brushing the pendant around her neck. “Of course. This is, uh, the living room. Bernie picked the furniture.”

Ric ran his hand along the faux leather sofa. Serena wondered if he noticed the wine stain on one of the pillows, or the slight tear in the leather from Jason and Bernie getting carried away whilst watching World’s Strongest Man. She was grateful that Bernie had folded her blanket and stored it away. Would never have been able to live it down if Ric Griffin had seen the wrinkled blanket; the stack of pillows.

“There are three bedrooms and a study upstairs.” Ric followed her up the staircase, noting the gallery of pictures adorning the wall. He lingered on one of the six of them at Christmas. “We could have found somewhere smaller but we wanted the children to feel like they could visit.”

“Of course.” They reached the top of the stairs, Serena immediately moving to her right. But she paused, realising her mistake. “Still getting used to the new house?”

She nodded sheepishly. “I lived at the old place for so long I still get a little muddled. Cabinets in different places, different temperature in the shower. It’ll take time to get used to it all. Bernie’s fine, she’s used to living out of a suitcase.”

Ric looked right through her, as if he could tell she didn’t quite believe her own spiel. She wished he’d challenge her, make some joke at her expense. But ever since Elinor he was kind. Too kind. “I think it was the right move. New start, new house. New life together; you and Bernie.”

“That’s the idea, isn’t it?”

He didn’t question any further, just let himself be led around the new house. Ric didn’t point out the mould in the corner of the bathroom, didn’t mention the single toothbrush in the holder. Didn’t bring up how the two spare bedrooms looked so empty. It was only Serena who noticed the books Jason had left behind the last time he had visited, or the single teddy bear of Elinor’s that Serena had allowed into the new house. Ric did make a joke as they walked down the back staircase to the
kitchen; gently teasing Serena about how many times she and Bernie had christened their new home. She laughed, fobbed him off. Easier than lying. Easier than telling the truth.

“Glass of wine, Ric?”

He nodded absentmindedly; perusing the chore chart Serena had printed off and stuck to the refrigerator. “You do your own hoovering?”

Serena huffed as she uncorked a bottle of Shiraz. “Of course I do my own hoovering!”

“How do you have the time? Bernie’s running AAU; you’re running Holby, however temporarily. How can you fit in dusting, descaling the sink?”

She painted on a derisive smile, gently rolling her eyes. “Teamwork, Ric. And a woman can always find the time.”

Turning to throw the cork away, Serena was immediately given a stark reminder that a woman couldn’t always find the time. That no matter how well they’d worked together in the past, teamwork wasn’t always enough. Serena felt Ric glancing over her shoulder, no doubt concerned at her sudden pause. There was no hiding the bin, full to the brim. Nor the plastic bottles overflowing from the recycling container. And bin day was today.

“Well, looks like Ms Wolfe will be in trouble when she gets home. Sleeping on the sofa tonight, eh Serena?”

It was meant as a joke. But it cut so close to the bone that Serena couldn’t keep it together any longer. She broke down in tears, wrapping both arms around her waist. Ric’s hand gently held her shoulder, but she shrugged herself away from his attempt at comfort. When she’d dried her face with a sheet of kitchen roll (cheap, nasty, can’t Bernie do anything right), she turned to find a large glass of Shiraz pushed her way.

Ric had broken into Bernie’s stash of whiskey and poured himself a finger. “I take it your new start isn’t going as well as you’d hoped.”

Serena shook her head. “Bernie is sleeping on the sofa. We’re fighting. All the time. Here, at work. We haven’t had sex since—“Since I came home from my sabbatical. Two glorious weeks where they couldn’t keep their hands off of each other. But since they’d moved into their own place, they’d barely touched. “There were a couple of problems with the house when we moved in. Bernie got into doing the DIY; then she was swamped on AAU. Things started to slide.”

“A couple of dirty mugs here…”

“…a full bin there.” Serena sighed, swallowing half her wine. “It didn’t take much. I love Bernie but I’ve always known her housekeeping skills leave a lot to be desired. Living together, in our own home not just mine, made it all ten times worse. Then everything with Doctor Mayfield and Hanssen and suddenly I’m acting CEO.”

Ric offered no further interjection. Serena imagined he already knew the rest. As soon as she had taken up position as CEO, rumours and gossip regarding her and Bernie flew through the hospital halls like they were some sort of celebrity couple. Fletch had told Bernie the most salacious ones, and her partner had passed it onto her as if it was a good thing that people thought they were shagging in storage cupboards and Bernie was giving it to her on the CEO’s desk. It wasn’t long after that that their relationship had deteriorated even further. Serena picked Bernie over for every little thing; the slightest infraction. Fights at home over washing up had spilled into work and fights at work over
hospital resources had spilled into their home.

Hence the one toothbrush. Hence the blanket on the sofa. Hence why Bernie was at Albie’s, now, rather than at home with her.

Draining her glass, Serena reached over for the bottle. “What do I do, Ric? Holby needs me in command right now. It needs a steady hand.”

He frowned. “But does Holby mean more to you than Bernie? Hanssen will recover, eventually. Isaac’s trial will churn everything up but that, too, will pass. But it’s Bernie who will be standing there at the end. Whether you still love each other at the end of all this is another matter altogether.”

“I shouldn’t have to choose.” Serena sagged against the kitchen island. “But I suppose that’s the problem, isn’t it? Edward always made me feel awful for choosing my career over my family. Bernie knows what it’s like; Marcus did exactly the same. So we fight and Bernie sleeps on the sofa.”

Would she, Serena thought as she finished her second glass of wine, would she give it up if Bernie asked? If their relationship depended on it, if her future with Bernie was so in jeopardy, would she give up what was really her dream job? Bernie shouldn’t have to ask, was her only answer. Not that it was much of one. Ric had no answers either and, after finishing his whiskey, headed off home leaving Serena alone in her new house. It was quiet, still; no sound of the television as Jason watched his programs or Elinor on the phone as she chatted with her friends. No Charlotte playing her flute and no Cameron playing his X-Box. No Bernie. Bernie. The back door opened and a familiar blonde head popped through; the smell of freshly battered fish and chips wafting in with her. “Wasn’t sure if you’d eaten. Thought I’d bring something home.”

“Thank you.” It was the first civil conversation they’d had all day, all week. “How was Albie’s?”

Bernie shrugged as she found the plates, portioned the chips. “It was alright. Morven’s on a date and I had to deal with a jealous Cameron for two rounds.”

“The joys of adult children.”

“Indeed.”

They sat at the kitchen island, silence falling over the household as they munched their way through their chip tea. Halfway through Bernie got up and went to the bread bin, pulling out a loaf and making herself a chip butty. She left the knife hanging over the sink, and Serena resisted the urge to snap at her partner. All these little things were stacking up and it wouldn’t be too long before their rows turned into a fight to end all fights. A fight neither of them would win.

They needed a way forward. Serena shouldn’t have been surprised that it was Bernie who thought of one. “I think we should hire someone. To clean the house.”

“I.”

Bernie held her hand up, heading off Serena’s objections. “I know, I know. You’ve always prided yourself on a well-run household and when Jason lived here there were three of us to share the load. But now there are two of us and we’re both so busy…” She stretched her hand across the table, taking Serena’s hand in her own. It was the first time they’d touched in weeks. “I thought that if someone else did the washing and the ironing then we’d have more time for us. I miss you, Serena.”

“I miss you too.” She laid her other hand atop of Bernie’s, wanting nothing more than to reach across
the kitchen island and kiss her partner. “You’re right. You’re right. Hiring someone would ease the pressure.”

“And then when you come back to AAU, we can re-evaluate.” Bernie bowed her head. “If you come back to AAU. You’re doing an amazing job as CEO, Serena; I wouldn’t be surprised if the board asked you to stay on.”

Serena felt her eyes prick with tears once more. “You really think I’m doing an amazing job?”

Bernie nodded. “Absolutely. Only Serena Campbell could keep Holby afloat after the previous CEO was stabbed by a disgruntled former employee. I know we’ve had our run-ins but you’re doing amazing work, Serena. I’m really proud of you.”

“Bet you don’t think that when I’m shouting at you.”

She pulled back just a little. “When you’re shouting at me I do sometimes miss Hanssen. But I’m also a little turned on. CEO Serena Campbell is quite sexy.” Bernie winced, no doubt remembering their argument about the rumour mill. “I know you don’t want to hear that.”

“I don’t mind hearing that. From you.” Serena sighed, still clinging to Bernie’s hand. They should have talked about this ages ago. “I just don’t enjoy being the object of the porters’ lesbian dominatrix fantasies.”

Across the table, Bernie burst out laughing. Serena felt herself join in; felt the stress of the last few weeks fade away in Bernie’s company. There were still a few things they needed to work through, but as Serena was joined on her side of the kitchen island, she realised that they would make it through. After Kiev, after Elinor, they could make it through anything. They just had to talk to each other.

“New question. How do you feel about being the object of a trauma surgeon’s lesbian dominatrix fantasies?” Bernie teased, sliding her hands underneath Serena’s blouse and holding her close. Serena nodded, sighing contently as Bernie’s lips brushed hers. “God, I’ve missed you so much. I think I should go put the bins out and then take us both upstairs for a nice hot bath. What do you think?”

Serena tangled a hand in Bernie’s curls, pulling her partner closer. “I think that sounds perfect, except for the fact that bin day was today.”

“Ah, well, bin day is actually tomorrow because of the bank holiday. I put the note from the council on the fridge.”

Of course it was. Between her new job at Holby and her fighting with Bernie, she’d completely forgotten all about the bank holiday. Resting her forehead against Bernie’s, savouring the warmth of her lover’s arms around her waist; Serena wanted nothing more than to slip into a hot bath. But it wasn’t just the chores they’d let slide. Hiring someone wouldn’t fix this aspect of their relationship. “Bernie, I think we should skip the bins and christen the kitchen.”

“Do I need to get some holy water for that?”

Serena shook her head, chuckling. “No. I miss you. So I want us to shag on top of the kitchen island.” She smirked, feeling lighter than she had in days. “Up for it?”

“Oh Ms Campbell, what will the neighbours say?”

Serena pulled her down for a bruising kiss, relishing the taste of salt on Bernie’s lips. “Fuck the
neighbours.”

Suddenly she felt herself hoisted atop the wooden kitchen island by her macho army medic; her legs pushed around Bernie’s waist as they rutted against each other. Fingers and thumbs stumbled over buttons and zips as they peeled off layer after layer, both desperate to touch each other after so long apart. Remnants of their takeaway were knocked to the floor and Serena was sure that she heard the bottle of Shiraz smash. But it didn’t matter. They could clean it up in the morning. Right now, all that mattered was them. Finally together.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Feel free to request more prompts for this collection at ddagent.tumblr.com
"Bare Your Soul" [Bernie likes being naked around the house]

Chapter Summary

anonymous prompted: "ARTEMIS: Serena discovers how much Bernie likes to be naked around the house, at first she is kind of annoyed, then she decides to enjoy it."

Chapter Notes

This sort of follows on with my previous prompt "Cracks in the Foundation" but you don’t really need to read that one first.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

_Cup of tea. Long hot bath. Cuddle with Bernie._

Serena repeated those words to herself as she pulled into her driveway, trying to find serenity despite the incessant drone of her phone notification ringtone. She glanced at it, cursing the board member who was trying to reschedule the meeting they should have had today. Holby was still in a PR crisis after Isaac Mayfield had attacked poor Henrik, and Serena needed the board, well, _on-board_. She didn’t have time for those who couldn’t agree to even a simple meeting.

_Cup of tea. Long hot bath. Cuddle with Bernie._

Locking the car behind her, Serena shuffled up the gravel path to her new home. She was looking forward to a warm cup of tea, maybe those nice biscuits the housekeeper had started adding to the weekly shop. A long, _hot_ bath with all those fancy oils and soaps Jasmine and Morven had given her as a birthday present. Then, when she was feeling more like herself, she would cuddle up with her girlfriend; the lucky sod who had had the day off.

“Bernie, I’m back!”

“Oh _shit._”

The usual accompaniment to that conversational exchange was Serena finding her romantic partner involved with someone else. After a similar exchange she’d found Edward in their bed with an agency nurse and, after his _second_ chance, had found him shagging Elinor’s au pair on the sofa. Serena fully expected to see Bernie in _flagrante delicto_ with that blonde from Darwin who kept eyeing her up every time they went to Albie’s. Instead, she found her girlfriend naked on their sofa; tea cup in hand and half a packet of biscuits on the coffee table.

“Bernie. You’re…you’re…”

_Naked._ Those lovely small breasts and pebbled nipples were on show; Adrienne’s good china covering very little. Her bare arse was pressed against the replacement sofa (_thank goodness we got rid of the faux leather, that would have chafed horribly_). Bernie’s bush, the unruly and wild dark curls that Serena was so used to running her fingers through, burying her face between, was in full
view. In her living room. *Besides the television remote.*

It wasn’t the first time Serena had come home to a naked Bernie. But this was the first time Bernie hadn’t been waiting for her. “I should go put some clothes on.”

“I think that’s an excellent idea.”

Flushing bright red, Bernie quickly placed her tea cup on a coaster and made a beeline for the stairs. Her shoulders were hunched; her arms wrapped around herself, covering herself. *She was ashamed.* Serena felt that shame roll through her, then; disappointed that she had sent her partner away without even asking why she was naked in the first place.

“Bernie!” Serena called out, waiting at the foot of the stairs. A blonde head peered over the top of the bannister. She could still see bare legs, bare thigh. “I’m sorry. I was just surprised! You rather caught me off guard.”

“I thought you’d be home later.” She bowed her head, looking at her toes rather than Serena. “I’m so sorry. I’ll put some clothes on now.”

Serena placed one foot on the stairs. “Darling, I’m not mad. Just surprised. Of all the things I’ve come home to, you naked is by far the best. Just, usually, you’re naked for me.”

Bernie finally looked at her. “I like to be naked sometimes. Like how it feels.”

“Then be naked. This is your house, just as it is mine. But give me a little warning, next time? In case any of the kids decide to come over for tea?”

The thought of Jason, or either of Bernie’s children, or anyone from the hospital seeing Bernie nude filled Serena with immediate dread. That was quickly replaced, however, by arousal as Bernie descended the stairs to envelop Serena in a hug. She wrapped her arms around her partner, enjoying the feel of bare skin underneath her fingertips. Serena slid her hand lower, unable to resist the urge to squeeze her girlfriend’s arse. Bernie moaned against her neck, immediately pulling at the collar of her coat to leave a kiss there.

*Cuddle with naked Bernie. Make love to naked Bernie. Long hot bath. Cup of tea.*

After her acceptance of Bernie’s particular *quirk*, Serena found that the former army medic really enjoyed being out of uniform. She would come down in the morning to find her partner at the counter making breakfast, buttering toast in the nude. She’d drop jam on herself, *as she always did*, but this time she ran her finger along the curve of her breast rather than have to throw another vest in the wash. Certainly cut down on the laundry, and certainly increased the amount of times they’d had sex on the kitchen island.

She’d always appreciated Bernie’s body. She was a beautiful woman, and it didn’t take much for Serena to be aroused by her. She did not care, however, to be turned on when she was watching a documentary on ITV with Trevor McDonald. Yet there Bernie was, cross legged on their sofa with her cup of tea, commenting in the break about how they needed to add more biscuits to the shopping list. Bernie exercising in the buff whilst Serena tried to research a new paper was, too, distracting. Hearing her lover’s grunts as she did push ups made her wet. Coming in to find a thin sheen of sweat across her back, her nipples pebbled and hanging low as if waiting for Serena’s mouth, made her tackle Bernie to the living room floor.

The final straw came when Bernie was baking hot sausage rolls for the staff picnic and Serena had to yell at her to get her breasts out of the oven. “Have you gone *mad*, woman?”
Bernie stood there, the oven gloves on her hands the only item of clothing she wore. “It’s fine, Serena, I wasn’t going to burn myself.”

“But you could have. And Holby is the closest hospital to us! How would we have explained to the staff in the ED how you managed to burn your tit!”

Blonde hair fell across her face, Bernie struggling not to laugh. “I’m sorry. I didn’t think of that.”

Serena crossed over the kitchen, turned off the oven, glaring at Bernie who was still sniggering under that waterfall of blonde hair. “Bernie, I love you. But you have no sense of personal safety. You use chopping knives too close to your fingers. You drive like you’re Vin Diesel. And now you’re opening oven doors with no clothes on. I’m happy you’re comfortable in your own skin. But at least put on a shirt when you’re cooking?”

Bernie made a reluctant nod. “You’re right. Safety first. I’m just... really enjoying not having to wear clothes around the house.”

“I know.” Serena pressed a chaste kiss to Bernie’s lips. “And I’m glad you’re comfortable; I want you to be comfortable. But…” She didn’t want to hurt Bernie, shame Bernie. But they had to have this conversation before someone pulled a muscle. “Maybe you could wear a few more clothes whilst I’m around?”

“Really?” Bernie’s forehead furrowed. “I’d have thought it was the exact opposite.”

Serena shrugged. “Honestly, I’m not getting any work done with all the sex we’ve been having.”

Bernie honked; her breasts shaking as she laughed. Serena wanted to reach out and touch them, squeeze them. This is what I’m talking about. “Alright, fine. More clothes when you’re around. But, and this is just an observation, perhaps the problem is not with me. Perhaps, Serena Campbell, you should learn to keep your hands to yourself.”

“Go put on a shirt.”

“Yes ma’am.”

Bernie wore a smirk as she headed up the back staircase, winking at her just before she disappeared from view. Serena just shook her head at her partner, fishing out the sausage rolls and making sure the pasta sauce hadn’t burned. Keep your hands to yourself, indeed. Bernie was just as eager, just as wet. What was Serena supposed to do when she saw those lovely breasts that felt so wonderful in her hands? Or that glorious pussy that tasted so sweet? Or that arse that Serena just wanted to bite?

So distracted by thoughts of Bernie, Serena hadn’t noticed the pasta sauce now on her blouse rather than in the saucepan. “Bugger.”

Not wanting the stain to set, she quickly pulled off her blouse and ran it under the cold tap. Standing there in just her bra, Serena felt rather silly. Growing up she’d been told to be respectable, to always look professional. To not have any skin on show. She wasn’t quite the repressed Catholic schoolgirl she once was, but nor was she as free as Bernie Wolfe. And she did look free. And comfortable.

With the stain rinsed out as best she could, Serena left it on the radiator to dry. She went back to the pasta sauce, making two quick stirs of the saucepan before deftly reaching behind herself to unclasp her bra. There. She loathed wearing it anyway and her breasts certainly thanked her for it. The house was warm, making Serena feel rather comfortable half dressed. So, after double checking the spaghetti, Serena quickly undid her trousers and kicked them off. Standing around in just her knickers was quite freeing. Quite fun.
“Serena Campbell cooking in her underwear. What will the neighbours say?”

Serena brandished a wooden spoon at Bernie. “Nothing as the blinds are drawn and the door is locked.” She grinned as Bernie enveloped her from behind, a pair of calloused hands splaying across her bare stomach. “You’re right, though. This does feel nice.”

“Told you.” Bernie nibbled at the shell of her ear. “Although, you’re not quite done.”

Serena gasped as Bernie slid a thumb into either side of her knickers and tugged them over her hips, down her legs. They pooled at her feet; the residual warmth of the oven against her pussy making Serena buck. A pair of shorts and a RAMC t-shirt joined her knickers, and suddenly Bernie’s bare front was pressed against her back. Her hands gently explored her, softly massaging her breasts as Serena stirred the spaghetti.

“You’re a bad influence on me, you know that don’t you?”

Bernie sniggered, pressing a kiss to her bare throat. A finger curled along the metal chain of her pendant before slipping down to pinch an erect nipple. “I’m terrible. Got you into lesbianism, got you into nudism. The next thing you know, you’ll be drinking white wine.”

“No chance!” Serena laughed, leaning up to kiss Bernie. She pushed her tongue into her mouth, enjoying Bernie’s gasp and the slight roll of her hips. “But this, this we can keep doing.”

She really wouldn’t get any work done, now, would she? Ah well. The only thing she should be bringing home from work anyway was her wonderful, beautiful, naked Bernie.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Feel free to request more prompts for this collection at ddanger.tumblr.com
Anonymous prompted: "Chocolate/caramel: Serena hires an escort for a night. Could be as a date for an event or just for fun. :)"

Hope you enjoy this! Warning: pure filth.

The second the meeting was over – before she could be accosted and drawn into a lengthy discussion with an anxious board member – Serena was on her phone. One text to an unlisted number; no face or name beside the eleven digits.

_The Fairfax, two hours. Usual attire. Room number to follow._

She was halfway down the corridor, ignoring the calls of her name behind her, when she received a response.

_I’ll be there. Afternoon tea or dinner?_

Serena paused; thumb hovering over the _reply_ button. She had a presentation to prepare for; two elective surgeries booked before most people ate breakfast. As tempted as she was by the prospect of _dinner_, Serena knew her own schedule. _Afternoon tea_ would have to suffice. She replied as such, sliding her phone into her bag. Waiting by the elevator, Serena glanced over her shoulder; grateful that the two chattiest members of the board were already occupied by their phones. She would be unable to meet her timeframe if she had to field their questions and reassure their woes.

And, really, after _her_ day she needed _The Fairfax_.

Before she left she made sure all the paperwork was signed off and that the shift change was in place. She even replied to an email from one of the Board members regarding possible replacements for Henrik. But the moment she stepped out of Wyvern Wing and into the waiting cab, Serena was, for all intents and purposes, off the clock.

“Where to, luv?”

She smiled. “_The Fairfax_, please. Quick as you can.”

_The Fairfax_ was on the other side of Holby City; about a thirty minute cab ride through traffic. A historical landmark; its architecture was impressive both inside and out. _Pricey_, yes. But its walls and staff carried a certain level of _discretion_. Serena had, on a number of occasions, seen their local MP at the bar with a very pretty brunette who was certainly _not_ Ms Yeats. But she couldn’t judge, not really. Her time at _The Fairfax_ wasn’t exactly spent on her knees doing bible study.

Serena paid the driver and swept through the lobby; already feeling her stomach churn at the prospect of what laid ahead. She stood at the concierge desk behind a greying businessman. Those passing through _The Fairfax_ no doubt assumed she was there on business; one of the many travellers to come through Holby City. But the staff, in particular the raised eyebrow of the young man at the desk, knew better.
“Good evening, Ma’am, a pleasure as always. Your usual room?”

Serena smiled. Whilst at first it had been disconcerting to be remembered so, it did cut down on the hassle of getting her key. “If it’s available, Steven, thank you.”

The young man typed in her information; accepting the discreet envelope filled with crisp twenty pound notes as payment. There was a second, similar envelope in her purse. Serena subconsciously patted it as Steven prepared her key.

“Shall I leave one behind the desk for Ms Springfield?”

She nodded. “Thank you, Steven. I do believe there’s a little something extra in there for you as well.”

He smiled; slipping the extra twenty into the pocket of his waistcoat before attending to the next guest. When she’d first started visiting The Fairfax, almost a year and a half ago, she’d paid with her credit card. It had taken several visits and more than an hour of research in her incognito browser before she knew the best way to go about it. Paying in cash was better; as was respecting and taking care of the staff. They took care of her at The Fairfax. Twice a week for almost a year and a half meant a lot of tips. Those tips led to such perks as anonymity and a bottle of Shiraz in her hotel room.

Smiling at the bottle, Serena immediately poured herself a glass. She took a few sips as she slipped off her shoes and texted the room number to her guest. Once arrangements were made, Serena could finally relax. She undressed in the bathroom in just her underwear; pouring hot water and suds into the claw foot tub. Like she would at home, Serena lit a few candles and put her iPod on something soothing. Perfect relaxation.

Soaking in the hot water, sipping a glass of Shiraz, Serena toyed with a nipple. She rolled it between two fingers; bringing it to peak. The hum of arousal she felt the moment she’d sent that initial text blossomed into a throb. She palmed her other breast, feeding the ache between her thighs. She would not come; not yet. She just wanted to be ready.

Once the water had cooled, Serena stepped out and into one of the hotel robes. She tied it loosely around her waist; relishing the brush of silk against her tortured nipples. Pouring herself another glass of wine, Serena sat by the roll top desk and awaited her guest. Sure enough, two hours after she’d sent the initial text, Serena heard a key at the door. Bernie.

The first thing Serena saw was heels. Black with burgundy soles; leading up to a pair of nylon covered legs. The rest was covered by a tailored trench coat; pinched and tied in the middle so not a sliver of skin was on show. Her blonde curls were messy from the rain but her smile was as bright as the sun. Serena gestured to the glass of wine on the table by the door; behind it her fee resting in a nondescript envelope.

“You made it alright, then?”

Bernie nodded. “No problem whatsoever. It’s a little wet out there, though.”

Serena smirked, toying with the tie holding her robe in place. “It’s a little wet in here, too.” There was hunger in eyes. The same hunger in Bernie’s. She put down her glass and undid the tie around her waist. “Take off your coat. Come here.”

She wet her lips as Bernie peeled off the trench coat, dropping it to the floor. The basque she wore was gorgeous. Practically see-through; with lace trim covering her nipples, her cunt. Gold clips held the fabric in place over her breasts, her stomach. It would take little effort for Bernie to be as naked
as she was. But Serena rather enjoyed seeing her in lingerie. The cup of the bra; accentuating her small breasts. The delicate strip holding her nylons in place. She was a beautiful woman. Serena liked seeing her in beautiful things.

With the coat removed, Bernie quickly dropped to her knees. Serena opened her robe wider before spreading her legs. She slid a hand through blonde curls, enjoying Bernie’s sigh as her short nails teased her scalp. Serena quickly guided her head between her legs, pressing Bernie’s mouth to her clt. “Be a good soldier, Bernie, and make me come.”

Serena could feel a smile against her skin, could feel the first tease of a tongue against her clt. Bernie knew how to please her. Serena recalled an afternoon in this very hotel room where, for the entire hour, Bernie had solely focussed on eating her out. Finding out which side of her clt was more sensitive; how many fingers she could take. It was almost routine, now. Bernie attending to the left side of her clt with short strokes of her tongue; hands spreading her wide. Occasionally she would slip her tongue inside her. It would always end with Bernie sucking on her clt, pressing her tongue flat against the pulsating nerve. A gentle orgasm before the main event.

Foreplay with men had been nothing special. But Serena loved it with Bernie. She loved watching that blonde head bob below her own thatch of dark curls; the noises Bernie made as she lapped at her wetness. She loved the first press of Bernie’s finger inside her – surgeon’s fingers – and she loved the bite of her nails against her thighs. Serena sat facing the door, wine glass in one hand, her other holding Bernie’s head firmly against her folds. The idea of any of the staff walking in, seeing them like this, was the final thought that brought Serena to climax.

It rolled through her; her fingers tightening in Bernie’s curls to keep her mouth in place. Her head rested against the back of the chair, relishing the moan in the back of her throat. It felt so good. Bernie’s tongue elicited a second orgasm, enough for her hips to buck against her mouth. She only pulled away when Serena loosened her grip.

Reaching up between Serena’s spread legs, Bernie stole a kiss. Serena could taste herself on her mouth; her lips and chin coated with her wetness. She ran her thumb against Bernie’s lips before sucking it clean. She then swiped her tongue against Bernie’s open mouth; licked at the cleft of her chin. She cleaned her lover; tasting every last drop of herself on Bernie’s skin. This always felt so good. “Thank you, soldier.”

“You’re welcome.” Bernie brushed her nose against hers. “Happy to be of service.”

“Good to know.” Serena gave her lover one last kiss before standing up from the chair. They weren’t done yet; not even close. “I want you to get on the bed; right against the pillows. Legs spread for me.” She grinned wickedly. “Are you wet, Bernie?”

A fine blush appeared across her cheeks. Serena loved it; loved the contrast with her mused curls and shining lips. “You know full well that I am.”

She did. She always was. Serena liked to imagine Bernie anticipating their time together just as much as she did; perhaps squeezing her thighs together on the cab ride over or maybe even touching herself before she left her flat. Either prospect was exciting, arousing. Serena offered Bernie her hand, pulling her up into a searing kiss. Her teeth teased her bottom lip as a hand slid inside Bernie’s knickers. Soaked. She ran a thumb across the lace detail on the front before working the clips on the side. Her knickers came off easily enough, discarded next to the bottle of Shiraz.

“Get on the bed,” she whispered in Bernie’s ear, tugging at her earlobe. “Keep yourself wet for me.”

Bernie gave her a mock salute – cheeky – before climbing onto the bed; giving Serena an excellent
view of her arse in the process. She positioned herself against the pillows, hand resting against the garter belt. Serena waited until a hand slid between Bernie’s thighs before she retreated to the bathroom. She found her handbag; retrieved the bottle of lube and a velvet bag she’d made sure not to leave Holby without.

There was probably some rule about bringing sex toys to the office. But Serena needed to fuck someone, and that someone would be Bernie. She quickly stepped into the straps, tightening the leather around her hips and arse. The base nestled against her clit, rubbing her just right with every step. She drizzled lubricant on one end, sliding her hand over the shaft to cover every inch. Finally ready, Serena stepped back into the bedroom. Bernie groaned when she realised what was about to happen.

“You bought it.”

“Couldn’t not do, really.” Serena dropped the robe, leaving her in nothing but the strap on. The cool of the air conditioning felt glorious across her nipples, her wet thighs. She edged herself onto the bed, lining up the head of the shaft with Bernie’s entrance. Her fingers were still brushing her clit; her wetness coating her fingers. “Tell me if I go too hard.”

Bernie nodded, once. “You can go harder.”

Serena snorted, sliding her hands over Bernie’s hips. “I haven’t even started yet.”

“I know.”

Serena held her gaze as she pressed the first inch of the toy inside Bernie. The bulbous head stretched her; the next few inches sliding easily inside. Serena knew how it would feel; Bernie had fucked her with a similar toy only a few weeks before. Now it was Serena who pushed their hips together, fingers sliding over the sheer sides of the basque. Leaning forward, Serena undid the first few clasps to let Bernie’s breasts spill out. As she gently eased herself out, Serena took a nipple between her lips. She tugged with her teeth the moment her hips snapped back inside Bernie.

“God, Serena…”

Grinning, Serena continued to lick and tease Bernie’s nipples whilst her hips worked that dildo in and out of her. Slow and steady thrusts had them both moaning; Bernie’s hands gripping the leather straps to work her in deeper. The base continued to press against her clit; another orgasm slowly building. But her own climax was secondary to watching Bernie fall apart; to fuck her utterly and completely.

Leaning back, Serena spread Bernie’s legs as far as they would go. She gripped Bernie’s hips as hard as she dared; knowing full well they would bruise tomorrow. But Bernie beckoned her on, hips lifting to meet her thrusts. With her grip tight, Serena fucked Bernie mercilessly. She pounded the dildo in and out of her, only pausing to drag the dripping tip across her clit. Bernie cupped her own breasts, pinching her nipples through the sheer fabric. All the while she stared at Serena, gaze only shifting to watch the bounce of her breasts; the sight of the dildo working its way out of her wet folds.

She couldn’t control the Board. Couldn’t control the change in funding to AAU or the fact that there were other names apart from hers on the shortlist for the CEO position. But she could control this. Could control the speed of her thrusts; how many inches she sunk inside Bernie. Could change the angle of the strap on; how she teased the spot just inside her. Serena could feel her own orgasm building; could see the sweat forming across Bernie’s forehead, could hear her harried breathing. She pressed them breast to breast; fingers teasing Bernie’s swollen clit as Bernie’s grip on the harness
thrust her towards orgasm.

Serena gasped Bernie’s name against her throat; teeth closing around her windpipe to stop herself from screaming. Her name was repeated as a prayer with every wave of pleasure that went through Bernie. Serena’s smile was boundless; her body boneless as she laid atop her lover. Bernie’s fingers teased her hair, brushing the damp strands. Eventually they were both still, relishing the post coital glow and the aftershocks of a mind-blowing orgasm.

Smiling, Serena turned to Bernie. She brushed her lips against hers. “I needed that.”

“I could tell.” Bernie gave her another, lingering kiss before she pulled away. “I need to clean up.”

*And that was that.* Intimacy and arousal fading in the realisation that this – for all intents and purposes – was nothing more than a business transaction. Bernie slid off the bed, throwing Serena a saucy smile before she sauntered off to the bathroom. She undid the harness, left the dildo on the clean sheets still dripping with lube and Bernie’s wetness. As she heard the shower run, Serena slipped on her robe and returned to her wine. She drained one glass before pouring herself another. This was the bit she always hated. *The after.*

After she’d finished her glass, Bernie returned; towelling her hair dry. Sometimes, when Serena wanted a whole evening rather than just an hour or two, they showered together. Water spilling over bare skin; the pressure of the shower head against bare flesh…a sensual experience. But today it was back to business. Bernie had retrieved the spare bag she left just outside so as not to ruin the illusion; that gorgeous lingerie replaced with a pair of skinny jeans and a plain white shirt. *No bra.* Serena could see her nipples through the fabric. *Not a bad trade.*

“Thank you, for today,” Bernie said, perching atop the desk and pressing her lips firmly against Serena’s. “We’ll have to use that again.”

“Oh, absolutely. Especially if the Board keeps giving me the run around.”

Bernie frowned, leaning back to snag her wine. “Don’t tell me they haven’t offered it to you.”

She rolled her eyes. “Shortlisted. I have twice the experience of anyone on that list *and* I’m already Deputy CEO. But apparently that’s not enough.”

“Fools, every single one of them.”

There were *some* benefits to the *after.* The snippets of conversation they shared over wine where it felt like they were actually friends. Where it wasn’t all sex and toys and control but career woes and children dramas and that awful new article in *The Lancet.* Although Sian had suggested she try other girls at the agency, Serena was happy with Bernie. She had been her first. Her first woman, her first escort. Why would she go with anyone else when what she had was so…spectacular?

“I should go.”

Serena nodded. Their time was up. “Night shift?”

Bernie grumbled as she finished her wine. “Unfortunately. Two of the porters are off sick.”

“You know we are looking for a new consultant at Holby,” Serena said, hating herself the moment the words spilled out of her mouth. “A woman of your talents should not be wasting them pushing patients between floors.”
Bernie wrapped her arms around Serena’s middle, her lips ghosting over hers. “I’m not wasting my talents. I think I’m using my hands very, very well.” She demonstrated this by rolling a nipple between her fingers, Serena gasping into her mouth. “I appreciate the offer, Serena.”

But it was a no. Always a no. Serena had read on forums and in blogs that men sometimes offered their escorts lavish holidays or gave them expensive gifts. She kept trying to offer Bernie a job as a consultant surgeon on AAU. The country’s leading trauma surgeon should not be a porter in a lowly hospital a town over; nor should she have to supplement her income by providing a first time service to those experiencing their Sapphic awakening. Not that Serena was complaining. The moments she shared with Bernie were some of the finest of her life.

But part of her wanted those moments to be as equals, as something more than client and escort. After all, Bernie rarely saw a client twice let alone carried on with them for as long as she had with Serena. Surely there was something between them? Something other than money?

Sometimes she thought she saw the same longing in Bernie’s eyes. “Next week?”

“Next week.”

Sometimes, when Bernie took her envelope and walked out, she thought wrong.
"Homecoming" [Serena returns after Bernie is admitted to hospital]

Chapter Summary

anonymous prompted: "Serena returns before planned due to Bernie being hurt/in an accident/somehow admitted to the hospital. Angst galore ;)

I twisted this just a little but I hope you enjoy it nevertheless! Shout out to my girl ktlsyrtis who I made cry. Love you babe.

She’d forgotten how cold England was.

After spending two months in the South of France touring their finest wineries; another two lost in the history and grandeur of Italy; and the last two in San Francisco helping an old colleague write a book, Serena Campbell had really forgotten how bloody cold England was. Her mother had always claimed it to be the river that brought the chill. Serena didn’t know how true that was, but she did long for the scarf neatly packed at the bottom of her suitcase. She had left Holby in April with her red coat pulled tight around her neck. Now it was October and she pulled her jacket just as close.

There were some things, however, that Serena could never forget about home. The taste of British chocolate. The poor print of the Holby Gazette. Jason’s smile as he won again at whatever game they were playing. Bernie’s laugh that Serena could hear through walls and across floors. The sound of utter joy on the other end of the phone when she’d told her partner I’m coming home.

Serena felt that same joy she stepped out of the airport and breathed in her first breath of Holby air. But, as she waited on the kerb beside the picking up zone, Serena realised that there were some things that Bernie had forgot. Namely, her.

“Need a ride, love?”

Serena shook her head, slipping her phone out of her handbag. “No, thanks. My partner should be picking me up.”

Should being the operative word. Serena scrolled through the numerous emails that had flown back and forth between them over the last few days. She saw in black and white how they’d confirmed the time of Serena’s flight; her likely arrival time into Holby. Bernie had offered to meet Serena at the gate; a surprisingly soppy proposal from the queen of British Reserve. But Serena had suggested they meet outside and get home as quickly as possible. They could say their hellos in private.

Probably got caught up in surgery. She, more than anyone, knew how busy a consultant’s life could be. Ignoring the sharp little voice at the back of her head that told her otherwise, Serena decided to just call her. She was probably in the locker room, pulling on her jeans, desperately rushing to get to her. She didn’t forget me.

Serena waited through six rings until her voicemail kicked in. “Hi, Bernie, it’s…I t’s Serena. Listen, I’m at the airport and you’re, well, you’re not. I’m sure you’re caught up on AAU and you’ll just have to make it up to me when we see each other again. I’ll…I’ll get a taxi home. I love you, Bernie.”

I hope you still love me.
Serena tried to reassure herself of that on the taxi ride home. She missed you. Said she was excited to see you. But six months was a long time. She wouldn’t - couldn’t - blame Bernie if she had met someone else; fell in love with someone who was whole and present. Their friendship, the connection they shared, would always be there. Even if they could no longer be together. She’s just been called into surgery and forgot to call you. She forgot to text you for two months when she ran off to Kiev. She thinks emoji is a new music trend. Everything is fine.

“Here we go. Twenty-two Gressingham Avenue.”

Serena smiled and paid the driver. “Thank you.”

After helping her with her bags, the driver pulled away; leaving Serena and her suitcases by the kerb outside her former home. It looked exactly the same. Six months away; Serena would have expected some change. The ivy to have crawled up even higher; a broken window from Bernie and Jason playing football in the back garden. But it looked exactly like it had the day she’d left. Right down to the two milk bottles on the front doorstep. Her key still fitted in the lock.

“Anyone home?”

No response. Sighing, Serena hefted her suitcases across the threshold and closed the door. She hung her jacket on its familiar peg; placed her heels next to a pair of Bernie’s battered trainers. Leaving her luggage in the hall, Serena shuffled into the living room so she could collapse into the nearest chair.

But as she flicked on the light, she gasped. The entire room was covered in banners. Her mother’s antique china dog was wearing a party hat. There were bottles of champagne and Shiraz and a banner declaring Welcome Home Serena!; no doubt painted by the Fletchlings.

For the first time since stepping off that plane, she felt warm.

Grasping for her phone, Serena dialled the familiar number. Still no answer. “Bernie, it’s me again. Just wanted to let you know that I’m home. Thank you for all of this. It’s the perfect homecoming. Would be more perfect if you were here with me, of course.”

Throwing one last look at all the decorations, Serena walked the familiar path to the kitchen for a glass of water. She opened the fridge, expecting it empty, finding it full to the rafters with party food. “I’m assuming the party’s off, what with you stuck in theatre. Still, just means I get you all to myself, hmm?”

After stealing a mini ham and mustard sandwich, Serena closed the fridge. She looked at the calendar; at Jason and Bernie’s printed rotas for the week. Bernie had finished a good hour ago, but was obviously still at work. She could surprise her; maybe even go for a drink at Albie’s to celebrate. No, too much. But the idea of surprising Bernie held its appeal. “I love you, Bernie. I’ll see you very soon.”

Ending the call, Serena suddenly felt rejuvenated. She could collapse into a chair later; shower and unpack tomorrow. She wanted to see Bernie now. After six months apart she couldn’t wait a moment longer. So she grabbed her car keys and her purse and headed back out into the October chill. She struggled with the gears for a few seconds; the handbrake stiffer than she recalled. But the route to Holby City she knew like the back of her hand.

But unlike her house, things had changed at the hospital. Another car was parked in her spot. There were nurses and doctors wearing light blue and burgundy scrubs that Serena did not recognise. She tried not to stare at the ghosts of Elinor and Jason and the car as she strode through the doors of Wyvern Wing. They were just ghosts. She had spent the last six months putting them at rest. Thankfully the familiar sights and sounds distracted her from any wandering phantoms. The thought
of Bernie kept her on task. She was her anchor, her Northern Star. She’d brought her home and here she was.

Pushing her way through the familiar doors of AAU, Serena sucked in a breath. Antiseptic gel, body odour, blood. Perhaps not the most romantic of locations for a reunion but it would do. Serena nodded at a few nurses (all new) before sticking her head into their old office. No Bernie. Probably still in surgery.

“Excuse me, can I help you?”

Serena turned, greeted by a small woman in AAU scrubs. Dark hair; sad eyes. Very attractive. Oh please don’t be my replacement. “Yes, I’m looking for Ms Wolfe?”

Her mouth twitched; the polite smile she wore fading into a thin line. Perhaps she and Bernie did not get on. Perhaps they got on a little too well. “She’s in theatre at the moment. Are you family?”

“I’m her partner.” The woman nodded. “I’ll wait in the office until she gets out.”

The woman reached out, resting a hand on Serena’s elbow. “Perhaps you’d prefer to wait in the family room? It might be a while; it was quite a complicated procedure. I can get Doctor Digby to talk it through with you? You two know each other, right?”

“Why would—”

But then she knew. She knew why Bernie hadn’t picked her up from the airport; why her voicemails lay unheard. She knew why this doctor wanted to take her to the family room. She knew it by Fletch’s face as he came out of theatre. She knew by the way he looked at her. Bernie had looked at her the same way on that day, that fateful awful day, with Elinor.

“Bernie—” was all she managed to say before Fletch was by her side, large hands holding her upright. She stared at him; saw the tremble of his upper lip. “No. No.”

She was vaguely aware of Fletch speaking to her. It sounded like she was at the bottom of a pool; the water filling her ears. The words accident and little boy got through. A plastic cup of water was pushed into her hand, and Serena felt herself be taken into her office. Fletch sat her down in her old chair, still trying to explain about drunk drivers and Major Wolfe being a hero. Her arm was lifted and the plastic cup pressed to her lips. They were supposed to be back at home by now. They were supposed to be talking and kissing and celebrating with warm champagne and wearing ridiculous party hats.

But her love was on an operating table. And she was here. She should have been here.

“I need to see her. I can help.”

Serena tried to get to her feet but Fletch pushed her back down. “Serena, I know you want to help. But you know the rules. Look, the best doctors at Holby are working on her. Mister Griffin is in there; even Hanssen scrubbed in. She’s in the best possible hands.”

“No, no she’s not. Because this is a trauma injury and the best trauma surgeon we have is currently being operated on.” Serena bit back a sob. “I can’t lose her, Fletch. Not…not…”

“I know, yeah, I know.” Fletch held her hands, clinging to them. “We are doing everything possible to make sure she comes back to you, yeah? I promise.” He swallowed. “She’ll be back out in no time and we can go to that party we’ve been planning for you, yeah? Did you see the banner?”
She nodded. “I did. It was lovely. Your kids? Oh…Bernie’s kids. Have you-“

“Morven got in contact with Cameron; he’s in Costa Rica but he’s on the next flight out. Charlotte is getting the train down from London. Damon and Jason have gone to pick her up.”

Serena frowned. “Damon?”

“Jason’s new mate. F1 up on Darwin. Nice lad; sweet on Morven. We’ve got everything under control, Serena, I promise you. We learnt from the best.” Her lips twitched; Fletch smiling weakly as he managed to finally calm her. “Now I gotta go and check on the rest of the ward but as soon as there is any news, I’ll let you know, okay?”

“Okay.”

He gave her hand another squeeze before getting to his feet. “It’s good to see you, Serena. We’ve really missed you.”

She had imagined those words said under very different circumstances. Her first day back on the ward; over drinks at Albie’s. A knowing stare from Bernie with a smile that said I missed you most of all. Serena wondered if she would ever get to see that smile again. Hear that laugh. Feel her touch. The thought of having to plan another funeral; to package up another life…she felt like a knife was burning white hot through her heart. What would Bernie’s eulogy be like? Would her army friends come? Would her family? Would anyone other than their friends at Holby know what Serena had meant to her?

They’d fallen in love so quickly and they’d barely had enough time to be a couple before she’d left. Serena wondered if their time had run out.

Gulping at her water, she tried to distract herself with other things. She looked at her old desk; at the files of patients she didn’t know and photographs of a small boy she didn’t recognise. Nina Karnik said the paperwork. Her replacement. This was her desk now. Serena got to shaky feet and crept over to the other desk. Mountains of paperwork. Half an apple. Familiar photographs of Cameron and Charlotte and one of the two of them taken at Albie’s. Bernie’s desk felt familiar and warm and she held onto Bernie’s smile in those photographs; on the smell of cigarette smoke on her sweatshirt. Bernie was her Northern Star. She clung to her anchor and hoped she didn’t drown.

Hours seemed to go by. Nina passed through once or twice to collect files but did not speak. Perhaps she didn’t know anything. Perhaps she felt it best if it came from someone Serena knew. Eventually, barely an hour after she’d arrived, Ric appeared. He looked tired and his hands were rough from scrubbing out. It was over. They were done.

“Is she-“

“Alive.” Ric offered her a weary smile. “I won’t sugar coat it for you, Serena, it was touch and go for quite some time.”

Serena nodded; feeling her shoulders sag in relief. She was going to be okay. “Fletch said something about an accident?”

“Three car pile-up caused by a drunk driver Bernie was passing by, was there before the paramedics. Got caught up in the wreckage of another car trying to help a young boy.” Ric swallowed. “Her liver was punctured, several broken ribs. Severe damage to her leg.”

“Her hands?”
A surgeon’s life was their hands. Serena knew it would kill Bernie quicker than any car wreck if she could no longer perform in surgery. Thankfully Ric shook his head. “Her hands are fine. As is her leg; we managed to save it. But she’s facing an intense period of rehabilitation.”

“I’ll take care of her.”

Ric’s smile was warmer now. “I know you will. She kept talking about you, before she lost consciousness. Wanted someone to pick you up from the airport.”

Serena snorted. “Of course she did. A punctured liver is a flesh wound. God forbid I get a taxi home from the airport.”

“She loves you. And I’m sure she’ll be awake soon, if you want to see her.”

“I do.”

She needed to see Bernie with her own two eyes before she could let go of the fear still weighing heavily on her heart. That sharp little voice in the back of her head reminded her of every patient she’d brought out of surgery alive, only for them to crash mere hours later. It reminded her of Elinor, how she had appeared fine and then deteriorated so quickly. Serena needed to be there herself. To check the notes, her obs. She wasn’t going to lose another person in her life. She wasn’t going to drown. Not this time.

Inside side room A was a woman that looked like Bernie Wolfe. But there was none of the warmth or colour that Serena associated with her. Her hair was limp, straight. Her cheeks were pale and there was still blood in the lines of her face. There was a cable monitoring her heart; a tube helping her breathe; an IV full of drugs to help her with pain and infection. Serena never saw Bernie after the IED. She wondered if she’d looked like this. Wondered if this was the Bernie that the doctors on Darwin remembered.

Taking a seat beside her, Serena poured over her notes. They’d been thorough at the scene, thorough when she’d been brought in. She’d lost a lot of blood. But in her clinical opinion, Bernie would make it through. She was a soldier, a fighter. She would come home to her.

“Hello stranger.”

Serena lifted her eyes from Bernie’s notes as she heard the familiar yet strained tones of Bernie’s voice. She beamed at her partner, immediately clenching at her hand. She relaxed her grip when she realised she was holding on too tight. “Hello you.”

“You’re…back. I…there were party hats.”

Serena’s laugh was jittery; amusement punctuated by sheer relief. “I know, I saw. You didn’t have to go to so much trouble. I didn’t expect a trumpet fanfare on my arrival.”

“Damn.” Bernie wet her dry lips. “All those lessons for nothing.”

“I’m just glad to be home,” Serena swallowed, biting back tears. “I’m back now. So no more going off playing hero, alright?”

Bernie blinked. “Well I…I knew that England’s finest vascular surgeon was coming back. Thought she’d take care of me.”

Serena didn’t care how hard she held Bernie’s hand this time. “And I will. Once you’re fit enough we’ll bring you home and I’ll take care of you. Help you with your rehab and get you fighting fit and
back on the ward. I’ll look after you, Bernie, like you looked after me.”

Her patient, loving Bernie who never pushed her, never asked for anything more from her. She’d helped plan the funeral and she’d tossed dying flowers in the bin and she’d made sure there was food for Jason every night. She’d taken her distance and her sharp words and kept fighting for them. Bernie had left her once and Serena knew she was determined never to leave her again. Serena had had to leave. It was necessary for her survival as a person and for their survival as a couple. But she would never leave her again.

“Okay.” Bernie’s smile was weak, but her eyes were showing some of that familiar warmth. “So that’s the plan, then? You take care of me. I take care of you. We’ll take care of each other. We’ll love each other.”

“Yes, that’s the plan.” Serena lifted Bernie’s knuckles to her mouth; lips lingering in a light kiss. “You’re okay. I’m okay. The world can go round.”

“Can now you’re back.” Bernie’s thumb brushed the tear making a singular track down her cheek. “Missed you, Campbell.”

Serena took in a deep breath, swallowing down more tears. “And I missed you too; sometimes more than I could bear. But I’m home now. For good.”

“I’m sorry if I-“

She didn’t know what Bernie was about to say; but guessed it would be an apology for making her worry, for frightening her. For bringing up the ghosts of daughters past. Serena didn’t want to hear it. She cut off Bernie with a soft, chaste kiss; brushing away the moisture clinging to Bernie’s eyelashes before she pulled away. “Get some rest, love. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

She would be. Every hour, every day. Until they came home to stale sandwiches and flat champagne and fallen ‘welcome home’ banners. This wasn’t the homecoming they’d had in mind. Bernie recovering from major surgery; Serena waiting diligently by her bedside. But they were together now. That was all that mattered. Bernie was her anchor, her Northern Star. Bernie was home.
"Virtual Attraction" [AU - F1!Berena are in an online relationship]

Chapter Notes

The incredibly delightful ktlsyrtis prompted me "“You’ve Got Mail”/online dating AU”, and I've twisted it with another prompt from anonymous which was watching porn. So this fic is NSFW. I hope you both enjoy!

(As always, mad love to ktlsyrtis for appeasing my anxiety. Also, you owe me one fic cherie.)

After a twelve hour shift on AAU, all Serena McKinnie wanted to do was to go back to her flat, open up a half-decent bottle of Shiraz, and watch the new season of *Orange is the New Black*. Drained from broken bones, bloody noses, and a RTC where she had assisted Mister Hull in theatre, Serena could not even summon the energy to change out of her scrubs. Shuffling past Pulses and out to her car, Serena checked her phone for the first time all day.

Work email, text from mother, Twitter notification. *Her*. A message from armymedic69. *Hope your shift is going well.*

Smiling, Serena messaged back. *Utter shite. Looking forward to a large glass of wine when I get home. What about your day?*

Serena waited desperately for a reply; itching to check her phone the entire drive home. She knew better than to text and drive; having seen the consequences of doing so in an operating theatre. But she couldn’t help her eagerness. Ever since she had met armymedic69 on a junior doctor message board, she had found herself unnaturally drawn to the woman. Perhaps it was finding someone in a similar boat to her: junior doctor, intense ward, recent revelation regarding her sexuality. But her heart didn’t leap when she received similar messages from other junior doctors. Her stomach didn’t flutter with anticipation every time her phone showed a new notification from work or her mother.

She recognised the symptoms of attraction. Serena was yet to figure out a course of treatment.

*Off shift today,* was her reply when Serena finally checked her phone. She mentally kicked herself for agreeing to the overtime; realising she could have spent the entire day talking to armymedic69 instead. *Slept in, made cheese on toast. Watched some television. Missed you.*

Biting her bottom lip, Serena paused outside her front door. *Missed you.* It wasn’t just her, then, who felt the burgeoning attraction between them. It wasn’t just Serena reading into things. She wanted her back. *I missed you too. RTC in surgery. Could have used your trauma eyes.*

*Is it just my eyes you want?*

Groaning, Serena quickly pocketed her phone and hurried inside so she could continue their conversation in private. She hung up her coat, grabbed a wine glass from the cupboard, and poured herself a large glass. She took a welcome first sip as she re-read their messages. Then, summoning all the courage she possessed, Serena replied.

*Not just your eyes. Your hands would be just as good.*
Serena was on tenterhooks; eyes glued to her phone as she waited for a reply. When they’d first started talking, armymedic69 had been awful at responding. Serena would get back to her in a matter of minutes (barring shifts or medical emergencies) but she had taken days. Thankfully the better they’d known each other, the quicker she’d replied. Serena scrolled up through old messages while she waited; still wishing she had a face to go with the pseudonym. They’d described themselves once. Serena knew she had blonde waves, dark eyes. She imagined armymedic69 running her hands through her hair as she thought of the perfect response.

Then, the notification. *My hands, eh? They’d be able to help?*

*Yes,* she typed, leaning back against the counter. *Your hands. I’ve had a truly rubbish shift and I could do with a massage. Start with my back if you like.*

Serena felt her stomach flutter at the prospect of what was to come. The first tendrils of arousal crept through her, and she found herself quickly grabbing her wine and practically sprinting to her bedroom. Once the door was locked she unlace her shoes and unclasped her bra. There she settled against her pillows, one hand resting atop her stomach; her body clenched in anticipation of her response.

*If I was there, I would.*

“Damn,” Serena cursed, feeling more frustrated by the second. “What does a girl have to do to get a sext around here?”

*I’ll just have to make do with my own, then. They’ve served me well enough. I know just the spots to find…relief.*

Serena could picture armymedic69 sinking back against her pillows, groaning with lust. *You’re trying to kill me, aren’t you?*

*I’d rather do other things to you. That’s if you’re interested, of course.*

This was it. Moment of truth. Would they cross that line or continue to hover around it? Serena hoped for the former. *Always interested. I know I’m awful at replying but please don’t take that as a lack of interest. I really, *really* like you. You just might have to help me.*

*You’re supposed to be the experienced one here.*

*A fling with a girl at university hardly counts as experience.*

Serena snorted. *And drunkenly snogging my flatmate at a conference in Stepney does? But I’ll make it easier for you. Where are your hands right now?”*

Hers were toying with the drawstring of her scrub bottoms. *One hand is on my laptop keyboard. The other is inside my shorts.*

Letting out a groan, Serena used her admission as permission to slide her own hand underneath the thin cotton of her scrubs, her knickers. She was damp, getting wetter with every illicit thought that crossed her mind. The image of armymedic69 in a similar position made her keen.

*You watching anything good on that laptop of yours?*

*Ha. A friend sent me a link to a video about junior doctors. He meant it as a joke but I found it rather compelling.*
A link popped up in their message bubble. Serena clicked it, a video leaping onto her screen. Closing it lest her flatmate hear, Serena quickly retrieved her laptop and headphones and opened it up in her web browser. It was two junior doctors in rather tight fitting scrubs. They were being yelled at by their consultant; complaining about their work ethic and how they’d been so consumed with each other rather than the wellbeing of their patients. As the consultant (a rather gorgeous older woman with red hair) began pulling up her pencil skirt, Serena pressed pause.

*Oh my god it’s junior doctor *porn*.*

*Yes. He thought I’d get a kick out of it. Instead I’ve been…you know.*

Serena could only imagine what she’d been doing instead of laughing at the absurd depiction of the NHS. What with the older consultant in a tight fitting white blouse; the erect nipples of the two junior doctors visible through their cotton scrubs. Serena could even see a damp spot between their thighs. Moaning, Serena watched another few seconds of the video. The consultant encouraged one of the junior doctors to her knees and guided her towards her pussy. The sound of her tongue working her folds was unmistakable through the headphones.

*It was a task, stroking herself whilst replying back. But she managed it. *They’re quite something, aren’t they? Three beautiful women. Can’t help but think about my own workplace.*

Serena almost laughed at the speediness of her reply. *Our head of surgery is very beautiful. I might have been thinking about her. And you.*

A lesbian threesome was a little outside Serena’s current wheelhouse, having only kissed a girl and nothing further. But this was fantasy. She pictured herself in the place of the young brunette doctor, sitting atop her consultant’s desk and rubbing herself through her scrubs. armymedic69 was on her knees, Serena’s own head of surgery forcing her to pleasure her orally. She felt slick wetness coat her fingers; her arousal rolling through her.

*I’m thinking about you too. Where are you in the video?*

*The consultant is taking the brunette with a strap on.*

Serena groaned, her clit pulsing at the thought. Since coming out, she’d indulged in plenty of lesbian erotica to explore this new side of her. A dildo working its way in and out of her, with soft hands against her hips and soft breasts against her back, was a recurring fantasy. Serena resumed the video, resisting the urge to skip ahead. She watched as the consultant came against the blonde’s tongue; wet her mouth as the two doctors were made to kiss. The consultant (Serena would never be able to look Ms Tolan in the eye again) ordered them to undress each other. She rubbed her clit as scrubs, then bras, then knickers, were removed. The sight of two beautiful women wearing nothing but their stethoscopes was a bigger turn on than she’d thought.

*She’s just making her lean over the desk,* Serena messaged; abandoning her clit in favour of her breasts. She pinched her nipples roughly; twisting until she felt a spike of pleasure. *I’m soaked, fyi, and I blame you.*

*You didn’t have to watch the video!*

*A beautiful woman sends me porn, saying she’s been touching herself to it. What was I supposed to do?*

Serena pressed play, her gaze occupied by the image of the consultant fucking the brunette with a large strap on. Sliding two fingers inside herself, Serena could almost imagine that dildo inside of
her. Her thumb brushed her clit; her free hand checking for another reply. She almost wished they’d exchanged phone numbers; wished she could hear armymedic69 whisper all manner of filthy things in her ear whilst she brought herself to orgasm. Maybe next time. Serena increased the pressure on her clit just as the consultant once again used her grip to guide her junior doctor playthings; this time it was the brunette’s opportunity to use her mouth.

_Honestly, I’m more taken with the idea of you touching yourself than watching this. You are, aren’t you?_

_Since you said you were. What are you doing?_

Serena kept one eye on the video; the other on her phone. *My flatmate got me a mini vibe for Christmas that I am finally putting to good use.*

_Oh god, the thought of armymedic69 using that…Serena felt another rush of pleasure. And, yet, I don’t have to be worried about this flatmate of yours, do I?_

_God no. She’s a stuck up cow. She only bought it as a joke; thought I’d never use it. Jokes on her. I’ve got it on the lowest setting right now. Any higher…I don’t want to come, not yet._

_Serena didn’t want to either. None of her recent encounters had ever been so erotic, so intimate. But she could feel her orgasm building. Her folds were slick; her knickers wet. Her arousal was peaking; her thumb constantly pulling back before her orgasm could crest and come. She felt her swollen clit underneath her fingertips and for the first time could imagine armymedic69 touching her. Tasting her._

_Come for me, soldier. That’s an order._

_Serena counted in small, delicate strokes across her clit how many seconds it took for her to come. She pictured her chest heaving; blonde curls soaked with sweat. Damp fingers grasping at the buttons of her phone to describe their first mutual orgasm. Serena didn’t think she could last much longer. Not with the image of Serena’s name on her lips; the fantasy of a blonde head between her own thighs._

_God, doctorshiraz, that was…I want you to feel like this. Touch yourself. Come with me._

_And she did. Serena rubbed her clit until her orgasm overwhelmed her; until she had to slap a hand across her mouth to stop herself from screaming. Her hips bucked to meet her hand; her cunt pulsed around the fingers inside her. She bit down on her pillow, touching herself until she came again. She wanted to reply, wanted to tell her she’d just had the best orgasm of her life. But Serena allowed herself a moment. She’d just masturbated to lesbian porn and the beautiful lesbian doctor that she was falling for._

_If only her seventeen year old, Catholic schoolgirl self could see her now._

_That was amazing. Thank you for being a part of my first lady-assisted orgasm. Here’s to many more._

_Serena laid back against her pillows, grinning when the response came through. *Any time, doctorshiraz, any time._

_‘I’ll take you up on that. But right now, I need food. Be right back? I’ll be here._

_Serena felt like she was walking on air as she left her bedroom; armymedic69 and her incredible_
orgasm staying with her even after she poured herself a glass of water and stuck last night’s leftovers in the microwave. But even as good as she felt, there was something missing. A person, a physical form to hear and see and touch. Maybe one of these days she could visit London and see her. Or armymedic69 could come down to Holby instead. She would, of course, have to explain why she’d lied about where she was; having told her she was in Bristol. The internet was a strange place. There were always doubts over who you were really talking to.

As the bell dinged on the microwave, her flatmate’s bedroom door opened. “Nice to see you’re wearing clothes today, Ms Wolfe.”

Bernie rolled her eyes, immediately ducking into the fridge for a can of red bull. “It’s my flat too, McKinnie; I can wear what I like.”

Serena scoffed, turning her attention to fluffing her leftovers. She glared at her flatmate as Bernie got a tub of ice cream from the freezer; lifting it to her flushed cheeks. “Out for a run again?”

“Something like that. How was the ward?”

“Busy.”

They both stood in their small kitchen; Serena eating mouthfuls of chicken and rice and Bernie casually licking her way through a pint of raspberry ripple. When she was done, Bernie left her spoon atop the growing pile of dirty dishes.

“I thought you said you’d wash up whilst I was at work.”

“I’ll get around to it,” Bernie shrugged. “Alright, McKinnie?”

Cursing Holby’s HR department who’d suggested the two new F1s on AAU moved into together, Serena lunged forward and snagged Bernie’s hand. “You said that two days ago. It’s your turn. How you actually manage to perform in surgery-“

“I’m a damn good surgeon,” Bernie shot back, lifting her hand out of Serena’s grasp and reaching for the washing up bottle. “Better than you.”

Resisting the urge to be drawn into another quick fire argument with Berenice bloody Wolfe, Serena grabbed her plate and returned to her room. She kept the door open, listening to the sounds of running water and Bernie’s muffled rant as she finally did her share of the household chores. Whilst she waited, Serena entertained herself with the last few messages from armymedic69. She was intelligent, engaging, no doubt gorgeous. Serena really, really liked her.

She couldn’t wait to meet her.
"For Your Protection" [AU - handcuffed together]

Chapter Summary

ktlsyrtis prompted “handcuffed together AU”

She felt the warmth of Serena’s breath on the side of her neck, teasing blonde strands that had escaped her ponytail. Warm lips nuzzled her skin; a nocturnal embrace. Her arm was numb; her body unable and unwilling to disturb Serena when she slept so peacefully. It was an intimate tableau. Two women, sleeping together on a double bed, the do not disturb sign hanging outside. But the cold steel of the handcuffs around her wrist felt odd, alien. They didn’t belong here. But they would remain for as long as Serena Campbell was in danger.

Bernie was ashamed to admit that she hoped Serena was in danger for a little longer.

She’d been taken aback the first time she’d met Serena Campbell. Strong, wilful, beautiful; unable to understand why Holby police wanted to put a car outside her home when she and DI Medcalf had broken up over a month ago. Bernie had volunteered to work surveillance; surprising everyone with her eagerness. Only an hour before she had been arguing to go back into the field; to do proper police work. In the end, a stakeout outside Ms Campbell’s home had led to one officer in hospital and Bernie and Serena on the run.

The handcuffs might be overkill. But Bernie wasn’t taking any chances.

This wasn’t the best choice of safe house. But Medcalf knew all the usual places; had helped Bernie move into her new flat when she’d left London for Holby. Serena had suggested the Fairfax, and if it wasn’t for the budget Bernie would have sprung for a room. But this would do. Even though the cheap mattress was doing a number on her back. The bathroom was surprisingly clean, although Bernie had noticed the lipstick print around one of the glasses. But they were safe, alive. There was a beautiful woman burrowing further into Bernie’s side.

She’d had worse assignments.

A low moan vibrated against Bernie’s throat. She felt eyelashes flutter against her jaw; fingers dab at damp skin where Serena had drooled in her sleep. Their arms jostled as Serena moved; stretching out her arms, her back, her breasts. Bernie felt dark eyes linger over her still form. Nimble fingers brushed along hers, before rubbing at the skin irritated by tightened steel cuffs.

“Not one for foreplay, are you, DI Wolfe?” Serena smirked, lifting up their hands. “Are these really necessary? I can think of a much better use for them.”

Bernie blinked, her tongue wetting her bottom lip. Control yourself. “I need to keep you safe, Ms Campbell.”

Her dark eyes glinted. “And you’re doing a wonderful job of it. But it’s been twenty-four hours since this whole fiasco started and I need to take a shower. I take it this…” She lifted their hands again. “Means you’ll be helping me wash my back?”

Bernie swallowed. Definitely had worse assignments.
"Three Steps to Heaven" [AU - Werewolf]

Chapter Summary

ktlsyrtis prompted “Werewolf AU”

FYI: This one does get a little racy.

Her eyes snapped open.

For a moment, Bernie could not understand why she was in the wine cellar. Nor could she work out why she was lying naked against the stone floor. But, eventually, it all came back to her. The sandpaper tongue; the matted fur. A leg, desperate to run, shackled to the wall. Waking from the Change was always disorientating. But, after nearly three decades, Bernie was accustomed to the aftermath of the full moon.

First step: unlock the shackles. A key had been left outside her cell, and Bernie stretched to reach it. She sighed with relief as the shackle clanked against the stone slabs. She rubbed her ankle, forcing blood flow down her leg. The shackles were not the most comfortable of devices, but they were useful for holding her wolf form. They were useful for other things, too. Bernie’s body pulsed as she recalled a different awakening, one of her first in this house. Shackled wrist and ankle; Serena’s warm mouth lapping at her swollen clit…

Down, girl.

Second step: attend to the body’s needs. Bernie stretched her muscles; flexed her arms and legs. All in working order. As she bent over to touch her toes, her stomach grumbled. The Change required a great deal of energy, and Bernie was often ravenous the morning after. Her nostrils twitched as she smelt something outside her cell. A plate covered with tin foil. Bernie scrambled over; grazing her knees against the stone in her eagerness. She ripped off the foil and devoured the lukewarm bacon and eggs with her bare hands.

Hunger sated, Bernie sagged against the bars of her cell.

Third, and final, step: burn off excess energy. In her youth, Bernie had spent the full moon running through woodland; hunting rabbits and foxes. These days, she just paced her cell. All that energy was still pent up inside her; the wolf still yearning to run even after returning to human form. Serena had laid out running clothes for her beside the key, the plate of food. Her skin itched. Her body craved. She could go for a run. But there was something else she would much rather be doing.

Reaching for the second key, this one a little further away, Bernie opened her cell door. She stepped over the running clothes, padding in bare feet past Serena’s extensive wine collection and up the stairs to the main house. All the curtains were pulled closed out of necessity for Serena, and for Bernie’s tendency to walk the house naked. Not that many passed their house. She’d heard the Fletcher children whisper outside about the two old ladies who lived in the haunted house; how no one would ever go near it. A good thing, no doubt, as the house was owned by a fifty year old werewolf and a vampire who had just celebrated turning two hundred and three.

Serena Campbell, one of the oldest vampires in England, and Bernie’s mate for life. She couldn’t
help but smile as she stepped into their bedroom; couldn’t help the grin at the sight of her beloved. Serena was stretched across the mattress; negligee and sheets abandoned due to the sticky August heat. There was no heartbeat to listen for; no glimpse of bare breasts lifting with every breath. Just a Shiraz stained mouth and a hand, outstretched, almost reaching for her.

Bernie slowly approached the bed. She crawled on all fours towards her mate; nuzzling Serena’s ankle with her nose. She pressed teeth and tongue against Serena’s legs; nipping her way up glorious thighs towards her wet cunt. Serena had touched herself before going to bed; writhed against their sheets as she, no doubt, thought about Bernie buck naked in the wine cellar below. Bernie could smell it on her fingers, on her bare thigh. Running her tongue along the crease of Serena’s leg, Bernie was rewarded by a hand sliding through her blonde curls.

“No run today?” She shook her head. Above her, Serena laughed. “Good. I’m not sleepy either.”

Smiling, Bernie bent her head and began step three.
Chapter Summary

@ktlsyrtis prompted “Bernie is at Holby when the Priest draws Serena” AKA A Berena remix of 16.23

Bernie avoided eye contact with patients and doctors alike as she fled AAU for the roof. *Today had not been a good day.* Her staff were bickering like teenagers in a playground; more concerned with their own petty squabbles than the patients. Bernie herself had lost one on the table; his injuries too far gone for her to do any good. The cherry on the bad day sundae was a painful early morning encounter with Serena. The vascular surgeon had flirted with her in the line at *Pulses* and Bernie, coward that she was, had simply bumbled and blushed until Serena had left with her latte.

On a day like this, she *really* needed a cigarette.

Slipping the pack of Silk Cut from her pocket, Bernie tapped a fag into her open palm and put it behind her ear for safekeeping. She quickly rounded a corner, her feet tripping over themselves in their eagerness to be up on the roof. But as she passed the chapel, something caught Bernie’s eye. An elaborate, erotic drawing of a woman in chalk. The closer she got, the more she recognised the subject.

Serena Campbell. *Naked.*

Bernie stared, mouth open, at the depiction of Venus on the wall of the chapel. Voluptuous breasts; glorious thighs. Dark hair Bernie had often wanted to thread her fingers through. Dark eyes that promised joy and mischief in equal measure. *This is the closest you’ll ever get to the real thing.*

Suddenly Bernie felt shame coil low in her belly; different to the shame her sexuality had provided but no less pressing. She shouldn’t ogle Serena this way. It wasn’t right, wasn’t respectful. She could only imagine the humiliation Serena would suffer if this drawing was made common knowledge.

So Bernie sacrificed her cigarette for a scrubbing brush.

She had plenty of experience scrubbing felt tip pen off living room walls, but chalk was a nasty bugger. It *smeared.* Still, Bernie threw her shoulder into it, determined that there would be no trace of this embarrassment before Serena could see it. Blonde strands stuck to the back of her head; her scrubs clinging unpleasantly. Damn thing wouldn’t come off. But Bernie kept going. She had a lot of frustration to work out after all.

Just as she was rubbing her brush along Serena’s thighs, Bernie felt a presence behind her. She turned, eyes wide, as she saw the original rather than the cheap imitation on the wall behind her. Bernie couldn’t help but let her eyes linger over Serena’s legs, her breasts. But quickly she turned her gaze to the floor, guilt and shame weighing heavily in her stomach.

“I was just coming to do that myself. Thank you, Ms Wolfe.” A hand brushed her shoulder. Serena came into view, smiling until she coaxed one out of Bernie herself. “One of my patients is suffering from a neurological condition. Thinks he’s madly in love with me.”

“Two aren’t mutually exclusive. You don’t have to be mad to fall madly in love with you, Ms
Campbell.”

Bernie bit the inside of her mouth, mentally slapping herself for not keeping her trap shut. But when she stole a glance at Serena, her eyes were twinkling. “Is that so?”

She suddenly craved the cigarette behind her ear. “I mean, you’re a very beautiful woman, Ms Campbell.”

*Just stop talking. Stop talking now. This drawing is embarrassing enough. She doesn’t need you drooling all over her as well.*

But Serena just leant in, almost conspiratorially; her eyes as mischievous as the drawing. “I appreciate the compliment, Ms Wolfe, but I think he used a body double. I certainly don’t have a figure like that. Or a figure like yours.”

There was something in Serena’s stare - the way her eyes lingered over Bernie’s lean legs, her small breasts - that gave Bernie the confidence she had long sought after in her encounters with Serena Campbell. “I think you’re fishing for compliments.”

“Well I’m not the one who called me a very beautiful woman.” Serena stepped closer and, for one glorious moment, Bernie thought their lips would touch. Instead, Serena just plucked the cigarette from behind Bernie’s ear. “Dear me, Ms Wolfe, you should know better. If you ever need suggestions for an alternate oral fixation, please know my door is always open.”

Suddenly Bernie was no longer craving that cigarette. “I might take you up on that.”

“I hope you do.” Serena wet her top lip. “I must apologise, I have a surgery to get to. Are you alright to finish taking care of this?”

Bernie gave Serena a mock salute. “Yes ma’am.”

Another lingering look: from the rigid stance of her hand to her taut thighs standing to attention. “At ease, soldier.”

Serena left with another touch to her shoulder; a glint in her eye reminiscent of a siren calling a sailor to sea. Bernie was in desperate need of a sea, or a bucket of cold water. She returned to the drawing, vigorously scrubbing at the space between Serena’s thighs.

She really needed that fucking cigarette.
"Dinner Date" - [AU - Bernie doesn't go to Kiev]

Chapter Summary

ktlsyrtis prompted “Bernie doesn’t go to Kiev, they have their dinner date.“

It was just dinner.

A simple dinner between two friends. Bernie would make curry, or dig out the leftover beef wellington she had made the week before. They’d talk over a glass of wine or three like they always did. Then Serena would go home to her house and Bernie would stay in her flat. Just because neither of them had to work the next day didn’t mean something would happen. Just because they were alone and could be as loud as they wanted didn’t mean something had to happen. Just because they’d shared a passionate kiss that morning and spent the entire day in a state of utter frustration didn’t mean they wanted something to happen.

Just because Bernie had given up an amazing job offer to be with Serena didn’t mean that she wanted a relationship with her.

It’s just dinner.

Like their first kiss, Bernie’s dinner invitation had thrown Serena into a state of disarray. Should she dress for a night at Albie’s, or a romantic evening? Should she bother to shave, and if so how far up? She ummed and aahed over the wine coloured lingerie she had bought last week; trying to ignore the consideration of Bernie’s face when she saw Serena in it. Earrings and bracelets came on and off. Mascara and eyeliner and blush were applied and then wiped away. As she slid her lipstick across her lips, she was gifted with the image of Bernie’s bare breasts covered in lipstick smears; a perfect imprint of Serena’s mouth around a dusky nipple.

“Oh god.”

Serena groaned, immediately chastising herself for the explicit fantasy of her best friend. But, between agonised sighs, a little voice spoke: you can think of her like that, now. You don’t have to hold back. For once, that little voice was right. Serena could let her eyes linger over Bernie’s form; let her mind conjure every lurid fantasy it so desired. No longer did she have to suffer the dance of denial regarding her attraction to a beautiful woman. No longer did she have to hold herself back from thinking about Bernie, thinking about kissing Bernie. Thinking about making love to Bernie.

Hold your horses, Campbell, it’s just dinner. You both have a lot of talking to do first.

She scoffed at that little voice as she slipped on her heels. But she knew it was true. They had to discuss what their attraction meant in terms of their friendship, their working relationship. Was this going to be a friends with benefits arrangement? Or would they go on dates and meet each other’s children and call each other girlfriend? Locking the house behind her, Serena hoped and prayed for the latter. She felt too much for Bernie for it to be restricted to the bedroom. She wanted them to cook together; for Serena to open a bottle of wine whilst Bernie worked her culinary magic. She wanted them to shop together in Sainsbury’s; to read the BMJ in bed on a Sunday morning.

Serena wanted Bernie, quite frankly. Every inch of her. Every second of her life. She wanted her and
was reluctant to settle for anything less.

On the way to Bernie’s, Serena rehearsed everything she was going to say. When the taxi pulled up outside her flat, Serena had a clear proposal as to their nature of their relationship. However, with every step forwards, her bravado seemed to slip. By the time she reached Bernie’s front door, Serena was an anxious mess: her fingers fiddling with her pendant, her mind overanalysing everything from her shade of lipstick to her choice of nylons. It didn’t help when Bernie was slow to open the damn door.

Serena was starting to worry that she had imagined the dinner invitation when Bernie’s front door was flung open. “Sorry, Serena, I couldn’t hear the doorbell from the bathroom. You’re early!”

Serena stammered out some excuse about traffic or shortcuts. Serena wasn’t sure what her mouth was saying as she was too consumed with what her eyes were seeing. Bernie Wolfe, her Bernie, was in nothing more than a towel. Blonde hair plastered to her scalp. Water droplets sliding over muscular arms, taut thighs, the valley between her breasts. The towel was old, threadbare; Bernie had to keep adjusting it to keep herself decent. The draft from outside pimpled Bernie’s skin into gooseflesh and Serena imagined Bernie’s nipples hardening under the thin material.

When Serena met her eyes, Bernie was smirking. “Safe to say my question of are you sure you’re attracted to women is answered.”

Serena chuckled nervously; her fingertips toying with her pendant rather than the loose thread of Bernie’s towel. “Quite. I should—”

“Yes. Please.”

Serena stepped forward, both of them dancing around each other in the small space of Bernie’s entranceway. “I’m sorry I’m so early, I just…wanted to see you.”

Bernie beamed, bowing her head under Serena’s attention. “I know the feeling. I’ve been trying to make everything perfect for you. Clean the flat, plan dinner…I’m not quite the romantic I want to be. I’m not even dressed.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Bernie wearing nothing but a towel wasn’t exactly a hardship. There would be plenty of time to see her all dressed up. Right now Serena was enjoying the fine blush spreading across Bernie’s collarbones. The freckles Serena could see dotted along her shoulder. The war wound that brought her to Holby; the scars that Serena wanted to nuzzle and kiss until Bernie keened. Perfection could wait.

“Tonight doesn’t have to be perfect.” Serena stepped forward, her hand pressing against the bobbles of the towel. She could feel the warmth of Bernie’s skin through the fabric. “In fact, let dinner burn. Let the wine stay in the bottle.”

“Let the wine stay in the bottle…” Bernie laughed. “Serena, are you feeling alright?”

She shook her head. “Actually, I think I’m coming down with something.” Before Bernie could suggest postponing, Serena placed a finger to her lips. “Perhaps a skilled diagnostician could help?”

Bernie’s eyes traced the plunging neckline of Serena’s dress; the shape of her legs and just the hint of a garter belt. The flush across Bernie’s chest deepened; and the grip of her towel only grew tighter. “Of course. You know, I’ve been feeling quite under the weather myself. Lots of different symptoms. Perhaps a trauma approach? Deal with the main problem, leave the paperwork ‘til after?”
Serena nodded eagerly. “Okay.”

With one hand on her towel, Bernie took Serena’s hand and led her across the flat to her bedroom. They made it two paces inside before the towel ended up abandoned on the floor. But Serena was right. Her shade of lipstick did look incredible against the pale skin of Bernie’s breasts. And her stomach. And her inner thighs. Everywhere, really. Especially across her heart.
"Rainy Day" [Bernie and Serena share an intimate moment whilst listening to the rain]

Chapter Summary

Inspired by a magazine article about recycling old short stories, I present Remix Monday. Every week, I shall remix an extract from an old story with a new pairing. I've decided to post them within my prompt archive, as essentially I'm using the original stories as a jumping off point.

The original story is Rainy Day, written in 2010 for The Closer. I’ve remixed the first 800 words into a Berena story; keeping the general atmosphere and most of the dialogue. Enjoy!

The heavens had opened, and rain poured across the Midlands. Holby City was smothered by clouds; the doom and gloom creeping across the ward. For once, the casualties were minimal; potential patients heeding the weather warnings and staying off the roads. Fletch had escaped early to pick up his kids from school. Raf was assisting Morven in the afternoon rounds. Serena…Serena was sitting in her office, lights off, listening to the sound of the rain and exchanging soft kisses with Bernie Wolfe.

It had started innocently enough. Bernie had just come down from HR, paperwork in hand. She was once again part of the AAU family after her recent secondment to Nairobi; a follow up to her work in the Ukraine. Serena had smiled as Bernie had passed the forms; made a joke about how long it would be before she got a better offer. I'm staying this time, Bernie had said, and Serena thought she really did mean it. They'd been co-workers and friends for close to three years at this point. Serena didn't think anyone understood her better. She wondered if Bernie felt the same.

"Looks like it's going to rain all afternoon," Bernie said as the conversation between them died off.

Serena nodded, wincing at the cracks of thunder. "I think you might be right. And here's me, forgetting my umbrella. Might as well swim to Albie's."

"I think I've still got one stashed in my locker. If not, I'll lend you my jacket," Bernie offered, sharing a brief smile with Serena across her desk. "Quick celebratory drink, then back home for a takeaway? I-uh-I mean, your home."

"I know what you meant."

Serena's home on Canning Drive had become theirs shortly after Bernie's return. Bernie had taken a taxi from the airport to find all her belongings in the garage and fresh locks on the door. In the time Serena had known Bernie, her marriage had never been stellar. It had suffered through Bernie's return; hit a speed bump when Bernie had seconded to the Ukraine. A brief honeymoon period had been brought to an abrupt halt when Marcus took early retirement and began begging Bernie to do the same. The closing of the trauma bay, Holby Pride, and an offer to help in the early stages of the Nairobi trauma centre had all driven Bernie to buy a plane ticket out of the country.

It had been the end of her marriage. But not the end of everything: Serena had picked Bernie and her boxes up and offered her spare room without a second thought.
"I bet you didn't miss this," Serena said, bridging another silence. "Cold, gloomy weather. Buckets of rain."

"Not particularly. But there were things I did miss."

"Oh?" Serena's eyes sparkled, knowing full well what Bernie meant. Upon picking Bernie up outside her old house, Serena had been given a bone crunching hug by the least tactile person in the world. She'd missed Bernie too. "Well, just so we're clear, they missed you too."

"I'd hoped they would."

This was the part where someone would disturb them. An emergency phone would ring. Raf would have a patient. But there was nothing but the rain. It lashed against the windows as Bernie slid her chair closer. Their office grew darker as Serena laced Bernie's fingers with her own. They'd been sharing a house for the past week. But with Jason and the baby, it rather felt like this was the first moment they'd had alone in some time. Since Holby Pride.

Bernie brushed a strand of hair back behind Serena's ear, thumb gently caressing the shell. Her hand lingered on the side of Serena's face. Serena didn't pull away. She was rooted to her chair; unable to do anything but fiddle with the cuff of Bernie's other hand. She'd washed this shirt only the other day. Bernie's shirts and trousers and knickers stuck in a rotating cylinder with Serena's own. Such a flimsy connection to fixate upon. They were linked together in other ways. The ward they ran. The friends they had. The affection – and attraction – they shared.

Without thinking, Serena moved forward and kissed Bernie softly on the mouth. The office flashed with lightening just as they broke apart. Serena didn't meet Bernie's eyes. Just fiddled with that loose button. "I'll have to fix this, later."

"No need. I'm a surgeon; stitching's part of the job." Calloused fingertips stole across Serena's jaw; fiddled with the teardrop earrings she wore. Bernie smiled. "Some things don't have to be fixed, you know. Some things can't. Best to throw it out. Buy something new. Something you've wanted for a really, really long time."

Serena swallowed, leaning in to Bernie's touch. "Is that so?"

"It is." Bernie shifted closer. "Do you need to scrub in soon?"

"No. ED's got things covered; people are finally heeding weather warnings." Serena pressed her tongue to her teeth, eyebrow raised as she probed Bernie's enquiry. "Why, what did you have in mind?"

"Come here and find out."

So Serena did. Neither noticed when the rain stopped.
"The Kids are Alright" [AU - Bernie and Serena's daughter is tired of being compared to Elinor]

Chapter Notes

Inspired by a magazine article about recycling old short stories, I present Remix Monday. Every week, I shall remix an extract from an old story with a new pairing. I've decided to post them within my prompt archive, as essentially I'm using the original stories as a jumping off point.

Our original story this week is The Kids Are Alright, an NCIS fic written way back in 2011: “A little redheaded girl doesn't want to dress like her older sister did one Halloween.”

I've kept little from the original except the basic plot, replacing Kelly with Elinor, and Micha with Charlotte. It was difficult to remix considering the misogyny of one of the characters, which actually became more about grief and anxiety. It was also supposed to be about 500 words. This is over 2000. Enjoy!

"Mum? Can we talk?"

Bernie immediately stubbed out her cigarette, blowing away plumes of smoke with her hand before turning to address her daughter. Charlotte was standing in the frame of the back doorway, still in her school uniform. She was chewing the inside of her mouth; a habit she had picked up from Bernie herself. Something was bothering her but, in true Wolfe fashion, Charlotte wasn't sure whether she was ready to talk about it. Bernie didn't pry. Charlotte would talk when she was ready.

"I don't want to go as a witch for Halloween."

Alright then, Bernie thought with an imaginary shrug, unsure of what else to say. But she bit back her words; knew there was more to this than Charlotte not wanting to go trick or treating in the homemade Halloween costume she and Serena had made themselves. The green lace had been as difficult to suture as an RTC in an active war zone. Jason's scarf, made with fifteen different colours of wool, had been much easier. If there was to be a problem with Halloween costumes, Bernie had assumed it would be her nephew complaining.

But it was her ten-year-old instead, who still hadn't revealed why she didn't want to be a witch for Halloween. But after a few minutes of silence neither Wolfe wanted to breach, Charlotte reached into the pocket of her school trousers and pulled something out. A dog-eared photograph. She showed it to her mother.

"Where did you get this, Charlotte?"

"Mum's side of the wardrobe." Charlotte frowned, crossing her arms. "I don't want to be a witch. She was a witch."

Bernie sighed softly at the picture of Elinor Campbell. Such a beautiful little girl. Dark hair, dark eyes. A wicked grin under the brim of a large witch's hat. Elinor's father, Edward, was standing beside her in – hopefully fake – bloodied scrubs. Bernie could imagine her partner taking this picture
and thinking that life could only get better. The car accident, the subsequent funeral, and the years of grieving were all to come. Not for the first time, Bernie was glad that Charlotte looked like her: thin lips, dirty blonde hair. It was easier not to compare their daughter with a ghost. Easier, but not impossible.

Serena was the hugger in their family, but today Bernie pulled her daughter into a tight embrace. Small fingers gripped the back of her shirt. "I'll talk to Mum. Go as whatever you want."

Charlotte ducked out of their hug quickly; her face and tears hidden under a curtain of blonde hair. "Thanks Mum. Love you."

"Love you too."

Charlotte stepped back inside; no doubt joining Cousin Jason for homework time on the dining room table. They'd catch up on their school work, have a fish supper (when Serena brought it home) and then go out trick or treating down the houses of Canning Drive; maybe the rest of the estate. Home for *Hocus Pocus* and a glass or two of Shiraz for the grownups. Bernie decided to dig out her emergency vintage, just in case her conversation with Serena didn't go well. They'd had many an argument over the years regarding Elinor, and Edward.

Was difficult sometimes not to feel like second best.

Burying those feelings deep, **deep** down, Bernie got back to decorating the house for Halloween. She'd had the day off, leaving her co-lead and partner to run AAU in her absence whilst she fiddled with fake blood and prosthetic limbs. Once Serena texted she was on her way home, Bernie quickly dressed in her Halloween costume (her army fatigues; an automatic guarantee of weakening Mr Campbell's knees); then she got the kids ready. Jason was going as Tom Baker's Doctor Who. Charlotte raided their wardrobe and came downstairs in a pair of Serena's scrubs and a spare stethoscope.

"Doctor Wolfe-Campbell," Bernie greeted, saluting her daughter.

"Captain Wolfe." Charlotte grinned. "Doctor." Jason nodded, fiddling with his papier-mache sonic screwdriver. Then the front door opened, Serena coming through. "Mum!"

Serena gasped as she saw her daughter. Shifting both takeaway bags to one hand, she wrapped Charlotte in a one-armed hug. Pulling away, her fingers reached over to adjust the line of Charlotte's scrubs; tuck some blonde hair behind her ear. Surprise was etched into her features; Serena had clearly been expecting a blonde witch to join her own coven. But her smile was warm, genuine. Their daughter wanted to go as *them* for Halloween. How could they not be thrilled at that?

"You look wonderful." Serena smiled at Charlotte, then at Jason. "Both of you. Two doctors for Halloween, how...wonderful!"

Her partner was never lost for words, so Bernie intervened. She quickly grabbed their cooling dinner, and ushered Charlotte and Jason out of the foyer. "Come on you two, let's eat!"

Serena mouthed *thank you* as they all headed towards the dining room. The table was already set; wine and lemonade already poured. Jason and Charlotte talked eagerly across the table; the spookiest monsters of *Doctor Who* once again up for debate. Bernie and Serena both ate in silence.

Serena kept staring at Charlotte as she ate her dinner; their daughter jokingly cutting the fish with surgeon-like precision. Bernie was staring at the empty chair at the end of the table.

Jason had called it Elinor's chair once. Serena had snuck off to their bedroom to cry.
Charlotte's sister had been nine when she'd died. Serena and Edward had been arguing; he'd then driven off high on coke with Elinor in the car. There was the crash, the surgery, the funeral. Bereavement leave that had turned into a sabbatical. Bernie wouldn't know Serena until much later. They met three years after Elinor's death when an IED had sent the army medic packing back to Holby. There was an instant attraction, months of flirtation, a kiss. Elinor had been gone five years when they'd moved into this home. Seven by the time they'd decided to have a child; risky considering their age but something they had both wanted. A family.

A boy. They'd wanted a boy. The ultrasound had said so; they'd painted the nursery blue. Cameron. But Bernie had given birth to a girl. Charlotte.

"—said I was failing at that too." Bernie blinked; Jason's voice cutting through her thoughts. He was discussing one of the nastier boys in his class. "Could you teach me some army moves, Auntie Bernie?"

"I–er–" Bernie looked to Serena for help. Her partner stared straight back; confusion furrowing her brow. Everyone else's plate was empty. Bernie's remained practically untouched. "RAMC was non-combatant, Jason; I'm sorry."

"Shame."

"Indeed." Serena stood up from the table, fixing Bernie with a look that said we need to talk. "Why don't you two watch some television why I get changed into my costume? I could use some help, Bernie?"

Bernie nodded, her chair muffled as it dragged across the dining room carpet. The kids went into the living room, Jason quickly taking possession of the remote, whilst she and Serena headed upstairs. They were going to have that conversation now. Bernie hadn't prepared for it; wasn't entirely sure what to say other than I'm not sure you love Charlotte or me as much as your first family. Knew that would go down as well as a glass of Chardonnay. Bernie sat on the edge of the bed, her fingers twitching as she longed for a cigarette. Serena didn't say anything. Just darted into the ensuite with a dry cleaners bag.

"So…" Bernie started, unsure the direction her sentence was taking. She checked her pager to see if there was some emergency that required them on AAU. Zip. "We should probably have a quick word."

"I agree."

The ensuite door opened. Bernie's jaw dropped. Serena stood in nothing more than purple lingerie: a lace brassiere that cut low on her breasts and barely there knickers that would come apart with one tug. Then there were the stockings. Trick or treat indeed. Bernie's gaze lingered over her partner's skin, wondering how long the kids would be entertained with episodes of Doctor Who downstairs. Serena smirked.

"You were saying something?"

Bernie couldn't remember any words other than wow. But she tried her best. "Yes. Something… something…Charlotte." There you go.

Serena sighed, reaching for the silk robe she kept on the back of the bathroom door. She joined Bernie on the end of the bed, hands clasped across her lap. "Is this about the sudden change from spellcaster to surgeon?"
"Yes. Charlotte found a picture of Ellie where she went as a witch for Halloween. She was pretty upset, Serena."

Bernie returned the photograph to its rightful owner. Serena pressed a thumb against the fading image of her daughter; her index finger teasing the creased corner. Her chest began to heave. A sniff; a raggedy intake of breath. Bernie immediately squeezed Serena's shoulder, placing one hand on hers. The last thing she had wanted to do was cause Serena any more pain. But she'd promised Charlotte she'd talk to her mother; make it clear that Charlotte was neither replacement nor second best.

Serena agreed. "She must think I hate her."

"Serena."

Bernie was once again lost for words. Never very good at them in the first place; certainly didn't know what to say in this situation. Of course she doesn't? Charlotte loves you? I know you love Charlotte with all your heart? Problem was, even ten years on; Bernie couldn't shake the image of Serena's disappointment upon seeing Charlotte for the first time.

"Well I have utterly fucked this up, haven't I?" Serena sniffed; rubbing her eyes with the heel of her hand. The tears kept falling. "I love her so much and she doesn't even know it. Talk about history repeating itself." Another sniff. "She's...perfect. A miniature version of the woman I love; how could I not adore her? And she's so smart, and funny, and she can already beat Jason at the numbers on Countdown. I love her to pieces."

"You should tell her that more often. Don't be like Adrienne and have her find out much later."

Serena nodded, taking a deep breath. "I know. Oh, I know. It's just...Elinor hated to be told that. Used to wriggle out my grasp every time I tried to hug her. She was always such a daddy's girl and I clung on too tight. And then she left me."

"Charlotte isn't going anywhere."

"I know." The tears had finally stopped. Serena rested her head on Bernie's shoulder. "I'd forgotten about the witch's outfit, if that makes it any better. I just figured it was something spooky; thought we could go as a coven...and Doctor Who. I should talk to her; apologise. Maybe not go as a witch."

Bernie nodded. "You could go as a patient? We still have some fake blood left, and we could wrap a bandage round your head. That way you and Charlotte could go as doctor and patient, and Jason and I could go as the Doctor and a member of UNIT."

"That sounds wonderful." Serena let her lips linger against Bernie's cheek. "Sorry for crying on you yet again."

"No need to apologise. It's what these shoulders were made for: pretty girls crying on them."

Serena smiled weakly. Her kiss landed on the corner of Bernie's mouth this time. "Well, thank you for talking to me, then; I know this can't have been easy. Elinor is never an easy subject. But thank you for understanding, even when you don't."

Bernie nodded. "Always. Now, how about I get the first aid kit, and you get changed into something more appropriate?"

"Deal."
Serena picked herself up and headed back into the ensuite. Bernie took a beat by herself. The emergency vintage would still get opened when they returned from trick or treating. But the dark cloud that had hovered over Bernie since her conversation with Charlotte had lifted. There were still other things to discuss, but that could wait for another day. It had waited this long, after all.

The door to the ensuite opened just as Bernie made it to the bedroom door. Serena darted across the carpet and spun Bernie around, sinking both hands into Bernie's blonde waves and pressing her forehead to hers. Serena's eyes were rimmed red, but they were bright. Full of love.

"I love you. So much. I have never loved another person the way I love you."

"Wha—"

Serena smiled. "I don't tell either of you enough how much I love you both. So here I am. Berenice Griselda Wolfe, are the absolute love of my life. And the one good thing that came out of losing Ellie was that it put me on the path to you. We met. We made Charlotte. And I honestly can't imagine a life without the two of you in it. Wouldn't want to live in one."

Bernie's lips took Serena by surprise. Squeaks turned to moans as Bernie propped them both up against the wardrobe. Her hands trailed along Serena's sides and down onto bare thigh, lifting her bum and encouraging Serena's legs to wrap around Bernie's hips. She became lost in lips and tongues and Serena's teeth along Bernie's throat as the heels of Serena's feet pressed into the small of her back. They collapsed against the duvet just as their bedroom door opened.

"Oh my god!" A pint sized consultant slapped two hands across her eyes. "Jason said I should see what was taking you both so long."

"We'll be down in a minute, darling," Serena said, trying to catch her breath. "I've decided to go as your patient, so why don't you and Jason break out the first aid kit and he can help you tie a sling for me to wear?"

One hand lifted from her eye; the corners of Charlotte's mouth lifting in a smile. "Okay."

When they could hear their daughter downstairs, Bernie finally let out a breath. At least Jason knocks before he enters a room. Turning to Serena, she saw her partner still watching the doorway their daughter had just gone through. Joy and pride was quickly followed by a wave of guilt. Serena sucked in a breath; her face finally calm as she returned to the ensuite. Suddenly the look from the delivery room made sense. Serena hadn't been disappointed to have another daughter. She'd felt guilty she loved Charlotte just as much.

"I love you, Campbell!" Bernie called out.

"I love you too!"

Halloween was a time for ghosts. As the Campbell-Wolfe-Haynes clan left their house in search of chocolate and chills, Bernie felt that they'd finally exorcised theirs.
"Lent" [Bernie decides to give up Serena for Lent]

Bernie Wolfe had long ago labelled herself an atheist. The Wolfe family had never been particularly religious; their only embracing of faith a yearly pilgrimage to her grandmother's church for Christmas. The horrors of war, and the archetypal view of homosexuality and the church, had led Bernie to faith in her own abilities, and of those around her. Still, she celebrated Christmas and Easter as secular holidays (as most of the nation was wont to do). Yet her most recent patient, a vicar with her wife by her bedside, had given Bernie food for thought.

She still wasn't convinced about a higher power. But with everything that had happened over the past year, the act of purging herself through Lent was appealing.

Sitting in the office she shared with Serena, Bernie tapped her pencil against the notepad in front of her. She'd googled things to give up for Lent, as if giving up sex (celibate since her marriage had imploded) or chocolate (was partial to salt and vinegar crisps rather than a dairy milk bar) would help her achieve the reflection Lent required. There was a list; albeit three items long:

Coffee

Whisky/glasses of wine

The car (walk to work?)

None of the ideas were particularly appealing. Her new house was quite the walk away, and coffee was a staple in every consultant's diet. As for her alcohol consumption, that wasn't really Bernie's fault: she had never drunk this much before Serena. Serena.

Bernie glanced through the open door of their office out onto the ward; her gaze immediately finding her co-lead. She was laughing at a comment from one of their F1s; fiddling with an errant lock of hair curling over her ear. Serena had stopped dying it weeks ago; the dark strands now threaded with silver. Bernie continued to stare; her fingers itching as she imagined running them through Serena's hair: feeling the weight of the strands; tugging just so.

That was it. That was what she could give up.

Ever since they'd met over a year ago, Bernie's thoughts and fantasies about Serena Campbell had grown in number. Serena, of course, was not interested in Bernie that way; or any woman for that matter. It had been Bernie's New Year's resolution to stop fixating on things she couldn't have; but after January had devolved into more of the same, Bernie returned to her familiar crutch. Thinking of
Serena in a romantic fashion – and especially in bed – was not fair on either of them. So she needed to stop it. Now.

It would require a lot of work, but it could be done. There would be no more eye contact; lingering looks over paperwork and patient charts. No gentle brushes of hands or reassuring hugs. The occasional massage would have to go, too. Forget about drinks at Albie’s: the temptation was too great. It might make things awkward for a while; her friendship with Serena would suffer. But in the long run it would be worth it. If she could talk to Serena about this, Bernie was sure her friend would agree.

"I'd give up the car, if I was you." Bernie jumped; not realising that Serena was standing right behind her. She smirked; amused at scaring the fearsome Major Wolfe. Her finger tapped against the list. "Can't give up coffee; you'll never make it a day. As for alcohol…well, there's a reason I've never made it successfully through Lent."

Bernie chuckled; her laugh too long and too loud to hide her nerves. Serena took her familiar spot in the desk right in front of her. "Well, um, thank you, but I've thought of something else to give up."

"Oh?" Serena stared across the desk, her eyes warm; Bernie melting under her gaze. "Are you going to tell me, or am I going to have to guess?"

*I have to give you up for Lent, or our friendship will never make it another year.*

"Salt and vinegar crisps; going to be a real challenge."

Yes. Yes it would.
"Creases" [Christmas AU - Serena meets Bernie in a department store]

Chapter Notes

I do not own Holby City or any of its characters, or its settings - all belongs to the folks at the BBC.

Shout out and thank you to Igerna for her notes: you are, as always, amazing. This was the only story I ended up writing for berenaadvent (prompt "giftwrapping"). I hope you enjoy!

Of all the decisions she regretted in her life, getting a seasonal job at Griffin's department store was one of Serena's biggest. She had originally intended to spend her winter break from Harvard catching up with friends, coursework, and British confectionary. But when her mother had begun to list a painfully detailed itinerary for her visit home, Serena had blurted out her desire to earn some extra cash whilst she was back in the UK. Seasonal work was a preferred alternative to Christmas carols, family visits, and criticised the neighbours' exterior decorations.

In her haste, Serena had not thought her idea all the way through.

Griffin's department store was Holby's oldest storefront. It was also the only business that would accept Serena's application: apparently a medical degree from Cambridge, and a future MBA from Harvard, wasn't enough qualification to sell books, toys, or Christmas trees. It was also the busiest place in Holby leading up to Christmas. Merchandise was strewn everywhere; the ching of the till echoed in Serena's ears long after she'd clocked out. Every table in the café was splattered with coffee and mince pie crumbs. And the customers…Serena had never experienced such rudeness!

No, getting a job at Griffin's department store had been one of her poorest decisions. But it did have its perks.

"Morning, Ms Wolfe. Back again?"

Several boxes of all shapes and sizes were tossed unceremoniously upon the counter in front of her. Behind them was a young woman, about Serena's own age. Her coat fell to her ankles; her scarf (navy blue, hand-knitted) was wrapped twice around her throat. Blonde hair fell in a waterfall across her face and down her back. Her cheeks were pink and her smile bright as she stared across the counter at Serena.

"Yes, I'm back. I'll bet you'll be glad for Christmas to arrive; at least you won't have to see me again."

Serena cleared her throat, ducking her gaze in case Ms Wolfe could tell that Serena very much wanted to see her again. "Same as usual?"

"Please."

When she'd first started at Griffin's, they'd put her to work as a cashier. It was only after she'd argued with a gentleman at length over the state of the NHS that she had been relegated to the wrapping department. This meant that, for eight hours a day, fingers that yearned to cut and stitch would fold
and wrap. She had quickly learnt how to crease the paper; to make firm lines and tie a ribbon and bow. Not that she was very busy. Customers at Griffin's tended to visit her only when it was something expensive, or delicate. But, over the last week and a half, Serena had wrapped nearly every single one of Ms Wolfe's Christmas presents.

Serena had begun to long for her visits. Just to see that achingly pretty smile.

"You're more than welcome to leave these with me, Ms Wolfe, if you wanted to grab a coffee in the café," Serena said, knowing that her words would go unheeded. During every visit to Griffin's, Ms Wolfe had remained right here.

"I'll wait," she said, as expected. Ms Wolfe hovered near the counter, hands buried in the pockets of her coat. "Unless you want a coffee, of course?"

The lack of caffeine was making Serena's skin itch. "Unfortunately, we're not allowed hot drinks on the shop floor. Probably afraid we'll spill it on the wrapping paper."

Ms Wolfe laughed. "You don't need to worry about that with me. Honestly, my family are so used to my god-awful wrapping that a coffee stain wouldn't surprise them at all." She tucked a length of blonde hair behind her ear. "You're a godsend, Ms McKinnie."

"You know, you're the only one who calls me Ms McKinnie. All the other customers call me Serena." She glanced down at the burnt umber name badge affixed to her blouse. It was really only the men who called her Serena. Just an excuse to stare at her tits, she was sure. Shrugging it off, Serena picked up the thread of conversation: "And, actually, it's Doctor McKinnie."

"Doctor McKinnie, eh?" Ms Wolfe held out her hand. "Doctor Wolfe. Bernie, really. You can—you can call me Bernie."

"Bernie." It suited her. "And another doctor, hmm? Explains the awful handwriting on the tags."

Bernie shrugged. "My hands are for saving lives, not for wrapping presents."

"Well, hopefully you're much better in surgery than you are at gift wrapping."

Bernie laughed; Serena smiling at the sound. It was unusual, but wonderful, and Serena enjoyed the way Bernie's eyes lit up when she laughed. However, a passing visit from her supervisor kept Serena's own mirth at bay. Back to work. She reached for the first present. Bernie had brought seven for Serena to wrap that afternoon. She took as long as humanly possible (extra tape, double ribbon, a ruler for folding paper) so that she and Bernie could talk. And talk. And talk. Serena had forgotten how wonderful it was to talk to a fellow medic. She sometimes felt lost with her peers at Harvard; unable to share the joy of surgery or a new technique. Ever since Bernie had come into Griffin's, there had been a warmth between them: conversation had been easy, effortless. But this afternoon – this conversation – had transformed that warmth into an inferno.

But all good things had to come to an end. Eventually, Serena finished the last present. "There, all done. When do you head back to Oxford?"

"Christmas Eve, after a night shift. My brother's driving me back." Bernie rested her hands beside the pile of neatly wrapped presents. "This is the last of them. Mum, Dad, both my brothers. Sister in law, niece."

"No boyfriend?" Serena mentally kicked herself for her blunt assumption. Maybe Bernie wanted to wrap that one personally. "I mean—"
"—no, no boyfriend." Bernie shuffled her feet. "Not my cup of tea."

Oh. Serena found her stomach fluttering with excitement. "Oh."

"Yes. Anyway—um—I should get going. I've got a shift tonight and the consultant's a nightmare. I got you something, though." Bernie dug in her pockets for a hastily wrapped present in foil and thin ribbon. Serena could now see why her services had been so required. *Her hands are certainly not for wrapping presents.* "It's just a little something to say thank you. Maybe we'll see each other again after Christmas."

"Maybe." *I hope so.* "Thank you, Bernie."

"You're very welcome."

Serena watched as Bernie gathered up two armfuls of beautifully wrapped presents and headed across the floor to the revolving door. With no other customers in sight, Serena dug into Bernie's present with gusto. A part of her insisted she wait for Christmas morning, but it would be hard to explain to her mother why a customer had given her a gift when she had only been working there two weeks. Paper tossed to one side, Serena was greeted by a plain white box. She opened the lid. Inside was a miniature bottle of Shiraz. *Supermarket vintage; barely enough for one decent glass.*

But Bernie had listened, and *remembered.*

"Raf, I'm taking my fifteen minute break, all right?"

Serena didn't wait for her friend at the customer service counter to respond. She just grabbed her scarf and gift and hurried into the cold twilight air. Outside, Serena sought a familiar blonde head among the crowd of Christmas shoppers. *There.* Bernie hadn't made it far with her collection of presents. It didn't take long for Serena to catch up to her. Even less time for Serena to wrap both arms around Bernie's neck and press her lips to the corner of her mouth.

The presents Serena had just spent the last hour wrapping were dropped in a puddle of rainwater and fallen leaves.

Cursing, Serena leaned back to stare at the muddy wrapping paper, and then at Bernie. "I'm so sorry."

"Are you kidding? I've been wanting to do that since the first day I walked into Griffin's." Bernie smiled; then bit her bottom lip, wincing. "You were talking about the presents, weren't you?"

"I was." Serena tugged at Bernie's scarf. "But it's fine. I've—I've wanted to do it, too." She fiddled with the threads of yarn. "Thank you for my gift."

"Thank you for mine." Bernie's eyes sparkled in the thinning light.

Serena felt her cheeks flame in the bitter cold at the thought of being Bernie's *gift.* She shivered, and not just from the weather. "You can get me that coffee now, if you'd like."

Bernie grinned. "I'd like that very much."

Serena spent what was left of her fifteen minute break in the café with Bernie, enjoying a warming coffee and a stale mince pie. The rest of her shift was spent salvaging Bernie's presents. Then, after clocking out, she walked Bernie to her beaten up Peugeot. Serena gave Bernie her second gift against the car door: her lips moulding to Bernie's own; Serena's nimble fingers sinking into waves of blonde hair.
Taking a job at Griffin's department store was quickly becoming one of the best decisions she'd ever made.

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