The Journey

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Summary

This story tells the unseen moments of the love story between Owen and Amelia. From the first time they heard about each other, to their first interactions, how they fell in love and eventually got married.

For example, how exactly did Owen and Amelia end up in an on call room in the beginning of episode 11x16? How did they go from having pizza at the end of 12x10 to waking up together in bed in episode 12x12? So much happened off screen but we never got to see it.

I don’t change what’s canon, I merely add. Everything Amelia and Owen lived before and after these scenes have also happened in these stories. This story is canon and remains loyal to the events of the show.

Before each new part, I will explain the timeline in which it sets and we will move forward little by little.
Part One

Timeline for Part 1:

This one has three separate blocks (separated by dots). The first one covers episode 7x03, when Amelia first shows up in Seattle after Derek got shot and brings the case of a guy she met on the plane. Owen and Cristina married in a rush after the shooting and are dealing with her professional crisis/emotional breakdown; The second block covers episode 8x15, when Amelia flies in from Los Angeles bringing Mason’s mom’s case and Owen is dealing with the aftermath of Cristina’s abortion; The third block covers the events of episode 10x21, when Owen had already divorced Cristina and she is dealing with her Harper Avery loss while Amelia is back in town after being unsure she really wants to marry James, so she spends her days watching after Derek’s kids.

Let’s get to it!

The Journey – Part One

Owen Hunt was distractedly making his way through the surgical floor when he heard a loud, muffled sound coming from the corridor ahead. To his surprise, he found Derek stomping against a vending machine, clearly frustrated.

The trauma surgeon hesitated for a while, taking a deep breath before walking up to the scene. It hadn’t been more than a few weeks since that devastating day when Gary Clark had opened fire at the hospital and shot so many of their own. Derek had undoubtedly been more affected than most, considering he was the main target. Owen could only imagine how awful he must have been feeling. Survival’s guilt was a real thing and the former army surgeon could speak from experience. He didn’t wish to Derek or anyone what he’d once gone through but, unfortunately, the bullet aimed for Derek had made two fatal victims, not to mention the incredible amount of physical and mental damage that still haunted a lot of the employees present on the surgical floor that day.

Slowly, the hospital was getting back on track after the tragedy, but Owen still dealt with the aftermath very closely, considering both his wife and friend had been intimately involved.

“Hey…” Owen tried to gently sweep into the situation, trying to prevent Derek from hurting himself or breaking the machine at his insistent kicks.

“Damn thing swallowed all my quarters…” Derek walked around in circles, trying to calm down but failing. He went back and gave the vending machine another kick, immediately regretting it the moment his toes started to throb inside his shoes.

“You know what, I got it,” Owen pulled a dollar bill from his pocket and fed the machine, giving room for Derek to make his choice. The neurosurgeon clicked on the image of a candy bar, avoiding eye contact. It was clear that he was supressing a lot of anger. Knowing how hard Derek was trying to get Cristina back to her usual self, Owen wondered if she was the reason why he was so frustrated. “What’s gotten into you? Is it Cristina?”

“No,” Derek replied, too worked up to share more. He didn’t want to discuss Cristina and how guilty he felt for what had happened to her. He also didn’t want to discuss Amelia, the way she had
unexpectedly appeared at the hospital earlier that day, bringing back that long lasting sensation that he’d somehow failed his own sister. All he wanted to do was to be left alone.

Owen had opened his mouth to argue when Meredith Grey materialized by their side. Judging by the impatient look Derek directed at his wife, Owen wondered if maybe his friend’s bad mood had something to do with her.

“Don’t worry,” Meredith looked at the trauma surgeon, seeing how confused he was and rightfully assuming he was concerned about Cristina. “She is fine. She is helping Derek on a case.”

“No, she is not, because there is no case,” The neurosurgeon snapped back, clenching his jaw.

“There is a case and a very interesting one,” Meredith replied back, not intimidated by her husband’s rude manners.

Owen was still lost.

“What’s going on?” He asked, frowning heavily.

“Derek’s sister is here,” Meredith confessed after seeing her husband’s reservation. “He is upset because of her, not Cristina.”

“I am not upset,” Derek insisted, but it was obvious he was.

Meredith looked at him, obviously doubting his words, and then her gaze fell upon Owen.

“His younger sister who is also a neurosurgeon brought him a pituitary tumor,” Meredith explained.

“Oh, nice,” Owen approved, thinking maybe Cristina would take interest on the case and finally improve her mood.

“Yeah, she diagnosed it by feeling the guy’s touch alone,” Meredith added, hoping Derek would be admit his sister was actually a talented surgeon too and not the impulsive teenager he seemed to consider her to be.

“Impressive,” Owen agreed with a head nod, wondering how exactly that diagnose had happened. He frowned in question, but quickly recovered after seeing the neurosurgeon sigh heavily in frustration.

“I am not touching that guy,” Derek decided, walking away.

“Can’t you at least take a look at the scans?” Meredith followed her husband. Owen now could only hear them by distance.

“You can tell Amelia to go home,” Derek replied very decidedly. “My answer is no.”

Later that day, Owen figured Derek must have had a very stubborn sister because the surgery did happen. But that piece of information didn’t linger on his mind for more than a fraction of second. He was entirely concerned with his wife and how badly she was doing after the shooting incident. Owen hoped that the interesting case with the brain tumor might inspire her, but all Cristina did once she was back home was brood. She complained about Derek, who had forced her into surgery; about Derek’s sister, who had, according to her, spent the entire day questioning her skills, and then about Owen, who she believe to be as annoying as them.

As Owen fought back with his wife, frustrated that she didn’t realize how badly she was doing, he
unconsciously created a mental image of the Shepherd sister. She was probably close to his wife and Meredith in age, and once he heard about Cristina’s complaints, he immediately assumed she was probably an irritable, unattractive mid thirties annoying woman, who pushed residents to feel better about herself. It was very typical of neurosurgeons to have gigantic, pressing egos and Owen knew it.

But then once again his wife shut him out with what had become a familiar silent mood, refusing to open up or say a word about how she was feeling, and every image vanished from Owen’s mind. He stared at Cristina, looking more difficult than ever. The trauma surgeon was assaulted by a wave of guilt as he unwillingly asked himself if all of that really was worth it. He had no right to be thinking that. He had made vows.

Duty and responsibility won over anything as Owen took a deep breath and mentally prepared himself for the long night of unsuccessful attempts to establish a conversation with his wife that was about to unfold.

Owen looked outside his office, letting out a heavy sigh of discontentment and frustration. He had never imagined that being chief would be easy, but he also had not imagined it would involve that much paperwork. The trauma surgeon had just picked up his pen to resume signing budget reports when three knocks on his door distracted him.

“Hey,” He saw the figure of Derek walking into his office, even though they didn’t have any meetings scheduled for the day.

“I know you’re busy, so I’ll get straight to the point.” Derek spared him of small talk, noticing how grateful the new chief seemed to be at his decision to be practical. The neurosurgeon knew Owen and his wife were at odds and their marriage was on the rocks, but that wasn’t what he was there to discuss. “My sister is in town and she wants to bring over a gliosarcoma from LA for us to operate on together.” Derek flipped open the envelope with scans and handed them over for the other doctor to check. “I have reviewed her plan and I think it could work.”

Owen frowned heavily after scanning his eyes through the images. Neurosurgery wasn’t his specialty, but that tumor looked very likely inoperable.

“Are you sure?” He looked back at his colleague. Derek was one of the few people whose capacities and technical skills Owen trusted completely.

“Yeah. Amy flew over and spent some time in the skills lab trying out a new approach,” Derek then described to Owen the idea his sister had to access Erica Warner’s tumor through the carotid artery, assess the tumor and reinstall blood flow in less than ninety seconds. It was a bold idea but after trying out for it a few times in the lab, Derek was convinced it could work. And no one liked to resect supposedly inoperable tumors more than he did.

“The plan seems very risky,” Owen replied with honesty, pondering about the situation. He was sure he didn’t need to remind Derek there was a high chance the patient could have a stroke, bleed out and die. “Are you sure you want to do it?”

“I am,” Derek said with conviction. “I just need you to give my sister operating privileges and we’re good to go.” He added. “This woman… Erica.” Derek put his hands inside his coat pockets. “She has a son. This is her only chance.” He bargained, wondering why he was suddenly so invested and the obvious answer was that he wanted to do it for his sister. “We are her only chance.”
Had it been anyone else, Owen would probably have discarded the idea or dwelled more on it before signing off on the procedure. But he knew that the patient, whoever she was, was in very capable hands. As Derek gave out the documentation for Owen to fill the paperwork, allowing his sister privileges to work at the hospital, Owen couldn’t help but feel optimistic about the idea judging by the unknown surgeon’s impacting resume. Maybe being remarkably brilliant was something that ran in the family.

He knew Derek had a lot of sisters, reason why it didn’t even cross his mind to consider that this inventive Shepherd might have been the same one who had given Cristina a rough time the year before, right after impressively diagnosing a brain tumor using pure semiology.

“You didn’t meet my sister last time she was here,” Derek said with a discreet nod and Owen finally made the connection, instinctively remaking the image of a geeky, self centered neurosurgeon who probably had a big ego. “I’ll bring her over to introduce you the first chance I get.”

“I’m looking forward to it,” The trauma surgeon nodded, hiding his indifference.

If Derek said anything else after that, Owen really didn’t pay any attention. His thoughts went back to the counseling session he’d had with his wife earlier that morning and his stomach churned with rejection at the idea of going back there and facing their demons. The therapist had suggested they took a break and tried again later that evening, but Owen wasn’t even sure if Cristina would show up. Her insistence about not wanting kids and the way she had so decidedly aborted their baby still tormented him, it was all he could think about when he looked at her. His eyes fell on the scans Derek had left on his desk and Owen noticed the giant mass compressing everything around, sucking out the life of an otherwise healthy individual.

Even though it was hard to admit, he couldn’t see a way out of the situation he was in. Having kids wasn’t something he was willing to compromise and his wife clearly felt the exact opposite. The image of the gliosarcoma once again met his gaze and Owen let out a heavy sigh, completely overtaken by hopelessness.

Maybe that’s all his marriage really was. A life sucking experience. Maybe they were very much like that patient’s disease: far beyond reach but still hanging by a thread, holding onto every glimpse of hope to tell themselves they could make it when all signs pointed otherwise.

And yet for some reason that defied logic, just like the Shepherd siblings coming up with a plan and telling themselves they could fix the impossible, he and Cristina were still fooling themselves believing that they could somehow fix their broken marriage.

During the years that followed, Owen learned that his initial assumption that the relationship he’d invested so much on was doomed from the start had been right all along.

His marriage had ended and he couldn’t blame it only on the fact that Cristina didn’t want kids. Truth was, her entire perception about life and what mattered the most was completely different from his. Their priorities were so far opposite that only a fool would insist to keep trying. After setting his head straight and thinking rationally, Owen acknowledge all of that.

But that didn’t mean it hurt any less.

And after flying back home from Boston, Owen had realized many things.

Not long before, as he stood outside the shower in which he’d found his ex-wife still fully dressed,
he’d tried to comfort her about the patient she’d lost and the remaining two that were still in critical condition. Owen didn’t have kids but he desired them more than anything, so he could sympathize with the excruciating pain the McNeils were going through.

He knew his ex-wife liked to keep her emotional distance and never get personally involved with the cases she took, but that time, it was different. It had to be different. Cristina had spent too many hours with that family, she’d been too invested in their cases to react so indifferently to the news.

And yet, when Owen had wrongfully assumed her desperation had been about the McNeil kids, stating that she’d done everything right, Cristina had simply agreed with conviction that she knew she had. Her confident manners in affirming so left no room for doubt. In that moment, he realized that even though she seemed devastated and extremely upset, it had nothing to do with the turn her cases had taken. That could only mean the cause for her affliction had to be the award that had slipped through her fingers.

Overwhelmed by a feeling of icy rejection at her coldness and selfish manners, Owen had stood there and unaffectedly admitted to Cristina what he’d heard from Richard: She was supposed to have won the Harper Avery Award; she had been the one with most votes. Politics had gotten in the way but by merit, she was meant to be the winner. He’d done it to test her, to see how she would react, secretly hoping that she wouldn’t place so much value in vanities, opting to reach out for what was concrete instead.

But just like that, the words seemed to heal and torment her as Cristina walked out of that shower without saying another word. And in her action, Owen found another answer.

He had come home that night hating himself for how angry he’d become. In his mind, Owen didn’t think he should be surprised, much less disappointed. That’s exactly how Cristina was and he knew better than anyone that it was pointless to keep making excuses to justify her lack of empathy and tactfulness. Every day, it became clearer that Cristina’s main priority in life was herself, closely followed by her career. Everything else stood a dozen steps back on her list. And for the first time, Owen felt relieved that he hadn’t got to have a child with her. After years of spending more time in her presence and watching her actions, it made perfect sense as to why Cristina didn’t want to be a mother. She would never be able to selflessly put anyone else above her and her career, not even their own child, and he would spend the rest of his life resenting her for it. He had at least admired how decisive she had been about that.

Even though Owen didn’t condemn her thoughts and feelings, he also had a hard time understanding her. Owen just didn’t get how a freaking award was more important than the lives of three kids. He couldn’t understand why Cristina could only take validation from a stupid trophy rather than helping out a family. It would never make sense to him why publishing a paper was more important than actually sharing the joy of being able to help a patient. And after years of trying to figure that out, he had finally thrown the towel.

He knew Cristina had every right to feel the way she did, but he wondered how in the world he’d come to fool himself saying that that’s what he wanted. Truth was, Owen would never stand by any of that. He had spent exhausted years trying to make her into something he wanted and that hadn’t been fair of him either. They would never prioritize the same things, there could be no common ground and it wasn’t fair to ask if any of them that they gave up their desires and dreams. Owen could never go through life married to Cristina knowing that while he would always put their family first, he would never be as important or as fulfilling to her as her career.

Soon enough, Cristina would be flying off to Zurich and deep down, he was happy about it. Once and for all, it would be over.
Almost automatically, Owen’s mind raced with “what if”s and he quickly shoved them aside after reaching out for a beer. He had spent the past few years obsessed with the idea of a woman who was perfect for him. His biggest mistake had been to try to convince himself that Cristina was that woman, when she’d done nothing but repeatedly prove to him that she was actually the complete opposite. And he only had himself to blame for that.

Going outside his trailer, Owen rejoiced in the chilly cold wind that made him feel alive, contrasting with the numbness that seemed to have taken over him for the past weeks.

Across the yard, a bright light shone in the living room of Meredith and Derek’s house. Looking over, Owen noticed that none of their cars were parked there and he wondered who could be in the house at that hour. But before he could dwell much on it, he saw Zola running across the living room while a young woman chased after her, clearly entertaining the little girl.

The image of his friends’ daughter smiling warmed his heart and Owen felt his chest constricting once again. He wanted a family more than anything, more than all the awards in the world. He wanted not only kids, but a wife he could love without any reservation or second thoughts. Someone who would leave for work in the morning knowing that what mattered the most in life wasn’t what you had, but whom you had. A woman who would warm his heart and his bed, who could challenge him to be better, someone he could grow with.

But maybe a failed marriage was all he was ever going to get.

His self-deprecating thoughts were distracted by the scene playing out in front of him. Being busy surgeons, Meredith and Derek often had babysitters over, most of them college students who looked to make some extra money between classes by watching after Zola and Bailey. Every now and then when he came home from work, Owen would distractedly catch a glimpse of some of them, reading their college books after putting the kids to bed or even taking them out to play during the day on weekends.

That particular one must be new, Owen thought. He was pretty sure he had never seen her around before. Through the window, the surgeon watched with attention as the young woman playfully attacked Bailey’s belly with kisses. Even though he couldn’t hear them, Owen noticed by the pleased expression on the baby’s face that the boy was giggling with sheer happiness. And the woman looked just as pleased to have caused it.

At that moment, Owen envied her. That young babysitter would probably live her own experiences, maybe someday even have kids of her own. She looked like she still had an entire life ahead of her, enough time to make mistakes and learn from them. Judging by her easy manners around the children, he imagined it was very likely she would turn out to be an affectionate mother. And whoever got to join her on that parenting adventure would probably be a very lucky man.

Realizing he was one step away from feeling sorry from himself, Owen quickly shook his head and finished his beer with one long gulp. Truth was, he had no idea. He couldn’t possibly decide on what would make a complete stranger happy based only on what would make him happy. He’d tried that once and failed miserably.

But the more he told himself to go back inside and stop eagerly watching the woman interact with the kids, the less inclined he felt to do it.

His eyes thoroughly scanned the figure of the unknown babysitter, noticing her ivory skin fiercely contrasting with the dark shorts she had on, so small that they exposed her long, shapely legs, leaving very little for imagination. From a distance, Owen couldn’t quite tell the color of her eyes but she had an intoxicating smile and for a second, he felt mesmerized as she happily laughed at something one
the kids had said. And as she once again lifted the baby high in her arms to tickle his belly with playful bites, one stretch of skin became visible under her shirt, revealing a slim waist that seemed perfectly designed to accommodate the touch of a man’s hands.

When Owen finally realized the direction his thoughts were taking, he quickly forced himself to stop. What the hell was wrong with him?! Lusting after a twenty something innocent college student, who was just doing her job was very much beneath him, or so he’d thought. Disappointed at himself, Owen threw the beer bottle in the trash with violence and immediately served himself with another.

The trauma surgeon knew that a lot of the guys at the hospital had the disgusting habit of preying after young medicine graduates but he had never quite understood the satisfaction in that. Of course he was a man and his body reacted at visions such as the ones he’d just witnessed, but entirely physical experiences had never been his thing. He preferred grown women, especially those who could actually engage in conversations and challenge him rather than unexperienced, fresh off the diapers young girls.

Once again, Owen gazed through the window and this time he saw the barefoot babysitter gently accommodating Bailey on her arms, very close to her breasts. The boy immediately stopped fussing and seemed to calm down. The idea that maybe Owen felt drawn to that girl not only because of her attractive figure but also due to her maternal and affectionate manners popped in his mind and he quickly rejected it.

What was he thinking? He definitely wasn’t drunk enough.

Reaching out for the third beer of the night, Owen told himself he had to stop watching that complete stranger but couldn’t. As his eyes registered her every graceful move, he slowly emptied the bottle, little by little numbing the pain that ached inside his heart, hoping to avoid all the mourning he had ahead of him. For now, thinking that he might never get what his soul deeply yearned for hurt too much. So it was more convenient to focus on the outside as a distraction.

Making up his mind to drink as many beers as it took to make him forget all about his ex-wife, his broken dreams and their lost promises, Owen studied the lively, smiley young woman who’d put a baby to sleep with absolutely no effort. He kept staring, wondering what kind of life she would have ahead of her. Did she want kids? A career? What kind of fire burned deep inside her, late at night? Had she planned anything at all for herself? But deep down, Owen knew it really didn’t matter. One thing he had learned the hard way was that life had its own way of happening and moving on regardless of any plans or careful thinking.

One bottle followed another and before it was ten in the evening, six of them had piled outside the trailer. The lights in the living room were turned off after the babysitter had probably taken the kids to bed. Only then Owen finally convinced himself to go back inside for the night, determined to forget everything about that day.

And as he lay on the bed, almost immediately falling asleep, Owen wondered if one day he would ever get what his heart desired the most, completely oblivious to the fact that the woman he’d just spent the past hour admireth through a window would one day soon turn out to be the love of his life and mother of his children.
Part Two

This part focuses on the events between episodes 10x21 and 10x22 and goes through to the developments of episode 22. Cristina was upset about losing the Harper Avery Award and was being constantly invited to other places to give a speech, ultimately deciding to go to Zurich. Derek invites Amelia to join him on a case of conjoined twins and treats her like an idiot in front of everyone.

The Journey – Part Two

Derek paced back and forth outside Owen’s office, waiting until the chief’s meeting was over so he could finally talk to his friend. After long fifteen minutes, a woman who Derek knew worked at the legal department walked out, making room for the neurosurgeon to finally go in.

“Hey, Hunt, when you have some time, there is something I want to talk to you about. I have finally made up my mind about the Cooper twins’ case,” The neurosurgeon revealed.

As it happened often, the chief of surgery at Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital got a weekly load of requests from patients all around the country applying for cutting edge procedures. Owen had forwarded Derek a case of conjoined twins who had done their research and elected GSMH as their place of choice to have the risky surgery that might finally separate them after years. Derek had met them just days before, promising he would look over their case very carefully before making a decision on whether or not he’d agree to operate on them.

“I want to give it a shot.” Derek said with conviction.

“Good.” Owen furrowed his eyebrows, not quite understanding why Derek seemed borderline angry about his decision. If he had opted to take on a case as difficult and challenging as the Cooper twins, the least he could show was a bit of excitement.

“I’m going to need you to sign off so my sister can scrub in with me.” Derek said between his teeth, apparently angry.

“Your sister?” Owen frowned in confusion, not following.

“Yeah, the one who’s also a neurosurgeon?” Derek asked impatiently, taking a seat before his friend. Amelia had been to Seattle a few times before but he couldn’t remember if she and Owen had ever been properly introduced. “She showed up at my door a couple of days ago and since she is available, I want her to assist me on the procedure.”

Owen could see that while Derek apparently had made his decision, he didn’t exactly seem to be at peace with it.

“I know you’re not particularly fond of having co-surgeons on your cases,” Owen tried to interpret Derek’s mood. He knew the neurosurgeon had a good reputation and lately, over the past few years,
his ego had become increasingly bigger, especially after some successful results on complicated procedures. But it wasn’t possible that Derek expected to perform alone in a case as risky as the twins’. He would definitely need a few extra sets of hands. “But you can’t work on this one alone. You need a full team for the Cooper’s case.”

Owen knew the twin girls had been born joined by their heads and separating them was a very invasive and complicated surgery. For starters, the hospital needed to ensure two skilled neurosurgeons who could quickly take the lead on each twin after they’d been separated. And it was his job to make sure nothing was missing.

“It’s not that I want to work alone on it,” Derek explained, knowing it was impossible, especially after the girls had been separated. He would probably need all the help he could get. “I just didn’t want to have Amelia in the OR with me.”

Owen took his time processing the information. Derek wasn’t making any sense. If he doubted his sister’s skills, then why was he appointing her to the case? Owen chose to believe that his friend wouldn’t ever compromise the chances of a patient by simply favoring a family member who might not have been qualified for the job.

But then Owen thought harder, trying to dig through his memory and it finally clicked. He’d seen the work of Derek’s sister before, on two separate occasions. First, she had diagnosed a difficult tumor with resourceful skill. Then she had suggested a new approach and convinced Derek to operate on a tumor that perhaps no other surgeon would dare to touch. In both times, she had succeeded. So it was unlikely that the neurosurgeon wasn’t qualified.

“What are you saying exactly? You want your sister to scrub in but you don’t think she is the right person for it?”

“She is the right person for it.” Derek affirmed. “Amy is probably the only one I would trust to operate on my brain,” He added and in that comment Owen knew Derek considered his sister’s skills to match his own, which was a huge compliment. “Her abilities are not what concerns me.”

“What, then?” Once again Owen tried to understand.

Derek got silent for a second, pondering about what to say. Truth was, he really didn’t know why he was so defensive about having his sister on the case.

Or maybe he did and just didn’t want to admit it.

The past few weeks had been overwhelming and there were so many uncertainties about his career that he was having a hard time adjusting to that new reality. Derek had always been confident about his skills and abilities. His career had never given him any reason for concern. But lately, it seemed like spending his days at GSMH operating on challenging tumors didn’t fully satisfy him anymore. Especially not when younger, talented neurosurgeons could match his talent. Derek needed something more. Something that didn’t threaten his comfort zone.

And having Amelia there doing his job certainly did.

While rationally he knew that Amelia was the most qualified neurosurgeon to operate on the Coopers with him, it made his bruised ego intimidated that she might not only perform well, but too well. Derek wasn’t used to that. He had never felt threatened by anyone before. Especially not by his little sister. It made him comfortable that everyone saw him as reference. And at the same time he didn’t want that to change, he was also never going to admit it.
“You know what, why don’t you just get Morton or Knox to do it with you?” Owen decided to end the agonizing silence, noticing Derek was having a hard time admitting why he wanted his sister on the case. It might have to do with some family drama and Owen definitely didn’t want to get caught up in the middle of that. “They work under you, they’re good surgeons and they’re familiar with your preferences. It might be a better idea.”

“I don’t need a good surgeon, I need a great surgeon,” Derek said decisively, hating the taste of the words coming out of his mouth. He was being petty, jealous and he hated it. “I need Amelia.”

“Okay,” Owen agreed with a head nod, rightfully assuming the woman was probably more qualified for the job than the other surgeons they had available. “Just bring her over to get her up to speed while I take care of the paperwork. When are the Coopers coming back for a follow up consult?”

“I’ll call them today and get them admitted for pre op tomorrow at the latest. I want everyone available for this case. It’s not going to be easy.”

“No, it won’t.” Owen agreed, already pulling in a file. “You get back to me as soon as you can.”

As Derek left to get things prepared, Owen logged onto the computer with human resources data and looked for the file of Amelia Shepherd. As he opened the document, he noticed she had been at the hospital in two separate occasions, both times to operate with her brother. As Owen read her credentials, he briefly remembered about the day Cristina had complained about Derek’s sister, affirming that she was the typical stuck up neurosurgeon.

Owen twitched his lips in annoyance, not looking forward to dealing with an egocentric know-it-all. In her file, it said Amelia Shepherd worked in a hospital called St. Ambrose in Los Angeles. Owen had never heard about the place before. He wondered why a seemingly competitive, up to speed surgeon who had graduated top of her class in Harvard and done her residency at Johns Hopkins would choose to work in a lower ranked hospital. Maybe they were simply paying her a fortune, he thought. But Owen was too distracted absorbing other bits of information to pay much attention to anything else.

Just that morning, he’d had a board meeting and throughout the entire day, his voicemail wouldn’t stop beeping. Once again, Cleveland Clinic was calling. After another brief look at the computer screen, he noticed another email arriving from Zurich. Everyone was crazy after Cristina, wanting her to talk more about her conduit experiment and Owen was convinced that she should go for it. Right now, his ex-wife seemed to be unsure about the next step she wanted to take. Owen knew that Cristina valued her career above everything but staying at GSMH meant she would probably never get the recognition or opportunities she wanted. After Dr. Russell had quit, obviously because he didn’t think he would ever win the Harper Avery Award by working at GSMH, Owen had thought about offering the position of head of Thoracic Surgery to his ex wife. Even though Cristina hadn’t finished her fellowship that long before, she was more qualified than anyone he’d met and what she lacked in experience with leadership she could make up with ambition and drive. But somehow, Owen had never gotten around to offer her the job.

Not only did he know it would hold her back from achieving her dreams, something he did not wish, he also acknowledge that maybe they would both be better if they parted ways. Their wishes were very different so it would probably be wiser if they stopped holding onto notions of “could have been”s and instead focused on moving on for real.

His personal life was such a mess that Owen convinced himself to focus on work instead. There was
a giant pile of papers he needed to read and sign, and later that day he would still have to meet with
the financial department, not to mention now Derek had added to his workload by bringing a case
that would definitely attract press coverage and a lot of attention. Letting out a sigh, Owen forced
himself to forget all about his problems, so he could focus solemnly on what was more pressing at
the moment.

. Amelia could not believe what she was hearing. After spending the last couple of days pretty much
only taking care of her niece and nephew, her brother had came home that evening with a large file.
He then started to fill his sister on the case of the conjoined twins and only later she realized that he
was actually asking her to be his co-surgeon.

Amelia hardly ever said no to surgery, much less to an opportunity like that. The case was interesting
by itself but what really touched her that time was how her brother had asked her to assist him. Not
only Derek was the oldest and most experienced, Amelia knew he considered her to be immature
and impulsive, something he had never really hid. So to hear her brother invite her touched Amelia
very deeply, because she knew he wouldn’t have her on board unless he fully trusted her abilities.

Derek never really gave her any room or time to ask why he had chosen her, of all people. Before
Amelia realized, she was walking into the hospital where her brother and sister-in-law worked, being
introduced to the staff that would also be a part of the case.

But slowly, throughout the day, Amelia’s cheerful mood vanished. The way her brother would
introduce her to everyone as “Amy” instead of professionally treating her as his equal took a toll on
her good humor.

She should have known. It was very unlike Derek to actually see her as a capable and responsible
person. Whenever he did things like compliment her abilities or even allow her to watch his children,
her heart would fill with hope that maybe their very unleveled relationship would finally find some
balance. But it never took Derek more than twenty four hours to prove that, at the end of the day, he
would always consider himself to be above her.

At first, every colleague Amelia was meant to work with had promptly welcomed her to the team.
But as they spent more hours at the skills lab and Derek went on treating her like she was somehow
impaired, Amelia noticed the reservation with which some of the co-workers started to treat her. It
wasn’t fair. Derek could think ill of her at home all he wanted, but when they were at work, the least
he could do was treat her with respectful professionalism.

Amelia was already boiling with anger when she met her brother later one morning, after he was
done rounding on his patients.

“Hey, I need you to go update Hunt,” Derek said distractedly while handling the mannequins at the
skills lab, not even bothering to look at her. Amelia could see he was irritated at the laparoscopic
equipment.

Earlier that week, she had handled the machinery with graceful ease and hit the right points only on
her second try, but Derek was obviously still struggling to get the hang of the new software set up
they had installed specifically for that surgery.

“Who the hell is Hunt?” Amelia replied bitterly, too angry at his attitude to even pay attention to
what he was saying.

At her insolent question, Derek stopped what he was doing and finally brought up his eyes.
“Owen Hunt?” He said the name like she should know it. At Amelia’s shrug of shoulders, he grew impatient. “The chief of surgery?”

“Oh.”

“He wants an update on our plan to see if the Coopers’ insurance will cover the procedure or if the hospital might need to look for funds.” Derek explained, already looking back to the 3D model in front of him as he resumed practicing.

“You’re the lead surgeon on the case,” Amelia rebelled. “You go do it.”

“I’m busy,” Derek replied like he was reprimanding a child. Amelia wondered if he was trying to purposefully drive her mad.

The youngest surgeon took a deep breath, trying to make sense of her brother’s irritable manners. She assumed it had everything to do with the fact she had already mastered the new controls while Derek only now seemed to have adjusted to it. Feeling a wave of evil pride taking over her, Amelia left the skills lab, making her way to the chief’s office after asking a resident for directions.

Amelia gave the door three knocks and patiently waited. She was so angry with Derek that the few seconds of standing outside felt like an eternity.

Soon enough, she heard a muffled come in from the inside. Taking a deep breath, the neurosurgeon finally opened the door to the chief’s office.

Amelia had been in several meetings with chiefs, directors and even principals before. She was too confident in her skills to be nervous about those. Besides, Derek’s constant nagging about her capabilities had made her completely oblivious to any kind of anxiety about that encounter.

Amelia didn’t exactly know what she expected to find but she was surprised to see the broad shouldered blonde man standing behind the desk. That wasn’t at all what chiefs usually looked like.

“Hi,” She sheepishly started, suddenly overwhelmed by how hilarious that entire situation was. She was having to introduce herself to her brother’s boss because Derek was even more stubborn than she was. The realization brought an adorable grin to her face as she stepped forward to greet the man who called the shots on that surgical floor. “You must be Owen Hunt.”

“Yes…?” Owen gazed at the woman in confusion. He felt like he should recognize her and yet he couldn’t quite remember where exactly he’d seen her before. The baggy navy scrubs surely didn’t give a clue but her smile was strangely familiar.

“I am Amelia Shepherd,” She confessed, stretching out her hand to give him a handshake. “Derek’s sister.”

And then, all of a sudden, Owen’s brain twisted in a knot.

That was Derek’s sister?! At the mention of the neurosurgeon, he quickly remembered where he’d seen that woman before. She was the mysterious babysitter he’d been admiring the other night. Of course!

But as Owen gazed at her, studying her features, he felt even more confused. Babysitters surely didn’t wear attending navy blue scrubs or had surgical caps hanging in their pockets. Which could
only mean that the woman standing in front of him was the same one to hold the impressive resume Owen had thoroughly read earlier that day.

But how could it be? In the previous times Owen had heard about Amelia Shepherd, everything pointed to her being an unattractive, boring middle age woman who probably never smiled.

“Something wrong?” Amelia asked with half a grin. He looked alarmed and she couldn’t quite tell why.

“Oh, no,” Owen shook his head, trying to set his mind straight. Seeing the doubt stamped on her face at his obvious reaction, he explained embarrassingly, “It’s just that you’re not at all what I imagined.” He added, on purpose not mentioning he had long ago made a mental image of Amelia that was nothing like her real figure.

“What does that mean?” Amelia folded her arms and asked very defensively. What was that guy saying?

“It’s just that you’re…” Owen stopped, refraining from saying she was more attractive and charming than he had imagined. “Young.” He settled for saying, noticing in the scowl she made that he hadn’t picked the right word. “Anyway, I am sure you have more important things to talk about… Did Derek send you here?” He asked, clearing his throat and putting on his most professional tone.

“Yes,” Amelia dryly replied and then proceeded to update the chief of surgery on the data her brother had requested. As she did it, Amelia couldn’t help feeling like the guy’s reserved silence and uptight manners irritated her even further.

What did he mean, young?

Amelia was so tired of that stupid prejudice. Everyone would take a look at her and simply assume that because she was young and looked to be even less than her age, she wasn’t yet experienced or qualified. Her quarrel with Derek had been exactly about that and Amelia was growing tired of people’s biased opinions. The last thing she needed was for this seemingly obnoxious chief of surgery to give her the same kind of treatment.

“Okay, well, it’s good to have you on board,” Owen said when they finished going through the surgical plan. He was still alarmed about his earlier assumption that she had been the babysitter and the memories of how he had lusted after her made him blush, avoiding eye contact. He didn’t know Amelia Shepherd and had no right to look at her in any way that wasn’t strictly professional. Doing his best to come off as polite and impartial, Owen avoided looking at her unless it was extremely necessary, for his conscience was still throbbing about the way he’d watched her play with her brother’s kids.

Owen’s principles and correct conduct made him realize he had been invading her privacy by doing so the other night and that was inexcusable, even if he hadn’t meant any harm.

“Thank you,” Amelia replied coldly, wrongly assuming his reserve and strict professional manners were due to disappointment after noticing she was young. The guy had probably already made assumptions.

A heavy atmosphere lingered in the air and Owen cleared his throat, determined to break the uncomfortable silence.

“I saw on your file that you went to Harvard Med,” The chief of surgery tried to break the ice and gave her a polite head nod. “So did I. Did you by any chance take Professor McCarthy’s
"pharmacology class?" He asked about the first random memory that came to mind when thinking about his college days. “I surely don’t miss it.”

“No,” Amelia replied with vengeful determination. “He’s dead.” She lied.

“Oh?” Owen was shocked to hear it. Soon after, they went back to the silence that was making him uncomfortable but not her, apparently. “What about Professor Rafferty’s neuroanatomy class? She used to fail everyone back in my days… But I am sure you didn’t have a problem with it,” Owen nodded gently, assuming that she had always liked Neuro, considering it had become her specialty.

“I didn’t have a problem with it,” Amelia confirmed his suspicion with an evil grin. “But I also didn’t have a problem with Professor Rafferty.” She added, knowing it wasn’t true. Everyone who had graduated Harvard Med at some point had to painfully endure one of the toughest classes there. “She retired.”

“Oh, she did?” Owen’s eyebrows rose in disbelief. “I can’t believe it.” He said, more to himself than her.

“Well, that’s what happens when people get old,” Amelia felt the satisfaction to be tormenting him. It was obvious he was older than her, but not that much older and yet she was doing everything in her power to make it seem like his days in college had been a lifetime ago. If he thought he could use her age against her, then she would do the same to him. “They usually retire. Or die.” She added, rejoicing in the startled expression on his face.

Soon after that, she excused herself and left. Owen stood behind his desk with a heavy frown upon his head, trying to make up his mind about whether or not he’d just been called old by Derek’s Shepherd’s little sister.

“Hey Callie,” Owen hurried his pace in the cafeteria, trying to catch up with the orthopedic surgeon. “You’re on Shepherd’s conjoined twin case, right?”

“Yeah,” Callie frowned, wondering where Owen’s interest was coming from. She took an empty table by their left, being followed by him.

“I want you to be honest with me,” Owen placed his tray on the table but barely looked at his food, trying to catch Callie’s attention as she took a bite of her sandwich. “What did you think of Shepherd’s sister?” He asked, instantly realizing the question appeared too forward. “I mean, have you met her yet?”

“Yes, I’ve met her…” Callie gave him her typical you’re not telling me everything face, but when Owen remained in silence, almost apprehensively, she gave up trying to find out more. “She was in the skills lab earlier this morning.”

Callie then remembered of how Derek had treated Amelia, almost patronizing her. She had paid him back by maintaining her serenity while keeping up with his ideas and fast thinking, and then had even helped out some residents who were having a hard time figuring out the idea behind their surgical approach.

“The residents sure did like her,” Callie added with casualty, before taking a sip of her water. Owen was surprised and then wondered why he had gotten the idea that Amelia Shepherd was an egocentric showoff who probably pushed her residents around. “She seemed pretty alright. Why do you ask? Are you worried about something?”
“She has amazing references,” Owen dodged the question on purpose. Finding out that the hot babysitter from the other night was actually Derek Shepherd’s sister had messed with his head. And there was also the fact that she actually seemed talented, smart and maybe even nice, not at all typical arrogant neurosurgeon he had first assumed she would be.

“Yeah, it is all very confusing… Derek treats her like she is a dud, but she actually seems very competent judging by what I saw earlier today.” Callie confessed between laughs. “I guess their feud must be a brother and sister thing.” She shrugged, remembering what Derek had said about completely trusting his sister’s skills when she had confronted him about it not long before. “But well, I guess soon enough we’ll find out how good or not she is.”

Owen found out exactly what Callie meant when, soon enough, the Shepherds operated on the conjoined twins and Amelia’s patient presented with better outcome than Derek’s. Owen knew that surgeries had uncalculatable risks, but he couldn’t believe it was a coincidence that even with the worst prognosis, the twin B operated on by Amelia was actually doing well, whereas the one Derek had taken the lead on unfortunately didn’t make it through.

A couple of days after the surgery, he stopped seeing Amelia at the hospital and realized it made complete sense. Derek had told him she lived in Los Angeles and had a fiancé there, so it was to be expected Amelia returned home any day now. As for his ex-wife, Owen was surprised to find out she had received and accepted an invitation to run a hospital in Switzerland. With a mix of a constricted heart and painful relief, Owen prepared himself to watch her leave for good. It was probably for the best, but he drowned in work even further, telling himself that the busier he was, the less time he would have to mourn about everything his life could have been but never really turned out to be.

On a grey afternoon not too long after that, Amelia let out a heavy sigh as she sat on her brother’s spacious balcony. The wood furniture fit the room very well and she particularly liked the stretch of grass that occupied the entire yard, from the house all the way up to the lake.

Her eyes noticed the tin box in which she found out Owen Hunt lived and she couldn’t help but roll her eyes at the image of him. Why did all attractive males have to be such idiots? The way he had condescendingly judged her on her age still made Amelia furious. She remembered that after the hype of the surgery had passed and her head had cooled down a bit, she had bumped into him in a scrub room and decided to give her negative first impression another try. After all, she was supposed to be leaving soon and wouldn’t hurt to leave the door open with the chief of surgery at GSMH in case she ever wanted to come back for more cases.

But as she had approached him, Owen had coldly avoided her gaze. When Amelia had tried to engage him in conversation, he had grabbed his buzzing phone and excused himself, telling her he had a meeting to get to.

Even though he hadn’t been particularly rude, he also hadn’t been courteous either. And if Amelia had already decided to loathe him before, now she really didn’t need another reason. Men were all the same, she thought. Even though more female surgeons hit powerful positions everyday, for some guys surgery was still the boys’ club and Amelia wondered if Owen Hunt was one of those men. It fit him well, she decided with scorn. He was already uptight and broody as hell. That was practically one step away from thinking he was superior.

It would never cross Amelia’s mind that Owen’s bad mood might have anything to do with the fact that not only had he felt ashamed to be looking at her through the window, he was also in a very bad place in his personal life at the moment. All she had gotten from him was cold reserve that bordered
indifference, even though she had repeatedly tried to be nice. So it was much more obvious to assume he was just another self-centered jerk who couldn’t bother to take a second to say anything nice.

And that’s exactly why Amelia felt so surprised that afternoon when she turned her head and noticed the tall, broad shouldered surgeon sitting on the steps of the wooden structure his trailer stood on with a children’s pink bike on his hands.

Her first reaction was to get up and go back inside the house, avoiding him completely. But she found the scene so intriguing that Amelia couldn’t help herself. Before she could even notice, her feet had already made her cross the back yard.

Owen noticed he wasn’t alone when he heard the sound of muffled footsteps coming in his direction through the grass. Looking up, he saw Derek Shepherd’s sister approaching and instantly wondered what she could possibly want.

“Nice bike,” Amelia said to break the ice. She didn’t know why, but he was intimidating. And surprisingly, it had nothing to do with his size.

“It’s Zola’s,” Owen replied, immediately turning his eyes back to the screw he was fixing.

Amelia noticed the button up dark plaid shirt he was wearing, much different than the preppy ones he would wear at work. This time, there was no tie. He looked charmingly casual with the first two cases of the shirt unbuttoned and the sleeves rolled up all the way to his elbows. They probably had nothing in common, Amelia decided. She was very urban and modern, whereas he fit perfectly in that nature scenario, surrounded by a lake, a long stretch of grass, an old trailer and thick woods. The screwdriver he had in his hand and the tools scattered around the wooden deck added the perfect touch to make him look completely different than the serious, centered chief of surgery she had met.

“Why are you fixing Zola’s bike?” Amelia asked, slightly bending over to inspect it. His hands were particularly large and matched very well with his built physique and craftsman exterior.

“Because it was broken,” Owen replied the obvious.

“Clearly,” Amelia chided, feeling the familiar irritation she always seemed to feel whenever he was around. “I meant, why are you doing it?”

Owen stopped tightening the screw and looked up to meet her eyes. He had never quite noticed them before, but she had amazing blue eyes. With a shrug of his shoulders, the surgeon confessed:

“I don’t know, I noticed she hasn’t been riding it for a couple of weeks now and she used to do it all the time. Then I found the bike lying around there, next to the garage,” Owen pointed towards the house. “And I saw one of the wheelies was loose. So I am fixing it.”

Once he was done explaining, Owen went back to the job he was almost done with, leaving Amelia to wonder about the situation. That did not make sense at all. Why would an uptight, self centered and maybe even sexist chief of surgery worry about the broken toy of a little girl?

“I am sorry about the other day in the scrub room,” Owen looked up to meet the woman’s eyes, genuinely regretting the way he had acted. He had evasively tried to avoid her, still too embarrassed about his wrong assumptions about her. “I didn’t mean to leave so abruptly like that.” He confessed and Amelia noticed he seemed sincere. “You and Derek did an amazing job. I was hoping to tell you that next time I saw you, but you haven’t been at the hospital ever since.” The chief of surgery added with a polite head nod.
“Well, I don’t work there,” She reminded him with a gentle smile. “I actually have to go back home to my job.” She confessed, not sure why the idea didn’t excite her.

“Well, feel free to come back and operate with Derek whenever you want.”

Amelia smiled at herself, realizing that even when that man let his guard down, he was still formal and uptight. Hoping to make him feel more at ease, she swiftly took a seat on the steps next to him by the deck, watching as Owen grabbed a bottle of beer from the grass.

“Do you want one?” He asked looking into her eyes. Amelia couldn’t remember him holding her gaze like that and she took her time to study how bright blue his eyes were.

“No, thank you,” She dismissed his offer with a gentle wave of her hands. Amelia had been sober for quite a while now and she was determined to never have another slip.

Once again, they felt into an easy silence as Owen’s hands skillfully finished repairing the broken wheelie under Amelia’s careful watch. She noticed he looked unusually athletic for a chief of surgery. And not at all a typical gym fabricated kind of athletic. Instead, he looked like a man who was used to heavy handwork. Amelia laughed at herself to imagine he could probably carry heavy boxes and fix things with his hands. The idea contrasted with his smart eyes and professional position, but it completely suited his lifestyle choice to live in a trailer, have a full set of tools and fix loose screws from broken wheelies.

Dark clouds were gathering in the sky and Amelia figured it would rain very soon. That was Seattle, she realized.

“Well, I guess I should get going.” Amelia said after a few minutes of examining him. She got up and rubbed her hands on her pants, determined to get rid of the dirt from the ground. “It was nice meeting you. Thank you for the opportunity of letting me scrub in with Derek.”

“Anytime,” Owen replied with a nod, getting up too. He swiftly pulled Zola’s bike back to a standing position and Amelia noticed both wheelies worked perfectly now. “Do you mind taking this back to the house with you?” Owen asked, giving the bike a little push to see if it was safe for Zola to resume playing with it.

“Not at all,” Amelia promptly agreed, glad to have something she could keep her hands busy with.

The neurosurgeon was already a few steps across the yard when she heard his voice, almost immediately followed by a roaring thunder.

“Shepherd?”

Amelia only had time to turn her head before feeling the first heavy drop of rain falling on her face.

“I spoke to a colleague at Mas Gen today,” Owen lied. He was bluffing but she would never know it. “He said Professor McCarthy’s lecture on antiarrhythmic drugs was a success last week.”

Amelia knew he was talking about the same professor who she’d claimed to be dead only to insult him.

“Maybe someone psychographed it,” Amelia replied with a witty smile, biting her lower lip while silently refusing to admit she had been busted.

Owen struggled to contain a chuckle. He lifted his head and when his eyes finally met hers, both surgeons instantly smiled with easy contentment and now found camaraderie.
“So, I’ll see you around.” Owen gently gave her a head nod walking back to his trailer after feeling the rain start to fall heavier.

Amelia took her time processing her discoveries about him. The guy had a fascinating combination of traits. At the same time he seemed to be responsible and serious, he was also capable of tricking her in her own game. She thought about the way he had stepped up to fix Zola’s bike even though no one had asked him to. Owen Hunt had just given the toy for her to take back, so it was obvious he hadn’t done it for recognition. No egocentric guy would ever take his time to do that. Amelia was usually very good at reading people, but for once, she felt like she was having a hard time figuring someone out. The feeling wasn’t only unusual, it was also quite amusing.

Too bad she was going back home, because it felt like she had just found someone who apparently could keep up with her sharp intelligence and sneaky manners. Giving him one last look, Amelia grinned and gently nodded her head, certain she was probably never going to see him again.

“Goodbye, Owen.”
Part Three

Chapter Summary

This one covers episodes 10x23 and 10x24. Derek is going to DC and has handed over his practice and appointed Amelia to replace him. After apparently being on board, Meredith decides last minute that she doesn’t want to go (after Cristina gives her that “he’s dreamy, but you’re the sun” speech). Owen is dealing with a crazy day and after weeks hovering around, Cristina finally goes off to Zurich. Meanwhile, Amelia is debating with James on the phone nearly every day because she doesn’t want to go back to LA.

The Journey – Part Three

Amelia paced back and forth in the living room of her brother’s house. She couldn’t believe how much her life had changed and in a matter of days.

When she’d come to Seattle, hoping to get her head straight, the neurosurgeon was kind of hoping the experience would reinforce her wish to stay in Los Angeles, marry James and build a family with him.

But none of that had happened.

As Derek moved back and forth between Seattle and DC, he had progressively referred his patients to her. Day after day, discussions with James over the phone had followed. Amelia slowly got seduced by the big hospital lifestyle until it suddenly clicked that the thing she’d been craving for when she’d left LA wasn’t exactly to start something new in her life, but rather to restart something she deeply cared about and hadn’t been able to focus on lately: her career and passion for surgery.

And Amelia couldn’t believe that the order of events were a coincidence. Just when she’d felt the urge to break up her engagement, knowing that despite loving her fiancé, she really didn’t need or want him in her life anymore, she had been offered the opportunity to stay in Seattle and give her career a full spin.

Amelia cared about James and even though they ultimately wanted the same things in life, it hurt to admit she didn’t want those things with him, or exactly at that very moment. He was a nice, generous person and she acknowledged how amazing he had been to her in a time of need but now, she felt ready to take on the world and explore other possibilities. Unfortunately, she didn’t see where he could fit in that new scenario.

Derek had decided to move to Washington and Amelia now had a big house and a big practice to take after. She secretly hoped that she would also get the job of head of Neuro that her brother was leaving vacant, but she knew it wasn’t very likely. To win the position, Amelia would have to be hired by Owen Hunt.

Taking a deep breath, Amelia shook her head and took a deep breath. She really wanted the job, not only for the status but because she would like to have something to keep her busy. At the same she
wished the position, she also wasn’t going to push to get it. At that moment, she would just let life happen and organically follow the new rhythm, taking her time to adapt to change. Whatever came next, she would deal with.

Hoping with all her heart that Owen Hunt was a fair guy who could choose wisely and impartially, even if it meant not choosing her, Amelia set her mind to the new challenge ahead, flipping through the pages of a heavy textbook and old medical charts to prepare for the cases she would see the following day.

Owen scratched his forehead, trying to get his stress under control. Everything felt incredibly messy.

His ex-wife was leaving and even though Owen was absolutely sure he and Cristina would never work as a couple, it still hurt that now they wouldn’t even be able to try anymore. Rationally, he knew it was for the best, because the two of them had probably tried more times than it was healthy or wise.

But it wasn’t Cristina’s departure that really was getting to him. It was the notion that now, after she’d left, he would be pretty much on his own.

Despite dysfunctional, his relationship with Cristina had been some sort of link, a connection to someone. Even after their divorce, they had still remained in each other’s lives and even though at times her presence had been toxic, it had also been comforting to know that for all means, he had someone there.

But now, for the first time since he’d come home to Seattle from the war, Owen found himself completely alone.

He knew he was being unfair, for he had his mother and she was the only person in his life who would certainly never turn her back on him. But Owen craved for more. He wanted a person who could share his life and build something with him. It had been easier to convince himself that he could turn Cristina into that person rather than giving a try with someone new but now, the realization that his ex-wife was never going to be that one was finally becoming concrete.

Rejecting with every fiber the feeling of loneliness he had now, Owen let out a heavy sigh and pulled up a file from the folder. Over the last few days, he had gone through a marathon of interviews and discussions to find the most suitable candidate to take over Dr. Russell’s position as head of cardiothoracic surgery, finally settling for Margaret Pierce. And now, much to his dismay, he was probably going to have to do the same exhausting run to find someone to replace Derek Shepherd on the Neurosurgery department.

Owen really didn’t want to go through another round of interviews and have people flying over just so he could spend hours listening to candidates nagging him about why they should get the job. It might not be the wisest solution, but this time around he would find someone within the department. Unlike cardiothoracics, neurosurgery had a lot of senior attendings and extremely qualified personnel.

His choice was supposedly very simple. Owen pulled out the files of the three candidates he was considering offering the job to and perused each one of them.

Jim Nelson was the obvious choice. The guy had been working at the hospital for over a decade now, knew the residents, the staff and the way things worked in his department. Nelson had also been the interim head of Neuro a few times when needed. Owen knew the guy published a lot and
was a competent surgeon. But something about Nelson bothered him. The attending struck Owen as being the kind of guy who always played safe and never stood up for himself. And to be ahead of an entire department, Owen needed someone with more motivation, fiber and energy. He wasn’t sure if the colleagues or even the residents would have a lot of respect for Nelson in a position of leadership. Pondering it for a few more minutes, Owen finally opted to discard the file.

Morton was his second candidate. The guy was a brilliant surgeon, had good teaching skills but didn’t exactly commit to work, choosing to stay at the hospital only for as long as necessary. Owen had also heard rumors of his extra marital affairs and even though that was none of his business, it could become a problem later on. It was a known fact Morton was aggressive in the way he worked and Owen imagined that while Nelson was as slow and unmotivated as it could be, Morton would probably eagerly try to take advantage of the position, most likely favoring himself over the department. That was definitely not the kind of leader he wanted for Neurosurgery.

By last, Owen had Amelia Shepherd’s file. Initially, he hadn’t been too excited about giving her the position. Even though Derek had recommended Amelia for the job and she had taken over her brother’s practice, the female surgeon was new to the hospital and overall less experienced than the other two candidates. But even so, her resume was the most impressive. Because of her young age, Amelia had logged overall less OR hours than her competition, but Owen noticed she used to take on more up to date and cutting edge procedures. He had also noticed she was very good with residents and seemed to genuinely enjoy teaching. The fact that Amelia was a lot younger than the other attendings in the department didn’t particularly bother him, but Owen feared it might cause difficulty in inspiring trust on her colleagues. But then again, he had just hired Maggie Pierce who was just as young and this might be something the two newcomers could share and bond about.

Amelia hadn’t been at the hospital for long, but as chief, Owen’s eyes were always seeing in between the lines and carefully analyzing everything around him. One thing he’d noticed ever since her first days was that Derek’s sister had empathy and excellent bedside manners. She was so charismatic that patients often felt engaged and so did residents. At the same time she seemed approachable, he also knew she could be fierce and talk back when challenged, which he fully approved of. He didn’t want someone who would simply agree to everything he said, but a thinking leader who would give him honest feedback, speak her mind and be logical, plausible and fair while doing so. And because she had just arrived, Amelia seemed loaded with energy, eager to do well and willing to improve, at the same time she seemed very well balanced, not rushing into decisions or holding back in fear. As far as being a leader was concerned, Owen thought she could make up for her lack of experience with natural talent.

Overall, Owen believed she could be the most inspiring of the three. But he still hesitated, wondering how the others would feel about it. Morton and Nelson were probably biting their nails, wondering which of the two would get the position. They would definitely be surprised to hear the choice hadn’t been either of them. And there was also the fact that some people would probably assume Amelia had been picked due to nepotism, since her brother had been head of department before her.

But after weighing all the pros and cons, Owen finally made the choice. It didn’t matter what people thought or which rumors would be whispered around the hospital. He was fair and knew that all that mattered was that the job got done in the best possible way. He had to choose solemnly based on what would be best not for him or the candidates, but for the hospital.

And at that moment, Owen genuinely believed that Amelia Shepherd was the best candidate for the position.
For the second time in just a few days, Amelia saw herself standing outside the Chief of Surgery’s office. Even though she had regularly taken over Derek’s practice, the neurosurgeon hadn’t really talked to Owen ever since the day she’d caught him fixing Zola’s bike.

Amelia imagined this probably had to do with her recent hiring. Human resources had already taken care of the paperwork to formally admit her as a neurosurgery attending but maybe as chief Owen would still have other things left to discuss.

Three knocks on the door and a familiar come in later, Amelia finally stood in front of the man she hadn’t expected to see again in her life.

“Hey,” She smiled politely at him, taking a seat after he’d acknowledged her presence with a head nod and signaled towards a chair. “I’ve been told you wanted to see me?” Amelia added nervously.

She was intrigued by her own reaction. On their first encounter, she hadn’t been anxious at all, even though he had never met her. And now, after knowing Owen Hunt had already welcomed her to the service he ran, she found herself strangely intimidated.

“Yes,” Owen agreed. His eyes stayed focused on hers the entire time he was speaking and it didn’t go unnoticed to Amelia. “How are you settling in?” Owen asked, formally intertwining his fingers in front of the desk at the same time he leaned back against the chair, looking very relaxed.

Amelia noticed how at ease he seemed to be occupying a position of power and command. Owen Hunt certainly inspired confidence, but not in a cocky, arrogant manner. He looked like a man who was dedicated, took his job very seriously and certainly expected that everyone else who worked for him did the same.

“Everything is good,” Amelia replied, trying to contain a grin. She was enjoying the rush of working again in a hospital more than she could explain. “I like the fast rhythm around here.”

“That’s good,” Owen nodded in approval. He had heard and noticed good things about her but, before letting her know of his decision, he also needed to know if she was interested in the job to begin with. “And the hours? Are you feeling overloaded or…?”

“Oh, not at all,” Amelia interrupted him. “I mean, Derek had a lot of patients and there are people from so many places scheduled to see him. But I am enjoying the challenge.”

Hearing her say those words encouraged Owen.

“How would you feel about adding to your workload?”

“What do you mean?” Amelia asked with a heavy frown. Was he talking about what she thought he was?

“Well, with your brother’s departure, I have a position to fill,” Owen explained with serenity. “I have thought about this and I was wondering how would you feel about taking his job as Head of Department?”

Even though Amelia had hoped she would be offered the spot, she hadn’t really considered getting it. Derek had told her she would take over his patients and that he would recommend her to also take charge of his department but her brother had explained that there were at least two or three other attendings who, being her seniors and having accumulated a workload at the hospital over the years, probably had better chances to get the position.

So to see Owen Hunt offering it to her only days after having met her really touched Amelia.
“I don’t even know what to say,” She confessed, genuinely surprised and flattered, looking from his face to the desk and then to her hands trying to process the information.

“Say yes.”

Amelia looked back into his eyes and saw the determination and security with which he’d spoken the words. Owen certainly inspired leadership.

“Yes.” This time she couldn’t contain a smile and Owen felt something funny moving inside of him at the sight of two dimples forming on her cheeks. “Thank you! I… I am surprised, I really didn’t see this coming at all.” Amelia confessed.

“You don’t think you can do it?” Owen raised one eyebrow, sneakily testing her.

“It’s not that,” Amelia vehemently denied his assumption. “Of course I can do the job,” She sustained his gaze with fierce determination. “I just didn’t think you would consider me, knowing you have other candidates.”

Amelia wanted to add that even though she was grateful and flattered, she was also a bit alarmed. Owen barely knew her and yet he was giving her a vote of confidence. Supposing he was doing it for Derek, and not her, Amelia swallowed hard, more determined than ever to prove that she deserved the position, not because of her brother’s legacy, but by her own merit.

“I believe you can do the job too,” Owen added, hoping he was making the right call. He couldn’t quite explain it, but it was like deep down something was telling him that Amelia was the one, the best choice he could make. And after years of living in the line of duty and going through many things, Owen had learned to trust his instinct. “I expect your full commitment, Shepherd.” He said, intensely staring into her eyes. “Don’t let me down.”

Amelia felt the weight of his words and the power of his gaze. Even if Owen Hunt hadn’t chosen her for the best reasons, he still seemed to be sincere when he said he believed in her. Despite having spent her college and residency years repeatedly proving her potential, Amelia had never really felt like people had taken her seriously, especially her family. All her siblings were successful doctors, very focused and serious about their careers. Even with all her achievements, graduating top of her class and being regarded as the best surgical resident at Johns Hopkins, Amelia had never really had a chance to prove her worth by taking a position of responsibility. It was easy to stand out when she was one among many others, but now she would be alone in the spotlight, the challenge would be much greater, as would the reward. If Amelia was able to do this, a job that felt so grownup and that had once been Derek’s, maybe people would regard her with respect and stop feeling like she was a failure.

Maybe even Amelia herself would stop feeling that.

The idea was very exciting and the neurosurgeon wanted to jump in with both feet. She couldn’t wait to get started. Her eyes once again met Owen’s and she saw the fiery disposition he had. The man exhaled leadership, confidence and strength. And somehow, instead of being frightened or intimidated, she somehow felt supported and inspired.

“Thank you for choosing me, Dr. Hunt. I won’t let you down,” Amelia looked into his eyes with a newfound fire burning inside her, feeling better about herself than she’d felt in years. “I promise.”

Owen let out a heavy sigh while striding across the land, grateful that hell of a day was finally over.
He couldn’t believe it. For the past two weeks, Cristina had been postponing her flight but today, amidst all the chaos, at last she had gone away.

The day had been so long, with the mall explosion and the possibility of it being an act of terrorism that Owen had barely had any time to properly say goodbye to his ex-wife. But he supposed that was probably for the best. At this hour, she was probably arriving in Switzerland, ready to start a whole new chapter in her life. And for the first time in years, Owen finally felt free.

The past weeks had not only been stressful because of his personal life, but work had also driven him to exhaustion. Among dealing with cuts in the residency, overseeing two new heads of department and dealing with the press, Owen had also found out that April Kepner was pregnant. He was thrilled for her but also knew it probably meant his workload at the ER would definitely increase.

On the other hand, maybe that could be good. Owen wouldn’t mind spending more time inside the OR. He missed it. Working as chief often involved several meetings, paperwork and bureaucratic obligations, leaving very little to no time left for operating. Now, with April having to step down temporarily, he might get a chance to scrub in more often. Timing was convenient for Owen too, for he would much rather spend every minute possible at work than coming home to a trailer that felt as empty as his life at the moment.

His sharp senses developed after years of military training let him know he wasn’t alone. Owen looked around and noticed the slim, small figure gingerly walking towards the clearing in the woods, a couple of yards from his trailer.

“How?” He greeted the woman, swiftly coming from the shadows.

“Oh, God, what the hell…!” Amelia replied instantly, obviously startled. Owen noticed how she immediately took her hand to her chest, obviously scared by his sudden appearance. “Do you always sneak up on people like that?” She asked with a grumpy expression.

“Technically, you’ve sneakied up on me,” He reasoned. “I was already here when you arrived.”

“Well, who made you the word police now?” Amelia snapped, instantly regretting it. “Sorry,” She added sincerely. “I am trying to filter… It’s just that you appearing out of nowhere really scared me.”

Owen kept examining her face, struggling to admit he was amused by how easily frightened she was. His entire day had been hell. That had probably been the first time he honestly smiled.

“Ugh, I know, right… how do you do it?” Amelia rolled her eyes, obviously feeling sorry for him. But when she saw the confused expression on his face, she realized he hadn’t been lamenting living there like she’d initially assumed. “Oh, God… Sorry! I told you… filter.” She apologized again as she pointed to a spot between her brain and her mouth. “I’m working on it.”

Owen held a chuckle and turned his back, walking up to the deck to grab a beer. Once again he offered her one, but she refused. Amelia wrapped her arms around her body and rubbed the sleeves of her jacket, trying to warm up at the same time she wondered how he could be wearing only a shirt and not be shivering from the cold.

“So, how is work?” Owen asked, distractedly picking up a rock from the ground and throwing it into
the lake. Amelia noticed the rock bounced three times on the water surface before finally sinking.

“I am enjoying it more than I thought I would.” The neurosurgeon confessed with honesty.

As Owen picked up another rock to once again throw into the lake with that amusing skipping effect, Amelia turned around and glanced over at the house. The lights in the living room were still turned on, which could only mean her brother and wife were still there.

“Haven’t they reached an agreement yet?” Owen asked from behind her.

Amelia turned around, surprised that he knew about it.

“It doesn’t look like they have,” She confessed, unsure of what else to say. “I got home and really didn’t want to get in the middle of that, so I actually for the first time considered taking a walk and exploring the land,” Amelia smiled. “It’s better than walking in on them trying to kill each other.”

“That bad?” Owen raised his eyebrows, reaching out for another stone.

“He really wants to move to DC,” Amelia explained. “She really doesn’t.”

Owen acknowledged her answer with a head nod, took another sip of his beer and resumed what he was doing. Amelia noticed he didn’t ask further questions and she thought he probably was the kind of person who respected privacy. Even though at home he was pretty much just a neighbor, at work he was her boss and she could see why he would be uncomfortable discussing the personal lives of the people who worked for him, especially with someone he barely knew.

But as she kept studying him further, Amelia noticed that there was probably more to his silence. His expression gave away his exhaustion; it had been a long day and she knew it. Several times, she’d heard about the chief having to deal with press and controlling the mass casualty influx that wouldn’t stop arriving in the ER. It was a miracle he still had energy left to throw stones with such vigor. The realization made her imagine that something else was probably troubling his mind, but Amelia didn’t know the guy enough to ask. The way his knuckles would whiten as he closed his hand around the rocks made her think he was probably angry at some level.

“How do you do that?” Amelia asked with a puzzled expression, watching as the rocks he threw would bounce on the water several times before finally sinking in.

Owen turned around for a second and grabbed a flat stone.

“You just have to make it spin like this,” He showed her, doing the movement slowly so she could see it. “It’s mostly about rotation, not speed. Do you want to try?”

Amelia hesitated for a second, but after seeing he was handing her the rock with a mix of surprise and amusement, almost as if daring her to do it, she took a couple of steps in his direction and accepted the object he offered.

Her first throws were awful, but soon enough Amelia got the hang of it. After a while, she found the activity strangely therapeutic. Maybe it had to do with just standing by the edge of the lake, focusing so hard on making the best move that she could easily forget about everything else.

Like how messy her personal life was at the moment.

Amelia lost her concentration for a second and took a sideways peek at Owen. He had remained silent for the past twenty minutes, gazing over at the lake while occasionally helping her find a flat stone to throw. She wanted to ask if he needed to talk about something, but didn’t know if she
should. In every occasion she’d been at his presence, Owen had been strictly polite and professional. The only thing she knew about him was that he’d gone to Harvard Med and now ran the surgical department at GSMH. Amelia found it odd how she could know so little about a person and yet feel so comfortable in his presence, especially when they were in complete silence like that.

“The woman I used to love left the country today.”

Amelia heard the words with surprise and instantly looked up to meet his eyes, but Owen kept staring at the lake, as if lost in his own mind. She instantly realized he wasn’t going to share more, but having said that had probably already made him feel better.

“I broke my ex-fiancé’s heart earlier today when I said I was not going back to Los Angeles.” Amelia shared in return, not because she felt like she should say something, but because she felt comfortable doing it. “I felt like I was finally free.” She only realized she’d made a confession after the words had slipped her mouth.

“Me too.”

Amelia looked over her shoulder and met his eyes. Once again, Owen sustained her look, gave a slight head nod, but didn’t offer any more insight. And strangely, she was okay with not knowing.

A thousand words were said in the intensity of his look and before she could process everything, he looked away. Amelia was overwhelmed. At the same time, she was as fascinated as she was frightened by that newly discovered and powerful way of communication Owen had just introduced to her.

He was so intriguing, more than she could have initially considered. Amelia could tell that behind the tough façade and the obvious strength, that man’s soul probably bore more pain than she could possibly imagine. Amelia knew it because, having her share of pain herself, she could easily identify the signs.

It was nice finding someone she could relate to without the need to explain herself. If she had to take a guess, Amelia would say Owen could probably understand most things better than a lot of people she considered close to her. There were many things left unresolved in her life but right now, she was okay with not exhaustively discussing them over, or trying to find solutions for her problems.

Even if just for that night, while she waited until her brother and wife figured their own life out, Amelia would put her own on hold, knowing that throwing rocks in the lake with a guy she barely knew but in whose company she felt so at ease was strangely enough.
Chapter Summary

11x01 and 11x02. Amelia is settling in as head of department and during an AA meeting finds out Maggie Pierce is related to Webber and Meredith. Owen is adjusting to life without Cristina.

The Journey - Part Four

Amelia double clicked on the radiology computer while taking a sip of her steamy hot coffee. She was dealing with the case of a twenty year old girl who had stroked out during sex. The case itself was interesting enough but the neurosurgeon was sure there was probably some medical mystery related to it. And Amelia couldn’t help herself. She needed to find out.

It was nice taking some time alone. That was one of the few things she missed about her work in Los Angeles. Even though Amelia loved the rush and the full time busy schedule of big hospitals, sometimes she enjoyed sitting by herself, studying scans accompanied only by a cup of coffee. The silence made it easier for her to concentrate and at that moment, it was entirely welcoming.

As her eyes thoroughly examined every detail on the screen, Amelia couldn’t help reminiscing about how well she was doing. She deeply missed Addison and the other friends she’d made at Seaside, but for the first time in a long time, Amelia felt like she was in full control of her life. It was unusual for her to feel like that. And the surgeon knew that even though she was in a good place, it was important to make sure she didn’t neglect her life long recovery battling addiction, for Amelia was determined to never again have another slip.

For that reason, as soon as she had settled at work, the neurosurgeon resumed going to AA meetings. At first, it had been an awkward surprise to find Richard Webber there. But the more she thought about it, the more at peace she became. Richard was an amazing surgeon, with an incredible career. Looking at the guy, Amelia would never guess that he too had an alcohol problem. And yet, there he was, seeking out help the same way she was. Even though she sympathized with him, Amelia also felt inspired. Just like Charlotte King, if Richard Webber could recover from addiction and live his life to become chief and rebuild his life from scratch, then there was no reason why her own life couldn’t also be promising. Richard and Charlotte were examples to be followed and Amelia felt stronger to realize she wasn’t the only one. Probably everyone in the hospital had their own skeletons in the closet and it was a comforting thought to know she wasn’t an outcast.

Amelia had just finished separating the images she wanted to zoom for a more careful read when the door opened. She turned around and saw Maggie Pierce lying against it, her eyes closed as she took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

“You okay?”

Maggie instantly opened her eyes, realizing she wasn’t alone like she’d originally imagined.

“I am sorry,” The thoracic surgeon looked rather uncomfortable. “I didn’t know you were here,” she
added, already turning around to leave.

“No, it’s okay!” Amelia said before she could even think about it. Her own reaction surprised her and she wondered why she’d hurried to guarantee Maggie could stay. Earlier that day, Richard had briefly introduced the two of them, but there wasn’t much Amelia knew about the young head of thoracics other than the fact that she seemed really resourceful. Just a while ago, Maggie had suggested they tracked down a patient’s identity using her cell phone serial number. But the fact that she had called Derek “the other Dr. Shepherd” had also helped to put the woman in Amelia’s good graces. “Bad day?” The neurosurgeon asked, narrowing her eyes as she studied the other’s expression.

Once again, Maggie took a deep breath and seemed to hesitate a bit before finally revealing:

“I’ve had bad days and rough starts, but this…” The young woman sighed, visibly shaken up. “It just feels like everyone is against me today.”

“What do you mean?” Amelia considerately asked, seeing the woman probably needed to talk.

“I don’t know if I am being tested,” Maggie confessed, taking two steps forward and sitting next to Amelia by the computer. “I mean, I was already hired, so if they wanted to test me, why didn’t they do it before? It would have been…”

“Who’s testing you?” Amelia asked with a grin, interrupting the ramble.

“Everyone,” Maggie admitted. “There is Meredith Grey, who’s being a bitch to me for no reason…”

“Nah, that’s just who she is,” Amelia waved in dismissal with good humor. A few days before, during a particular revealing AA meeting, she had found out through Richard Webber that Maggie Pierce was his biological daughter, and half sister to Meredith Grey. The thoracic surgeon didn’t know this yet but Amelia was pretty sure the secret wouldn’t be kept much longer. “Don’t worry, you’ll get used to it. I am sure.”

“Then there’s my resident, who simply won’t do what I tell her,” Maggie carried on, ignoring the interruption. “And there’s the chief, who’s hired me but then treats me like I am incompetent and not up for the job.”

Amelia didn’t know why, but Maggie’s impression on Owen Hunt intrigued her more than the one about her sister in law.

“How is that?” She asked, trying to sound indifferent. “I mean, I am not prying, it’s just that I have also just been appointed Head of Department and don’t want to deal with any unpleasant surprises.” She hurried to make up a believable excuse for her interest.

“I don’t know…” Maggie sighed again, feeling better already just by having confessed her feelings to someone. “It’s like he won’t let me do my job. Maybe he thinks I am beneath his ex wife, maybe he thinks I am not as good as her but…”

“Well, she left.” Amelia pointed out and then frowned at herself for doing so.

“Yeah and I am here,” Maggie said, feeling a wave of empowerment. She looked at Amelia, as if the neurosurgeon had just given her an answer and proceeded to get up. “She left and if she was better than me, she would have stayed for the job. I don’t have to prove myself to anyone, I am well aware of how capable I am,” Maggie decided with renovated vigor. “Thank you, you were great!” She said with honest gratitude before holding her head high and walking out the door.
Amelia was left with amused disbelief, wondering what exactly she’d done. Later that day, she and Maggie would meet again and after discussing nearly fatal sex injuries, Amelia would realize she actually enjoyed the other surgeon’s company. They were both young, talented women who had recently arrived at the hospital. The duo also had to put up with people thinking they couldn’t do their jobs on a daily basis and therefore, had a lot in common. Maybe Maggie could really become a rather welcomed new friend. Amelia certainly had enjoyed watching her operate and eating a bag of chips while they talked and she chanted the ode Maggie’s parents had made up for their daughter. Amelia felt strangely touched. It was obvious Maggie Pierce had proud parents and a supportive family. Those were things the neurosurgeon had longed for all her life. Amelia had felt comfortable enough to share she had three sisters and a brother, who are all very put together, while she had always been the odd man out. It was interesting to interact with someone who’d clearly had a traditional upbringing.

Maggie Pierce seemed to have a funny way of functioning and even though they hadn’t spent more than a couple of hours in each other’s company, Amelia already liked her a lot.

Owen felt like kicking the coffee machine inside the attendings’ lounge. Yet again, he was having one of those days. They seemed to happen quite often lately and he wasn’t at all excited about the things he had left to resolve.

“I really have to say this… I love working here!”

Owen turned around to meet the excited face of Amelia Shepherd. The young neurosurgeon made her way in, swiftly taking control of the coffee machine Owen had visibly been struggling with and he didn’t know whether to feel angry of grateful.

“That’s good to hear,” He added in a bad mood, only because he felt he should say something. But the woman was so excited about whatever she was cheering about that he doubted she noticed his heavy expression.

“Maggie Pierce has just diagnosed a patent foramen ovale on a twenty year old who had a stroke,” Amelia shared, excited about the case. “I just watched her close it with a catheter. It was such a good catch,” The neurosurgeon excitedly went on, easily getting the machine to work and pouring two cups. Owen thankfully took the one she was offering him and quickly got busy drinking it, so he wouldn’t have to take part on the conversation. “You know, she is amazing.”

“Who is?” Owen asked distractedly, just realizing he wasn’t paying attention to what she was saying.

“Maggie Pierce,” Amelia replied like it was obvious.

“Oh,” Owen recovered his senses, doing his best to focus. He shrugged and breathed in before finally making eye contact with the newest head of Neuro. “You’re right, she is incredible… She uh,” He hesitated, embarrassed to say he had almost put a brake on her brilliance because of his stubbornness. “She actually was able to solve a case after it had been thoroughly searched. Everyone had given up on it,” He admitted, thinking about how Maggie found out the cause for the McNeils cardiomyopathy, linking it to a genetic mutation. “I had given up on it.” He confessed humbly.

“Well, I am glad she is here,” Amelia admitted for selfish reasons. For once, she wasn’t alone. Maggie was also the young prodigy whose capacities and experience everyone always doubted. Amelia could relate to that.

“Wait, did you say you had a twenty year old with a stroke?” Owen asked with genuine interest.
After an entire week of being asked out by Derek and Jackson, dealing with residents' issues and handling a feud between Meredith Grey and Maggie Pierce, it was nice to find some distraction on something he really enjoyed. He hadn’t been in the OR for a while and honestly missed it.

“Yes!” Amelia replied with enthusiasm, carried on after seeing he was interested in the conversation. “Luckily for the patient there were no deficits but it could have been much worse.” She added before getting a sip of her own coffee, finding comfort in the hot beverage.

“How did that happen?” Owen asked, unsure if she had already said while he hadn’t been paying full attention.

“She had a leg clot and after vigorous sex, the clot traveled back to her heart, passed through her PFO and went up the carotid,” Amelia explained, impressed by the situation. “Can you imagine it?” The neurosurgeon shook her head. “I mean, of all the sex injuries I’ve ever imagined or seen, this one I could have never predicted…”

“What?” Owen asked with a hoarse voice, suddenly feeling tense. Why was she talking to him about sex? And asking if he could imagine it?

“I once had this patient that…”

Amelia went on rambling but Owen found it extremely hard to keep paying attention. His mind was assaulted by the vivid image he’d seen through the window, a couple of weeks before. Involuntarily, his mouth got dry and his breathing got heavier. He could still clearly see it: Amelia gracefully moving around wearing shorts, her shapely firm thighs in evidence as she playfully entertained the children. Her slim shoulders and curvy waist were also exposed, making up the delightful vision.

What the hell was wrong with him?

Owen loathed himself for allowing his thoughts to take that direction. He knew he hadn’t had sex in a while, and that was probably adding to his already bad mood, but he couldn’t keep imaging the woman that way. She was his employee. Amelia worked for him. The least he could do was treat her with respect and not objectify her like his brain seemed so determined to do.

“… so after hours of blindly looking, we were finally able to figure out where that rash was coming from.” Amelia ended her excited tale, failing to notice how uncomfortable Owen seemed. “Hey, do you want more coffee?”

“Sure,” Owen replied automatically, trying to use that time to regain control.

But as Amelia turned to her side and went to the coffee maker, his eyes fixated on the image of her profile.

“I have to admit, despite the stroke I kinda envy those two,” Amelia chuckled, pouring more coffee into the cups. “I mean, how many women do you know who can say they had such a mind blowing orgasm, if you know what I mean…” Amelia joked, intentionally making a pun.

Oh God, Owen thought, painfully aware of how close she stood. Why did she have to say words like orgasm and ask him a question in the same sentence? His body immediately took it like a challenge and Owen was assaulted by images of that woman lying underneath him on a bed, her wonderful brown hair against a fluffy white pillow while he…

Damn it. Owen forced himself to stop thinking. Why was that happening?

“I have to go,” He cut her short and strode to the door, not even bothering to grab the coffee she had
offered. But Owen noticed the look of confusion on her face as she was basically left talking alone.

Amelia stood still, caught off guard by the way he had suddenly left. Had she said anything to offend him? Amelia didn’t think so, but who would know? Owen Hunt was so mysterious and so moody that the best thing she could do was simply stay under the radar, avoiding his presence completely. That way, not only she wouldn’t have to deal with his strange mood, she could also stop wondering about him and why he was so annoyingly fascinating.

Amelia finished gathering her things, ready to call it a day. It had been a fun one. She had really enjoyed getting to know a bit more about Maggie.

“This has probably been the longest shift of my career,” Maggie exaggerated. She’d had longer and rougher days during residency but today had been especially hard.

“You took on so many cases,” Amelia pointed out with a gentle smile, seeing how her colleague looked exhausted. “But don’t worry, there will be others tomorrow.” The neurosurgeon added with a wicked grin.

Maggie chuckled and finished changing from her scrubs to her regular clothes. She had just closed her locker when she remembered:

“I can’t believe you got asked out by the patient’s boyfriend.”

“Well, technically he didn’t ask me out,” Amelia corrected her with a smile. She knew Maggie was talking about the date of the patient who’d gotten a stroke while having sex. “He just asked for my number.”

“He looked like he could only think with what was in his pants,” Maggie shook her head in playful disapproval. “That kid can’t be more than twenty two, did he seriously think you were going to accept his offer… He probably hasn’t even left college yet,” Maggie realized. “Are all college guys like this?” She wondered out loud.

“Well, don’t you know?” Amelia gave her a look of surprise. Maggie had gone to college too. How come she didn’t know?

“I was way younger than everybody,” The thoracic surgeon confessed with a sad grin. “Plus, I had gigantic braces and carried a heavy physiology textbook anywhere I went. Muscular gym guys hardly found that attractive,” She joked at her own predicament.

“Well, sometimes it is good to think with body parts other than the brain,” Amelia advised with a chuckle, noticing how Maggie had blushed.

At that exact moment, the door to the lounge opened but the two surgeons were too caught up with their own conversation to notice the tall, broad shouldered man who had entered.

“Are you serious, though?” The neurosurgeon gave up putting on her jacket, looking at Maggie with comic disbelief. “You didn’t enjoy that part of college?” Amelia asked, scandalized. “I swear to God, I should have gotten that guy’s number and given it to you. He surely looked dumb enough but no one dates a guy like that to discuss rocket science, if you know what I mean…”

Maggie blushed at Amelia’s words but she felt her entire face turning red when she noticed the chief of surgery had walked into the room. He definitely had heard a part of the conversation and the fact that he looked livid and serious made the thoracic surgeon even more anxious. Maggie felt like she
had somehow been caught misbehaving.

“Is everything okay?” Owen asked with a heavy expression.

“Yea.” Both women replied at the same time.

Maggie noticed how while she was alarmed and clearly uncomfortable, Amelia was the portrait of innocence. Owen kept staring at the head of Neuro for a second longer than necessary, as if expecting her to say something else, but on the face of Amelia’s indifferent silence, his eyes fell upon Maggie one more time.

“I was looking for you, Pierce,” He confessed, clearing his throat before talking. “I…uh,” Owen hesitated, uncomfortable by the presence of Amelia. “I just wanted to say you did great today,” He encouragingly added. Owen had noticed how, after solving the mystery to the McNeils case, Maggie hadn’t gloated or bragged that she was better or worse than anyone. She had simply gone on to finish her job and he admired her attitude. “With all your cases.”

“Thank you, chief,” Maggie let out a breath she didn’t know she’d been holding, relieved to be hearing those words instead of the reprimand she was sure they were going to get. “It’s been a long day.”

“Get some rest and I’ll see you tomorrow,” Owen said, watching as the two women prepared to exit. He waited on purpose until they were both at the door and called out. “Shepherd, can you hold on for a second? I want to talk to you.”

Amelia noticed by the stiffness of his jaw that he wasn’t really asking and she silently said goodbye to Maggie before turning back and closing the door after herself, leaving the two of them alone in the room. What did he want now? She hadn’t forgotten the way he’d left her talking to herself earlier that afternoon. That man really was impossible to figure out.

“Something wrong?” She forced a polite smile, unsure of why he was looking at her with angry impatience.

“Need I remind you the hospital has a very strict policy regarding dating patients?” Owen started, feeling the bitter taste of the words as they left his lips.

But he couldn’t help it. He had walked in on the two women and caught Amelia Shepherd making a joke about getting a patient’s number. Deep down, Owen knew it was probably harmless and he doubted she had even meant it, but today that impulsive and passionate young neurosurgeon was really getting to him. He knew he should have held her back, but his temper got the best of him.

“What?” Amelia asked with a heavy frown, unable to believe what he was saying. If she already had been angry with him for his behavior from before, now she was undoubtedly irritated.

“I just heard you telling Pierce something about getting a patient’s number?” Owen said with a heavy tone, knowing he was being excessively strict. “You know the hospital has policies against that.”

“Oh, the guy wasn’t even a patient, he was the boyfriend of the girl who had the stroke,” Amelia justified herself. She had never dated a patient or their family members and she was well aware of work and ethical policies. It had obviously been a joke, so why was Owen Hunt so worked up about it? “And besides, he asked me for my number, not the other way around. I don’t go around flirting with patients,” She took a step in his direction, getting angrier at his inexistent accusation. “I certainly don’t encourage it, but it’s not my fault if they flirt with me,” Amelia added in a tone of defiance, knowing there was no need to go that far.
But she couldn’t help it. The guy got on her nerves too easily.

“Well, I sure hope so.” Owen said between his teeth, sustaining her look. “Have a good night, Dr. Shepherd,” he added, letting her know that conversation was over.

Amelia left but before she turned her back on him, Owen noticed her blue eyes were sparking with rage. He knew he was being unfair. Had it been anyone else, Owen probably would have let it go but Amelia Shepherd had already haunted him enough that day.

Earlier in the afternoon, she had innocently trapped him in a conversation about sex and Owen immediately started to have thoughts he should be ashamed of. But then she’d gone on and joked about a guy and Owen made an unpleasant discovery:

Even more disconcerting than fantasizing about Amelia Shepherd with that gorgeous alabaster skin hot and flushed as she had an orgasm was to involuntarily imagine her in someone else’s arms while at it.

Owen was disturbed by how fast and how intensely his thoughts had escalated. He really wasn’t in a good place. Being a guy, of course he often noticed women and felt attracted to them, but never before had he been so flagrantly unable to properly function because he was having dirty thoughts about a colleague before.

Especially not one who was as tiny and delicately shaped as she was fierce, daring and challenging.

It was probably not even about her, Owen tried to convince himself. He just had a lot on his plate at the moment. Maybe he could use a distraction, something he enjoyed doing that could keep him busy. That was it. He needed a new hobby.

Feeling more optimistic than he had all day, Owen strode back to his office. Maybe it was time to revisit an old project he had, involving war veterans. Callie Torres had a whole new lab and her research about robotic limbs was a success. It was definitely a better idea to keep his mind focused on prosthetics and amputees, people who really needed the assistance and resources he had available. And it was much more comforting to channel his energy on helping people who needed it than using all of it to stop picturing Amelia Shepherd without her scrubs on every time she directed those scandalous silver blue eyes at him.
Chapter Summary

This one covers 11x03 and 11x04. Owen is working on a project with Callie about War Veterans and reminiscing about his life prospects; Derek has decided to stay in DC so he and Amelia are butting heads about the leadership of the department.

The Journey – Part Five

“AMELIA SHEPHERD!”

Amelia swallowed hard, startled by the voice of command. She turned around and met Owen Hunt’s steel gaze fixated on her. He calmly strode in her direction with confidence and powerful authority but she could tell by his hardened jaw that he wasn’t at all as calm as he wanted to look.

That was Amelia’s fourth week as head of the Neurosurgery Department.

It was also the fourth time she was summoned by the Chief in that not so elegant manner.

Her first impulse was to reply what the hell is it this time?, but Amelia held the words instants before they could leave her mouth. After so much effort put into it, that filtering thing seemed to finally be working.

“Yes, chief?” She looked at the guy with forced serenity. Owen Hunt was really irritating her. Over the past week, he had alternated among treating her with cold distance, plainly ignoring her or, a few times when she least expected, paying her an encouraging compliment seconds before walking away with what seemed like contained anger.

Amelia had just recently gone back to working in a big hospital and therefore needed to adapt to many things. But if there was one thing she knew would never change over the years was how healthcare employees liked to gossip. And at Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital, it was no different. Unwillingly, Amelia had learned that the chief was grumpier than ever and people attributed that to his ex-wife’s leaving.

“Please, follow me to my office.”

As he said those words, Owen turned his back and didn’t even look back to see if she was following his orders, as if not considering that to be possible. Amelia looked around in the UCI where she was getting an update on a patient from Maggie Pierce. A couple of people noticed the way the chief had spoken to the neurosurgeon but the minute Amelia gazed at them, they immediately looked away.

Feeling like a school kid who had just been reprimanded by the Principal, Amelia took a deep breath and lifted her chin to maintain her pride. Owen Hunt was so irritating! Her instinct was to simply stay where she was and ignore his command but she was trying really hard to be a responsible adult and therefore had to start acting like one. Ignoring a direct order from her boss wasn’t a good idea. Plus, she had no clue what the guy would do if she dared to defy him like that and she wasn’t exactly
eager to find out.

Promising the universe that one day she would get back at him for it, Amelia walked to the chief’s office, taking deep breaths to control her temper. Technically, she had no reason to be mad because all he’d done was ask her to see him in his office and he’d even said please. But being willful and stubborn, Amelia knew very well how to recognize another one of her kind. Owen was just as strong headed. The only difference was that, at the moment, he had a position of power and was her boss, which unfortunately meant she reported to him.

Amelia didn’t want to admit the guy messed with her because she believed that would give him even more power. So she settled for walking into his office with a condescending attitude.

“You wanted to see me?” The neurosurgeon asked with fake meekness.

Owen had to hold his breath and force himself to calm down before looking at her. That woman was driving him crazy.

Not only was she giving him a headache at work, she was also insisting on haunting his thoughts in a very random manner. As much as Owen tried, it was hard to let go of some of the images he had created in his mind a while ago when Amelia Shepherd had had the terrible idea of talking to him about sex.

“How can you even…?” Owen stopped mid sentence, taking his time to exhale slowly or else he’d lose it completely. “Shepherd, are you freaking kidding me? On a two year old?

Owen knew that awake craniotomies, the kind of brain surgery where surgeons kept the patient alert and responsive were usually reserved for some kind of tumors that had unclear margins. Throughout surgery, the neurosurgeon could assess more easily if they were damaging a healthy portion of the brain by testing functions like vision, body movement and language skills. The procedure was usually reserved for people who could stay calm and functioning during it.

Which was not the case with a toddler.

“Well, it worked,” Amelia justified herself. “The baby had a medulloepithelioma and I had to make sure I had clean margins, otherwise the chance of recurrence would be huge!”

Owen knew that kind of tumor was very aggressive and usually affected young children. Surgery with tumor excision was the choice of treatment but it was usually done with the patient fully sedated and anaesthetized. Kids that young weren’t very reliable at keeping still and following commands, meaning the surgery could have been a complete disaster if the young patient had suddenly decided to freak out.

Seeing as he was having a hard time accepting it, Amelia worked harder on making her case.
“Look, that’s why I had the mom inside the OR the entire time, you see.” When Owen’s eyes grew wider with shock, she realized she was only making it worse. “Just listen to me,” Amelia raised a hand to silence him, noticing the chief was about to interrupt her. “I put some cartoons on and had the mom there to distract the little girl. The mom was really helpful asking the kid to move and giving me feedback and I think the surgery was only this much of a success because I chose that approach.” The neurosurgeon concluded, absolutely sure of what she was saying. “Now a two year old is on her way to radiotherapy with the actual chance of being cancer free and living a full life ahead of her. How awesome is that?”

Owen once again took a deep breath.

“I really hope you have amazing insurance, Shepherd, because if these parents decide to sue I will have a hard time having your back all by myself.” He said with an authoritative voice but Amelia noticed he seemed actually worried for her.

“They won’t sue me, they love me,” Amelia replied with a jovial smile. “Look, I am not stupid, okay?” She said with encouragement. “I explained everything to the family, gave them all the options and made them sign all the paperwork. They knew about the risks and they also knew this was their child’s best option to actually beat brain cancer. So, they agreed to the surgery. And it was a success,” Amelia gloated a little. “You’re welcome.”

She realized she’d gone too far when, at the sound of her last sassy words, Owen took two steps in her direction and added with cool formality.

“If you have any interest in keeping your job, next time you think of doing something crazy like this, you will inform me.” Owen then went back around his table and gazed at her from the other side of the desk. “You can go now.”

Amelia thought about talking back but the actual possibility of losing her job made the neurosurgeon think twice. With Derek changing his mind about DC and staying in the city, she already had a real threat of having to hand over the department. It wasn’t wise to butt heads with the chief, especially in a moment like this.

She had been doing such a good job at filtering her thoughts! Why did she have to relapse in a moment as important as that one? Knowing that the man was too irate to consider even listening to another word she had to say, Amelia settled for retreating, thinking she would most likely spend the entire day thinking of what to do next to make her situation at least a bit better.

Owen waited until the woman was finally gone to allow himself to sit down.

Amelia Shepherd was getting on his nerves in a way none of his other head of departments could. She had been there for barely a month and yet, had stirred up more trouble than everyone else combined.

And the biggest problem was that, even though Owen really tried, he just couldn’t find a concrete reason to stay mad at her.

After weeks of being there, Amelia had turned the entire neurosurgical wing upside down. She had forced the older neurosurgeons in the department to each log another morning in the practice downstairs. At first, it had made Owen insane with the amount of complaints he’d had to endure from Nelson, Morton and the others. But after a couple of weeks, he realized what Amelia had done was actually bringing more patients into the hospital, and therefore increasing the number of
surgeries in her department. So even though Owen was having to deal with very angry neurosurgery attendings, whose egos were deeply hurt, he couldn’t hold it against Amelia because ultimately all she’d done was increase hospital profit, making her the newest favorite within the finance department.

Nurses complained that she stayed in the OR for much longer than her shifts, indirectly forcing them to stay until the surgeries were over too. Her commitment went beyond the walls of the operating room because whenever she wasn’t operating, Amelia was organizing schedules, updating data and coming up with ideas on how to improve her department. It wasn’t uncommon for Owen to arrive home and realize her car wasn’t there, which was impressive enough considering he spent nearly fifteen hours a day at the hospital. Just like her optimism, her energy never seemed to end and even when he arrived at the hospital very early in the morning for a meeting or some other bureaucratic appointment, he would find her looking fresher and younger than ever, no matter what time it was.

And then there was the fact that she openly stimulated residents to compete with each other and rewarded them with surgeries and procedures. Even though in real life residency was all about competition, attendings and supervisors liked to pretend it wasn’t so that, at the end of the day, they could tell themselves they were doing a good job educating and putting a hold on already very eager young doctors.

But Amelia obviously didn’t care one bit about being politically correct. With her unorthodox method of teaching, she had quickly climbed to the position of favorite attending, leading the positive feedback from residents. That made it extremely difficult for Owen to point out where she was going wrong. When the young doctors did care to complain, they would usually take it out on each other, saving only compliments for the amazing Dr. Shepherd. In result, Owen now had to deal with resident feuds more often than ever, at the same time Amelia Shepherd’s popularity skyrocketed.

On top of that, she was also a big success among patients. Owen had already noticed how empathetic and kind she was, but over the past weeks he’d made sure to watch her more closely, almost as if looking for fault to have something to use against her when she drove him mad, something that was happening quite often lately. Amelia was always kind and respectful with her patients and their families. Her good manners quickly added to her already good reputation, causing her to be one of the most sought after attendings by new patients who came to the hospital claiming they’d heard excellent references about the young neurosurgeon.

All in all, truth was that, even though she was turning his life upside down, she was also improving everything she dared to touch and transform. The reactions she inspired on his body were still driving Owen to the point of avoiding her presence but that didn’t mean he admired her any less. It just felt like, no matter how much he tried, Owen had too much of a sharp sense of justice to deny that Amelia Shepherd was too brilliant and competent. And that made it especially difficult to give her a lecture or control her insubordination. As much as Owen would thoroughly enjoy backing her into a corner and putting some sense into her head, he struggled to admit he actually enjoyed her willfulness and strong personality.

Amelia had a shining light inside of her, a unique kind of fire that burned as intensely and passionately as could be. And the last thing Owen wanted was to put out something so authentic and so admirable as her creativity and resourcefulness. Because no matter how crazy she drove him and how much trouble she added to his workload, if there was one thing he was sure of was that she wasn’t boring.

And right now, Owen could really use some unpredictability in his life.
Amelia walked around the corridor of the hospital, her head fuming with anger.

Who the hell did Derek think he was?

She should have known… The minute he’d decided to stay instead of going to DC, it was clear that she would have to put up with her brother’s narcissism. Unsurprisingly, Derek was having a hard time accepting that Amelia was the new head of department and that now, he reported to her. Her brother already had a big enough ego, but having to take orders from his little sister was visibly messing with his head, which only caused more friction between the two siblings.

Amelia felt frustrated but at the same time, she didn’t know what to do about it. Just minutes before, she’d walked into the cafeteria and seen Derek sharing a table with Owen Hunt. What he was trying to do was so obvious that it made her sick to her stomach. Derek and Owen weren’t just work acquaintances; Amelia knew they were also friends outside the hospital. It was one thing for her to be ahead of the department when her brother wasn’t there but now, after seeing the two together, Amelia realized it was far too likely that Owen would give Derek his old job back. Her brother had been in the position for over a decade and as he’d said it himself, he didn’t take steps back in his career. He might not have moved forward, but he surely wasn’t going to settle until he got his old position back.

Amelia knew it was unfair. For Derek, it was only a matter of ego and pride. For her, it was a one in a lifetime chance to prove herself. Derek had decided to turn down his big opportunity, it was his own fault that his career wasn’t moving forward whereas the only thing she was guilty of was being the little sister to such an egocentric guy.

Before exiting the room, suddenly losing her hunger, Amelia spotted Derek casually laughing at something Owen was saying. Even though her brother seemed to be in a good mood, the chief of surgery had his usual broody façade. Amelia wondered if he was capable of smiling, for she’d rarely ever seen him have any other facial expression that didn’t resemble a frown. In the first couple of times she’d been in his presence, Amelia’s instinct had been to assume he was a genuinely good person. She’d made a reading out of him and imagined he was probably closed off due to a lot of hurt, but deep inside, there was probably more good than bad to him. And yet, Amelia was starting to think she might have been wrong all along. Owen Hunt was focused, serious and competent at his job and he seemed to be fairly just regarding surgical and administrative concerns. But even though she’d often catch him saying a few words of encouragement to Maggie, the other new head of department, the chief of surgery hadn’t spoken to her in over a week, ever since he’d dismissed her in his office. The two year old patient had evolved remarkably well and was now on follow up for radiotherapy with a good prognosis. Owen hadn’t asked her about the patient but she assumed he probably knew about the outcome.

And after seeing how close the guy was to her brother and the camaraderie between the two men, Amelia supposed it wouldn’t take long before Owen Hunt called her again into his office, for the fifth and probably last time in the whole month she’d been there.

Owen paced back and forth outside the post op ward, trying to recover from the full day he’d just had. Over the past week, he’d been exhaustively drowning in work, doing everything in his power to gather a group of Army veterans who needed help. He’d been very excited about working alongside Callie and her new prosthetics lab, but at first, the orthopedic surgeon had rejected his idea.

Owen had felt horribly and before he could have controlled it, the intensity of the feelings he’d been avoiding for the past weeks caught up with him. He yelled at Callie and acted like an idiot, making a fool of himself and embarrassing her in front of a lot of people. When Owen finally got around to
control his temper, he’d looked for her and explained what he was feeling.

As he’d gone on saying the words, Owen had started to figure out feelings he hadn’t been able to understand before. Talking about it had really helped to set his mind straight. After Cristina left, a feeling of loneliness had completely overtaken him. For the first time in a long while, Owen felt hopeless. That was an awful sensation and now he knew why he avoided it with all his heart.

It was hard to admit it with words, but Owen truly feared that he might end up exactly like how he’d told Callie: As a single guy, with no wife, no kids… no family. His heart wasn’t broken that Cristina had left. Owen was happy for her. She was pursuing her dreams and it was good that at least one of them could get to do it. But he felt stuck. Trapped in a place where it was hard to see light again. A familiar sensation of darkness assaulting him was more present than ever but now Owen knew better. He didn’t need another woman to distract him from it. He needed someone whose light was strong enough that she could once for all extinguish that dark feeling he had consuming him.

In the exact moment he thought about it, his eyes caught a glimpse of Amelia Shepherd slowly walking through the hall. If Owen weren’t so skeptical, perhaps he would have thought that seeing her there amidst the thoughts he was having wasn’t a coincidence. But right at that moment, he still had no idea the woman he was staring at would one day make his life better in every possible way.

Amelia looked exhausted dragging her feet with a heavy expression on her face at the same time she held a scrub cap in her hand.

Owen didn’t know why, but seeing her look so defeated bothered him very much. He’d seen Amelia Shepherd smiling, laughing and teasing several times before. That was the image Owen associated with her. The woman was always optimistic and good humored. Deep down, even though her impulsiveness and teasing remarks had driven him crazy, he really liked that she was so joyful and genuinely positive. So to see her looking so sad really got to him. Owen instantly tried to reject the feeling of protectiveness that started to assault him but before he could even realize what he was doing, he rushed to catch up with her.

“Hey,” He slowed his pace to walk beside the neurosurgeon.

She didn’t greet him back or give him a sermon about sneaking up on her. Instead, she settled for nodding briefly before looking ahead again. The indifferent reaction made Owen feel even more alarmed.

“You know,” He hesitated, unsure of how to ask her what was going on. Maybe if he shared some of what had happened to him, she would feel inspired to talk. “I just watched Jackson Avery and Callie Torres implant a prosthetic leg on a guy again. You’d love the work he did with the nerves.”

“I heard,” Amelia looked sideways at him again and gave a polite nod before looking away.

Owen frowned, intrigued by her reaction. In the few times they’d discussed surgeries, Amelia had always been overly excited about procedures. She was always hovering around the OR, watching colleagues, asking questions, learning different techniques. This time around, she didn’t look at all turned on with the subject.

“You need a minute?” He forced eye contact with her. “I’d like to see you in my office.”

Amelia stopped walking and took a deep breath, trying to stay in control of her emotions.

That was it. She knew this moment was coming. Once again, her egocentric big brother had pushed her around just to prove that he could. Not long before, Derek had bullied her inside an OR,
affirming that he was better than her and she wouldn’t hold that leadership position for much longer. And judging by the events of that day and the way the chief of surgery was sternly looking at her, as if he felt sorry for her predicament, the neurosurgeon realized she was probably going to get fired. And the worst part was that Amelia was sure she didn’t deserve it.

“I just need to check on a post op, can you give me five minutes?” She felt her bottom lip trembling and turned around before Owen could see it. Amelia hoped to buy some time so she could gather some strength and make sure she took it professionally when he finally gave her the news.

“Sure,” He frowned, intrigued by her sudden leaving. “I’ll wait for you in my office.”

Owen did as told, telling himself he wasn’t as anxious as he seemed to be feeling. Having randomly bumped into her had actually been convenient, because there really was a delicate subject Owen needed to discuss with her. He just didn’t expect to find her looking so sad.

Or to feel so annoyingly affected by it.

At the same time Owen pondered about how he was going to notify her about the news, Amelia appeared at his door. She still looked fragile and somewhat vulnerable, but he decided to ignore it, because noticing those things made him feel emotions he wasn’t prepared to acknowledge.

“Everything okay with your patient?” Owen asked with a sympathetic smile.

“Yes,” Amelia replied with a dignified head nod, taking the seat in front of him he was pointing at. “It was just a aneurysm clip, no big deal.”

“Good,” Owen said with politeness. He liked that while she took on a lot of big cases like massive tumors and complicated procedures, she also seemed to stick to the basics on the every day routine. “I suspect you know why I called you here. You probably have heard rumors?”

“Yeah,” Amelia said, gathering all her strength to proudly keep her head up. At the same time she understood Owen’s decision to give her brother his old job back, probably thinking it was the best for the hospital, she was also very angry with him for the injustice of the situation.

The way they were both avoiding to acknowledge the elephant inside the room made Amelia lose her patience completely in a matter of seconds.

“You can just say it, Dr. Hunt. There’s no need to feel sorry for me. I get it.”

Owen frowned, wondering what the hell she was talking about. What did she get?

“That little girl you operated on last week?” Owen raised both eyebrows in question, hoping she would follow his line of thought. “The two year old?” As Amelia nodded affirmatively with her head, he proceeded. “Her grandfather was here to see me on Monday.”

“Oh,” Amelia replied with surprise. That wasn’t the subject she was expecting them to discuss. The neurosurgeon had discharged the patient from the PICU and sent her to a wardroom, where the toddler was allowed to have visitation from her family while recovering remarkably well.

“He is one of the associates at General Eletric’s Healthcare branch in the west coast,” Owen confided, noticing the confusion on her neurosurgeon’s face. “That’s a big, billion dollar multinational company that manufactures medical equipment.”
“I know what they are,” Amelia replied, still oblivious to the point of that conversation.

“The thing is, the guy has way too much money and resources at his disposal,” Owen explained. Amelia wondered if things were about to get ugly for the unconventional way she’d chosen to have the procedure done on the patient, and felt suddenly alarmed. “He told the family had been to four different hospitals in the past three weeks looking for a treatment plan for his granddaughter and they all rejected the idea of invasive surgery, insisting she was terminal. You were the only one willing to try to save her and give her a chance.”

“Well,” Amelia explained with genuine modesty. “I got the tumor out but the margins were very hard to dissect. She is going to radiotherapy and I hope it works but there are no guarantees. The tumor could still grow back.”

“He knows that,” Owen explained. “We talked about it and he is aware that she isn’t yet fully cured. But the man feels like you, of all people, were generous and invested enough to take a shot and because of that, he gets to hold his granddaughter in his arms with hope that she might be okay instead of grieving that she will be gone soon. He told me he is feeling so optimistic that he wants to give back.”

“What do you mean?” Amelia furrowed her brows, trying to make sense of what Owen was saying.

“The man donated this,” Owen grabbed a check from a folder and slid it across the table in her direction. Amelia was shocked to realize the number of digits on the tiny piece of paper, “plus two brand new last generation MRI machines to the Neurosurgery Department research.”

“What?” Amelia asked with disbelief, too baffled to believe it was actually true. “Are you serious?”

Owen couldn’t contain a chuckle at her startled expression.

“Yes,” He confirmed it, making sure she knew it was real. “According to him, more patients should have the same opportunity his granddaughter had and he wants you to use that money to help fund surgery for other kids who have the same condition but can’t afford the procedure or treatment.”

“Oh my God, that’s…” Amelia couldn’t find the words. She was deeply touched by the selfless gesture and honored for the recognition.

“Get ready for the line of patients you’re about to get in the following weeks,” Owen smiled with contentment, happy to see her so positively affected by the news.

Amelia was still in shock, trying to process the entire situation. What had just happened was amazing. That money could change the lives of so many families and she couldn’t wait to get started. The idea of being ahead of a project like that deeply moved her. She knew too well the agony that losing a child was and therefore felt more determinate than ever to help others avoid the same fate she’d had to endure. But in order to do that, the neurosurgeon would have to be at the hospital, working day after day.

“Wait,” Amelia frowned, confused. “Does this mean you’re not going to fire me?”

“Fire you?” Owen was taken aback by the unexpected suggestion. He had hoped she would be thrilled with the news, not shocked or alarmed like she seemed to be.

“Yeah,” Amelia looked at him accusingly. “I thought you’d called me here to tell me you’re giving my job back to my brother.”

Owen’s deep voice mixed with a heartfelt chuckle as he expressed his surprise. How could she even
have thought that he would do such a thing?

“Your brother gave up the job because he had other plans. If he changed his mind, that’s on him, not on you,” The chief of surgery declared. Owen had always had a good sense of justice and that time, it was no different. “If I thought you weren’t living up to expectations, I might have considered it, but that’s not the case,” He added, pulling a tablet and showing her some statistics of his last meeting with the board and the financial department. The numbers didn’t lie and Amelia took in the information with genuine surprise. “After one month, your department profit rate has increased by eight per cent and complaints have dropped by fifteen per cent. No lawsuits or settlements in the period, which is great, even though it hasn’t truly been that long,” Owen explained. “But the truth is, you’re doing well, Shepherd. I have no reason to fire you.”

Amelia looked up from the screen with the charts and her eyes met his. Owen looked happy and relaxed, almost like someone who was eagerly giving a present and waiting for a reaction. Amelia was so taken aback that she felt a bit numb. She had walked into that office expecting to be fired and yet, she’d received the amazing news of a donation to help other patients and very encouraging information on her performance in her first month as head of department.

“Did you really think I was going to fire you?” Owen asked, intrigued. He noticed how she still wasn’t her usual confident and sassy self and unconsciously did his best to invoke that spirit back. “Now that I think about it, I should give you a raise,” He joked. “It’s the first week since you’ve been here that I didn’t have to call you into my office to give you a lecture or threaten to take away your privileges.”

Amelia smiled, feeling more comfortable after seeing he wasn’t taking her confusion too seriously. Owen Hunt surprised her every day. Just when she thought he would get rid of her, after dealing with her insubordination and impulsiveness for the past weeks, he had in fact overlooked it because he’d been able to identify her brilliance and superior results beyond all of that. And Owen seemed to be the kind of guy who judged people by their best, not their worst.

“I am sorry I am so difficult sometimes,” Amelia bit her bottom lip, feeling her emotions all messed up. Just earlier today, she had decided Owen was a prejudiced, annoying man who was too blind to see things through. But he had just proven that she had been the one who had rushed to assumptions. “I promise I am trying to get better.”

“Just let me know next time you come up with a crazy plan like awake surgery on a child, okay?” Owen didn’t try to contain the smile that was forming on his lips. The woman was crazy, completely unbalanced and impulsive.

And yet, there was something about her that inspired him. Owen was just as sure that despite being all of that, Amelia was also extremely competent, dedicated and considerate. She might not have the most traditional ways, but she genuinely worked hard to improve her department and at the end of the day, it was all he could really ask for.

“I will,” Amelia replied with a smile. Slowly, Owen identified the cheerful, energetic woman in her returning. Now he understood why Amelia had acted so defeated. She had really thought he was going to fire her and only because Derek had changed his mind about going away.

Just as the neurosurgeon walked to the door, Owen lifted his head and their eyes instantly met when she turned in his direction.

“But just as a curiosity…” Amelia smiled and Owen noticed the mischief on her voice and face. “If I’d come to you and suggested the awake craniotomy for that toddler, what would you have said?”
“I would have said no,” Owen replied with authority, despite his friendly expression.

“That would have cost you two MRI machines and a good couple of millions,” Amelia smiled wickedly, enjoying the provocation.

“You know I can still fire you, right?” Owen smugly bent on his chair, bring forward his chest at the same time he narrowed his eyes at her impertinence. But deep down, he was more amused than he would admit.

“Yeah, but you won’t,” Amelia smiled, delighting him with a vision of her dimples. The neurosurgeon met his gaze one more time before finally walking out the door. “Good night, Dr. Hunt.”

Owen playfully rolled his eyes, cursing the heavens for the day they’d made that utterly complex and yet fascinating woman walk into his hospital and turn everything upside down. She drove him crazy. And he had a feeling that was just the beginning.

“Night, Shepherd.”
This one sets around 11x05 and 11x06. Owen and Amelia didn’t really have any relevant developments inside the hospital so I took a lot of liberties with this one. This is what I imagined happened between them offscreen!

The Journey – Part Six

Owen had just finished his morning coffee when he heard loud thuds coming from outside. Sneakily moving inside the small trailer, he bent over and gazed outside the window, looking for the source of all that noise. It shouldn’t have surprised him that the person who was cussing while repeatedly knocking metal against metal was Amelia Shepherd.

“What are you doing?” He frowned heavily at her, wondering why she was being so loud when it wasn’t even seven in the morning on a Monday. “You’re going to break the car.” He added with incredulity.

The neurosurgeon had the hood of a silver car open, while a nearly transparent smoke came from somewhere inside the engine. It was obvious something was wrong. Owen noticed an object in her hand, much similar to a wrench, and he wondered what she’d been trying to do with it.

“Are you beating up the car?” He tried to hide his amusement. “Trying to see if you hurt it bad enough it will decide to work?” Owen added, openly teasing the logic behind the idea.

Amelia seemed to hesitate for a second and he noticed how she slightly blushed. It wasn’t at all common to see her embarrassed so Owen rejoiced in it. It was good to see that sometimes she could get affected by the things he said or did as well.

“Pretty much,” Amelia confessed with an apologetic smile.

Owen went around her and pulled the hood of the car up higher, carefully inspecting it. Amelia noticed the way he easily went through some of the devices. It became obvious Owen Hunt was very familiar with mechanics.

Was there anything the man couldn’t do?

Amelia sighed in frustration. She always felt like she was a mess and that her feelings often got the best of her. It was annoying how sometimes, her mood could change due to any reason, be it a pathetic one or not. And yet, the tall surgeon standing beside her seemed so calm, controlled and unaffected that often she wondered how could someone be so levelheaded. Even when she’d seen him angry, Owen had been in control of himself. At the same time Amelia was attracted by it, she also felt a childish desire to test him just to see how far his self-control would go. The chief of surgery was very intimidating and instead of being scared, Amelia felt strangely drawn. She had no idea why, but her instincts told her that even when pushed to his limit, the enigma that was Owen Hunt would dissolve a little, but he’d probably still be as fascinating.
“When was the last time you checked the radiator coolant?” Owen asked after a few seconds, noticing the levels inside the storage system seemed extremely low.

Amelia looked at him as if the guy was speaking a foreign language.

“What makes you think I even know what that is?”

Owen processed her reaction and chuckled at the same time he nodded his head in disapproval.

“Look, the level of fluid is extremely low,” He carefully opened a round recipient and Amelia saw he now had grease all over his hands. His forearms were amazingly masculine… how come she had never noticed that before? And his hands too… Owen had large, manly hands and Amelia didn’t realize the amount of time she spent with her eyes fixated on them. The way his fingers easily moved in between the car pieces, as roughly and skillfully as if he was performing trauma surgery, made Amelia wonder what else that man was capable of performing with his very talented hands. “Look, go over there to my car and get the bottle with green coolant that’s in the trunk,” He instructed her, pointing towards the blue truck parked a few yards from them.

Amelia quickly did as told, feeling better to have something she could actually do to help instead of distracting herself with amusing ideas. It was very early in the morning and she wanted to be at the hospital in time to do rounds and get plenty of time with two young patients who were scheduled to see her today. The donation money she had received was helping other kids with the same condition as the two year old patient Amelia had performed surgery on, and she was immensely happy to be able to help more children.

The neurosurgeon opened the door to Owen’s truck and couldn’t help taking a moment longer than necessary to observe everything. Unlike her own car, that had coats, an empty water bottle and an overnight bag for shits scattered on the back seat, the inside of the blue truck was perfectly neat and clean. There were no crumbles or forgotten clothes on the inside and Amelia smiled mischievously, thinking that made justice to the image she had of man who owned it.

She followed his instructions and brought back the liquid he’d asked for. Without saying a word, Owen added it to a recipient and closed it. Afterwards, he bent a little further and scraped something inside the panel.

“You also need to replace the engine filter,” Owen informed her.

“Okay, I will,” She replied automatically, grateful for his help, but also feeling a little guilty he had literally gotten his hands dirty just to help her while she was still perfectly clean.

“No, you won’t,” Owen replied matter-of-factly. He didn’t know the woman that well or for that long but somehow he was sure of what he was saying.

“Yeah, I probably won’t,” Amelia confessed with an embarrassed grin. After noticing the way he was judgingly looking at her, obviously condemning her decision, she got defensive. “What? I don’t have the first clue on how to…” She rolled her eyes, impatiently giving in. “Alright, fine. I know I have to, otherwise the car will fry.” The neurosurgeon admitted, against her will. “Should I just walk into a car shop and order an engine filter? Oh, wait, can I buy it online?”

She noticed the silly smile on the corner of his lips, as if in her complete ignorance about mechanics, Amelia had said something so absurd that he was having fun at her expense. She felt like knocking him down for it.

“Just leave the car here over the weekend and I’ll replace it for you.”
With a gentle nod he went inside the cabin, turned the key and like magic, the car worked. Without saying another word, Owen gave Amelia the keys and walked back to his trailer, presumably to wash off all the dirt that had stained his arms and clothes.

Amelia wasn’t surprised by how bossy and economic with words he was. The man was so frustrating, ordering her around. It was her own car, damn it! But at the same time, she couldn’t quite control a warm feeling that slowly started to consume her.

Owen had no obligations with the Shepherds whatsoever but he did things like fix Zola’s bike and now, repair her car. She hadn’t asked for his help, he hadn’t exactly offered it. Instead, he’d simply gone on and fixed what needed to be fixed. His practicality and the way he was always there in a time of need alarmed Amelia at the same time it attracted her. She was afraid it could easily become highly addictive to have him around. Even when Owen was reprimanding her, he was always kind and respectful. Amelia felt strangely looked after. She was used to being on her own and not counting on someone to have her back like that. That made staying mad at him exponentially more difficult.

Trying not to think about those insane notions, she got into the car and drove to work, telling herself it was going to be a great week.

At work, Amelia did have one of the finest weeks she ever remembered having. After performing seven surgeries and following up with post ops in the PICU and the ICU, the neurosurgeon took a cab home on Thursday afternoon, after being at the hospital since the previous Tuesday.

All Amelia wanted was to take a hot, relaxing shower and sleep until the following morning. Her brother was responsible for covering the night shift and she was supposed to come home with Meredith, but her sister-in-law had been notified about a donor’s liver for her patient and would spend the entire night performing a transplant. In usual conditions, Amelia would pick up her niece and nephew but she was in no shape to even drive home, let alone look after two kids. Settling for a cab, Amelia took pleasure in the idea of having the house to herself.

As she left the hospital to go home, a thin rain started to fall. The neurosurgeon wasn’t surprised. After years of living in LA, where it was mostly warm all year long, adapting to Seattle wasn’t hard. Amelia had grown up in New York and she actually preferred the colder, rainier days.

Invariably, she had to step on the grass to walk up to the house and much to Amelia’s dismay, her brand new boots got covered in mud. She was still sighing at the realization when she went to pick up the mail.

To her delighted surprised, Amelia found a postcard from Sheldon Wallace. It had been dated two weeks before and she smiled widely while reading about her friend’s adventures in a paradise landscape in the middle of the Caribbean. Amelia was happy for Sheldon that he had quit his job and was now traveling the world.

She was tired and it demanded so much energy to focus on reading a simple card that Amelia completely forgot to clean her boots before entering the house. As result, she stained the floor with several mud steps. Cursing heavens for the sloppiness of her actions, the neurosurgeon went to the back of the house in search of a clean mop when she inadvertently slipped.

Amelia tried to hold her balance on the kitchen isle but all it did was crash two half filled water glasses on floor, adding to the mess before she ended up landing on her bottom. If the situation weren’t so ridiculous, it would be hilarious. Trying her hardest to keep her composure, Amelia
promptly cleaned up after her mess, worried about not leaving any tiny glass splinters considering there were two small children living in the house.

One hour later, Amelia had already showered as she looked for something to eat inside the fridge. It was becoming increasingly harder to ignore the sharp pain that was coming from her bottom. Initially, the surgeon had assumed it'd been from her clumsy landing, but as the minutes progressed, she realized there was probably more to it.

Dropping the waffle mix she was about to prepare on the counter, Amelia went to the bathroom and took off her pants. After minutes of careful inspection and thorough search, she realized there was a tiny piece of glass deeply lodged under her skin. She'd had jeans on when her accident happened but somehow the sharp object had made it through. Amelia had no idea how she was unlucky enough that, of all her body parts, she ended up with a splinter stuck in such a horrible place. Not only it was absolutely painful, it was also very hard to reach.

Amelia knew that for any experienced doctor, getting out that tiny glass piece was probably an easy procedure. She was also aware that if she didn’t do anything about it, her body would keep reacting to the foreign object with more inflammation and perhaps even get infected. The skin was already reddish and swollen around the area, probably due to her failed attempts at removing it with a pair of tweezers.

She was still trying to get the glass piece out when the doorbell rang, suddenly startling her. It was a few minutes after 8 and Amelia was alarmed, wondering whom it might be. After pulling her striped pajama pants up, Amelia went to the living room. Feeling stupid for not guessing sooner, she spotted the blonde tall man outside through the peephole and opened the door.

“Hey,” She greeted him, seeing the look of surprise on Owen’s face when he saw who had opened the door.

“Oh, hi,” He replied a bit awkwardly. Owen noticed none of the cars were at home but Derek’s, so he simply assumed his friend was home alone. “Is Derek around?”

“Oh, no, he’s actually on call tonight,” Amelia explained, wondering what Owen could be doing there. He looked very casually dressed with a V-neck green jumper and a pair of dark fleece pants.

“Sorry to bother, I saw his car and thought he was here,” The trauma surgeon explained, ready to turn around and go home.

“No, actually he carpooled with Meredith today because he has the night shift,” Amelia explained. “She is spending the night there too.”

“The liver transplant,” Owen shyly smiled. “Do you have the kids?” He asked, worried. Amelia looked tired and it was obvious both Meredith and Derek wouldn’t be back anytime soon.

“Uh, no, actually they are at the hospital in overnight care because I pulled a double shift so I am in no condition to babysit.” She casually leaned against the door, somehow hoping they could extend that conversation. Just minutes before, she’d been eager to spend some time alone but now that she had company, Amelia really didn’t want him to go.

It was rare seeing Owen outside the hospital in that easy, relaxed manner and she grew curious. Her eyes scanned him quickly and not for the first time, Amelia noticed how broad his shoulders were. He looked so solid that sometimes she felt like touching him just to see if his body was as hard and virile as his personality.
“Well, I’ll leave you to rest, then,” Owen said after a few seconds of silence. He had already broken eye contact with her, ready to turn around and leave when he heard her voice.

“No, wait,” Amelia called out and unconsciously bit her bottom lip, trying to think of what to say. “I am not Derek, but maybe I can help too?” She suggested with a contagious smile.

Owen couldn’t help loosening up at that very inviting offer and put his hand inside his pockets.

“I was actually going to ask Derek if he’s watching the game tonight,” Owen explained. “Ever since it started to rain my TV signal has been running low and because I know Derek has cable here, I supposed he might be a little luckier than me.”

Amelia had no idea what game it was or even why exactly Owen had been having problems to watch it inside his trailer. But she quickly caught up on the fact that he was obviously spending the night alone, with a TV that didn’t work and craving for some company.

“You can watch it here,” She hurried to say and realized she had been standing at the door like a fool the entire time. “Sorry, come in,” Amelia gracefully invited him, taking a step back so he could enter the house.

Owen hesitated, unsure of what to do next. At the same time he wasn’t sure it was a good idea, something inside him made him desperately want to stay. The idea of going back to his trailer and spending the evening alone didn’t look appealing. Not nearly as much as staying in the company of a woman who could invoke all different types of feelings in him without even trying.

“Are you sure?” He asked, looking from her eyes to her figure, figuring by her outfit that she was probably dressed for bed.

“Yeah, absolutely,” Amelia smiled wider. “I was just going to prepare some waffles. I’d be happy to share them with you.”

Owen walked into the house and kept his hands inside his pockets as he slowly followed her to the kitchen.

“How are you not freezing?” Amelia asked, shrugging her shoulders to control a wave of shivering. Just to open the door and stay exposed to the weather outside for a couple of minutes had already taken its toll on her. And yet Owen had walked all the way from his trailer in light clothes, stood outside in the chilly wind for a while and seemed perfectly comfortable.

“It’s not that cold,” He replied with a shy smile.

Amelia made eye contact with him and grinned widely before returning to the waffles she’d been preparing earlier that evening.

“How can you even say that?” Amelia asked, shrugging her shoulders to control a wave of shivering. Just to open the door and stay exposed to the weather outside for a couple of minutes had already taken its toll on her. And yet Owen had walked all the way from his trailer in light clothes, stood outside in the chilly wind for a while and seemed perfectly comfortable.

“It’s not that cold,” He replied with a shy smile.

Amelia made eye contact with him and grinned widely before returning to the waffles she’d been preparing earlier that evening.

“How can you even say that?” She teased, preparing the mix under his attentive eyes. “It’s like, fifty five outside,” Amelia argued.

“Well,” Owen pointed out, “when you spend months in the hot desert in combat clothes you start to really appreciate lower temperatures.”

Amelia stopped what she was doing and processed his words. She’d heard that Owen Hunt had served in the army a couple of times as a surgeon. The military stereotype really did fit him and the thought amused her. With a friendly smile in his direction, she watched as Owen stepped up to help her with the mix.
“So, breakfast food at eight in the evening?” He finally asked, intrigued by it since the moment she’d first mentioned what she was cooking. “Is there a particular reason why you’re making waffles?”

“Do you really need one?” Amelia smiled mischievously, licking the mix that had been left on the spoon after she was done sorting out the waffles. “I mean, who decided that waffles could only be eaten for breakfast?” She questioned, intriguing Owen. He had never really thought about it. “I don’t see why it’s a rule. It’s a very stupid one if you ask me.”

“I can’t say that surprises me,” He added, returning her teasing remarks. “You obviously don’t care much about rules in general.”

The idea that Owen Hunt was actually capable of joking made Amelia laugh. It wasn’t the first time she realized how drawn to him she felt. The neurosurgeon had enjoyed his company from the start but she hadn’t seen him outside of work that much. Since Owen was her boss and Amelia was nearly always unintentionally causing problems, most of their interactions had been about work related issues but she had to admit she actually enjoyed spending time with him and getting to know more about the very reserved trauma surgeon when they were outside the walls of the hospital.

“So,” Amelia tried to engage him in conversation. Even though she wasn’t uncomfortable when they were in silence, she knew he wasn’t very chatty, meaning it would be mostly up to her to keep any kind of talk going. “What’s the game about again?” The neurosurgeon asked while carrying two plates with warm waffles to the living room, closely followed by Owen who brought steamy mugs with hot chocolate.

“Football,” He explained, accepting the remote Amelia was offering and setting the TV to the right channel. “Seattle is playing New York.”

“Oh, awesome,” She got more excited about the prospect of watching a sports game. Amelia had never particularly cared for sports but she had always been highly competitive. “Go, New York!” She cheered, without a clue of whom she was cheering for.

“No, go Seattle,” Owen looked at her with a smile and intensified his gaze, as if silently trying to convince her.

“New York all the way,” Amelia replied, more interested in pestering him than in the actual game.

“One day, after you’ve been in the city long enough to realize this is the best place to live in, you’ll become a Hawks fan and I will live to see it.” Owen predicted.

Amelia laughed in disbelief but little did she know that in a few years, when she and Owen had already started to build their family, she would indeed realize that Seattle was the only place in the world she would ever consider home. And being a Seahawks fan after him would come with the package.

As the game was starting, she took a seat on the couch next to him. Her bottom was still very sore and Amelia was reminded of that in the worst way. As she sat down for the first time, the annoying piece of glass throbbed against her skin, making the neurosurgeon swiftly put one of her legs folded under her body, preventing the sore area from getting any pressure against the couch.

“This tastes really good,” Owen complimented her a few minutes into the game, pointing to the waffles.

“Thanks,” Amelia replied with gratitude. Being complimented on her cooking skills wasn’t something she was used to. The neurosurgeon was well aware that her talents in the kitchen were
very limited. “So, I am having a real hard time figuring out what’s happening…” She confessed, frowning at the screen. Owen turned his attention from the TV and gazed at her profile, finding the way she was squinting at the TV trying hard to understand adorable. “Isn’t the whole point of this game to carry the ball to the other side?”

“Pretty much,” Owen replied, curious to see where she was going.

“Well, why doesn’t the guy just run with the ball while his friends knock down the other team?” She asked like it was obvious.

Owen chuckled heartily.

“For starters, the other team has eleven guys the size of tree trunks fully trained to knock down anyone who tries to pass by them,” He explained. “That’s why the team changes players according to ball possession. Some guys specialize in offense while others are the defense line.” Owen added. “And the friends of the guy who has the ball,” he used her own words on purpose, having fun with her adorable thinking, “are offensive players, their main strength isn’t to knock down the other team but rather to try to run through them.”

“That doesn’t sound very smart”, Amelia argued.

“It is actually a very strategic game,” Owen explained.

“Someone is definitely getting hurt.”

“That’s half the fun.”

Amelia’s eyebrows rose at his comment and when she looked sideways to meet his gaze, she realized he was kidding and they both laughed together.

For the next couple of hours, she kept asking questions as Owen patiently answered them, carefully explaining the common rules of football. Amelia didn’t seem that excited about the sport but while it was obvious she didn’t share his passion, at least she was rationally trying to understand it.

During each of the four quarters, Owen had noticed how, despite her charismatic smile and adorable serene façade, Amelia seemed somewhat physically uncomfortable. After paying closer attention, he figured something was bothering her because her body went stiff whenever she moved beside him.

“Are you okay?” Owen asked after a few minutes of silence. The question caught Amelia off guard and she studied his expression, trying to figure out why he was asking it at the same time she made an effort to pretend she was fine. “I’m only asking because you grimace every time you move on the couch.”

“It’s nothing, really,” Amelia replied, but it was obvious she was lying.

Owen wasn’t going to ask any further questions because he didn’t want to sound pushy or make her feel uncomfortable. The trauma surgeon had already diverted his eyes back to the last few minutes of the game when he heard her voice.

“Actually…” She started, feeling embarrassed. “Maybe you could help me out with something.”

Amelia was mortified at the idea of sharing what’d happened but at the same time, the neurosurgeon knew she couldn’t keep that piece of glass inside her skin much longer. It was starting to hurt for real and since she couldn’t get it removed by herself, it was likely she would have to ask for help. Her brother and sister-in-law wouldn’t be back until the following day and the idea of going to the
hospital sucked all her energy. Not only was Amelia exhausted from the long hours at work, she also didn’t want to show up in the ER to have an intern or young resident examining her butt. The idea of how quickly the embarrassing news could spread made her completely drop the idea.

Luckily for her, the best emergency surgeon at the hospital was sitting on the couch of her home and there was no one around to witness Amelia’s humiliation. Not to mention she was pretty sure Owen wasn’t the kind of guy who would tell others about the embarrassing situation. Having him remove the piece of glass was the wisest idea she could think of, and the quickest way to solve her problem.

As she mentioned maybe he could be of help, Owen simply sustained her look, kindly inviting her to resume her explanation.

“As I got home earlier today I dropped a glass on the floor,” She explained. “It was messy and there were small pieces all over the place.”

“Did you hurt yourself?” He asked considerately.

“Not really,” Amelia bit her bottom lip, hesitant about sharing the embarrassing part. “The thing is, some splinters got scattered around and one of them got wedged in my skin. I tried, but couldn’t get it out.”

“Oh,” Owen quickly realized what the problem was. “It’s alright, I can try to get it out for you,” He proposed with his usual practicality. “Do you have a needle we can sterilize?”

“Yeah,” Amelia had fun with the idea of imagining if he’d still be as willing to help as he seemed to be when she shared more details about the incident. “The thing is, the glass is on my butt.”

“What?”

Amelia thought she’d feel embarrassed but after seeing his mortified expression, what she really wanted to do was laugh.

“I forgot to mention that after I broke the glass, I landed on it.”

Even though Owen was perplexed, he couldn’t help laughing.

“Okay, then,” He furrowed his eyebrows, wondering how he’d ended up in that situation in the first place. “Well, let’s try to get it out.”

After a quick trip to her bathroom, Amelia came back with cotton balls, a small bottle of alcohol and a sterilized needle. It was hard to believe the mess she got herself in sometimes. The neurosurgeon didn’t realize she’d taken a deep breath and was holding it until she met Owen’s gaze. He’d clearly been staring at her, waiting for her to make the first move.

“Oh, yeah, right,” Amelia shook her head trying to focus. “Well, you’ll know where it is when you see it.” She walked over to where he was sitting on the couch and stood in front of him. Her tone of voice changed from playful to threatening when she added. “I swear to God if I ever hear a joke about this I am going to spread a rumor about you.”

Owen laughed, amused at her reaction. Amelia was often confident and very sassy. To see her in a situation like that was actually really entertaining.

He was still carefully thinking about that when the neurosurgeon turned around. Owen took a deep breath once he actually realized what was about to unfold and suddenly, the atmosphere around them felt dense.
He couldn’t see the look on her face, but Owen imagined she wasn’t exactly comfortable. Aside from a quick accidental bump as they passed each other occasionally, he had never really touched her, even though he’d had countless thoughts about it.

Thoughts that were so dirty and downright inappropriate that Owen immediately rejected them.

“You have to show me where it hurts,” He broke the silence, noticing Amelia was standing in front of him without doing much.

“Oh, of course,” She took a deep breath and slowly let it out, taking her hands to the hem of her pants.

Amelia wasn’t embarrassed of her body, she had always been confident about it. But suddenly, the image of Owen’s masculine hands assaulted her memory and she felt her face blush. It took a lot of effort to slide down pajama pants and expose the upper part of her butt cheek to him, especially when she had no idea what to expect.

But Amelia quickly found out.

As Owen’s hands splayed on the sides of her hips, gently pulling her one step closer to him, she felt an electrical wave assaulting her body with full force. His touch felt warm and powerful as his hands easily grabbed the curves of her body, bringing her to a position where he could actually reach her wound.

“It doesn’t look like it’s in too deep,” Owen swallowed hard. He had imagined many times over what it would be like to touch her, but he hadn’t been prepared for the overwhelming reality.

“Alright, I’ll start. Don’t move.”

Amelia closed her eyes and tried to focus on the fact that Owen was a doctor. What he was doing was purely professional. Or at least that’s what it should feel like.

But instead, Amelia was having a hard time getting over the fact that his hand had a firm grab on her body. She couldn’t see him, but it felt like his presence was engulfing her. The neurosurgeon knew she was vulnerable and exposed but instead of feeling uncomfortable, she was completely at ease with being touched by him. In fact, it was nearly impossible to ignore the rush of blood to her lower abdomen that only increased as she became more aware of his presence and his touch.

Owen picked up the cotton ball soaked in alcohol and gently brushed it against her skin a few times. He had done the same with patients many times over in his life but it had never made him as agitated as it did that moment. The trauma surgeon knew his restlessness had nothing to do with the procedure, but rather with the patient. Amelia Shepherd and her delicate, feminine body had a few times before charged him. Until the day Owen had laid eyes on her, he had not been aware of the intense sexual energy that had been hiding somewhere deep inside him. And yet, the sight and touch of her smooth silky skin seemed to bring that to surface with full force.

Very gently, Owen used the needle to get to the splinter of glass. It wasn’t a small fragment but it was wedged deep inside her skin. He knew there was the risk the piece would break, causing more damage. Amelia was silent and Owen could feel her entire body stiff, but he supposed she was nervous about the procedure when in fact, Amelia was trying to control the wave of desire that assaulted her every time she felt Owen’s experienced movements as he brushed and grabbed her butt cheek with his fingertips.

“You’re moving,” Owen tightened the grasp of his free hand on the side of her naked hip, trying not to sound too impatient. He was desperate to get that over with and Amelia’s jerky movements
weren’t helping. Truth was, his body wanted to prolong contact for as long as possible but his censoring mind was so alarmed with his own reactions that Owen wanted to be done with the procedure as soon as possible.

“Sorry,” She closed her eyes with more force and looked up, trying to focus. But her brain was invaded with images of Owen wearing the green jumper he had on tonight. Was it her imagination or did the clothing piece outline his manly biceps in a scandalous way? Amelia couldn’t be sure. He was all strength, possession and control and his intoxicating masculinity was stealing her breath in a very escalating manner.

When had it been exactly that Amelia had started looking at him that way? She wasn’t sure. In her mind, Owen had always been an attractive guy but that had never been on focus. He had confused her, irritating the neurosurgeon with his bossy, stubborn manners at the same time he amazed her with his loyalty, impeccable sense of justice and addicting reliability. Up until now, Amelia had been trying to figure out whether she liked him or not and the raw reality alarmed her.

Not only did she figure out that she actually enjoyed his company and admired Owen, apparently her body also liked him very much.

“Jesus, will you just stand still!” Owen grunted, losing his patience. He was not doing very well. At the same time the woman was unknowingly enticing him and seducing him with the amazing smell of her hair and the delicious texture of her skin, she was driving him crazy with her incapability of remaining motionless. Owen really didn’t want to hurt her, but she just wouldn’t stop moving as he was piercing her body with a needle, driving him crazy with anxiety. But what was really adding to his bad mood was the fact that no matter how much he tried, the trauma surgeon couldn’t deny he was insanely attracted to that stubborn, gorgeous woman.

“Well, you’re taking too long!” Amelia complained, suffering from the same symptoms as she tried to blame the tension on him.

Owen didn’t bother replying. She had the insane ability of making him lose control, in every sense. Without notice, Owen’s hand traveled from her hip to her lower stomach, under her shirt. He pulled her towards him with fierce determination. Amelia felt her body shivering when his palm splayed below her bellybutton, keeping her from moving forward like she’d been doing. That man’s hand was so large that it nearly covered the entire area of her lower belly. She found that thought and the possessive way he had pulled her nearer extremely sexy.

“I am trying not to hurt you, but you’re not making it easy,” Owen said between his teeth. Touching her like that was making his body have responses he hadn’t originally planned or considered, but the worst part was that he didn’t regret it one bit. He’d wanted more than anything to feel her skin under his touch and now that he could attest, it was as deliciously smooth as he’d imagined.

It also didn’t help him at all to unwillingly become aware of her gracious figure. Amelia’s body was very feminine and it was becoming increasingly hard to ignore her curves. She was so small and yet so adorably shaped. Her round bottom was literally under the touch of his hands and even though Owen was performing a medical procedure, his thoughts were far from professional. What he really wanted to do was too scandalous to be described in their surgery textbooks.

Amelia could swear his voice sound contained. She was just wondering if the brush of his thumb on the hem of her panties had been accidental when Owen suddenly pulled apart.

“There,” he said, sounding relieved. “I got it out.”

Amelia anxiously turned her neck around at the same time Owen’s hand grabbed the waistband of
her pajama pants and carefully pulled it up.

It was then that Amelia finally realized it: She wasn’t the only one who was painfully aware of the intense sexual tension that had established between them. He felt it too and that made it even very harder to ignore the physical attraction they were sharing.

“Look,” Owen noticed her eyes studying him and tried to distract her, flashing the glass splinter on the palm of his hand.

“Wow, it was bigger than I thought,” Amelia said with genuine surprise.

The moment Owen noticed he had just imagined her saying the same sentence in a total different context, he realized it was time to go. The game on TV wasn’t yet over, but for the first time he didn’t care one bit about football.

“It’s getting pretty late, I should go,” He blurted out, noticing Amelia was standing so close that if he moved two feet forward their bodies would collide.

“Thank you for helping me,” The neurosurgeon instantly replied, looking just as affected.

Owen was so distracted examining her features that he forgot to reply or move to finally go home. Amelia noticed the way his eyes were on her face. He was admiring her, she realized with girly silliness, feeling herself embarrassingly blush.

What was wrong with her?! Amelia had always been confident and extremely good at flirting games. Why couldn’t she help acting so awkwardly around him?

But then Owen’s eyes broke contact with hers and slowly traveled to her lips, making Amelia unconsciously hold her breath. Oh God, was he going to kiss her? Amelia was startled to realize she very much hoped he would. When had that happened? She couldn’t remember looking at Owen that way but suddenly, all she could think about was feeling the solidness of his arms around her and finding out if the stern, controlled chief of surgery was as much affected by the magnetic wave of attraction that seemed to connect their bodies as she seemed to be. When Amelia realized he was slowly moving forward, she closed her eyes, ready to embark on the experience of exploring his lips. But then his words assaulted her, like a shower of cold water breaking the magical moment.

“Good night, Shepherd.”

When Amelia opened her eyes, she had to blink repeatedly to be brought back to reality. Owen was already a few steps away from her, moving towards the door. Oh God, had he realized she’d expected to be kissed? Amelia felt like a fool. Gathering her strength to be back in control again, she smiled when she remembered the unmistakable spark of desire she’d identified in his eyes just moments before. There was no way Owen Hunt wasn’t as affected as she was. And if he had held the urge to kiss her, the least Amelia would do was to torture him in return.

“Amelia,” She caught up with him, standing by the door after he’d already crossed it.

Owen turned around in confusion, exactly like she’d anticipated, and the neurosurgeon explained.

“Well, since you’ve already grabbed my butt and felt me up... You might as well call me by my name.” Amelia wickedly added, controlling her smile of satisfaction. Now, every time Owen Hunt had to speak to her, he would undoubtedly be assaulted by memories of what had happened between them that night.

And what could potentially have happened but never did.
The neurosurgeon realized she had reached her goal when his entire face reddened with embarrassment. Without another word, Owen turned around again and went straight to his trailer. Amelia watched him disappear from a distance and smiled with pride, knowing that at least now she wouldn’t be the only one lying awake in bed, wondering what the other one was thinking while reminiscing every minute of the explosive physical discoveries they had just made that night.
Part Seven

Chapter Summary

This chapter sets throughout the events of episode 11x07. One detail about it is that EVERY dialogue this chapter contains was taken from the episode. So it’s one hundred percent canon, I merely added impressions, thoughts and feelings.

The Journey – Part Seven

Owen opened a bottle of beer and took a long sip, hoping it would relieve some of the stress he was feeling. His eyes traveled around the spacious backyard of Derek Shepherd’s land and the trauma surgeon spotted the light inside one of the bedrooms on the top floor to the right.

He knew it was Amelia Shepherd’s room and immediately Owen felt guilty for so flagrantly diverting his thoughts to her again. One week ago, during an unpretentious evening, the two of them had shared one of the most intense physical moments he’d ever experienced. They hadn’t had sex or even kissed but for some reason, Owen had left the house feeling more sexually charged than he could ever remember feeling.

But then came guilt. He just couldn’t seem to get the rebellious neurosurgeon out of his mind. She was Derek’s little sister and yet all Owen could think about was how touching her had made the blood rush inside his veins. It was all very confusing. At the same time he’d become strangely protective of Amelia and didn’t even know why, Owen also wanted to lock himself in a room with her and get lost in the gracious curves of her feminine body. For some reason, it felt like he was walking into forbidden territory. Derek was one of his best friends. Owen wasn’t exactly returning his generosity and loyalty by constantly fantasizing about his baby sister.

The intensity of his feelings and desires were troubling the trauma surgeon so much that all he could do was to stay away from Amelia as much as he could. At work, Owen would talk to her the strict necessary and at home, he would avoid crossing paths with the woman at all costs. A couple of nights before, he’d waited until the Shepherds had turned in for the night and kept his promise to change the engine filter of Amelia’s car. At the hospital, she’d made sure to thank him between surgeries and it was then that Owen realized she must have been feeling as awkward as he did.

Every time he remembered how closely they’d stood and the way she had closed her eyes but he’d backed away, Owen felt like punching himself. Even though rationally he’d made the best choice, avoiding a strain to their professional relationship, Owen also couldn’t believe he’d missed out on the chance to kiss her. The memory haunted him every time he saw the woman and for that, the trauma surgeon became even more determinate to avoid seeing Amelia Shepherd as much as he could, despite really enjoying her company.

Amelia had started off her day on a very positive note. Everything at the hospital seemed to be working out perfectly. Except for the fact that her boss didn’t seem much interested in talking to her.
A few weeks before, she and Derek had had awful discussions about what they both wanted and needed for their careers, sending Amelia on an annoying depressed mood. Later on, her frustrations had vanished when, unexpectedly, the chief had assured the neurosurgeon that he had no reason to fire her. Owen Hunt had proven with statistics and official hospital data that Amelia was thriving at the job but what had touched her most was the amazing feedback he’d given her with his own words.

Amelia hadn’t been working for Owen for long but she’d already quickly grown to admire him. As chief, he was fair and inspiring. The guy was always interested in reaching out to his employees, took suggestions well and ran a tight ship under his strong command. It was a general opinion around the surgical floor that Owen Hunt had all the qualities of a great leader. He rarely made mistakes and when he did, the man was humble enough to apologize and try to fix them, setting the example for his employees to do the same. While he was confident and inspired order and security, he was also noticeable humane and understanding. All those traits added together made everyone on the floor respect and look up to him.

And Amelia was no different.

Owen had been one of the few people in her life who had took a leap of faith with her and believed she could do something good, even when Amelia herself wasn’t fully sure she could. Sure, he reprimanded her when he saw it fit, but Owen also made sure to compliment and encourage her and that’s more than Amelia had ever been given before from an authority figure. In her past, a lot of people had treated her with decency and kindness, but never had she seen anyone expect the best from her on a first impression. The friends she had in LA were incredibly supportive and respectful, but before their bond and even professional relationship had developed, they had already known Amelia on a personal level.

Meanwhile, Owen had granted her privileges to work at the hospital upon her brother’s request, but then against expectations he’d hired her as chief of department, affirming he believed she had what it took to do it. When he’d first met her, the chief hadn’t focused on the fact she was young, impulsive or simply Derek’s sister. Instead, he’d chosen her because he’d seen Amelia as her own person, acknowledged the merit in her work and believed in her capacity to perform the job. Ever since that day, the neurosurgeon had been determinate not to disappoint him.

And yet today, for the first time, she’d felt like she had.

After a busy morning helping out with traumas in the ER, Amelia had humbly offered to go update the patient’s family. That had been the worst decision she made that day.

As she approached the old couple’s daughter, Amelia had the darkest secrets of her life exposed by a total stranger. Breaking every oath in the book, the distressed young woman had shouted to the entire floor about Amelia’s addiction. It all happened so fast and unexpectedly that the neurosurgeon felt numb, out of reaction. It was like she was living one of her worst nightmares in bright colors, exposed for everyone to watch. Her recollection of the moment included her boss stepping up in a matter of seconds, taking the woman away from the scene to prevent more damage. And then her brother coming in her direction.

Amelia fully expected Derek to come to her aid, say words of comfort and show support. But instead, he’d given her an icy, judgmental glance and completely ignored her in front of the entire staff. In the eyes of the spectators, Derek might as well have said that he fully agreed to the woman’s impressions about his sister. The patient’s daughter had requested another doctor to the case and even when Owen Hunt had already removed the woman from the scene, Derek had gone on and showed everyone where exactly he stood. The way he’d then closed the curtains on her face hit Amelia like a
punch to the stomach without a warning.

That was it. The final act to the sad show she kept reenacting all her life, everywhere she went. Soon after, as she walked through the halls, she could hear people whispering about her and pointing fingers. Not for the first time in her life, Amelia heard that she’d only achieved something because she was Derek Shepherd’s sister. The young neurosurgeon had lost count of how many times before she’d found herself in that very same scene. Somehow, for Amelia, only screwing up was never enough. It seemed like life made sure that on top of it, she had exposed her traumas, failures and losses to the world.

Coming to Seattle had been one last attempt at starting over with a clean slate. One final attempt at not letting what had long before happened dictate her future. But once again, her past caught up with her and hit the young surgeon right on the face.

“I need to talk to you.”

Amelia had been so nervous that she’d gone to the one person she knew could understand her. Talking to Richard Webber was a wise decision because Amelia was able to expose her fears and insecurities. After she’d guaranteed Richard that she was sober, he was of fundamental help by saying she was under no obligation to tell anyone. Webber had been the chief of surgery for a long time and Amelia valued his insight. According to the man, as long as she wasn’t doing anything that compromised her ability to do her job, Amelia’s private life could remain private. Even though she still felt the weight of everything that had just happened, including her brother’s betrayal, the neurosurgeon was finally able to hold her head up high.

With a deep breath, Amelia left the room. No one was entitled to know. Her past was in the past and she didn’t have to defend it to anyone. Later that day, she would go to a meeting and do exactly what she needed to be done. She would follow the instructions by the book, because the woman had long before learned that that was the only path to maintain her sobriety. Just like it had happened every now and then, life had knocked Amelia down.

And just like always, she would once again rise even stronger.

Owen paced back and forth inside his office, trying to set his head straight. It felt like his day had taken a full turn. Just earlier that morning, he’d been thinking about the chance he’d had to kiss Amelia Shepherd and how he’d missed it. But now, his concerns were of a much deeper level.

Like everyone else on the floor, Owen had been surprised to hear a strange woman shouting that his head of neurosurgery suffered from drug addiction and had once woken up next to her dead boyfriend. At the moment, Owen hadn’t hesitated. He’d spotted the initial shock on Amelia’s face and before everyone else could regain their composure, he’d already gotten the woman out of the room, preventing the situation from getting even worse. Because of that, Owen hadn’t been around to watch what’d happened afterwards, but unwillingly, he’d heard all the gossip.

According to the voices that got to his ear, Derek Shepherd had walked past his sister with a look of despise on his face. He’d taken over the case and left her there under everyone’s scrutiny. When he’d first heard it, Owen felt like punching his friend. How could he leave his own sister in a position like that and simply do nothing? Owen could never do the same. But the more chief thought about it, the more alarmed he felt.

If Derek had not stepped up to help Amelia or even deny the accusations that had so violently been thrown to her face, it could very well mean he agreed to everything that was being said. When the
senior neurosurgeon had first appointed his sister to replace him, Owen had felt that, even though Derek clearly trusted her abilities, he still had reservations about the younger sibling. Slowly, a lot of thoughts were starting to alarm him and Owen felt a sick feeling to his stomach.

His gut had told him that Amelia Shepherd could be trusted, but was it possible that for the first time in his life, his instincts had deceived him? If her own brother hadn’t stood by her, was it possible that the woman really was a risk? It made sense that Derek wouldn’t openly wreck his sister’s reputation by sharing that information about her, but his silence also spoke a lot.

Owen spent the following minutes reminiscing about the time he’d spent in the company of the woman and the way he’d carefully inspected her work. Was Amelia Shepherd really a drug addict? Why had no one told him about it when he’d first hired her?

And worse, was it possible that she was still using?

Amelia had always been full of energy but up until now he’d never found it particularly intriguing. If she was indeed consuming illicit substances, it could very well increase her performance and explain why she spent so many hours loaded with so much hustle, going back and forth and working all the time. It could also explain why she sometimes acted so impulsively. Even though never had she done anything exactly reckless, Owen had noticed Amelia took more chances and engaged in more risky behavior than any of the other surgeons. She pulled stunts like awake craniotomies on infants. Just the previous week, Amelia had had a very suspicious domestic accident and after admitting she’d spent two days straight at the hospital, she had remained seated beside him awake and alert, interacting for hours without the slightest sign of being exhausted. And the fact Owen knew virtually nothing about her past or the reason why she’d moved from Los Angeles also added to his now long list of doubts about her.

All signs pointed to a reality Owen wasn’t ready to acknowledge. But before trusting assumptions and making speculations, he knew what he needed to do. Talking directly to the woman was the only way to go and the least she deserved was the benefit of the doubt.

Picking up his white coat from the back of his chair, Owen put it on and quickly left the room, determined to go find her.

Amelia had just heard another round of hateful whispers when she heard the unmistakable voice of her boss startling her.

“Dr. Shepherd… Uh… Can we go somewhere private and talk?” Owen asked considerately. At the same time he needed to hear the truth from her, there was absolutely no need to submit Amelia to public judgment. What she had to say was no one’s business.

“I’m busy right now, actually.” Amelia replied evasively.

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“This is important. Listen.” Owen hoped with everything that she would cooperate. He had spent long minutes pondering about the situation and unfortunately, considering all the information he’d gathered, it wouldn’t be that surprising if Amelia was indeed everything she’d been accused of. “Is there anything you want to tell me? To clear this up?” He added, anxious to hear it from her. Owen realized he was almost hoping she would explain everything because he really didn’t want to change his mind about her. Amelia was doing a remarkable job ahead of the neurosurgery department and he had believed in her from the start. Not only did Owen not like to be wrong, he had just realized that he’d also come to genuinely care about the woman.
“I don’t. I think you heard all the facts.” Amelia replied. She remembered what Richard had said and held her head up high. The neurosurgeon didn’t owe anyone explanations. As long as she was doing her job well, and Owen had stated not long before that she was, no one was entitled to knowing anything.

It took a lot of effort for Amelia to hold herself together. At the same time Richard’s advices had helped her stand her ground, she couldn’t help feeling like for some reason, she wanted to tell the chief of surgery the truths about her past. Amelia had always kept it hidden, afraid to talk about it because people never reacted well.

But somehow, Owen had always given her the impression that he wouldn’t judge if he knew. He’d never refused to listen to her and now he was actually asking. During the past month, even when Amelia had acted out, he’d never treated her like he was dealing with a child or patronized her. Slowly, she developed the impression that maybe this guy actually respected her as a woman and as a professional. That was something Amelia wasn’t very used to.

But a lifetime of disappointments after trusting people prevented Amelia from taking that leap of faith with him.

From there on, Owen dealt with her refusal to say anything else. Her reaction alarmed him even more. If Amelia didn’t have anything to hide or be embarrassed about, why wouldn’t she explain? The chief of surgery had made sure he wasn’t accusing her of anything. He had been pretty clear he only expected to hear her side of the story in an attempt to help her. But even then, Amelia refused, making Owen’s suspicions only increase.

Later that day, after updating the patient’s daughter with Derek, Owen found out a bit more about the situation he was having a hard time managing. The woman in front of him apologized, making sure they knew she was aware she’d just broken an oath. It became clear then that Amelia was indeed a drug addict, considering she went to meetings. But what added to Owen’s stress was Derek’s remaining silence.

“Derek, what am I looking at here?”

And just like before, Derek kept his mouth shut, refusing to give out more information. Even though Owen didn’t want to believe it, he was left with no choice. If there was any chance that Amelia Shepherd was a risk, Owen couldn’t keep her on as chief of department. If she really was using drugs, Owen knew he would also have to revoke her privileges. Until he was sure Amelia was clean, he needed to make a decision about her, but up until now, there were merely suppositions. And Owen hated that. What he really wanted was to hear something concrete, so he could act on it. By keeping their silence, the Shepherd siblings were pretty much leading him to believe that Amelia really couldn’t be trusted and as chief, Owen had to put the hospital’s best interest ahead of anything else. Regardless of how much his gut told him there was more to the story, Owen couldn’t force the neurosurgeons to talk. And no matter how personally affected he felt to see Amelia Shepherd in such distress, Owen knew that at that moment, his professional side would have to win the battle inside his heart.

Without a second thought, Owen decided to call a board meeting.

Amelia didn’t for a second consider that day could get any worse until she was alone with her brother inside one of the hospital rooms. She’d already had a hard time processing that Derek hadn’t
stepped up to help her.

But when Amelia figured out it was her job he was after, she felt like she’d lost her ground completely. Apparently, their chief of surgery had had the decency to go after Derek for an explanation, probably after he’d unsuccessfully tried to hear it from her. But instead of helping her case, her brother had made it even worse.

“How can you do this to me?” Amelia raised her eyes to meet his gaze, feeling destroyed.

“I will…” Derek tried to explain himself before being interrupted.

“To me?!” Amelia shouted, unable to hold it back any longer. Her own brother had not only failed her, he’d also betrayed her. Derek had let her reputation get ruined on purpose, because he thought it would increase his chances of getting his old job back. Her brother knew how chronically Amelia struggled with her addiction, how much hurt and loss it had given her and how hard she worked every day not to be defined by it. The fact that he’d put the position inside the department above her personal well being and feelings made Amelia not only angry, it made her disgusted. She knew in her heart that in his place, she would never have done the same, no matter what in the world they were going through.

“I will fix it!” Derek insisted.

“How can you do this?” Amelia felt her heart breaking in a thousand pieces. Derek had always been her reference. Amelia had grown up without a father but since she could remember, her older brother had been someone she could look up to. In the past, she’d disappointed him over and over and her entire family had made sure she knew it. But now, the concrete realization that Derek wasn’t at all the super hero figure Amelia had always imagined him to be completely shattered her. When their father had died, she’d felt like she’d lost her security figure. But now, after what Derek had done, it was like her entire support system was not only gone, but it had also turned against her.

“I will talk to them! I will talk to all of them, and I will fix it.” Derek assured her, looking genuinely distressed.

“You’re my brother.” Amelia sustained his gaze, trying her hardest not to lose control. She wanted to hide in a corner and cry, but life had taught her better.

In silence, she watched as Derek assented with a head nod and putting on his best empathetic face, he left.

Amelia never hated him more than she did at that second.

After watching her brother leave, she sat back and took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. Somewhere inside those hospital walls, their chief of surgery had probably decided to fire her and Derek was the one to blame for it.

In a matter of seconds, a movie ran through Amelia’s mind and she felt sick. She thought about the time she’d gone over to apologize to Derek after crashing his car and he’d refused to see her. And how worried she’d felt after hearing he’d got shot. During that time, her brother had completely ignored her calls. When Amelia had heard from Addison that Derek was often in touch with his ex-wife and yet refused to talk to his own sister, her world had collapsed.

Unlike most people in her family, Amelia wasn’t resentful or excessively proud. So she’d taken a plane and gone over to see him. Her brother had once again humiliated her, making her feel unworthy in front of his wife she’d just met. And later on, he’d kept the recurrent act of not talking to
her, lecturing his sister like he’d do to a young kid until his anger built up and he exploded, saying
hurtful things. Derek had repeatedly done it because he knew he could get away with it. Amelia was
his little sister and at some point, she would forgive him. Especially after years of developing an
unbalanced notion that she needed him more than he could ever need her.

That was their circle. Amelia realized. That newly found grasp of reality hurt like hell. After doing
and saying a lot of things that he knew would hurt her feelings, Derek would simply move on to
making a sweet, heartfelt speech. Amelia would buy it, and eventually she’d forgive him. The young
neurosurgeon didn’t doubt her brother spoke from the heart and that he really loved her. But even
though she understood where his actions, anger and fear came from, it didn’t give him the right to
treat her like his personal punching bag. That unfair circle would stop right now.

Amelia was sure that, when the entire situation was fixed, Derek would redeem himself. He would
lower his walls, control his ego and apologize. She would be angry for a few days but because she
was uncapable of holding a grudge much longer, soon enough, she would forgive and forget. That’s
what they always did. But somehow, now it felt different. This time, the idea she’d had of him had
shifted completely.

Because Amelia had just realized that not only her lifetime super hero was flawed and wouldn’t
always defend her, by taking advantage of her feelings and vulnerability sometimes Derek could
actually act like her personal enemy.

Owen looked around and saw all the board members gathered around the table. Arizona Robbins
was the only one missing but since she was stuck in surgery, he proposed they started the meeting
without her. And yet before they could even start, Derek Shepherd barged into the room, clearly
distressed.

“I know you’re trying to figure out what’s going on. I know you’ve heard some stories about
Amelia. I let you believe something. I let you believe that…”

Owen heard the words spoken by the neurosurgeon and frowned in confusion, interrupting him
before Derek could continue.

“Shepherd, you were pretty clear when we spoke, so…”

“She’s in recovery. She works really hard at it. She’s been successful in recovery and… “ Derek
closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. Owen kept gazing at him, eager to believe every word the guy
was saying. “This hospital should have protected her. This woman should have protected her. And…
More importantly, I should have protected her.”

Owen noticed how the neurosurgeon stopped again, taking a deep breath, as if he had a hard time
saying the words that were leaving his mouth. The chief of surgery turned in his chair, puzzled.
Owen didn’t want to jump to conclusions so he wouldn’t be disappointed again but if what Derek
was saying was true then it meant he hadn’t been wrong about Amelia, after all.

“I didn’t. And I didn’t because I wanted her job. I wanted my old job back. So now we’re here. My
fault.”

Owen noticed how everyone around gave Derek a baffled look, having a hard time believing he had
actually done that to his own sister. When Meredith spoke, the neurosurgeon quickly interrupted her,
gazing straight at the chief of surgery.
“She should stay where she is, Owen. She can do the job. She is doing the job. I couldn’t do it any better.”

After the heartfelt confession, everyone quickly processed what Derek had just said and moved on with their obligations. One by one, the board members left, until the chief was the only one sitting in the room.

It took him a few minutes to realize he was clenching his own fist, so hard that his knuckles had turned white. Owen took a deep breath, trying to control his temper but even without a mirror, he could tell his face was entirely flushed with anger.

Derek Shepherd was an insensitive idiot and if Owen could, he would punch the guy in the face. Earlier that day, it had been frustrating enough to find out that the neurosurgeon had let his own sister down and failed to be there for her. But now, after hearing Derek had on purpose helped stain Amelia’s reputation, nearly getting her fired just so he could get his old job back had made Owen start to wonder if he knew Derek as well as he thought he did. Thankfully, the guy had redeemed himself in time but to think he was actually capable of acting like that in the first place made the chief of surgery question all the impressions he had.

His thoughts shifted to Amelia and he couldn’t help feeling his chest constricted. She didn’t deserve what had happened to her that day. Even though it’d caught Owen by surprise to hear about her drug problem, something she probably should have disclosed when she’d first been hired, he understood why she had been secretive about it. He knew very well about being judged and scrutinized because of a personal problem. Many times before, Owen had had people questioning his skills and job performance because of his personal problems while refusing to look at him as a whole person. He had been reduced to being his PTSD and today, under his eyes, Amelia Shepherd had been reduced to her drug addiction.

But there was more to it, Owen noticed. Just like him, who struggled to maintain his mental health every day, Amelia Shepherd also refused to let her past define her. If he already admired her before, now Owen held her in an even higher regard. He didn’t judge Amelia for having a problem; instead, he saw her as a stronger person for overcoming it and showing up to work with dignity and commitment every day, refusing to get any sort of special treatment or victimizing herself.

The way she had somehow gone from using drugs and losing a boyfriend to achieving the position of head of department by her own merit spoke a lot about her resilience and for the first time since he could remember, Owen felt the urge to go see her. They had more in common than he had realized and that day, as he left the hospital, the trauma surgeon hoped with all his heart that he’d run into her at home.

“You okay?”

Amelia heard the words as she entered the house and froze in response. She was more hurt than she would ever admit. Her first impulse was to leave the room without even looking at her brother, but she remembered what she’d just said and heard in AA and took a deep breath, anxious to avoid that conversation and go straight to her room.

“I was at a meeting.” Amelia shared, watching as her brother asserted her words with a head nod. “I am moving out tomorrow.” She informed him, determined to get out of his intoxicating presence. The younger neurosurgeon couldn’t begin to explain how mortified she was at her brother’s predicament.
“I’m sorry. I’m just so sorry.”

There it was, Amelia realized with an eye roll. Now that all the anger had cooled down a bit, it was time for that step in Derek’s predictable moves.

“Don’t, Derek. Don’t even bother.” She added, walking right past him. Amelia was in no mood to put up with his sensitive apologies, references of the past and guilt trips.

“I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

As she heard his voice, Amelia stopped walking and defensively stood in front of him, sarcastically replying:

“I’m sure you didn’t.” She slightly nodded her head in disapproval and met her brother’s eyes, making sure he knew how she was not okay with the situation. “I am sure you didn’t even think about me. You saw an opening and you took it.”

“I have always wanted to protect you ever since dad died. I didn’t want to… I’m sure you didn’t want me to. But I promised.”

Amelia looked up at her brother and for the second time that day, hated him. Derek had no right to once again bring their past into their argument just to win her over. He didn’t need to remind her of the significance he’d had in her life and the way his words were sweetly disguised made Amelia’s anger boil inside her chest. She stood in front of her brother, empty staring through him, waiting until he was done talking so she could finally leave his presence.

“Then you came up here, and I realized I didn’t have to worry anymore. You were okay. You were fine. You were more than fine. You could take care of yourself now, and I didn’t need to anymore.”

At the sound of his words, Amelia lifted her chin up higher. How could he even believe she was fine? Using compliments to try to win her over also weren’t going to work. She knew damn well she could take care of herself as she’d done for the past two years. But she also didn’t need Derek to be testing her.

All of a sudden, Amelia felt guilty for feeling so bitter. Deep down, she knew Derek truly loved her and wanted the best for her. But today, he didn’t get to be forgiven. Not yet.

Today, Amelia had every right to thoroughly despise him.

“I needed you today.” She added, trying to sound indifferent while making a point. Amelia watched as her brother took in her words and processed them, obviously struggling to come up with what he had to say next.

“I don’t know who I am anymore. Not anybody I ever thought I’d be. I try to make the right choices for Meredith, for the kids, you… And, um… I’m angry all the time. I’m miserable and I don’t know what to do with it. All I do is hurt people. The last people I want to hurt. And I just can’t get control of it. I don’t know what to do anymore.”

Amelia sustained his gaze, watching as her brother spoke the words with sincerity. She understood very well what he meant, because that day, Amelia had felt angry and miserable and a big disappointment too. Those were all things she could relate.

But right now, Derek didn’t really deserve her sympathies or her shoulder to cry on. Not when he’d been the one responsible for making that potentially bad day into one of the worst Amelia had ever had. Gazing at her brother with her feelings stamped in her eyes, the neurosurgeon pulled herself
back together and decided to go to her room, leaving Derek to lick his wounds. All his life, her family had pointed fingers at her for acting out when she’d felt hurt, lost and confused. Her brother included.

But today, Derek had discovered exactly what it was like to be in those shoes. And unlike Amelia, he’d let his ego get the best of him, hurting the people he loved the most.

“I know how you feel.” Amelia gave him one last look before finally walking away with her head up high, knowing that that time, for a change, she was the Shepherd that had no reason to be ashamed. “We call it rock bottom.”

Later that night, Amelia had a hard time falling asleep. Before she could realize what she was doing, she found herself by the windowsill, where she sat with her legs folded in front of her body. Amelia wrapped both arms around her thighs and rested her chin between her knees, idly gazing at the window outside.

Everything was dark and eerily silent. Not a single cricket was chirping and instead of feeling at peace with the lack of disturbance, Amelia felt lonelier than she’d ever felt. At that moment, she only had her own thoughts to keep her company. And for the first time since she’d broken off her engagement, Amelia wished she had someone to come home to.

Almost immediately, her head turned and the neurosurgeon spotted the only source of light her eyes could find. From a distance, she could see the dimly lit interior of the trailer where her boss lived in. It was nearly two in the morning and Amelia wondered what was he doing up. For a few minutes, she distracted herself, imagining if he also had trouble sleeping that night. Was he reading a book? Watching TV? Reminiscing about the events of the day?

Amelia thought back about the way he had approached her by the OR board and considerately asked to hear her own version of the story. It was strange not being instantly judged. Amelia was so used to being frowned upon that having someone bother to hear her before deciding she was a disappointment had become the exception rather than the condition.

But then, there was Owen Hunt. With his understanding blue eyes that somehow felt like they could see through her soul. It would have been completely acceptable if Owen had reprimanded her for not going to him first with the truth but instead of censoring her, the guy had offered to listen and help her. Just the week before, he had showed up at her door when Amelia was home alone and entertained her with his presence at the same time he captivated her with his strength and integrity. She remembered the way Owen had touched her afterwards and how they had both been taken aback by the intensity of the contact.

The thing was, Amelia had somehow come to like him. To really like him. She respected the guy as her boss but above that, she admired him as a decent and considerate human being.

Taking a deep breath, Amelia pondered about her situation. The day after, she was going to look for the chief and explain everything, making sure he knew how she felt. That would be her first step towards regaining control of her life and resuming the plans she’d made when she first moved to Seattle.

For some reason, thinking about being in good terms with Owen Hunt comforted her and Amelia was finally able to go to bed, unaware that she had just made the choice to trust her heart with the
only man who would never take her feelings for granted.
11x08, both Omelia scenes. 11x09 and 11x10. Basically Amelia is dealing with Herman’s tumor and Owen is working on his veterans project with Callie while handling his duties as chief.

The Journey – Chapter 8

Owen walked into the scrub room, trying to ignore the throbbing headache that was assaulting him. Not only had he not got much sleep the past few days, ever since he’d set foot in the hospital that morning things had become increasingly worse.

First, he’d had to solve a feud between Maggie Pierce and Derek Shepherd to then see one of the two soldiers in his project with Callie getting hurt after the orthopedic surgeon had openly stimulated them to compete. Owen knew he had probably overreacted by lashing out at her, but he was far from his right mind. At that moment, his biggest concern was making sure the patient received best medical care for his head trauma. And he was glad he could count on Amelia Shepherd for that.

The chief was ready to exit the scrub room after getting an update on the patient status when he heard her voice, as she spoke almost anxiously:

“I feel like I owe you an explanation. About what you heard last week.”

Owen turned around, carefully listening to what she had to say. He had heard, from someone else, a very personal thing about Amelia and even though he knew it was none of his business to know the details, it touched him that she had taken her time to come forward about her problem. Hearing her share more details made him feel surprisingly concerned for her well being, for her addiction apparently had been much more severe than he would initially guess.

And Owen knew too well himself of how hard it could be to share such a dark part about oneself. Trying to spare Amelia from feeling embarrassed or ashamed, he was quick to kindly add that she didn’t have to say anything else, for Derek had already explained she was doing well in rehab. His instinct had been right, Amelia wasn’t a risk and as her boss that’s all he needed to know. No matter how much his personal feelings pointed otherwise.

“I work for you and I respect you and I like you, so if it’s all right, I don’t care to hang my professional relationships on Derek Shepherd’s reputation.” Amelia spoke, awing him. Owen tilted his head and nodded in agreement, taking in her words with genuine interest. “I needed you to hear from me. I know it’s a choice, keeping me on. I know I am a risk.”

The chief of surgery stared deeply into her eyes. The way Amelia had humbly acknowledged her condition and confessed she respected him and liked him softened him up completely. Owen felt an urge to hold, comfort her and tell her he knew exactly what she was feeling. He understood her pain and somehow, with her childlike manners and sincerity of emotions, Amelia had come to inspire a feeling of protection in him that Owen couldn’t quite figure out. He noticed the hesitation and the
vulnerability she felt as she proudly stood sharing her past with him and realized how strong she had to be to deal with the situation in such a mature, graceful way when she was probably in a lot of distress. Owen wanted to make her feel better very badly, to let her know she had nothing to be ashamed of.

“We’re all a risk. We all have something.” Owen explained, determinate to make that courageous woman know she wasn’t the only one. “I mean, I have my own version.” He confessed, surprising himself with how easily the admission slipped his mouth. Somehow, seeing her like that made him feel comfortable enough to be completely honest about how he felt. “And it was different. It took a different toll. It still does, and I push through every day.” Owen looked into her eyes, hoping she knew he was being sincere. “And I’m assuming you’re doing the same thing, unless I see otherwise. Okay?”

“Okay.” Amelia nodded with her head, letting him know she was in accord with what he’d said. As she watched her boss leave, her plans to scrub in were ignored for a moment. She’d been meaning to talk to the chief since the previous week, but only today she’d had an opening. The neurosurgeon had spent the past few days trying to come up with what she was going to say, but in the first moment she’d had alone with Owen, his presence had made her forget everything about her rehearsed speech.

Amelia didn’t know him that well but the little she did did made her feel comfortable enough to open her heart about a subject that was really hard for her to talk about. Judging by what she’d learned about her boss in the previous couple of months, it didn’t surprise her when he comprehensively listened to her. In the end, Owen even added that he had his own demons too.

She thought it was sweet and considerate of him to say that she wasn’t the only one who had their skeletons in the closet, but Amelia wondered how okay he really was. Owen was her boss and he seemed to always be in control of everything around them, be it at the hospital where he ran a busy surgical service or at home, where he was always fixing things and making time to help others. With the exception of one night by the lake when she had been throwing rocks beside him, never had she seen Owen showing any signs of distress or being affected by something. But he was only human and of course he had feelings and his own personal issues too.

The guy was an enigma. He was controlled but intense, strict but understanding, rough but kind. Owen was always available, solved all problems, had everyone’s back.

And Amelia wondered if anyone ever had his.

Later that day, the thought had already vanished off Amelia’s mind as she kept busy carefully looking over some scans she had come to find out belonged to Nicole Herman, a prestigious fetal surgeon who worked in the hospital. Arizona Robbins hadn’t said much about the case when she confessed to have stolen the images and Amelia had no idea who was following up with the treatment plan. She knew it was none of her business to keep digging but the neurosurgeon just couldn’t get past the fact the tumor was one of the most challenging ones she had ever seen.

“Shepherd, you were looking for us?”

Amelia heard her boss’ voice from behind her back and swiftly turned around, before closing the stolen images on the computer screen. Callie Torres stood beside him and at their request, she updated them on their patient’s neurological status. Amelia had heard about what had happened with the soldier and she was aware that her boss was running a program with the orthopedic surgeon to
help veterans. It was a cruel reality that a lot of the men and women who fought for the country came back and were left unassisted, especially some who had experienced very traumatic experiences. For the first time, she wondered what kind of things Owen had gone through while serving.

Amelia was too distracted with her own thoughts that she didn’t realize her boss had stayed in the room after Callie left until she heard his voice.

“You have people, right?”

“What do you mean?” Amelia asked automatically, trying to focus back on what they had been discussing instead of the thoughts she was having.

“I just mean…” She noticed when Owen hesitated, as if looking for the right words. “I mean, you’re not trying to…” Once again, he interrupted himself, finally looking her in the eye. “It’s hard to deal with all this stuff on your own.” Amelia knew he was talking about her addiction. “But you have Meredith and Derek, so…”

“Yeah.” Amelia genuinely smiled, deeply touched by his concern. The realization that Owen seemed to understand more than she’d initially considered about going through a hard time added to his comment about having a similar situation earlier that day made Amelia once again wonder what was hidden in the depths of his past. “And meetings.” She added, eager to let him know she was indeed in a better place than she had once been. “That’s what we do.” She intentionally added, taking a while to realize she had just found some common ground with him. And it alarmed Amelia to realize how intimate that connection could be.

“Right.” She heard him awkwardly agreeing, looking almost shy.

Owen had already turned around to leave when Amelia acted on an impulse.

“Do you?” She asked, belatedly realizing she’d gotten up in her eagerness not to break that fragile but meaningful bridge they were slowly creating between them. “Have people?”

“I’m… That’s… Um, I’m fine.”

Amelia noticed how uncomfortable he looked, at the same time her boss seemed somehow surprised. The fact he denied anything was wrong didn’t surprise Amelia, for she had never expected Owen to instantly open up with her. She had long before noticed how reserved he was, but that didn’t stop the neurosurgeon from speaking from the heart.

“No, I know.” She answered him with a genuine smile, truly hoping she could somehow return what he’d done for her and the support he’d shown. Maybe they could be friends? Amelia surely could use a friend. She liked her brother and Meredith very much but she didn’t really feel like they understood her. Not in the way her friends from LA did, anyway. But judging from what she’d seen, Owen was a person who definitely could. And Amelia desperately wanted to understand him too and reciprocate all the feelings he invoked in her. “But you’re right there, living in that little tin box on my brother’s back lawn… I mean, I keep saying I’m going to move out, but I’m still up at the house, watching them glare at each other.” She confessed, suddenly excited with the idea of spending more time with Owen outside the walls of the hospital. The few times she had, the neurosurgeon had truly enjoyed the way she didn’t really need to say a lot to feel understood. “Let me know if you, you know… If you need people.” She smiled adorably at him. “I’m around.”

“Thanks.” Amelia noticed how her boss’s tone of voice changed and his entire facial expression became sweeter, almost boyish. After seeing him acting so responsible all the time, she realized she
really liked this unknown side of Owen Hunt. “Thanks. And thanks for the update.”

As he left, Amelia took a deep breath and slowly let it out. The neurosurgeon could feel her chest pounding and her pulse racing but she told herself it probably had to do with the fact that she had almost been caught with stolen scans.

But later on, as Amelia was already focused back on studying Nicole Herman’s MRI, she failed to notice that it hadn’t exactly been the tumor that made her heart beat faster.

Owen strode around the halls of the hospital, enjoying the quietness of the hour. The past couple of weeks had been hectic with a lot of different things going on.

Along with running his war veterans project with Callie, Owen had to not only take on his usual responsibilities as chief but also log more hours in the ER because of April Kepner’s pregnancy. But the trauma surgeon really didn’t mind. For the first time in a while, he was feeling in a good place.

The fact that he’d just been able to go to one of the air vents and stand there by himself, enjoying the windy ride meant a lot, he thought. That was the secret place where he would take Cristina and up until then, he’d avoided going there because it brought painful memories. But today, it had felt differently. Owen didn’t feel sad or heartbroken anymore. Now, Cristina was gone and even though Owen knew he was over her, that night he’d had the confirmation that after so many years of involvement with his ex-wife in an intoxicating relationship, his heart was finally at peace with their story and the way it had ended.

Earlier, he and Callie Torres had talked and joked for a while. Owen had confessed he’d had one night stands after his ex-wife was gone but he wasn’t really sure he was ready to build something meaningful again. By having just divorced Arizona, Callie understood it well. It wasn’t exactly that Owen didn’t want to, he wanted more than anything to find that one person he could share his life with. But he’d come to a point when he wasn’t sure anymore that he ever would.

Since he was young guy, Owen had always known that in order to be happy, he didn’t really need extraordinary accomplishments. His validation had never come from the things he’d gotten, but rather from things he’d done, learned and shared. While most people tended to overlook and take for granted things like family and roots, those were the ones that attracted him the most. He didn’t need much. A decent, meaningful job, a house and especially a family were everything he’d ever desired.

But Owen didn’t want just any family. He wanted a woman he could connect to, on a deeper level. Someone who could go through life beside him, who could be there for better and for worse. If it was just to have a kid, he could easily get it done by knocking up a random woman. The idea didn’t attract him at all because Owen wanted all or nothing. And he wasn’t going to settle for any less than what he knew he deserved. He thought back about the conversation he’d had with Callie, when she’d wondered if they had already used up all their share of happiness for a lifetime. Owen hoped with every fiber of his being that his friend was utterly wrong, because his heart strived for more than what he’d ever gotten.

As he strode through the halls of the surgical floor pondering about that, the trauma surgeon spotted a dim light turned on in one of the skills lab. Assuming one of the residents had probably forgot to turn a piece of equipment off, he distractedly made his way in, surprised to find Amelia Shepherd silently sitting by one of the distant corners.

Owen’s first impulse was to ask what she was doing, but the woman looked so focused that he didn’t have the courage to interrupt her. For the past few weeks, ever since he’d given the okay for
Amelia’s complex plan to operate on Nicole Herman’s massive tumor, it wasn’t infrequent to find the neurosurgeon exhaustively going over the case.

Amelia had carefully explained her surgical approach to him and even though Owen had the medical knowledge to understand the idea behind her list of events, the technology she was using was very edgy. Since neurosurgery wasn’t his field of study, even though he’d heard about the techniques, Owen had never really seen or been in direct contact with a lot of the methods she was using.

“Having fun?” After a few seconds observing her, Owen couldn’t help asking with a sympathetic smile. It was the middle of the night and she was restlessly handling detailed machine equipment as if it were the middle of the afternoon.

At the sound of his voice, Amelia immediately looked up, surprised to find him there. The smile that formed on her lips when they made eye contact made Owen remember the way she had selflessly offered to be there for him in case he needed someone to talk to.

“Very much,” The neurosurgeon confessed. She’d had a rough few weeks and as expected, tried to balance the excitement with her surgical plan and the insecurity that assaulted her every time she thought of actually executing the tumor removal.

Owen approached her with a few steps and Amelia noticed the gentle furrow on his eyebrows at the sight of what she was doing.

“It’s a Cavitron ultrasonic surgical aspirator,” She explained, wondering if he was familiar with it.

“CUSA,” Owen nodded his head in agreement, showing her he knew what she was handling. “It’s the latest model, isn’t it?” He asked, thinking of the check he’d had to sign to acquire the new equipment a few weeks before.

“No, it’s the one prior to that,” Amelia answered as her dimples danced on her cheek. “The new toy you bought for me is carefully kept inside the OR. I wouldn’t let the residents play with it here.”

The way she spoke, obviously excited about the machine at the same time she showed gratitude made Owen tilt his head to gaze at her. The chief of surgery put his hands inside his coat pockets, too eager to stay in her company. Amelia’s passion about that surgery had convinced him to sign off on it from the very start, but the way she donated herself to thoroughly studying and planning for it let Owen know he’d made the right decision.

“I’m glad you liked it,” He confessed, knowing that if possible, he would buy a dozen new machines if it meant she would thank him with that smile every time.

“I was feeling kind of unmotivated earlier this week, but I kept pushing through,” Amelia explained, using the words on purpose because she knew he’d get the reference. Seeing the question in his eyes, she promptly answered. “I don’t know, I was just feeling like I was the odd one out because no one was getting the idea behind what I am trying to do.” Owen frowned, offended and Amelia immediately corrected herself. “I don’t mean you… I meant the residents.” She explained, suppressing a giggle at how he softened his facial expression instantly. “But then I finally got around to find one that seems to be talented enough for this. Edwards saw the idea behind my plan.”

“Edwards is the best in her year,” Owen agreed with a head nod. “You couldn’t have asked for a better partner. It’s never good to try to make things work with someone who doesn’t understand you.”

Amelia wondered how much he really meant with the statement but his words quickly vanished in
her mind as she bit her lower lip and mischievously smiled at him, determined to tease the guy. Owen clearly wasn’t familiar with the approach she was using, even though he looked genuinely interested in it.

“Unless, of course you want to be my co surgeon,” She suggested with an evil grin. “I can totally ditch Edwards and work with you.” She added, thinking of the way his hands had once handled the inside of her car. Owen’s entire physical structure seemed perfect for rough handwork, not at all the kind of talent a neurosurgeon could use.

Owen let out a shy chuckle, knowing she was pestering him on purpose.

“I can’t take this opportunity away from Edwards,” He replied playfully, knowing that was not at all the reason why he didn’t engage in neurosurgery procedures more often.

“I’d ditch Edwards for you any day,” Amelia replied unceremoniously.

“Really?” Owen narrowed his eyes in provocation, but deep down he couldn’t help feeling flattered.

“You’re the chief of surgery,” Amelia smiled with mischief, shamelessly speaking her mind. “Imagine how many of these babies you could give me if I fell on your good graces.” She patted the CUSA machine like it was her object of pride. Owen was trying not to think of what he wanted to give her when he heard the neurosurgeon adding. “Do you want to give it a try?”

It took him a couple of seconds to shift his thoughts from his mind to the reality in front of them. Amelia offered a very delicate probe with her hand, anxiously waiting for him to take it. Owen hesitated, frowning heavily at the same time he sat on a stool beside her and then finally accepted the object she was offering.

“It’s not as complicated as it looks,” Amelia got up and patiently explained, looking from her boss to the machinery in front of them. “All you have to do is reach the tumor area,” she showed as she spoke, “and gently use this guy to suck the dead tissue,” She pointed to the probe Owen was now holding, “think of it as playing a videogame.” The neurosurgeon instructed with a smile.

Owen looked from her adorable smile to the computer graphic design in front of them, where he could test his skills at operating the expensive and cutting edge technology. At his first attempt to maneuvering the guiding system, he failed miserable. Amelia smiled with contentment at his frustration. It was interesting seeing Owen struggle with something because he had always been so assured and skilled that she was actually happy to see his hilarious attempts.

“I said gently,” Amelia playfully reprimanded him with a chuckle. “If I did to Herman what you just did I’d give her a stroke.”

“That’s very encouraging.” Owen replied ironically, but kept a genuine smile on his face when he turned his neck to the side.

Amelia’s eyes met his and she laughed once again before telling him to give it another try.

“Gently!” She insisted, unable to withhold the fit of laughter that assaulted her after seeing how clumsy Owen was with a task that required accuracy.

“I am being gentle!” He said grumpily, but Owen wasn’t in a bad mood. Much on the contrary, actually. He’d never known that actually being horrible at something could be so amusing.

Or maybe it had everything to do with the person standing beside him.
“If that’s your gentle, then I don’t want to find out your rough,” Amelia lightheartedly confessed, noticing he seemed to be enjoying their bantering as much as she was. “Finesse is something you really need to work on, chief.” She joked, patting his shoulder.

Owen was suddenly very aware of how close she stood. He was sitting on a very short stool and as Amelia bent over to inspect his work and give him instructions, they were pretty much at the same height. He became painfully conscious of the amazing smell in her hair. In an attempt to distract his body from the responses she was instilling in him, the trauma surgeon resorted to teasing.

“I am still wondering why the residents like you so much,” He was clearly provoking her and didn’t mean his words. “You are not nearly good at teaching as they say. All you do is make fun of me.”

Owen was sure Amelia would pretend to be offended and quickly try to make it up to him. That’s why her response surprised and amused him more than he could ever imagine.

“Well, don’t pin this on me, it’s just that you really suck at this,” She smiled wickedly, making him laugh. “I am not saying you’re bad. You’re like…horrible.” Her eyes met his and she laughed unceremoniously too. “You really do suck at this.”

Owen was having too much fun to be offended. He acknowledged it with a head nod and couldn’t hold his laughter after hearing the delicious sound of hers.

“I think I got your point,” He replied acidly, but the smile lingering on his face was a telltale of his amusement.

“Don’t move,” Amelia instructed. After seeing he wasn’t exactly following her instructions to go easy, not because he didn’t want to, but because he couldn’t, the neurosurgeon lost her patience and came forward, sneakily closing her right hand around his. “Close your eyes.”

At the sound of her words, Owen did as told but what really got to him was the electrical buzz that ran through his entire body at the mere touch of her hand on his. He felt the way Amelia gently held his fingers still, trying to guide him through the procedure.

“Forget about the screen, just feel the movement of the probe first.” The neurosurgeon didn’t realize her voice was nearly a whisper. The lights in the room were very dim so the computer screen could stand out. Owen felt like he was being seduced at the sound of her voice and touch of her hand as she carefully gave out instructions. “Don’t think about it, just feel it… Notice with your senses how it responds to your command.”

How was he supposed to focus all his attention on handling the equipment when all he could think about was turning his head a little to the right, closing his eyes and testing all of his senses on her?

“Like this…” Amelia said with a sweet voice as her hand guided his, clearly satisfied with his improvement. “Excellent, that’s much better.”

“You know,” Owen finally opened his lids. His gaze was far from the computer screen as he looked deeply into her silver blue eyes, recalling the way Amelia was always energetically moving around, “for someone who has a really hard time staying still, you can be surprisingly steady.”

Amelia swallowed hard when she heard the warmth in his voice. His eyes were fixated on hers and not for the first time, she felt like his presence took up the entire room. Her hand was still on his fingers but she slowly released her grip at the same time Owen slowly stood up, suddenly engulfing her with his shadow.

“Thank you for the lesson,” The chief of surgery said without breaking eye contact with her. The
intensity of his stare made it really hard for Amelia to breathe.

Owen was mesmerized. His entire rational skills had abandoned him and all he could think about was the way he’d had the chance to kiss Amelia once and held back from it. That was definitely not going to happen again. The chief of surgery knew that if he thought too much about it, he would end up finding a hundred reasons to step back. But Owen didn’t want to step back. Which is why that time, he let go completely, swiftly leaning forward as he allowed his senses to overcome his thoughts, exactly how she’d instructed him.

Amelia saw the fire in his eyes. The signals his body was sending were instantly captured and welcomed by hers. And she’d already closed her eyes, completely ready to embark on the touch of his lips that was surely about to come when the computer screen buzzed, suddenly alarming them.

The neurosurgeon pulled apart abruptly, breaking the magic of the moment. She noticed the disappointment in Owen’s eyes but he was too polite to say anything. At the same time he cleared his throat, visibly uncomfortable for the obviousness of what was just about to do, Amelia hurried to explain:

“The program is doing some automatic updates.”

“That’s…” Owen awkwardly looked around, knowing he probably looked like an idiot with his face blushed. “Okay.”

He wondered how the failed attempt of a kiss had completely transformed the bantering atmosphere into a heavy, sexually charged one. And it hurt to realize it wasn’t the first time it happened.

“I should go home,” Amelia rushed to say as she set off the computer. “I have a craniotomy scheduled at nine. Better get some sleep,” She tried to keep a conversation flowing until they parted ways so they wouldn’t have to acknowledge what’d just happened.

“Good,” Owen said, belatedly realizing his reply made little to no sense. Why did she always seem to make him act like a fool?

“Do you need a ride home?”

“Nah, I am good,” Owen dismissed her with a wave of his hands. “I’ll see you around.”

“See you,” Amelia gathered her stuff and rushed to get out of the room.

It wasn’t until she was finally away from his presence that the neurosurgeon allowed herself to exhale the deep breath she’d been holding. The situation between them was getting far too out of line.

At first, she’d been drawn to Owen by his magnetic powerful aura and the enigmas of his personality. But slowly, she’d started to actually feel things for him she couldn’t quite identify. And Amelia realized the more she knew about the man, the more she liked. She had grown from not getting Owen to fully admiring the guy and now even liking him.

Amelia knew better than anyone of how dangerous that could be. The computer buzz had probably avoided a very complicated situation. She forbade her mind to think about her boss. Herman’s surgery was complicated enough to keep her busy and the neurosurgeon surely didn’t need that kind of distraction. Focusing on Owen Hunt at that moment or even giving him the slightest thought had the potential to turn her life into a disaster and Amelia wanted more than anything to remain in control of her emotions.
That was it, she thought. She was in control. Amelia was fully capable of dominating her thoughts and feelings, she’d come this far and wasn’t going to take any steps back. Telling herself she was definitely not going to think about her boss anymore, Amelia left, anxious to leave the hospital and his presence.

But as she drove home through the empty streets that night, a pair of light blue eyes and the way Owen Hunt could easily make her relinquish control like he’d belonged in her life all along were pretty much the only things Amelia could think of.
Part Nine

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the events of 11x11, when Amelia is clearly affected by what’s happening to Jackson, April and their baby, how Owen notices she is not doing well and the in betweens of their amazing scene at the hospital chapel; It also includes the events of 11x12 (yaaa the part we were all waiting for), when they flirt in such an adorkable way and it leads to… well you know how this ends :) won’t spoil it any more. Let’s get to it!

The Journey – Part Nine

Owen ran back and forth in the ER, trying to get the place running smoothly in April’s absence. He knew that day was going to be especially hard. Even though people didn’t address it directly, they knew about Kepner and Avery’s unborn child’s condition and it felt like everyone was walking around on eggshells, unsure of what to say or do.

Owen pondered about her situation. He wondered if she was avoiding him because she was busy, distressed or because she was still too uncomfortable by what had almost happened between them the previous week.

The chief of surgery found it hard to believe Amelia would be dodging him for the latter, considering they had almost kissed in her living room once and she had responded to the situation with teasing banter. But maybe she was in over her head with her surgical plans. Amelia was operating on a really important case that day. One of her patients had a tumor much similar to Herman’s and he supposed she was probably too worked up about it, adding to her stress.

But, at the same time Owen tried to convince himself that was the cause for her withdrawn mood, he also couldn’t help being sure that, judging by the pain he’d identified in her eyes, there was more to Amelia’s state of mind than he could ever imagine.
Later that same day, after her surgery turned out to be a success, Owen expected to find Amelia in a better mood. Instead, he found her snapping at Edwards.

“Everything alright?” He asked.

Owen wanted very much to let her know that he was around too. Just like she had put herself available to him once, he was there in case she needed someone to talk to. And judging by her defensive reaction and unusual lashing out at a resident, he could see she did. The trauma surgeon had stopped fooling himself thinking his interest in her well-being was purely professional. Owen had already accepted he really liked and cared for her in a very personal manner.

“Yep.” Amelia replied evasively.

Owen hesitated for a bit, unsure of what to say next. Amelia anxiously looked from the tablet on the counter to him and back. The neurosurgeon’s cheeks looked flushed and her posture was stiff and uneasy. She clearly wasn’t alright but he didn’t want to push it. He knew exactly how it was to be a private person, and how abusive it felt when people kept pushing him to talk when he didn’t want or wasn’t ready to. Respecting her privacy, he opted for sharing instead:

“Hey, the candle thing does work, by the way.” Earlier that day, Owen had gone up to the chapel and lit one. It had made him feel better and more at peace. “So thanks for that.”

With a head nod, he walked away, hoping that whatever was bothering her could be fixed soon. And if he couldn’t help, he hoped that at least some relaxed introspection and maybe even faith might.

Amelia walked into the chapel for what it felt like the tenth time that day. She was still battling with her emotions and struggling to keep her head leveled so she could get through with that day without losing her cool when her eyes found the unexpected amount of lit candles near the altar.

She felt her heart swelling with a mix of emotions and sat down by one of the benches, unable to believe how unexpectedly the past was catching up with her. Once, not long before, she had been in a similar situation to April Kepner and Jackson Avery.

Her baby had also been condemned to death even before being born and she could relate to the ordeal the parents were going through. Amelia had been through a lot in her life, but no pain had ever compared to holding her son in her arms knowing he would be gone from the world very soon.

Even though it had almost destroyed her, Amelia had found in herself the strength to make something good come out of an excruciatingly painful situation. The loss of her child had transformed the lives of many people, not just hers. Meeting him, being able to hold her baby and knowing the difference he’d made in the world had impacted her in a way that nothing else could have. Amelia still carried that scar and probably would all her life but her son had changed her, and for the better. She still grieved not having him with her, but she took comfort knowing that the same way he had blessed her with his existence; her son had also saved countless families that today were whole, safe and happy cherishing the miracle of life.

April and Jackson’s baby would meet similar fate and Amelia knew that his presence in the world also wouldn’t be in vain. She refused to believe that nothing good came of horrible situations. Just like her baby who had left a positive mark in the world, the Kepner-Avery child would transform the entire meaning of life for his parents, even if they weren’t fully aware of that yet.
The uneasy silence was broken by the discreet sound of the chapel door opening. Soon enough, Amelia looked up to find Owen Hunt walking in and sitting next to her without saying a word.

The trauma surgeon was keeping his prerogative of not asking questions that the woman beside him might not want to answer. Yet, for some reason Owen still felt intimately compelled to be there for her, so he’d followed his employee upstairs. Even if it meant being in complete silence. He wanted to let her know that, whatever was afflicting her, she didn’t have to go through it alone if she didn’t wish to.

Much to his surprise, Amelia’s voice echoed in the dimly lit room.

“My baby lived for forty three minutes.”

The words hit Owen like a shock wave. He immediately turned his head to her side, looking for her eyes, but Amelia’s gaze was fixated on the candles by the altar. The intensity of her confession was stamped on Amelia’s face, even though it was clear she was trying to hold it together. Owen had never admired or respected her more than he did at that moment.

Of all the things he could have guessed were bothering her, never in a lifetime would he consider such an unthinkable scenario. The closest experience he’d gotten to the loss of a child had been when his ex wife terminated a pregnancy, aborting a baby he desired very much. But Owen couldn’t imagine how exponentially worse it must be to get to hold or see a beloved child only to lose it so soon after.

He had no idea the circumstances in which such loss had happened. But details didn’t matter. Not at that moment.

Now he understood why Amelia Shepherd had spent the day at the edge of sanity, presenting reactions like withdrawing in silence and snapping at a resident for a seemingly unimportant reason. He sympathized with her pain. It was obvious and expected that the topic hurt her very much and it touched him deeply that she’d chosen to share it with him when she could have remained in silence.

Before he could think about it, Owen stretched out his hand and gently held hers. His thumb caressed her delicate fingers, trying to transmit how sorry he was for her loss. The trauma surgeon didn’t have children but he desired them more than anything and he couldn’t imagine a pain worst than losing a baby.

Amelia turned her head and when she finally faced him, she read in his eyes the thousand words his heart was saying. She hadn’t planned to say those words, but his presence made her feel so strangely safe that Amelia had confessed it, unconsciously yearning for comfort and comprehension.

Owen didn’t know this yet, but he now was the only person in that city who knew about Amelia’s most painful secret. She hadn’t shared it even with her brother, because even though she knew Derek would sympathize and feel sorry for her, she wasn’t sure he would be able to understand the length of her pain.

And yet, in the depth of an amazing pair of light blue eyes and the confident, powerful presence of a male figure who had given her nothing but honesty, care and concern, Amelia had found a safe spot to bear her soul, even if it’s just a tiny piece of it. A piece that yet small, carried the weight of a hard lived life.

Owen had no idea how much that confession had meant to her, or how better she felt after speaking the words. That secret was consuming her and Amelia had spent the entire day at the edge of control. Now, after finally letting the truth out, she was finally able to breathe normally again.
Someone else knew now. Someone who hadn’t judged, or asked further questions. Owen had simply understood, and that’s all Amelia really needed.

Talking about it had made the memory of what had happened in her past more real and vivid, but at the same time, it had helped Amelia ease her pain. She couldn’t change her past, but she was trying to build a better future. Her son gave her strength to do it every day and having his existence acknowledged by someone other than her felt like a blessing in a time of need.

Little did Amelia know that the man sitting beside her would one day give her the most amazing gifts of all: Five little people they would love more than anything. Together, she and Owen would share the most amazing adventure of a lifetime: parenting. And going through it with him by her side would make Amelia more fulfilled than she could ever dream of being.

When she diverted her gaze back to the candles, Owen stayed beside her, silently holding her hand. He wasn’t going to let go. It was amazing how one single sentence could be so impacting. That small bit of information had elucidated a lot about Amelia. Before, he already admired how invested she was. Now that he understood why, he held her in an even higher regard.

It made sense why Amelia was so devoted to her work, especially when it involved kids. She wanted to save as many lives as she could, because she knew too well the pain that losing a child was. He thought back about the little girl she’d save with a peculiar surgical approach. That was one more family who would sleep well at night because of something the neurosurgeon by his side had done. She had a brilliant mind, a skilled set of hands but most importantly, a very generous heart.

Owen was still processing the impact of her confession when soon after, two other people walked into the chapel, whispering words and occupying seats as they prayed for their loved ones. Very gently, Amelia took her hand from beneath his and got up, ready to go back to the new page she had turned in her life when she’d moved to Seattle and once again bury that piece of information in the depths of her past.

But before she could leave the chapel, Owen spotted her hesitation as she turned around and gave him one last look, almost as if saying she too hadn’t wished to let go of that moment between them.

For the following week, the surgeons didn’t see much of each other. Amelia would eventually walk past Owen by the hallways and she often wondered if the spark she’d seen in his eyes every time she felt his gaze on her was real or just a product of her imagination.

The surgical plan for Nicole Herman despite well established was still the sole focus on Amelia’s mind at the moment. For what it felt like the third time that day, she spotted her boss crossing paths with her but this time around, he stopped her.

“Shepherd, how’s Herman? Any changes to the tumor?” Owen asked, genuinely interested. He’d had the most bizarre morning and was in need of some answers.

First, Callie had gone on and on about having game and flirtation skills, to which Owen honestly replied he didn’t have a lot of talent for. Being honest had always worked fine for him and at least he felt like Callie had gotten out of that conversation a little more inspired.

But then, he’d come to find out that Nicole Herman had stolen a couch from the doctor’s lounge and during the already troublesome enough task of talking to her about it, the fetal surgeon had openly and shamelessly flirted with him. Owen wasn’t generally very good at picking up these things, unless he was interested too, but the woman had been so blatantly forward that, that time, even he noticed.
“Hm, it’s grown a little inferiorly but it’s still within the margins I expected.” Amelia replied with honesty. “Why?” She added, interested.

“I was just checking.” Owen said and then took a step forward, standing up in front of her as he forced Amelia to stop walking so she could fully face him. “Actually, hm… Her behavior is…” Owen struggled. At the same time the situation was embarrassing and Amelia was the last person he wanted to discuss flirtation with, he felt obliged to report her patient’s behavior to her, considering it could be a neurological game changer in the plan to schedule the surgery. “She is stealing furniture.” He started, a little embarrassingly, knowing he was avoiding saying the main point.

“Oh,” Amelia took in the information, wondering if she should be getting worried.

“And she was flirting with me,” Owen finally confessed.

That seemed to particularly draw her attention. He wondered if there was more to her reaction than merely concern about her patient.

“Herman flirted with you?” The neurosurgeon asked, trying to disguise her personal interest on that information.

“I think so…” Owen replied awkwardly and in that moment Amelia noticed how embarrassed he was. “I… Yeah.”

Even though Amelia often felt clumsy around his powerful confidence, at times he would involuntarily let his guard down like this, letting her know that the guy wasn’t at all indifferent to her. Amelia didn’t know if he held her in the same high regard she held him, but the surgeon was pretty sure he felt at least just as physically attracted to her.

And flirting was in her nature. She couldn’t help it. Even though Amelia thought she didn’t have that talent as sharp as it had once been, she could still pull off some moves. And seeing Owen so obviously uncomfortable was the exact opening she needed.

“Did you take her up on it?” She asked teasingly, but deep down Amelia knew she would be bothered if the answer was positive. “I mean, she is very attractive.” The neurosurgeon added encouragingly, seeing her boss looked lost and taken by surprise.

“No. Yes, she is, but…” Owen heard himself stuttering.

“And tall.” Amelia proceeded with her swift moves, on purpose keeping eye contact with him. “I mean, she might be the tallest person in the hospital.” She tested him, looking at his chest to reinforce their height difference. “You might find tall people attractive. I don’t know.”

“No, I don’t. Not as a rule.” Owen replied with honestly, feeling like a fool. How could he even think about people’s heights when an adorable petite brunette deeply stared at him with the most amazing blue eyes he had ever seen? Owen felt fascinated. Completely enchanted. And belatedly, he realized he’d just fallen on Amelia Shepherd’s web of seduction. “But, professionally, it’s not a good idea.”

“Is that a rule? No co-workers?” Amelia asked before she could help it, feeling a bit insecure. The guy had nearly kissed her, was it possible that he had refrained because of professionalism? She really hoped not.

“Didn’t say that. I like co-workers.” Owen said bluntly and in the way he looked at her, Amelia knew he meant her. With reinvigorated confidence, she tilted her head, giving him her best angelical look. “But the hospital, we have rules there are, um…” Owen froze and broke eye contact with her.
before he lost control. He couldn’t believe the things she made him feel. And he barely even knew her. Doing his best to get out of there as soon as possible to avoid making a fool of himself even more, the chief of surgery cleared his throat before adding, “Thank you for the update.”

Amelia felt a wave of disappointment assaulting her as she watched him walk away. It’d be a lie to say she wasn’t having fun with the situation. But at the same time, Amelia knew she was walking in dangerous territory. But the more she tried to convince herself to focus on work let go of that intense dynamics with her boss, the more Owen seemed to occupy her thoughts.

Even though during the rest of the day Amelia was able to successfully keep her mind busy with her surgeries, once back home she couldn’t find any sources for distraction. It was very late at night and everyone else in the house was already sleeping. But when she’d spotted the lights on inside the trailer parked outside on the yard, her head started to spin in circles, going back to the same source of uneasiness: Owen Hunt.

Involuntarily, a movie ran in her mind as she recollected memories about every single one of their interactions. Amelia was very confused. She had no idea how exactly she felt about him.

Well, in a way she did. Amelia knew she liked him. She actually liked him a lot. But she wasn’t sure about the nature of those feelings. One thing she was sure of was that she really admired Owen. Ever since she’d met him, Amelia had noticed he was special. The guy had been there for her in a difficult transition in her life, offering her an opportunity at the hospital without an agenda while never failing to treat her with respect and consideration, both at home and at work. He had never judged her, even when everyone else around her had. Owen had always tried to hear her side of the story whenever he felt like he needed to reprimand her about something and once outside the walls of the hospital, his integrity of character remained the same.

Not only did Amelia feel an unfamiliar soothing sense of security whenever he was around, she also had developed the habit of watching him in action. Despite the fact that he was reserved and an overall private person, Owen’s kind manners and respectful approaches were reserved for everyone, be it patients, hospital staff, other surgeons or people in general. He was always polite, fair and empathetic. Those were traits she really admired and Amelia couldn’t say the same about a lot of people.

But even though she’d learned it was Owen’s nature to act by those principles, Amelia couldn’t help wondering if it was just her wishful imagination or if he was indeed a bit gentler and warmer with her than he was to others. She knew it would make no sense to expect that the guy who ran an entire surgical department treated everyone with the same courteous approach for he often had to be firm and serious, but even in the times he’d reprimanded her, Amelia had always felt like for some reason, his concern and investment had never been strictly professional.

She liked to believe that Owen actually did like her. The neurosurgeon tried not to think too much on the reason why she felt that way because Amelia was afraid of what she might discover. Leaving the room, she went downstairs to the kitchen, trying to avoid those thoughts.

The neurosurgeon walked back and forth, looking for something to distract herself with. Those were the moments when staying sober was a bitch. In another time of her life, she would simply sit down with a bottle of wine until alcohol numbed her racing mind.

But that had been exactly how Amelia had become an addict once and she was determined never to fall off the wagon again. If, in order to stay sober, she needed to deal with emotions she wasn’t exactly ready to acknowledge, then she would do it.
The neurosurgeon opened the fridge, spotting what looked like a bottle of champagne and later realizing it was only sparkling water. She took it out and grabbed a glass from one of the cabinets, excited about the prospect of drinking something, even if alcohol free. But as Amelia read the label, noticing the flavor, her thoughts once again drifted to the man living in the backyard.

Not only had Owen Hunt already emotionally overtaken her, Amelia couldn’t deny he was also very physically engaging. At first, Amelia had noticed he was an attractive guy, but it wasn’t until she’d met his personality that the neurosurgeon had truly paid attention to the details of his physique. His built body, with broad shoulders, a muscular chest and strong arms matched perfectly with his masculine personality; his angled jaw revealed his stubborn, proud strength at the same time his blue eyes were warm and understanding. Amelia had noticed he had long, thick eyelashes that were the same color as his hair. Sometimes, when her boss was distracted, Amelia would stare at them with amazement, thinking that behind that the fierce, powerful façade of a solid, trustworthy leader, there was also the compassion and kindness of a special soul.

All those physical and emotional attributes combined made Owen the most challenging, intriguing and attractive male Amelia had ever encountered.

She thought back about the only meaningful previous relationships she’d ever had. Aside from a steady college boyfriend, Amelia had pretty much jumped from one casual fling to another during all her life, always completely detaching sex from romantic feelings.

When she’d met her baby’s father, it had started off as a meaningless one night stand. As usual, sex had come first. Later, as they’d spent more time together, the physical attraction had made room for an emotional connection that despite brief and intense, still confused Amelia very much in regards to everything that had happened. Her experiences with Ryan had been lived mostly under the effect of opioids, making Amelia doubt if the euphoria she’d felt during the time she spent with him were truly related to her feelings for the man, to the plans of chasing a dream she’d longed for all her life or due to the effects caused by drugs. She had long ago accepted the fact that she’d never really find out, avoiding thinking about the subject completely because even though Ryan had given her a few weeks of bliss, his presence in her life was also related to her most painful experiences. First, she’d found him dead on their bed, losing the person she’d invested all her hopes on. Then, the discovery and loss of a child they had conceived together and Amelia had wanted very much would always appear in her mind whenever she thought of him.

The deep emotional pain Amelia had gone through during that period had severely scarred her, making the neurosurgeon wonder if she’d ever be able to get involved with anyone, ever again. For a while, she’d convinced herself she wouldn’t. When she’d met James, Amelia had reluctantly accepted his advances, but after a while she’d let it happen, only because deep down she’d always known that the ER physician would never really be a threat to her heart. Even though Amelia loved him, she had never been in love with him and that had meant no heartbreak if they ever parted ways. Exactly how it had happened.

The most passionate experiences she had ever felt had been with a guy who was now dead and even then, Amelia had been under substance influence. The risk of ever going through another loss scared her more than anything and that was why Amelia tried to completely avoid admitting how Owen Hunt made her feel.

Whenever she was in his presence, Amelia felt her palms sweating, her pulse racing and that undeniably sensation of anxiety. The brain was her object of study and Amelia couldn’t fool herself about what all those symptoms meant. This time, there were no drugs involved to explain those reactions.
Which meant the feelings were completely real and not chemically fabricated.

And then there was the additional of a very unfamiliar but at the same time very soothing sensation of being taken care of. It was like she knew she could count on Owen, even though they hadn’t been in each other’s lives very long. Amelia had trusted other people, but usually only after exhaustively getting to know them. But with her boss, it felt different because instead of rejecting his concern and worry, like she initially did with everyone else, Amelia felt strangely drawn to them.

Letting out an exasperated sigh, Amelia tried to ignore the unnerving realization that Owen Hunt could indeed become a real threat to her very guarded heart. She’d recently broken off an engagement and convinced herself that romantic relationships weren’t a concept she was willing to grasp any time soon. So, maybe she and Owen could just be friends. She already enjoyed his company very much.

Or maybe, if she just attempted at something physical with him, all that wondering and the silly infatuation with the man would stop.

That was it, Amelia thought, very practically. She was confused and reacting like a twelve year old because she wasn’t used to that situation. Usually, when she became attracted to guys, she successfully seduced them and quickly grew tired. The fact that Owen Hunt wasn’t a virtual stranger but actually someone she’d come to care about definitely wasn’t going to get in the way of that. All she really needed was to get that nonsensical sexual tension out of the way and once she’d tried and got that energy out of her system, they could remain friends.

Picking up the bottle of sparkling water, Amelia completely ignored the portion of her brain that was warning her just how irrational she was being. The guy was her boss and he didn’t strike her as the kind of man who had meaningless sexual encounters with his employees. But in the end, Amelia’s impulsive nature got the best of her and before she could think about it, she was already climbing up the steps to the wooden structure his trailer stood on.

Owen had just finished brushing his teeth and was ready to change for bed when he heard gentle knocks at his door.

“Uh, hi,” The trauma surgeon frowned, surprised to see Amelia Shepherd standing outside.

“Hey, Sorry.” She smiled invitingly. “Do you drink wine?”

“Uh…” Owen hesitated, wondering what had taken her there. After their somehow disastrous conversation earlier that day, he was expecting another full week of avoiding each other.

“I just wanted to visit, and people bring wine sometimes when they’re going to visit another person. Especially if they have…” Amelia spoke and it didn’t go unnoticed to him the way she was struggling. Her voice had a higher pitch than normal and she seemed a bit jumpy. “They bring a bottle.”

“That’s water.” Owen pointed out, satisfied to notice that this time around, she was the one who seemed nervous and completely affected. “So…”

“Because I don’t drink wine. I don’t drink at all. Not anymore.” Amelia tried to sound indifferent. “So, I brought water, and…” The neurosurgeon instantly realized how she was embarrassing herself. God, what was she thinking? “I’m sorry. I have literally no game.” She humbly added, hoping Owen wouldn’t have a bad impression of her insane and impulsive decision to show up at his door, in a late hour with that stupid excuse. She noticed as he chuckled and handed him the bottle, seeing the look of confusion on his face as he took it. Unlike that morning, the guy seemed to be back to his serene,
controlled self. He raised both eyebrows as if expecting her to say something else, but it only made Amelia feel even more awkward. “I should go. It’s sparkling.”

“Mm-hmm.” Owen was enjoying that conversation more than he should. Often before, it was him who hadn’t been able to hide just how much Amelia affected him. This time, she was the one struggling and it completely contrasted with her usually confident and sassy manners. He thought she’d never looked more adorable than openly admitting she’d tried to flirt with him because she didn’t think she had game.

Owen knew that if only Amelia realized she didn’t really need to open her mouth to entice him, she wouldn’t be saying those things with so much conviction. Just the sight of her gorgeous figure and her charming presence were enough to invoke all kinds of responses in him.

“Lime.” Amelia added, stepping back. “Just wanted to say hi.” She repeated, trying to repair the situation. Amelia couldn’t believe she had pretty much given him reason to believe she’d gone there with an agenda.

As she turned around to leave, the neurosurgeon let out a heavy sigh, trying to calm down. She was feeling like a complete fool and wanted to get out of there as soon as possible. What was she thinking?! That Owen would open his door, invite her in and greet her with a kiss?

But that was the thing, Amelia wasn’t thinking. She needed to start acting like the grownup she was determined to become.

Owen watched her reaction with amusement and asked, adamant on not letting her go.

“Hey, do you want some water?”

From a distance, he heard her reply without turning her back.

“Not thirsty.”

It was clear she was embarrassed. Owen smiled to himself. If before he’d had doubts, now he was absolutely certain that Amelia reciprocated his attraction. He’d had two chances to kiss her before and missed it.

Owen wasn’t going to make the same mistake again.

“Okay, wait.” He put the bottle on the ground and gave the order. “Amelia. Stop walking.” Owen finally caught up with her, noticing how insecure and adorable she looked. He assumed she was probably embarrassed thinking he’d rejected her. This time, he was going to make it very clear that there was no way she was getting out of his reach before he had the chance to do what he’d been dying to try. “I’m gonna kiss you now,” He informed her with practicality, even though he could feel his own heart beating faster. Owen noticed the anticipation in her eyes and that only added to his desire to touch the woman. “So, don’t say anything.”

Amelia heard the sweet tone of command in his voice at the same time she felt the touch of his large hand on her cheek. The way Owen captured her eyes with his, intensely staring right through them, made Amelia lose her cool completely.

His left hand made its way to her jaw, possessively pulling her in his direction at the same his lips covered hers in a sweet, intimate kiss. Amelia felt his forehead touching hers as the warmth of his body and the softness of his lips made her knees feel weak, leading her to hold his elbow for support.

Owen had meant for it to be one simple, quick kiss. But even though he’d repeatedly anticipated that
moment with anxiety and high expectations, never would he have been ready for reality.

The trauma surgeon had imagined kissing Amelia would be amazing, but he hadn’t expected it to feel so right or so good. He unwillingly pulled apart, eager to find out her reaction, but when he felt Amelia’s head moving forward, as if protesting the loss of contact, Owen tightened his grip on her, capturing her lips with reinvigorated desire. Seeing Amelia surrender to him with so much abandon drove him crazy and Owen deepened the kiss, wondering how he’d ever be able to let her go.

Amelia felt his thumb striking her cheek and her heart swelled with the tenderness of his touch. Owen was all solidness, power and rough strength. But the way he softly caressed her, holding her face with so much gentleness made Amelia mellow.

She kept her eyes very closed, unable to focus on anything other than how he made her feel. How could she ever, ever have considered that after kissing the guy and getting that energy out of her system, she would go back to being in peace?

Owen pulled apart slowly. It seemed like he’d just become aware of how everything about Amelia made complete sense. Her skin was flawlessly soft, her scent was intoxicatingly numbing and her gracious, feminine body felt like it had been molded to perfectly accommodate in his arms. He wanted more than anything to wrap them around her waist, take her to his bed and kiss every bit of her body.

But he couldn’t. It was too soon. He didn’t want to rush things, scare her off and end up regretting his lack of control the following day. Amelia deserved better and Owen already liked her too much to imagine doing anything that might slightly make her uncomfortable. It was already too late to step back, pretend nothing was happening between them or deny it. The only thing left for them to figure out was how they were going to act on it.

And Owen decided to take it slowly, anxious to enjoy every step of the way.

But now, looking into Amelia’s eyes, he realized she was as confused and unsettled as him with the intensity of what they’d just shared.

“And now you can go home.” He added, giving her room to recover from it. He would definitely need it too.

“Yeah, I’m gonna go home.” Amelia struggled with breaking contact with him, especially when she felt his hand rubbing her shoulder. Taking longer than usual to process her thoughts, Amelia smiled at him with affection and comfortable ease. “Which is that way.” She turned back one last time to look at the guy, already accepting the fact that her reaction had become quite obvious. “To my house.”

Amelia had her back turned so she never noticed the way Owen kept staring at her with his hands in his pockets as she crossed the yard, feeling like she was walking in another dimension. The journey from his trailer to her brother’s house seemed like an eternity. When Amelia finally made it upstairs to her room, she closed the door after her and leaned against it, finally letting out the breath she’d been holding.

Owen had completely swept her off her feet with the electrical wave of desire that ran through her body the moment he touched her with his hands and lips. And if after only a kiss Amelia had already lost control and her entire capacity to think, she didn’t want to imagine how much further those feelings could grow.

The problem was, being with Owen was potentially dangerous to her heart and yet it felt so good
that Amelia already knew it was impossible to try to resist it. She didn’t want to try to resist it. What she really wanted was to walk into his arms and let herself go completely.

Damn it. She couldn’t, Amelia realized. Going to him had been an insane idea and she needed to protect herself. She could not let her feelings get the best of her again. Determinate to never suffer another heartbreak, which was in Amelia’s experience an inevitability when it came to relationships, she promised herself to solely focus on Herman’s surgery and nothing, nothing else.

It was decided, she realized, finally able to breathe normally again after attempting to regain control of herself. Amelia wasn’t going to think about Owen. She wasn’t going to think about kissing him again.

And she definitely wasn’t going to think about what might come next.
This one includes the moment after Omelia’s first kiss and the arc with Nicole Herman’s tumor, basically. Unfortunately, I couldn’t cover ALL parts of 11x14 yet, otherwise the chapter would be way too big. So I made it to the beginning of the surgery around the first third of 11x14 and the next chapter will cover the aftermath of Owen dealing with Amelia’s insubordination by taking off the gloves and exposing herself to radiation. The only upside to this is that I have a relatively free week so expect a faster update next time!

The Journey – Part Ten

Amelia dragged her feet out of bed, trying to hold onto the promise she’d made the previous evening.

Despite her resolve not to think about Owen anymore, he had haunted her dreams during the entire night, setting Amelia on a restless, agitated sleep that made her feel even more tired when she woke up.

As she got dressed to go to work, the neurosurgeon wondered how it would be when they met there. Surely they couldn’t act as if nothing had happened? Amelia knew she very much wanted to, but she was almost certain she wouldn’t be able to talk to her boss and pretend she hadn’t felt her knees weak as Owen had held her face between his hands and stolen her breath with a dazzling kiss just the night before.

Did people really do that? Did they go from sharing sensual, inebriating kisses to talking about mundane topics such as the OR board or budget meetings? This was all very new to her and Amelia had no idea, but she hoped the answer was affirmative, considering how determined she was to completely ignore how her boss made her feel.

Much to her dismay, not too long after she stepped foot in the hospital, Amelia was informed the chief of surgery wanted to see her in his office.

The neurosurgeon postponed going to meet him for as long as she could but before lunch, she was running out of excuses to ignore the call. Hoping with all her heart that encounter wouldn’t be too awkward at the same time Amelia predicted it would, she climbed the stairs to the upper floor, crossing her fingers that the meeting turned out to be as work related as possible.

Owen tapped his foot uncontrollably inside his office and then censored himself the moment he realized he was doing it. Behaving like a love struck teenage boy was beneath him and there was absolutely no reason why he should feel that nervous.

Earlier that morning, Owen had driven to work unknowingly wondering about the same things the woman he’d kissed the night before also had. He had no idea how Amelia would behave from there
on but he was damn sure about one thing: He wanted more.

Owen had anticipated that kissing her would be amazing, but it had actually been more than that. Judging by her reaction, Amelia had been as taken aback by the intensity of their moment as he had. The situation was so alarming that Owen now struggled to regain some of his senses because he knew that, while at the hospital, he was Amelia’s boss and that insistent urge to grab her hand, take her to an empty room and lock the door behind them couldn’t cloud his professional judgment. So Owen had made a decision.

To prove himself he was capable of keeping both worlds apart and therefore to keep pursuing the adorable neurosurgeon, Owen was going to call her for a meeting he’d been postponing for a while. A few weeks before, he’d structured the new theoretical course for the residents program. His idea included a series of lectures from each head of department and since Neurosurgery was on focus at the moment with a very interesting case, he had thought about asking Amelia Shepherd to kick things off with a Masterclass.

For a while now he’d avoided calling her to his office, too confused with his own emotions for the woman. Owen didn’t want to mix work with their personal lives but he couldn’t ignore what he felt whenever he saw her; reason why he had been giving himself excuses to refrain from having Amelia over. But now that he knew she was in synchrony with his emotions and especially after having tasted what it felt like to kiss and touch her, the last thing Owen wanted was to continue avoiding her.

Three knocks on his door made Owen nearly jump from his chair in alarm.

“Hey,” Amelia hated herself for feeling her face blush as she entered her boss’s office. “I heard you were looking for me.”

Owen took a while longer than usual to reply, unconsciously too pleased to see her.

“Yes,” He cleared his throat and changed to his most professional tone. “I need to talk to you,” He informed her and, with his gaze, pointed to a chair. “Please, sit.”

Amelia frowned heavily, too confused with what was going on. As she walked into his office seconds before and spotted the look of appreciation in his eyes, she was pretty sure the subject of their talk would be what had happened the night before. But then as Owen had asked her to sit and taken a position in front of her with a desk between them, all certainty she had about anything was suddenly gone.

“I think this won’t come as a surprise to you considering I mentioned it before, but I am reformulating the residency program classes schedule with Webber,” Owen informed her. Amelia knew that every medical residency consisted mostly of practical training but residents were also required to take mandatory theory hours on a weekly basis. “I was drafting the schedule for the upcoming weeks and I think it would be a great idea if we started the new program with Neurosurgery.”

The look of confusion was evident on Amelia’s face, for that was the last thing she expected him to discuss with her at that moment, but Owen mistook it as rejection for his proposal.

“If you think about it, it makes perfect sense,” He explained, thinking he was going to have to sell the idea. “You have Herman’s case now and the residents are very invested in it. I think it’s great timing to explore the basics of your specialty, maybe even build your set of classes around it?” He raised his eyebrows, pensively.
Amelia opened her mouth to talk, but quickly closed it again, unsure of what she was going to say.

Before, she had hoped that talking to Owen wouldn’t prove to be as awkward as she imagined it would, because she doubted they would be able to ignore what had happened the previous night. Amelia had thought that not talking about it would actually make her more comfortable with the situation.

But she had just discovered that Owen’s apparent inclination to not even acknowledge it had bothered her more than she would have cared to let it.

What did that even mean?! Hadn’t he been as affected by it as she had? Was he really going to pretend nothing had happened?

“What do you think of it?” Owen pushed, alarmed by her complete silence.

“I think you gave me the best kiss I have ever had.”

Amelia quickly shifted the focus of her thoughts, hurrying to process the information he’d just given her about the classes and tried to stay as professional as possible to match his attitude.

“It could be a good idea,” She replied, not really succeeding at carefully thinking it over. If she had, Amelia would have realized that she already had too much on her plate and preparing a series of lectures was a very hard and demanding task, even for brilliant academic prodigies like her. “Yes, I can do that.”

“Good,” Owen approved with a head nod and then look from her face to the computer in front of him. “I was thinking one or two classes per week, for a total of four weeks, what do you think?”

The harder Owen tried to focus on work, the more distracted she seemed to become. He was feeling like an idiot. The chief of surgery had no idea why he was blabbering about a series of lectures that didn’t matter the least bit to him, at least not in that moment. The only subject he wanted to pay attention to could only be explored with the woman in front of him and yet, the more he wanted to bring up the kiss they’d shared, the less he felt able to do it.

Even though Owen had initially summoned her there to prove to himself that he could separate their private lives from work, he hadn’t planned to act so coldly and distantly. But the chief of surgery had no idea how to turn that off without crossing the line completely.

If he dared to talk or even think about touching her, Owen wasn’t sure what would stop him from going around the table, holding that gorgeous woman in his arms and kissing her until he lost each one of his senses again.

“Yeah, sure,” Amelia nodded affirmatively, still confused with the entire situation. “That sounds great.” She said, unsure of what exactly she was agreeing with. Her predicament was very alarming and Amelia was feeling so foolish to have walked in there presuming she was in control of anything that her instinct after that realization was to just get out of there as soon as possible. “Can you email me the topics you want discussed? I really have to go now.” She got up, without offering any more explanations.

Owen was about to suggest that she chose the subjects herself but the woman had already stormed out of the room.

Feeling like a complete idiot, his last attempt to lie to himself and maybe feel a little better was to imagine that the cause of Amelia’s distraction was her complete focus on Nicole Herman’s case, and not at all the way he had utterly made a fool of himself during that awkward encounter.
For the following days, Owen tried approaching Amelia in an attempt to fix his mistake but whenever he spotted her, she was either surrounded by eager residents, operating or studying files with absolute attention. On a random Wednesday morning, he finally saw the chance to catch her alone inside one of the scan rooms. That day Amelia would give her first lecture and he supposed she would be busier than ever, but Owen couldn’t help himself. He couldn’t pass on the chance to be alone with her again.

Since he didn’t want to start off by going straight to the point, the trauma surgeon thought some small talk was in order to initiate the conversation. Bringing her coffee was an attempt to break the ice, but his plans were more ambitious. What Owen had in mind involved asking her out to dinner so they could actually have to talk outside the walls of the hospital, instead of embarrassingly avoiding each other at work like they’d been doing.

But once their interaction was over, Owen wondered if they’d ever be able to talk again without him feeling like he was messing it all up. He could still hear Amelia’s words, “I really need to focus… On the tumor. Don’t need any distractions, and you’re… You’re very hard to ignore.”

What did that even mean? Owen understood she had a lot going on at the moment, but it had been Amelia the one to cross the yard and knock on his door late at night. And then Owen had kissed her and felt her melting in his arms. Surely she was into it as much as he was? Or was it possible that she’d had a change of heart about it? She certainly wanted to ignore him, a task she’d just admitted to being hard. So it was likely that what the neurosurgeon had felt hadn’t changed, but rather her opinion on actually acting on those feelings.

Owen was so confused that he didn’t know what else to think. Women in general were very complicated but the complex ones like Amelia Shepherd were also intriguing and challenging. And the problem was that he was already far too invested in whatever was going on between them to want to back off now. Not when Amelia looked at him with those gorgeous blue eyes and nearly stuttered in his company. She was so confident, so on top of her game all the time that to see her reacting with adorable insecurity to his presence made Owen feel more attracted to her, and he didn’t know that was even possible.

If he were to be completely honest, Owen had to admit he was a bit disappointed that things hadn’t turned out to be quite what he expected. After their moment outside his trailer, he had been sure that the breathtaking kiss would be just the start. But as the days progressed, he noticed the two of them were getting distant instead of closer and he didn’t know what to do to stop that from happening.

He knew that the case Amelia had on right now was very consuming and it made total sense that she needed to focus all her energy on it at the moment. If it were him, he knew there was no way he could juggle exploring romantic feelings for a person at the same time rationally focusing on such an important moment in his career. So it was only fair that he respected her to feel the same.

Owen could wait. But he couldn’t wait forever. Kissing Amelia Shepherd once was far from being enough. Unless he heard it from her that she wasn’t interested, Owen definitely wasn’t giving up on pursuing her. And once all of that hype with Herman’s surgery was over, he and his delightful head of neurosurgery would have a lot of catching up to do.

Amelia closed the door after her, leaning on it for support at the same time she tried to control her breath.
Everything was too overwhelming. She had no idea how she’d gotten there but it felt like the entire world was engulfing her as she struggled to keep her cool.

And failed miserably.

What had started out as an unpretentious series of lectures for residents had actually grown in popularity faster than Amelia could realize. The idea of building the classes around Herman’s case and therefore exploring topics in a very didactic manner had proven to be an excellent idea. Armed with amazing material, the neurosurgeon’s competence and charisma shined through every lecture, attracting more residents, and even attendings and professionals from other hospital areas. Before Amelia could process the meaning of it, her talks were being recorded and streamed in other facilities. People seemed to thoroughly enjoy the topics but what really was causing the buzz was the expectation around the big surgery she was about to perform.

And Amelia belatedly realized that creating such a hype before the actual surgery happened had been a mistake.

All it did was add to her anxiety. As the procedure date approached, the neurosurgeon logged more hours going through the patient’s files many times over, looking for any possible detail she might have missed in a scan or while building a solid plan. It didn’t take long for other surgeons to start questioning her plan, or even doubting it.

And worse, comparisons to her brother also started to become more frequent than the neurosurgeon would have liked.

Amelia had dealt with that all her life and she wasn’t naïve to think this time it would be any different. But once she’d started working on Herman’s case, her idea seemed solid enough to be worth of developing a plan. Now, as things slowly moved from theoretical to actually very concrete, she started to second guess everything she’d planned.

A woman’s life was at stake. A brilliant, amazing surgeon’s life. Nicole Herman carried a death sentence inside her head and Amelia was the only one who could maybe defeat it. The expectations around her plan had reached such a high that there was no room for failure.

Now, after a series of lectures, convincing talks and a lot of hard work, everyone truly believed Amelia Shepherd could pull off what could be called a surgical miracle. And if she didn’t, the neurosurgeon wondered what could happen. It was too much pressure on her shoulders and she needed that whole thing to be over as soon as possible.

It was too exhausting having to separate all her feelings of insecurity and self doubt from the rational ability to make the best decisions regarding Herman’s case. It was all very suffocating. Amelia felt completely alone because there really wasn’t anyone she could talk to about it that could understand.

That wasn’t entirely true, she knew. There was one person who she was sure wouldn’t judge and would be capable of offering her support and advice. But talking to Owen Hunt might turn out to be just as draining as dealing with the case because once again, Amelia would have to work really hard to separate her personal feelings from the bigger picture and in that case, it could be exponentially harder. She had no idea how to label what she felt for Owen but she was sure it was more intense and harder to contain than anything else she was experiencing.

But right now, Amelia needed to focus her entire energy on figuring out how she was going to proceed with her plan. Nicole Herman wasn’t exactly being the most cooperative and her refusal to accept neoadjuvant therapy was a bump on the road that the neurosurgeon wasn’t counting on. Her approach would have to alter in some strategic moments during the surgery and Amelia felt like she
was too close to losing her mind. The mortification she’d felt when her resident had lectured her and
told her to “Get it together” let Amelia know she had reached her limit of sanity.

Owen was just finishing updating a patient’s chart when he saw his head of neurosurgery passing by,
with a very distressed look on her face. Over the past few weeks, he’d followed up closely with the
evolution of her plan throughout every lecture she’d given and the chief couldn’t help but become
nervous and excited for her.

“Just so you know, the auditorium is packed. The fire marshal actually made me move a bunch of
people out to an overflow room.” He informed, supposing the neurosurgeon would be pleased to
hear about her growing popularity. But the distant, somewhat even uncomfortable look on her face
warned Owen that something was terribly wrong. Trying not to pry at the same time he hoped to
contain his concern, the trauma surgeon encouraged her to talk. “Amelia.”

“Just give me a minute.” She replied, unable to make eye contact with him.

“Amelia.” Owen tried one more time, watching as she raised her hand with obvious intention to
silence him.

“Hang on.” She pleaded. Amelia needed remain focused and calm, otherwise she could lose her
balance and that wasn’t something they could afford. Not her, not the hospital and certainly not
Nicole Herman. Even though rationally she knew that talking about her feelings and letting it out
was the best way to get rid of that anxiety, she was still determined not to do it with Owen, of all
people.

The neurosurgeon took a deep breath and sighed slowly, trying to put in action everything that her
brain was deciding.

“You can talk to me.” Owen declared, interrupting her thoughts. “You’re wound pretty tight.” He
added and Amelia finally looked up to meet his eyes, wondering why was it so easy for him to
apparently read her mind. “I just want you to know you can talk to me.” The trauma surgeon
affirmed, hoping she accepted his support.

Owen hated seeing her in distress and he wouldn’t hesitate to help her with whatever it may be. It
was obvious she was bothered by something and the least he could do was to make himself available
to hear her, even though Amelia had stated that, at the present moment, she preferred not to be in his
company.

The neurosurgeon took another deep breath. But before she even opened her mouth, Amelia already
knew the words would pour out of her because that’s the effect Owen had. She had spent the past
weeks making up her mind and coming up with several reasons why she shouldn’t talk to him but
with one look and a few words, Owen was able to vanish with all her resolve. And the thing was, he
didn’t even need to do much. It was like he knew exactly what to say to break all her defenses and
the man definitely didn’t walk around in circles.

“My whole career, I have been the other Dr. Shepherd.” She explained, noticing by the way he
frowned that Owen rejected the assumption. He had no idea how much that display of loyalty meant
to her. “He’s the real one. I’m the other one.” Amelia continued. In his eyes, she saw comprehension
and so much acceptance that it became too overwhelming to keep looking at him. “Right now, this
plan of mine is theoretical. It’s just talk.” She confessed, feeling an immense relief to finally voice out
all her concerns. “But at some point, I am going to slice into Dr. Herman’s brain, and I have this sick
feeling that when I face that tumor, I will discover that I am not just the other Dr. Shepherd,” Amelia
added, feeling a lump in her throat as she tried her hardest not to tear up. “I’m the wrong Dr.
Shepherd.”
Owen noticed how her voice broke as she struggled to verbalize those feelings and, at the same time, maintain her control.

He had no idea how his eyes reinforced his words and transmitted so much security to her as he affirmed with the uttermost conviction:

“Listen, I know it couldn’t have been easy constantly being in his shadow,” Owen put his hands inside his white coat pockets, determined to make her see what was clear to him. “And I can only imagine how unsettling it must feel when people bring it up. I suppose it happens more often than anyone knows,” He guessed correctly, seeing the affirmative answer on her face. “But don’t let others constantly comparing you to him lead you to do the same,” Owen advised, noticing the confusion in her eyes.

Amelia hesitated for a bit, unsure if she should ask, but his voice resonated again, ending all doubts.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re better than him or not,” Owen stated with conviction. “It’s not something that can be measured, anyway,” Her boss raised his eyebrows, wisely pointing out the truth. “At the end of the day, it only matters if you’re being the best you can be, if you’re giving everything you got…” He described, knowing how well that applied to the woman. “And I know you are,” Owen confessed, tenderly smiling at her. He knew that smile contained more than just professional encouragement from someone who had more years of experience. It also contained an undeniable load of affection and care, and the chief didn’t even bother hiding it. “I see you, I see how hard you try, how invested you are in this…” He explained with full honesty. “In all the years I worked beside him, your brother repeatedly proved his brilliance but you’ve got something he never did,” Owen kept smiling as he noticed the curiosity in her eyes. “Derek was never humble. And that is exactly the quality in you that makes you the only one fit to take this case on.” The chief of surgery gave his true opinion.

Amelia felt her throat constricting even harder. Owen had no idea how much that kind of recognition meant to her, especially coming from him.

“I am afraid of what might happen if I fail,” Amelia confessed with a low voice, blinking repeatedly before finally sustaining his look, hoping her following confession wouldn’t change his opinion of her. “That’s not being humble… That’s being selfish.”

Owen noticed the brightness in her eyes caused by the accumulated tears. All he wanted was to hold and comfort her. When she looked at him like that, it tore him apart completely.

“You can only fail if you don’t try,” He wisely answered, speaking with propriety. “If you really were selfish, you wouldn’t be giving up so much to focus on this,” Owen pointed out and Amelia knew exactly what he meant. “Of course you’re excited about it, as we all are. You love surgery and there is nothing wrong with that,” He expressed in words what she was feeling better than Amelia could. “But glory and recognition are not what you’re doing this for,” He stated with conviction. Owen had met people who were like that. He had even married one once. And he was damn sure from what he’d seen in Amelia that she was the complete opposite. “We don’t know what the outcome of the surgery will be, and of course we are hoping for the best, but this medicine, Amelia,” he reminded her. “There are no guarantees. There is a reason why we don’t make promises in our job.”

Amelia heard the words and the undeniable understanding in them.

“She could die.” The neurosurgeon bit her lower lip, unaware that she looked like a frightened child. “She could die on my table.”
She will die if you don’t try.” Owen offered a new perspective. “Nicole Herman is a grown woman and she knows about the risks.” He reminded her. “The woman has been to several other specialists and kept refusing treatment. Your plan was the only one she embarked on. There is a reason for that too.”

His words sunk in and as Amelia processed them, it was with a sigh of relief that she felt finally able to breathe normally again.

“You’re right.” The neurosurgeon sniffed lightly, using her finger to brush unshed tears from her eyes. “I owe it to her to try,” Amelia decided and felt a wave of optimism taking over her. “And I owe it to myself to do the best I can do.”

“Yes,” Owen agreed with a head nod, blissfully happy and even proud that she’d understood it. He fought the urge to place a loose lock of brown hair behind her ear and caress her cheek.

The chief of surgery was about to propose they went for coffee in the cafeteria when suddenly Amelia’s entire face lit up and her eyes sparkled with a unique fire he’d grown accustomed to seeing.

“I have to go,” She interrupted his thoughts and judging by the look on her face, it became obvious to Owen she’d just had an epiphany. “I…” The neurosurgeon struggled, feeling her thoughts racing faster than her mouth could speak as she was assaulted by an incredible number of new ideas to figure out the loopholes in her surgical plan. With one last look at the man who’d just eased her restless soul, Amelia spoke the only words that could translate her feelings. “Thank you.”

With reinvigorated energy, Amelia hurried to the skills lab, her mind racing with new solutions to her plan. She spent the rest of the night working on fixing every tiny detail that she felt was yet to be improved. The following day, with renovated confidence and in an obvious better state of mind, she gave the final lecture of the series, rejoicing in the cheer of applause as she presented the grand finale for her plan to completely extinguish Herman’s tumor.

As she made herself available to answer questions from the spectators, Amelia felt more than ready to deal with whatever they fired at her. Her boss was absolutely right. It didn’t matter what they thought. If Amelia knew she was doing the best she could - and she was - that was good enough for her to maintain a peace of mind that was strangely inspiring. Even when Callie Torres had asked about her brother Amelia was able to keep her cool because she knew better now. She felt prepared. Confident. And absolutely ready to transform theory into action.

In the audience, her eyes spotted Owen. Involuntarily, Amelia felt her heart swelling. He had no idea what he’d done for her. Even though the surgical plan was entirely hers, without the boost of confidence and the words of assurance Owen had given her, Amelia probably wouldn’t have been able to come up with her newest ideas. Before talking to him, she’d been walking around in circles, feeling stuck in the same place. But after confessing her insecurities and overcoming her fear to expose her vulnerabilities, Amelia had been rewarded with comprehension, support and a lot of encouragement.

It was like Owen came with a manual because he always knew exactly what to say. Soon enough, as Amelia took her final notes planning on going home to sleep after the draining day she’d had, doctor Herman walked in and dropped another bomb on her lap.

Even though the neurosurgeon would have liked a couple more days to at least go over her concluded plan, there was no time left to waste. In that newly found state of serenity, Amelia took the lead, getting a new set of scans and coming up with the decision to start the procedure that would be a game changer in her career.
“Word’s getting around.” Owen caught up with her in the hallway. He had just heard about the news and even though he was halfway home, he’d turned around and come back to the hospital. “You’re gonna have a full gallery. Everybody wants to see the show.” He added, remembering how she’d been feeling insecure a few days before and how drastically that had changed after their conversation near the nurses station. He wanted more than anything for Amelia to be positive about what she was going to face. “You feeling good, confident? You’re not worried, are you?” He asked, alarmed with her silence. “Are you worried?”

“This is where you leave me, Dr. Hunt.”

In her smile and calmness, that contrasted so much with how restless he was feeling, Owen realized she was more than prepared for what was about to come.

“Oh. You okay? Do you need anything?” He couldn’t help asking.

“I’m fine. I’m great. I just… I prep alone.” She looked at him with confidence and Owen smiled in return. “So… I will see you on the other side.”

Amelia walked into the OR corridor, noticing how people ran back and forth in agitation, obviously preparing everything for her surgery. As the realization of what was happening caught up with her, Amelia locked herself in a bathroom and finally allowed her emotions to come to surface with full force. Seconds later, as she regained her balance and put her emotions back in order, with renovated strength to believe in superpowers, Amelia would walk into the OR, ready to take on the biggest challenge of her career.

The neurosurgeon once again studied the field, closed her eyes and reviewed her plan, going through every single step in her mind. When she realized everything was in order, just the way it should be, Amelia felt an additional fit of confidence running through her veins, preparing her for the big moment.

And as she took one last look at the gallery, right before focusing back on the patient, a pair of crystal blue eyes stared back at her, armed with a smile that was the last encouragement Amelia needed to finally make the first cut.

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Part Eleven

Chapter Summary

Guys I am so happy I decided to split this part into two chapters because it wouldn’t have been possible to explore everything I wanted otherwise. This one is my favorite so far, it has a lot of unseen scenes and these are my favorite to write. It takes place during the events of 11x14, when Amelia recklessly takes off her gloves during Herman’s surgery and Owen flips (I wrote his reaction to it) and also what I imagined happened between 11x14 and 11x15. Here goes!

The Journey – Part Eleven

“Shepherd, what are you doing?!”

Owen had got up and reached for the intercom before he could even notice what he was doing. From the OR, he heard Amelia’s distant voice.

“It’s so much easier this way…”

But Owen didn’t care how easy it was. After over fifteen hours of standing in that OR, going through an incredible exhausting procedure, Amelia Shepherd had finally made it to the near end. All she needed to do was place small radioactive seeds in the inside of Nicole Herman’s brain to make sure the chances of tumor recurrence were as close to none as possible. After weeks of closely following up with her plans, Owen knew the procedure steps by heart. The radiation level those seeds contained were considerably high, which demanded special gear to handle them. Even though the dosage was not life threatening, it could still be very harmful. As chief, Owen had to ensure the hospital staff took every precaution in the book to guarantee their own safety before anyone else’s.

His head of neurosurgery taking off her gloves and exposing herself to radiation was a huge liability. It could cause a great deal of damage if she prolonged that exposure, therefore causing a big bureaucratic headache for Owen to solve, not to mention a very likely insurance problem.

But that was not at all Owen’s concern.

Instead, he was having a hard time accepting that something harmful could actually happen to Amelia Shepherd.

“You need to put that glove back on right now!” He shouted through the intercom, struggling not to let his emotions cloud his decision-making skills. Owen looked at the clock and saw the minutes ticking. He knew they were in a time frame and Amelia was toying with her luck. “Grey, stop her,” He ordered, looking at Meredith who was also inside the OR. “She needs to put that glove back on right now.”

Next up, Owen heard Meredith talking about the time they had left but he was hardly paying attention. It wasn’t until Amelia finally placed the last seed and backed away from the table that he was finally able to relax, dropping on the chair and sighing heavily.
Amelia could not believe it when, after having had dinner and taken a relaxing hot shower, she couldn’t gather the energy to go home, choosing instead to crash on a bed in one of the on call rooms.

Her day had been exhausting and the past thirty-six hours, incredibly overwhelming. She’d gone from a back to back day at work with a rollercoaster of emotions only to find out she’d have to start Herman’s surgery before planned and without getting any kind of rest.

The sun had set and risen but Amelia had not seen it, spending nearly twenty hours inside an OR. The whole process had been draining, not only physically, but especially mentally. The neurosurgeon had needed every ounce of energy to keep fighting and maintain her cool. At times, Amelia had found setbacks and her mind had played tricks on her, making the surgeon second guess herself. But with the support of co-workers and the memory of the comforting words Owen Hunt had said to her hours before the procedure were enough to keep Amelia standing.

And now, she was rewarded with the best scenario possible.

Herman had made it through surgery; Amelia had been able to take out the entire tumor and she had successfully planted all the radioactive seeds. The patient had then been taken to the neurology ICU, where she would recover from anesthesia and possibly not wake up for hours. All the parts of her plan had been beautifully executed and the minute her head lied on the pillow, Amelia embarked on the serene sleep of one who knew she’d done everything in her power to fix a situation, everything that could possibly be done.

A few hours later, she woke up to the sound of the door cracking opened.

“I’m sorry,” she heard a deep male voice that sounded displeased echoing inside the room. “I was looking for you but I had no idea you were resting.”

Amelia struggled to open her eyes, adjusting to the darkness. Even though she couldn’t see much, she would recognize that voice anywhere. Owen Hunt stood by the door, his hands clenched into his fists. As she regained some of her sight and consciousness, Amelia noticed his jaw was hardened and his eyes were sparkling with fury. The guy was obviously struggling to contain himself.

“Is everything okay?” She pulled out the covers at the same time she sat on the bed, with obvious intention to get up. “Is it Herman, is she-?”

“She is fine,” Owen interrupted her as he finally fully walked into the room and closed the door after himself. Amelia saw him reaching for the switch and violently pressing it, turning on the lights. Her eyes were assaulted by the sudden clarity. Next thing she noticed, he had walked over to the corner where her bed was and unceremoniously held out her hands, examining her palms.

“What are you…?”

Her sleepy voice was once again interrupted by his serious tone.

“Don’t ever,” Owen’s voice was dangerously low and Amelia noticed for the first time the contained wrath in his face. “Ever pull a stunt like that again, you hear me?” He hissed, finally looking from her hands to her face.

Amelia felt the intensity of his gaze and swallowed hard. Her body was assaulted by a warm rush of blood and she wasn’t sure what that unexpected response was exactly about.
“It’s fine,” She started, sustaining his look in clear defiance to his intimidation. It was obvious her boss was worried that the radiation from the seeds in the surgery could somehow have hurt her. “It didn’t even…”

Owen possessively grabbed her right wrist, carefully inspecting her hand again and Amelia realized that was his way of showing her she was no match for him where physical dominance was concerned. His grip, despite fierce, wasn’t too tight so he wasn’t hurting her but it definitely didn’t allow Amelia to escape should she wish it.

The neurosurgeon didn’t notice she held her breath as Owen’s free hand touched the palm of the one he was holding. His thumb slowly explored the surface of her skin, examining it, and then slid upwards to her fingers, making Amelia slightly shiver. The contact was at the same time very intimate and incredibly erotic. Amelia never knew that only the touch of a hand could cause all of her senses to suddenly be brought to life and she didn’t realize her lips were slightly parted as her breathing got heavier by the second.

“You don’t know,” He whispered in a dangerously low voice, unable to accept how exponentially angry he was with her. Owen had waited for hours to talk to her, giving the neurosurgeon a chance to rest after the exhausting procedure and also some time for himself to calm down but it clearly hadn’t worked. He was still as mad as he’d been in the gallery. “You could have late signs of radiation exposure. You could have-”

“I am fine!” It was Amelia’s turn to interrupt him, repeating the words as she forced herself up with full intention to get rid of his touch. His presence was inebriating her logic and that was something she couldn’t afford right now.

“Do you have any idea what you could have done?” Owen easily contained her attempt to free herself and as if punishing her, he held her slim wrist above her head, forcing Amelia downward again. She felt his shadow covering her as his face got dangerously closer. “The damage you could have caused?”

“Herman is fine!” Amelia chided, too aware of his proximity. Her heart was racing and it was alarming the way she couldn’t control the responses of her body. “She is fine, she will be…”

“Well, damn it, Herman is not the one I am concerned about!” Owen shouted between his teeth, too angry with her to try to act rationally.

Amelia’s reply got lost somewhere in the back of her mind. She looked up and noticed Owen’s eyes fixated on her, his pupils dilated with anger and desire as they traveled from her gaze to her lips. Automatically, Amelia opened them, silently consenting his seductive invitation.

“Who, then?” She tested him, unable to help it. Amelia wanted to hear him say it. She wanted to see him lose control, the same way he was forcing her to at that moment.

But he ignored her question completely, almost as if reading through her intentions.

“When I tell you to do something,” Owen leaned over on the edge of the bed, completely aware that he had long before crossed the line of professionalism. Amelia drove him crazy and he hated himself for allowing her to have so much power over him. “You do it.” He commanded irrationally, his face hovering over hers, almost as if testing the woman.

Amelia opened her mouth to automatically say he was not her boss, but she held the words in the last second, realizing how foolish she would sound. Owen was her boss. In the OR, he had every right to demand she played by his rules.
But right now, as she lay on a bed under his shadow, completely vulnerable to his every action, Amelia knew she should feel threatened and intimidated. But somehow, she felt strangely excited, vibrating in the same frequency of his outburst of energy. She spotted the vein pulsating on his neck and knew how hard he was struggling to remain in control.

Guys like Owen weren’t very used to being defied. Amelia knew that. The realization only boosted her desire to test his patience and make him lose his mind completely.

“Fine, then… Next time you disagree with one of my choices, I will hand my OR over to you and you can finish the procedure yourself,” She declared, doing her best to pester him as she spoke the words, on purpose inputting all the irony in them as she could. “If you think you can do a better job, I mean.” She sustained his look and provoked the guy, seeing his pulse racing through the vein that was popping on his neck. “I’d like to see you with that ridiculously large hand trying to place small seeds inside someone’s brain…” She smiled mischievously at his angry scowl at her insult. “I know, right?” She went further, knowing he was about to lose control any minute now and she was in for God knew what kind of retaliation. Strangely, even though she was well aware of Owen’s physical superiority, Amelia wasn’t afraid of him. “It’s easier said than done…”

Owen breathed in and out through his nose, desperately trying not to lose his last bit of rationality.

“You are the most irritating, obnoxious, insolent woman I have ever…” His words got lost as, amidst the blinding anger that was consuming Owen, he looked down and saw Amelia smiling at him with what looked like contentment.

She didn’t look pretentious or provoking in any way. Instead, her eyes were warm and her smile was surprisingly lazy, almost as if she was satisfied.

His brain twisted in a knot and he brought his face closer to hers, trying to study the woman with more objectiveness. She was testing his every limit and he wasn’t sure how much longer he could take it.

Owen was an army guy. He had grown up in a military household and spent a great deal of his life under a chain of command. Where he came from, disobeying clear orders was a serious violation and not at all a considerable possibility. Every day, he walked around the halls of the hospital with the calm confidence of someone who knew that, just like in any army base, his service ran smoothly because it was under a reliable command. There was hierarchy. Order. Discipline. People listened to him. They trusted him. And they obeyed his orders.

But then Amelia Shepherd had walked into his life and disrupted that balance completely. She was so insubordinate, impulsive and took so many risks that Owen felt like more than half of his work related headaches were caused by the brilliant neurosurgeon. Her behavior stood out completely from everyone else’s, not only because she was pretty much the only one who dared to defy him so openly, but she also had the annoying habit of almost always being right or making the best choice.

And Owen felt a primitive need to discipline the woman, to subdue her to his command at the same time he desperately wanted to protect her from everything else and preserve that spark of stubborn determination that challenged him so much.

“Wipe that silly smile off your face before I…” Owen heard the words, interrupting himself when he realized he was the one saying them.

“Before you what?” Amelia’s smile slowly faded as she made eye contact with him again, realizing his face was only inches away from hers. If she moved one bit, their noses would touch. She could feel his warm breath as his intoxicating scent numbed her senses. Even the muscles on his neck were
rigid, showing he wanted the same thing as she did and Amelia realized she was done playing her games. Relaxing under his touch, she made eye contact with him and lost her smile.

Owen noticed how she slightly let her guard down and saw the opportunity there. As badly as he wanted it, he couldn’t miss out on a chance to give her that lesson. It took all self-control he had left and more to prevent himself from crushing her lips with his.

“I want to kiss you,” He lowered his head and released the grip on her wrist, daring her to break free of him now that she could. While dangerously hovering his face over hers, Owen noticed the moment her eyes closed, as if preparing herself for what was about to come. “I will kiss you.” He added, brushing his lips on the smooth skin of her cheek, avoiding her lips on purpose.

Owen knew he had achieved what he wanted when Amelia’s hand made its way to his shoulder, silently inviting him in. It took all the effort in the world to do what he planned to do. Owen tried not to think of how she was lying down on a bed, closing her eyes, expecting to be kissed by him. But he needed to prove a point and Amelia needed to learn a lesson.

“I will kiss you, but not right now,” Owen added, pulling away gently. Amelia opened her eyes in shock, being brought back to reality by his surprising words and the loss of contact with his lips on her skin.

“What?!” She got up, on purpose using her hands to push his chest from above her.

“Go home and get some rest, Shepherd,” Owen’s angry voice returned as he got up, too frustrated with himself for having to do that. Sometimes, he hated being the chief. “I’ll deal with you later,” He informed her with authority, on purpose using the same tone as he would with an impertinent child before leaving the room.

Amelia was left fuming with anger and disbelief at his outrageous attitude. I’ll deal with you later. Why did it have to be so hard?!

Biting off the case of a pillow at the same time she snorted with frustration, Amelia threw herself back on the bed, feeling her back violently colliding with the soft mattress. No one could make her as confused and indecisive as Owen Hunt. He was more stubborn than she thought was humanly possible; more relentless than anyone else she’d met and harder to beat than any opponent she’d had to face.

The more Amelia tried to figure him out, the more she realized he was way too complex and challenging. And unlike Herman’s tumor, Owen couldn’t be subjugated to carefully constructed plans. No matter how much Amelia tried to decide on how to act around him, he always seemed to find a way to break into her defenses.

And her only option now seemed to be giving up planning completely.

Amelia enjoyed the hype after the surgery but it didn’t last very long. Not too long after she’d left the on call room and went back to the neurology ICU, a familiar sense of worry started to grow inside of her as soon as she noticed Nicole Herman wasn’t waking up like she was supposed to.

Initially, Amelia supposed it had to do with the extended surgery and the possible overlapping effect
of a prolonged general anesthesia. But as hours became days and days became a full week, the neurosurgeon went back to feeling like she was walking around in circles.

It became increasingly hard for Amelia to pay attention to anything that wasn’t related to the patient. She cancelled her electives surgeries and pushed consults, obsessing with finding out what could have possibly gone wrong to explain why her patient wasn’t waking up. Amelia had left the OR after the tumor removal feeling like a hero who’d just won a battle yet now, with the lack of response from Herman, she wondered if all of that had really been worth it.

Nicole Herman might never wake up again and Amelia would be the one to blame for stealing possible weeks from her life with her ambitious surgical plan. No matter how perfectly the execution had been, if the outcome wasn’t positive, there wouldn’t be much to celebrate.

The neurosurgeon took another sip from her cup of coffee, getting ready to go over the footage of the entire procedure for what felt like the tenth time that week when she was suddenly interrupted.

“Stop. Go home.”

Amelia had to use all of her strength to keep it together and not talk back. A lot of colleagues had said the same to her during the past days and she was tired of people not getting it.

“I need to figure this out.” She replied evasively, determined to go back to what she was doing and be left alone.

“No, you need to take a break.” Owen affirmed with propriety. During the past week, all his head of neurosurgery had done was examine Herman’s case, repeatedly studying the surgery performance and analyzing every single detail of the entire thing. He could barely remember the last time he’d seen Amelia anywhere near the house. Ever since their day in the on call room, he’d been desperate to be alone with her again. But Owen’s frustration didn’t only have to do with the damage she was inflicting on himself, but also with his longing to enjoy her company and attention.

“There is no swelling, no edema. I don’t know why she is not awake.” Amelia spoke, more to herself than to him.

“It could be any number of reasons,” Owen pondered rationally.

“Don’t tell me what it could be!” Amelia lost her patience, unfairly taking her annoyance about the entire situation out on him. “Don’t you think I know every possible thing it could be?” She exploded. Hearing it from Owen had been more triggering because he was one of the few people whose good opinion Amelia actually cared about. She expected him to talk back and reprimand her but after seeing the look of patience and comprehension in his eyes, Amelia felt too embarrassed for her tantrum, turning her head sideways to avoid his gaze. “I’m sorry.” She softened her tone and added with sincerity. “I just need…” Her voice trailed off as she struggled to explain.

“I know.” Owen affirmed with security. “You need it to be over.” He said, hoping to be right. Amelia once again wondered why he could read her so well.

“I need her to wake up.” She explained, offering the only scenario that would give her any sense of accomplishment.

Owen felt a stinging sensation in his heart and mistook her guilt for unmeasured ambition. It was hard to imagine Amelia Shepherd was egocentric enough to obliterate everything else about that experience and focus only on the result. The idea was quickly rejected by the chief, and he left before he could think too much about it.
It took a while longer than expected but on a random weekday, Nicole Herman finally regained consciousness. It was with a sense of relief that Amelia realized pretty much all of her patient’s cortex functions were intact, with the single exception of her vision. At first, it really bothered the neurosurgeon but then as she had proper time to digest the information and process it, the patient’s sight loss felt like a small price to pay in face of the many years of a healthy life she would have, and all of it thanks to the miraculous surgery Amelia had planned and performed.

As she drove home that night, Amelia recapitulated the events of the past month. It had been an insane rollercoaster. Especially lately, when she had focused most of her energy on work.

But now, that incredible surgical challenge was finally over and Amelia could take a break and relax again. It felt amazing to leave the hospital with the sense of who’d just done their duty remarkably well. Amelia loved her job but she could very well need a break to focus more on herself now. The neurosurgeon knew that for the next weeks, she would still have to go through follow ups with the patient and probably a lot of medical press but those were nothing in comparison to what she’d already been through. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d calmly had breakfast at home, without a rush, and those simple things were the ones she missed the most.

As she parked her car in the garage, Amelia saw some movement around Owen’s trailer. It wasn’t dark yet and her brother’s house seemed to be empty. Meredith and the kids were probably still at work and day care, and the prospect of being alone after such an amazing victory made Amelia feel strangely sad and lonely.

She got distracted pondering why Owen was home at such an unusual hour. She knew he usually worked late but muffled sounds were coming from his place and Amelia grew curious. Earlier that same day, she had been unfairly rude to him. Telling herself that apologizing to the guy was the reason why she needed to go there, Amelia dropped her work bag on the front porch and made her way across the yard.

To her surprise, the sounds she was listening to weren’t coming from a TV or any other equipment. She found her boss outside his trailer, near the lake, where what looked like a punching bag was hanging by a tree branch. Owen stood next to it, mercilessly attacking the object with his closed fists. Amelia noticed how flushed his face was as he fired blow after blow, apparently unaffected by the collision of his hands against the hard material. She swallowed hard at that display of virility as the simple white T-shirt he was wearing outlined the muscles of his back and the width of his shoulders. A droplet of sweat was running from his forehead, and it touched the ground at the same time the guy turned around and noticed her presence.

“What?” Owen frowned, unable to decipher the estranged expression on her face.

After being caught flagrantly staring at him, Amelia looked away, finally noticing the countless boxes stacked near his deck. It was obvious a moving was going on and she felt her heart beating faster when she considered the most obvious idea.

“Are you…” She studied the place again, unwilling to believe that possibility and anxiously asked. “Are you moving out?”

Owen tried to ignore the look of surprise and expectation on her face as he followed her gaze and noticed what her eyes were fixated upon.

“No, these are not mine,” He explained, wondering if it’d just been an impression or if Amelia really
had been bothered by the notion. “Two of my friends are getting married and buying a new place. They asked to drop those here until they can take it to their new house.”

“Oh,” Amelia replied with an unexpected sense of relief. She didn’t know what else to say so she simply slid her hands inside her back pockets and watched as her boss resumed punching the sandbag, this time around even more fiercely. “Is that theirs too or have you moved on from throwing rocks at the lake as a stress reliever?”

Owen stopped amidst a hit, but didn’t turn around. He took a deep breath, trying to figure what the lighthearted tone on her comment meant but he couldn’t. With a heavy sigh of frustration, he finally faced her again.

“It is my friend Leo’s,” He explained. For some reason, having Amelia figure out so quickly that he was throwing punches because he was stressed made him feel uneasy. “He was in the army with me and he has always been into boxing, so he dropped this stuff here while he doesn’t have a place to store them.”

Amelia took a couple of steps in his direction. His voice sounded sharp and his body language was very defensive. Was it possible that he was this mad with her? Earlier that day, when Amelia had lashed out at him, she had immediately said she was sorry and he seemed to have understood her frustration and accepted her apologies. Deep down, she knew there were a lot of unresolved matters between them two but Owen had never acted so silently angry with her before.

“Are you okay?” She asked, finding his behavior very strange. She’d seen mad, serious Owen before. But Amelia had never seen him acting so unaffected and indifferent in her presence.

“Never better,” He replied harshly, obviously lying.

Owen had just been waiting for Amelia to give him any kind of stupid reason so he could start an argument with her. He was frustrated and the past few weeks had been hard enough to endure withstanding the intense attraction he felt while unable to act on it.

All he wanted was to be with her, but Amelia was focused on something else entirely. For a while, that had been completely understandable. Owen agreed that she’d needed all of her focus and energy to come up with the hardest surgical plan of her career, and of course she should prioritize that above all things at that moment. But then, even after Herman’s surgery was over, she had kept immersed in work, obsessing about it despite the fact that there was nothing else she could do to change the patient’s status other than wait.

Owen had tried to approach her. He’d offered to talk, but all she seemed to do was to dig her head deeper in the case, studying it and going through the files over and over again. Earlier that day, Owen had had enough of it and confronted her. But before he could even begin to lash out, Amelia had rudely dismissed his attempt to offer some kind of support.

Even though it was hard to admit, her behavior had disappointed Owen a little. Not only because he was physically frustrated, unable to channel the attraction he felt for her, but mostly because he thought Amelia wasn’t that kind of person. Unconsciously, he’d come to slowly form an opinion about her and actually like what he’d seen in the woman. Owen had imagined she wasn’t one to make her career the center of her life and neglect everything else completely, depending only on her surgical outcomes to feel happy and validated. So to see her so immersed in work, not paying attention to anything else even after the procedure was over had been a big letdown. Owen had assumed she was different. For weeks, he’d watched her actions, heard her words and been in her presence. Everything so far had led him to think Amelia was relatable. But now, for the first time, he’d come to wonder just how accurate his opinion of her really was.
“Are you mad at me?”

Amelia felt an involuntary constriction inside her chest. She felt drained, all her energy was gone and she didn’t have the mind for flirtation games, teasing each other or even pretending the feelings she had for Owen weren’t there. Her biggest challenge at work was over and she was finally free. Coming home to an empty house had felt lonely enough, but to see the only person she would consider celebrating her big victory with treating her with such cold distance hurt especially hard.

Her question took him completely by surprise and Owen looked up from the ground to her face. The sun was starting to set, casting an orange shadow upon them, making Amelia’s large blue eyes look even more revealing than he could remember.

Something in her sheepish tone alarmed him. Owen had to be fair: Amelia was many things. She was impulsive, intense, energetic and even ambitious.

But she was also genuine.

The transparency in her eyes was obvious and the way she would look at him with so much vulnerability reminded Owen of a child who felt like she had just disappointed someone. There was no way he could look into those eyes and think for a second that Amelia could be lying about who she was, or pretending to be something she was not.

“I’m not,” Owen replied with a much gentler voice. He withheld a chuckle, wondering how could he have been so stupid. “What brings you here? Is everything okay?” He asked, realizing for the first time that she had willingly showed up at his doorstep.

The realization pleased him very much. He knew Nicole Herman had finally regained consciousness that day. Instead of staying late at work to register every detail of it, Amelia had come home very early. And apparently, the first thing she’d done once there was to look for him.

“It’s just that…” Amelia felt a lump in her throat. She didn’t want to confess everything to him but at the same time, she didn’t have it in her anymore to keep pretending or to keep analyzing every little scenario for her every action. Amelia was tired. All she wanted was to lower her guard but in order to do that, she needed to be with someone who she trusted enough not to take advantage of that. “I just wanted to see if… I mean, if you’re not busy, if you…”

Her voice trailed off and she looked up to find Owen’s encouraging yes.

“Yes?” He offered her a warm smile in exchange for her words.

“The whole thing with Herman is over,” She explained. “It’s finally over. And it worked out,” She chuckled, biting her lower lip embarrassingly. “She is alive and I didn’t rob from her a couple of months of her life… and now she can go on to save more babies…” It was clear in Amelia’s voice she was relieved. The neurosurgeon had no idea how much those words meant to Owen, because even though he’d read it in her eyes, she was giving him verbal confirmation that her commitment to the after surgery outcome had nothing to do with her ego and pride. “I mean, now she is blind, she can’t operate anymore, of course, but at least she can teach? Or, or… guide, instruct?” She went on rambling. “I don’t know… Oh, she can share her experience, write books, inspire others…” Amelia added excitedly. “Anyway, it doesn’t matter.” She smiled gracefully. “What matters is that it’s over… And I feel like I should celebrate it,” Amelia finally added, seeing him nod his head in agreement. “You know, it feels like a big win…” She said with modesty. “And I was wondering if you…if I… I was thinking that I’d like for us to celebrate it together.”

Owen narrowed his eyes in appreciation. He was really not expecting that.
“If you’re up for it, of course,” Amelia nervously added, putting a loose lock of hair behind her ear.

“Of course.” He gave up thinking and having an opinion about her completely. That could be left for later. Now, all he wanted was to enjoy her company. “So what do you have in mind?”

Amelia shrugged. She hadn’t really thought it through.

“I don’t know,” The neurosurgeon answered with honesty. “I didn’t really plan anything. I just don’t want to be alone, I guess.” She admitted.

Owen pondered for a second, with a relaxed look in his eyes.

“Well… Do you like hot dogs?” He asked, obviously with an idea in mind.

“I love hot dogs,” Amelia replied with a smile.

“Good,” He rejoiced at the site of her dimples and walked over to his trailer deck, silently inviting her to join him. “I’ll start the grill and then have a quick shower, okay? Give me ten minutes.”

Amelia nodded affirmatively and spent the following minutes studying everything around her. A couple of blue coolers were empty by the deck, but she’d seen Owen getting beers from them a couple of times. She particularly liked the bottle shaped lamps hanging from the ceiling, realizing they gave the place a personal touch. The wooden table and set of chairs looked very rustic, and fit perfectly with that outdoorsy scenario and the personality of the man for whose company she eagerly waited.

Exactly ten minutes later, he came back from inside the trailer bringing the hot dogs and fresh buns. By then, the grill was already hot enough. As Owen got busy preparing their dinner, Amelia spent her time observing him.

His hair was still wet from the shower and he smelled like fresh soap. Even though he’d put a sweater on because the weather was getting cooler now the sun had fully set, his strong arms were still visible, much to Amelia’s appreciation.

“You make that seem very easy,” Amelia casually commented, watching him handle the grill.

“It isn’t exactly brain surgery,” Owen replied with a playful smile, indirectly paying her a compliment.

Amelia chuckled and handed him an open bun, enjoying that comfortable intimacy much more than she could predict. Owen asked if she’d been to a lot of barbecues growing up in New York and even though Amelia nearly always avoided talking about her childhood, with him it didn’t feel so awkward.

The conversation shifted from her childhood to his childhood; then to trips, some of the cases Owen had seen while in the army and Amelia’s training during her fellowship. Owen talked about his time at Harvard, his favorite professors, most of which Amelia had later been taught by, and they discovered they both used to go to the same small pizza place in Boston while in med school.

At some point during the evening, Owen realized she was nearly freezing and before Amelia could realize what he was doing, her boss went inside and came back with a fluffy sweatshirt that nearly engulfed her entire frame.

“It fits perfectly,” Owen joked, gently pulling up the zipper while looking into her eyes with an affectionate smile. There was nearly one foot of excessive fabric on each sleeve and the hem of the
sweatshirt made it almost past her knees.

They were standing in front of each other by the deck, next to the grill. Amelia felt the soft touch of his old army training uniform against her skin and wrapped her arms around herself, breathing in to feel his familiar soapy scent on the piece of clothing, loving the combination of senses.

“I think I am going to steal this hoodie from you,” Amelia confessed, genuinely in love with it.

“You can keep it,” Owen smiled in return. Somehow, seeing her in his clothes made him feel proud and touched by the obvious reality that Amelia was very comfortable around him. Besides, she looked adorably cute in the oversized sweater.

“Aww, thank you,” Amelia replied playfully, trying to mock him. “First you gave me a job, then tonight you fed me, entertained me…” She joked. “Now you even clothed me.”

The silence that followed added to the brightness in his eyes let Amelia know that perhaps she’d said a little too much. It was obvious Owen was thinking that he would much rather be taking off her clothes instead of dressing her, and Amelia had to admit she also did.

“Owen…” Her voice was nearly a whisper and he felt a wave of desire running through his entire body after hearing her pronouncing his name like that. “What are we doing?” Amelia asked without any trace of malice, really interested in the answer. “I mean…” She hesitated, seeing the intensity of his gaze on her face. “What is this?”

He took one step closer and gently placed his hands on each side of her waist.

“I think you and I both know what this is…” Owen whispered back, completely seduced by her. He had to use all his strength not to pull her into his chest and wrap both arms around her.

“Last week you said… You said you wanted to kiss me.” Amelia reminded him, eagerly looking for an answer in his eyes.

Owen knew she was talking about the day he’d woken her up in the on call room and confronted her about her impulsive decision to remove her protection gloves during Herman’s surgery.

“I meant it,” He replied, unable to break eye contact with her. “I wanted to.”

“But you didn’t.” She reminded him, suddenly pulling apart from his touch.

Owen held his breath, frustrated for the loss of contact with her.

“Amelia, you know I…”

“I know,” She interrupted him, smiling lazily into his eyes. Amelia wanted very much to be in his arms and kiss him back with the same desire she knew he felt for her. But if she allowed that to happen, she knew in her heart that the night wouldn’t end there. And they couldn’t go there. Not yet. Had it been any other guy, Amelia would probably already be sneaking out from his bed at that hour. But with Owen, for some reason she knew the sex would mean much more than just physical release. “We don’t need to define anything right now.” She smiled, showing him there were no hard feelings. “Let’s just figure out what this is instead of hurrying to put a label on it.”

Now that her big surgery was over, Amelia would finally have the time to focus on her personal life. She didn’t want to rush into things. On the contrary, she wanted to enjoy every step of the way. And with Owen, that felt especially important.
“Okay,” Owen read her meaning in her eyes and smiled, silently agreeing with her conditions. “Let me at least walk you up to the house?” He offered, noticing she had gotten ready to leave. “It’s kind of late.” He added, as if that somehow justified Amelia needing his protection.

“Sure,” Amelia replied with newfound joy and started walking beside him. “There are no werewolves here, you know?” She teased his offer to walk her home, playfully nudging his shoulder with hers on the way. “No vampires either… I won’t get bitten.”

“Let’s not take any chances,” He contained a smile, knowing that his proposal to accompany her had been a mere excuse to spend more time in her presence.

Much to Owen’s dismay, they reached the house soon after and as Amelia turned around to say bye, he felt the soft touch of her fingers on his.

“Good night,” Amelia rubbed his hand affectionately. “I had a great time tonight. Thank you for dinner.” She smiled with honesty. “It was delicious.”

“Anytime.” Owen felt sad to be leaving and gently let her go.

He had already climbed down the steps of the porch and was on his way back to the trailer when his voice interrupted her thoughts.

“Amelia?”

She looked up one last time before closing the door, noticing he had turned around. After seeing he had her attention, Owen smiled widely and confessed.

“I still want to kiss you.”

Amelia chuckled, feeling a delicious sensation on her stomach. Everything about that evening had been wonderful.

“I know.” She smiled back, her eyes sparkling with mirth and playfulness.

And just as she thought he was done, Amelia heard Owen adding from a distance, unknowingly widening the smile on her lips as he walked home with his eyes still on her.

“I will kiss you.” He repeated the words he’d said to her in the on call room, causing the same sensations he once had.

But the only difference was that, this time, Amelia had no doubt that he would.
Part Twelve

Chapter Summary

This one sets throughout the events of 11x15 and 11x16. I imagine that the make out session in the on call room at the end of 11x15 connects with the opening scene for Omelia on 11x16, so I made the two episodes as a very long day. Amelia and Owen are much more friendly toward each other (obviously lol) and slowly, their relationship is blooming. 11x15 is the episode with Ruby’s case (the girl who Owen guides through the phone to perform surgical procedures on her mom when they’re trapped in a cabin) and 11x16 is all Omelia fluff. Let’s get to it!

The Journey – Part Twelve

Amelia opened the curtains of her bedroom, allowing the sun to shine in through the glass windows. It felt amazing to finally be able to wake up and not be in a rush. Now that she didn’t have a draining surgical procedure to worry about, she could finally take her time getting out of the house in the morning and that included even getting some extra snooze minutes in bed after the alarm rang.

As it often happened when her sister in law spent the night at the hospital, Amelia would wake up the kids, prepare their breakfast and then take them to daycare before starting her day at work. After putting on her clothes, she stopped by the window one last time to admire the weather outside. The skies were unusually clear for that time of the year and Amelia smiled to herself, drawing parallels between the atmosphere and the moment she was living. Everything felt fresh and incredibly full of exciting new possibilities.

Her mind was deeply lost in thought when the responsible for her daydreaming left his trailer, walking towards his car. As if sensing she was invoking him in her thoughts, Owen turned his head up in the direction of her window. When their eyes met, Amelia felt a tingling sensation in her stomach at the same time her smile broadened after being immediately reciprocated.

She noticed his gaze lingered for a while longer than usual, which could only mean he also was enjoying that unexpected, silent exchange of looks. Too soon for her taste, Owen slightly tilted his head and intensified his gaze before finally getting inside his truck.

Amelia was still awed by how much the guy could communicate without saying a word. She considered herself to be an empathetic person, but for some reason, with Owen it felt especially easier to pick up the truths he spoke with his eyes, touches and expressions. The way the energy would flow between them felt organic and natural, almost effortless. Unlike other people, Owen would let her know a lot without the need to speak a single word.

Considering all of that, it was hard not to feel like the connection they had was one of a kind. Amelia hadn’t met anyone else in her life that made her feel the same things he did and the idea was at the same time very exciting and very alarming. If there was one thing Amelia was familiar with, it was loss. But she was determinate not to let her past shape her future in a negative way. So it was with lighthearted contentment that the neurosurgeon went to work that day, looking forward to the many prospects the near future could bring.
After her daily rounds, Amelia went downstairs to answer her ER consults. Even though she secretly had hoped to spend some time with her boss, the case they had that day turned out to be more intense than she could initially predict.

Throughout the morning and afternoon, she had the chance to watch closely the way Owen got personally involved in a very challenging crisis. After an earthquake hit, her boss had answered the call of an eleven year old girl who’d been trapped in a cabin with her injured mother. After finding out about it, Amelia hadn’t left his side. Not only the case touched her too and the neurosurgeon felt compelled to help as much as she could, the fact Owen looked so moved also made Amelia long for a good outcome.

After the child’s cell phone battery died, she watched as Owen entered a state of complete anxiety. Amelia stood next to him, watching as he breathed in and out trying to control himself, often repeating that the girl would call again. She hoped with all her heart that his predictions came true. Seeing him in such distress deeply touched her. This was an unknown side of Owen, a much softer and more vulnerable layer to his personality that Amelia hadn’t exactly been allowed to see yet. Her boss was always in control of things and himself, his authoritative figure overshadowing everyone else’s. Amelia had noticed before how Owen was particularly sweet around her, much more than he was with anyone else. But to see him handling so well an aggravating situation with a scared child made Amelia admire the guy even more.

Over the past months, it had become clear to her that Owen liked kids. She often wondered how a guy like him had made it this far in life without having any. Amelia knew he’d been married before but she didn’t know the details of why his marriage had ended. She had however, while helping out with her niece and nephew, heard her sister in law commenting more than once how good it was to have some help around the house. During those times, Meredith had even added that even though Cristina was often around, she wasn’t exactly a child friendly person. Amelia had met the thoracic surgeon her boss had been married to once and briefly spent some time in the woman’s presence before she’d moved out of the country. After getting to know Owen a little better, it became increasingly harder to understand how a guy with values like his could have had a relationship with a woman like Cristina Yang, who obviously didn’t vibrate in the same frequency.

In a fraction of a second, an epiphany hit and Amelia wondered if their likely divergence of opinions regarding that matter had led the couple to end a childless marriage. The neurosurgeon knew that for a lot of people, not having kids was a valid option but after months getting to know Owen and seeing how protective, family oriented and loyal he was, she just couldn’t associate him with the image of a guy who would be okay with not being a dad. He had always struck her as a man of traditional values and she wondered if the former couple had ever disagreed on the matter of conceiving a baby.

Suddenly feeling an addition of sympathy for her boss, Amelia fought the urge to go to him and ask what she could do to help about the case they had on. There was so much about Owen she still didn’t know, but little by little, as she slowly uncovered more about the man, Amelia had to admit it became too difficult not to admire and like him even more. He wasn’t exactly the talkative type, but Owen excelled at unconsciously showing his layers through his actions. His silence added to the way he was so invested in helping out the kid who’d called them asking for help was a perfect example of that.

Unable to control herself any longer, Amelia reached out and touched his shoulder, unconsciously longing to ease his distress and show him he had her support. Owen had been there for her so many times before that she felt compelled to reciprocate his kindness and decency as much as she could.
The chief of surgery gently turned his head and looked up to meet her eyes, nodding in gratitude for her presence. Amelia was just thinking of what to say when the telephone rang, finally ending the excruciating long wait.

Amelia’s fingers worked skillfully, as she maintained the steadiness of her touch on a woman’s brain. Even though every patient was important to the neurosurgeon, regardless of their story, this time around Amelia wanted very much to fix that subdural hematoma and make sure the likelihood of deficits were reduced to a minimum. Somewhere outside the OR, a little girl anxiously waited for her mother to be operated on. And beside her, a man who often occupied Amelia’s thoughts waited just as impatiently.

Not long before, Owen had burst into her OR and asked how the patient was doing. Amelia had quickly dismissed him, knowing that in order to do her best, she needed to remain fully focused on the procedure. The patient’s injury had thrown a clot right around the same time her boss had unknowingly added more pressure to her shoulders but thankfully for everyone involved, Ruby’s mother made out of surgery well and with a good prognosis.

It filled Amelia’s heart with joy to give the little girl the good news, and she noticed on Owen’s facial expression that he shared the feeling. Together, a while later they stood outside the ICU bed, watching as mother and daughter saw each other for the first time after the accident.

When they made eye contact, Amelia smiled noticing how Owen nearly instantly looked down. He seemed somewhat adorably embarrassed and she wondered if that had to do with the fact that, for the first time, she had seen him exposing his feelings so openly.

“You’re welcome,” She smiled back, putting her hands in her coat pockets, unsure of what to do next. That entire miraculous adventure with the kid who had saved her mother in a cabin with medical instructions from a dedicated surgeon seemed too surreal, almost made out of a movie, even though they had just lived it. And the ending had been positive enough to inspire fairy tales feelings in Amelia.

Too contaminated with that vibrating energy and the lightness of spirit Owen instilled in her, the neurosurgeon approached him, suggestively opening her arms. The movement wasn’t at all planned; instead it was born from an urge Amelia felt to share with him the same state of bliss she was in. Together, they had turned an awful situation into a miracle save and there wasn’t anyone Amelia would rather have done that with.

Without hesitation, Owen embarked in her offer. Amelia felt one of his arms wrapping around her waist with ease, as his other hand rubbed her back with affectionate care. She’d meant to briefly embrace his neck in a chaste hug, but before she could realize what she was doing, Amelia slid her hand on the length of his shoulder all the way down to his arm, feeling his powerful strength beneath her open palm.

The neurosurgeon had more than once wondered if Owen was as solid as he looked. Despite the fact they’d kissed once, there had been a considerable distance between their bodies at that moment. Now, for the first time, Amelia felt the amazing warmth of his solid structure as she found out how intoxicatingly sweet his masculinity could be.

And then it became too hard to let go.
Owen noticed how Amelia hesitated, unwilling to break their embrace. Friendly hugs didn’t usually last that long. It was only when the thought occurred to him that Owen realized he also hadn’t let go.

Throughout the entire day, he’d noticed the way Amelia had loyally stood by his side, stepping up to help with a difficult situation without the need of him asking her to. After operating on Ruby’s mother, the neurosurgeon seemed genuinely happy to see the woman and the girl reunited. Her behavior had deeply touched Owen and now, standing this close to her, able to breathe in the amazing scent of her hair, he felt an exponential desire to hold her closer and never let go.

Owen was aware of the exact moment when, after he touched her brown locks, Amelia relaxed and melted in his embrace. Her arms surrounded his shoulder as she exhaled heavily. He tightened the grip around her waist, pulling her nearer. It never failed to delight Owen how adorably small she was. With one arm, he could easily bring her forward against his chest, allowing his free hand to gently caress the loose hair on her back.

It was amazing to finally be able to touch her like that. Owen felt like he’d been anticipating that moment for longer than he could remember. Ever since their first kiss, he’d been craving for more. The memory of touching her was already incredible enough, but the reality of having her in his arms didn’t compare to anything else he’d ever experienced.

With a conformed sigh, Owen realized the intensity of the moment they were sharing. Even though they stood on a hallway, in what looked like an innocent hug, he knew there was way more to it than just a platonic exchange of sentiments. Unwilling to let her go, Owen slid his free hand around her waist, keeping her close to his body as he slowly allowed Amelia to pull apart just enough so she could face him.

“Come with me,” He took her hand, belatedly realizing they needed more privacy for what he intended to do.

Amelia barely had time to process what he was doing when she found herself being taken from the hall. Unsurprisingly, Owen hadn’t exactly asked, but she didn’t mind it one bit. The neurosurgeon followed him through the familiar surroundings of the hospital, feeling his large hand fully covering hers as he led the way for them. Only when Owen opened the door to an on call room and made room for her to enter before him, Amelia realized what was happening.

Her boss closed the door after them and swiftly locked it. Amelia was standing in the middle of the room and he went to her, unceremoniously splaying his hands on the sides of her waist, pulling her nearer with such ease that it amused her.

Amelia was desperately attracted to him and she also couldn’t wait for the kiss they’d been postponing for far too long. But what really swept her off her feet was the way Owen touched his forehead to hers, intensely staring into her eyes as a relaxed smirk formed on his lips.

“Hi,” His whisper was slow and seductive, breaking Amelia’s defenses completely.

That very simple word had a deep meaning and Amelia understood it. That was the first time the two of them were alone together on purpose. Before, when they’d shared physical moments, never had it been planned. Instead, the situations unfolded on the spur of the moment.

Now, however, Amelia was as well aware as Owen of what was going to unfold and the anticipation was too delightful to skip it. She smiled back at him when his hands traveled from her waist to the curve of her neck, gently brushing the side of her face on an affectionate caress.

Owen was thinking of how smooth her skin was and how feminine her gracious figure looked when
she took a step forward, bringing her face up to deliberately kiss him. Owen was surprised by her swift move, but at the same time utterly pleased. Soon enough, her gentle touch enticed him. Unable to hold his desire, Owen’s hungry mouth parted her lips, deepening their kiss.

He was amused to notice she was as into it as he was. Amelia grabbed him fiercely with her tiny hands, running them up and down his arms, unknowingly charging Owen even more. His gentle touch on her face became a rough grab around her waist, beneath her white coat. Amelia felt him pulling her body to mold to his and she responded with a fierce push on his chest, forcing Owen against the door so she could kiss him back with the same hunger he seemed to be exploring her lips.

The trauma surgeon felt his back being mercilessly crashed against the wall, as the door handle violently collided against his spine. It amused him to realize that Amelia was having a hard time controlling her desire too. He could feel her hands all over his shoulders, arms and chest, exploring and touching as she struggled to seize control of his lips. Owen did his best not to lose control completely. She was so small and yet so feisty that the neurosurgeon had actually managed to trap him inside her web of desire, grinding him against the door under her touch.

The realization pleased Owen more than he could process and before he processed what he was doing, he pulled apart, holding her face in his arms while struggling to catch his breath. Her pupils were dilated and her breathing was just as heavy, informing Owen he wasn’t the only one who’d been assaulted by a wave of hot, strong desire. Pulling apart just enough to look into her eyes, the chief of surgery silently asked the question, noticing how Amelia discreetly nodded her head in consent.

Determinate to put an end to that delightful agony, Owen swiftly wrapped his arms around her waist, easily lifting her from the ground to then carry her to the closest bed.

Amelia’s plans to take thing slowly and allow them to explore that sensual energy with careful control went down the drain the moment he placed her on the bed and covered her body with his. It wasn’t the first time she realized the incredible capacity Owen had to be, at the same time, sweetly intense and roughly tender. As his hand gently caressed her hair, his mouth took hers in a kiss that numbed Amelia’s senses.

As they lay in a messy tangle of arms and legs, she could feel the weight of his body on hers, delighted to be imprisoned beneath him. Owen’s hands slid up and down her sides, exploring the curves of her hips and waist. He realized it was getting way too hard to fight the urge to pull her scrub tops up and explore the warmth of her soft skin with his lips.

Owen wanted very much for that to happen, but he hadn’t exactly planned for it to happen there. The trauma surgeon was just thinking of a way to gather the strength to pull apart when his phone buzzed, interrupting his thoughts completely.

“Pager…” He nearly whispered, trying to control his breath.

“Nooo…”

Owen heard her moaning in response and it physically hurt him to lift his head from her neck. Chuckling at her obvious desire to prolong that amazing contact they were having, Owen kissed her once more. “I know… hey,” He pulled apart to a considerable distance this time, determinate to get up, interrupt what they were doing while he still could and go answer the call.

But as Owen stopped to look into her eyes and explain why they needed to stop, his eyes caught sight of her face and suddenly, every rational thought slipped his mind. All he could focus on were Amelia’s gorgeous blue eyes shinining with desire and longing. Her leg clenched his, tightening its
grip around his thigh, making it very clear she didn’t wish him to go. And the way her eyes traveled from his gaze to his lips made Owen lose control completely.

He immediately drowned himself in her again, exploring every corner of Amelia’s mouth with explosive intensity.

The pager continued to buzz, leading Owen to think that the only possible explanation for the annoying interruption was that everything was conspiring to make sure they didn’t go any further. Rationally, Owen knew Amelia deserved better than that. He wanted to do things the traditional, proper way with her and having sex for the first time in an on call room wasn’t exactly the most romantic idea.

Gathering in those thoughts the strength to pull apart, Owen smiled when he noticed the look of frustration on her face.

“Sorry… We will continue this later,” He informed her, referring to way he intended to kiss her.

Owen’s last image was the irritation on Amelia’s face as he responded to the work call and unwillingly left her.

“We better!” The neurosurgeon replied, throwing her back on the bed to regain control of her messy emotions.

Throughout the rest of the day, Amelia kept busy working on ER cases. Despite her wish, she didn’t see much of her boss. The neurosurgeon knew he was also busy with his own patients, which was why a smile brightened her entire face when she was checking a patient file on a tablet and felt his vibrating presence right behind her back, too close to her body.

“Are you done here?” Owen’s deep voice whispered so close to her ear that Amelia felt a shiver run down her spine.

“Nearly,” She replied in the same tone, trying to be discreet.

“You know where I’ll be.”

Owen punctuated his sentence with a brief but bold squeeze on the left side of her hip. It was too discreet for anyone else to notice, but Amelia felt the intimacy of the touch and all her senses were once again brought to life in anticipation for being alone with him.

Finishing typing the data she had to enter on the chart as fast as she could, the neurosurgeon put the tablet back on the counter at the nurses’ station and rushed to the on call room where Owen had left her earlier that day.

“Hi,” Amelia sheepishly said, closing the door after her.

“Hey,” Owen replied with a genuine, happy smile. He had spent the past five minutes anxiously waiting, wondering if she’d really come. Despite all signs pointing to Amelia reciprocating his feelings, she was so unpredictable that when it came to the fiery neurosurgeon, Owen was never sure.

Amelia noticed he was sitting on the bed, obviously waiting for her. The realization made her heart ache with longing. Was it possible to already miss him this much already? Shrugging the idea away from her mind, Amelia tried to focus on what was concrete.
Owen slowly got up, keeping a smile on his face. Even though he’d already decided that having sex in that impersonal room wasn’t the best choice for their first time, it didn’t mean he desire to kiss her or be in her presence any less.

“So…” Amelia started, looking intensely into his eyes with an adorable smile lurking on her lips. “It’s later now.”

“Yeah,” Owen approached her, watching as she did the same and met him halfway.

The significance of that simple gesture touched Owen deeply. In all his previous relationships, he’d felt like he was always the one making all the effort to make things work. He didn’t know this yet, but with Amelia, nothing would feel like work. Compromising and meeting half way would be a natural consequence of their dynamic as they spent a lifetime being considerate of each other’s feelings and respecting one another, even when they made mistakes.

Amelia saw the sweet way he was looking at her and she felt special. Owen’s eyes communicated so much and she was overwhelmed to see so much care and appreciation. The surgeon knew that even though they weren’t as erotically charged as they were earlier that day, both still wanted very much to be together. The only thing different was that now, instead of a blinding sexual desire, Owen’s eyes were overflowing with affection.

She stood in front of him, gently running her hands up his arms, enjoying the intimacy of his touch. It was exciting to explore that newly found level of familiarity. Amelia was discovering that sometimes, being intimate with someone wasn’t necessarily about sex. As she felt Owen’s hand exploring the curve of her waist and slowly going up, brushing on the side of her breast, she figured that even though the contact had sexual desire, it was actually loaded mostly with tender affection.

Feeling an overwhelming sensation of bliss, Amelia looked up, eager to be kissed by the only guy who’d ever made her feel so many different emotions. As usual, Owen didn’t disappoint, gently holding her face to bring her lips closer to his touch. Her hands held the sides of his body, traveling up to his elbows around the same time both their phones started to buzz again.

“Oh my God…”

“You gotta be kidding me…”

Owen realized they’d both talked at the same time when they pulled apart and each checked their phone, once again obviously discontent with their predicament.

“Well?” He asked, too upset at yet another interruption.

“Yeah.” Amelia confirmed that she also had to go. It was clear she wasn’t the least bit happy about it.

“Yeah.” He sighed heavily, trying to recover his thinking state of mind. Reaching out, Owen grabbed his white coat after he chivalrously opened the door, making room for her to exit first.

The trauma surgeon was too irritated with the multiple interruptions, reason why he wasn’t exactly courteous with the ER staff after arriving there.

“Someone paged me about a patient?”

One of the nurses noticed the tone of distress in the chief of surgery’s voice and replied with a scowl.
“There is a man on exam room three insisting that you told him to come today at this hour for a follow up.”

“What?” Owen frowned, picking up the file. It was nearly eleven in the evening, he would never have a patient come back at that hour. But when he read the name on the tablet, he instantly remembered what that was all about. Looking back at the nurse with an apologetic nod, he explained. “I’ll handle it. Thank you.”

The chief of surgery walked through the emergency room, noticing how everything was running smoothly within the department.

“Hey, Mr. Pratt,” Owen greeted the patient when he walked in the designated exam room, closing the door after himself. He looked up to see a strongly built man in his late sixties. The guy was wearing a neatly cut suit, a very expensive wristwatch and his beard was flawlessly shaved, even though they were at the late hours of the day.

“Dr. Hunt, it’s good to see you.” The man replied with a firm handshake.

“How are you feeling?” Owen asked with interest. “Everything good?”

“The problem was solved.” The man replied with sincerity, going straight to the matter.

Owen had met Oliver Pratt a few months before, right after Amelia Shepherd had performed an unorthodox neurosurgical procedure on the guy’s two year old granddaughter and cured her from a massive brain tumor. Mr. Pratt had been so grateful for the leap of faith the young head of neurosurgery had taken that he’d come back and donated an insane amount of money and resources to her department.

During that visit, Owen had found out the guy was one of the most powerful executives in the chain of command of General Electric, a huge multinational conglomerate corporation of technology. When Mr. Pratt had returned a second time looking for the chief of surgery at the hospital, Owen had supposed the guy was in fact looking for the neurosurgeon who had operated on his granddaughter, but found out that the man was in fact seeking for a consult for himself.

After a quick exchange of words, Owen had discovered why the guy had looked for him at an unusual hour, claiming he wanted discretion. His physical exam confirmed Owen’s initial diagnosis and after a quick check up and a few exams, Owen booked an OR late at night and operated on the patient, fulfilling his wish to have the procedure done with as much privacy as possible.

The trauma surgeon had asked the senior guy to come back for a check up that night. Owen had been so caught up with the cases that day and the inebriating presence of Amelia Shepherd still lingering in his every thought that he’d completely obliterated the post op consult from his mind.

“Looks like you’re in perfect shape,” Owen attested with a professional grin after as he took off his gloves when they finished the physical exam. “Any remaining symptoms?”

“Absolutely none,” Mr. Pratt replied with gratitude, finishing buttoning his pants. He had liked the stern, confident chief of surgery from the first moment they’d met but after finding out that like him, Owen had also served in the army, and being able to count on his discretion to solve a very embarrassing medical problem, Oliver Pratt took an instant liking for the guy. “Dr. Hunt, are you busy this Thursday?”

Owen was just finishing up taking notes on a tablet when he looked up, trying to contain his alarm. Why exactly was the guy asking him if he had a free night when he’d just…?
“My wife’s country club is hosting a benefit auction on Thursday for a charity committee and there are some people there I’d like you to meet,” Oliver Pratt explained with cool practicality, vanishing every inappropriate idea that had briefly occurred in Owen’s mind.

“Oh,” The chief of surgery replied, trying to disguise his relief that the question didn’t have a personal connotation as he’d initially considered.

“For all that’s worth, you operated on my appendix and that’s how we met.” Pratt decided, making it very clear that Owen shouldn’t in any circumstances mention the cause of their second encounter. “I spoke great things about your hospital and the service you run to a couple of colleagues and they were very interested in looking at Grey Sloan for prospective business partnerships.” The businessman went on, slowly clarifying the reasons why he thought Owen would be interested in the event. “They also know about the way your head of neurosurgery saved my Bella. So, add to that the fact they’re truly impressed.” The man added with a tender smile as he mentioned his granddaughter. “How is Dr. Shepherd, by the way?” He asked with an undeniable smile of gratitude.

“She’s…Um,” Owen cleared his throat, feeling his face inevitably blush as he thought about Amelia. “She is doing very well.” He added with a smile. “Making very good use of the resources you provided, sir.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Pratt seemed genuinely pleased as he slowly went back to a more professional tone. “You see, this is exactly what I had in mind by inviting you over on Friday,” The senior took his wallet from his pocket and handed Owen a small business card. “Lots of investors will be there and I expect you to make a good impression on them.” He spoke proudly, almost as if knowing he was returning Owen a big favor. “You know… a lot of wealthy people, bored out of their minds, with a lot of charity money sitting around… Just waiting for the right cause to donate it to.” Pratt nearly winked, informing Owen of what was in for him if he did attend the dinner. “You’re welcome to bring company with you. The auction starts at ten.” Oliver Pratt grabbed his formal coat and put it over his suit. “I’ll meet you at the hotel bar for drinks at nine thirty.” He informed Owen with the propriety of a guy who was used to having business done his way.

Owen quickly tried to think of the appointments he had planned for that week, trying to remember his exact schedule to make sure he was free on said date.

“I’ll see you then, sir.” He nodded in agreement, quickly saving the card on his pocket as the man walked out of the exam room.

The idea of going to a fancy dinner party with Seattle’s richest businessmen didn’t excite Owen at all. He knew the evening would probably revolve around people not so subtly comparing their wealth with each other as they spent an insane amount of money on items that weren’t worth a quarter of their initial bid. That auction was going to be a dull excuse to show off the extent of their financial power and yet, they disguised it as a charity event to make it more politically correct.

Even though Owen hated that kind of environment, where nothing was what it seemed, he knew that for the hospital’s sake, he couldn’t skip it. Oliver Pratt had pretty much said that the chances of getting another round of generous donations to Grey Sloan were high and as chief, Owen often had to partake in boring events like those. He tried to cheer himself up by thinking of the improvements he could make in the residency program if they got a donation to be invested in education but then a thought struck his mind and suddenly, the idea of attending the boring dinner party became surprisingly exciting.

Owen drove home with that thought in mind and to his pleased surprise he saw Amelia arriving at the house at the same time he turned off the car engine. Quickly making his way to Derek and Meredith’s front porch, Owen was able to catch up with her before she entered the house.
“Jesus!” Not for the first time, Amelia took her hand to her chest, absolutely startled by the way he had sneakily approached her. “How can you move without making a single noise?” She asked grumpily. His shameless chuckle and apparent satisfaction to have scared her irritated the neurosurgeon even more, making Amelia impulsively hit his arm with a folded subscription magazine that had been lying on one of the wood tables.

Owen’s subsequent laughter and the way he completely disregarded her hit, almost as if Amelia had barely even tickled his shoulder added to her dissatisfaction.

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“Don’t do that!” She complained, still angry at his sneaky manners.

“You scare too easily,” Owen provoked her, watching as her face transformed into a scowl of disapproval. Unable to contain a smile, he approached her, unceremoniously splaying his arms on the sides of her waist and pulling her closer, making her breasts collide against his chest. “Someone is not pleased.” He smiled, stating the obvious.

Amelia tried to keep her angry façade but as he gently brushed her cheek with his lips, initiating a trail of soft kisses down the outline of her jaw all the way to her neck, she couldn’t help cracking up.

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“You’re tickling me!” She held a fit of laughter, hoping no one would hear them. It was past midnight and she knew Meredith and the kids were probably asleep, but didn’t want to take any chances. Whatever she and Owen had going on was too intense and too recent, and she wasn’t ready to share it with anybody but him just yet.

“I kind of have the feeling that the moment I kiss you, my phone will ring.” Owen joked, watching as she deliciously laughed.

“Well, then don’t,” Amelia provoked him, obviously not meaning what she’d just said.

Owen seemed to know it, because he ignored her words completely and bent over, pulling her into his arms as he slowly explored the outlines of her lips before parting them with his. Owen leaned back on the wood railing of the porch, drawing his long legs apart so that Amelia could stand in the middle, leveling their heights.

“I see what you mean.” He initiated the conversation, not exactly sure how he’d propose it. Owen very much wanted to take Amelia out and spend time alone with her, preferably on something that wasn’t work related. But knowing about her tight schedule and his, he didn’t envision it happening anytime sooner than the next Thursday. And Owen couldn’t wait much longer. “Would you like to come with me?” He smiled adorably at her, intensely staring into her eyes.

“What do you mean, work event?” Amelia grinned, knowing in his smile that he was up to something. “What kind of event?”
“A very boring, very pretentious dinner party.” Owen explained with lighthearted contentment. “Do you remember Oliver Pratt?” He asked, watching as Amelia nodded yes in response. “He is participating of this auction thing and wants me to come because he says there are possible investors there who might want to donate funds for hospital research and education.”

“So, let me get this straight,” Amelia splayed her hands on his shoulders, gently rubbing them downwards to his chest. “You’re asking me to go on a very boring, very pretentious date?” She raised her eyebrows, looking undeniably amused.

“Well, I’m a romantic guy… I like to make a good first impression.” Owen replied with good mood, making her heartily laugh. He watched with delight the way she seemed so relaxed and happy. “So, what do you say?”

Amelia’s eyes searched for his and when they met, she smiled broadly, enchanting him with her dimples.

“Alright, I’ll go with you.” She decided, already excited with the idea.

“It’s settled, then.” Owen gently straightened his body up, casting a shadow on her face as he bent over to kiss her. “You go to bed, now.”

“ Alone?” Amelia raised her eyebrows playfully, knowing she was tempting him.

“You better not have anyone up there waiting for you,” He chuckled in response, clearly marking his territory. At the same time it was too soon for them to take that step, he wanted Amelia all to himself and wouldn’t share her with anyone else.

The neurosurgeon smiled and unlocked the front door under his careful watch. When she was almost inside, Owen grabbed her wrist and swiftly pulled her back, making Amelia giggle at his inability to let her go.

“You forgot to say good night,” He said as an excuse to steal another kiss.

“Go home,” Amelia laughed out loud when he gently attacked her neck with kisses and bites. “Go, get out of here before your phone rings,” She playfully pushed him, having too much fun to pretend she was anything other than deeply amused.

“Don’t even say it,” He joked back, watching as she settled to leave again. Owen still tried to stop her, mischievously holding her by the waist, but as Amelia laughed trying to break free, he gently released her from his grip, chastely patting her bottom before she finally entered the house.

It was with reinvigorated energy that Owen went home that night. In a few hours, he’d have to go back to work, but nothing could spoil the good mood he was in. The woman who haunted his dreams had happily walked into his arms more than once that day, and the chief of surgery longed for the moment when he’d finally have her all to himself, without the chance of any interruptions.

Another great idea struck Owen’s mind and he couldn’t help reveling in the thought. On Thursday, they were going to the fanciest hotel in the city to attend a dinner party. It took place in a considerably far location from their workplace, at a late hour, in a hotel filled with vacant rooms where no one could ever find them.

Owen wanted very much to take Amelia out on a proper date and spend some quality time in her company before they finally had their much anticipated first time. She seemed to long for it as much as he did, and the thought filled his heart with joy. Considering the fact Amelia didn’t yet have a place of her own, and Owen’s trailer was far from being a romantic location, an obvious solution
was one reservation away for Owen to give Amelia the perfect evening he thought she deserved.

If he didn’t do it, it wouldn’t take long before they got carried away with stolen kisses inside on call rooms, and even though sneaking out with her pleased Owen very much, having sex on hospital brown sheets behind a locked door like two teenagers was not at all what he envisioned for their first night together.

Smiling from ear to ear after considering all the facts, the chief of surgery made up his mind. The minute he woke up, Owen would call the hotel and book the best room they had available for the following Thursday evening, already anxiously counting the minutes for that night to finally come.
Part Thirteen

Chapter Summary

This chapter sets entirely between 11x16 and 11x17. After Omelia’s last scene on 11x16 (when they are again interrupted in the on call room), Derek arrives home. Since it’s not mentioned on the show when exactly after this last Omelia scene he arrived, I let my creativity take over. I didn’t plan to end this chapter right where it did, but I had to, otherwise it would be too long. All I can guarantee is that, as always, I am not changing anything that happened on the show :)

The Journey – Part Thirteen

Amelia hurried from the Neuro ICU to the OR, trying her best to get over with what was left of her work obligations so she could make it back home in time. She hadn’t scheduled any elective surgeries for that Thursday, hoping to have an early finish at the hospital so she could get properly dressed and ready to go on her first date with Owen later that evening. But much to her dismay, not only she had been paged to the hospital at an ungodly hour earlier that morning, an MVC with four victims had also extended her workload, jeopardizing the entirety of her plans.

At first, Amelia had realized she was probably not going to have any time to even take a nap before the event like she’d planned right after her pager had buzzed at four am. But as the hours progressed, she started to wonder just how much time she’d have to actually get ready for the dinner party.

Men had no idea about this, but getting ready for such an event demanded a lot of time and energy. Unlike Owen, who would probably just shave, shower and put on a suit, Amelia had a lot to work on. He had told her he’d meet her at the front porch of Derek’s house at eight thirty and it was almost past seven when Amelia finally arrived home.

Going straight to the bathroom, Amelia showered and washed her hair in a hurry, blow-drying it right afterwards. She carefully inspected her legs to see if there were any missing spots from the waxing session she’d gone to a couple of days before and quickly moved on to work on her make up. She had just finished putting on her dress when, through the window, she saw her boss crossing the yard towards the house.

Looking at the clock by the nightstand, Amelia realized it was eight thirty on the dot. Damn Owen with his military punctuality. She made her way downstairs, wondering about her looks. The neurosurgeon believed to have made a very satisfactory job with the little time she had to pull off an evening look, knowing she could have done a lot better had she more time.

“Hey…” Amelia opened the front door before Owen could ring the doorbell, excited to see him.

Owen opened his mouth to reply but after seeing her, every word instantly vanished from his mind. His eyes lingered a little longer than usual, obviously in appreciation. Amelia was barefoot, wearing an amazing midnight blue long sleeve dress. The cleavage was very modest, with a mid rise V neck that exposed her shapely neck. She had on a discreet single pendant necklace, giving the neurosurgeon a classy look. The soft fabric of the gown outlined her waist, suggesting her feminine forms without actually exposing them, adding a sexy touch without any traces of vulgarity. And as she turned slightly to the side, Owen noticed the exposed skin on her back, small enough to be
discreet, but big enough to accommodate the touch of his hand. He thought she’d never looked more perfect.

“You look amazing.” He managed to say, encouraged by her bright smile.

“Thank you,” Amelia felt like a silly schoolgirl, something she’d never felt before. Not even when she had been a schoolgirl.

The neurosurgeon turned her neck inspecting the room behind her, trying to make sure no one would see them. The reason why she hadn’t let Owen ring the doorbell was because her sister in law was at home. She knew her niece and nephew had recently been put to bed and not long before she’d seen Meredith disappear into the kitchen, in the back of the house. Amelia still needed to put on her shoes and give her make up a final touch. Her initial plan involved asking Owen to wait a couple of minutes, but she couldn’t risk letting Meredith see him, or else too many questions would arise.

“Is that… Is that Derek?” Owen frowned heavily, distractedly looking at the entrance of the land across the yard where a cab had just pulled up.

Amelia narrowed her eyes, trying to get a clearer view, but a sudden noise of the coffee maker interrupted her thoughts.

“Oh, shit!” She inadvertently exclaimed, pulling Owen by the hand. Before he could realize what was happening, Amelia was sneaking up upstairs, dragging him along the way. “Don’t make any noises!” She contained a fit of laughter as she pushed him inside her bedroom, noticing the smile on his face.

“What is happening?” He chuckled heartily, trying to figure out the confusing situation. “Are you… Are you hiding me?” He asked with an amused tone, unable to believe it, fully expecting her to deny it.

“Of course I am hiding you!” She shamelessly confessed, looking at him like he was the unbelievable one. “I can’t risk letting Meredith see you, let alone my brother.”

“I didn’t know he was back,” Owen casually commented, completely ignoring the importance of Meredith knowing or not about them.

“Shh!” Amelia put her forefinger on her own lips, making an adorable scowl as she asked him to be quieter. “I didn’t know either.” She confessed with a whisper, swiftly making her way to the corridor.

Through the stairs’ banister, Amelia spotted Meredith sitting on the couch, with a couple of notepads surrounding her as she drank coffee from a large red mug. Her sister in law was obviously engaged with what she was doing, explaining why she seemed startled when the front door lock tried to be opened from the outside, undoubtedly by Amelia’s brother.

“Damn it, even when Derek doesn’t want to he gets in the way! How are we getting out of here?” She walked back and forth in the room, grabbing a pair of stilettos and skillfully putting them on under Owen’s fascinated gaze.

He had sat on the edge of her bed, looking at everything around. This was the first time he’d been in Amelia’s bedroom and he had to admit everything inside looked just like her.

“How about we walk out the door, like two adults?” Owen raised his eyebrows, playfully reprimanding her.
“Hm, how about no?” Amelia rebelled, still looking at him like he was out of his mind. “Are you crazy? If my brother and Meredith see you here they will obviously think that we are…”

“We are.” Owen interrupted her.

Amelia stopped walking around to get her lipstick and turned around to face him. The certainty with which he said the words was seductively confident and slightly alarming. Seeing the change of expression in her eyes, Owen explained:

“We are two adults, Amelia, we don’t owe anyone any satisfactions.” He smiled, changing his voice to a gentler tone. “I know you probably don’t want to draw too much attention, especially from Derek and Meredith who live with you, but we are not doing anything wrong. There is nothing to be ashamed of, or to hide.”

Amelia picked up on the trace of insecurity in his voice and rightfully assumed he feared she wasn’t serious about what was happening and therefore was treating him like a disposable fling.

“It’s not that. Of course I am not ashamed.” She explained, walking in his direction and offering one hand for him to hold. “It’s that if my brother sees you, he will start to ask questions, and I am not sure we have the answer to them.” She explained. “I agree with you that no one has any business in our lives,” She smiled affectionately. “They really don’t. So how about we keep it just to ourselves for the time being?”

Owen took a deep breath. The idea of having to hide or lie every time he went to see her at the house didn’t please him that much. Derek was his close friend and of course it felt a bit awkward to tell the guy he was dating his baby sister. But Owen was fully invested in dating Amelia regardless of how Derek took the news.

“Alright.” He tried to sound convinced. If left up to him, Owen would go down the stairs, say hello to the couple in the living room and leave with Amelia. But he wasn’t the one who would have to come back home to a bunch of questions. So, for her sake, he agreed to the plot. What Owen wanted least was for her to feel uncomfortable with anything regarding the two of them.

Amelia saw the consideration in his eyes and it totally won her over.

“We already knew you can pull off the suit and tie,” The neurosurgeon bit her lower lip, gently letting go of his hand. “But tonight, you’ve outdone yourself.” She added in a lighthearted tone. Whenever Amelia felt like she was getting close to being too emotional, like seconds before when she realized the way Owen had been looking at her, it was automatic to resort to humor and bantering as a defense mechanism.

He let out a chuckle that widened her smile. Without paying much attention to what she was doing, Amelia moved forward to where he was sitting on her bed and stood between his legs, gently fixing an almost imperceptible wrinkle on his tie knot. She always felt like whenever Owen was around, there was this strong invisible force that pulled her nearer, and it became nearly impossible to not touch him.

“Can we go now? We’ll be late.” Owen commented casually, smiling when their eyes met. His hand swiftly traveled from her arm to her shoulder, gently touching the few brown locks that were let loose. She was wearing her hair up in an elegant messy bun, with a few loose locks hanging from the sides. Amelia’s dark hair created a vibrating contrast to her fair skin and magnetic silver blue eyes, and Owen couldn’t get enough of how beautiful she was.

“Yes,” Amelia smiled, looking at the clock and realizing it was already eight forty five. She looked at
the window suggestively and then back at him. “I guess this is the only way out…”

“What?!” Owen asked in disbelief.

“We can’t go downstairs without the risk of being seen.” She calmly explained.

“Amelia, I am not going out the window.” Owen looked at her with fierce determination.

“Well, what do you suggest, then?” She defied him, obviously not finding her initial idea as absurd as he did.

Owen approached the window, giving her the impression that he had changed his mind and was about to embark on her plan, but before Amelia could stop him, he grabbed a toy duck that had been left on the floor by one of the children.

“Don’t touch that, it’s gonna…”

Amelia didn’t have time to finish her sentence because the toy started to squeak incessantly. The neurosurgeon had stolen the yellow duck from Zola and Bailey’s play box earlier that week, after spending a full afternoon having to listen to the insanely annoying electronic gadget playing repeatedly, making a scandalous quacking sound.

“Did you see what you just did?” She frowned heavily at Owen, trying to figure out why he looked so calm. “That damn thing won’t stop playing for hours!”

“I know,” Owen smiled with the corner of his mouth, and seeing the surprise in her eyes, he clarified the situation. “I was the one who gave it to Bailey for his first birthday.” He noticed the shock on her face and explained, “but of course I had no idea that it was this annoying.”

“Are you crazy, why did you throw it there? They’re going to hear it!” Amelia pointed out, obviously talking about her brother and Meredith.

“Good.” Owen simply stated, grabbing her hand and taking her from the room, like that had been his plan all along.

Only after they’d snuck down the stairs and left through the back exit of the house, Amelia fully understood the plan. By throwing the loud duck out the window into the front porch, Owen had caused an uproar outside, making Meredith and Derek leave the house for a few seconds to check what was going on. That gave them the opportunity to go downstairs and leave through the kitchen door without being seen.

“You know…” Amelia still pondered about the quick, intelligent move as Owen drove his car through the city streets toward the Hotel. “That was actually pretty strategic.” She frowned harder and then looked at him, almost as if she should be surprised but really wasn’t. “Do they teach you that kind of stuff in the army?” The neurosurgeon added provocatively.

Owen chuckled and gave her a quick look before turning his attention back to the road.

“Only after they make sure we know how to properly exit through the window.” He teased in a lighthearted tone.

Even though she knew she was being made fun of, Amelia laughed along, contaminated by his mirth. Soon after, they arrived at the prestigious hotel, and she watched as Owen handed the car keys to a valet before turning around and taking her hand in his as they walked inside.
“Gee, this is a fancy place,” Amelia casually commented with a smile when they reached the Hotel’s lobby. Everything around them was luxurious. She was particularly marveled by the chandelier inside the main atrium. The enormous structure was not only wide and large, but was filled with hundreds of tiny crystal prisms, matching perfectly well with the twin staircases and dark marble floors.

“Yeah?” Owen didn’t realize his voice sounded hoarse. He was delighted that she seemed to have approved of the place because unbeknownst to Amelia, he planned to have them stay there until the following morning.

The main lobby was particularly busy that evening, undoubtedly due to the charity event. Amelia was just about to explain why she’d liked the place so much when, as soon as they entered the bar area to the right of the front desk, a familiar face came to greet them.

“Mr. Pratt,” Owen politely offered his hand, which the man took for a firm handshake.

“I’m glad you could make it, Dr. Hunt.” The company director replied, obviously satisfied. His eyes then traveled to the woman standing beside Owen and a smile grew on his lips. “Dr. Shepherd! What a pleasant surprise!”

Amelia instantly recognized the man who had donated an insane amount of money to her department. She gracefully greeted him back, before asking the guy about his two year old granddaughter.

“Bella is doing amazing.” The senior replied with an affectionate smile. His granddaughter was the light of his life and he couldn’t imagine anything worse than losing her. “She will be three in a couple of months and is living and learning like any other kid her age… And all thanks to you, Dr. Shepherd.”

Amelia blushed, embarrassed with genuine modesty.

“Actually, it’s all thanks to you Mr. Pratt.” The neurosurgeon replied with an encouraging grin. “You never gave up on Bella and it was your stubborn wish to see her cured that made you find me.”

The man seemed genuinely touched by her words and quickly made both surgeons follow him to the bar area, where a few other men stood with their scotch glasses around an elegant counter. One by one, Oliver Pratt introduced them. Amelia noticed how the company director was treating the duo of doctors like they were his guests of honor. The three other businessmen were obviously close to Mr. Pratt personally, because they all seemed to be aware of his granddaughter’s brain tumor operation when Pratt explained who Amelia was.

“Well, Dr. Hunt, before we talk business, let’s get you two set up.” One of the men slightly waved with his head, to which a waiter instantly materialized in front of them. Owen joined the men in their choice of drinks; Amelia asked for a club soda. “Dr. Shepherd, not much into scotch, I see.” He noticed with a polite head nod. “Are you sure you’re willing to endure this,” He used his ability to easily point out things with his head and signaled towards the conference room where the auction would soon be taking place, “without a single glass of alcohol?”

“I’ll take my chances,” Amelia smiled brightly in return. “Might be a rookie mistake, I know.” She added, making the atmosphere lighter around them.
Amelia was the only woman among four important businessmen and the chief of surgery of Seattle’s most prestigious hospital. She knew she should feel intimidated and out of place, but she felt strangely confident. All of the guys around them were in their sixty or seventies, but Owen’s full head of strawberry blonde hair stood out amongst the grey of their suits, ties and thinning hair. Amelia had to contain a smile when she realized what a great metaphor that was.

Ever since he’d walked into her life, Owen had brightened her days with a lot of color. The biggest reason why Amelia had moved from Los Angeles to Seattle had been to focus a little more on her career. For the past two years, her personal life had been so messy that Amelia had neglected her passion for surgery a bit. But once in Seattle, working in a big hospital with a busy influx and so many challenges in her everyday routine, slowly she’d come to rediscover the pleasure that operating and teaching gave her. Her job had become an important source of happiness for her, and her new status had been extremely important to help her feel established in the city, giving her life some much needed stability. Amelia now felt like she was moving forward and that she finally had some control over her life after a couple of hectic years.

But then there was Owen… With his warm smile, his tender touch and the way he would simply look at her and make her feel understood. With Owen, she didn’t feel so in control anymore, but instead of feeling unnerving, the new-found situation felt strangely… balanced. The way he had been there for her several times in such a natural, compassionate way made Amelia see him as one of the most decent and humane people she had ever met. And those feelings inspired her to allow her true self to blossom, often putting down her walls and giving back to him as much as she got.

“So, Hunt, Pratt has told me many good things about Grey Sloan, but I’d like to hear it from you. Tell me…” One of the guys in the group took a long sip of the amber liquid in his glass before asking. “Why should I invest my money in your hospital?”

Even though it hadn’t been more than fifteen minutes since they had been in the company of those men, Amelia had already noticed how they lived and breathed business. Even when a casual comment was inserted into the conversation, it quickly ignited a new topic to discuss money, investments, firms and corporations.

“I think the real question is, why shouldn’t you?” Owen replied with the same easy confidence as the man who’d started the conversation. Amelia turned her head and noticed his chiseled profile as the man who caused so many different emotions inside her heart casually carried on with his impeccable line of thought. “The only certainty in life is that at some point, we are all going to die. At some point, everyone will get sick, or suffer an accident, or even see a beloved one going through those.” Owen spoke brutally, making Amelia frown. But the lack of such a scandalized reaction from the other men let her know that it wasn’t a coincidence that Owen was taking such a rough approach. Those guys standing next to them were business sharks and probably didn’t have a lot of respect for people who appeared to be soft. “And when that does happen, when you’re at your most vulnerable, who would you like to have treating you?” Owen looked around, on purpose making eye contact with each man, one by one. “Some random ordinary team…” He took a pause on purpose, letting the information sink in. “Or a service known by its excellence? At Greys Sloan we think not only about the patient who’s there with us, but also about the ones yet to come. Our residents not only learn from the best,” He suggestively nodded his head in Amelia’s direction, making her bite her lower lip to hide an amused smile. “They also become the best. And it’s not a coincidence that they do.”

The guys exchanged silent looks, but Amelia could read in their eyes that they were obviously impressed. By their startled expressions, it was clear none of those men had ever dared to think about that subject. They were used to being in command of every aspect of their lives. So to hear from a chief of surgery that they were susceptible to death and disease just like any other ordinary person must have really shaken their minds.
“And what do you think, Dr. Shepherd?” One of them stopped conjecturing with the others, giving Amelia a challenging glance. “Dr. Hunt here has made absolutely obvious that injecting money into the health care business might turn out to be a good investment later in life.” He summed up with grace and gave Amelia a smirk. “But I’d like to hear it from you. Why should we be convinced that Grey Sloan is indeed the best choice of hospital if we do decide to venture in the business?”

“Well,” Amelia crossed her legs, surprised at the question. She really didn’t expect to be included in the conversation, at least not in a topic like that. Keeping a straight face, she stared back at the men, who were obviously delighted to be looking at her. “For instance, we have the best coffee.”

Her unexpected reply completely swept them off their feet, inadvertently causing a general round of laughter. Contaminated by the lighter atmosphere, the neurosurgeon added with a wide smile:

“I promise you, this might not seem like a relevant information, but hear it from someone who’s lived in the four corners of this country.” She glanced at them sideways and gave a quick, almost imperceptible wink. “You won’t find better coffee anywhere in the States.” Her effusive joy and charismatic smile completely won them over and seeing she had their full attention, Amelia continued, under Owen’s amused watch. “Okay, I have to be honest now…” Her grin slowly faded but she maintained a captivating sympathetic expression on her face. “I don’t know the first thing about finances, business or even about running a hospital.” Amelia quickly looked at Owen with admiration before resuming her speech to the men who carefully listened. “But I do know a lot about treating patients.” She humbly added. “And I can assure you that you won’t find a more humane or dedicated surgical service than ours.” Amelia explained. “Not only is our boss extremely committed to making sure of that,” She glanced at Owen and gave a warm smile that meant much more than anyone else there could ever know, “I can assure you that every single one of the employees in his team follow his good example.”

The four men once again nodded in approval and resumed talking among themselves, but Owen was too fascinated with Amelia to pay any attention. Soon after, Mr. Pratt’s wife came looking for them and after warmly greeting Amelia and telling the others about how the neurosurgeon had been incredible to their family, which only added to the good impression that they already had, the small group was escorted to the main conference room, where the auction would take place.

As the evening went on, the gentlemen resumed talking about business and Owen was introduced to more people. Just like he’d expected, it didn’t take long before the guys swiftly started a polite conversation to disguise the competition they were sneakily proposing to boast about their wealth. He heard about golf fields, ownerships of large corporations, yachts and racing cars, things brought out with the obvious intention to impress.

By his side, Amelia remained in silence, paying attention to the items in display at the auction. After noticing her focused expression and delighting himself with a vision of her slim neck and feminine shoulders, Owen was instantly reminded of the way she’d joined his cause just minutes before. Amelia didn’t have any obligations to withstand boring business conversations, and it wasn’t her job to try to get more funds for the hospital. Nonetheless, she had loyally shown her support, quickly figuring out the intentions in Owen’s speech and partnering with him at his own game.

The more he discovered about her, the more fascinated he became. Owen wasn’t very used to having people standing by his side, especially not at their own initiative. Amelia was different to anyone else he’d ever met and every day more, she proved that with actions instead of empty words. Those guys surrounding them that night could have as many digits in their bank accounts as they wished, but as the minutes progressed, Owen became more convinced that he was actually the one holding the biggest treasure that night. And Owen wouldn’t trade her for any of the things those guys seemed to so highly value.
“What is it?” She asked with an affectionate smile, noticing the way he had been staring at her for the past seconds.

“Nothing,” Owen dismissed her concern with a warm grin and gently took the empty glass of club soda from her hand, putting it on top of an empty tray. Slowly, he walked beside Amelia, studying the items that were soon to be auctioned.

“Look at this thing,” Amelia pointed to a small painting framed by a faded gold metal. “It’s horrible.” She whispered in his ear, giggling at his mortified expression. “Who would ever buy that?”

“Apparently, it dates back from the Civil War and was painted by a soldier who died in the field.” Owen read the small box that contained information about the item. “He painted it in his dying bed once he realized he wasn’t ever going to see his lover again, and asked that it was sent to her.” He finalized the tragic story, bringing his eyes back the picture and slowly analyzing it. A large cow was depicted in front of what was supposed to be a farm house, next to a piano. “But I have to give it to you,” Owen admitted with grace. “Horrible doesn’t begin to define it.” He added, obviously talking about the painting. “Maybe the guy was hallucinating when he painted it?”

Amelia’s laughter intensified as she strode beside him, feeling the warm comfort of his large hand gently guiding her lower back, exactly on the spot where her dress exposed her skin. One by one, they inspected the remaining items, and the neurosurgeon had an amazing time making fun of most of them for Owen’s delighted amusement.

“So, you never told me why exactly Oliver Pratt invited you here,” Amelia casually commented, noticing Owen’s gaze was fixated on a sculpture made entirely of onyx. “Did you keep in touch with him after he donated all that money to my department?” She asked, obviously interested.

The way Owen slightly hesitated made Amelia know he was carefully measuring his words.

“Not exactly…” She heard his evasive reply and raised her eyebrows in question. “Okay, but you have to promise you’ll be discreet about this…” Owen informed her, making Amelia even more curious. At his insistence, she quickly promised not to say anything, driving her boss to finally confess. “He came to the hospital looking for me a few weeks ago.”

“What was wrong with him?” Amelia asked, picking up on the hint that the visit had been caused by a medical reason.

“He had a rectal bleeding.”

“He what?”

Amelia’s words had been spoken in a louder tone of voice, attracting a lot of attention. Owen reprimanded her with his eyes, waiting until everyone went back to what they were doing to patiently explain:

“Hemorrhoids.” The trauma surgeon informed the diagnosis, obviously not too pleased to be talking about it. “I booked an OR late at night, had a team and a fellow from proctology joined me and we took care of it.” He added, leading Amelia to finally understand why the guy had been so interested in helping Owen back, after all.

“Really?” She asked, obviously amused. Owen glanced over his shoulder, noticing the signature childish grin on her face and anticipated the bunch of jokes that were about to come. Against his will, he laughed when she fired the first one. “That must have been a pain in the ass.”

“Amelia…” Owen playfully rolled his eyes, seeing where that was going.
“I bet surgery turned him into a perfect asshole.”

Owen struggled to keep a straight face.

“Ok, that’s just…”

“It was a good crack, wasn’t it?” She interrupted him, laughing at her own joke.

Owen gave up reprimanding her and just laughed along, having too much fun to care about anything else other than the gorgeous smile on that incredible woman’s face.

“Wait, I got one more,” She informed him just as Owen thought they were done talking about the subject. “I bet he couldn’t take the news sitting down.”

Owen laughed even harder and watched as she finally kept a straight face.

“Ok, now I am done.” She smiled mischievously at him. “We can put this ‘hole’ thing behind us.”

“Will it ever end?” He gave up trying to tame her, too overwhelmed with the obvious joy shown in her eyes. Leaning forward, he smelled the fresh scent of vanilla shampoo on her hair, feeling completely seduced by her witty humor, gorgeous figure and sharp intellect.

“Did you say ‘end’ on purpose?” She pestered him. “Because if you did, this officially makes you the worst player at this game.”

Owen was just about to reply when a guy in his mid thirties went up on the small stage nestled on the back of the room, obviously with the intention to start the auction. The chief of surgery then led Amelia back to the seats they’d been assigned and she had a lot of fun casually talking to him while people placed their bids.

Amelia didn’t realize exactly when it had happened, but before she could even think about it, her chair was already a couple of feet to the left, closer to his. His right arm was lazily wrapped around her shoulders as the upper part of her back rested against his solid chest.

The neurosurgeon was too immersed in her own thoughts about that cozy proximity that it took her a while longer than usual to realize that, when the horrible cow painting was sold, Owen had been the one to place the highest bid.

“I can’t believe what you just did!” Amelia playfully smacked his arm minutes after the auction had ended and he received the item he’d purchased. “You actually bought this horrendous thing?” She chuckled, too amused to care to hide it. “I mean, I get that its charity, but really?” She frowned.

“I got it for you.” Owen teased her, noticing the laughter in her eyes. “Now you’re going to have to take it home and hang it on your bedroom wall.”

“Why?” Amelia defied him with a teasing tone.

“Because,” Owen leaned over and took advantage of the darkness inside the room to gently brush his lips on her cheek before whispering in her ear. “This is the first gift I ever got for you and first times have a whole special meaning.”

Amelia held her breath at the sound of his words, feeling Owen’s free hand skillfully wrapping around her waist. They were standing in a corner inside the hotel conference room, and a lot of people were coming and going, making them almost imperceptible to the other guests. The moment she slightly turned her head, Owen lips brushed on hers with such contained intensity that her knees
felt instantly weak.

“Is this over?” She eagerly asked, referring to the event. Amelia wanted very much to finally have him all to herself.

“I think so,” Owen nodded in approval and then stared straight into her eyes. Amelia noticed how he took a deep breath and kept his passionate gaze upon hers. “I have to tell you something,” he confessed, hoping she would be on board with his plan. “Let’s not go home yet, Amelia.” Owen bent forward and slowly breathed her in, delighted by her fresh smell. His lips hovered over the smooth skin and he gently kissed the column of her neck before finally confessing. “I have a room upstairs booked for us if you want to stay…” Owen intensified the grip around her body, possessively pulling her closer. “I am tired of interruptions,” his hoarse voice along with the trail of kisses his lips were tracing on her neck completely convinced Amelia that they should definitely stay. Her face was captured between his strong hands as Owen looked deeply into her eyes and confessed into her ear, “I want you.”

Amelia felt a shiver running down her spine at the sound of his words. Owen was bold and he didn’t waste any time with games or empty provocations. Judging by what she’d seen in him, including the purpose of that evening there, her boss was a guy who went after what he wanted and claimed it as his own. To have him do the same thing to her, seductively whispering in her ear that he wanted her made Amelia completely on board with his idea, too turned on by the display of masculine possessiveness.

She looked into his eyes and smiled very suggestively before standing on the tip of her toes to steal a kiss without any reserve. Owen smiled against her lips, feeling her delicate body pressing against his as she forced her way into his mouth. Her answer had been better than his highest expectations.

“Let me just go to the restroom,” Amelia said with a smile as they pulled apart. “Go check us in. I’ll meet you at the lobby.”

The last thing she noticed was the anxious and delighted expression on his face as she went inside the ladies’ room. Amelia used that time to compose herself, fixing her hair and cleaning the stains of lipstick that Owen’s kisses had caused around her lips.

Less than five minutes later, she made her way to the front desk, quickly spotting Owen. Amelia noticed the heavy frown on his face. In a matter of minutes, he had gone from charmingly anxious to obviously cross.

“What?” She looked into his eyes, searching for an answer. “What happened?”

Owen let out a heavy sigh before explaining with frustration:

“Pratt was just here while you were inside.” Amelia noticed he didn’t seem too happy about it. “He insisted that I join him and the other guys for drinks back at the hotel bar.”

“Owen, that’s good!” Amelia smiled effusively, doing her best to encourage him. The businessmen had listened to Owen’s points a couple of hours before and if they insisted on talking to him again, it was obvious there was more to unfold where a potential investment was concerned. “They were probably convinced by what you said and want to hear more about the hospital because they’re interested,” Amelia rightfully predicted. “Of course you should go.”

“The problem is,” Owen hissed between his teeth, controlling his anger. “Now is really not the best timing.” He added, suggestively looking at her and descending his eyes across her face all the way to her neck.
Owen planned to thoroughly explore that wonderful slim neck with his lips during the next minutes, until she was melting in his arms and asking him for more. But of course that wouldn’t happen if he had to join four senior guys in boring conversations about finances at that late hour.

“Look, don’t worry,” Amelia considerately rubbed her palms on his chest, trying her best to make him see it was actually a good thing. “You go see what they want.” She proposed with practicality. “And I will go upstairs and wait for you.” She promised, gently playing with a button case on his shirt. “Don’t worry, I am not going anywhere. Take your time.”

Owen was really in a sour mood but her words made him regain some of his good mood.

“Alright,” He was finally convinced, mostly by her wonderful smile. “We’re in room 802,” he took a keycard from inside his pocket and handed it her. “I brought a small case in the trunk of my car and asked to have it sent up to our room. Feel free to make yourself comfortable,” He gave her an apologetic smile, gently holding her chin with his free hand. “If you’re hungry, order anything you like.”

“Owen, go,” Amelia smiled contagiously at him, too touched by his considerate thoughtfulness.

“I don’t want to.” He affirmed with conviction.

“I mean it,” She chuckled, nearly pushing him. “You have the hospital to think about.” She reminded him. “I’ll still be here when this whole thing is over.”

“You better be.” He touched his forehead to hers, gently nudging his nose against hers.

“Go,” Amelia splayed her open palms on his chest, knowing soon enough she would have to be convinced to let him go if Owen kept looking at her like that. “But wait, first give me my painting!” She chuckled, stealing the forgotten wrapped item from his hand.

“Oh, so now you want it?” Owen teased her, delighted to see the happy expression on her face.

“I said it was ugly as hell,” Amelia informed him with a smile. “I never said I didn’t want it.”

“Fine,” Owen chuckled and finally relinquished the object. “I knew you’d eventually acknowledge my grand romantic gesture.”

“Romantic?” Amelia raised her eyebrows in defiance.

“You can’t have romance without a stomping cow playing the piano in front of a farm field.” Owen informed her before stealing a kiss. He then took a deep breath, watching as she slowly moved in the direction of the elevators. “I promise this won’t take long.” He whispered, knowing that Amelia could still hear him.

She smiled and gracefully entered the elevator, carefully turning to face the Hotel lobby while holding the ugly painting. Owen caught one last glimpse of her face before the elevator doors finally closed, reading on her lips the answer that made his blood run faster inside his veins:

“I’ll be waiting for you.”
Part Fourteen

Chapter Summary

Timeline for Part 14:

This chapter picks up exactly where we left off on part 13. Owen and Amelia are at the hotel, we will see the aftermath of that encounter and further explore the events of 11x17.

The Journey – Part Fourteen

Amelia made her way to the assigned hotel room feeling her heart fluttering in an unfamiliar yet delightful sensation. She still reminisced about the touch of Owen’s lips on hers when she swiped the keycard to let herself in.

Considering the place they were in, Amelia shouldn’t be surprised with the opulent decoration, but the way everything was luxurious and yet comfortable still amazed her. She had walked into a foyer entrance that was impeccably furnished and decorated with soothing colors. The high ceilings and tall windows offered a panoramic view of the city outside, and the white and gold hues of everything around her matched perfectly with the romantic, homey scenario. Owen had really gone to lengths to make sure they had somewhere special to be together and even though the room was stunning, it had been his consideration and care that impressed her the most.

Amelia had no idea how much longer he would take, so she decided to thoroughly enjoy the room even in his absence. She quickly spotted Owen’s case in a corner near the bedroom entrance. He had told her to make herself comfortable. Since Amelia hadn’t known in advance, she hadn’t brought anything with her, but she supposed she wasn’t going to need any clothes to spend the night. Despite being alone in the room hadn’t exactly been the way she imagined being undressed, it still made her glad to finally get rid of the evening dress. And as she unhooked her stilettos, Amelia realized that initially, she’d wanted to look her very best for Owen. Now that the evening was almost over, all she truly wanted was to stay comfortable.

The neurosurgeon felt an immense relief to step on the floor without her high heel shoes. It was past one in the morning and Amelia had been paged to the OR nearly twenty-four hours before. After spending the entire day working on multiple cases after a nearly sleepless night, all she really wanted was to relax until Owen finally joined her. The anxiety and anticipation that his impending arrival caused were already enough to give her butterflies in her stomach and Amelia simply tossed her shoes aside, really not in need of anything else to focus on.

After seeing the hand carved marble stones in the bathroom, Amelia realized it would too much of a shame to spend the night in that room and not make the most of it. Swiftly slipping into the shower, she let the steamy hot water relax her tense muscles while she massaged them with a bubbly liquid soap. After ten minutes, the neurosurgeon felt reinvigorated. She wrapped herself in the fluffiest white towel robe she had ever touched and went back to the room, involuntarily checking the clock every two minutes to see how much time had passed.
The king size bed was too comfortable and too inviting to be ignored. Turning on the huge flat screen television on the wall, in front of the bedframe, Amelia leaned against cushy pillows, crossed her legs at her ankles and grabbed a small jar with nuts from the nightstand. After a few minutes watching a poor taste horror film and nearly closing her lids against her will, she realized exhaustion was getting the best of her.

Still determined to wait for Owen, Amelia set the alarm on her cell phone for the next morning. She had a laminectomy scheduled for nine am and she knew as soon as Owen walked into that room, they would instantly forget everything about the world outside. The neurosurgeon was so chronically tired from the rough work week that it was very likely she’d fall asleep without bothering to worry about her waking hour, so it was better to prevent she didn’t sleep in while she still could.

Forcing her eyes to remain open, Amelia scrolled through the TV channels, once again checking the clock and letting a heavy sigh to realize it hadn’t yet been half an hour since she’d left Owen’s presence, but it already felt like too much time had passed.

It was past three in the morning when Owen finally was able to take the elevator upstairs. On one hand, he couldn’t contain his excitement about the amazing business prospects the small reunion had given to the hospital. In the following week, two of the men he’d just had drinks with were scheduled to pay the hospital a visit and, if everything ran smoothly, the residency program would get a large donation to be invested in education.

But on a different note, Owen was extremely frustrated. He had planned for that night to be spent mostly only in Amelia’s company and unfortunately, they had been invariably interrupted. The chief of surgery knew it was very late, but she had told him she’d wait for him at the room upstairs. Owen really wanted to believe she hadn’t changed her mind and gone home, too upset to be left alone for so much time in an evening that they both knew would mean something.

He finally made it to the eighth floor, gently knocking on the door before swiping his keycard to open it. Owen eagerly entered the room, a look of blissful expectation on his face, but his smile quickly vanished when he didn’t hear or see signs of Amelia inside the bedroom. The only sounds coming from inside were from the TV and he let out a heavy sigh, blaming himself for having had too much hope.

He was already loosening his tie, halfway through the bathroom, when the corner of his eyes caught something that drew his attention.

On the spacious king size mattress, a gorgeous petite woman was adorably curled up in what looked like a bath robe. Owen was about to turn on the lights, but gave up on it the minute he noticed her presence, suddenly feeling determined not to wake her. He approached the bed and adjusted his eyes to the darkness, noticing Amelia’s serene façade as she lay there, embarked on a deep sleep.

With a smile of mixed amusement and disbelief, Owen realized that was not at all what he had in mind when he planned to take her to bed that night. Not resisting the urge to touch her, he gently pulled one lock of hair from her face to the back of her neck, watching as she didn’t move a muscle. The relaxation on her expression let him know she was probably exhausted.

As chief of surgery, Owen knew everything that went on in his floor. He was aware Amelia had been paged to the hospital nearly twenty-four hours before, and that she had been up and running ever since. That amazing woman had worked all day, found the time and energy to get dressed to go out with him, delighted Owen with her company, intelligent conversation and witty sense of humor throughout the whole evening, and eventually gone upstairs a couple of hours before with a bright
light in her eyes, promising she would wait up for him. But Owen wasn’t upset that she hadn’t resisted her sleep. Instead, he was feeling rather guilty for having brought her to an event without being able to give her as much attention as he originally intended, especially after all the effort he knew she had put into being there that night.

As his hands gently brushed her arm, Owen noticed how cold her skin was. Without a second thought, he pulled one of the duvets that had been placed at the foot of the bed and gently covered her. He had no idea how many times that scene would repeat in the years to come, or even how often Amelia would startle him in the middle of the night as she rolled over to his side of bed, touching him with her freezing hands and feet after dumping the covers in her sleep like a worry-free child.

The two glasses of whisky Owen’d had at the bar surely served the purpose to make him drowsy. It didn’t take him long to quickly fall asleep on the opposite side of the bed. Roughly five hours later, Amelia’s cell phone discreetly buzzed on the nightstand beside her, making the neurosurgeon repeatedly blink her eyes until she remembered where she was.

After fully making sense of the scenario around and the situation she was in, Amelia noticed she had a warm blanket covering her body whereas Owen looked very relaxed in his sleep beside her. He was lying on his back, his left hand gently holding hers. She wondered if they had spent the night like that. Involuntarily, a smile formed on her face as she got out of the bed as quietly as possible. Amelia had no idea at what time Owen had made it back to the room. She had been so exhausted that obviously her attempts at staying up waiting for him had miserably failed.

After a quick trip to the bathroom, Amelia finished brushing her teeth and changed back to the evening dress, secretly wishing she’d brought some luggage with her. There was no way she was showing up for work like that, which meant she would still have to make a quick trip home to change and be at the hospital in time for her surgery. Gathering her purse from the chair next to the bed, she hesitated for a second, surprising herself.

Amelia had found herself in that position a lot of times in her life. Sneaking out through the back door or even through a window were things she had often done in the past. Usually, to guys she had never again seen. It was fairly simply and predictable. First came a lot of flirtation, then sex, and then Amelia took off. It was an easy and uncomplicated recipe. Yet that time, it felt entirely different. And the fact there hadn’t been sex involved wasn’t at all why.

For some reason Amelia couldn’t quite explain, she felt horrible to leave just like that, as if she was making an escape. At the same time she really wanted to see Owen and make sure he knew she’d really enjoyed the previous evening, despite it not ending exactly how they’d planned, she also didn’t want to wake him. He looked very immersed in his sleep and the situation was too uncommon for her to know what to do. There, beside her on a huge bed, lay a man with whom Amelia had never sex with, and yet every day she felt more intimate with. Had it been anyone else, the neurosurgeon would have found the scenario too awkward to even prolong her stay, especially at the expense of being late for surgery.

But the thing was, it wasn’t just anyone else. It was Owen.

Her feet automatically took the steps as Amelia found it harder by the second to remain rational. Slightly bending over his side of the bed, the neurosurgeon touched his temple, lazily running her fingers through his soft strawberry blond locks.

Amelia had been longing to touch him for what it felt like an eternity. She wished more than anything that she could simply ditch work and spend the entire day in that hotel room with him. A smile lingered on her face as she imagined the two of them in bed all day long, talking and having breakfast and doing a lot more that she hadn’t yet experienced with him, but already anticipated how
good it would be.

A heavy sigh escaped her lips when Amelia was suddenly reminded that ditching work to spend all day in a hotel room with a man hadn’t exactly worked out for her in the past. Shoving those unwelcomed thoughts aside, she tried to focus on the present, feeling grateful that this time, things were completely different. She was sober, her life was actually working out and the man lying on the bed wasn’t anything like any other guy she’d met before.

Unable to resist the urge, Amelia leaned forward, softly brushing his temple with her lips. She had already gotten up to finally take a cab home to then go to work when a skillful male hand gently but firmly grasped her thigh.

An electrical wave of pleasure rushed through her entire body at the touch of his palm against the soft fabric of her dress. It made her chuckle to think how swiftly and easily his hand had gotten control of her body, and her smile of happiness became obvious to Owen the moment she turned around to face him.

“Were you going to leave without saying goodbye?” He playfully asked, gently sitting up against the bedframe.

“I think I just did,” Amelia raised an eyebrow, teasing him in the same lighthearted tone.

Owen didn’t bother replying. With one fast movement, he pulled her towards him, grasping both sides of her waist to make Amelia’s body crash on his.

“Don’t go…” He touched his forehead to hers, looking deeply into her eyes as his deep male voice was nothing but a whisper. “Stay.”

Amelia felt the seductive power of his words as she became very aware of his body nearly lying underneath her. If possible, Owen was even more solid than she’d originally imagined.

“I have a laminectomy scheduled in forty five minutes,” Amelia explained with an apologetic smile, running her hands on the surface of his arms.

“Call in sick,” Owen joked, sneakily circling her waist with his arms to hold her captive.

“I can’t,” Amelia smiled mischievously, tempted to kiss him. “My boss is very strict,” She suggestively gazed at him, holding her laughter. “He’ll know I am lying.”

“Your boss,” Owen joked, whispering in her ear, “sounds like a jackass.”

Amelia’s laughter echoed in the room as Owen pulled against him. Unable to control his urge any longer, he kissed her with the same desire he wished to have kissed her the night before.

“I mean it, though,” Amelia was breathless when they pulled apart, but a silly smile wouldn’t leave her face. “I have an important surgery. I have an entire OR waiting for me. This woman flew in from Portland just to see me.”

“You little show off,” Owen teased, gently releasing his grip around her body. “Alright, fine. Go.” He shook his head in obvious disapproval of her decision.

“I’ll catch up with you later?” Amelia grabbed her high heels and finally finished putting them on, noticing on the clock by the nightstand that now she was definitely going to be late.

“You better.” Owen replied in a decisive tone.
Unsurprisingly, when she made it to the hospital, Amelia was a few minutes behind schedule, but nothing that compromised the quality of her work. Her spinal surgery went remarkably well. After making sure the patient had smoothly come back from the anesthesia, the neurosurgeon returned to the scrub room to wash her hands. She was aimlessly watching the OR being emptied when the door suddenly opened, startling her.

“Owen!” The word escaped from Amelia’s mouth before she could contain it. She was surprised, but positively so. “Uh… Chief.” The neurosurgeon quickly fixed it after noticing they weren’t alone.

“Hey, Dr. Shepherd.” Owen greeted her back, unable to contain a smile. He was too enchanted to hide his contentment for bumping into her, of all people. “You finished your laminectomy in OR two?”

“I did.” Amelia replied, just as happy to see him again so early in the day. “Did you need-?”

“Oh, I am just trying to see if Bailey can get in here for a bowel obstruction.” Owen interrupted her, watching as the scrub nurse that was inside the room left. A few minutes after Amelia had left the hotel room, he had gotten up, showered and gone straight to work.

“Right.” Amelia replied, watching as the door closed behind them and, inside the OR, her patient was removed to the post op ward. “OR’s all hers.”

“Great.”

By the look in her eyes, Owen anticipated she was about to say something they’d both like to hear.

“I felt like last night’s business was left unfinished.” Amelia took a step closer, obviously flirting.

“You felt that way too?” He asked, in the same tone.

“Many agenda items left unchecked,” She replied, thinking about the great time they’d had the previous evening.

“Barely scratched the surface, really.” Owen added. He had kissed her a few times the previous evening and once this morning. Despite the great time they’d had together the night before, the two of them knew they both expected more.

“I think we need a follow-up.” Amelia creatively joked.

“Agreed.” Owen nodded in approval, too mesmerized by her looks to pay attention to anything other the woman standing in front of him.

“When we won’t be interrupted.” Amelia said emphatically, thinking about the countless times they had been forced to part ways because of work during that week. Owen chuckled heartily, looking from her eyes to her lips, eager to kiss her again. But just as Amelia finished her sentence, her cell phone buzzed. “Oh my God.” The neurosurgeon laughed with good humor, finding the situation too hilarious to believe it.

Amelia walked past him, sad to be leaving but the ER was paging her about a head trauma.

“Hey, how about… How about tonight if you’re not on call?” Owen’s words interrupted her thoughts.
“I’m not.” She answered with a flirtatious smile, after quickly but carefully thinking through her schedule.

“Okay, then.” Owen took a deep breath, wondering how he was ever going to get through that day.

“Okay.” She added with a happy grin before finally leaving the scrub room.

Five minutes later, Amelia was taken aback to find out the ER patient she’d been paged about was actually Owen’s mother. At first, when she read the last name on the chart, the neurosurgeon figured it was just a coincidence, but then as the senior lady notified the present staff that her son worked there and was actually the chief of surgery, Amelia was positively surprised to make the connection.

“Hi, Evelyn.” She put on procedure gloves and smiled empathetically to the old lady who had, according to her chart, slipped in the shower. “My name is Dr. Shepherd and I am going to take care of you today.” She saw the elderly lady was conscious as she acknowledged the words. “Now, do you know where you are?”

Amelia followed with her standard neuro consult, asking Evelyn questions at the same time she examined the head wound and check for any signs of deficits. There was a deep laceration caused by the fall, but the patient’s general status was good. She was still listening to Evelyn when suddenly, the blinds were opened, revealing Richard Webber and Owen standing outside the trauma room.

“Mom! What happened?”

From that moment on, it became quite clear to Amelia that not only was Owen a worried, devoted son, he also had no idea what was going on in his mother romantic life.

Even though she knew it was none of her business, Amelia thought the idea that a senior lady could be dating again was very adorable. She didn’t know Evelyn, much less her boyfriend John, but by the expression on their faces and the way they treated each other, Amelia guessed he wasn’t conning her, like Owen obviously feared. The neurosurgeon always trusted her instincts regarding people and this time, she’d had a good impression. But of course, as a son, Owen couldn’t rely on instincts alone, so she fully understood where his frustration and confusion were coming from.

Had it been her mom dating a guy who was young enough to be her brother, Amelia would have the same concerns. She didn’t exactly talk to her mother that often or visited her that much, whereas Owen obviously kept in touch and visited his own very regularly, so the neurosurgeon imagined that hearing his mom had been dating the guy for a little under a year without her son knowing had alarmed him to the point of perplexity.

At the same time the family feud was installing, Amelia worried about Evelyn. She had confessed she felt dizzy and they hadn’t yet fully figured out what had caused her fall. Even though the neurosurgeon wanted to talk to Owen and make him feel better about the whole situation, at that moment she had to think about that very special patient. A head CT was in order, and while they couldn’t take her upstairs, Amelia tried to distract mother and son from the disconcerting topic of conversation by jotting in words about her neurological condition.

Finally, after hearing John making a sexual innuendo towards his mother, Owen fully snapped, leading Richard to intervene. Amelia stayed behind with the patient, watching as she acted obviously distressed with her son’s behavior.

“I am sorry.” Evelyn slightly shook her head in denial. “Owen has a good heart but he has always
been too much of a hothead for his own good.” The elder lady explained.

“Really?” Amelia asked with genuine interest, cleaning the woman’s wound with sterile gauze after irrigating it with saline. “I would never have guessed,” She smiled and looked Evelyn in the eyes as she got rid of her dirty gloves and picked up a new pair. “He has always seemed so levelheaded to me.”

“He is,” Evelyn confessed, returning Amelia’s smile. “Well, sort of.” The older woman gently smiled, seeing the confusion in her doctor’s face. “He is very calm until something pushes his buttons.” The patient let out a heavy sigh, trying to keep a lighter tone. “Then he becomes a fiery force of nature.”

“Well, for what it’s worth, he seems to be a really devoted son,” Amelia pointed out as she grabbed a small syringe. “And he obviously cares a lot about you.” She added, watching as Evelyn agreed with a discreet smile. Then, she grabbed a suture kit from one of the drawers and prepared a syringe. “This is going to sting a little but I promise you won’t feel anything in a few seconds.”

Evelyn nodded assertively, studying the younger woman’s features as she gently numbed and then sutured her laceration. She had no idea whether or not her son was dating again. At some point, Owen used to share everything with her. Ever since high school, he had always brought his girlfriends home for his mom to meet them. But ever since he’d gotten married a few years before, that had stopped. Even when his son had divorced Cristina, it took Evelyn months to find out about it. And ever since the thoracic surgeon had left the country, Evelyn had no idea what went on in her son’s love life.

But now, after identifying the signs of infatuation on the young female surgeon’s face as she carefully tended to her wound and said nice things about her son with a genuine smile, Evelyn wondered if Owen had finally moved on from his previous toxic relationship.

“Okay, we’ll get you up to CT now to see if you have any internal bleeds, okay?” Amelia explained after she was done with the head lac.

For the following minutes, Amelia learned a little more about Evelyn Hunt. She struck the neurosurgeon as a fascinating woman. Her speech only reinforced Amelia’s initial idea that her boss was indeed very close to his mother.

Growing up, Amelia had had a tough childhood. Later on, she’d moved from city to city, never really returning home to New York as often as the rest of her siblings. The youngest Shepherd knew she was the outcast in the family, so to see Owen so naturally nurturing a healthy, intimate relationship with his mother was absolutely endearing. Over the past months, it’d become obvious how Owen was excellent at treating people with respect, justice and care. Whenever she was with him, Amelia felt especially looked after and secure. Obviously, Evelyn held a lot of the merit for raising such an honorable son.

And not for the first time, Amelia realized that the more she found out about Owen, the more she liked him.

A few hours later, Owen left the wardroom, fuming with anger.

He hadn’t at all meant to hurt his mother, but his concern for nothing but her wellbeing, the surgeon hadn’t exactly been careful with his words. After he’d pretty much told Evelyn that there was no way a young guy like John could sincerely like an older woman like her, his mother had been
extremely hurt and upset. Owen had instantly tried to fix it, but after putting himself in his mother’s shoes, he knew that it would take some time before Evelyn could get over his hurtful words.

He was so caught up with his own self loathing that the words he heard next completely surprised him.

“I like your mom. She’s funny and smart. I mean, I am not surprised.”

Owen noticed the expectant smile on Amelia’s lips and the joyful way she’d spoken her impressions. Her attitude completely contrasted with his sour mood and the idea that his mom probably had of him right now. Before he could notice it, the acid reply left his lips:

“Is there a point?”

Amelia heard the harsh tone in his voice, but decided to cut the guy some slack. She understood his discontentment had nothing to do with her.

“Owen, if it were my mom I would be thrown too.” The neurosurgeon confessed empathetically. “But from talking to her, it seems like they’re really in love.”

The chief of surgery took a deep breath, feeling in over his head. That entire situation was a circus and he couldn’t believe Amelia of all people had actually embarked on the nonsense.

“You spend fifteen minutes with her and you have this whole thing figured out,” He commented with sarcasm, too disappointed in his mother and in Amelia’s apparent gullibility. “I know nothing about this guy.” Owen affirmed with conviction. He might not have been the fairest, but at that moment, he didn’t care. His mother’s wellbeing was more important than anything and if there was the slightest chance he was being obtuse, Owen was willing to make a mistake because at that moment, the benefit of the doubt was too much to risk. He had to think about what was best for his mother and if the price to pay for his concern was a random guy was taking offense at Owen’s accusations, then so be it. Unconsciously taking out his frustration on the one person who had an unbiased view of the situation, Owen fired. “And you don’t know my mother, so please just stay the hell out of it.”

Amelia stayed quiet, letting the words sink in. The minute she realized how much of a jerk Owen was being, she turned around and left, too disappointed at him to believe his actions. It was one thing for Owen to be upset about the situation, but being concerned for his mother didn’t give him the right to treat her like that. Especially not when Amelia had nothing but the best of intentions.

As she went upstairs, Amelia’s thoughts wandered to the moments they’d shared earlier that morning. Your boss sounds like a jackass had been Owen’s playful words to express his displeasure with the fact she had to go, and he couldn’t allow her to stay. Before, Amelia had known he was joking.

But right now, after hearing him treat her with such hostility, those words started to make absolute sense.

Owen hovered by the hospital entrance, trying to recover from that rollercoaster of a day. It had started off too well, with him being woken up by Amelia’s soft caresses and affectionate smiles. Then, they’d made plans that had gotten him even more excited, but everything had changed when, around noon, he’d found out not only had his mother suffered a domestic incident, she was also involved in a potentially dangerous relationship with a guy Owen had never met and really couldn’t
trust.

Because Owen cared so much about his mother, he had acted really badly in face of the situation, hurting two people he really cared about. Thankfully, after controlling his temper, listening to John and reanalyzing the situation, Owen had become rational enough to see things through a new perspective. Of course it didn’t mean he was completely okay with the guy now, but at least the firefighter didn’t seem to be a conman or a schemer. Owen would make sure to keep a closer eye on his mother from now on, at the same time he was well aware she was a grown woman and was entitled to living her life to the fullest. As long as John didn’t give him a reason to change his mind, Owen wouldn’t intervene.

But now, after making sure his mom was okay under the careful watch of the trusted ICU staff, Owen wrapped up everything else at work to finally go home. And yet, he felt like he still owed one last apology. He and Amelia had agreed to see each other later that day, but Owen had a feeling he’d screwed everything up. Nonetheless, he was a man of integrity and wouldn’t leave without talking to her.

Seeing as the neurosurgeon had just made her way from the main lobby to the entrance doors, Owen hurried his pace to quickly catch up with her.

“Amelia, I am so…”

“Sorry?” Amelia asked, turning around to face him. She couldn’t believe how angry she was. “For being such a jackass?”

“And for how I spoke to you.” Owen humbly confessed, fully agreeing with her accusation. He had indeed treated her in an awful manner, when all she’d tried to do was to cheer him up. “I was out of line.”

“You think?” Amelia ironically provoked him, too surprised with his apology. For the past afternoon, she had been preparing to stay angry with him for quite a while. For as long as his attitude made her angry, Amelia wouldn’t feel sad, and that was her intention as she invariably didn’t make the situation any easier.

“I am sorry.” Owen empathically spoke the full sentence this time, adamant that she heard it from him. He meant every word and wanted her to know it.

“Good.” Amelia replied in a dismissive tone, ready to walk away. She had accepted Owen’s apology because she knew he was being sincere. Amelia wasn’t one to hold a grudge, but she also needed time to process the whole situation and get over her anger with him.

“Don’t go. Not like this.” Owen insisted, hoping there was a chance she would stay. He let out a heavy sigh, ready to make a confession that meant a lot more than just the newly found condition with his mother. “It just took me by surprise.” Owen tilted his head and looked at the woman in front of him very suggestively. It was all true. He was used to being on his own. Having someone offer words of comfort, someone he actually cared about and longed to be with was something entirely new. “I am not always good with surprises.”

The confession didn’t startle Amelia. She had quickly picked up on the fact that Owen was very much in control of everything around him. It probably made him feel vulnerable and exposed to have to relinquish some of that control.

And just like him, she was also too overwhelmed by the way things were progressing between them. Feelings that before didn’t exist today had proven to be remarkably present. And the reality of how
Owen could potentially hurt her feelings alarmed the neurosurgeon very much.

“Me either.” She shouted and let out a sigh of relief, feeling better just to have said it. She noticed Owen’s gaze and the way he was looking at her. Once again, she identified the sweetness and secure comfort in his expression. Who was she kidding? Of course Owen could potentially hurt her. But after seeing the loving look in his eyes, and thinking about everything she’d learned about him over the past weeks, she could never believe he would do it on purpose. For months now, Amelia had heard Owen and mostly, she’d watched him. She trusted her judgment. Relationships weren’t easy and at some point, they would hurt each other. But the best thing about it, what made this whole thing between them worth pursuing, was their capacity to come around, put themselves in each other’s places and truthfully apologize after being in the wrong.

With one last look, Amelia decided the expectation they’d been through for the past week was already causing too much friction. At first, the constant interruptions had been amusing. Now, they were simply annoying. Because of the scars in their past, they had wasted too much time carefully planning everything, trying to withhold control at all times, when truth was, they weren’t allowing themselves to make the most of what was growing between them could potentially become. With a discreet shrug of shoulders, that was much more about consternation than indifference, Amelia sheepishly suggested:

“Maybe we should just get over that.”

Owen smiled and read the message in her eyes. He was done planning and waiting and overthinking everything too. And Amelia was so amazing that she was willing to let what had happened that day be a part of the past, while they focused on a much more pressing present.

“I want to take you home;” Owen took a step towards her, testing her reaction. She didn’t flinch or flee. Instead, she stood her ground, carefully listening to his words as she sustained his gaze. “I want to take you home, turn our cell phones off, shut the blinds, lock the door… I….” Owen saw himself lost for words as he finally allowed himself to touch her, cupping her face with his hand. “I want you, Amelia.”

The way she put her hand on top of his and exhaled slowly, as if controlling her own pulse, made Owen realize she was giving him an affirmative answer.

“If we’re going to do that,” She spoke very seriously, looking deeply into his eyes. “I’m going to need a ride home.”

Owen chuckled, suddenly not feeling so nervous anymore. Her lighthearted joke had broken some of the tension and from that moment on, he knew what had happened in the halls of the hospital earlier that day had already been forgiven and forgotten. Holding out her hand in his, the chief of surgery guided her to his car.

They drove home only with the radio station playlist as a background noise. Amelia kept staring outside through her window, watching as the night sky became darker as clouds swiftly gathered. Earlier that day, she’d heard on the weather forecast that a storm was expected for that Friday.

“I really wanted to take you somewhere nice,” Owen broke the silence with a humble glance just as they were about to park the car. Planning too much really didn’t see to work out for them.

“You already are.” Amelia replied with simplicity, giving him a smile that proved she meant every word of what she was saying.

After noticing Amelia wasn’t at all the kind of person who was impressed by displays of wealth and
power, Owen felt his admiration for her growing even more. She was a unique woman and he wanted very much to make her happy.

As soon as they left the car, he walked around it, standing by her side before they could climb the steps up to his trailer.

“It looks like a storm is about to strike.” Owen noticed the color of the sky. A strong gush of wind passed through them, making Amelia’s cheeks get even rosier as her locks of brown hair fluttered with the air.

“It looks like it, indeed.” Amelia replied mysteriously. When Owen’s eyes left the clouds above their heads and met hers, he understood the real meaning of her words. An important milestone in their relationship was about to happen, and once it did, they couldn’t take that step back. By taking her to bed that night, Owen knew that they were about to share a lot more than just sex. The idea was frightening, but not because Owen was scared. Instead, he felt incredibly anxious and positively surprised that life had given him the chance to start over and actually build something better this time around.

Amelia noticed the familiar smile that formed on his face, but she was too overwhelmed by her emotions and his presence to formulate any questions. From that moment on, she would ignore all her rational thoughts, and would focus only on her feelings. Owen noticed the way she hesitated for a split second, only to finally sustain his gaze again. She was giving him another signal and he intended to fully respond to it.

Grabbing Amelia’s hand in his, Owen finally opened the door to his trailer, knowing that, in that moment, he was also opening the door to their future.
Part Fifteen

Chapter Summary

Timeline for Part 15:

This one sets during the ending of 11x17 and the beginning of 11x18. Basically, it’s Omelia’s first night together.

The Journey – Part Fifteen

Amelia felt the firm hold of Owen’s hand in hers as he led the way for them. Even though she’d been to his trailer a few times, up until now she had never actually gone inside it.

The interior actually surprised her, for Amelia had always believed it to be smaller and way more claustrophobic. After a quick look around, she realized it was also cozier than she’d initially imagined. The place was neatly kept, with a tasteful masculine decoration. A sugar brown couch facing a small table booth served as living room, whereas a wooden carved space with few cabinets, a refrigerator and a discreet stove made up a kitchen. As she expected, there wasn’t a lot of furniture or utensils around, which was great because the place didn’t look overcrowded and yet everything seemed practical and functional.

“It looks like you have everything you need in here.” Amelia casually commented with a smile once she was done studying the place. Obviously, the bedroom where they were invariably headed was located at the back of the trailer, but the neurosurgeon on purpose skipped looking directly to it during her inspection.

“I do.” Owen replied seductively, not bothering to look around. Instead, his eyes were focused on hers and the intensity of his gaze made Amelia’s breathing get heavier.

He noticed how anxious she looked. As she processed the obvious meaning of his reply, Owen kept carefully gazing at her, noticing the slight changes in her expression. Amelia was as adorable as she was smart, witty and absolutely delightful.

“This is the moment when you’d usually suggest a drink, right?” She asked with an apologetic hesitant smile, accidentally bumping her knee into one of the chairs as she turned around.

“Are you okay?” Owen went to her aid after hearing her low growl of pain.

Amelia smiled embarrassingly and nodded yes with her head. God, what did she have to be so clumsy? As if the situation wasn’t awkward enough.

Owen continued to study her expression. Instantly, he realized she’d probably brought up the subject of drinking because it was obviously a tension breaker. And she definitely looked tense. He knew in their case drinking was off limits but it didn’t bother him one bit.

“What is it?” He asked with a smile, taking off his coat and placing it on the couch. A loud thunder struck outside at that very moment and it didn’t go unnoticed to him the way Amelia slightly
flinched, obviously startled. Owen had met women before who forced reactions in order to appear more fragile and vulnerable, which was a rather annoying behavior in his opinion. But Amelia was so transparent that he could tell her responses were one hundred percent genuine. “Are you nervous?” Owen asked with the most caring eyes, looking at her with absolute enchantment.

Years later, Owen would come to find out that Amelia didn’t like roaring thunders for a reason. As a kid, after her father had died, she’d lie awake in stormy nights like that one, usually curled up with a blanket outside her mother’s bedroom, too afraid to ask to be comforted in fear of being mocked by her sisters. Owen didn’t have any idea of the proud little girl the woman standing in front of him had once been, and how she’d bravely faced her fears over and over throughout her life.

Owen also had no idea about the lengths of her suffering, the pain she’d had to endure and how much she’d lost. He didn’t know the specifics because he hadn’t yet had access to a lot of details. But something about the fire burning in her eyes day after day had already informed him of how proud, strong and courageous that beautiful woman was. Owen felt madly attracted to her, and not just physically. She was gorgeous to look at, but she also had the insane capacity to drive him crazy, to intellectually challenge and emotionally engage him in a way no one had ever done before. Her smiles had an enchanting effect, her actions had thriving power and most of all, the way she would look at him and communicate everything without saying a single word completely swept Owen off his feet.

He fully expected Amelia to deny his assumption she was nervous, or to try to distract him with some lighthearted banter. He had noticed she was always confident and sassy. She also flirted way better than Owen knew he ever could. But then the sincerity in her eyes as she sustained his gaze and nearly whispered a reply to his question immediately overthrew him.

“Yes.” Amelia apprehensively smiled, well aware of what was about to happen. A lot was at stake. They hadn’t even begun and she was already more anxious than she’d anticipated. At the same time she badly wanted to spend the night with him, Amelia also didn’t want to disappoint. And that feeling of insecurity had never happened before. She had always been overly confident with anything physical. But that night, Amelia had no idea what to expect, even though she was certain that that time with him would be like no other. And it was exactly the intensity of the unknown that made her knees feel so weak. Finally making eye contact with him, she breathed in and added, “of course I am nervous.”

The honesty with which she’d spoken the words were Owen’s undoing.

“Allie,” She heard the way he’d spoken her name and felt a shiver running down her spin. “Come here,” Owen gently commanded, extending a seductive invitation that was loaded with warmth and a lot of unspoken promises.

Amelia saw the desire burning in his eyes and couldn’t contain herself any longer. She desperately wanted to be touched by him. Too mesmerized to even speak, she slowly walked in his direction, suddenly awed when she found herself wrapped in a strong embrace. Owen’s mouth didn’t speak any more words. Instead, he leaned over her, capturing her lips with hungry desire. Amelia felt a wave of heat racing through her body as he deepened the kiss, his hands possessively grasping on the curve of her waist, pulling her against his solid chest until he finally started walking toward the bedroom taking her with him.

Owen only broke the kiss when they were already on the foot of the bed. He kept his forehead touched to hers and closed his eyes, deeply breathing her in. Her hands finally gathered the courage to touch him, and Owen felt her fingers slightly trembling as she worked on unbuttoning him. Amelia’s eyes darkened when she pulled the sides of his shirt apart, exposing his bare chest to her.
Owen’s entire body felt solid and warm, and she couldn’t fight the urge to touch him any longer. Stretching out her hand, Amelia splayed her palm on his chest, gently rubbing his warm skin while feeling the strong beats of his heart against her hand.

Unable to control himself, Owen cupped her bottom with his hands and pulled her against his rigid body, sending a clear message of how much he wanted her. He heard her gasp when his face buried on the crook of her neck, exploring the delicious smoothness of her skin against his lips. Owen kissed every bit of her shoulder and slim neck, slowly ascending, noticing she was losing control by the way she completely forgot about her task and instead of finishing with the button cases, grabbed his shirt for support when his lips finally touched the curve of her jaw.

His hands made their way up, squeezing and touching every tiny piece of the side of her hips, sending shock waves of dizzying sensations throughout her whole body. Very gently, he captured the hem of her shirt, gently sliding it up, taking his time to explore the delicious softness of her skin. Owen then gently stepped back, taking his time admiring her, noticing her slender neck, her graceful round shoulders and slim figure. Amelia was so tiny and yet so deliciously feminine that Owen wanted to lose himself in her, to explore every curve of her body with his hands and his lips until she was begging him to take her there.

“You’re so beautiful…” Owen whispered as he laid his hand against her flushed cheek and gently rubbed it with his thumb. His other hand captured the other side of her face, traveling back and forth to smooth her heavy cascades of brown hair. Owen’s lips touched her ear and he closed his eyes, losing himself in the mesmerizing sensations she was causing in him. “So beautiful…”

Amelia closed her eyes and held onto his arms for support when she once again felt the hunger of his lips against the column of her neck as Owen explored and kissed her sensitive skin with experienced ease. Instinctively, her fingers slid into the soft hair at his nape while her body adjusted to press against his, unknowingly enticing him even more. When his arms strongly closed around her with force, Amelia realized she was being picked up.

Once in his bed, she found herself among a pile of blankets and pillows, but all she could notice was Owen’s body next to her. With a few swift movements, she finally got rid of his shirt, feeling his mouth claiming hers with sweet intensity. Amelia’s fingers touched the side of his face when he tightened his arms around her, pulling her closer as he continued to steal her breath and every rational thought with his kisses.

Slowly, Amelia was discovering Owen’s incredible capacity to be, at the same time, possessively firm and roughly sweet. He leaned over her, forcing Amelia to lie on her back against the soft mattress and gently covered her body with his. At the same time he was obviously taking control of the situation, Owen would seduce her with delicious kisses and soft bites on her skin, using his lips, hands and tongue to arouse her to such point that Amelia could barely even think anymore.

Owen’s trails of kisses slowly descended from her jaw to her neck and then her chest. Amelia felt an urge of desire when his lips brushed on the sides of her breasts, exploring her as his unshaved beard gently scratched her sensitive skin, leaving tiny red marks wherever he touched her.

His lips had already made their way through her breasts when his right hand traveled from her sides to her abdomen, lazily rubbing her stomach. Owen pulled apart slowly, taking his time to admire the look of pleasure on her face while his palm gently struck the surroundings of her bellybutton. A smile of amusement and delight brightened his face when he noticed his splayed hand nearly covered the entire surface of her lower belly, exactly where he didn’t know their children would one day grow.

Swiftly, Owen unbuttoned her pants and slowly pulled them off, exposing her underwear to him.
With a pleased smile of satisfaction, he kissed her flat stomach just above her panties, noticing the shivers that assaulted her body as his fingers playfully brushed the inside of her thighs, gently forcing them apart. This was the first time Owen saw her undressed and the reality was even better than his fantasies. Amelia was absolutely gorgeous, all her features matching to perfection. Her hips were rounded but not large, her waist had a gentle curve that perfectly accommodated his touch. Her breasts were full and yet delicate; her legs shapely and feminine and her glorious porcelain skin was exactly as smooth as it seemed. Owen couldn’t get enough of touching her.

Very slowly, he pulled the straps of her bra through her arms. When the garment was removed completely, Owen delighted himself with the vision of her firm breasts, promptly committing to exploring them with his lips. Amelia involuntarily flinched when she felt the warmth of his tongue teasing her in such a sensitive spot. She arched her back, trying to regain some of her senses, too caught up with the sensations he was giving her that it was already too late when she realized Owen’s experienced fingertips were slowly stripping her panties down her thighs.

He noticed the alarm in her face and a proud grin of sheer satisfaction crossed his lips when he noticed she was blushing. He’d never taken Amelia for being shy, and yet she was constantly surprising him.

“I want to kiss you,” He repeated the words he’d already told her so many times. “Everywhere.” Owen added with a mischievous grin, at last ridding her of the last piece of clothing.

Amelia understood his meaning when, seconds later, Owen’s lips traveled from her breasts, tracing a path through the curves of her waist all the way down between her thighs. Her legs clutched to him once she felt his breathing hovering over her most sensitive spot, at the same time she was too overwhelmed with the emotions he was causing to have any responses that weren’t the natural desire of her body aching for his.

Amelia was already seizing with desire for him after the full journey his lips had traced all over her body, but she had no idea what was yet to come. With slow cruelty, Owen teased and brushed his lips against her, finally parting her legs to kiss her the most intimately, without any trace of shyness. Amelia gasped for air when she felt the contact of his tongue with her sensitive center, unconsciously running her fingers through his hair and pulling nearer as Owen completely overtook her body, dictating the rhythm.

At the same time she felt like she was dying with desire, Amelia was alarmed with her lack of control. Sex had always been a game she’d mastered and yet, right now, she felt like a beginner. The physical enjoyment wasn’t news, but the way her romantic feelings for Owen were mixing with the sensations his caresses and kisses were causing on her body and maximizing them, had thrown Amelia completely off her game, leading her to hold back in a way she’d never done before.

Up until now, she had never felt intimate enough with anyone to actually be self conscious about sex, or she simply hadn’t bothered to care about her partner’s impressions, making it easier to allow every response from her body without any trace of shyness or self doubt. But Owen was introducing her to a whole new level of exchanging and providing pleasure, and even though she was new to it, Amelia knew she was too far deep in the game to go back now.

And she didn’t want to go back.

All she wanted was Owen. Kissing her and touching her and saying all the lovely things he had been whispering in her ear all night, all the while making her feel the most special she had ever felt her entire life.

She was about to burst with passion when Owen suddenly lifted his head, taking his time to nibble
the inside of her thighs before making his way back to her breasts and then her lips. Amelia felt his hands once again running all over her curves before he finally fully pulled apart, looking into her eyes with an affectionate, lazy smile that made her feel even more cherished.

Without a word, her hands searched for his body. Owen felt a wave of satisfaction he had to struggle to contain when her delicate fingers gently got him rid of his clothes. After pulling down his pants, Amelia couldn’t help noticing the advantaged bulge outlined by his boxers. A few times before, when Owen had kissed her more passionately and covered her body with his, she had become aware of his weight and felt his hardening pressure against her stomach, invariably realizing that Owen was bigger than most guys.

And not only in height and muscular structure.

But, as her unusually unsteady hands pulled down his boxers while he kept busy kissing her neck, Amelia’s eyes involuntarily grew wide with a mix of shock, alarm and surprised admiration once she realized how advantaged in size he really was.

Owen became aware of the way she’d slightly frozen under his touch. Once he noticed the look of hesitation on her face, a smile of satisfaction and contained amusement crept on his lips. Owen wasn’t arrogant, but he was used to women having similar reactions once he was fully exposed to them for the first time. Up until that day, he had never really given it much thought other than feeling a standard masculine pride on being admired like that. This was their first time together and Owen was fully invested in making the most out of that experience for Amelia, but never before had he been with a woman as small and delicately shaped as Amelia. And after studying the expression on her face with attention, he realized why she looked so alarmed, almost fearful. She had probably also become well aware of their size difference. Feeling an instant urge to comfort her, Owen looked deeply into her eyes and reached forward, kissing the corner of her mouth before looking at her with a reassuring glance.

“Hey,” He gently tipped her chin up and made her look into his eyes, identifying the passion that was burning in hers. “Don’t worry, alright?” A warm, affectionate smile formed on his lips as he affirmed with conviction before leaning over to once again caress her, seeing she still looked agitated. “Sweetheart, I promise I am not going to hurt you.”

Amelia heard the soothing promise that was immediately followed by a gentle kiss, much different than the hungry ones he’d so far reserved for her. This kiss was meant to comfort, to reassure her. It messed with her emotions, but also turned her on in a way she couldn’t quite explain. It was like now, after hearing his sweet words, Amelia wanted him even more. She was surprised that Owen had been sensitive enough to notice her hesitation and that only made her surer they were doing the right thing. His consideration to actually pay attention to her emotions, identify her insecurities and actually step up to make her feel at ease her deeply touched her heart.

Amelia was then taken over by an indescribable sensation of security and affection. She saw in his eyes the way he was trying to make sure she was as comfortable as possible and realized that up until now, Owen had selflessly dedicated their entire time to fully to pleasing her. Despite the obviously alarming difference of sizes between their bodies, after the intensity with which Owen said the words, Amelia believed him. He was so gentle, so considerate… She couldn’t believe he would treat her any differently once they took the next step. Without planning, her lips captured his in a hungry kiss, yearning to give back as much pleasure as she was getting.

“Amelia,” Owen’s voice was husky when he felt her hand touching the muscles of his abdomen and his whole body tensed in anticipation. “You can’t look at me like that…” He took a breath, trying to recompose himself. “Because when you do…” His words trailed off as he was suddenly assaulted by
the intensity of her gaze deeply into his eyes. She had the surprising power to make him lose all control. Owen could not believe the natural ease with which she drove him crazy. And judging by the slightly mischievous look on her face, she had just realized it.

Slowly, he reached out and covered her hand with his, gently guiding the way for her until she was touching him exactly where he wanted to be touched. Owen closed his eyes and held his breath, controlling every cell in his body to prevent him from climbing on top of her and ending that sweet agony.

When he opened his eyes, Amelia’s hands traveled to his shoulders as she encouraged him to finally cover her body with his. Automatically, her hands ran on the full extension of his arms to ultimately wrap around his neck and pull him down against her. Owen once again committed to kissing her neck and lips. He’d made sure she was ready for him and as of now, couldn’t wait any longer.

Amelia felt her heart leaping with a mixture of pleasure, desire and insecurity to let go completely when she felt his maleness pressing against the middle of her legs, tempting to enter her but holding back in an agonizing delirious torture.

“Tell me when,” Owen gently brushed his lips to her ear, watching as Amelia closed her eyes and inhaled deeply when he continued to tease her with his hips. Beneath him, her body felt even smaller and he knew he couldn’t hold it any longer either. Her locks of brown hair were gorgeously spread across the sheets, her breathing was rapid and shallow, her pupils dilated with desire and pleasure. She was wonderful, in every sense of the word. And Owen wanted to give her everything.

He supported his weight on his elbows, carefully placing them on each side of her shoulders to still explore her mouth at his will. He wanted to see him reach it, to hear her moan his name in desire as she clung to him begging him to take her to the peaks of pleasure.

“I want you,” Owen kissed her, nipping her lower lip and then claiming her mouth on another hungry kiss.

Amelia knew she was imprisoned by him and the newly found situation was surprisingly exciting at the same time it was comforting. Not only he was drowning her in pleasure with his intense stares and reassuring words, Owen had the ability to make her feel secure inside the strength of his arms. Gently striking his nape with her fingertips, unknowingly turning him on, Amelia whispered back:

“Now…” She clutched him against her, closing her eyes as she tried to resist the passion that was overtaking her. Owen’s face was hardened with passion, his shoulders were strained as he contained himself and his breathing was rapid and shallow. Amelia parted her legs and on purpose wrapped them around his hips, clinging to him with force. “I want you now.”

It was all the encouragement Owen needed. He had promise her he wasn’t going to hurt her and even though he was dying to bury himself into her, he kept his word. Even though Amelia’s body was fully prepared to receive him, Owen plunged into her partway, slowly easing out and in again until she was arching her hips forward, clearly demanding more. The moment he fully entered her, he saw the way Amelia gasped, extended her neck and held her breath, as she let out a groan of pleasure and apprehension.

Fueled by her reaction, Owen withdrew and then drove deeper into her, feeling her tightening warmth around him as her thighs fiercely pulled his hips, reaching out for what he desperately wanted to give her. He alternated slow and faster strokes, watching with delight as she matched his rhythm, pulling apart just in time to capture her in another breathtaking kiss, and another, and another…
“I want to see you get there, Amelia,” He whispered in her ear, watching as she slowly surrendered but for some reason still didn’t let go completely. “Don’t hold back any more, darling…” Owen added, bending over and gently crushing her body with his as he went from a slow, torturing pace to a fierce, steadier one.

Amelia felt the entirety of his body covering hers, his muscular thighs pressed against her hips, his chest and broad shoulders touching the full extension of her abdomen, breasts and arms. Owen was so committed and he took her in such a gentle, selfless way, that the thought was more than she could bear. Her emotions mixed with the inebriating sensations his body was giving hers, making it all burst into one blissful sensation. Realizing she’d already lost control, Amelia finally let go completely, closing her eyes at the same time she clung to his shoulders. Her entire body quivered with pleasure and her muscles contracted involuntarily as a shivering ecstasy assaulted her every cell.

When she groaned his name, Owen brought his head up just in time to see her face being taken over by an inebriating sensation of bliss as her body continuously contorted underneath his. A combination of pride, satisfaction and determination led him to hold her even tighter, silencing her moans with a kiss as he continued to move his hips against hers, soon after reaching his peek while she still enjoyed hers.

Very slowly, their sweaty bodies slowed the rhythm and soon enough, all that was left for Owen to admire was the flushed look on her red cheeks. Smiling affectionately, he partially rolled to his side, using an elbow to support his weight as he bent over and gently kissed her hot cheek, satisfied by the way she lazily threw her arms around his neck after turning sideways to face him.

“That was…” Amelia struggled to catch her breath, but her voice trailed off when their eyes met. Suddenly, she wasn’t feeling so embarrassed or self-conscious anymore.

Owen’s breathing was heavy but in a matter of seconds, he looked fully recovered. She widened her eyes, about to say something else, but was suddenly startled to hear his response:

“It’s not over.” Owen’s hoarse voice promised her as he rolled over to his back, pulling her to his top and kissing her lips with renovated vigor, starting all over again.

An hour later, the rain was still falling heavily against the metal walls of the trailer when Amelia was finally able to catch her breath. A languid smile lingered on her lips when she felt Owen’s hand lazily thrown over her waist.

She was lying on his bed facing him, but Owen’s eyes were closed. She didn’t quite notice the moment he’d fallen asleep, but it didn’t bother her one bit. A loud thunder struck and she shivered, involuntarily getting closer to him. His presence was comforting and she took pride in realizing he was completely worn out.

Without thinking, Amelia’s fingertips touched the outline of his jaw. She slowly traced a path, rejoicing in the roughness of his trimmed beard beneath her skin. A wide smile formed on her lips when Amelia’s fingers gently slid through the extension of his eyebrows, and she delighted himself with the vision of his strawberry blonde eyelashes.

Owen had eyelashes too thick and long to make any woman envious. Amelia had no idea why, but the realization amused her very much. She was still lost in thought when her hand was suddenly captured, making her giggle when she felt the delicate touch of his teeth around her fingers.

“What are you doing?” He asked with a corner smile, his voice still husky after their amazing
“Nothing,” Amelia instantly replied, a guilty smile hovering on her lips as he slowly released her fingers from his grasp. “I was just thinking.”

“Yeah?” He raised an eyebrow, intrigued. The rain outside falling against the trailed provided a soothing noise and Owen felt so relaxed and blissfully satisfied that he couldn’t help almost falling asleep. Amelia’s gentle caresses had also served as an amazing distraction. “And what exactly are you thinking about?” He provoked her with a smile, openly flirting.

Amelia took a deep breath and looked at him with the same provocative expression and mischievous grin.

“I was thinking…” She stared deeply into his eyes, distractedly touching his jaw as she nudged his nose with hers, apparently about to bait him. “That the skies are falling outside.” She chuckled, too happy to care to bother it. “Just imagine the amount of mud I’ll get on my boots from walking here up to the house.”

Owen’s laughter with her witty response echoed inside the small bedroom, contaminating her. Amelia felt his arm tightening its grasp on her back and pulling her closer, until her breasts were again crushed against his chest.

“Well, then don’t go.” Owen proposed while seductively staring into her eyes. “Stay,” his hand softly caressed a loose lock of brown hair, gently placing it behind her ear. “Sleep with me tonight.”

Amelia was so mesmerized by the intensity of his look and the unspoken words in his eyes that she instinctively nodded yes, happy beyond words that he had asked her to spend the night.

“I’ll make you coffee in the morning,” Owen bargained, even though she had already agreed.

“I’ll hold you to that promise,” Amelia offered him an adorable smile before he pulled the covers on the two of them, instantly embarking on a restoring sleep.

When Owen opened his eyes the following day, the dark clouds had already given room to a few shy rays of sunlight that gently invaded the room through the window. He took his time adjusting to the light and finally when Owen was fully awake, he allowed himself to go over the events of the previous day.

Sleeping beside him was a woman who’d just given him one of the best nights of his life. Owen had had good sex, great sex even. He’d had situations when his body had been fully numbed after satisfying hookups. But the day before had been a totally different experience.

Amelia Shepherd had the power not only to seduce him with her looks, touches and gorgeous feminine shape, but she also had the unusual power to stir up emotions that went from admiration to protectiveness. This was the first time Owen felt equally physically and mentally attracted to the same woman.

Everything that was happening between them was too new, and yet already too intense. Now, after carefully processing all of that, he finally understood why Amelia had probably held back a bit the night before. Judging by what he knew about her personality, Owen expected her to be more impulsive, to take more risks and to dive with her head into the new. But of course she had been smarter than that. Owen had no idea what kind of experiences she’d had in the past but it was obvious Amelia knew pain. And if she knew pain, there was a great chance she also knew loss or
heartbreak. Or both. And he was sure that, just like him, she was well aware that the more you had, the more you had to lose. So it was actually quite understandable that she guarded her feelings when not even the two of them were sure what that happening meant.

With a heavy frown on his face, Owen propped his head on his left elbow, trying to recollect what had led them there. The trauma surgeon knew that exposing his heart to a possible new disappointment was a big risk. Every relationship he’d had in the past had failed. So there was no reason to expect this one to be different.

But then his eyes caught sight of the adorable angles on her naked back, the shadow of a smile that still lingered on her lips even though she was asleep, the way she curled up to a pillow like a child seeking comfort and security… And Owen couldn’t help himself.

He simply couldn’t stay away.

He wanted her. He’d had her. And now that he’d found out how amazing being with her was, Owen knew in his heart that one night was never going to be enough.

Reaching forward, his fingers gently brushed her brown locks. Owen leaned over, inebriating himself with the scent of vanilla on her hair. He was still idly considering his newly found realizations when, at the touch his hand, her eyes slowly opened and a smile instantly formed on her face when she saw him.

“Hi.”

Owen smiled back at her, mesmerized by the color of her eyes in the morning light. They looked like liquid silver, and instilled so much affection in him that Owen felt overwhelmed.

“Did you sleep well?” He asked, still caressing her. Memories of the previous night assaulted his mind and once he was reminded of the smooth texture of her skin, Owen couldn’t fight the urge to gently brush her naked back with his free hand.

Amelia felt a wave of electrical pleasure running through her body at the first contact of his touch and gently lifted her shoulders, still lying on her stomach.

“I slept very well,” She confessed, biting her lower lip. The night before, she had been busted admiring Owen while he’d been asleep, and now, she’d just caught him doing the same thing. “What are you thinking about?” Amelia asked with a teasing voice, making Owen chuckle once he realized the reference she was making to the previous evening.

He was thinking that she was gorgeous. That he wanted to spend the whole day in bed with her, talking, getting to know her and then losing himself in her body many times over. But on top of everything, that he couldn’t wait to fall in love with her, because at some level, Owen had a feeling that that was inevitably already happening.

“I’m thinking that I owe you that coffee I promised,” He settled for saying, satisfied with the smile that formed on her lips.

“You do,” Amelia replied with an encouraging smile, watching as he leaned over and kissed her forehead before getting up and out of bed.

While Owen put his underwear back on and dug through the drawers in search of something else to wear, Amelia delighted herself with the vision of his bare back. His body was as beautiful, powerful and masculine as his personality. Owen’s muscular thighs and calves were delightful to watch, and Amelia realized that even though the previous night had already been amazing, she was far from
satisfied. There was too much of Owen that she yet longed to touch and explore.

“Wait,” She bit her lower lip in provocation, using her best seductive stare as she watched him turn around to face her. “Come here. I have to tell you something.”

Owen frowned, intrigued. But when he approached the bed, she immediately pulled him down, making her crash on her top. Without another word, Amelia kissed him with hunger and it didn’t take long for Owen to realize what she was trying to say.

This time around, Amelia took initiative, surprising him with her playfulness. Owen was already mesmerized enough, but when he was again fully inside her, about to lose control, their eyes met and something magical happened.

Amelia smiled, and for a second it was like time had frozen. And Owen instantly knew. The sight of her dimples made him absolutely sure that the inevitable had already happened. He’d fallen head over heels for that amazing woman and now she had all the power to absolutely rule his heart.

It was past eight in the morning when Amelia finally let him get off the bed. Sooner after, a delicious smell of coffee took over the inside of the trailer. Feeling energized even before the hot drink, Amelia got up and threw on her panties and the first piece of clothing she found.

“It stopped raining.”

Owen turned around, alarmed by her unexpected presence in his kitchen. The first thing he noticed was she was wearing his blue button up shirt, and how it adorably engulfed her petite frame.

“Yes,” He gave her one approving look, too distracted with her figure to come up with a coherent answer. “It was a bad storm, but it’s gone now.”

“It was not bad,” Amelia smiled into his eyes, approaching him. “It was a perfect storm.”

Owen’s eyes gleamed with satisfaction when he interpreted the meaning of her words and answered with a gentle peck on her lips. After that, he got busy with the coffeemaker, watching as she stood by his side.

“Are you going to the hospital today?”

“Not for work,” He replied with a satisfied smile, pouring coffee in two separate mugs. “What about you? Are you going in?”

“Nope,” Amelia’s face lit up as she heard and told the answers she’d been hoping for. It was Saturday morning and even though she had a pile of paperwork to revise, there was nothing scheduled for her to do at the hospital, and her next shift wasn’t until the following week. “I can work from home.”

“Good,” Owen’s smile disappeared behind his coffee but his eyes were still bright with happiness as he took a sip after handing her one of the mugs. Amelia drank the hot liquid, feeling its warmth spreading through her body as her senses became more alert. “Actually, I was supposed to go meet with the school principal today but she rescheduled her visit for Monday.”

“The school principal?” Amelia asked with an amused, mocking tone. “What was it this time, were you caught cheating on your exam?” She teased, watching as Owen cracked up laughing. “Did you forget to hand in your homework?”

“I never cheated on my exams,” Owen informed her with a mysterious darkness in his eyes. “And
actually, for your information the middle school principal has requested a field trip for the seventh graders and I told her she can’t send everyone at once, so we were going to meet and figure out how it’s going to work out.” He told her, not really interested in the subject. A much more pressing matter was drawing his attention because Amelia’s eyes were glowing with pleasure and he loved to realize she was willing to spend time in his company.

“Of course you didn’t cheat on your exams, did you?” Amelia didn’t let the subject go and teased him, biting her bottom lip as she held her mug with both hands. “You were the good kid with the clean record, I bet.” She laughed, clearly mocking him.

“I was an athlete,” Owen informed her defensively, like that already said it all. Automatically, he thought back to his high school days, when he’d played soccer and football. “If I so much stepped out of line, I could risk being kicked off the team,” He explained, seeing on her teasing smile that she wasn’t buying it. “Okay, fine, I wasn’t very wild, but in my defense, I had a very strict mother.”

Amelia burst out laughing, contaminating him with her good humor. Seeing the look of happiness on her face made Owen forget all about his coffee, and he placed both his hands on her waist, giving her a gentle squeeze before pulling her nearer.

“She seemed adorable,” Amelia affirmed with conviction, meaning every word. She wasn’t the kind of person who’d pay fake compliments just to impress a guy and the honesty was evident on her face. “Are you going to see her today?”

“Yes, I am,” Owen took his hand to her face and gently brushed her cheek before informing her, “they probably won’t discharge her from the ICU for a couple of days, though, so it’s not like I can stick around for too long,” he added, genuinely bothered by the fact he couldn’t stay with his mother while she recovered. Even though Owen was the chief of surgery, it didn’t give him special privileges and staying inside the ICU for long hours as a visitor definitely wasn’t advisable, especially since he wasn’t the one who ran the unit.

“I hope she recovers fast,” Amelia said sincerely. “I didn’t spend too much time with her but it was enough to give the impression you two are close.”

“We are,” Owen smiled, impressed by her perceptiveness. “I mean, she’s always been there for me in a way I could never explain,” he added, thinking with regret about how he’d kept his distance from his mother ever since he’d returned to Seattle after the war. Thankfully, after his divorce, Owen had reconnected with her and he found out that having his mother’s presence in his life actually made him feel a lot more at peace. He noticed the look of approval on Amelia’s face as she attentively listened to his words and a curious frown formed on his forehead. “What about you? Are you close to your mom?” He asked, finally taking the final sip from his mug. “I actually met her once, did I ever tell you?

“You did?!” Amelia grinned with a mix of disbelief and amusement. “Oh my God, I can’t believe it.” Her eyes glowed with curiosity. “When was that?!”

Owen chuckled and on purpose took his time replying, watching as her entire face contorted with contained expectation.

“She was here to see your brother a few years ago, I didn’t know you at the time.” He finally confessed. “I met her very briefly but it was nice knowing she was in the military too.”

“Yeah.” Amelia agreed with a sad grin. “She was a navy nurse for twenty five years.”

“Oh,” Owen’s face lost its smile as he looked at her with sympathy.
“No, no,” Amelia quickly read the meaning of his expression and explained. “She never deployed after Derek was born. She used to work in a small navy medical post in New York and you know… basically be a full time mom.”

“That’s good,” Owen half affirmed, half asked, expecting her to share more about her childhood.

“Yeah, I guess,” Amelia quickly dismissed the subject. She was too happy at the moment and definitely didn’t want to visit old memories about her broken childhood. “So, at what time do you have to go?”

“In about an hour, I think,” He replied, thinking about the ICU visiting hours as he watched her as step up to wash the mugs they’d used.

“Alright, so there is time for breakfast then,” She said excitedly, hoping for a change of subject. “How about waffles?”

Owen smiled and thought back about the day he’d come to the house looking for Derek and found her home alone instead. Amelia had delighted him throughout the evening with her company, and even watched the game with him. At some point, she’d made waffles, despite it being eight pm. And the two of them had an amazing evening.

“Sounds perfect.” Owen replied with a grin.

For the next half hour, Owen had a great time hovering around her, kissing her neck and embracing her waist from behind as Amelia prepared the food. Too soon for his taste, he watched as Amelia changed back to her clothes from the previous evening, unknowingly causing a new wave of electrical frenzy run over Owen’s entire body.

“Ok, so I am going to go,” She informed him with a discreet smile. They’d shared amazing hours together and he had made Amelia feel completely at ease. But now came the awkward part of parting ways and since she usually snuck out the window or left before the night was over, Amelia had little to no experience with saying bye.

“Okay,” Owen reached out to touch her, genuinely sad to see her leave. In normal occasions, he would do everything to spend the entire day in her company but unfortunately, his mother needed him more at the moment. “I really wished I could spent the day with you,” He said, hoping she believed him.

“Don’t worry about that,” Amelia placed her hands on his chest, rubbing him affectionately. She reciprocated his desire but the fact Owen was passing on the chance to stay all day in bed with her to go see his sick mother made her admire him even more. “There will be time.” She informed him, gingerly hesitating before finally staying on the tip of her toes to steal a kiss.

Owen quickly got caught up with her action. He deepened the kiss and ran his hands all over her hips and thighs, finally cupping around her buttocks and pulling her closer against his body.

“Go,” He laughed moments later, gently releasing her. “Go now before I change my mind and take you back to that bedroom.”

“Would that be so bad?” Amelia tormented him, laughing with amusement as she succeeded in dodging his following attempt at capturing her.

She was already halfway through the path back to the main house when Owen’s voice broke the silence.
“Amelia?”

She stopped walking and turned around, eagerly listening to him with a wide smile on her lips.

“Yes?”

“Have dinner with me tonight,” Owen proposed, delighted to see the satisfied look on her face. He had a lot of expectations for their next encounters and didn’t want to waste any more time.

“Yes.” She managed to once again enchant him, giving Owen one last look before finally moving on to the house.

Owen smiled to himself and went back inside to change, well aware that if the anticipation for their first night together had completely messed with his head, it was very likely that the expectation for the second one might actually make him completely lose his mind.
Part Sixteen

Chapter Summary

This one sets entirely through the events of episode 11x18. A lot of fluff, romance and even Derek x Omelia coming your way.

The Journey – Part Sixteen

Amelia spent the majority of her afternoon inside her bedroom, catching up on paperwork. She was taking nearly twice as much time to go through everything than she generally would and the reason behind that distraction was very obvious.

No matter how much she tried to focus, whenever she blinked, the neurosurgeon caught herself thinking about Owen and the amazing time they’d had together. Memories of the things he’d done to her body the previous night still made Amelia shiver. She just couldn’t wait to see him again. Unconsciously, her eyes traveled through the room until they met the infamous painting Owen had bought at the auction.

Instantly, a dazzling smile lit up her entire face as she kept distractedly gazing at the unusual portrait. The image completely stood out next to the rest of the decoration, but Amelia didn’t mind it one bit. She was going to keep it on her wall because every time she looked at it, it reminded her of one of the happiest evenings she’d ever had.

Her thoughts were still wandering far when three knocks on her door brought her back to reality.

“Come in.”

Less than a second later, Amelia watched as her brother quickly slipped into her room with a smile on his face. She couldn’t ignore the obvious fact that Derek looked happy. Even though she’d been on her own all afternoon, she knew that while Meredith was at work, her brother had spent time with his kids and that was probably adding to his good mood.

“Hey, are you okay? You’ve been locked here all day,” Derek started but before Amelia could open her mouth to reply, he added, “Look, if you’re not busy, could you watch the kids tonight?” After seeing his sister was about to ask, the neurosurgeon proceeded, “it’s just that I feel Meredith and I could use some time alone to properly talk… you know? And I feel like if we sit down at a restaurant or something, we will be less distracted than here at the house.”

“I guess,” Amelia carefully replied, fighting an internal battle. At the same time she didn’t want to say no to her brother, for she truly believed he and his wife had a lot to catch up on and some time off would do them good, she also didn’t want to stand Owen up. “Hm, at what time are you guys going?”

“I don’t know,” Derek shrugged, knowing he hadn’t even discussed it with Meredith yet. “Wait, you’re not on call tonight, are you?”

“No, but I…”
“Good,” Derek interrupted her with a silly smile, obviously too happy with his plans to notice Amelia’s slightly confused expression. “Thank you so much for doing this, Amy, I owe you one.”

And once again before Amelia could say anything, he left the room.

Roughly half an hour later, the young neurosurgeon was still pondering what to do. At the same time she couldn’t see a way out of her brother’s request because she knew he needed that time out and Amelia had always found it hard to say no to Derek, she also really didn’t want to cancel on Owen.

Ever since she’d made it back home that morning from his trailer, Amelia had been anticipating the moment when they would be together again. Memories of the previous evening returned to her mind and she found herself smiling like a fool, nervously playing with the phone in her hands.

Choosing to be practical, Amelia took a breath and anxiously typed a quick message asking Owen what time he’d planned to see her for dinner. Two minutes that felt like an eternity passed before her screen buzzed with his response.

Amelia bit her bottom lip and tried to concentrate on a solution. She was determinate to see Owen again that evening but she couldn’t bail out on babysitting her niece and nephew. Seconds later, the solution popped on her mind and it felt so obvious that she chuckled alone in her room when she finally realized it.

Derek and Meredith had already left the house that evening when the doorbell rang. Feeling a wave of excitement run through her body before her mind could even process what was going on, Amelia made her way to the door, unconsciously holding a breath.

“Hey,” She greeted Owen with a smile, noticing his face lit up after seeing her.

Their eyes met and Amelia suddenly felt like a teenage girl all over again. It was incredibly intimidating to be facing the man who’d made her scream his name with passion just the night before, but somehow the neurosurgeon wasn’t quite embarrassed. Instead, her heart felt swollen and she had to fight a sudden urge to throw herself in his arms and enjoy his undivided attention.

“Hi,” Owen whispered back with an affectionate grin, promptly walking into the house and closing the door after them when Amelia invited him in.

He found Zola and Bailey already in their pajamas, sitting on a mat on the floor surrounded by blocks, dolls and other toys.

“I am so sorry I had to cancel our dinner out tonight,” Amelia spoke and in her tone, Owen noticed she genuinely regretted changing their plans. “My brother just caught me completely off guard but I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

Her concern in keeping her word touched Owen and he approached her, unable to spend another minute without touching her. His hand gently reached out for hers and Amelia quickly accepted his hold.

“It’s okay, you have nothing to be sorry about,” Owen assured her. It was obvious she hadn’t used the kids as an excuse to bail out on spending time with him otherwise she wouldn’t have invited him over.

“I know spending the evening in the company of small children is probably not what you had in mind,” She added. After the previous evening, she yearned to spend time alone with Owen and
imagined he probably felt the same way.

“It’s been a while since I last saw these two,” He casually commented, looking from Amelia to the brother and sister distractedly playing with their toys. “I don’t mind it all.” Owen looked back at Amelia and smiled. “Have they had dinner yet?”

“Yes,” Amelia replied with a satisfied smile, watching as Zola got up and came in their direction, demanding attention.

For the following hour, Amelia watched as Owen interacted with the kids. It was obvious they knew him and felt comfortable in his presence, which was quite unusual. When she was in her latest teen years, two of Amelia’s sisters already had children so she’d come to know how toddlers were usually very intimidated by grown men, but Owen had his own particular way of being caring at the same time he inspired trust.

“Zola seems to really like you,” Amelia smiled at him after the little girl spent the previous twenty minutes monopolizing Owen’s attention and then ran to grab a book she insisted he read for her.

“I used to babysit her sometimes when she was younger,” He explained with a serene expression, looking up from the blocks Bailey was giving him. “Before you came here, they didn’t have a lot of help with the kids.” The trauma surgeon added, referring to Derek and Meredith.

“I thought Cristina used to be here all the time,” Amelia frowned, thinking back of what she’d heard from her sister in law during the past few months. Every now and then, in casual conversations, Meredith would mention that whenever she and Derek were busy, Zola would stay with Cristina.

“She didn’t really like kids,” Owen informed her with an evasive grin before looking back at the blocks and then at Bailey.

Amelia noticed the subject clearly made him uncomfortable, so she decided not to prolong it.

“Well,” She smiled mischievously when another trail of thoughts assaulted her mind. “I said Zola really likes you and I guess it’s pretty obvious why.”

“Yeah?” Owen looked up, finding it amusing when he saw the distinguished playfulness on Amelia’s face. “Why?”

“Because that’s the effect you have on us Shepherd girls,” Amelia shamelessly flirted, enjoying the way Owen’s face slightly turned red even though he tried to act normally. “Zola is not the only one whose heart you stole.”

“Oh, really?” Owen chuckled, feeling flattered with the obvious meaning of her words.

“Really.” Amelia smiled into his eyes and brought her head closer, nearly touching his nose with hers. The last thing she saw was a spark of delight on his face before Owen gently covered her lips with his.

The trauma surgeon felt his senses instantly igniting when Amelia completely embarked on the kiss, placing her hand on his nape to pull him closer. Owen loved it that she had no reservations to touch him. In fact, she was actually the most affectionate woman he’d ever met and he loved that about her. The way her fingers idly caressed the back of his head as she leaned over to deepen the kiss made Owen feel like at that moment she held all the power over him.

The sounds of Zola’s muffled footsteps returning to the living room made the two of them break apart. After the young girl made Owen read her three different books, she finally settled for being
taken to bed upstairs. Amelia carried a half asleep Bailey while her niece excitedly led the way, at the same time Owen went to the kitchen with the promise of making them something to eat to replace the dinner they’d had to cancel.

The kids were so tired from a full day of playing that they dozed off in a matter of minutes. When Amelia finally returned downstairs, she entered the kitchen to find an adorable scene in front of her eyes.

Owen looked completely distracted as he worked on something that looked like tomato sauce. The smell was delicious and Amelia couldn’t stay away much longer. Silently entering the room, she stood right behind him and sneakily hugged his waist from behind. His obvious surprise made her chuckle with amused delight.

“This is revenge,” she playfully told him, still not letting go of his solid torso. “You’re always scaring me and sneaking up on me.” Amelia smiled as she looked up with her neck turned sideways, meeting his eyes. Owen had the annoying habit of surprising her and he always found it funny the way she easily got startled. “This is so you’ll know what it feels like.”

“So, it feels this good?” Owen turned around in her embrace and quickly wrapped his own arms around her, engulfing her with his shadow. “I had no idea,” he returned her smile, clearly referring to her touch and not the way she had surprised him.

“Very clever,” the neurosurgeon unknowingly enchanted him with her dimples, unable to believe how much she was enjoying herself that evening.

They ate their meal at the small table by the kitchen. Amelia knew it wasn’t necessarily what Owen had first had in mind when he’d invited her to dinner, but she could see he was having a good time anyway. A few minutes later, Owen went back home, but not without telling Amelia he absolutely expected her to join him after Derek and Meredith got home.

And it didn’t take five minutes after her brother and wife had turned in for the night for the youngest neurosurgeon to sneak outside. She couldn’t help keeping a smile on her face throughout the short journey from the porch to the trailer, eagerly crossing the yard in the darkness to be with Owen.

After a quick knock on the door, he welcomed her with an embrace that swept Amelia off her feet. She tried to verbally greet him, but Owen seized control of her lips, hungrily kissing her with the desire of someone who’d waited all day to do it.

Finally, he pulled apart and allowed Amelia to catch her breath. When he turned around to close the door after them, she noticed the buzzing sound coming from the TV and got distracted with the noise until she sensed his presence behind her back.

“You took too long,” Owen huskily whispered, cornering her between the kitchen counter and his own body. Amelia felt his fingers unceremoniously digging through the hair at her nape and pulling her locks to the side so that her neck was fully exposed. At the same his lips explored the sensitive region below her ear, his free hand slipped inside her shirt, drowning Amelia in a mix of sensations that completely numbed her every rational thought.

Owen felt his own breathing get heavier as he gently squeezed the soft skin of her stomach beneath his open palm. He kissed the column of her neck, watching as she shivered under his touch. Owen couldn’t wait to have her naked in his arms again. Amelia was so adorable, so delightfully feminine and delicately shaped that he couldn’t help himself every time he saw her. Especially not when she so eagerly returned his advances, melting at his touch and encouraging him to keep going as she looked back at him with those insanely gorgeous eyes.
He left a trail of gentle bites and intense kisses on the curve of her neck and shoulder, smirking with pride when he noticed the rosy marks at the exact spots his lips had touched. Amelia had gone from once holding back her desire for him to now completely giving in to the reactions he provoked in her. Her abandon only made her look even more vulnerable, inspiring a sense of protection in him like no other Owen had ever felt before. He knew she was completely at his mercy and that only made him even more determined to give her everything she deserved and shield her from any harm.

He was still exploring her neck with his lips and her waist with his touch when her hand reached out for his. In an unplanned gesture, Amelia intertwined her fingers with his own, making Owen lose all control as he found in her trust the most amazing booster for his desire.

The way Amelia was selflessly embarking on the experience drove him crazy. Owen turned her around in his arms, cupping her bottom with his hands and roughly pulled her against his body, knowing she could tell how much he wanted her by the reaction of his body pressed against her belly.

“I was just about to go take a shower,” Owen informed her, between kisses. “Get in the shower with me.”

“What?” Amelia oscillated her level of consciousness, feeling his fingers sliding up on her back beneath her shirt. She wasn’t sure whether he’d really suggested what she thought to have heard or if it’d just been her imagination.

“The shower,” Owen whispered against her lips, guiding her through the small corridor inside the trailer. “I want you in it with me.”

Amelia didn’t protest and in a matter of seconds, she was unbuttoning his pants at the same time he got her rid of her clothes. She tied her hair up in a bun, losing her shoes immediately before getting into the shower. The cubicle looked incredibly small, making her wonder how Owen alone could manage his way in there, but once she joined him, she discovered why he’d thought it would be a good idea in the first place.

The lack of space forced them to touch through the entire extension of her bodies and the steamy hot water falling on her skin added to the delightful sensations his lips and hands were causing. Since Owen had just turned on the shower, the walls around them still felt cold and in order to avoid them, Amelia pressed her body harder against his, watching with delight the way his body immediately responded.

“Wait,” She wickedly stopped him from kissing her again. “You said you were going to take a shower,” She bit her bottom lip, stretching out a hand to grab a bottle of shampoo.

“Amelia…” Owen groaned, anticipating what she was about to do.

The combination of mischief and affection in her eyes seduced Owen and he stopped resisting, letting her have her way with him. Soon enough, her fingernails were playfully scratching his scalp, sending a fit of shivers through his spine.

“What is this stuff?” Amelia grabbed the bottle and quickly inspected it. “It smells so good, I will…”

Her words were interrupted when Owen stole her breath with another demanding kiss. The bottle quickly fell to the ground when her hands traveled from his hair to face. Amelia didn’t take long to wrap her arms around his shoulders, pulling him nearer at the same time Owen placed his hands on the curves of her waist.
“I love the color of your hair,” Amelia confessed, tenderly caressing the back of his head with her fingertips. “Sometimes it looks blonde, sometimes it looks…”

Owen’s chuckle interrupted her again but Amelia didn’t mind. She watched as he touched his forehead to hers, intimately gazing into her eyes. Owen couldn’t remember ever being treated with such affection before. He’d heard compliments from other women through his entire life, but he could nearly always identify the hidden agenda behind them. They’d usually say what they thought he wanted to hear or give him some kind of empty praise just to achieve something.

But Amelia every now and then would make these adorable confessions that touched his heart. Her words were so spontaneous and genuine that Owen knew she didn’t spend a single minute rehearsing a speech just to get into his good graces. She would simply say what was on her mind and the truthful way she stated how much he pleased her made Owen happier than any other compliment he’d ever gotten. Amelia didn’t pretend to be something she was not, and the realization filled him with joy. Because she didn’t need to change, neither Owen needed to adapt, seeking for a version of his expectations instead of the real one. She attracted him the exact way she was, with all her flaws, qualities and baggage.

He spent the following minutes laughing with amusement as Amelia continued on teasing him with her hands filled with soap. Owen let her rub his arms and shoulders, watching with delight as the water cascade smoothly ran through her breasts. Her small hands made their way to his chest, involuntarily making Owen contract his muscles in response to her touch. The sight of her naked body turned him on like nothing else and before he realized what he was doing, Owen had already turned her around, anxious to return what she’d done to him.

Using a handful of shower gel, he explored every bit of her body, taking his time especially on her breasts after noticing the pleased look on her face as he touched her with devoted experience. His hands sneakily made its way down, anticipating how she would respond. Even though Amelia had her eyes closed and was facing the wall opposite to him, Owen spotted the way she shyly blushed when he finally reached the middle of her thighs.

He expected her to resist his touch but to his surprise, Amelia placed her hand on top of his, not only encouraging, but also guiding. Owen took a while to process the explosive sensations she was causing. He’d planned to prolong that exchange of contact for as long as possible, but after long minutes of kissing and caressing her, he couldn’t wait any longer.

Amelia felt her back colliding against the cold tiles of the wall when Owen swiftly clutched her legs up, burying himself into her. She moved her hips forward welcoming him at the same she felt his firm grasp on her thighs. Her hands wrapped around his neck, leaning on him for support as Owen continued to motion back and forth, inebriating her with the most erotic sensations.

When it was over, Amelia collided on the bed next to him, feeling too exhausted to even collect their scattered clothes that had been left everywhere on the floor outside the bathroom. They quickly fell into a deep sleep and woke up the next morning realizing the weather outside hadn’t gotten any better.

Amelia spent most of her Sunday in Owen’s company, enjoying getting to know a little more about him as she told him more about her. They watched a movie in television together and she felt blissfully happy and strangely protected to be his arms. After they had lunch in bed, Owen taught her how to play rummy, a game of cards he’d learned while serving in the army, only to find out Amelia was more interested in learning how to succeed at cheating than at actually playing. When he realized her bad intentions, Owen quickly gave up playing cards to focus on the much more interesting game of seducing her.
Day and night went by too quickly for both of their liking and before Amelia realized it, it was Monday already. She loved her job but sometimes, she wished she could simply call in sick and spend all day in bed, doing nothing and everything, exactly like the perfect Sunday she’d had with Owen.

The chief of surgery kept mostly busy throughout all of his morning, failing to see Amelia again before lunch. He did however run into Derek, only to find out his friend planned to be back full time to Grey Sloan. Personally, Owen approved of the idea, knowing the guy was an excellent surgeon and would be a great addition back, not to mention he was also a part of the board. But he worried about how Amelia might feel, especially considering how devastated she’d been last time Derek had threatened to steal his old job back from her. As chief of surgery, Owen held the power to stop that from happening, but he couldn’t control Derek’s attempts to intimidate his sister if he decided to.

“You realize all this has to be approved?” Owen asked while walking alongside Derek through the hospital corridors. He’d just made it clear he was on board with the neurosurgeon returning, but ultimately, the head of department had to sign off on it.

“By whom?” Derek asked, frowning. “I am on the board, I have privileges,” He added, supposing the chief of surgery was concerned about the bureaucracy of having him work there before he had formally signed a contract.

“By Amelia.” Owen replied and his sheepish tone didn’t go unnoticed to Derek, just as the way the chief used her first name, instead of the usual your sister he’d generally use.

“Of course,” Derek watched as Owen nodded in approval and proceeded to go back to the ER. “I’ll ask Amelia,” he let out a heavy sigh, not exactly happy with the idea.

Amelia was also having the first taste of the busy day that was slowly unfolding. But much to her contentment, a group of adorable students met with her and she had the pleasure of watching the scowl on Derek’s face when one of the boys asked him if his sister was his boss and he had to humbly admit she was.

Ever since figuring out Derek had probably come back for good, Amelia had worried about what this would mean professionally for the two of them. After all, Derek was her older brother and he wasn’t used to having her in a more prestigious position as him. More than once, he’d reacted badly to it and Amelia really had a hard time believing this time it would be any different. So even after hearing her brother affirm he wasn’t after her job, Amelia still had her reservations for she really didn’t want to have another fight with Derek and possibly compromise their relationship. Especially not now that they seemed to be getting along better than ever.

But her first proof that maybe this time things would be different came when Derek settled for taking a minor case instead of insisting on being part of the trauma team that was working on robbery victims that day. Even though Derek had to admit clipping an aneurysm wasn’t nearly as challenging as working on trauma patients, he tried to keep a positive attitude after reminding himself of what had made him go back to Seattle in the first place.

His mind was processing his reasons as he prepared for surgery when the door to the scrub room opened and his boss walked in, apparently looking disappointed.

“Hey,” Derek casually greeted the man, wondering why he had that look on his face.

“Hey…” Owen cleared his throat, trying to sound as natural as possible. He’d looked at the names
on the board five minutes before and had come to the OR with the intention of catching Amelia before she started her procedure so he could ask her to lunch at the cafeteria after she was done. “I thought Amelia…” The chief quickly caught his slip to have called the neurosurgeon by her first name. “I was looking for the other Dr. Shepherd,” he tried to fix it, sounding as professional as possible.

“She is busy with a trauma.” Derek informed the other man with a grin. It was obvious there was more to the situation than Owen bothered to say, but he kept quiet for the sake of avoiding any more problems.

“Ah,” The chief of surgery saw an opportunity to distract his friend from the obvious fact that he’d gone in there to look for his little sister. “Did you talk to her?”

“I did.” Derek replied evasively.

“And?” Owen asked with curiosity.

“I’m clipping an aneurysm for her,” Derek informed him, resuming scrubbing his hands.

“Huh.” Owen frowned, clearly puzzled. “And you’re good with that?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s a far cry from mapping the brain for the president.” Owen pointed out, hoping it hadn’t become too obvious he knew for a fact that Amelia would have reservations about hiring her brother. Last time Derek had quit the brain-mapping project, he had let his ego move him and ended up bruising his sister’s feelings with his careless actions and hurtful words. Owen still remembered how Derek had left Amelia hanging out to dry after she’d been mercilessly exposed about her drug addiction in front of the entire hospital and secretly, the memory still made him want to punch his friend. But a lot had happened after that and he’d learned it from Amelia herself that the two siblings were in better terms.

“She’s been talking to you.”

Derek’s words let Owen know the neurosurgeon had picked up on unsaid information and he didn’t bother lying. For Amelia’s sake, he would keep their relationship private until she felt comfortable disclosing it. But he wasn’t going to pretend something wasn’t true.

“A bit.” He answered evasively, not really lying but also not telling the full extension of what those words meant.

“I’m good with it.” Derek informed him. “Actually, I am a little nervous.”

“You sure you want to tell me that?” Owen asked goodheartedly.

“No, I mean, it’s a good nervous. A good, excited…” Derek trailed off. “I just haven’t operated in months, and… It feels really good to be back.”

“Well, I’m glad to have you back.” Owen replied sincerely, turning around to leave.

“Hey, Hunt,” Derek stopped him. “We should hang out more. Do you fish?”

Owen was surprised by the question and chuckled in response, wondering if Amelia had said a word to Derek about them the previous weekend while he’d been at the hospital to see his mother. But
since he didn’t know for sure, he avoided talking about it.

“Never. Never have.”

“You should.” Derek added with a smile. “We will.”

“Okay,” Owen agreed, strangely satisfied with the outcome of that conversation. He planned on going forward with what he and Amelia had started and spending more time with the people who loved her seemed like a good way to do that.

“All right. Okay.” Derek smiled, immediately going back to what he was doing when Owen walked out.

Amelia’s day got progressively worse as they not only lost two injured cops during surgery, but also had to see the liver of one of them going to the person who had most likely shot them. The whole situation brought to surface bad memories about the way her father had been coldly murdered and even though gunshot patients were relatively common in a busy ER, that particularly case got to Amelia because not only she had to watch the victim die, exactly like her father had, she also saw the man believed to have been the responsible get away with a organ donated by the cop, of all people.

It also didn’t help much when she stood outside an ICU room, talking to her unwilling sister in law about her brother. Meredith seemed to believe Derek really was willing to start over and even though the conversation didn’t go exactly as the neurosurgeon planned, she decided to give her brother another chance.

Amelia was still processing everything about that day when Derek walked outside, meeting her on the porch of his house.

“It’s cold out here.”

“It’s quiet out here.” Amelia responded to her brother’s words, despite agreeing with him about the temperature. Secretly, she’d been waiting outside to see when Owen would finally arrive so she could met him at his place but that wasn’t something she would share with her brother.

“Mmm.”

“Ever since you’ve been back, you guys have been reconnecting. Vigorously.” Amelia took that opportunity to pester her brother, even though she had to confess she hadn’t spent that much time in the house in the past few days to really be bothered by his bedroom activities. “You should have built thicker walls.” She added, taking a sip of her coffee.

“You okay? Derek asked with concern. His sister’s teasing remark didn’t surprise him, but she lacked her usual lively energy and bright smiles. Something about her attitude was off.

“What do you mean?” Amelia asked with a sheepish smile, after realizing he looked honestly concerned.

“I didn’t want to ask you, and I’m not supposed to big-brother you. And you don’t need me to.” Derek explained, thinking about the heart to heart conversation they’d had in his living room after he’d been a jerk to her and how he’d admitted it scared him how Amelia didn’t need him to protect her anymore. She was a grown adult and he fully acknowledged it. But she was still his little sister, and he would forever worry about her wellbeing. “There was a robbery, two shootings, and you declared two men dead.” Derek summed up the hell of a day they’d had. “I kept thinking about dad.”
He confessed, looking straight into her eyes. “I wanted to know if you’re okay.”

Amelia looked away, trying to think of what to say, but the wound was still very much open and she didn’t want to discuss it at that exact moment. Even though she appreciated her brother’s concern, Amelia didn’t want to deal with emotions about their father at the moment. Especially not when she was counting the minutes to be with Owen again and find in his arms the comfort for that particularly dreadful day.

“I’m happy for you.” Amelia swiftly changed the topic of the conversation, not really answering Derek’s question. “That you’re back, you’re making it work.” She explained and hesitated before adding, “that you’re not running.”

“What do you mean, running?” Derek asked with a frown.

“Hey, I am not judging.” Amelia replied, this time with her usual good humor. “We are runners. I ran from my engagement. You ran from Addison.” The youngest neurosurgeon looked down at her lap, recalling the many situations in her life when she’d ran away whenever something she didn’t want to deal with started to happen. It had been the same when she joined her fellowship, when James had asked her to set a date for their wedding… And she wasn’t the only one. Even though in a lesser scale, their three sisters would also react the same way to adversity. “I think, after dad, if something scares us, we sprint, as fast as we can.” Amelia clarified. “But you turned around this time.” She picked up her mug, trying to see the silver lining and added with a mischievous smile. “That’s something. I’m inspired.”

Derek smiled, processing her words and realizing they were nothing but true.

“Did mom tell you I went to go see her?”

“No. Wow.” Amelia was genuinely impressed as she watched her brother take a seat at the table next to her. “How did that go?”

“She said I was tired and miserable, which I was.” Derek confessed, hearing his sister’s amused laughter. “Told me to get it together.”

“No sympathy.” Amelia leaned back against the chair and folded her arms in front of her body to keep her hands warm. After the loss of their father, their mother had toughen up a lot and now Amelia understood that she’d needed to do so to be able to raise five kids on her own. But Carolyn Shepherd’s practical ways could sometimes be a bit too harsh and unforgiving.

“Oh, no, never. She said, ‘Derek, take a good, hard look at your life. If it’s not working, shut up and fix it.’” Derek confessed, once again hearing Amelia’s delighted laughter. He also was very aware of their mother’s rough but loving personality. Nodding his head in denial, the neurosurgeon added, “Amy, I’ve been missing out on everything in my life. I mean, I’m watching my kids grow up on a computer. I don’t want to miss my family. I don’t want to miss another second.” He confessed, watching as his sister seemed to approve of his words. The two of them had grown without a father and they knew how incredibly painful it could be. It wasn’t fair to Bailey or Zola that they had to go through something similar when Derek could very well be there. And it was obvious he had just realized he very much wanted to. “I want to coach soccer, go to ballet recitals. I don’t need to change the world. Clipping aneurysms, stopping bleeds, that’s the fun. That’s changing the world with our hands.” Derek affirmed as Amelia analyzed his words. “When did that stop being enough? Saving someone’s life? That’s more than enough.”

“I’m glad you’re back.” Amelia repeated, thankful for his insight. She agreed with everything he’d just said and was glad to hear it being put into words. And she was genuinely happy for Derek that
he’d turned around and come back before it was too late.

“Me too.” Her brother said, playfully touching his beer to her coffee to simulate a toast.

From a distance, Amelia heard the discreet sound of Owen’s truck arriving. The sudden realization that after an extremely difficult day all she wanted was to be with him scared the hell out of her. Owen’s company had proven to be irreplaceable. His words and his touch were comforting like anything else she’d ever experienced and the way he could unconsciously lure her into feeling safe in his presence was highly addictive.

Touched by the way her brother had chosen to open up to her about his struggles, Amelia decided to finally confess.

“I think I’m falling in love with Owen Hunt.” She admitted, unable to look Derek in the eye as she said the words. The impact that new reality had in her was too intense and she needed some time to get used to the idea. Every single time something as good as Owen had ever happened in her life, it had ultimately turned out to be a complete disaster. Amelia was done losing. She wasn’t sure she could endure any more loss in a lifetime. And being with Owen meant also living with the risk to have her heart broken again. “And I’m really afraid that it’s going to destroy me.” She explained, finally turning her neck to look directly at her brother.

Derek heard her words and studied the expression on her face. He knew his sister had been through a lot. Amelia was one of the strongest people he knew and she certainly deserved to be happy. Earlier that day, Derek had picked up some hints that something he didn’t know yet might have been happening between Amelia and their boss. Derek knew Owen for quite some time now and even though the guy had his own issues, he was a decent and kind person. And even though Derek couldn’t know for sure that Owen would never hurt Amelia’s feeling, he was sure his friend would never be reckless on purpose.

“It wouldn’t be love if it didn’t.” He said with a supportive smile, watching in Amelia’s face how relieved she seemed to have voiced out her fears. Relationships could be complicated but they paid off and Derek was being reminded of it at that exact moment in his life. After taking another sip of his beer, he went on with the conversation. “You know, we never got to talk about this, but you did something remarkable with that astrocytoma.”

Amelia knew he was talking about Nicole Herman’s surgery and even though Derek did seem much less egocentric since his return, she still didn’t expect to hear such compliment.

“Thank you,” She frowned, unsure of how to react.

“I am not sure I could have done it better,” Derek added, confusing her even more.

“Really?” Amelia showed her disbelief, playing with the coffee mug in her hands. “Are you really saying you don’t think you could do what I did? Did I live to see this day come?”

“Don’t push it.” Derek grumpily replied and when their eyes met, both siblings started to laugh. “You know, Amy, I do think you did an amazing job but I am not talking just about the surgery.” He confessed. Amelia kept looking into his eyes, wondering what he meant. Her cell phone buzzed on the table at that exact moment and since it was dark around them, it was obvious Derek could read Owen’s name on the screen as his text popped up on her screen. Taking a deep breath after looking from the phone back to his sister’s face, Derek offered more of insight. “You had a situation that seemed impossible. Every time you’d been faced with stuff like this before, trying has failed. So you had every reason to believe it was hopeless this time too.” He added, smiling tenderly at her.
“I guess,” Amelia shrugged, not really giving it much thought.

“You know, the thing about an Astrocytoma as challenging as this one,” Derek looked at the phone very suggestively, clearly not talking about the tumor, “is that they don’t come our way that often, you know? Sometimes they happen only once in a lifetime. In fact, some people live their whole lives without ever encountering one this big. The regular ones are out there by bunches but they don’t really cause any impact on us, do they? They don’t move us. You and I, we need the big, intense, intimidating ones to be happy.”

“What…?” Amelia frowned, interested in what he had to say but not sure she was following his line of thought.

“My point is that even though you weren’t expecting it, it came your way…” Derek explained and Amelia was unsure if he was talking about Herman’s tumor, her feelings for Owen or both. “You didn’t see it coming, you weren’t looking for it, but one day you woke up and realized it was there… And you didn’t run.” He smiled at her, using the same points she’d made to cheer him up to try to console his sister. “You didn’t freeze in fear of what seemed impossible.” Derek added with an encouraging smile. “You built a plan. You saw the light, you saw a way. I am sure it wasn’t easy, there were probably several setbacks down the road. But it once looked unreal, unachievable, and yet you succeeded. You decided to make it work. You gave it your best,” Derek tilted his head. “And eventually it paid off.” He concluded. “It was an absolute success and you should be proud. I am proud.” Derek added, finishing his beer under his sister’s attentive eyes.

Amelia was in silence for long seconds, processing the literal and metaphorical meaning of his words.

“Are you really comparing Herman’s cancer to my feelings for Owen?” Amelia smiled with amusement, unwilling to admit Derek’s insight had genuinely offered a new perspective, but she felt really grateful for it.

“See, you got it!” He teased her back, “You really are smarter than I ever thought.”

“Shut up, Derek.” Amelia tried to sound offended but her smile betrayed her.

“Don’t let fear freeze you.” He advised, getting up from the chair with the empty bottle of beer in his hands. “You saw the amazing things that can happen when you don’t.” Derek added with a smile. At that exact moment, Amelia’s phone buzzed again and Owen’s name appeared on the screen as if that whole situation had been somehow orchestrated all along by the universe. “You should answer that.” The oldest Shepherd said, not bothering to hide he was peeking at the screen.

“Good night, Derek.” Amelia teasingly sent him away, picking up the phone as her brother made his way back inside.

“Good night, Amy.” He replied with a smile, closing the door at the same time Amelia finally picked up her phone to answer Owen’s call.

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Part Seventeen

Chapter Summary

Timeline for Part 17:

How much exactly happened between Amelia telling Derek she was in love with Owen at the end of 11x18 and the opening scene of 11x19? One night? Why not a little more than that? This chapter explores the interactions between these two episodes. And sadly, we are getting ready to say goodbye to Derek.

The Journey – Part Seventeen

“What’s this?” Amelia asked widening her eyes. Owen had just moved his leg up to better accommodate the two of them in bed and she couldn’t help noticing the long scar on the outside of his right thigh. “Who did this?” Her eyes scanned it with concern, noticing the poorly done surgical repair. “It’s a disaster,” she joked, outlining the thin mark with her index finger.

“What?” Owen distractedly asked, taking his eyes off the TV to focus on the woman in his arms. “Oh, that,” He chuckled, knowing she’d probably be horrified by his answer. “I got a nasty cut there once and got it stapled.”

Amelia’s scowl of sympathy for the painful procedure amused him. Even though there was nothing but a pink discreet line visible on his fair skin, as a surgeon she could obviously identify the evidence of a severe laceration that has bruised his leg once.

“Oh my God, where were you when this happened?” Amelia leaned over, unceremoniously pulling the fabric of his boxers up his thigh to take a closer look at the scar. She knew Owen had been to a warzone more than once and wasn’t sure she was prepared to hear his answer. “It looks like a carpenter did it.”

“I did it,” He replied and waited for the surprise on her face, that didn’t fail to come. “That’s why it looks that horrible. I was in a hurry and didn’t have that much of an angle.”

“Oh my God, where were you when this happened?” Amelia leaned over, unceremoniously pulling the fabric of his boxers up his thigh to take a closer look at the scar. She knew Owen had been to a warzone more than once and wasn’t sure she was prepared to hear his answer. “It looks like a carpenter did it.”

“I did it,” He replied and waited for the surprise on her face, that didn’t fail to come. “That’s why it looks that horrible. I was in a hurry and didn’t have that much of an angle.”

“Where in the world were you that you couldn’t properly suture this?” Amelia asked with sympathy, supposing it was a battle wound.

“At the hospital,” Owen surprised her and couldn’t help a fit of laughter at her nearly offended expression. “Right here in Seattle.”

“You were at the hospital and you did this to yourself?” Amelia’s voice was a pitch higher than usual. She looked almost angry. “What the hell, Owen?”

He shrugged and chuckled, amused by her protective reaction.

“I guess I wasn’t thinking much back then. I had just made it back from war and my head was not in a very good place,” Owen followed her eyes and ended gazing at the result of his impulsiveness with the stapler. “The cosmetic result doesn’t bother me that much but I suppose I should have at least
gotten the area numb before stapling myself. I probably would have done a better job if I weren’t feeling every staple slicing my skin.”

Amelia was silent for a couple of seconds before she finally admitted.

“Well, I can’t judge you that much on that because I once did something similar,” She pointed to her left hand, where a virtually nonexistent scar served as a reminder of her messy drunken days. “But at least I had the decency to apply some local anesthetic to it first.” Owen laughed along with her, and he couldn’t help cracking up harder when she added, “not to mention I used real, grown up surgeon suture line and not a quick carpentry patch.”

Owen wrapped his free hand around her waist, pulling her back closer against his chest. They were in bed, half lying, half sitting. Amelia was between his legs, comfortably leaned on him. Owen had grown to love holding her every night. It felt perfect to have her tiny frame captured in his arms, to be able to breath her in and smell the amazing scent on her hair as they did something as mundane as watching an old action movie on television together on a random weeknight.

After her sassy comment, Owen stretched out his hand and grabbed hers, inspecting the almost imperceptible scar on its left side before taking it to his lips, kissing the area with delight mirth.

“Do I want to ask how you got that cut in the first place?” He turned his head sideways, meeting her eyes as Amelia accommodated the back of her head against his shoulder.

The neurosurgeon saw the raised eyebrow and pretended to think long and hard of what to say before replying:

“No.”

Owen chuckled at her response and saw the contained laughter in her eyes before burying his face on the crook of her neck.

“But you’ll tell me anyway,” he affirmed with conviction, playfully showering her shoulder and neck with kisses that made Amelia twitch her back in a ticklish response.

“Okay, okay…” Her giggles echoed through the small interior of Owen’s trailer as she surrendered. After catching her breath, Amelia finally confessed. “I was drunk and fell on a bar.” She met his eyes and noticed he was expecting something more. “Actually, I fell from the bar. Not that glorious, as you can see.”

“At least you were having fun.” He added, noticing she seemed to be avoiding sharing more details. Owen knew she was probably bothered because the memory was linked to her rock bottom days as an alcoholic. But he didn’t judge her for her condition. In fact, he thought her resilience and drive to overcome it everyday spoke a whole lot more than her addiction in the first place.

“Yeah, kind of…” Amelia grinned, thankful that she could now laugh about the situation that had once been so embarrassing. Her gaze had diverted back to the TV as once again she and Owen got caught up with the movie on screen when she felt his fingers idly rubbing the skin of her stomach beneath her shirt.

A lazy smile formed on her lips as Amelia relaxed even more in his arms, not making a lot of effort to contain a yawn. Over those past few days together, she’d come to notice how Owen’s hands were always seeking her back and belly under her shirt and she didn’t mind it one bit. In fact, Amelia found the act quite intimate and soothing. It felt amazing to feel the roughness of his hand against her skin, constantly reminding her that he was there.
His thumb was still distractedly rubbing the curve of her waist when Amelia interwove her fingers with his, unconsciously offering him support as she heard the words slipping her mouth.

“How was it there?” She asked, unable to withhold the question much longer. “I know you’ve been to several tours but you never talk about your days in the army.”

Owen’s eyes were still on the screen but he was no longer paying attention to the movie.

“There is nothing much to tell,” He evasively answered, finally looking from the screen to her eyes. Amelia saw his discreet smile before he leaned over and kissed her temple with affection. “I spent most of my time there working at a campaign hospital, seeing patients and scrubbing in on surgeries the same way we work here every day.” Owen added.

It wasn’t exactly true and he knew it. Not only were the conditions at the war zone a lot different, it was a daily struggle to see the men and women he fought with having their lives hanging by a thread, or losing them despite his best efforts. Fighting alongside people he considered brothers and sisters was already hard enough, but being the one who worked on them when they were at their worst not knowing if at any moment he would turn out to the next victim was exponentially rough.

Owen had lived through a lot. He’d seen and heard everything. Those days were in his past and at the moment, he was much more interested in the present lying comfortably in his arms.

And who knew, maybe she might turn out to be his future too? Owen surely hoped so.

“Yeah, but you never bring it up.” Amelia gently insisted, thinking about his wellbeing. “It’s okay to talk about you, you know that, right?” She turned sideways in his arms, leaning the side of her head against his shoulder as she looked up to meet his eyes, feeling him adjusting to better hold her. “You should talk about it. I’m here if you want to.” She selflessly offered, waiting for his response, but all Owen did was to give her a quick peck on the lips.

“Thank you.” He smiled when they broke apart. “But I am okay,” he added, more worried about assuring her than about his own current status. Owen had been severely traumatized when he’d come back from his last tour, but a lot of hard work in therapy sessions and long years of taking care of himself had made that better.

It was impossible to talk about the war without bringing up some painful memories. Owen had lost people he cared too much about to it… Friends and family. Tonight, they were having a blissful moment, and he didn’t want to ruin it with memories that would only constrict his heart.

“Okay, then, but the offer still stands,” Amelia smiled genuinely at him, still playing with his fingers between hers. “Did you find what you were looking for?” She turned her head and looked deeply into his eyes. “In the army, I mean. Whatever made you join… Did you find what you were after?”

Owen slightly frowned, looking lost in thought. A lot of people asked him what had made him join in the first place, but no one had ever asked him that.

“I think so.” He was still surprised with the question, but tried to be as honest as possible while looking back into her eyes and speaking from the heart. “I don’t know, I guess I wanted to make a difference.”

“You can make a difference right here.”

The way Amelia said the words, without any hesitation while looking straight into his eyes moved Owen. In her shy smile, he learned the true meaning of her last sentence.
Feeling his heart being invaded by a warm, tender sensation, Owen wrapped his arms around her more tightly and kissed the top of her head, closing his eyes as Amelia snuggled closer to his chest. Minutes went by before they finally began talking again.

“Are you really taking a day off tomorrow?” She asked, raising one eyebrow questioningly at him. Ever since she’d started working at the hospital, it was rare to see Owen taking a personal day. He’d have free time sometimes on weekends, but Amelia couldn’t think of a single weekday where her boss hadn’t been at the hospital.

“Yeah,” Owen awkwardly replied, looking like someone who’d just been busted. Unable to keep the information a secret any longer, he finally confessed. “Your brother is going to DC in a couple of days to finalize his work with his project there and he told me he’s taking this time to do all the things he loves the most… You know, like spending time with his family, or being back in the OR.” Owen explained. “But he also told me he loves the quietness and silence he first found when he got here. So Derek planned a fishing excursion for tomorrow and after telling me about it, he insisted I joined him.” The chief of surgery looked at Amelia conspicuously. “I have a feeling he suspects about us.” Owen added with a semi apologetic grin.

The neurosurgeon thought it was cute the way he was apparently blaming himself for it.

“Derek knows,” Amelia affirmed with conviction, watching the transformation in Owen’s face as he showed surprise with the information. “Well…” She bit her lower lip with doubt. “I am not sure how much he knows, to be honest.” The neurosurgeon confessed, thinking about the conversation she’d had with her brother. She had openly admitted to being in love with Owen, something Derek didn’t look so surprised with, but Amelia had never told him that the two of them were steadily seeing each other.

“Oh God,” Owen widened his eyes with discomfort. “Do you think that’s why he invited me?” Suddenly, a look of alarm was stamped all over the surgeon’s expression. “He’s not going to…You know…” Owen hesitated, visibly uncomfortable. “He’s not going to be asking me questions, is he?”

Amelia studied his expression, having fun with Owen’s predicament. Derek was obviously protective of her, but he’d made it clear he supported the romance between his sister and his friend. She really couldn’t see him grilling Owen about it, but it was fun to watch their boss being so terrified with anxiety.

“Well,” Amelia chuckled, seeing Owen growing worried by the minute. “I guess tomorrow you’ll find out.”

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The sun was shining high in the sky, casting a comfortable heat on them as Owen listened to Derek’s monologue about rods, reels and lines. After a few minutes, the two men sat beside each other inside the small boat. Owen found out that instead of the awkward conversation he was expecting, there was actually comfortable silence.

Both surgeons had learned how to cherish those moments of peace and quietness. Derek, being born and raised in New York, had grown accustomed to noise and busy streets. Owen on the other hand had learned the true value of tranquility during his first deployment, while spending months deprived of it. After Derek popped open the first two beers, both guys remained immersed in total silence, enjoying the rare day of clear skies in Seattle.

After what it felt like a couple of hours, it was Derek who finally started the conversation.
“This is nice,” The neurosurgeon casually commented, pulling out his rod and collecting the medium size trout that had bitten his bait. “We took too long to start doing this.” He added with an encouraging grin.

Owen watched as his friend skillfully prepared another hook.

“Yeah,” He agreed with a head nod, looking over his shoulder to Derek. Owen had to admit he was enjoying that day more than he would have expected. It felt good to take a break from everything and be closer to nature. “I had no idea how much I needed this.”

“The quietness?” Derek raised his eyebrows in a clear mocking smile. Owen recognized the expression, it was the same one Amelia had on whenever she was about to tease him. “I bet you did,” Derek tried to contain a smile. “I mean, it’s not like you can have a moment’s peace with Amelia. In fact,” the neurosurgeon looked playfully at the other guy, as if knowing how uncomfortable he was starting to feel. “She won’t shut up whenever she can help it.” Derek chuckled. “But I’m sure you’ve already picked up on it.”

Owen breathed in, hesitating for a moment while he thought of what to say. The tension was building up and he had been caught by surprise.

“Yeah, about Amelia…”

“Hey, don’t worry, alright?” Derek interrupted him with a lighthearted grin. “I know.” He said without adding details. And then, almost as if giving his blessing, the neurosurgeon nodded his head. “She told me.”

Owen didn’t know how to respond to that, so he simply remained silent. At the same time Derek had no saying in Amelia’s love life, he was her brother and Owen knew the two of them were close. He and Amelia hadn’t really defined what they were yet, but the chief of surgery wanted to believe she was just as invested in their relationship as he was. And if that were the case, Derek would probably be a significant part of his life from there on.

Almost as if reading his thoughts, Amelia’s brother commented:

“You know, you are welcome to park the trailer in my back yard for as long as you want,” Derek started, smiling mischievously. “But if you ever feel like you need more space, I heard the owners there have been trying to sell the place for years now,” He pointed to a squared flat land surrounded by high pine trees directly across the smaller portion of the lake. “I almost bought it, but I would have no use for it. Everything I need I already have right here.” He pointed to the house and the yard with his eyes, smiling affectionately. The expression on Derek’s face showed he was thinking about way more than he was actually saying. “But how nice would it be to be my neighbor?” The neurosurgeon hid his telltale smile behind a bottle of beer.

Owen looked at him suspiciously. It was obvious what Derek was implying.

“I am already your neighbor.” He pointed out, refusing to give the idea and everything it entailed too much thought, otherwise Owen knew he would quickly be seduced by it.

“I meant a grown up neighbor.” Derek teased him, looking from his friend back to the vacant land. “Amelia is a big city girl, though,” he continued, completely ignoring Owen’s grumpy protest. He knew he was seeing way too much into the future but after his latest epiphany, Derek felt like there was no time left to lose. Life was too precious and went by too fast to waste any time overthinking things that already made a lot of sense. “So don’t expect her to celebrate the idea of living out here in the woods on the long run,” The older brother finished his beer and smacked the leftover flavor on
his lips. “Just promise her you’ll never make her sleep in a tent and she’ll be on board.” He looked at
the chief of surgery like he’d just given him privileged information. “It’ll also earn you some extra
points if you add a big bathtub in her suite.”

Even though Owen was trying really hard to stick to reality, it was incredibly difficult to refrain from
actually picturing what Derek was saying. It had always been his dream to build a family and a home
with a woman he loved and wanted the same things in life. Amelia came from a big family and it
was obvious Derek enjoyed having her around. No wonder why the neurosurgeon was pretty much
making plans for Amelia’s future and including Owen in it.

“And then when you two have kids, you can even…”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Owen interrupted his friend, giving him a censoring look. “You should take a
step back and come back to the present time.” The chief kept a heavy frown. “Actually, take several
steps back.”

“What, you don’t want to have kids?” Derek playfully asked, smiling widely when he noticed the
obvious answer in Owen’s eyes. The neurosurgeon was well aware of where his friends stood about
having children, especially after closely witnessing how being deprived of them had contributed to
put an end to his marriage.

“Of course I do.” Owen refuted him instantly.

“Then what’s the problem?” Derek spoke excitedly. “You know, Hunt, there will come a day when
you’ll wake up one morning and find out there is no better feeling in the world than when your baby
holds your face between their hands and smiles at you before saying dad.” His eyes were gleaming
with mischief when Derek then finally added. “But then my mom will probably ring on your front
door unexpectedly, or one of the kids will throw up on you and next thing you know, you’ll be
wondering how you got yourself into this mess in the first place.”

Owen couldn’t contain a chuckle. He couldn’t deny how the idea was incredibly inviting. If things
kept progressing the way they were, at some point he would love to embark on the idea of building
the kind of life Derek had made for himself with Amelia. In a way, Owen already felt like they were
already working on the foundation.

Truth was, Owen hadn’t been with Amelia for too long. And life had already taught him to be
cautious and how to shield his heart from further disappointment. He had learned not to project his
expectations into someone like he’d done in the past, because that didn’t work out. But with Amelia,
it simply felt like he didn’t have to. So far, she had only given him reasons to believe she was
everything he’d ever wanted and after months in her company, getting to know her and slowly
falling in love with her, it became increasingly harder for Owen not to jump in Derek’s idea with
both feet.

Involuntarily, his eyes searched across the lake and once again Owen spotted the piece of land Derek
had just mentioned. It looked perfect. In a matter of seconds his brain filled in all the blanks. He
could almost see a two-story house right by one of the corners, a small football field where he could
play catch with his kids and they could ride their bikes on the summer. And right in the center of it
all, he could see Amelia being the one right beside him building everything from scratch.

The thoughts remained on his mind for the following hours. Soon enough, he and Derek had already
collected a bucket of fish and talked about enough topics to clear their heads. Feeling reinvigorated
and more hopeful than he’d felt in years, Owen returned home with his friend, surprised when by the
time he made his way to his trailer for the day, Derek insisted he had dinner at the house with the
Shepherds later that evening.
The trauma surgeon was about to get dressed when something on the bed caught his attention. Narrowing his eyes with curiosity, Owen approached the bedroom, only to find a delicate white bra that certainly did not belong to him.

Reaching out underneath the blankets, Owen took the small piece and smiled affectionately. For the past week, Amelia had been spending pretty much every night with him. And even though it hadn’t been that long, her presence was already evident in every corner of his trailer.

Her forgotten lingerie was just one of the many traces she’d left behind. Now, his sink usually had two dirty coffee mugs instead of one. The smell of her hair was still very much imprinted on his sheets and the remote control on the opposite side of the bed where he usually laid on also gave away that lately, Owen hadn’t been sleeping alone.

After his eyes noticed the late hour, the trauma surgeon hurried to put the object he’d found inside his pocket and quickly finished getting dressed with dark slacks and a deep green button up shirt. When he rang the doorbell, Owen was surprised to find Zola opening the door right before Derek. He was escorted inside, served a beer and joined his friend on the living room couch, learning that Meredith had scrubbed in on a long surgery and would be home late that evening.

As for Amelia, Owen had no idea. He’d texted her a couple of times earlier that day, but she hadn’t yet replied. And he certainly wasn’t going to ask Derek. Just as Owen was wondering where she was, the front door opened in a hurry and the neurosurgeon barged in, looking absolutely surprised to find both men in the living room.

“Hi!” She recovered quickly from her initial shock, frowning in obvious confusion to what was going on. Amelia had her phone in her hand, and the way the looked from it to Owen let him know she’d just caught up with his messages. “How was fishing?” She asked, uncertain of what to say in that awkwardly surprising situation.

“It was good,” Owen replied evasively.

“Really good,” Derek replied at the same time, visibly more excited.

Amelia looked from her brother to her boss, carefully studying his expression. Owen didn’t seem exactly uncomfortable, but he seemed a bit guarded. As if he wasn’t entirely relaxed, even though the two men were simply watching a game on TV, like they’d done dozens of times before. And it was very obvious why.

Other than her childhood sweetheart, Amelia had never really introduced a guy to her family before but that situation was entirely different, because Owen was already friends with Derek by the time he got involved with Amelia. The younger neurosurgeon didn’t feel awkward to have her brother know about her romantic life, but she could see why a reserved, honorable guy like Owen would be hesitant to act intimate with his friend’s younger sister in his presence.

“So,” Derek looked from Owen to Amelia, determined to make the two of them feel as awkward and uncomfortable as possible for his own amusement. “Are we having dinner, or what?”

“Yeah,” Owen quickly stepped up to help, on board with the idea of having something to keep busy with.

“Good,” Derek nodded. “I am just going to take these little guys to bed first.” He picked up Bailey and called Zola. “Amy, why don’t you set the table?” The neurosurgeon gave his sister a not very
subtle wink, clearly trying to embarrass her in front of Owen.

“Sure,” Amelia rolled her eyes at him, reading his intentions. As soon as Derek disappeared upstairs with the kids, she turned her head to the man left standing between the kitchen and the living room. “What’s gotten into you two?” She asked with good humor, trying to decipher Owen’s controlled expression. “You’re so secretive about your date today.”

“We went fishing today,” Owen said like that answered everything, openly ignoring the way she had mocked him by using the word ‘date’. He stuffed his hands into his pockets and followed Amelia into the kitchen, noticing the questioning look that still remained her eyes. “It was nice.” Owen tried again. He’d never really been that good with words and that whole day still felt very confusing.

“Did Derek give you a hard time?” Amelia asked accusingly. Being a big brother, she fully expected Derek to torment her as much as he could.

“No, it was actually very nice,” Owen repeated more emphatically this time. Memories of the future Derek had painted were still haunting his memory, and the surgeon was trying his best not to give into the temptation of fully investing in them without holding back. “We didn’t talk much but I guess… I don’t know…” Owen awkwardly hesitated and stopped laying the plates on the dinner table like he’d been doing. His eyes met Amelia’s and he took a deep breath before confessing. “I guess he was just trying to make sure I have good intentions about you… That we are not just fooling around, I mean.”

“Oh,” Amelia looked at the man in front of her, feeling touched by her brother’s devotion.

“And also, that I was sure I knew what I was getting myself into,” Owen added with a teasing smile. Amelia scowled, rejecting his playful remark.

“Well, now he knows,” The neurosurgeon sighed in conformation. She had just realized that Derek knowing about she and Owen sort of officially meant they were something. Trying to contain her anxiety about the situation, for Amelia was not sure she was ready for a serious commitment yet, she resorted to playful banter to distract her mind. “You’ve always been the one to condemn our hiding and sneaking out. Now it’s out in the open. Satisfied?”

“Yes,” Owen smiled with joy. Feeling particularly inspired, he took his hand to his pocket and slowly pulled out a white object that Amelia obviously recognized in an instant. “But mostly because of this.”

“What?” She chuckled, approaching him. “I was looking for that this morning!” The neurosurgeon tried to take the bra from his hands but Owen easily dodged her attempt. Amelia folded her arms in front of her body. “What are you doing?”

“You think you’re just getting it back like that?” Owen raised one of his eyebrows playfully and approached her, whispering with a seductive voice. “I don’t even get a thank you for returning it, first?”

Amelia was determined not to give into his bribery, but his charming ways and magnetic presence convinced her otherwise. With amused laughter, she wrapped one of her arms around his neck and pulled his head down towards her, kissing him with the same fiery passion she usually would when they were alone in bed at night.

Owen felt her lips forcing his apart and welcomed her sweet intrusion. Amelia stood on the tip of her toes and pressed against him, molding her body to his solid frame as she continued to explore and
deepen the kiss.

“Now, that is a proper thank you,” Owen affirmed with a teasing voice as they slowly pulled apart. Her electric blue eyes were looking at him with desire and longing and he instantly regretted agreeing to that dinner instead of having her all to himself for the night. He was about to say it when they heard a noise coming from the living room and quickly went back to the boring task of setting the table.

As he entered the room, Derek looked from his sister to his friend, instantly picking up the animosity in the air. He smiled mysteriously, making Amelia believe she was in for a full round of teasing during dinner but to her surprise, Derek behaved impeccably, bringing up lighthearted topics that entertained the three adults while they shared a delicious hot meal.

As soon as they were done eating, Owen’s cell phone buzzed incessantly. Seeing it was the hospital, the chief of surgery excused himself for a moment, going into the living room to have more privacy as he answered the work call.

“You are unbelievable!” Amelia took advantage of Owen’s absence and immediately accused her brother, watching as he laughed with delight at her predicament.

“I thought you’d be happy!” Derek replied with pretend disbelief, knowing very well his sister was censoring the way he’d sneakily convinced Owen to spend time with him exactly after Amelia’s confession. “After all, you told me you were falling for the guy. All I did was try to set you up.”

“Derek!” Amelia lost her patience. “I am already going out with Owen.”

“You are?” Derek raised both eyebrows in an exaggerated reaction.

“Yeah, but somehow…” Amelia squinted, slowly reading into the situation. Derek was smiling like he knew better. “Something tells me you already knew that though, didn’t you?”

Amelia noticed the proud smirk lingering on her brother’s lips. She’d told Derek she was developing feelings for Owen, but she hadn’t given him any details of their relationship. It was obvious something was going on, but Derek couldn’t possibly know exactly what.

“Of course I know.” Derek playfully admitted, seeing the crossed look on his sister’s face as she realized she’d flagrantly failed to hide something from him. “I’ve known it since the day you two sneaked out through the back after throwing that noisy toy outside.”

“You saw us?!” Amelia asked with surprise. That had been Derek’s first night back in the city, exactly when she’d gone on her first official date with Owen to the auction.

“I very much did,” Derek laughed at her incredulity. “I am a neurosurgeon, Amelia. You wouldn’t believe how sharp my sight is.”

“Actually, I would.” Amelia replied, obviously butt-hurt by his sneaky insult to her neurosurgical sighting skills.

“You haven’t slept at home once in a full week.” Her brother cracked up with the busted look on her face. “No one has that many night shifts.” Derek logically explained. “Besides… how do you think I am so okay with this?” He asked, leaning on the kitchen counter to look into her eyes with an amused expression.

Amelia took her time digesting the meaning of his words.
“You don’t have to be okay with anything.” She playfully chided, even though she felt flattered with her brother’s concern. “It’s my life, not yours.”

“It’s my friend,” Derek pestered her.

“I stole your job, what makes you think I wouldn’t steal your friends?” Amelia wickedly smiled, determined to get back at him for his previous insult to her abilities as a surgeon.

“Well,” Derek shrugged in conformation. “At least Owen is an upgrade from Mark.”

“You know about Mark too?!” Amelia widened her eyes in shock, genuinely surprised. A few years before, she had once had a meaningless one-night stand with Mark Sloan.

“You think Mark would miss out on the chance to rub on my face that he slept with each one of my four sisters?” Derek grumpily asked, suddenly irritated with the topic.

Amelia didn’t miss out on the chance to get her revenge.

“Well, you’ve always known sleeping with Mark was a rite of passage,” she joked.

“Yeah but I expected him to keep his promise and not prey on you when you were still underage,” Derek scowled, still distressed with the idea.

“I was already a surgeon, Derek,” Amelia argued, laughing with his annoyance.

“So?” He dismissed her point, pretty much saying that to him, she would always be his kid sister.

Amelia was just about to reply to his smug comment when she spotted a movement with the corner of her eyes.

Owen stood by the door with his cell phone in his hand. His tight grip around the object didn’t go unnoticed and Amelia wondered how much of the conversation he’d heard.

“Is everything okay?” She asked, noticing the slightly irritated look on his face.

“Yeah,” Owen replied dismissively but didn’t smile back at her when Amelia sustained his gaze. “It’s actually getting a little late, I should probably go.” Amelia exchanged looks with Derek and instantly knew he was also wondering the same thing as her. “Thanks for dinner, Derek.”

“Anytime,” The neurosurgeon turned around and focused his attention back on the sink, clearly stepping out of the conversation.

Amelia made her way to the living room, noticing as Owen waited for her to catch up with him to walk towards the front door.

“Do you have to go back to the hospital?” She asked, hoping he hadn’t heard the last bit of her conversation with Derek and misinterpreted the situation. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing much, one of the ortho surgeons needs an OR for a last minute procedure and I had to talk Urology into giving it up,” Owen explained one of the perks of his position. He knew he was doing a lousy job at pretending nothing had changed but finding out Amelia had slept with Mark Sloan had completely thrown him off his game.

Not only it had just made Owen wonder if casually sleeping with her brother’s friends was a recurrent routine in Amelia’s life, which he chose to believe wasn’t, he also felt the stinging flavor of jealousy racing through his system.
“Don’t go just yet,” Amelia stretched her hand and touched his elbow, hopeful his apparent bad mood wouldn’t last too long. She had missed him and spent her day yearning for the moment she’d finally be alone with Owen. Deep down, Amelia was hopeful he would invite her to go join him. He seemed to be fighting an internal battle, so she quickly suggested the first idea that came to mind, taking the responsibility of being the one who extended the invitation. “I am going to take a shower. Why don’t you wait for me in my room? It’s not even ten pm yet,” she pointed out, hoping with all her heart he’d stay.

Owen was still unsure of what to feel or think, but saying no to her was almost impossible. Before he noticed, he was already inside Amelia’s bedroom for the second time in his life.

While she went to take a shower, Owen kept busy studying the place. He spotted the painting he’d gotten for her at the auction hanging on one of the walls. A smile accompanied by a sudden rush of warmth in his heart improved his mood. The chief of surgery lost track of time as he examined the furniture around him, noticing a pair of jeans and a couple of cardigans thrown over a chair by one corner. Next to it, there was a small study desk. Owen put his hands in his pockets and distractedly gazed through the opened books, spotting Amelia’s distinguished handwriting on a white sheet filled with surgical notes next to a small computer.

Without anything to keep him busy, Owen flipped through the pages of the heavy neurosurgery textbook Amelia had obviously used to prepare her classes for the residency program a while before. The volume looked a few years old, despite well kept. He was still aimlessly looking at the pictures when he reached a chapter about intracranial shunts. His eyes were too distracted with the words when suddenly, a squared piece of paper slid from between pages.

After reaching for the floor, Owen stood still for a moment, holding the old photograph in his hands. It had probably been taken a few years before, because Amelia’s hair was longer than he ever remembering seeing and she looked to be in her late twenties. Wearing dark pants and a light grey shirt, Amelia looked as casual as she looked worry-free. Owen couldn’t help smiling when he saw the image of her contaminating laughter flawlessly captured by the image. The picture depicted perfectly everything she was: lively, positive, spontaneous and contagiously happy.

“What do you have there?” Her curious voice trailed off his thoughts.

Owen turned around and saw her finishing drying her hair with a towel, looking more adorable than ever in dark leggings and an old Harvard T-shirt. He flashed her the picture, noticing the surprise in her eyes.

“It dropped from the textbook as I was going through the pages.”

“Oh,” Amelia smiled affectionately. “I didn’t even remember that one…” She was taken by surprised. “A residency colleague was passionate about photography… She’d just take the camera everywhere with her. And sometimes, she would capture some moments and have it printed for us. I think I was in my fifth year here.” She said, approaching him and unceremoniously stealing the picture from his hands to take a better look.

Owen noticed the look in her eyes as she studied the image. He could see she was being assaulted by old memories. And judging by her expression, they were good ones.

“I can see clearly nothing much has changed.” He commented charmingly. She still looked every bit as gorgeous as she had on the day the picture had been taken.

Amelia smiled at him, on purpose taking a step closer as she took his hands in hers and played with his fingers.
“You don’t have to be upset that I slept with Mark,” She decided to go straight to the point. With Owen, it felt like she could simply speak her mind and the feeling was liberating. “This is not the same as that.” Amelia explained, obviously meaning their relationship in comparison to her casual hook up with their colleague.

“I am not upset,” Owen lied. He knew he didn’t have any right to feel jealous about her dating history. But that didn’t stop him from feeling it. “You don’t have to explain it to me, Amelia.” He added, hoping to sound supportive.

“It didn’t mean anything and I was just trying to prove a point back then.” She went on, ignoring his words. Amelia wasn’t opening her heart because she felt like she owed Owen any explanations; she was telling him the truth because she wanted him to know how she felt. “You see, all my sisters had already done it, even Addie. And I didn’t want to be the odd man out. As always.” Amelia explained, biting her lower lip with mischief. She didn’t exactly regret sleeping with Mark, but it hadn’t felt too differently to driving her brother’s car or getting into Med School after all her four siblings had already done it. “But with you, it’s different.” She explained, slowly walking Owen to the bed and making him sit on it as she stood between his knees and held his face between her hands. He had just been seduced of the idea of hearing her sweet declaration reinforced when her words surprised him. “You can’t kiss or sleep with any of my sisters. Promise me.” She childishly demanded, watching as Owen’s face lit up with laughter. “I am serious.”

“I don’t even know your sisters, I…”

“Promise me!” Amelia interrupted him, feeling like she was starting to get worked up.

Owen gave up talking and looked into her eyes. She was frowning heavily, almost as if anxious with expectation. The reality that she too could be jealous of him completely won him over.

“I promise.” He smiled, wrapping his arms around his waist and pulling her closer. Amelia was still holding the old picture of her residency days in her hands when he gently took it, giving it one last look before commenting. “You should have this framed. It’s too pretty to be hidden in an old textbook.”

“You keep it,” Amelia replied, not really bothered with the picture. She ran her fingers through the back of Owen’s head, watching as he smiled back at her with affection and contentment. “Are we going to your place or what?” She straightforwardly asked.

“Yes,” Owen took her hand and gently got up, feeling better than he had before. “Let’s go.” He added as Amelia led the way.

Owen had taken the day off and it had served the amazing purpose of clearing his head. After the conversation with Derek earlier that afternoon, he’d finally allowed his mind to go to places where only his heart had wandered so far. It turned out that his old dream of having someone he could share his life and build a family with was still very much alive, and he’d just discovered that. The prospect of having Amelia in it only boosted his desire to accomplish everything.

Taken over by an indescribable sensation of bliss, Owen climbed the steps to his trailer. The moment they entered it, he kicked the door behind them, instantly pulling her to his embrace. He then kissed Amelia with passion, watching her melting in his arms as she moaned his name. He felt absolutely sure that he wanted to do that every night for the rest of his life.

But what Owen couldn’t possibly imagine was that this was the last night he’d go back to his trailer with Amelia in his arms, happily kissing him back. Life and love were too fragile. Things could change in a matter of seconds. And Owen was just about to be reminded of that.
If anyone is curious, I got inspired for the description of Amelia’s picture Owen keeps after stumbling across this image:
This one sets entirely on the events of episode 11x19. It doesn’t exactly have a lot of unseen scenes, only a few, but it does offer a lot of insight on what the characters were feeling/thinking, especially Amelia. She appeared to have a big change of heart this episode about the relationship with Owen and a lot of people think it was only because of the work thing, but IMO there was a lot more to it. It’s all dissected right here. Let’s go!

The Journey - Part Eighteen

Amelia finished hanging the set of films on the viewer, devotedly going over the images as she looked for any signs she might have missed while studying them on the computer just minutes before, frowning harder at the challenge in front of her. A severed spine was always a hard case.

Nothing about that day seemed to be working very well and Amelia had a bad feeling about it.

Earlier that morning, she had woken up before dawn with an unusual noise, only to find out that a maintenance water pressure switch Owen had performed on his day off had caused the sink pipe inside the trailer kitchen to leak during the entire evening. As result, Amelia had woken up to find most of the floor soaked in water, and that included the clothes they had stripped and left scattered all around.

Much to Amelia’s dismay, they had to leave bed at an ungodly hour, Amelia’s task was to make them coffee while Owen skillfully worked on the pipe. Nearly an hour later, already dressed in the clothes Owen had found in her hospital bag at the car, the neurosurgeon returned to her brother’s home, only to find out not only was he still there, her sister in law was as well.

Amelia hadn’t expected to bump into them and the surprise was immediately stamped on her face. Derek hadn’t acted any differently from what Amelia had imagined, but it was obvious his wife noticed something was off. Before anything could be said about it, Owen had knocked on the door to return her forgotten cell phone, revealing to Meredith Amelia’s whereabouts from the night before. The neurosurgeon didn’t blame him for it, because she had specifically told Owen just a few minutes earlier that she didn’t expect to find anyone at home since her brother had a plane to catch and her sister in law has an early surgery. Considering Meredith’s late night at the hospital, Amelia had simply assumed she wouldn’t have returned home late at night considering how early she would have to be there the following morning.

But she had been so distracted by Owen’s jokes about the fact that she could simply walk up naked to the house that she failed to realize Meredith would probably want to see Derek before he left to D.C. that one last time.

Up until now, Amelia didn’t have a problem with her brother finding out about her relationship with Owen. But she had always been reticent about Meredith’s take on it.

Even though Amelia liked to believe her sister in law wished her well, she knew how close to Owen’s ex wife Meredith had always been. Whenever she was helping out with the kids, it wasn’t
unusual that Meredith made a reference to Cristina, having once or twice before even included Owen in her comments.

And Amelia didn’t want to find out about Owen’s past relationships through Meredith.

What she and Owen were building was entirely theirs and Amelia didn’t want an outside opinion on it. Meredith was her brother’s wife and that automatically made her family. All her life, Amelia had felt like an outcast but now, for the first time, she actually thought she and Derek were treating each other as equals, in a healthy, positive fraternal bond. It meant more to her than she could ever explain to anyone. That sensation of belonging in her own family was relatively new and fragile. Amelia knew Derek and she could anticipate his feelings relatively well. But she didn’t know Meredith all that much.

And Amelia didn’t want her sister in law to feel like she was betraying her best friend by welcoming Owen into her family through another woman.

At the same time Owen was a grown man, free to do whatever he wanted, Amelia knew that relationships were more complicated than that. Now, she was finally living her life in harmony and she didn’t want to antagonize anything or anyone. Her siblings had always pointed out the many ways in which she’d been a disappointment and that burden had been carried all her life. Amelia had moved away from Seattle to be rid of it, and she wouldn’t let anything get in the way of that. It was her path to sobriety and she knew she had to stick on it.

Making sure that her relationship with Owen wasn’t in any way going to create any animosity within her family and personal life definitely wasn’t going to be easy. But Amelia was willing to try, because she really didn’t want to sacrifice anything. Not right now. She was in a really good place in her life, feeling like she could potentially be the happiest she had ever been.

Those thoughts were still haunting Amelia when a sudden voice interrupted her study of the scans.

“Hey!” Meredith walked into the room, obviously with an agenda. “So, you and Owen?”

“Ahhh…” Amelia hesitated, defensively putting her hands inside her pockets. She expected the topic to be discussed, but she really hadn’t imagined Meredith would bring it up so straightforwardly. Especially not at work. “Is there an end to that?” She sneakily fired back, dodging the question until she was sure what her sister in law was asking.

“I don’t know, you tell me.”

Something in Meredith’s demanding tone of voice startled Amelia. Unlike her brother, who had teased and made fun of her while discovering about Owen, obviously happy about the relationship, Amelia’s sister in law seemed weary of it, somewhat bothered even. Her stiff posture and badgering expression pretty much confirmed that Meredith somehow imagined she had any right to an explanation. The neurosurgeon had been thinking about the situation, unsure of what to expect. But the sudden realization that Meredith apparently wasn’t offering any kind of support for the relationship, instead talking about it the same way she addressed her kids whenever they were up to no good hit Amelia harder than she would have liked.

“I don’t know what to tell you.” Amelia confessed, trying to keep a lighter mood. “Um, Owen and I are getting to know each other.” She added, not really putting a label in the relationship on purpose.

“How well?” Meredith raised her eyebrows in questions. The way she had changed her tone of voice to a more playful one didn’t fool Amelia, because by her sister in law’s body language, she could tell Meredith wasn’t enjoying the conversation either. “’Pants on’ or ‘pants off’ well? Is it just sex, or is
there something more?"

“Meredith, what is this?” Amelia shrugged, refusing to answer the question. It was none of her business, and she had no right to stand there expecting those answers like she was entitled to knowing any details. Especially not when Meredith seemed to be reprimanding her about it.

“I don’t know, I am asking you.” Meredith deflected.

“I don’t know what we are yet.” Amelia affirmed. Her feelings for Owen were still very confusing, and Amelia didn’t know what to call them. She was sure they were intense, and reciprocated. But if anyone had any right to finding out what they were, it was Owen. Not Meredith.

“Okay, well, that’s what I’m afraid of.” Meredith said unemotionally. Amelia once again was caught off guard, unable to believe what was actually happening. Why was her sister in law talking about the situation like she had any right to an opinion about it? “Listen, Cristina asked me to watch out for him.” She added. Amelia felt a tingling sensation running up through her spine. Deep down she’d already considered Meredith’s antagonism to be a possibility, but she had refused to believe it, opting instead for giving the other woman the benefit of the doubt. Clearly, Amelia had build up wrong expectations. But what Meredith was saying felt like more. It wasn’t only possessiveness about Owen in loyalty to her friend. It was like her sister in law actually believed Amelia would somehow be a negative influence on him. “I promised I would, so, I just want to make sure that…”

“That I don’t ruin him?” Amelia interrupted her, acidly gazing at the other woman. She could feel a mix of anger and disappointment start to boil, hating herself for allowing to hope that for once, someone in her family would have her back, and actually believe she was a grown up capable of making good choices and dealing with their repercussions. Everyone else already seemed to think Amelia was a train wreck. Now the neurosurgeon knew Meredith was no exception. “Is that what you mean?”

“That you’re careful.” The woman replied, unaffected by Amelia’s obvious displeasure. The neurosurgeon noticed how her sister in law completely disregarded how the conversation had bothered her, not even giving a second thought to ask how Amelia was feeling in face of everything.

Soon after, Meredith turned her back and left, indifferent to the fact that she’d just sent her husband’s sister in an awful mood. Amelia took out some of her frustration on Stephanie Edwards, not allowing the resident to be a part of the case she had on that day, which later only made her feel more like she indeed caused more damage than good.

In the afternoon, Amelia’s bad day became even worse when she found out Callie Torres had a complete opposite view on how to approach the golf player they were treating.

Marissa, a teenage girl had severely hurt her spine and was desperate to maintain her mobility. Callie had condemned the vertebrae bones, saying they were too unstable to hold a spinal fix and therefore could further increase the chances of a more serious lesion in the future. The ortho surgeon suggested a conservative approach, that would surely compromise the patient’s ability to move her hips but at least would still allow her to walk. But Amelia knew the young girl wanted to resume playing golf more than anything. If she could hold the nerves to the sides of the broken bones through a finesse technique, there was a chance the girl could swing her hips again, being able to compete in the sport she loved so much. Amelia knew it was riskier but it looked doable and she was willing to try.

Convincing Callie proved to be an impossible task, but the heated conversation was quickly put to an end when Owen stepped in, solving the discussion after saying they should go with the
neurosurgeon’s approach.

Unconsciously, Amelia had been fighting the idea to limit range of motion. She wanted everything, in every aspect. The earlier discussion with Meredith had invariably served the purpose to remind her of how things sometimes progressed, spiraled out of control and she didn’t even realize it until it was too late. It had happened before in her past several times and Amelia knew too well at what cost. An attempt to start over focusing on herself was the reason why she’d gone to Seattle in the first place. Her entire life had changed and in order to remain sane and avoid similar past experiences from happening again, Amelia needed to stick to her original project not to have any distractions.

But when her surgical plan went terribly wrong and she needed to call in Callie Torres to help salvage what little function they could preserve in the patient’s spine, Amelia was suddenly assaulted with the awful sensation that perhaps, she had already let it happen once again. She had lost control. And her personal feelings had compromised her ability to perform at her job.

While slowly falling in love with Owen, Amelia had neglected to see how much that could affect their careers. He was her boss, after all. The things he made her feel were so blissfully captivating that perhaps Amelia had been in denial. She couldn’t take her personal life to work and let it affect her performance. The earlier conversation with Meredith had triggered a lot of self-doubt about her personal worth in Amelia, and none of that would have happened if she hadn’t been romantically involved with her boss in the first place. It wasn’t fair to herself to have to go through that. Amelia had fought way too hard to ever feel insecure or unfit ever again.

Her stomach twisted in knots and Amelia felt sick. Marissa’s mother’s words echoed in her ears and guilt consumed her. Now that she thought about it, her feelings for Owen had taken control of her life the same way she’d allowed for pills to once dictate her rhythm. Being with him was so highly addictive that when confronted with the repercussions it could have, Amelia had gone into complete state of denial, leaning towards a riskier approach at work that she might not have in normal conditions only to prove to herself that this time it could be different. That the girl could have everything she desired. Amelia had taken the chances. And it hadn’t worked.

But the only difference was that, this time around, Amelia wasn’t the one to pay the price. It was a teenage girl who would never again play the sport she loved so much in a lifetime.

Amelia could feel her heart racing with anxiety while her hands felt shaky and unsteady. She couldn’t believe she’d allowed her personal issues to get in the way of patient treatment. Her stellar career was one of the few things she’d never stained in her life before and holding onto that had always given her a sense of security and comfort whenever Amelia was at her lowest. But now, even that was compromised and she felt more exposed than ever.

“There you are!” Amelia heard the sound of a familiar voice and felt a shiver running up her spine, making her even more anxious and distressed. “How did the surgery go?” Owen asked.

“I can’t do this.”

Owen heard the unfamiliar tone in her voice and frowned, watching as the neurosurgeon went out of her way and into a supply closet.

“You okay?” He asked, wondering what could possibly be happening to make Amelia act so jumpy.

“No. No, I am not.” Amelia scoffed, trying to control her emotions. She turned around, feeling anger add to her mix of emotions. “You shouldn’t have weighed in. I wish you hadn’t.”

“Excuse me?” Owen asked, startled by her defensive attitude.
Amelia was going through a turmoil of confused thoughts and “what ifs” in her mind. Deep down, she was sure of one thing, though. If she hadn’t been interrupted while discussing with Callie, maybe the two of them could have met at middle ground and came up with a plan that pleased them both. And maybe the surgical outcome wouldn’t have been as bad as it was.

“You should have stayed out of it. My approach was inferior.” Amelia took her hands to her head, fighting the imminent sensation of her lips starting to tremble. “And it cost my patient in… terrible ways.”

“What are you talking about?” Owen frowned harder. His voice sounded more serious than he would have liked, but truth was, Amelia’s reaction was catching him off guard. She seemed extremely mad at him and yet he had no idea why.

“Can you tell me honestly that you siding with me today was only about that patient? It had nothing to do with you and me?” She asked, visibly irritated.

Owen identified the distress in her voice and realized that the answer to his initial question was that the surgery hadn’t gone too well. He knew surgeons hated bad outcomes. And talented, skillful surgeons like Amelia hated them even more.

“Your plan was smart and solid and more in line with what the patient wanted,” he stated with conviction.

“But why were you there?” Amelia interrupted him, hating how she was losing her mind and he sounded so calm and controlled. Involuntarily, she stood on the tip of her toes, trying to level their heights and maybe also their insight into that awful situation. “Why…”

“That is why I suggested…” Owen kept talking, completely ignoring her interruption, as if he were talking to a child who was failing to see something obvious.

Amelia felt her anger boiling to an extreme.

“The only reason you even walked into that room was because you heard my voice and you wanted to check on me and see me, because of your personal feelings!” She raised her voice, ultimately making him shut up to hear her talk. In a calmer, contained tone, Amelia carried on, allowing all of her feelings to be confessed. “I know, because I would have done the same thing. Because we can’t help it. We are hard-wired. Our brains change when we…” She trailed off, unwilling to admit what her heart already acknowledged. Too bad that realization had come in such an awful scenario, Amelia thought. Something so beautiful shouldn’t have the power to cause that much damage and yet, that was all it did. It compromised her control and she couldn’t afford to lose it ever again.

“When we fall for another person, our neurological pathways get altered, and we make choices. We make decisions, whether we want to or not.” She settled for saying, trying to sound as rational and detached as possible. Owen took a deep breath, trying to read where her sudden insecurity about their relationship was coming from while allowing her to go on with her speech. “This… This is why it is not smart to mix personal and professional.”

“Amelia, this is not what happened.” Owen assured her. He could see she clearly felt guilty for whatever surgical complication the patient had developed but regardless of what had happened, Owen had a clean conscience. He’d indeed been drawn into the room by her voice but he’d judged the situation based on what the two surgeons were proposing and ultimately decided for Amelia’s approach, considering it proposed exactly what the patient wanted.

“I left my home. I left my job. I have been trying so hard to start over.” Amelia heard her own shaky voice and desperately tried to regain control of her emotions. “I have been fighting so hard just to be
taken seriously, to do this job well.” She added, struggling to contain tears. Amelia had spent too much time having to prove her worth to the hospital and just as she thought she had, her drug addiction had been exposed, making everyone question her ability. For long weeks, Amelia had fought through that, ultimately proving to everyone including herself that she was more than capable of performing the job she had right now. And she wasn’t willing to risk having that being compromised by the fact that she was dating her boss. She could already foresee people gossiping about it in the halls. Amelia couldn’t bear it. Her professional reputation had always been intact and she wouldn’t allow that to change. “That mom thinks I am a crappy doctor, who screwed her kid out of a future, and she is not wrong.” It hurt Amelia more than she predicted to say that. If they’d gone with Callie’s approach in the first place, Marissa wouldn’t be at risk for permanent paralysis. “Because all of this could have been avoided, if I had just…” She sniffed, feeling her throat constricted. Gazing at the floor with determination, she swallowed the tears and slowly rebuilt a wall around her heart. “If we had just kept our professional lives professional, but we didn’t.” She finally looked up, meeting Owen’s eyes.

The chief of surgery noticed how her voice had gone from emotional to completely cold, and how her previously distressed expression was now distant, almost empty of emotion as she looked around hesitatingly.

“It was a mistake.” Amelia affirmed, finally meeting his eyes again. Owen felt the impact of the words, seeing in her eyes she meant more than just surgery. The blow hit him hard and unexpectedly, and Owen was just bouncing back from the impact whens she added with defiance. “This was a mistake.”

Unconsciously, Amelia had been hoping for Owen to contradict her. Her own fear was testing him, desperately needing for him to say she was wrong, that the only mistake was being afraid of giving into a relationship that would only make them better and happier. That somehow, they could go around the fact he was her boss and make it work regardless of anything.

But when her gaze met his, Owen couldn’t look past the anger and see the fear and heartbreak. All he could see were the cold blue eyes of a woman who had given him nothing but warmth and affection. And Owen couldn’t recognize her anymore.

With a silent move, he walked away, unwilling to hear anything else that might add to the awful sensation building up in his stomach.

When Amelia arrived home that evening, her mood hadn’t improved. She was feeling worse than she remembered feeling in a long while. It was like no matter where she was or what she did, her past would always haunt her and compromise her present.

For long, blissful weeks, Amelia had convinced herself that she was finally in a better place, but she failed to see just how much her relationship with Owen could cause repercussions in her life. Not only personally, but especially professionally.

During the short walk from the car to the house, Amelia noticed her cell phone was incessantly buzzing inside her pocket. She didn’t need to look at the screen to figure out who it was, so she settled for silencing it while slowly making her way into the kitchen.

As she did, the neurosurgeon noticed her sister in law reading a book by one of the stools near the counter. It very late in the evening and Amelia supposed the children were already asleep. She knew Derek had left for D.C. earlier that same day. The uncomfortable silence and heavy atmosphere as she joined Meredith’s presence couldn’t be ignored, so after getting a snack from the fridge, Amelia
turned around before leaving to her room.

Earlier that day, Meredith had made her feel cornered. At first, Amelia was so surprised with the way her sister in law acknowledged their relationship with Owen that she took a while to process the meaning of her words. But after spending most of her afternoon dwelling on it, Amelia had the clear notion that Meredith obviously considered she could be a bad influence on Owen. Everyone who knew him and could see he was a grown man, fully capable of looking out for himself. So for Meredith to express any sort of doubt regarding what Amelia might eventually cause to him hurt especially hard.

Amelia knew the way she had broken up with James right when she’d first arrived in the city hadn’t been the very best impression on how she treated the men she got involved with, but that didn’t give Meredith the right to put a label on her. She wasn’t the inconsiderate monster her sister in law had made her feel. Which could only mean Meredith’s opinion of her was based on more, probably stories about her past or depictions that she’d heard from others.

Feeling unfairly judged and unsupported, Amelia tried to keep a cool façade as she stared deeply into her sister in law’s eyes:

“Look, I appreciate that you’re looking out for Owen. I do, but what I do or who I see are, quite honestly, none of your business…”

“Wow. Okay.” Amelia heard Meredith’s reply and bravely sustained her gaze. “I was only trying to…”

“I moved here to starting something, to build a new life.” Amelia interrupted her, surprised at how calmly she was able to say the words when she felt completely shattered on the inside. “You don’t know me. Not really. You don’t know where I’ve been or what I’ve had to overcome, because you never had to.” Before Amelia could control it, memories of her son came to mind and her heart felt heavier. “You’ve never lost the love of your life. You have never cried over the body of the person you love most in this world.” Amelia struggled to contain her emotions, knowing she didn’t feel the least bit comfortable to share the details of those moments with a person who clearly wasn’t that much interested in her well being or hadn’t made the slightest effort to see things through her eyes. “You… You don’t know how that messes a person up. You’ve never had to claw your way back from that.” She affirmed, tipping her chin up with pride. She’d overcome too much to let someone, anyone, make her feel unworthy like that. “But I have. I’m still trying to pull myself together, and I am doing the very best that I can, so… Until you’ve done that, until you’ve had to walk in my shoes, I need you to cut me some slack. And back the hell off.”

As Amelia finished saying the words, she turned around and left before giving Meredith the chance to say anything in return. The neurosurgeon really wasn’t interested in hearing it, and she desperately needed to be alone.

After entering her room, Amelia locked the door behind her, finally allowing the load of emotions of that day to catch up with her. Even though she kept fighting the tears, they eventually came and Amelia braved them as toughly as she could.

Minutes later, when she was finally able to take a deep breath and concentrate her focus on her thoughts instead of her feelings again, her cell phone was still buzzing.

And Amelia kept ignoring it.
Owen paced back and forth inside his trailer, repeatedly going over the conversation he’d had with Amelia earlier that day in order to figure out what was going on.

Her sudden change of attitude regarding their relationship had surprised him. Even though she had blamed it on their professional status and the implications their romantic involvement could have on their careers, Owen knew there was probably more to it. Just the previous evening, Amelia had relaxed in his arms while they playfully discussed the TV show they had been watching together in bed. He couldn’t link any of their previous events to the intensity of her reaction at work, making Owen wonder what exactly had happened in between to set her off like that.

He tried calling her several times, but when she failed to pick up, Owen finally settled for leaving a voice mail, hoping she would come around soon. He was really worried about her and wished Amelia would allow him to be there the way he hoped to.

Deep down, Owen supposed she needed time to figure out whatever she was dealing with, so he respected it and gave her space. From his trailer, he could see the lights turned on in her bedroom, but didn’t make an attempt to go to her. Decided to speak to her the next time they met, the trauma surgeon went to bed soon after that, taking much longer than usual to finally fall asleep.

Owen woke up before the alarm the following morning and arrived at work earlier than most residents. He could tell he was being harsher than usual with his subordinates and tried to control his mood the best way he could, knowing he shouldn’t take out his personal frustrations on other people.

Throughout most of the day, he kept busy with meetings and then scrubbing in on an ER case. Owen had tried to make time to go after Amelia, but in the few minutes he could spare, she’d been too busy to be interrupted. Finally, when it was already late afternoon, he saw her updating a patient’s chart inside the ICU.

“Hey, can we talk?” Owen approached her, belatedly realizing he hadn’t been subtle or gentle.

“Uh, actually, I was just…” Amelia turned around, aimlessly pointing elsewhere in a clear excuse to avoid the conversation.

“What’s really going on?” Owen demanded with a serious tone. “I need you to tell me, because… You say one thing, and I think you mean something else entirely, and I want to understand. I am trying to.” Owen confessed with a gentler voice, hoping she would open up to him like she’d done a few times before. He took a step in her direction, on purpose approaching her, hoping Amelia would also be done with the distance that had been keeping them apart since the previous day. “Because I want what we started here. I do. But I need a little help.” Owen looked deeply into her eyes, knowing by her body language that Amelia was torn between talking to him and avoiding the subject again.

And just as she seemed to be leaning towards confessing her feelings, the station telephone rang, distracting them both.

“I don’t think that this is really the place that we should be talking…” Amelia regained control of herself, immediately getting defensive again.

“Dr. Shepherd?” A nurse interrupted them. “You have a call on line four.”

“I got to get that.” Amelia looked at him and stepped away, knowing how clear it was that she was dodging the talk he wanted to have. She went over to the nurse and picked up the phone.
Owen kept gazing at her, deep down expecting Amelia to turn around and ask him to meet her later, or say she would call so they could have the conversation they needed to have. It felt a bit soon in the relationship for such problems to be coming up, but Owen didn’t lose his motivation because of it. He knew Amelia had a troubled past and he could tell by her daily attitude that she was very careful to guard herself and her own feelings. He admired that about her and respected it. And he knew he had his own issues too, so he was the last person who could judge her. During the entire time she’d struggled with the exposure of her drug addiction, Amelia had carefully tried to keep a low profile while fighting her way back. He had noticed the way she treated everyone with respect and consideration, not just people who were close to her. So he doubted Amelia was being cold and distant on purpose. Maybe she just needed more time.

Still determined to hear from her, Owen watched as she silently picked up the phone the nurse had offered, not once looking back at him. He didn’t know what the problem was, but he was determined to find out, because he really didn’t want to change his view on that woman or give up what they’d started to build.

Telling himself he couldn’t be wrong about his initial impressions about a woman yet once again, Owen retreated, positively thinking this was just a setback they could work through. Whatever it was, Amelia would eventually come to him and confess the real reason behind her excessive worry and sudden change of behavior. He’d understand her and they’d go back to living their lives the way they were doing just the day before.

But when the neurosurgeon passed the phone on to Meredith that afternoon, Owen wasn’t there to witness the first event on the upcoming series of tragedies about to hit their lives, directly starting what would serve to ultimately contribute to the end of his relationship with Amelia.
Part Nineteen

Chapter Summary

This chapter sets on episodes 11x20, when a plane crashes and Owen is suddenly reminded of the accident he still holds himself responsible for. This happens right after Amelia has changed the rules of the game in their relationship on the previous day. We go further to explore some events up to 11x22. I hope you guys like it!

The Journey – Part Nineteen

Owen arrived early at the hospital and as usual, got absorbed with the bureaucracy workload he needed to read and sign. But when he was notified a plane had crashed in the middle of the city, not too far from the hospital, he instantly dropped everything inside his office and grabbed his white coat, knowing the ER was where he was needed the most.

As he walked into the elevator, the chief of surgery assumed that dealing with memories and the familiar sensations of guilt and loss that a plane crash would surely bring was going to be the hardest part of his day. But when the doors failed to fully close as a petite brunette sneaked in, Owen second-guessed himself.

“Hey,” He couldn’t help greeting her.

“Hey,” The neurosurgeon replied, and Owen noticed the way she avoided his gaze.

Amelia hadn’t answered any of his calls, or make any effort to talk to him since their disagreement. He was still very much in the dark about her change of attitude just the day before, and the trauma surgeon desperately wanted to understand what was going on. Not only would he like to help her, but Owen also felt like maybe that day they could be on good terms. He could definitely use someone to talk to. Dealing with the massive casualties from the accident wasn’t going to be easy, and as usual, he would have to stay at the top of his game, neglecting his own responses because he needed to lead and do what had to be done.

But the idea of finding some comfort in her arms when that day was over had ignited a spark of hope inside of Owen’s chest. But given her obvious defensive attitude, he wasn’t sure whether or not to encourage it. After seconds that felt like minutes, Owen couldn’t stand the heavy silence any longer.

“Amelia.”

The chief of surgery knew he wasn’t the best when it came to words. Owen was well aware of how hard it was for him to properly use them, especially in emotional situations. But at that moment, everything he wanted to ask had already been asked. It was now up to her to start talking so he could understand what she was feeling and hopefully they could go back to being on the same page.

“I just don’t think this, us, is a good idea.” Owen frowned when he heard the first words coming out of her mouth. “Mixing work and play.”

“Play?” Owen scoffed, trying to understand what kind of joke she was pulling on him. Surely
Amelia couldn’t be serious, could she? “Play?” Owen repeated, starting to get nervous as she seemed to shrink and get more defensive by the minute, obviously with no intention to rephrase what she’d just affirmed.

“What am I now, some screw?” He asked with a mix of confusion after hearing her words and watching her distant, cold attitude.

“I didn’t say that.”

In her tone, Owen noticed how she was holding back. Her cool manners finally alarmed him enough. Owen felt his pulse racing, refusing to believe what he was hearing. Amelia couldn’t be serious. She couldn’t actually say that nonsense after everything that had happened between them.

“This is more.” He affirmed with conviction, unable to keep a physical distance any longer. “Amelia, you and I both know this is more.” Owen held her hands, desperately trying to make her agree with what he was saying.

“I don’t have any more to give!” Amelia pulled away, raising her voice for the first time. It was then that Owen noticed she sounded anxious and startled too and he frowned, unable to believe she really was saying that. She was actually breaking up with him. And without any explanation that made sense.

He simply could not understand how the same woman who had laughed in his arms, kissed him with so much abandon, loved him every night of the week and instilled so many different feelings in his heart could actually be the same cold, distant person who was labeling their relationship as something meaningless as a casual hookup.

Owen thought back about the vulnerability he’d spotted in her eyes countless times, about how from the first time he’d seen her, Amelia had unknowingly captivated him. From the moment she’d walked into his life, the young neurosurgeon had already thrown him off his game because with her, Owen had never been able to be indifferent. Not at work, and not in their personal lives.

Her smiles had always affected him; her charisma won him over and the brightness he’d thought to have seen in her eyes was suddenly gone together with every stupid idea Owen had about ever daring to think that unlike every woman he’d ever met, Amelia could actually be different.

“I am not trying to hurt you.” Her voice sounded broken when she added the words, but at that point, hurt and disappointment had already mixed with anger and confusion inside Owen’s heart and for the first time since he’d woken up that day, whatever was going on with Amelia didn’t interest him anymore.

“I am not hurt.” He lied, too livid to look at her. “I get it.” Owen thought about it, wondering how he ever had allowed himself to make the same mistake he always did when it came to his unrealistic expectations from people. He had actually dared to lower his guard enough to hope for something meaningful, to build a life and a relationship with a woman who was on board with the same dreams as him and actually challenged and interested him enough to make him fall for her. Owen had been significantly involved with other women before, but they either had different dreams or turned out to eventually bore him. With Amelia, for the first time he thought there was a chance he could have found exactly what he’d wished for his entire life. But never before had it happened. There was no reason why it should now. “And I’m done.” He finalized, with a decided tone, feeling the start of a headache.

“Owen.” Amelia stopped talking when she realized her voice was unsteady. His reaction had caught her by surprise and the neurosurgeon also had no idea what to say or do.
“You don’t want real. You want the play.” Owen resumed talking before she had the chance to process her own feelings. “You want the high. You want the rush. And I’m not doing that. I am not interested, so I’m done, Amelia.” He added with certainty, making her heart sink in response. Amelia had never meant to hurt him. And she had never seen him like a meaningless fling. But even though rationally Amelia knew Owen had every reason to believe that she did, considering her attitude in the past twenty fours and her words to him just seconds before, it still hurt her harder than she anticipated the way he quickly made up his mind about the whole thing. “I’ve had enough.” Owen informed her. Amelia was still thinking of what to say to let him know how she truly felt when the elevator doors suddenly opened, surprising her. And the second Owen stepped out of it, his usual professional tone of command replaced the obviously upset state of mind that had filled his voice with hurt just seconds before. “We need to set up a central triage area. Walking wounded can go to the ambulatory care center…”

His words faded from a distance, and Amelia remained motionless, unable to react. She had already noticed how good Owen was in crisis situation. He was an amazing leader, the one to look up to amidst a crisis. While everyone else was freaking out, Owen was always the serene one. And Amelia had always admired that about him.

But right as the elevator doors shut once again with Amelia in it, she stood still, wondering how could he have simply walked out and resumed working as if whatever had just happened and ended between them had already remained a part of the past, left behind inside that suffocating elevator.

Owen’s day got progressively worse as he struggled to focus on work while everything around him seemed to be collapsing. He had no idea how his relationship with Amelia had gone from taking off filled with promises to crashing unexpectedly. Much like that airplane earlier today.

And much like the airplane that Owen had signed for once, carrying six of his hospital employees.

Even though the event had happened a few years before and all the legal implications of it were already resolved, today Owen had found out that the guilt he’d felt then was still very much present. As the victims of today’s accident kept coming into the ER, he couldn’t help seeing the face of the people he’d lost on each one of them.

Owen knew his constricted heart and intensified desire to see that each patient got the best available care came from all his unresolved feelings with the situation from years in the past. But he was also well aware of how much his confusion and anger towards Amelia and her sudden decision to change entirely what their relationship meant were affecting the way he was treating her that day.

If Owen were to be completely honest, he wasn’t sorry that he was acting like a jackass. His pride would never allow him to admit how betrayed and hurt he felt, so it was easier to focus on his wrath and take out his frustration on her in the only ways he could. The moments he stood outside the radiology room nagging the neurosurgeon to hurry up with the CT reading were a proof of that. Amelia had every right to want out of their relationship, and even though inconsiderate, she also had the right not to tell him why if she wished. But he was still her boss, and she would still have to report to him. And if she wanted their relationship to be strictly professional, Owen would make sure to give her exactly that.

Deep down he knew he was acting immaturely, but Owen didn’t linger on those thoughts much longer. Since Amelia had left him so powerless when it came to deciding about their relationship, he rejoiced in the possibility of getting back at her by reinforcing his authority at work at any chance he could. That also included calling her out in the middle of the hallway to reprimand her treatment of a resident in front of Stephanie Edwards herself.
Owen realized his action was backfiring when soon enough, he found himself in the position of being the one who was getting a lecture. Edwards exposed so easily what was going on between the two attendings that for a moment, he was caught off guard. The resident’s earlier comments while in the OR and her obvious innuendo to his love life had already contributed to Owen’s sour mood, but now, as she stood there accusing him and Amelia of not figuring out “how to date”, the chief wondered how much exactly people knew about his involvement with his head of neurosurgery and how that would affect the way he was seen by his employees from there on.

As Owen dwelled on those thoughts, he noticed Amelia looking as embarrassed as he was. She had just probably reached the same conclusions as him and without making a fuss, the neurosurgeon made an excuse and left, making him wonder if they’d ever be able to stand in the same room again without that awkwardness and actually have a real conversation.

Amelia finished typing down her notes on the patient’s chart, pleasantly surprised that the woman had shown such promising signs of recovery. It was probably the first happy moment about that day, the neurosurgeon realized with a sad grin.

As it had been happening so often in her life lately, her mind shifted to Owen and Amelia felt her heart constricting. She felt awful.

For the last couple of days, she had been telling herself that it was better to put a brake on her involvement with her boss while there was still time. Amelia knew that allowing such a deep, emotional bond to grow would eventually only expose her to more heartbreak. She couldn’t risk that. But it wasn’t fair that he took the toll and suffered because she couldn’t correspond to the expectations.

Amelia knew that deep down, Owen had done nothing wrong. He’d never meant to get her out of her comfort zone, much on the contrary. For all the time they’d been together, he’d treated her with nothing but respect, decency and care.

And in return, she’d broken his heart.

During the entire day, she’d fed on the fact that he was being rude and uncivil towards her as a way to fuel her decision to step back from their relationship. But it didn’t take her two hours away from his presence to make her feel even worse. Amelia had shut him down and hadn’t even offered an explanation. She knew that if she told him how she really was feeling, Owen would probably forgive her and understand.

And that could be even more dangerous.

Because if he offered her comprehension and forgiveness, Amelia knew she was at serious risk for putting her entire decision in jeopardy and running straight back into his arms to pick up exactly where they left off. She had hurt his feelings and he didn’t deserve it. But right now, Amelia had herself and her well being to think about.

Rationally, Amelia knew it was better to keep her distance and give him some space. After all, everything was too recent and he probably needed time to process it too. But seeing him pass down the hall with his powerful, poised walk made Amelia reconsider. She couldn’t go home and sleep in peace knowing he was that angry with her. Not Owen. He’d always been considerate with her. And nothing made her feel worse than seeing cold indifference in his eyes while feeling like a total disappointment.
“Chief!”

The word left Amelia’s mouth before she could contain herself. She hurried to catch up with Owen, seeing as he was finishing giving instructions to a nurse.

“Tell Kepner I’ll be down soon to help triage the stragglers.”

Amelia noticed how he didn’t stop to hear what she had to say. He simply kept on walking and going his way obviously maintaining his earlier attitude to avoid her presence and make her feel like an annoyance. But Amelia didn’t let his passive aggressive response withhold her from sharing the news she hoped would make his day at least a little bit better.

“I thought you’d like to know Kate’s memory is coming back.” The neurosurgeon started as she walked beside him, trying to appear positive and maybe make up for some of what she’d put him through. Owen was much bigger and Amelia had to take two steps to keep up with every one of his and she wondered if he was going that fast on purpose. “It’s still incomplete, but I’m expecting a full recovery.”

She stole a peek sideways, hoping to hear at least a few words of encouragement or to see that he acknowledged the effort she was putting into making the situation as comfortable as possible for them both, but Owen kept his hands inside his coat pockets, barely looking her in the eyes as he replied unaffectedly:

“Thank you. I’m glad to hear it.”

Amelia lost her patience completely. She really was trying the best that she could, but never before had she been around someone as stubborn as that man. Owen could intimidate everyone else around them with his proud, tough guy attitude but he didn’t scare her. And she wasn’t going to let him walk away carrying so much negativity about her because Amelia really did care about him and his well-being.

By the time she made sense of her feelings, he’d already walked away out of her reach. Why did Owen have the power to irritate her so effortlessly?! Amelia knew she wasn’t the easiest person. And communicating well surely wasn’t her strength. But that guy took her patience to defying limits. If he was keeping that broody, sullen mood just to get back at her for the way she’d treated him before, Owen surely was more difficult than she’d initially imagined.

“You say I’m playing games?” Amelia had to nearly run to catch up with him again. “I am here, ready to talk, but you are pissed at me, so I’m getting punished.” The neurosurgeon complained, hating the way he kept his cool while she was one step away from jumping on his neck out of frustration.

“I’m not punishing anyone,” Owen informed her with a condescending look, taking one step ahead with the clear intention to leave, “and I’m not doing this.”

“I want to.” Amelia bravely stood on his way, not bothered by his display of cold authority. “I want to do this because this is unfair!” Grabbing his arm, Amelia forgot all about the line between personal and professional and opened the door to the first room she found on her right, resuming her talking while she pulled him inside. “This is…”

“Amelia, back off.” Owen interrupted her before she could go any further. He’d allowed her to trap him inside the empty on call room because she was visibly worked up and he wasn’t about to be part of a scene in front of his staff. The neurosurgeon seemed angry and he wasn’t sure what to make of it, adding to his frustration. “You wanted professional. I’m giving you professional.”
“No, you’re not.” Amelia stood up to him, taking one step closer. “You are hardly being civil. I am sorry if I hurt your feelings. I am, but…”

“This is not about you!” Owen snapped, for the first time raising his voice. Hearing her talk about hurting his feelings set him off but he wasn’t ever going to admit it. “Everything isn’t about you!” He shouted louder, hoping to scare her off so they wouldn’t be having that conversation.

“Then what is it?” Amelia didn’t give in, satisfied that he at least hadn’t kept his indifference. Even though angry, shouting Owen could be quite intimidating, she’d rather have him voice out his feelings and actually use words than seeing him shutting down in silence, refusing to talk while treating her like she was his punching bag at work.

“There was a plane crash.” Owen admitted

“Yes, but…”

“Not the one today.” He raised his voice, finally silencing them both. Amelia stopped coming up with arguments to why he should talk, apprehensively waiting for him to explain why he was so angry. “I’m talking about the plane that had Meredith and Derek and Arizona and Mark and Lexie and Cristina.” Owen admitted with a sheepish tone. He sighed heavily as he said the words, feeling too emotionally drained to even try to contain his emotions. “I put them on that plane. I signed the requisition for the airline. I paid for it.” He confessed, finally saying out loud the thoughts that had haunted him for so long and today had so unexpectedly been brought to surface with every feeling of guilt that came along. “I was in charge. I don’t care how long I’ve been out of the service. It was my watch, and they were my men.” Owen added, nodding his head in disapproval to himself. “And…”

He closed his eyes in order to control his emotions, struggling to keep looking at the same woman who’d offered him comfort and comprehension before. “I failed them.” He sighed heavily, feeling the weight of the words as he spoke them. Too overwhelmed with his own emotions, Owen sat down on the nearest bed to get a hold of himself. “It was my fault.” He admitted, taking a deep breath and regaining control. With a renewed disposition, he swept away all those uncomfortable feelings the memories had brought and added a conclusion to finally be over with the subject. “So, when something like this happens today, it brings it all back up.”

Amelia noticed the way he nodded his head, almost as if condemning himself for a mistake she knew hadn’t been his.

The neurosurgeon knew about the accident Owen was talking about. Her brother and sister in law had been on it, and because of the consequences of Derek’s injuries, one of Amelia’s sisters had had to donate some of her neural tissue to help their brother regain function of his hand and resume operating.

Amelia knew about the repercussions of the accident, how it affected people and especially, the lives it had taken. Mark Sloan had been on board that day and his death still constricted Amelia’s heart every time she thought about his smile and how growing up, he’d always had her back whenever one of her siblings was picking on her.

But she also knew there was no way that could be on Owen. She might be the one reconsidering defining what they meant to each other, but she didn’t doubt his integrity one bit. Amelia seriously doubted Owen would ever hire a company to provide a service if he so much as thought anyone’s security could be compromised.

She was about to open her mouth to tell him that when his next words echoed through the air.

“There was a plane crash.”
Amelia frowned, noticing the subtle changes in his expression. Owen looked lost, defeated, as if he’d just realized something else. And the confusion on his face gave Amelia a bad feeling.

“Owen.” She reached out for his hand, unsure of what exactly she was asking for. But his sudden change of attitude made Amelia feel an uncomfortable shiver running up her spine. She tried desperately to hold on. Because she had a feeling he was about to let go. And somewhere deep in the cold lump on her stomach, Amelia foresaw what was about to happen.

Owen held onto the fingers she was offering, hoping to feel her warmth one last time before they inevitably parted ways.

His mouth felt dry and his insides were churning like he was going to be sick. That hell of a day had been insufferable, but the part when he would have to break ties with the woman he’d invariably come to love was definitely going to be the worst.

Because just like the airplane collision, Amelia had walked into his life unannounced, uninvited. Despite all his careful planning and all his meticulous precaution, with her, he’d exposed himself once more. Owen didn’t see it coming, but he had fallen for her and before he could get a hold of what was happening, she had unexpectedly changed their course, crashing what little they had built.

Not too long before, Owen had sat on a boat and envisioned a life for them. He’d actually allowed himself to make plans. To hope. Her smell still lingered on his pillow. Her lipstick still stained his favorite coffee mug. And just earlier today, Amelia had made it pretty clear that, unlike his initial assumption, her vision of what all of that meant was entirely different from his.

Owen took a deep breath, refusing to believe it.

Let me know if you, you know… if you need people… I’m around.

He’d embarked on it, utterly fascinated by her personality and her looks. Owen had been careful at first, but Amelia was so amazing and so completely enchanting that little by little, her charisma and charm had knocked down his defenses and before Owen could realize what was happening, he’d already fallen head over heels for her. It had taken weeks, but little by little, Owen had started to believe in the possibility of his biggest dream ever coming true again.

I just don’t think this, us, is a good idea… mixing work and play.

And just like that, all the fire that had been burning in his heart, fed by how much she’d seemed to return his desires and affections had suddenly crashed, disappearing like it hadn’t even existed before.

Owen took a deep breath, struggling to say what he knew needed to be said.

“And I won’t survive another plane crash, Amelia.” He informed her, thinking back about how much pain and heartbreak he’d endured in the past for trying to convince someone of something that was his desire, and his alone. If Amelia wasn’t in synchrony with what he wanted, then it was better if they each went their ways while there was still time. While they could still survive the collision. Because Owen knew that soon enough, it would have already been too late to go back maintaining the least bit of mental sanity. “And that’s all we are.”

Amelia felt the weight of his words and struggled to accept the meaning in them. Somehow, she’d walk out of that room feeling even worse than when she’d first entered, something she hadn’t considered to be possible.

But as she pulled her hand, having to use all her strength after Owen hesitated to let her go, Amelia
realized that no matter how hard this was on the two of them, at least breaking up was something they both seemed to agree on.

For the rest of his shift, Owen tried his best to get rid of the awful sensation consuming him. He was aware of how intense his feelings for Amelia were, but even so he hadn’t expected to feel so devastated.

As one hour followed another, it became more flagrant that when he made it back to his trailer that evening, Amelia wasn’t going to join him. He wouldn’t wake up to her easy smiles and affectionate kisses in the morning. He wouldn’t have to tell her to hurry in the shower or they’d risk being late for work.

None of that would matter anymore because she simply wasn’t going to be there.

As anger slowly faded, his heart felt progressively emptier. Owen hated the feeling and rejected it with every ounce of strength he had. But soon enough he’d come to find out that the dark cloud hanging above their heads apparently had come to stay.

The chief of surgery knew that if he went home, there would be no distractions and he’d have to deal with his feelings so he chose to spend the night at the hospital instead. In the morning, Owen had just showered, shaved and was finishing dressing when he walked into the attendings lounge, looking for Callie to join him in an early morning procedure.

Small talk with other colleagues followed and Owen didn’t feel the least inclined to take part in it. He was sitting by the computer desk in the corner of the room when Meredith Grey interrupted the lighthearted conversation among her colleagues, dropping the news that Owen didn’t yet know would change everything.

“Derek is dead.”

The world became a turmoil around them and while everyone freaked out, discussing what was going on and trying to make sense of Meredith’s bombastic news, Owen took charge of the situation after the general surgeon passed out.

While Webber, Callie, Alex and Maggie tried to understand what was going on, Owen overheard the exchange of information that followed, unable to believe all of that really was happening. Involuntarily, his mind shifted to Amelia and he wondered how she’d taken the news. He still couldn’t process the loss and since Meredith wasn’t in a proper state of mind to share any details, Owen was left guessing.

Moments later, after updating Webber and Bailey on Meredith’s condition and finally getting to the bottom of what had happened to Derek, he found out that Amelia didn’t know yet.

As chief of surgery, Owen knew the protocol. If Amelia was operating, they couldn’t interrupt her. He felt his stomach twisting in knots when he realized that soon enough, Amelia’s world was about to become darker and more painful.

Owen didn’t want to tell her what had happened, he didn’t look forward to it at all. But at the same time, someone had to do it and he wasn’t going to let a sole random person share the news he knew would devastate her. The trauma surgeon had watched first hand how Amelia was close to her brother and he cringed just to think of the heartbreak and pain he would add to her life with the devastating announcement.
Owen knew it too well himself. He’d lost a sibling too. He’d never forget how his entire world had changed from one minute to another after he found out the chopper his sister was in was missing. But Megan had never been confirmed dead and the lack of closure could add up to anxiety and trigger emotions Owen was familiar with. This time, with Amelia it was different because they knew for sure what had happened.

But it didn’t mean it would be any easier.

The chief of surgery walked into the OR where the young neurosurgeon was finishing operating. After his gaze met Callie’s, Owen had the confirmation that Amelia was still completely in the dark.

The entire situation was too impossible to process. Owen felt like he was somehow living a nightmare. One of his closest friends had died and none of that made any sense. But soon enough, Amelia would find out and it was better that she heard from him than someone who might deliver the news in a cold, impersonal manner.

“Can we have the room, please?”

Amelia heard her boss’s voice and turned around, noticing the way Callie and Edwards silently retreated from the OR. Everyone was alarmingly silent, with heavy frowns on their faces. Something was going on and Amelia had no idea what.

“Did you need something?” She asked Owen, trying to sound as indifferent as possible.

Ever since she’d sat beside him on an on call room bed and heard the words that ultimately broke her heart, Amelia had disconnected from everything and everyone around her.

All her life, she’d heard how much of a disappointment she’d been. But very few times it’d come close to hurt as much as when she’d had to hear from the man she loved that their relationship was as disastrous as a plane crash. Amelia had had intense relationships before, but after Owen brutally told her what he felt, she’d realized that never before she’d been so deeply involved with anyone. No other guy had ever had the power to make her feel like that.

Her initial reaction had been to crave a drink and Amelia hated herself for it. She had to use all of her strength to keep her sobriety, too determinate not to slip. Especially not because of a heartbreak.

Owen’s words and the sad truth in them had hurt deeper than Amelia could have ever expected. But she didn’t blame him for her pain.

Instead, Amelia blamed herself. It was her fault for feeling this close to someone, for not knowing better and being seduced by everything Owen had to offer to the point of being blind whenever he was around.

To the point of actually letting her guard down and leaning on him for comfort, when she knew too well from experience of how loving someone ultimately only caused sorrow and pain.

She had moved to Seattle to focus on her life and her career. And after her brief and yet intense relationship with Owen, Amelia had closed off completely, too determinate to never let herself feel as close to having a relapse again as she felt just hours before.

“Maybe we should have this conversation in my office.”

His look was stern and firm as he said the words. Amelia wondered if she was seeing too much into it, or if Owen really was having a hard time keeping his composure.
Knowing him, Amelia supposed probably the first option. Owen was too annoyingly contained to ever be affected by something enough to compromise his performance at whatever he needed to do.

“Look, I don’t have time for…” She started out, still thinking he’d come to talk to her about work and was hesitating because of their conversation the day before. But when Owen walked into the room, calmly standing in front of her without breaking eye contact, Amelia realized something was seriously wrong.

And in his eyes, she saw the truth.

Ripping her surgical mask with one determinate movement, Amelia inhaled deeply and forced herself to control her heart rate, refusing to feel anything whatsoever other than anger. “Who died?”

“Amelia…” Owen took a deep breath, wondering how in the world he was going to deliver the news but her words interrupted him.

“I know the face. I’ve been here before.” She confessed, adding contempt to her list of allowed emotions. It was easier to despise everything than to actually let herself be affected by whichever news he had to give her. “Everyone thinks they are the first person in the world to ever look at a human being like that, but… It’s always the same face.” She added with impatience, thinking back about the many times she’d seen the same facial expression in the eyes of people who loved her whenever they shattered her life with bad news. Amelia was not going to let it happen again. She couldn’t control other people, but she sure as hell could control herself. And the lack of denial from Owen as she spoke the words pretty much confirmed her initial assumption. “Who is dead?”

Owen couldn’t bear it any longer. He could see in her eyes she was torturing herself, defensively putting up a wall to cope with the news he was about to deliver.

“Derek.” He said, feeling nauseated as he struggled to contain his emotions. “It’s Derek. I’m so, so sorry.” Owen gazed at her, hoping more than anything that she didn’t have to go through all of that. But he was powerless over the situation. All Owen could do was to be there for her and to make sure she knew things would be okay. “It was an MVC accident, and he wanted to help.”

“I don’t need the details.” Amelia broke eye contact with him, startling Owen. “Dead is dead.”

Owen frowned, trying his hardest to do the right thing. He’d prefer it if she cried and broke down in his arms, because then he would be able to do something. But the way Amelia coldly stood there, staring at him with indifference as if she’d heard something as mundane as her surgery being cancelled scared Owen, because he knew that reaction wasn’t at all healthy.

“I am so, so sorry.” He repeated, giving her time to process it. Owen couldn’t judge. He knew the news had barely sunk in for him yet. And Amelia was Derek’s sister. It was exponentially worse on her than it was on other people. Taking one step closer, he tried to touch her and get to her in the hopes that would inspire her to have a reaction. “I wish there was something I could…”

But Amelia stepped back, clearly rejecting his comfort and his touch.

“Thank you. For telling me.” She looked into his eyes, speaking the words with unnatural calmness. Owen wanted to hold her and make sure she knew that just because they’d broken things off the night before, it didn’t mean he wasn’t there for her anymore. Much on the contrary. Amelia would now go through something awful and he wanted to do everything in his power to ease her sorrow.

“Amelia, if there’s anything I can…”
“I’m good. I’ve done this before. I know the drill.” Amelia tried to inflict a lighter tone in her voice, as if trying to convince him as much as she tried to convince herself. “It’s not a big deal.”

Owen watched as she turned back to the sink and turned it on again, resuming washing her hands like the information she’d just received had barely affected her.

Feeling helpless, overwhelmed and unsure of what to do, Owen looked around, spotting Callie inside the OR, obviously giving the news to Stephanie Edwards. The resident broke down in tears, being promptly held by the orthopedic surgeon while she cried.

Owen watched the scene and looked back at the woman standing beside him, who bravely kept her chin up while refusing to succumb to pain.

“Amelia, I…”

“If that’s all, chief, I have some post ops to get to,” the neurosurgeon interrupted him, looking at Owen with a mix of defiance and what he interpreted as pity.

The chief of surgery reached out, this time succeeding in touching her shoulder.

“Are you sure you’re…”

But Amelia once again stepped back, this time reaching the door and grabbing the handle with the clear intention to leave.

“I am fine,” Amelia gave him one last look before finally exiting through the door.

Owen knew it was a lie. There was no way she could be fine. Not in these circumstances. But while Amelia kept lying to herself, there was nothing he could do other than wait.

Because when she finally allowed herself to process the news and feel the loss, Amelia would invariably break down.

And Owen would make sure to be there to catch her when she fell.
Part Twenty

Chapter Summary

This chapter has only “unseen” scenes. It covers some ground of the two hour episode 11x22, in which they show the fallout of Derek’s death. There is so much ground to explore and I think it’s extremely relevant for Omelia’s story to know what exactly happened to them, individually and together, right after Derek died.

The Journey – Part Twenty

The indistinct sound of conversations on the back distracted Owen as he put on a mask to cover his face while stepping into OR two.

“Do you know how much longer you’re going to be?”

His voice sounded serious and formal as he asked, but his eyes were warm and filled with concern as Owen looked at the young neurosurgeon who looked completely immersed in the work she was doing.

“I don’t know.” Amelia replied evasively, not bothering to look at him.

Owen took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, trying to control his frustration with the situation. Three days before, they’d been hit with the shattering news that Derek had died. And ever since, he hadn’t seen Amelia leave the hospital as she kept on pretty much covering her shifts and her brother’s while overseeing the ER cases the entire time. The chief of surgery knew it was her way of avoiding dealing with what had happened but he supposed Amelia couldn’t carry on that rhythm for much longer. At some point, she would have to slow down, go home and actually face the devastating loss.

After a few seconds of hesitation, Owen finally opened his mouth to say what he’d gone there to say.

“You’re going to be late for the funeral.”

The trauma surgeon patiently waited for her reaction, supposing that the obvious mention of what had happened would somehow affect Amelia and get her out of that numb state she’d drowned in. But not even the direct reference to Derek really being gone seemed to affect the woman.

Amelia hoped with all her energy that Owen would simply go and leave her alone. She didn’t want to hear about her brother’s funeral. The thought of facing her mother, sisters and brothers in law, and seeing the look of grief and sympathy on their faces gave her a nauseating wave of contempt. It would simply be better for everyone if she could stay at the hospital, helping people who could actually benefit from her presence.

“Derek is already dead.” Amelia replied acidly. “He won’t mind if I am late.”

At the sound of her words, the entire surgical team brought up their eyes and the neurosurgeon noticed the alarmed look on their faces. Forcing a chuckle, she gazed at each one before finally focusing back on the field.
“Gee, I was only trying to light up the mood a bit.” Amelia nervously bit her lip behind the mask. The last thing she wanted was to have people gossiping about her and her reaction behind her back. So Amelia knew she had to tone down the jokes before people started talking about it. Forcing herself to look at the man who still stood a few feet away from her, looking obviously concerned, she decided to do what was expected of her to avoid being at the spotlight. “I won’t be long. I’ll be there as soon as I’m done here.”

“I’ll wait for you.” Owen said with a decisive tone, gazing at her with an expression that didn’t leave room for denial.

“There is no need to, I can simply…”

“I wasn’t asking.” Owen informed her with authority and before she could refute, he stepped out of the OR, going to the adjoined scrub room in which she could see his presence.

Amelia let out a heavy sigh of frustration once she realized what he was doing. From where he was standing, Owen could not only oversee her work and therefore pressure her to take exactly her time and not drag the procedure on purpose, he also made sure she knew she couldn’t escape so easily and make up an excuse to disappear.

One hour later, the neurosurgeon was fuming in frustration as she was pretty much forced to put on black clothes and be driven somewhere she really didn’t wish to be.

Amelia really didn’t care about funerals anymore. She’d been to so many that they simply didn’t affect her as much as they seemed to affect other people. In her opinion, they were a complete waste of time. But if she didn’t attend it, it would only raise questions and put more people on her back, so Amelia decided to cooperate.

As Owen drove through the streets, she remained determinate not to look at him. Amelia knew that by being her boss, Owen could at any point force her to step back from work and that was the last thing she wanted at that moment.

“You okay?” His voice sounded sweet and caring as he stopped at a red light. Amelia could feel his gaze on her back but she kept stubbornly gazing outside through her window. “How are you holding up?”

Owen waited for her reply but no words were spoken. He nodded his head in denial, trying to keep his patience. She was being more difficult than ever but he couldn’t judge. Amelia was probably going through one of the worst moments in her life and the whole acting out was her way of dealing with it.

“I am going to take that as you letting me know you’re too tired to even speak.” Owen said with a decisive tone, knowing he was disguising a threat. “I think it’s only wise if you cut back some OR hours and take some time to properly grieve your brother.”

Amelia immediately picked up on what he was saying and felt a wave of wrath taking over her body. Turning around impatiently, she looked at him with fury in her eyes.

“Look, you can make me come here but you can’t force me to talk, okay?” She informed him with an angry tone. “I don’t want to talk, especially not to you.” Amelia fired, being mean on purpose in the hopes he would be upset to the point of leaving her alone. “So back the hell off.”

Owen stared into her eyes and with all serenity in the world.

“Okay.”
The way he’d spoken the word, as if doubting everything she had just said drove Amelia mad with anger. Luckily for her, he was just parking the car in the cemetery, so she responded to his condescending manners by immediately jumping out of his truck and slamming the door behind her on purpose.

Owen knew she was hurting and the way she was trying to push him away by being nasty was so obvious that it was almost comedic. If the entire situation weren’t so devastatingly painful, maybe he would find it in his heart to smile. But that wasn’t the case. So he simply locked the car as if her tantrum hadn’t happened and acted normally as he easily caught up with her.

Amelia knew she shouldn’t be surprised when he stubbornly walked beside her, at a minimum distance. Owen looked very serious with his dark suit and tie and his properly shaved face. She felt and looked like a mess and it irritated her the fact that he was always so appropriate all the goddamn time.

Swallowing the mean words she wanted to say, Amelia forced her chin up and slowly identified the familiar faces that agglomerated around the gravesite. A man in dark clothes who had probably never even exchanged two words with her brother was giving a big, emotional speech and Amelia hated every single person she saw at that moment.

She hated their tears, their mundane and cliché responses, the way they would quietly whisper in each other’s ears and say empty words of comfort that felt more like a rehearsed speech than anything genuine at all.

Some of those people were the same ones who’d antagonized Derek at the hospital several times before and yet they all stood there, acting like they had any right to grieve his death. Her lips pulled back in a thin line as Amelia scanned around her, meeting her mother’s gaze across the yard. The neurosurgeon quickly looked away and her reaction didn’t go unnoticed to Owen. He stared at her, studying her expression, noticing how almost bored she looked with her arms crossed in front of her body, exhaling heavily every ten seconds.

“Amelia,” Owen whispered, reaching out for her. He spotted her mother and three women standing behind her who looked so much like the neurosurgeon and Derek that Owen was sure could only be the duo’s other siblings. “Your entire family is there, maybe you should go be with them?” He proposed, gently placing his open palm on the small of her back.

Amelia took a step to the side, rejecting his touch. After folding her arms in clear defiance to the entire thing, she twitched her nose and scoffed with pretend indifference.

“Look, your ex-wife is there too.” She rolled her eyes with impatience. “Right over there with Meredith. Why don’t you go be with them?” The neurosurgeon repeated his words on purpose.

Owen knew she was trying to make him lose his head in the hopes he’d leave her alone but he refused to cave. Minutes went by when they stayed immersed in silence, with only the words of the spokesman at a distance.

“This whole thing is a circus…”

Owen turned his head to the side, surprised at the nearly inaudible words Amelia had whispered. When she realized she had his attention, Amelia continued:

“Isn’t it incredibly ironic that my mom, my sisters and I weren’t allowed to say goodbye to my brother when we could have and yet now we’re expected to be here?” She asked with a shadow of
pain, anger and hurt in her sarcastic tone. Owen noticed how tightened her eyes were as she discreetly sneered, directly gazing at Meredith. “I was only at a phone call distance but I was robbed from the possibility of saying goodbye.” Amelia declared with wrath. “But now I have to do it. Because today is the day someone else set this whole thing allowing me to do it.” She paused, drowning in controlled anger, resenting the facts she was exposing. “I couldn’t do it before. It wasn’t convenient for her. But now I have to. Because someone else decided for me that this is how I should grieve my brother.”

Owen noticed her eyes staring at her sister in law as she slowly spoke the words, clearly containing the fury in them for the sake of not making a scene. It was then that Owen realized how angry Amelia was feeling, and with every right to. It made sense now where all that anger and even some rebelliousness were coming from. It really wasn’t fair the way things had been handled, and how Meredith had acted like she was the only one entitled to deciding anything about Derek. Especially when she’d been with him long enough to know how close he felt to his family and how they would have liked to participate in the process once it became clear decisions had to be made about his health status.

Derek had died from a brain injury and his own sister who was a neurosurgeon and lived at a few minutes away had only been informed after he’d been hooked out of the machines. Nothing about that was fair.

He was just thinking of what to say to comfort her when Amelia’s voice broke the silence, again in a whisper.

“You know, she robbed me of the choice to say goodbye to him while he was still alive and now I am being forced to do it when he’s dead.” Amelia finally turned her head in Owen’s direction and looked deeply into his eyes. “And I wish I hadn’t come.”

“You don’t really mean that.” Owen whispered back gently. “You’d look back to this moment in a few months or years and you’d regret not coming.”

“No, I wouldn’t.” Amelia affirmed with conviction. She paused momentarily before explaining herself. “Goodbyes are just not my thing, Owen…” Amelia nodded her head in denial almost imperceptibly. “You know, I’ve come to find out that it’s actually easier this way.” She added and Owen noticed the expressionless movement of her silver blue eyes. “It’s what happens in real life. Goodbyes are for movies,” she added with contempt, “because in real life, people die or leave or get killed… You wake up one morning and the people you loved simply aren’t there anymore.” As she spoke the words, Owen saw through her seemingly unaffected ways and wondered how much exactly Amelia had gone through in her life already. She was still too young to have such a hard lived opinion on things and yet it was obvious in her speech she had been through enough to have created a thicker skin in order to survive. “That’s the way to go. Nice and easy.”

Owen remained in silence, processing the meaning of her words. He felt an addition of sympathy and urged to touch her, but he’d already seen what’d happened the last time he’d tried.

“Nothing about this is nice and easy.” He replied, in a firm but gentle tone. Amelia couldn’t keep acting like her brother’s death was no big deal because at some point, it would all catch up with her and he knew it.

“Yeah.” Amelia finally agreed with him. “For most people I guess it isn’t.” She suggestively looked around, pretty much implying that she agreed with him when it came to others but not to herself.

Owen took a deep breath and realized that once again he was out of words. Opting to remain in silence and show his support by simply being there, the trauma surgeon put his hands in his pants
pockets and heard the rest of the speech about Derek, trying to process the fact that his friend was gone for good.

Right after the funeral, a service was held in Meredith’s house and from a distance, Owen kept his eyes on Amelia, noticing the way her mother and sisters talked amongst themselves, at times including her in the conversation. All the while, the neurosurgeon seemed determinate not to cooperate with the dialogue, looking every bit as if she really didn’t want to be there. A lot of people were taking the opportunity to talk about Derek and share stories about him, but Owen couldn’t focus enough to have a two minute conversation, so he settled for standing in a corner, holding a forgotten glass of whisky in his hand while he observed the room around him.

“Hey.”

Owen heard the familiar voice and turned his head, seeing a discreet grin on the face of his ex-wife.

“Hi,” He returned her halfhearted smile and raised his glass to his lips, taking a sip of the burning amber liquid in the hopes it would distract him from Amelia’s demeanor. “It’s good to see you made it in such short notice.” Owen commented, realizing by the look on her face that Cristina was doing well. “How have you been?”

“Good,” Cristina nodded and studied his expression. “You?”

Owen shrugged with indifference and looked away, spotting Meredith sitting alone on the living room couch.

“How is she doing?” He asked, concerned. His attention had been mostly on Amelia lately, so Owen didn’t really know much about how exactly Meredith was coping. And he didn’t feel at all guilty about it. Derek’s widow had Alex, Webber, Maggie and now even Cristina while his youngest sister had barely any support system. But regardless of that, no one’s wellbeing mattered to him more than Amelia’s at that moment.

“Exactly like that.” Cristina replied with a conformed face, studying her friend’s desolated expression from the same point of view as Owen.

“How long are you staying?” Owen asked without really paying much attention. Once again he brought the glass of whisky to his lips and took a sip to hide the fact that his gaze went back to Amelia as he noticed her worked up expression getting heavier by the second as her mother heatedly spoke to her, apparently insisting on something. Their voices were slowly raising amongst the crowd and the conversation had apparently become a discussion.

“A couple of days.” Cristina replied with her eyes still fixated on Meredith. “I’ll make sure she…”

The thoracic surgeon’s words were interrupted when, by one corner, Amelia’s voice shouted out loud at the same time she pulled her hand from her mother’s grasp. Owen had been watching the scene from a distance, but as the young woman’s rampant words broke the sullen silence in the room, all eyes were suddenly on her.

The minute she felt the heavy gazes in her direction, Amelia quit talking. She kept on proudly staring at everyone, but Owen couldn’t be fooled. He knew her too well and could see she was mortified. As people slowly diverted their attention and went back to their private conversations, the murmurs in the room filled the air again.

“Excuse me,” Owen cleared his throat and placed his glass on the coffee table, leaning forward to
give his ex-wife a chaste hug before looking into her eyes. “It was good seeing you.” He distractedly
added before nodding his head, clearly ending the brief conversation.

Cristina went back to Meredith’s presence while he made his way across the room, catching up with
Amelia before she could leave through the back door.

Owen noticed the way she was pacing back and forth, as if struggling to control her temper. Amelia
looked livid, at some point even offended. After the scene he’d just witnessed, Owen knew it
definitely had something to do with her family.

“What is it?” He asked leaning on the corridor wall, watching as she had a hard time staying still.

Amelia looked at him and the floor again, biting her lower lip. Owen noticed as she hesitated before
finally deciding to talk.

“My mother is insisting that I go back to New York with her.” The neurosurgeon explained,
apparently dreading the idea.

“What did she say?” Owen asked carefully, thinking back about how Amelia had shouted a loud no
before pulling her hand from her mother’s just a few minutes before.

“She thinks I’m five years old and can’t take care of myself.” The neurosurgeon explained, rolling
her eyes.

Owen pondered about the idea. Perhaps it wasn’t such a bad suggestion, after all. In New York, he
knew Amelia would have her mother and sisters close by, and he figured it was probably better for
her to get through the loss all the while maintaining her sobriety if she had a strong support system.
But at the same time, the idea to see her go devastated him because Owen knew that if she went, it
was likely they’d never see each other again.

“What about your friends in Los Angeles?” He asked with interest. A few times before he’d heard
Amelia talking about them and it had become clear how close to them she felt. Amelia had lived in
the city once, she clearly felt comfortable there. And Los Angeles was much closer than New York.

“Addison called three times just this morning.” Amelia admitted with a broken voice. Derek’s ex-
wife couldn’t make it to the funeral but she was checking up on her friend all the time, all the while
insisting that the neurosurgeon considered moving back to LA.

But Amelia knew she couldn’t. It would feel like taking a step back in life and there was only one
direction she would go: Forward.

“You know you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to, right?” Owen forced eye contact with
her, watching as she sheepishly agreed with a head nod as her lower lip trembled. If Amelia decided
to move, he wasn’t going to try to convince her otherwise, but if she chose to stay, he was going to
make sure she had all the support she needed. “Whatever you decide to do.”

Amelia had been silently staring at her shoes, but the meaning of his words transformed some of her
anger into humbling gratitude. Somehow, she managed to meet his eyes despite her resolve not to
cry.

“Yeah…” Her voice sounded more hoarse than she had planned.

Amelia knew she’d just let her guard down and how exactly dangerous that could be. Seeing her
mother and sisters had deeply messed with her because the young surgeon was once again reminded
of how no one in that family took her seriously. Carolyn Shepherd kept trying to convince her
daughter to go back home and move in with her while her three sisters nodded in agreement to their mother, looking at the youngest sibling as if she was a ticking bomb ready to explode at any minute.

“People don’t really know how to grieve in my family.” Amelia offered some insight. She chuckled with refusal when she realized how ironic her sentence sounded, considering she could be included in it. When her father had died years before, her family’s way of coping had mostly been ignoring the subject. Amelia wasn’t sure she could go back to New York and rebuild her life there having to look at her mom and sisters in the eye without being able to talk about Derek. “Besides, I can’t go.” She stiffed up her lip and look at him with renewed pride, once again wearing her mask of self-protection. “I signed a contract with you. I can’t just leave my job.”

“Amelia, if you want to go, I can…”

“I gave you my word, so I am going to keep it.” Amelia interrupted him, noticing Owen was about to offer her a way out. “I have patients, I have work to do. I can’t go.” She spoke decisively. “I don’t want to go.” She enforced, making sure the matter was settled.

“Okay, then.” Owen stared at her with sympathy in his eyes, nodding gently.

He wondered how things were going to be from there on, hoping with all his heart that this slight display of emotion would stimulate Amelia to open up and finally allow herself to feel what she needed to feel.

But as days followed, he realized how wrong he was.

Everything around him seemed to be falling apart and Owen had no idea how to keep things from crumbling. His surgical service was still running smoothly, but he felt his attendings unmotivated and restless. Everyone just seemed miserable and hopeless, and understandably so.

Amelia was still avoiding him at every chance she could. A few times at night, Owen had stayed up late at his trailer hoping she would return home so he could check up on her, but the neurosurgeon would often sleep at the hospital, even when she wasn’t on call. He wasn’t sure how exactly she and Meredith were managing at the house and with the kids until one day, a couple of weeks after the funeral, he was caught off guard with the news that Derek’s widow had taken the kids and left.

Soon enough, Owen joined Callie, Maggie and Alex at the house, watching as the three surgeons discussed what could possibly have happened to make Meredith decide to leave so randomly, but he was barely paying attention to the conversation. Instead, he had his eyes focused on Amelia and the look of boredom on her face as the other doctors expressed their concern.

Amelia distanced herself from the group, wondering why they even bothered to try to understand Meredith’s actions when Richard Webber approached her, kindly offering to take her to a meeting that day. Amelia was aware she had been neglecting that important part of her treatment lately but she supposed that while she kept busy with work, she wouldn’t have to worry about a relapse.

As everyone else got more worked up about Meredith’s sudden disappearance, Amelia distracted herself with a glass of water. Her sister in law had left a note affirming she was okay so Amelia wasn’t really worried. Not that the neurosurgeon felt a lot of things lately, anyway. It was more practical to stay on the sidelines and watch as everyone gave room to their concerns because the less involved she got, the better it was for her on the long run.

And there was also the fact Meredith had simply taken the kids and vanished without even bothering to tell Amelia first. They lived together and the neurosurgeon was there every day helping with the kids, getting them prepped to school and making sure they had someone to talk to about their dad in
those dark days that followed his death. At five years old, Amelia had lost her dad too so she could relate to the situation completely, especially in regards to Zola. Back then, no one had explained anything to her, all the adults had simply ignored the fact and gone on as if nothing in the world had changed. Their decision had slowly made Amelia’s world crumble because as a kid, she’d never been able to figure out why her dad was there one day and then suddenly wasn’t. That had given her insecurity and then anxiety. And the last thing she wanted was for her niece and nephew to go through the same. So Amelia had made sure to let them talk about Derek and ask for him as much as they wanted in order for them to grieve their immense loss.

But now they too had been taken away for her too so Amelia wasn’t much inclined to worry about Meredith at that moment.

As he sat on the couch, Owen figured out he also wasn’t paying much attention to the conversation around him. Instead, he was trying to make sense of Amelia. The way she had physically distanced herself from the group perfectly exemplified her behavior in the past few weeks.

The unknown side of Amelia filled Owen’s heart with sadness and once again he felt powerless. The woman he’d fallen in love with was warm, affectionate and generally selfless. He could recall the many times Amelia had considerately put other people’s feelings above her own, even when she shouldn’t have to. He’d watched her and come to know her, so deep down Owen knew the way she was acting was just a bad response to the horrifying reality they were in. But it didn’t mean it hurt any less.

Her eyes that were usually overflowing with warmth and liveliness now would always look distant and cold. The previously caring words she would reserve for him had been replaced by a sullen silence that only increased the emptiness in which Amelia had put herself in. Owen watched as every day she drowned further in it, hating that he was so helpless when it came to pulling her back from there, despite his constant attempts.

All he’d been trying to do since Derek’s death was talk to her, but Amelia refused to make time for him. She ignored his calls, avoided his presence and only spoke to him about strictly professional subjects. Owen understood the pain she was in, but he was a person with feelings of his own too, and at some point, there would only be so much he could tolerate. Watching her repeatedly ignore him hurt on him too, because all he wished was to be there for her.

That evening, after Webber and Bailey left, it didn’t take long for Callie, Alex and Maggie to follow, leaving Owen alone in the house with Amelia for the first time in a long time.

He’d stayed behind on purpose, hoping for one last attempt at talking to her and actually succeeding at getting through to her somehow. This time, Amelia couldn’t turn her back on him with some lame work excuse or hide in a busy OR to pass her time. And judging by the way she was getting more restless by the second, it seemed like she’d just reached the same conclusion.

“It’s good to see you’ve finally come home.” Owen started the conversation, slowly getting up from the couch but keeping his distance. “I honestly have not been able to keep track of how many nights you’ve spent at the hospital lately.”

“Well, I am filling in for my brother.” Amelia defensively replied. “We’re one attending short in the department so it’s to be expected that as the one in charge I am taking his shifts.”

“Amelia,” Owen tried to be careful with his words. “You know you can hire someone. Or I can do it for you,” he suggested, supposing it would be hard for her to interview people who might take her brother’s position. “HR has already approved my request for a new attending.”
“It’s too soon.” The neurosurgeon turned her back on him and opened the fridge, aimlessly avoiding Owen’s gaze. “We can manage for now, don’t worry.”

Owen breathed out through his nose and ran his fingers through his hair, trying to come up with what to say.

“Have you been in contact with your mom?” He asked with worry, hoping that since she wasn’t talking to him, that she at least was leaning on her own family for comfort. After all, they’d just gone through the same loss and probably could relate a lot better to her predicament. “Your sisters, anyone?”

“I am okay, Owen.” Amelia grabbed an apple from the fridge and turned around with a decisive posture, hoping he would back off. Truth was, her mother, sisters and even Addison were calling several times a day. But Amelia mostly chose not to answer them. “And yes, I have been in touch with them.”

“Is your mom still insisting on having you move there?” He asked, trying to hide how interested in the answer he was.

“Yes.” Amelia replied with honesty, not giving any more details. Her mother would often call and insist her youngest daughter went there to spend at least some time with the family, but that was the last thing Amelia planned on doing. Over there, she knew her mom and sisters would constantly be on her back, pretty much in the same way Owen was right now. And Amelia simply couldn’t handle it at the moment. “You know, I don’t know how to say this, so I think I better just say it… I would really appreciate it if you could give me some space.” She added with a serious tone.

Owen swallowed hard, taking in another blow. That little dance they were doing was getting a bit exhausting and he couldn’t help but feel like he was at a serious risk to maybe join her in that numbing emptiness if he didn’t properly watch out for himself.

Work didn’t excite him anymore and the once comfortable atmosphere at the hospital had transformed into a painful experience during the daily hours Owen spent there. All he wanted was to feel useful and have some purpose in life. A few months before, he’d felt as lost and confused as he did today, but slowly he’d regained control of his life. In parallel to that, he’d met Amelia and she’d added a whole new meaning to his routine. During all the time he spent with her, Owen had felt energized, challenged and absolutely hopeful for better days.

But now, as he watched that fragile reality slowly slipping through his fingers, it was hard to maintain some kind of expectancy for a happy future. Especially when his past and present did nothing but fire a new blow day after day.

“Amelia, you know you can’t keep doing this for much longer.” Owen tried to be as gentle as possible when he warned her. Soon enough, she would drive herself to exhaustion and that could backfire. Amelia could potentially compromise patient care if she operated or made any medical decisions while working too many hours, or even reach a point when her mind wouldn’t take it anymore, falling at risk for a relapse. “At some point, you are going to have to deal with what happened.”

“Don’t… Really, Owen… Spare me of the talk. I told you I’m fine.” She shook her head in denial, rejecting his concern and Owen kept studying her, noticing her face transforming as her impatience turned into anger. “You know, I am sick and tired of everyone running around, talking to me like they know better, but guess what?” She took a step in his direction, so blinded by pain that she couldn’t see how much she was hurting him by speaking like that. “I’ve done this before, I don’t need your lectures or that cheap talk about how I need to deal with what happened.” She repeated his
words with sarcasm, obviously turning down the idea. “I don’t have to stand here and listen to all this crap about how I should feel, or what I should do, or who I should call…” She fired, getting more worked up by the second. A lifetime of frustration caught up with her and Amelia couldn’t take it any longer. “No matter what I do, or how I pull myself back together, in the eyes of you people it’s never going to be enough anyway, so just cut the crap and save your precious little speech for someone who is actually interested in hearing it.”

As she spoke the words, Amelia once again turned her back on him, too angry to put up with his comprehensive face any longer. All her life, her family had judged her for the way she’d reacted to every situation. When her father had died, they made the decision of how she should deal with it, and chose to obliterate the event rather than talk about it. Later on, as things got progressively worse until Amelia finally resorted to taking drugs, they’d repeatedly made her feel weak and unworthy for it. Over the years, she’d finally come to master the Shepherd’s way of dealing with things by simply burying them and pretending they weren’t there. So she definitely wasn’t going to just stand in that room and hear all about how she was wrong this time around too. Because it felt like no matter what she did, to the people she loved, she was never going to be enough.

Taking it from her family was already hard enough. Hearing it from Owen, of all people, felt even worse. Because before he’d never tried to change anything about her or made her feel judged for being exactly who she was. And even though they weren’t together anymore, Amelia secretly hoped that in his eyes, what he thought about her wouldn’t change.

“Okay.” Owen replied with a serious tone. Amelia noticed his clenched jaw and the way his fist was slightly tense, giving away how hurt he must have been feeling at her angry outburst. But at that moment, all Amelia cared about was distancing herself from him because she knew that if Owen kept insisting, at some point his stubbornness would win her over and she was at serious risk for actually coming to rely on him again. “You clearly know where you stand.”

“Yes.”

“Good.” Owen finally decided to drop the matter and picked up his jacket with every intention to leave.

Amelia watched as his previously warm, worried look transformed into a scowl of indifference. He was just approaching the door when she felt compelled to add.

“I… I really appreciate it that you’re concerned about me.” The neurosurgeon spoke, hating that they were parting in bad terms.

“Yeah,” Owen replied with sarcasm, thinking of how she’d just reject his support seconds before. “But you don’t really need it, do you?”

“I really don’t.” Amelia answered, feeling her heart shattering in a thousand pieces. She put on her coldest look and heard how impersonal her voice sounded as she spoke the words. “Maybe I should for once listen to my mother and go back to New York.” Amelia said, more to defy him and make sure he moved on with his life to be free from her because she really planned on going. The neurosurgeon put her chin up as she proudly added with a mask of indifference, “there is nothing for me here, anyway.”

Owen felt the weight of the words and gave her one last look of disapproval before disappearing into the night as he made his way to his trailer. Amelia had just given him reason to believe she really preferred he stayed out of her life in every possible way. And after that evening, that was exactly what he was going to do.
“I guess there really isn’t.”

That evening, Amelia sat on the windowsill of her room, pondering as a million thoughts ran through her head.

The sky outside was as dark and cloudy as her life at that moment. The lights inside Owen’s trailer were turned off and Amelia couldn’t help wondering if after that nightmare of a day, he had gone to bed already.

Little did she know that at that exact moment, Owen was running into a friend at the bar near the hospital where he’d gone to drink as many beers as it took to clear his head. And as Owen heard more about the humanitarian work the ex Ranger had been doing in the field with the US Army, the more interested he got into embarking on an entirely different perspective.

During the following days, the more Owen thought about it, the more the idea seduced him. Had his friend told him about this tour before, he wouldn’t even have considered it because of Amelia. But now, after she’d made it obvious she had no interest in having him in her life and had even said she planned to go back to New York, there really wasn’t any reason why he shouldn’t go.

Owen could use feeling helpful and needed. He was so busy trying to take care of everyone else around him that the trauma surgeon failed to see he was also grieving and reacting to it. And at that moment, saying yes to that opportunity felt like the only thing that could give him some purpose again.

In the course of a week, Owen reenlisted in the Army, this time signing up for a USAID team who coordinated both civilian and military personnel by taking medical services to areas where healthcare was precarious or unavailable. It didn’t take a lot of convincing for April Kepner to join him and things progressed so fast that Owen barely had any time to catch up with the pace of change.

Ever since Derek had died, board meetings were on hold, so it wasn’t hard for Owen to hand over his position to Richard Webber, who would be taking over as interim chief in his absence. On the day of his deployment, the trauma surgeon finished storing all his personal belongings inside the trailer while packing.

As Owen zipped his transport bag, he took one last look around, checking if he hadn’t missed anything. He was leaving a lot of memories behind and it was sad how at that moment it gave him more a sense of relief than actually nostalgia.

But as his eyes scanned the room, a small photograph inside his nightstand book caught his attention and Owen went back for it, safely placing it with the few items he was taking.

“You please sign here, and here,” A short, middle aged secretary instructed Owen as he finished filling in the paperwork that would officially release him of his contract with Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital for the following months. “Alright, that’s everything, you’re good to go.” The woman added with a smile, thinking how admirable it was that the chief of surgery was letting go of his prestigious position to join the Army for a noble cause.

“Thank you.” Owen replied with a discreet nod. Just as the woman was exiting the room, he cleared his throat in an attempt to catch her attention. “Could you please get Dr. Amelia Shepherd in here? I need her to look over some paperwork before I go.”
The woman happily obliged and Owen took a seat on his desk for what he knew would be the last time. At least for a while.

He had lied to the hospital employee. There really wasn’t any paperwork to be filled or signed on by Amelia. Maybe soon there would, when she resigned to go back home. Ever since the conversation in Derek’s house the night Meredith had disappeared, Owen hadn’t talked to her again and even though he’d decided to give her the space she had requested, it hurt to think that this was probably the last time he was ever going to see her.

In a few, Owen would be getting on an airplane to the Middle East, where he would stay for at least three months. By the time he was back, it was very likely Amelia had already left to New York and he simply couldn’t see deal with the fact this really was goodbye.

For the following hour, Owen sat and waited. His heart felt constricted inside his chest as memories assaulted him. This was one of the hardest decisions he’d ever done, but after weeks of walking around in circles, he knew that the time had come for him to look after himself.

A knock on his door distracted his thoughts, and his heart skipped a beat when Owen’s expectation to see Amelia grew. But as Richard Webber walked in, a look of disappointment was visible on the trauma surgeon’s face.

“Sad to be leaving?” The older man asked with a sympathetic tone. Richard was going back to the office that had been his for many years, and even though he hadn’t plan to be chief ever again, he’d agreed to do it because Owen Hunt really deserved that break.

“Not really.” Owen looked around, exhaling slowly. It was almost time to go, but he was still hopeful Amelia would come upstairs before he had to leave. “Is everything good? Do you need anything?”

Just the day before, Owen had had a meeting with Richard to get the man up to speed on each department’s most latent topics. Since Webber was so experienced with the position, it didn’t take him more than a couple of hours to be all caught up with everything.

“Don’t worry about it.” Richard answered with a knowing smile. “Just leave everything that’s here in here, and focus on the work you’re about to be a part of. That’s all you have to do.” The oldest man advised with wisdom.

Owen nodded in agreement and checked his clock again. If he didn’t leave now, he was going to be late.

“Thank you for doing this, Richard.” He slowly got up from the chair, watching as the new chief did the same. Owen extended his hand and shook the guy’s with firm determination. “I really appreciate it.”

“No,” Richard kept his serene tone. “It’s me that has to be grateful. Thank you for your service.”

Owen nodded affirmatively and awkwardly looked away, gathering his bag on shoulder and his army combat cap in between his hands before turning around to leave.

“Hey, Richard… Hm… Can you do me a favor while I’m gone?” Owen bravely asked, facing the other man straight in the eyes. Seeing as he nodded affirmatively, the trauma surgeon asked, “will you keep an eye on Amelia for me?”

“Sure.” Richard smiled, not at all surprised with the request. “I’ll make sure she goes to meetings and take proper care of herself.”
“Thanks.” Owen grinned discreetly. “I appreciate you doing it… You know, at least until she leaves I think it would be good if she…”

Richard’s frown never got to be converted into a question as to where exactly Amelia was leaving to, because at that moment, Owen’s phone buzzed and he realized it was past time to go, so the army surgeon made his way outside the office without another word.

Just as Owen took the first corner, he spotted Amelia sitting in one of the radiology rooms, carefully studying an MRI exposed on the screen. He noticed the way her smart eyes examined each detail on the image and felt a sudden urge to go to her, drop his bag, close the door to that room and take her in his arms to never let go.

But Owen had already been reminded that this wasn’t a fairy tale where the story finished with a happy ending. This was very much real life, and he wasn’t going to steal the girl and win her back. He was going to a dangerous zone, where his presence was actually needed. And Amelia would move on with her life, hopefully finding a way to be happy on her own.

Maybe this was for the best, Owen thought as he adjusted the strap of his bag on his back and put on his cap. If he said goodbye to Amelia, it would only make it harder for him to go. And it was already hard enough.

With one last look, he tried to memorize every tiny bit of her face in his mind, before finally leaving for his newest mission.

Five minutes later, Amelia knocked on the door to the chief’s office.

“Oh, hi.” She frowned in confusion as she saw Richard Webber occupying Owen’s seat behind the desk. “I’m sorry, Chief Hunt requested me here a while ago but this MVC arrived in the ER and I was looking through his scans, so I…”

“It’s okay,” Richard took off his glasses and studied the young woman with a look of consternation on his face. “It wasn’t anything important. He already told me everything I needed to know. You can go back to work.”

“What… What do you…?” The neurosurgeon struggled with her words in obvious confusion. Why was Richard even there? “Did you have a meeting with him too?” She asked, looking from Richard to the door as if Owen would be entering it at any moment.

Webber looked at her, quickly picking up on the situation. In a fraction of a second, his face went from confused to compassionate.

“Oh my, you don’t know.”

Amelia noticed how the man affirmed and not really asked.

“Know what?” She looked to Richard and then to room around them, as if looking for answers. “What’s going on, Richard? Where is Owen?”

“Amlelia, Owen isn’t here. He left.”

“What do you mean, he left?” Amelia forced a chuckle in response. “When is he coming back?” She tried to input a casual mood in her voice when in reality she was getting more alarmed by the second as she noticed Richard’s expression. “He just asked me to meet him here, I think he was…”
“I’m afraid I don’t know.” Richard looked the woman deeply in the eyes and felt awful to be the one giving the news. “Amelia, I am sorry he didn’t tell you.”

“Tell me what?” She asked a little aggressively, too scared and anxious by Richard’s compassionate expression.

But then the man’s entire face became impartial and Amelia recognized the look. It was the same professional look of a doctor who was far too used to telling people things they didn’t want to hear. And even though in Richard’s face Amelia saw the bad news coming, never had she imagined how it would feel like a stab in the heart when she finally heard the words.

“Owen rejoined the army, Amelia. I am sorry. I don’t know when he is coming back.”

And even after feeling the impact of the news tearing her apart and destroying every bit of life Amelia still had left, she struggled to keep her composure. After saying thanks to Richard for the information, Amelia got up, feeling as emotionally numbed as when she’d nearly overdosed back in the day.

The neurosurgeon had to gather all the will power to make it through the rest of the afternoon. She thought about the way she’d treated Owen the last time they’d been together and unsuccessfully tried to quit thinking about the many what ifs that now ran through her mind.

What if she had gathered the courage to let him in? What if she hadn’t treated him in such a horrible way the last time they’d met? What if she had bothered to ask how he was feeling too?

Maybe then Owen wouldn’t have joined the army again. Maybe he wouldn’t have left. Maybe his life wouldn’t be at risk.

And maybe right now Amelia wouldn’t have to be asking herself, what if Owen never came back at all?
Part Twenty One

Chapter Summary

This chapter continues to explore what happened to Owen and Amelia during the events of 11x22, when he left to a war zone and Amelia stayed behind working at the hospital. We will go forward and find out what they were up to in those long months apart.

Author’s Notes: Kenan & Kel was a show I used to watch as a kid on Nickelodeon. I suppose most of you are not familiar with it. The scene in which Amelia remembers her dialogue with Owen is a part of chapter 12.

The Journey – Part Twenty One

“Did you bring it?”

Amelia sneakily closed the door after herself, taking a good look at the eager little face staring back at her with enormous chestnut eyes.

“Of course I brought it,” she revealed the bottle she’d been hiding in her white coat, watching with delight as a smile transformed the little girl’s face.

“Who loves Orange Soda?”

Amelia heard the quote as she passed by the patient, receiving a high five before she sat down on the wardroom chair and propped both her legs on the frame of the bed, crossing them at the ankles.

“Am I late?” The neurosurgeon asked while serving two plastic cups with the bubbly drink.

“No, you’re just in time,” the girl replied with enchantment in her eyes, accepting the cup at the same time she turned up the volume on the TV.

Amelia kicked back on the chair with a smile on her face and focused on the small screen hung on the wall opposite to the patient’s bed.

Jamie Donovan was an eight-year old girl with an aggravating case of cystic fibrosis. With a full time working mom who had to juggle two jobs in order to afford her daughter’s medical insurance, Jamie spent most of her time at the hospital undergoing treatment. Amelia had met the girl a couple of months before during a neurosurgical consult for a particularly complicated lumbar tap. And since Amelia hardly ever left the hospital, she had slowly found out that spending her nights in the company of the kid was actually more enjoyable than spending it on busy on call rooms that had to be shared among other surgeons who were working during the night.

Amelia had gone back on two consecutive days for follow ups with the adorable patient and quickly become attached. After finding out Jamie spent most of her time alone or only with the nurses, Amelia instantly felt compelled to provide the kid some company, but it didn’t take long for her to find out that she actually enjoyed those excursions more than she’d initially assumed.

Because of the side effects of some of her medication, Jamie’s sleep pattern wasn’t regulated, making the young patient often sleep throughout the day and stay up all night. Since Amelia had come down
with a case of insomnia since her brother had died, it was actually entertaining for her to spend her free time with Jamie. The girl was easier to talk to than anyone else in Amelia’s life at the moment because unlike the adults, the kid never demanded any satisfactions or criticized Amelia’s behavior. On the contrary. Her conversations with the eight year old patient were often much more honest than the ones Amelia would have with her friends and co-workers throughout the entire day.

Just a few days before, even her favorite resident had offered to take Amelia on a support group for people who were grieving, and that made the neurosurgeon feel even more isolated and lonely. From there on, she’d have to tone down her jokes too, and the prospect of controlling her spontaneity was exhausting. She didn’t want to have to measure her words, or think about everything she wanted to say before actually speaking.

But with Jamie, none of that had to happen. Amelia could just be herself.

In a matter of days, it had become almost a ritual that Amelia joined the young patient in the late hours of the night to play board games, read the Harry Potter books or simply watch old children shows on TV. Jamie’s favorite, Kenan & Kel, had made the eight year old curious about the taste of orange soda, something she’d never tried before. Amelia had promptly stepped up to sneak the forbidden drink into the pediatric wing, but after Jamie had a severe fit of cough after laughing incessantly at the show, the neurosurgeon started to second-guess her decision.

“What are you doing, you little brat?” She belatedly realized. “Put your CPAP back on.” Amelia commanded, referring to the breathing device Jamie must have on at all times.

“It’s really annoying.” Jamie complained with a scowl.

“It makes you breathe a lot better, so end of discussion.” Amelia said with a firm but gentle tone.

“Fine…” Jamie sighed, knowing there was no counter argument. “Just wait until I get my new lungs, then I will run out of here so fast that you won’t be able to catch me.”

“I sure hope so.” Amelia’s eyes met Jamie’s and when they did, both smiled at each other.

Half an hour later, the show was over and Amelia frowned when Jamie asked to change channels as soon as a series about a teenage couple began.

“What, you don’t like this show?” Amelia asked tactfully, finding it strange. It was a typical silly school show with shallow, dreamy romance and more often than not, high pitched songs. It was obviously aimed at young girls and Jamie was exactly the target audience.

“I don’t like boys.” The unwilling patient said, rebelliously folding her arms on her chest.

“Oh, you don’t like boys?” Amelia teased, raising one eyebrow as she playfully added, “may I ask why?”

“Because all they do is play with their stupid toys or pretend they are superheroes and they never listen.” Jamie complained, making Amelia laugh. “And also, they need help for everything.”

“Surely not all boys are that bad?” The neurosurgeon asked with delight, without the faintest idea that one day, she would raise four boys who would perfectly fit Jamie’s description.

“The ones in my school are.” Jamie replied, still not convinced. Even though the girl had stopped going to classes a few months before when her condition had worsened, she still hoped to go back someday.
Amelia looked at the little girl with a mix of amusement and comprehension.

“Well, you see, the good thing is that even though boys seem horrible now, one day you’ll grow up and you won’t think so anymore.” The neurosurgeon gently explained. “I know they can be immature and annoying, but they can also grow up to be quite nice.”

Jamie squinted before staring at Amelia questioningly.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I am sure.” The grownup smiled, thinking about how Derek would pick on her when they were younger and how later in life they’d become closer and actually shared things with each other.

“I don’t want a boyfriend, though.” Jamie decided.

“You don’t have to have a boyfriend if you don’t want to.” Amelia tried to contain a smile. Jamie would probably change her mind one day, but she was still at that age when boys and girls had constant feuds with one another and didn’t mingle in any circumstances. “But boyfriends can be fun too.” She added, hoping to sound encouraging.

“I don’t see how.” Jamie replied with disbelief, giving Amelia a sideways glance, almost as if hoping her new friend would contradict her.

Amelia quickly picking up on the act and realized Jamie was much more interested in hearing what she had to say than she was letting it show. Decided to keep the light atmosphere, Amelia focused on her own surprising confession.

“Boyfriends can come in handy because they usually reach the higher shelves.” Amelia explained with a contagious smile, trying not to think about how, during the time they were together, Owen would often tease her by hiding the coffee pot in the top cabinet just so she would ask for his help in the morning. “And they give the best hugs, too.” Amelia daydreamed, being transported back to a time when she’d fall asleep feeling the safest she’d ever felt even when a strong storm would hit just because she was in Owen’s arms.

She tried to focus on Jamie instead of how much she missed those nights. Amelia couldn’t remember the last time she’d had quality sleep.

“It’s weird.” Jamie decided, completely rejecting the idea of being at good terms with boys.

“Sometimes it is,” Amelia smiled with patience, turning her eyes back to the TV. The young couple shouldn’t be more than sixteen and yet they were exchanging love vows and making promises of eternal love.

Jamie noticed how Amelia’s eyes captured the image on the TV and a smile lingered on her friend’s face.

“Do you love a boy?”

Amelia was caught completely off guard. She looked back to the little girl and tried to think of something to say to dodge the unexpected question but couldn’t. It was the first time in months that someone upfront asked Amelia about her feelings and the situation had become so unusual lately that she froze, unsure of how to react.

Her first instinct was to say no, but even though Amelia hadn’t exactly been allowing her feelings to blossom lately, she knew there was no point denying them. And she couldn’t lie. Not to Jamie.
“I do.” Amelia replied, feeling her eyes slightly tearing up. Deep down, she’d always known the answer, but actually voicing her feelings for the first time had an overwhelming effect on the surgeon. Her throat suddenly got constricted as she admitted with a hoarse voice, “very, very much.”

Amelia didn’t add the fact that the “boy” she loved was over six feet tall and had the prettiest pair of crystal blue eyes she had ever seen.

Jamie noticed the subtleties in Amelia’s reaction and her posture went from defensive to completely approving.

“All right?” She asked excitedly, eager to hear more. “Is he your boyfriend? Where is he?”

When Amelia realized she didn’t have answers to those questions, she realized it was time to call it a night.

“I think it’s past your bedtime, miss.” The neurosurgeon got up with a gentle smile, mysteriously walking over to the bed to help Jamie settle in.

“You didn’t answer my question.” Jamie replied with a begging face, obediently getting under the covers.

“Maybe some other time, ok?” Amelia said with a gentle voice. “I have to go get some rest now, but tomorrow I will be back and we can watch more Nick at Nite.”

“Will you stay for the Nicktoons tomorrow?” Jamie asked with a begging smile. “Please?”

“I’ll do my very best.” Amelia promised, blowing the girl a good night kiss before finally making her way to an on call room.

Owen finished setting up the last bags of everything they were collecting to take onto the next trip. He couldn’t believe he was going to the third mission in a row. Despite rewarding, the whole thing was also very exhausting.

Both he and April Kepner had once again extended their tours. At first, despite the physical toll the humanitarian missions were taking on them, they had kept their spirits high, driven by the instant positive response in the population they were helping. But as weeks followed, it became harder to face the cruel reality that the more people they helped, the more needed their help, or so it felt like. The number of human beings living in unsanitary and poor conditions in that area of the world was heartbreaking. Being there and being able to help humbled Owen. He felt a reinvigorated sense of purpose and strived to do his best, to be better every day. Sometimes, a case slipped through their fingers and the team felt the helplessness associated with being in an improvised facility with a very precarious health care system. But in most days, Owen went back to his tent feeling like his presence and his work had made the entire difference and that filled him with joy and contentment after long hours of work.

But then he’d lay his head on the pillow and his thoughts would involuntarily shift to a familiar pair of silver blue eyes and a dimpled smile that even after all that time would still haunt his dreams nearly every night.

Owen would speak to his mother on the phone pretty much every week, and from Kepner he’d hear updates on how life was going on back in Seattle. Mostly, April gave him updates on Jackson, sometimes even on Alex and Arizona. But the only one Owen really wanted to know more about
was hardly ever mentioned in his friend’s conversations. He wasn’t sure exactly where Amelia was right now, but he supposed she was already back home with her family. Owen only hoped that, wherever she was, the neurosurgeon was happy, safe and doing better than she was when he’d last seen her.

It was hard finishing a day of work and watching all the other guys and few women calling back home to their loved ones, hearing encouraging words from their spouses and sweet messages from their kids. All of that forced Owen to once again face the cruel reality that he would probably never get to have any of that.

“Are you ready to go?” His friend’s voice interrupted his thoughts, bringing the trauma surgeon back to the present moment.

“Yes,” Owen replied, staring deeply into her eyes. “April, are you sure you’re up for this?” He asked carefully. Owen had witnessed several times how heated the conversations between Kepner and her husband had become over the months and the fact April was extending her tour yet another time had surely added more friction to the already fragile marriage. “I mean, maybe you should go back home, see Jackson… you can always come back, you know.”

“I know, but I have to do this now.” April informed him with resolution. “I have to, Owen.” She lowered her voice a bit. “There are so many people who need us, much more than in Seattle, and I…”

As her voice trailed off, Owen gave her a discreet nod of understanding. He got her. Just like him, April had gone there because at home, her reality was as heartbreaking as some of the scenes they were witnessing. The only difference is that there, in mission, they could actively change that reality.

“Have you told Hill to hurry up and get that bag of syringes on the back of the truck?” April nodded her head in disapproval, walking up to the young army private who was also deployed in mission. “Hill, how many times do I have to tell you to be careful with the bag of…?”

Owen chuckled to himself, watching the scene from a distance. It was amazing how April had grown in those few months they’d been in the Middle East. The leader in her had finally been allowed to make an appearance, and his friend had come to find out she was actually good at it. It gave Owen joy to realize that and he smiled to himself, grabbing two loads and carrying them to truck before it became too dark for them to evacuate the area.

Amelia dragged her feet through the empty hospital corridor. The night was cold and a chilly air was blowing, making the neurosurgeon wrap her arms around herself, cursing the white coat for not being warmer. As it happened every holiday season, people tended to avoid going to the ER, unless they were really in need of it. And without a certain male head figure, the emergency room felt particularly empty.

It was nearly midnight and Amelia’s shift had ended five hours before, but she’d stayed at the hospital as usual. That night, she caught up on all her charts and did some research for a paper she intended to publish, but the holiday spirits seemed to have contaminated everyone around her, and Amelia couldn’t stand more than two hours at a cafeteria table hearing everyone around her making plans to be with their loved ones.

The neurosurgeon had finished her coffee, grabbed her journals and aimlessly walked around the hospital halls, deep down hoping for something to do to keep her busy. Amelia definitely didn’t want go back home. She knew that at some point she would have to because the laundry was piling up.
and she was pretty sure she hadn’t washed the dishes in about a week, but that night it had started to snow and something about the white fluffy flakes falling from the sky reminded her of home.

For a minute, Amelia’s heart felt a little less cold as she was assaulted by memories of a happy childhood when she would gather around a huge Christmas tree with her parents and four siblings, eagerly waiting for Santa to bring her presents. The memory was so distant and so deeply buried into the past that Amelia wondered if she’d really lived it or made it up. It just seemed completely unfathomable now, especially considering her present moment. Her remaining family members were all scattered around and Amelia had no idea if they were keeping the tradition of getting together for Christmas.

Months ago, Amelia had stopped answering her mother’s calls and that had resulted in Carolyn Shepherd showing up at Seattle to check on her daughter. It had taken Amelia a couple of days to convince the woman she was fine and ever since, Amelia had been forcing herself to call her family in New York at least a couple times of a week to avoid similar reactions. She’d found out that five minutes of shallow dialogue over the phone did the trick and conditioned herself to memorized every answer her mother and sisters approved of, mastering the art of speaking a lot of words without actually saying anything at all.

At work, it was mostly the same. At times, Richard Webber and Maggie Pierce would check up on her. It didn’t take Amelia long to figure out what they were doing and similarly to what she’d done with her family, the young surgeon forced herself to sit down for lunch with them every now and then as she mechanically smiled and told them everything the duo expected to hear. Amelia dutifully participated on every attendings meeting, eagerly oversaw and drafted residents’ evaluations and at times, had even volunteered to conduct the presentation of cases in her department’s weekly case discussions. It had quickly become very obvious that the more Amelia did and the more she engaged socially, the less people bothered her, because they would simply assume she was doing very well. That way, Amelia kept everyone happy while moving on with her life avoiding everything she could possibly feel and instead, focusing only on what was rational.

Soon enough, people had gone from worrying about her to actually admiring how tough and incredibly strong Derek Shepherd’s sister was to so gracefully be able to handle his loss and the disappearance of his wife and kids while succeeding at keeping her professionalism and the quality of her work. Most people had no idea about her attachment to the former chief of surgery, so Owen’s name was hardly ever mentioned to her, but in nights as slow as that one, Amelia couldn’t help but to think of him and wonder if he was alive and well.

When all talks, discussions and procedures were over, and every voice in her head had been silenced, it became increasingly harder to ignore the void left untouched inside her heart ever since the day he’d gone away to join the Army. Amelia missed him more than she would dare to acknowledge.

Her gaze fell upon the nurses station, where the patient files remained neatly organized over the counter. Before Amelia could control her thoughts, a flash memory came to mind.

“Are you done here?” Owen had whispered very close to her ear.

“Nearly.” Amelia replied, melting at his presence.

“You know where I’ll be.”

The memory faded together with the comforting feeling that had warmed Amelia’s heart as she thought about the excitement she’d once felt to go meet him. There had been a moment in her life when Amelia knew exactly which place Owen was or would be. But now, she had absolutely no
idea where in the world he was, or what kind of things he was going through.

As much as Amelia tried to obliterate her every feeling, every now and then she’d hear someone asking Jackson about April and the neurosurgeon couldn’t deny the fact that hearing Kepner was okay gave her a sense of relief, because she knew that Jackson’s wife was working alongside Owen. As long as Kepner had good news to tell, that had to mean her colleague was alive and well and Amelia relied on those little snippets of information to maintain the remainders of her mental sanity.

She had to make a superhuman effort not to ask Jackson directly, or even figure out a way to get in touch with Owen. For a few times, Amelia had drafted emails that she’d never sent. It was better this way, the neurosurgeon always told herself. The least involved she got, the less she would suffer.

After deciding to leave the ER, Amelia made her way to the elevators, thinking about going to see Jamie. The little girl’s condition had worsened in the last couple of months as she caught one infection followed by another. Earlier that week, Jamie had been discharged from the PICU after two weeks of treatment for a complicated pneumonia, only to be readmitted four days later with high fever and low blood sats.

As much as Amelia tried to remain uninvolved with the case, it had become impossible not to get attached. She ran into Jamie’s mother outside the PICU, instantly asking for an update on the case. After waiting for a couple of hours to see the young patient, Amelia finally settled for going to an on call room, already foreseeing the many hours of insomnia she’d face before a new day began.

Owen patiently waited until everyone was deeply engaged in heartfelt conversations and swiftly sneaked outside. It was nearly Christmas morning and that night, almost everyone was enjoying a break from work. The trauma surgeon had watched as the large team of healthcare professionals and volunteers reminisced about the past, talked about their family or suggested traditions they’d usually do at their own homes over the holidays.

Usually, Christmas was a time of the year that Owen really enjoyed. He loved the spirit of solidarity and selflessness that seemed to take over people during the holidays. Just like magic, everyone became more attentive, generous and gentler. Over there in mission it was no different. Even though they were in a country with no Christmas traditions, most of the workers were clearing their heads enjoying the popular date, some of them having actually had a couple of drinks after dinner.

Owen left the main tent and rejoiced in the cold air outside. At the desert, the temperature could drop to a nearly negative at night, but he didn’t mind. A couple of soldiers who were on duty that evening greeted their official as Owen passed by them and walked to a safe distance, enjoying his solitude on a top of a rock where he could sit by himself while still keeping an eye on the makeshift camp.

Owen let out a heavy sigh, trying his hardest to control his mood. It was almost impossible not to feel a bit depressed in a night like that, but he had no choice other than to toughen it up and remain on top of his game. After all, he had an entire unit to run, people who were relying on him, and letting them down was not a possibility.

As his eyes meticulously scanned the field looking for something slightly suspicious, Owen slowly relaxed in the quietness of the evening. From a distance, he could hear the soothing sound of the wind blowing against the tents, creating an inviting atmosphere to celebrate the fact they were all alive, well and almost ready to finally wrap up that mission. A few days following New Year’s Eve, that mission would be over and most soldiers were going home. After nearly one year of being out in the field, Owen had finally decided to go back too. He was chronically tired and his soul was crushed after seeing so much pain and misery in the eyes of the civilians they’d helped over those
long months. But what Owen really hoped to take back home with him was the sense of accomplishment of someone who’d done his duty very well and been able to help thousands of innocents with only the few resources they had.

As he thought about home, Owen wondered about his mom and realized he should take a few minutes to give her a call that night. It was Christmas, after all, and she would deeply appreciate hearing from him. As Owen made the decision to grab one of the stationed phones in a few minutes, his hand reached out for his pocket, grabbing a familiar folded photograph.

The trauma surgeon carefully opened it, seeing how worn out the picture was after so many months carefully kept inside his uniform. As usual, Amelia’s smile didn’t fail to dazzle him and Owen let out a heavy sigh. He thought about the evening in which she’d given him that picture, the way she’d met him at his place moments later and how they’d spent the night together. He’d had so many dreams back then. So much hope. And yet all had faded in a fraction of a second.

There hadn’t yet been a single night when Owen hadn’t spent long minutes thinking about her before finally falling asleep out of exhaustion. Every day he wondered how she was, if she was doing okay and the only thought that comforted his heart was that she was probably being well looked after by her mother and sisters.

But after a few months of deployment, Owen had casually heard Jackson including Amelia’s name as he told his wife about a surgery and that had made Owen wonder what exactly the neurosurgeon was up to. When he’d left, Owen had been sure she planned to go to New York, because Amelia herself had said so. But so many things had happened ever since, that he’d had no idea of what exactly was the situation in Seattle. If Amelia was operating, it could only mean she was somehow okay. It was hard not having any confirmation, but for now, even though it killed Owen, that comforting thought would have to be enough because he knew that in order to keep focused and doing his job well, it was better if he didn’t hear any details, or that could quickly escalate. As an experienced soldier, Owen had long ago learned that too much information could add an unwanted load of anxiety to his days, which would definitely compromise his ability to perform in duty.

But his time in the Army was soon to be over and Owen knew that once back at home, he wouldn’t be able to simply pick up where he’d left off. Too many things had happened in the past year, life changing events, and he knew that drowning in work once in Seattle wasn’t the solution. He wasn’t sure what exactly, but Owen knew he had to do something with his life. He’d spent the majority of the past months focusing on his job and the first thing he’d do once back home was to give his personal life a much needed new share of his attention.

“That your girl, Major?”

Owen looked up to the owner of the voice that had distracted his thoughts. His eyes found the broad smile of a nineteen year old who looked way too young to even be there.

Danny Hill was a skinny boy who was deployed in his first ever mission. The kid was as naïve as he was willing to learn and while most people quickly lost his patience with his eagerness, Owen found it amusing that a guy that young was actually willing to risk his life to serve his country.

He wondered if Hill had any idea of what he was signing up for when he’d first enlisted, but Owen supposed that probably not. No one really did. Not until they arrived there and saw it for themselves.

“What are you doing out here, Hill?” Owen gave him a polite grin, on purpose dodging the question. “I thought you were on post for the night.”

“Only until midnight, sir.” The boy cheerfully replied, taking a seat next to Owen while handing him
a generous portion of chocolate chip cookies. “I brought this for you, Major.” Hill added considerately. “I saw you out here on your own and I thought you could use some comfort.”

Owen raised one eyebrow and thought it was probably better not to ask. But when he took the first bite and tasted the delicious flavor of the homemade goodies, his expression transformed. Before he could ask, Hill’s face lit up with a proud smile as he explained.

“Delicious, aren’t they? My girl Annie cooked them.” The eager nineteen year old grabbed a picture from his pocket and proudly flashed it at Owen. “She baked those for me and sent them because she knows they are my favorite.” The boy affectionately informed, looking from the picture to his official with enchantment in his eyes.

“She sounds like a catch.” Owen added with reluctant amusement, contaminated by the effusive joy in the young man’s words.

“Yeah, she is.” Danny Hill looked back the image of the smiling girl with a round face, shining eyes and a large white apron wrapped around her body. “She is studying to be a cook, you know? But not those fancy restaurant cooks, I am talking about a real cook, that makes all sorts of homemade stuff. You know, the kind you’d only find back at home in Indiana. She bakes the most delicious things, you wouldn’t believe it, sir.” He added with visible pride. The boy was so chatty that Owen thought if he just stayed there without saying a word, Danny Hill could probably go on all night. “You know, I asked Annie to marry me before I came here.” The boy held his head high and sat up expanding his chest. “And she said yes.” He added with unmistakable pride, talking as if he’d just achieved the world’s greatest accomplishment. “When I go back home to Indiana, I am going to marry her and we are going to live in a house that has a big porch. One of those wooden porches, you know, I am going to build it with my own hands.” He flashed Owen a smile. “And then someday when I am done building it, we are going to have our own family.”

Owen saw the effusive joy in the young man’s face and his amusement transformed into affection. Danny Hill was just a kid who was going through the hardest of times in a dangerous zone, and yet he could find happiness and a reason to smile in a world that was filled with viciousness and evil. Owen desperately hoped that boy kept his positivity, because the world needed more people like him. He only hoped the cruel reality of life didn’t corrupt him, because the way Hill spoke about his fiancé back home and the dreams he had for them made Owen root for his plans to work out.

“What about your girl, Major?” Danny asked, not discouraged by Owen’s sullen silence. “What does she do?”

Owen breathed in heavily. He knew the right thing was to tell Danny that Amelia was not his “girl”. Maybe she had been once, but not anymore. And he had no idea where exactly she was at the moment. But the idea of crushing the boy’s childlike dreams of happy endings after such a long mission went against everything Owen preached about group support. He knew that the promise of a happy ending was probably what kept the boy going and he just didn’t find it in himself to break such positive expectations.

“Hm…” Owen hesitated, unsure of what to say exactly. “Her name is Amelia. She is a doctor too.” He added, watching as Danny smiled with contentment, obviously pleased to hearing the information. The boy’s face had a mix of appreciation and flattery to be having a one on one conversation with the male figure he’d come to look up to during those long months in deployment. Danny kept staring at him, as if patiently waiting for Owen to give out more information. “I left her home in Seattle and I really, really hope that I will see her again when I go back.”

“It sucks to be gone this long, doesn’t it?” Danny said and Owen belatedly realized the boy was trying to comfort him, obviously assuming Owen was hurting too much to even talk about the
woman he loved. The idea brought a smile to Owen’s face. “Don’t worry, sir, you’re going to see her in just a few days.”

“Yeah.” Owen replied with consternation, unwilling to contradict the kid, even if he wasn’t the least bit sure.

“I can’t wait to go back to Indiana.” The boy resumed his chatter. “When I get there, first thing I’ll do is… Major! Look out!”

And then it happened so fast that Owen acted more out of instinct than anything else. After the first shot had been fired, he immediately jumped on Hill, knocking the boy on the ground as a group of rebels opened fire against their camp.

What had just seconds before been a party became a horror movie scene as the soldiers on post shot back against the insurgents that had for some reason attacked the Medicaid group. All the military personal inside the main tent quickly went out and before Owen could clear the scene, he felt something moist and warm staining his shirt.

And just like that, he knew.

“Hill!” he rolled over to the side, knowing the boy had been hit even before his eyes could see it.

“Hill, talk to me!”

The kid’s large brown eyes were nearly invisible under the moonlight glow, but Owen could see the expression of panic in them as the teenager took his hand to his wounded abdomen and then to his face, spotting the red stains on his fingertips. His once blissful expression became a mask of sheer terror, and Owen easily lifted the skinny boy in his arms, sneaking out behind the barricades to safely access the inside of a medical tent in the opened camp.

Quickly enough, his trained team saw what had happened and in seconds, a gurney was brought over just as one of the nurses started to get a line on Hill’s arm while Owen assessed him. The gunshot wound to the abdomen had probably lacerated the patient’s liver and judging by the paleness in his face, the boy was losing too much blood, way too fast. Owen knew his condition required immediate intervention. Ignoring the gunshots being fired outside the tent, he looked up and saw Kepner at a close distant, holding her phone near while obviously being caught off guard by the rebels in the middle of a call.

“Kepner, we gotta pack up and bug out.” Owen said with authority, turning around to summon the anesthesiologist who was with their team. There was no time to be lost, if he didn’t act immediately, it was very likely the young man on the table would die. “Hill, look at me!” Owen commanded, staring deeply into the boy’s eyes with the intention to keep him conscious. “You’re going to be fine, okay? We are going to get you all fixed up, you hear me?”

“Major…” Danny Hill’s weak voice resonated in the room, and Owen had to lean over a little to be able to hear him. “Major, please…” The boy was nearly whispering. “You tell my girl that I love her, okay? You tell Annie that for me?” Danny’s eyes seemed to lose focus each second more, startling Owen. “Tell her that she doesn’t have to blame herself… That I did this for us…”

“No!” Owen held his hand and fiercely squeezed it, hoping with all his heart that Danny didn’t let go. “You’re going to tell her yourself, Hill…” Owen said with an authoritative voice, unable to believe that was actually happening. The life of a good, decent kid was on the line and Owen hadn’t even properly processed how that had happened yet. But one thing he was sure of, Hill was not going to die on him. “You’re going back to Indiana and you’re telling her yourself.”
“I… I…” The boy’s face twitched in a scowl of pain when Kepner helped Owen cut his clothes and access his wound. The anesthesiologist was ready to put the patient under, but properly waited until the surgeon gave him the okay to do so. “Tell Annie I love her, sir… Please… You have to promise me.”

“You will tell her yourself, Hill.” Owen reinforced, too determinate not to let that boy go. Life was too fragile. It could end in a heartbeat. And it was too short to be wasted in stupid things like pride and fear. Perhaps making the most impulsive decision he’d made so far, Owen commanded. “We’re going to do it together, okay? You and me.” He tightened his grip on Hill’s hand, feeling the young man faintly squeeze his back in agreement. Encouraged by the positive reaction, Owen reinforced it. “We’ll both tell our girls when we get home, alright? Are you with me?”

“Promise?” Hill’s breath collided like vapor against the oxygen mask the anesthesiologist had put on his face. Instead of the determined eyes of an Army soldier, all Owen could see was the scared face of a terrorized nineteen year old boy. “Do you promise, Major?”

Owen knew the job very well. Medicine wasn’t an exact science. Doctors were trained to never make promises.

“I promise.” He held Hill’s hand and gave his colleagues a head nod, informing the anesthesiologist that he should begin the procedure.

For the following hour, Owen heard gunshot wounds outside but none of that mattered at the moment. It was Christmas and a young boy with a huge heart had his life hanging by a thread. He relied on Owen completely to save his life and the surgeon wasn’t letting go.

That kid couldn’t die. He deserved to live. He had to live.

And with that thought, Owen finally figured out that Danny Hill wasn’t the only one who needed the promise of a happy ending to endure the few days left until they finally went back home.

Back in Seattle, Amelia watched as everyone hoped for an early finish at work to go home spend Christmas Eve with their loved ones. Unsurprisingly, the neurosurgeon had volunteered to take the night shift at the hospital. Amelia finished the late rounds and sat by one of the stations, listening as a faint radio in the distance played Stevie Wonder’s Someday at Christmas.

The melody unconsciously added to Amelia’s depressed mood. It was the first time she was completely alone for the Holiday.

During every other day of the year, being on her own had been a welcome situation. But that night specifically carried too much meaning to be spent in such a depressing mood.

Alex Karev had organized a reunion to at least invoke what was left of a holiday spirit in the discouraged group of surgeons. Amelia initially hadn’t planned on accepting the invitation, but on a second thought it looked more appealing than spending the evening alone at the hospital.

The neurosurgeon had just made up her mind to go see other people in a social event for the first time in an eternity when her phone started buzzing.

Noticing she was being paged by Pediatrics, Amelia immediately dropped her plans for the night and ran upstairs. The message didn’t specifically say it, but Amelia was pretty sure what the pager was about.
Rushing into the PICU, she found the little girl’s mom moving around in panic as a team of doctors and nurses gathered around the bed.

“What’s going on?” Amelia frantically asked, but no answer was needed. As soon as her eyes fell on the patient, she watched as the eight year old’s body contorted in uncoordinated movements. “When did she start having seizures?” The neurosurgeon asked, making her way among the other professionals at the same time one of the doctors ordered another round of drugs.

“In the past ten minutes.” One of the attendings replied. “We rounded on her just a couple of hours ago and she didn’t have this periorbital edema or unilateral ptosis… she’s on day three of treatment for a sinus infection, but…” the PICU doctor looked as confused and taken aback as Amelia, and he was visibly distressed by the unseen complication. “Her liquor culture was negative, she had no neurological deficits, she couldn’t possibly have evolved with meningitis and gotten this worse in just two hours, I…”

“Book an OR for me, now!” Amelia interrupted him as she asked one of the nurses, immediately focusing her attention back on the attending. She knew he was telling the truth because just that afternoon she’d seen Jamie too and despite her nasty infection, the girl wasn’t presenting those critical conditions. Amelia quickly did the math and reluctantly spoke, hoping with every fiber of her being that her diagnosis didn’t represent a death sentence. “It’s not acute meningitis. I think Jamie has a cavernous sinus septic thrombosis. I am going to confirm it with a head CT, but I am pretty sure.” Amelia declared after a quick physical exam, knowing the awful complication was the likeliest possibility under those circumstances.

“Dr. Shepherd!” Jamie’s mom came running behind them as Amelia and the PICU team rushed with the patient to radiology. “What’s going on?” The desperation was visible in the mother’s eyes and the woman broke down crying, obviously worried sick about her daughter. “What’s happening to Jamie? Why… why is she having seizures?!”

Amelia felt her heart constricting and tried her best to remain as neutral as she could while speaking to the woman she’d inadvertently grown close to.

“Her intracranial pressure is too high, Mrs. Donovan. I need to take Jamie now to try to fix it before it’s too late.” Amelia explained feeling like she was being punched in the gut. “Her sinus infection formed a clot and it traveled to her brain. It’s compromising the blood flow. There is no time for anything, if I don’t do this now Jamie is not going to make it.” Amelia explained with sorrow in her voice.

“But… but…” The woman ran to catch up with them, lost for words. “Dr. Shepherd, please… Jamie is all I have. She is all I have.” The woman begged, watching as the team prepared the girl for the emergency CT. Grabbing Amelia’s elbow, Mrs. Donovan looked straight into the neurosurgeon’s eyes as she pleaded. “You have to save her. Please…” The woman broke down again, unable to control her emotions. “It’s my daughter… it’s my baby girl… Please…!”

The words hit Amelia harder than she anticipated. It was like once again a cold dagger was being buried into her heart. The neurosurgeon knew too well the pain of losing a child and she could relate to Jamie’s mom entirely.

A clot stuck in such a delicate portion of the brain most likely meant disastrous effects, including imminent death. Amelia had dealt with cases like that a few times in her career and nearly every patient had died from it. From what she’d just seen on the scans appearing on the screen, Jamie’s thrombosis was massive and it matched the way her symptoms had quickly progressed. The fact the
girl had a severe underlying condition that compromised her oxygenation also didn’t help.

But Amelia was determined to achieve the only outcome that mattered: keeping Jamie alive.

And the surgeon could only hope she was able to evacuate the area in time.

“I am going to do everything I can, Mrs. Donovan.” Amelia said with honesty, hoping for the best but expecting the very worst, feeling her heart break into a thousand pieces as she dodged the crying mother. “We have to go now.”

“But…”

“But…”

“Now!” Amelia said, helping to push the gurney with a decisive tone.

Her entire system was on the verge of a collapse and Amelia knew that if she stopped to process what was happening, it was likely she would freak out. So instead, the neurosurgeon focused on the task ahead, keeping unusually calm because she knew the ultimate goal required every bit of her serenity.

That Christmas was already the worst one of her life.

And Amelia wasn’t about to let it get even worse.

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who lives? who dies?
Part Twenty Two

Chapter Summary

Owen and Amelia deal with the fallout of their respective patients’ surgeries. And after a long time of absence, Owen finally comes back to Seattle following the events of episode 11x22 and what immediately happens after that.

The Journey – Part Twenty-Two

“Are you sure you don’t want to take a break? I can take turns with you so you can actually sleep.”

Owen was startled by the familiar voice of April Kepner and opened his eyes with surprise, blinking repeatedly before coming back to his senses completely.

“I am fine.” He lied, unwilling to admit how exhausted he was. “Go get some rest, Kepner, we have a lot going on tomorrow.”

April stared at her friend with disbelief and disapproval stamped on her face. It had been nearly thirty-six hours since a group of rebels had opened fire against their camp. Everyone was scared and drained. By being a medical support team, they weren’t usual targets for terrorists or even smaller groups rebelling against the government in the countries they had visited. And to most people, including April, that had been an entirely new and frightening situation.

One person in special had lived the most terrifying moment of his life. Private Danny Hill was now in recovery, but April could remember with details the excruciating six hours of surgery when she’d stood with Owen in a makeshift medical tent, working on the boy’s abdomen while hearing gunshots and grenade noises outside. They’d needed all the focus and skill to salvage the patient’s liver. During the entire time, she had only kept her serenity and ability to work because of her mission leader.

Even when the noises had become dangerously close, Owen hadn’t flinched. His courage inspired April. She knew that if it weren’t for her friend, the medical staff wouldn’t be able to perform and Private Hill probably might not even be alive.

For the followings hours, the kid had pulled through an unstable and difficult recovery while the rest of the team assessed the damages following the unexpected attack. A lot of their supplies had been either destroyed or sacked. A homemade bomb had completely devastated one of their ward tents, hurting one patient that was admitted at the time and now also demanded more medical attention. Their stock of food had also been severely lowered, and on top of that, their satellites and phones were also compromised, making it difficult for them to stay in touch with the command base to which the team reported.

Their return home was scheduled for a few days after New Year’s Eve, but April supposed they would anticipate it, considering the current situation of their facilities and the morale of the group. Everyone looked sad and deeply affected by the events.

Everyone but Owen.

April hadn’t failed to notice that while her colleagues seemed scared, afraid or simply unmotivated,
their leader had been nothing but supportive to the whole team so far. He hadn’t left Danny’s bedside for one minute, afraid the kid might oscillate in his unstable condition. But April knew that in order to take care of everyone else, Owen first had to make sure he was fine.

“I can stay with him, Owen.” She insisted. “You haven’t slept in two nights, it’ll do you no good to stay in that chair when you could easily go to bed and let me take over.”

“It’s fine.” He stubbornly replied, smiling at her in an attempt to pretend he was okay but the dark circles around his eyes said otherwise.

“Is it just me, or did you actually become attached to this kid?” April teased, knowing she was being sincere. But she expected Owen to deny it, and that’s exactly what she hoped to use to convince him. “You haven’t been able to leave his side.” April explained after noticing the look of confusion on Owen’s face. “That’s the only possible explanation for you not wanting to leave.”

“Of course I am not attached.” Owen repeated the word with rejection, obviously trying to sound like he didn’t care about the kid in a special way.

“Hill is annoying, I know.” April looked at the boy’s pale face on the bed and smiled with care and affection, being assaulted by nostalgia. “He won’t ever shut up and his ability to make jokes and be happy, even at six in the morning can be infuriating.” She added, making Owen laugh. Those facts were no secret among the team. “But I have never seen a group of grown men cry this hard when I had to tell the soldiers that he got shot.” April said with consternation. “And ever since we got here, there wasn’t a day when Hill failed to remind everyone how much he wants to be like you.”

Owen furrowed his brow, looking up to his friend with a questioning look on his face. April immediately picked up on the unasked question and explained.

“You are his hero, Owen.” She smiled with affection, praying for the boy to recover fully as soon as possible. “You are the example he has. And now that you’ve saved his life, I believe he is going to put you in an even higher pedestal.”

Owen felt his heart constricting, and his shyness at April’s declaration became clear on his face.

“He probably saved mine too.” The trauma surgeon admitted with a sheepish tone. And when he noticed that this time it was April who had doubts, he explained, “I mean, I have no idea what could have happened, but he spotted the rebel group coming from behind my back and warned me. That’s what made me jump.” Owen recalled the moments. It felt like a lifetime ago but it hadn’t even been two days yet. “If he hadn’t, God only knows how I could have been shot on the back of my head… I probably owe my life to him.”

April seemed to be emotional for a while, absorbing the information. When Owen was sure she was going to say something meaningful, his friend commented:

“Just… For God’s sake, don’t tell him that? He is going to be even more annoying if he hears it.”

When their eyes met, both surgeons cracked up laughing, finding a much needed outlet for a long journey of exhaustion, both physically and mentally.

Months later, after the boy had already made his recovery, the US Army would honor Private Daniel Robert Hill when they awarded him with a Silver Star Medal for his act of heroism by putting his own life at risk to warn his team of an upcoming enemy attack.

And years later, Owen would also honor Hill by naming his third and fourth son after the brave young man who’d saved his life that Christmas day.
Amelia was going through some patient files, trying to fix the mess she had just made by placing some documents completely out of order. Just that morning, her resident had once again pushed the neurosurgeon’s buttons by implying Amelia should seek professional help for dealing with grief. Even though she had cut back on the dark humor jokes, Amelia would still spend most of her time at the hospital, now more than ever.

Stephanie Edwards had expressed her concern and that had led to a not so friendly argument between the two of them, which had culminated with the resident proposing that maybe she should spend a few weeks in another rotation to explore all her options. Amelia had promptly agreed, relieved to see her go, but she’d done it out of stubbornness and blind pride in the heat of the moment, because one of the few things that still gave her joy was teaching. Especially an eager and talented student like Stephanie.

But not even that could ruin Amelia’s mood that week. For the first time in a long time, she had received good news and while sorting through numbered pages that were out of order, the neurosurgeon still kept her optimism as she focused on the task.

About ten days before, Jamie Donovan had crashed on her operation table and for excruciating two hours, Amelia seriously questioned if the little girl would make it. Not for one second did she give up on the patient. The surgery had been long, meticulous and extremely unsettling but ultimately Amelia had been able to evacuate the clot in time for Jamie’s symptoms to be reversible.

The little girl had faced tough days of recovery in the PICU, with extensive intravenous therapy and constant monitoring. About a week later, right around New Year’s eve, she had been discharged to a ward room, being almost fully recovered with no neurological deficits, which was quite impressive considering the events she’d gone through. Amelia supposed that the only reason why Jamie hadn’t developed complications was because the diagnosis had been made quickly and accurately. If they had waited another hour or maybe even less, the outcome would most likely have been completely different.

Then, two days into the New Year UNOS had called and delivered the best news Amelia and Jamie’s family could hope for. A pair of lungs was available in Portland and the designated recipient was in no condition to receive them. Since they had just found out at the moment of surgery, the organ had to remain there and they transported the patient instead.

Amelia had barely had any time to say goodbye to Jamie when the helicopter came to take her. That evening, the neurosurgeon’s spirits were as anxious as they could be. But then hours later Jamie’s mom had called to notify everything had gone well. Amelia knew the little girl still had a long road of recovery ahead, but everything was on the right track. The actual possibility of Jamie making it and being discharged from the hospital gave her such immense joy that Amelia felt like nothing could ruin her mood that day.

But then, the neurosurgeon’s distracted mood was interrupted by a familiar face who looked so weary that Amelia immediately felt concerned.

“Mrs. Hunt?” The neurosurgeon studied the elderly woman coming in her direction with a heavy frown on her face, noticing how hesitating she looked. From what the neurosurgeon could gather, Evelyn was all alone, which definitely couldn’t be a good sign. Instantly, Amelia had a bad feeling about that visit. “Are you okay?”

“Hi, Dr. Shepherd.” Evelyn replied a bit sheepishly, but sounded firm and determined. “Please call me Evelyn.”
Amelia quickly glanced sideways, checking around them to see if anything unusual was happening. After realizing how intimidated and unsure Evelyn Hunt looked, the neurosurgeon gently guided her to a more private corner.

“What brings you here?” Amelia asked with concern, wondering what was the cause for that visit to the hospital in the middle of the day. Evelyn seemed fine, at least physically. Last time Amelia had seen her, Owen’s mother had suffered a domestic accident and had to undergo extensive surgery. “Did you have a fall or…?”

“This visit is not about me.” Evelyn interrupted Amelia, her voice sounding atypically broken as she looked the younger woman deeply in the eyes. “I came because of Owen.”

“Owen?” Amelia replied, feeling her stomach churning. Evelyn looked pale and distressed, like she hadn’t slept well in days. And the neurosurgeon was sure that could only mean bad news.

“I was wondering if… If by any chance he has made contact with you in the last few days?” Evelyn inquired hesitantly, going straight to the point. After seeing the look of confusion on Amelia’s face at the question, she clarified. “I’ve asked Jackson too, I just…” Evelyn stopped, noticing how everything she was saying wasn’t making any sense to Amelia. “I am sorry.” She shook her head in denial. “It was stupid of me to come here, I was just so desperate that I didn’t think this through.”


“Jackson Avery and I have been exchanging messages ever since my son and his wife left with the Army.” Evelyn explained, seeing how the neurosurgeon was following up. “It’s not always that the two of them can contact home, so whenever one of them does, we tell each other. But ever since Christmas Eve, both Jackson and I haven’t been able to reach neither Owen, nor April.” She added with sorrow and concern.

Amelia felt her stomach churning in protest and tried her best not to freak out completely.

Her head was spinning with the obvious possibility, but Amelia tried her hardest not to consider it. The thought alone of Owen being injured or worse made her want to drop to her knees.

“Have you tried contacting the Army?” She aimlessly asked the first thing that came to mind, feeling desperation start to consume her. During all those months, Amelia hadn’t heard directly from Owen but she did hear people at the hospital commenting and so far, she knew he was okay. Lately, she hadn’t seen much of Jackson at the hospital but Amelia had been too busy to consider what his relative absence could mean. “I am sure they would have information on…”

“I did.” Evelyn interrupted her again. Owen’s mom had served and she knew how those things worked. Her son and his friend were completely out of reach and no one had any satisfactory explanation to give. All they would tell her was that his team had lost contact and they were working on tracing their location. “Jackson mentioned that on Christmas he was just talking to April on the phone when…” Evelyn’s voice faltered.

The neurosurgeon immediately picked up on the hint that the news to follow weren’t good. Feeling like she was once again entering a nightmare, Amelia swallowed hard, unsure she was ready to hear the rest of that sentence.

“From what Jackson could gather, their camp was being attacked. He heard gunshots. And the last thing he saw was Owen asking April for help with a patient.” Evelyn finalized, tearing up. “And I have tried everything within my power to find out what happened to my son…” The older woman
couldn’t hold her emotions any longer, discreetly shedding tears while speaking with a broken voice. “I contacted old friends, I sent out emails, I even went to the Army office in person. But no one has any information to give and Jackson hasn’t had any success either… Not even with his family’s influence. I feel like I have tried everything I possibly can, but I still don’t know what’s happened to him… So I remembered you and I thought, maybe Owen called you during this period?” She raised her eyes expectantly. Evelyn Hunt had once supposed her son and the beautiful neurosurgeon standing in front of her were somehow emotionally involved. She hadn’t wanted to pry so back then she hadn’t asked, but right now, hearing about Owen was more important than respecting people’s privacies.

“He hasn’t, I am sorry.” Amelia tried to console the elderly lady. She bit her bottom lip to hold her own emotions as she tried her best to come up with nice words to comfort Evelyn, but at that moment, Amelia couldn’t formulate a two-word sentence. Her mouth was dry and her pulse was racing. The slightest notion that Owen could have been shot and killed in an Army camp made her want to scream in terror. This was beyond any nightmare she could have possibly imagined. “Owen hasn’t spoken to me ever since before he left.” Amelia admitted with a somber voice, feeling her throat constricting with a familiar sense of terror. She could feel her palms getting sweaty by the minute. Amelia had never felt like that before, but she supposed that was probably what a panic attack felt like.

“I am so sorry to disturb you at your work…” Evelyn said with sincerity, looking the younger woman in the eyes, far too caught up with her own sorrow to notice the terror on Amelia’s face. “I didn’t mean to frighten you, I just… I just couldn’t sit home and do nothing anymore… It’s been over a week. And I need to know if my son is okay.”

Evelyn Hunt had already lost a child to war. She wouldn’t be able to cope if she lost another one.

“You’re not disturbing me.” In an impulse, Amelia reached out and grabbed the woman’s hand, gently squeezing it. Unconsciously, she hoped that that handhold could transmit all the support the words were failing to communicate at that moment. “Please, will you…?”

Amelia’s voice failed as she processed the devastating information.

“Of course.” Evelyn understood the question without Amelia needing to ask it. “I will let you know as soon as I hear anything.”

As the older lady turned around and left, Amelia felt the weight of her body suddenly becoming too heavy for her knees to support it. That just couldn’t be true. The possibility Evelyn’s words had implied made the neurosurgeon sick to her stomach.

Everything around Amelia was spinning and she held on to the counter not to fall. She just couldn’t be there anymore. She needed to get away. Feeling dizzy all of a sudden, Amelia gathered the rest of the files she had been sorting in a messy pile and dropped them inside the first drawer she found, noticing how shaky her usually steady hands were. A nauseating feeling was building up in her stomach and her head was throbbing so violently that she had no idea how she managed to drive home that night.

Up until now, Amelia had somehow found a way to get herself together and pull through the horrible events that had followed ever since the end of her relationship with Owen. Her brother had died and her sister in law’s had disappeared with the kids, condemning Amelia to dark days of worry and agony.

She had been in a bad enough shape already but on top of all of that, Owen had left for an Army tour and his absence had left a void in Amelia’s heart that she hadn’t been able to fill with anything. Not
Derek had been in an accident and his life had tragically ended. She’d attended his funeral and had gotten some sort of closure, at least. Her niece and nephew were far too young to have any saying on where they were taken. And Amelia knew they were with their mother, so at least the two kids were being looked after.

But Owen had gone to a war zone and put his life at risk. He had left and Amelia had stayed behind, trying to pick up her pieces all by herself. She knew she hadn’t exactly been easy to him, that she had spitefully told Owen that there was nothing for her in Seattle and that most likely had accounted to his decision to re enlist. But now she could feel the bitter taste of the words in her mouth because what if she never saw him again?

What if she never had the chance to tell Owen the truth? To say to him how she truly felt, how he had been the only thing in her life that had kept her going after her brother had passed away… how her love for him overwhelmed and scared her, because it was the only positive and genuine feeling Amelia could find in her heart amongst so much anger and disappointment and cruelty in the world…

She didn’t want to lose Owen.

And Amelia wouldn’t be able to cope if she’d already lost him.

The neurosurgeon now supposed that, unconsciously, the only thing that had kept her sane in the past months was the expectation of Owen coming home one day soon. Amelia had clung to it with desperation. She avoided thinking about it, but deep down, she couldn’t consider another possibility.

If only she could see him with her own eyes and be sure he was alive and well… That would be enough to make her at least get some sleep at night. Even if he never spoke to her again, Amelia needed to know he was okay.

The house was dark and empty as the neurosurgeon expected it to be. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d come back home and actually spent more than a couple of hours there. The used mugs on the sink were a proof that someone still lived there, but Amelia just couldn’t stand the sight of it all.

The toys scattered in the living room were a heartbreaking memory of the happy moments she’d spent sitting on that playing mat with Zola and Bailey. Her brother’s favorite overcoat was still hanging on the foyer by the door. And the photographs of a once happy family framed on the living room were a cruel reminder that no happiness lasted too long. At least not in Amelia’s life.

And on top of that, through the window across the large yard, an empty large trailer remained locked and untouched, much like Amelia’s emotions inside her heart until that day.

Quickly sweeping those thoughts from her mind, the neurosurgeon made her way upstairs, feeling the physical exhaustion and emotional drainage consuming her. Amelia would give nearly anything to have a drink right now. She had to resort to her last ounce of self-control not to assault the liquor cabinet downstairs and get numbed to endure the pain she had been put through.

And then, as she walked into the second floor bedroom, her eyes immediately spotted a familiar painting hanging on the wall.

“You can’t have romance without a stomping cow playing the piano in front of a farm field.”

Owen’s voice once filled with so much warmth and affection had teased her right before he’d playfully stolen a kiss from her lips. Amelia could still vividly remember the scene as she played it in
her head.

Owen had gotten that that painting for her in their first official date. He had actually made a bid on it at an auction because Amelia had made jokes about the questionable piece of art and he’d found her honesty refreshingly amusing. When she’d brought it home, Amelia had been filled with expectations and hope for what their growing relationship could potentially turn out to be.

The tasteless, framed canvas had been the first gift Owen had ever given her and Amelia had cherished it longingly, unable to take it off the wall even after they had already broken things off. Even though the image on it was horrible, the object held an immeasurable sentimental value to her.

But now Owen had gone off to war and probably got himself killed. And Amelia couldn’t handle it. She just couldn’t accept it, or even understand.

Why had he left? Why had stolen her heart like that and gone away, making Amelia unable to move on with her life, making her unable to sleep at night, to eat, to breathe until she got the smallest piece of information notifying her of his status?

His crystal blue eyes haunted her mind and Amelia sat on the tip of the bed, tearing up with pain and confusion. But her emotional outburst quickly evolved to anger as the neurosurgeon felt her heart racing and her breathing getting heavier.

How was that fair to her?! Why did Owen have to be so stubborn, so unbreakable? She was insanely mad at him for actually going to a war zone, for risking his life to save other people, for leaving her behind without even bothering to say goodbye… and for disappearing without giving Amelia the chance to tell him how much she loved him.

“Damn you!” She yelled irrationally, projecting on the painting her anger with him as she threw the object. across the bedroom in an impulsive fit of maddening rage.

The fragile frame and display glass broke into a hundred pieces as it hit a wall, causing a deafening noise to wake Amelia from her uncontrolled behavior. The shattered glass on the floor made her heart break all over again and Amelia was defeated by her own emotions.

The tears started to fall so heavily and fast that once they did, Amelia lost control completely and couldn’t hold it back anymore. In seconds, she was already sobbing as she crouched down near the destroyed painting, regretting her impulsivity. The object was now completely ruined. It was a piece of Owen she would never get to have back, like so many others she had lost when she pushed him away. And Amelia felt guilt start to consume her, adding to her anxiety and distress.

Unable to keep looking at what represent very well the status of her life at that moment, Amelia left the scattered pieces behind and turned on the hot shower, in one last attempt to calm her head. She sobbed and cried throughout the entire time she spent under the warm water, clenching her fists and hitting the cold tiles on the wall with anger and frustration at the way everything seemed to crumble whenever she tried to pick herself up and live a normal life.

Then, nearly half an hour later, after all the tears had subsided, Amelia was strangely empty and more vulnerable than she had ever felt. Her eyes were swollen, her throat was constricted and the burden on her chest didn’t feel any lighter. But strangely, it was like after letting out her emotions, even if in secret, she had regained at least some control back.

The neurosurgeon finished drying her hair and walked over to the wardrobe, pulling the first pair of clean underwear she found. Amelia was just about to search for a comfortable set of pajamas when her eyes found a grey sweatshirt, so large that it obviously didn’t originally belong to her.
Pulling Owen’s old army training uniform from the hanger, Amelia put it on, despite it being way too large for her size. She pulled up the zipper, feeling the soothing touch of the soft fabric on her skin. But what comforted her the most was the way Owen’s scent still lingered on the piece of clothing, making Amelia feel that, no matter where in the world he was right now, her thoughts and her heart were with him entirely.

Little did Amelia know that, at that exact time, Owen was on a flight to Seattle. His team had finally been able to wrap up the mission and resume contact with the army base they reported to. The majority of people had gone home right after New Year’s eve, but Owen and April had stayed behind, making sure Danny Hill was in fit conditions to endure such a hard and extenuating transport.

When the kid was finally able to be evacuated, a medical team had taken him to Landstuhl Hospital in Germany, giving Owen and April no option but to return home.

And Owen longed for it more than anything.

The promise he’d made Danny was still very much alive in his mind and Owen counted the minutes to get to Seattle. He knew he probably should have called his mother and notified her of his upcoming arrival, but since they were only a few of hours from home, Owen planned to surprise her.

It was late morning when their flight finally landed at the airport. He and April split a cab and once Owen realized she was going straight to the hospital to surprise Jackson, he didn’t hesitate to accompany her. He had no idea if he would find Amelia there, but just the thought of maybe seeing her filled his heart with enough joy to endure the traffic at that hour.

Amelia dragged her feet through the hospital corridors, feeling like she had been taken down in a physical fight. Her head was throbbing from the amount of tears she had shed the night before. And Amelia still couldn’t get rid of that faltering sensation that everything around her was slowing crumbling, drowning her further in a whirlwind she wasn’t sure how to escape from anymore.

All she really wanted to become invisible, to get through that day and maybe make something meaningful out of it. But just as Amelia was walking through the corridor checking a patient’s labs in his chart, she was gently interrupted by Richard Webber.

“Oh, Amelia, hey,” the senior chief of surgery greeted her with goodheartedly. “Got time for a cup of coffee?”

The last thing on Amelia’s mind was socializing, so she settled for a forced smile as the words coming out of her mouth sounded fake even on her ears.

“Sorry, busy day.”

“Yeah.” Richard agreed. By the sound of his words, Amelia could tell he was still hovering somewhere behind her. Much to her dismay, she was sure the conversation wouldn’t there. And just like she had foreseen it, he added. “Haven’t seen you at a meeting in a while. A long while” Richard reinforced.

Amelia didn’t want to drag the subject any further but she was didn’t have the proper state of mind to discuss that.
“Like I said, really busy…”

“Edwards mentioned something about you…”

The notion that her resident had gone behind her back to speak about her made Amelia lose what little patience she had left.

“Really?” She asked irritably while turning around, in an obvious defensive posture. “What else is Edwards saying?”

Amelia noticed as Richard gently scoffed, as if trying not to make a big deal of the situation.

“I’m not accusing you.” He clarified. “I’m checking in. You know, I get to check in.” The man said, hoping she would agree. After all, they shared an important part of their lives and had repeatedly given each other support in times of need. “That’s the kind of friends we are.”

“I do not have time for coffee! I do not have time for meetings. I don’t…!” Amelia snapped, growing more resentful by the minute. All the emotions that had overloaded her just the night before came back will force and the neurosurgeon couldn’t contain the words as they seemed to automatically leave her mouth. “My job is not make you feel better about me.” She unfairly accused Richard. “My job is to make my patients get better.” Amelia stated, thinking about Jamie and the way she had been lucky enough to save her. If Amelia hadn’t acted in the exact moment she had, Jamie might not have survived. “Do you know what can happen in the hour or two I would be wasting with you?” The neurosurgeon heatedly fired, already bordering irrationality. “An hour or two matters! They matter to me! They should matter to you. They matter to my patients.” She added with certainty, grateful that she had been spending this much time at the hospital.

Richard noticed how distressed and close to losing control the young neurosurgeon was and in that moment he was sure of he’d already anticipated. Amelia wasn’t doing fine at all. During the past months, he had been tolerating her coping mechanisms because even though he knew they weren’t the most appropriate responses, at least Amelia seemed balanced.

But in the past couple of weeks, she had been acting more unusually than ever and Richard really feared that she might relapse. As she blurted out her thoughts, Amelia’s gaze met Richard’s and she tried to make sense of what was happening, but couldn’t. Everywhere she looked, there was too much loss. Uncontrollably, Amelia’s thoughts shifted to her brother and how she hadn’t even gotten to see him before he was let go.

“If I leave and my patient dies, it’s not me who will suffer, it’s his mother, his sisters, his friends, his wife, and they will hate me…” She added cruelly, rethinking the entire situation Derek had gone through and how little details she had of the whole thing. Amelia hadn’t been included in any part of the decision making and even though she tried to ignore it, the memory stung painfully. “With everything inside them, they will hate me and you and everyone here because they won’t understand why he is gone, why people always leave…” Amelia started to lose the battle to her own emotions, not noticing how personal she was getting. Her voice broke and in her child-like tone, it was obvious her words were filled with hurt and heartbreak. Owen’s face came to mind and she had to pull a herculean effort not to break down. At that moment, her outburst had already attracted attention from a lot of the hospital staff, but the neurosurgeon remained blissfully oblivious to that. “Why everyone you give a crap about walks away or is ripped from your world without warning, without reason, in convenience stores and plane crashes and podunk hospitals with podunk doctors who don’t do what they are supposed to do which is save people!” Amelia raised her voice, thinking about all the loved ones she’d already lost, including her father, Mark, Derek, her child… She desperately didn’t want to add more names to that list and the notion alone that Owen might just join them made her sick to her stomach.
Right after her outburst, she paused to catch her breath, noticing in Richard’s lack of reaction that something was wrong.

Amelia was prepared to fight. There was so much rage brewing inside of her that nothing would please her more than engaging in a verbal battle, be it whomever was available. But judging by the expression on Richard’s face, it became clear that instead of getting angry at her, he felt sorry.

And that was more than Amelia could bear.

Suddenly, she became very aware of people whispering about her in the hallways and a fit of embarrassment and regret formed in her chest. She was just turning her head to step away from the scene when unexpectedly, her eyes caught sight of a tall blonde man dressed in combat clothes who stared back at her with a very familiar pair of amazing blue eyes.

Amelia didn’t believe what she was seeing. Maybe she really was going crazy. It had to be a hallucination.

Owen wasn’t there. He was dead… He was...

But as she looked away and tried her best to focus again, the only thing she could do was to gather her file and sneakily get out of the public place, fearing how unstable her mind was.

Amelia was deeply embarrassed to have spoken to Richard the way she had. And more than that, she was mortified by the vision she’d just had.

It couldn’t be real, could it? Seeing Owen in flesh and bone had been so overwhelming that Amelia chose not to believe it.

She really was losing it. There was no other explanation. Amelia had lost control and there was only one way she knew for sure she could get it back.

Her heart was failing. She was tired. Consumed by a chronic exhaustion after long months burying every feeling in the book under a pile of anger and work. It consumed a lot of energy to withstand that mechanism on a daily basis and Amelia had just reached her very limit.

She just didn’t know where to find the strength to keep going anymore.

Before Amelia could realize what she was doing, her feet had taken her to the fourth floor lounge where she knew a few anesthesiology residents liked to hang out.

Without ceremony, she approached a short mid twenties boy with a sickening pale skin.

“I need you to score me a bag of O.C.s”

The young man looked at her with renewed interest.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He replied sarcastically, with a corner smile that made Amelia absolutely sure he knew just too well what she meant.

It was to be expected that a guy working under her denied the fact he was in possession of drugs, but Amelia didn’t bother with small talk.

“I am not here to play around, so let’s just get straight to it…” Amelia rolled her eyes with impatience. “What’s your price?”

The guy spent seconds looking at her, as if testing the attending to see how serious she was about it.
When he finally seemed convinced, he replied:

“I want in on all your craniotomies for the rest of my neuro rotation.” The resident proposed, clearly aiming high.

Amelia scoffed with despise, lowering her voice.

“You’re insane. I am not letting a burnout like you anywhere near my OR.”

The resident took offense and looked at her in a very suggestive way.

“Looks like you and me are two peas of the same pod, Dr. Shepherd.” He smiled with pretense, looking Amelia from head to toe, clearly dismissing her argument. “So I suggest you take back what you just said.”

Amelia swallowed hard. She didn’t have an answer for that. She was a drug addict and right now, one who really needed to get something. Even if she weren’t going to use it, Amelia just needed the comfort of knowing she had it available in case everything got out of control again.

“You’re not going in my OR.” The neurosurgeon affirmed with authority. “What else do you want for it?” She asked firmly, determined to make the trade.

The sneaky third year resident slid his hands into his shoulder bag and removed a little plastic bag so sneakily that Amelia would totally have missed it in case she wasn’t directly looking.

Feeling overconfident, the young man took one step forward and very suggestively placed the bag in Amelia’s scrub pocket, on purpose taking his time.

“You know, I can think of a couple of ways you can pay me back…” He suggestively looked from her eyes to her lips and then to her breasts.

And Amelia felt nauseated.

Taking one step back with violence, she quickly got rid of his touch and stared at the man with fury in her eyes.

“You touch me again and I will make sure you don’t see the inside of an OR for the rest of your life.” Amelia threatened, grabbing the small bag inside her pocket with force. “I will keep this as an apology for what you did.”

Even though the neurosurgeon had sounded confident, on the inside she was shaking. Nothing could guarantee that young man wouldn’t go around the hospital halls spreading rumors. Her reputation was already rocky and the anesthesiology resident wasn’t exactly known for having a role model behavior.

But after being faced with her rejection, the boy gave her a corner smile, almost as if approvingly.

“Next time you need something from me, you aren’t going to take it.” He assured her. “We will be sharing it.”

The propriety with which he said the words, following by his lascivious stare made Amelia even more nauseated. Before she could realize what she was doing, the neurosurgeon found herself going back home, taking the little white pack safely kept in her pocket.
A few hours later, Amelia lost track of how much time she spent pacing back and forth in her brother’s front yard.

For some reason, she just couldn’t seem to enter the house. The tiny bag in her pocket was the key to make all that pain go away and even though Amelia desperately wanted to use it, she knew she shouldn’t.

It was so hard to think about everything that was happening and process it, that Amelia spent her time focusing on emptying her mind, instead. She tried not to think about Owen or her brother or even her young patient who had just received a lung transplant.

But when a deep male voice spoke from behind startling her, Amelia could feel her heart skipping a beat.

“Hey.”

The neurosurgeon turned around in surprise, instantly meeting serene blue eyes that stared at her with longing and something else Amelia couldn’t quite identify. But as Owen came striding in her direction with an expression of hope in his face, Amelia found it hard to remain disconnected.

“It’s good to see you.” He added, unsure of what exactly to say.

“Hey.” Amelia breathed out, turning her back to him in denial as she tried to contain her emotions.

This couldn’t be happening. Owen was there and she was paralyzed. After losing so many people she loved, Amelia had already learned that staying up at night wishing they would come back never made any difference. So she had pretty much given up hope. When Owen was presumed dead, she prepared herself for another round of funerals and heartbreak.

But actually seeing him alive and well was so overwhelming that Amelia was frozen.

Owen noticed the stiffness in her body language and he kept his distance, despite his wish to wrap his arms around her to never again let go. As he’d arrived in the hospital just moments before, he was not sure if he would see her again. But then he’d spotted her name in the OR board and the way his heart swelled simply overtook him. Owen had not been ready for such an intense reaction.

The prospect of actually seeing her again fueled him to take a detour just so he could check up on her. After all that time, how would Amelia be coping? Judging by the little he’d seen earlier that day when she’d ranted at Richard Webber, Amelia wasn’t nearly as okay as Owen wished she was.

He’d taken a couple of hours to go see his mother and found the woman at a mortified state of mind. But after Evelyn was finally convinced her son was in one piece, Owen just had to see the neurosurgeon again.

Preferably, in privacy.

“Feels like I’ve been away forever, but I see nothing’s changed.” He casually commented, hoping to lure her into the conversation. His eyes fell upon the remains of a branch tree upon which he’d hung a sandbag the day Amelia had willingly walked over to his trailer and confessed she wanted his company right after Nicole Herman had finally woken up from her surgery. “Except they chopped down that old tree.”

Amelia turned her eyes in the direction he was pointing, not really following up with the conversations. She was restless and didn’t know yet what was happening. Her mind just couldn’t get in synchrony with her feelings and she was growing agitated and impatient by the minute.
“Yeah,” the neurosurgeon automatically replied, too distracted to have absorbed the content of his words.

Owen noticed how anxious she looked. He waited in the hopes she would express any inclination to talk, or at least show some sort of positive feeling to see him.

Owen had waited for that moment ever since the day he’d left. All he wanted was to go to her and hold her, hoping that Amelia would be as happy to see him as he was to see her. But as she made herself even more distant and kept her silence, the trauma surgeon realized that maybe he had been too hopeful with his wishes.

“Okay, I’ll...” Owen felt his heart shattering. “I’ll see you around.” He added as he walked way, devastated to realize the woman he loved wasn’t the least interested in even asking how he was after he’d spent nearly a year in a war zone.

And just as Owen was taking his fingers to the bridge of his nose, trying to keep his own feelings in check, her words cut the thin air like a blade slicing perfectly healthy skin.

“I have a baggie full of black-market Oxy in my coat pocket and I’m trying to decide whether or not to take it.”

Owen froze in his feet, instantly turning around in alarm. As he did so, Amelia shamelessly flashed him the bag, almost as if daring him to stop her from doing it.

Amelia’s words had left her lips so suddenly and impulsively, that the neurosurgeon didn’t even get to think of why she had decided to share it. For the past nine months, Amelia had been avoiding talking to anyone as much as she could.

And yet now, without asking a single question, Owen had already somehow managed to break her defenses and earn a confession from her.

The realization alarmed Amelia and she went back to her most daring mode, defensively despising everyone and everything around her in order to guard her own feelings.

“I’ve got the Dead-Derek thing completely managed.” She said in order to convince herself too. It was clear in Owen’s eyes that he didn’t believe her, so Amelia went further, testing him to see how far he could take it. “I know people were worried. Since he died, everybody’s been looking at me, waiting for me to fall apart or freak out or just... Boom! Become a mess.” Amelia knew she was scandalizing and kept on acting like that on purpose, just to see if Owen would shrug and realize she was a basket case and unworthy of his time as he walked away or if he would stick around to actually be convinced that she was indeed handling it. “Like some bomb everyone thinks is supposed to go off...” Amelia confessed, thinking about the day of the funeral and how back then everyone had looked at her expecting the youngest Shepherd to make a scene. “My mother was calling three, four times a day. Addison was calling... Everyone.” The neurosurgeon confessed, realizing that ever since her brother had died, this was the first time she actually talked about it with anyone. Her mother and Addison hadn’t been the only ones to try, even Sheldon and Charlotte had been very insistent on it, but Amelia mostly rejected their calls and replied with short messages later stating that she was fine. “It makes sense. It’s natural.” Amelia added with despise, thinking about how she’d gotten close to mourning Owen too and how that had devastated her.

Owen softened his expression, trying to quickly catch up with the unspoken words of what she was saying. It had become clear in a matter of seconds after seeing her that Amelia was anything but fine.

It was obvious in her every word and action that she was clearly in pain and Owen felt a wave of self
loathing consuming himself when he thought about just how much Amelia had probably gone through, and most likely alone.

He’d left her thinking that she was surely going to count on her family’s support as she planned to move to New York, but it was obvious none of that had happened. Instead, he’d come home to find her in an erratic state of mind, most likely having gone back to doing drugs again.

Owen’s temple began to throb and he looked at the gorgeous woman standing in front of him, exhaling so much pain in every word that he couldn’t withstand seeing it.

“Every man I’ve ever loved has died, including my baby.” Amelia recalled. First her father, then her son, then her brother… How dumb was she to expect that Owen would somehow escape her toxic curse? And yet, there he was, standing up just a few feet away, deeply looking into her eyes while Amelia finally let her walls down after months of walking around in circles. “Thank you, universe. So I should be, like… Greek tragedy, turned to stone, bat-crap crazy, but I’m good. I got this. I am fine. I’m telling you, I’m amazing. I am saving lives left and right.” Amelia added, not sure if her despise was at the situation or at herself. As she spoke, Owen kept staring at her with loving eyes, almost as if waiting for her rant to finish so he could intervene. The realization made Amelia even more determined to be convincing. “I am putting butts in the seats in that OR gallery. I mean, people are fighting to hear me lecture. I am entertaining! Joke, joke, joke! I’m funny! I’m fun! I’m a party! I’m doing… I’m great!” Her voice faltered as she realized she was failing to convince ever herself. How could Owen just come back from a war zone and look so together while she was one step away from completely falling apart? Beaten up exhaustion, Amelia toned down her voice and took a deep breath before saying, giving up the worked up attitude. “I’m handling the dead-Derek thing really well.”

“Okay.”

Owen kept meticulously studying her expression. He knew she was lying. She did too, he was sure. But Owen also knew that Amelia had probably not expressed her feelings in any way close to now. He had a bad feeling that, for the past nine months, Amelia had carefully kept all that pain stored somewhere deep inside of her, unable to cope with it.

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“Except today, I yelled at Richard, who was only trying to invite me for coffee,” He heard her interrupt his thoughts. “And then I went and scored Oxy from this junkie doctor.”

Immediately, Owen’s expression changed from understanding to concerned. The trauma surgeon frowned as he took one step forward, clearly anxious.

“But you haven’t taken any?”

“Not yet.” Amelia replied, finally encountering some emotion in him. She noticed how her revelation had alarmed him, and unconsciously tested his limits, acting indifferent and uncaring just to see how far he’d stay to stop her. “But I might.” She raised her eyebrows in clear defiance. “That’s the thing. I really actually might.”

It didn’t take Amelia long to figure out he wasn’t going anywhere. The realization touched her at the same time it brought back all her anger at him for endangering his life when the single thought of losing him had nearly devastated her.

“I have been sober for one thousand three hundred twenty one days, Owen.” Amelia heard her own voice breaking. “I was fine. I was managed. But I might.”

Owen saw the stubbornness in her eyes and had to control an urge not to go to her and put some
sense into her head with his touch instead of his words. It’d been too long since the last time he’d been able to hold her. And he wanted that, more than anything.

Amelia was hurting deeply. She had every reason to. And because she probably had never been taught how to cope with pain very well, she was acting out like a child throwing a tantrum, longing for the limits, acceptance and consolation she had never been offered.

“All this stuff you’re managing…” Owen crossed his arms behind his back, using his best authoritative voice. In a matter of seconds, Amelia’s response went from angry and frustrated to retreated and vulnerable. He noticed and softened his voice, trying to give her the understanding she had very likely never received during that time. Perhaps not in her entire life. “You’re not supposed to be managing it.” Owen took one step closer. “You’re supposed to be feeling it. Grief, loss, pain. It is normal.”

“It’s not normal.” Amelia chided, irritated. None of what happened was normal. Losing that many people, seeing so much pain… None of that slightly normal.

“It is.” Owen insisted. In that moment, Amelia turned her back and walked away, refusing to hear what she supposed would come next.

Just like everyone else, Owen would tell her much of a failure she was. That while everyone else just toughened it up, it was Amelia who was the weak one for allowing her feelings to get the best of her.

“It is normal. It is not normal to you because you’ve never done it.”

Amelia stopped walking, surprised by the words coming out of his mouth. She looked up to meet his eyes, confused and intrigued at the same time, but Owen didn’t seem to notice any of that as he insistently stood in her way, forcing her to hear what he had to say.

“Instead of feeling it, feeling the grief and the pain, you’ve shoved it all down and do drugs instead. Instead of moving through the pain, you run from it. You…” He straightforwardly explained. Amelia was grateful in that moment that he didn’t dance around the subject, or talked about it like she was a monster for resorting to drugs in the first place. It was the first time someone talked about her addiction without an ounce of judgment and the realization awed her.

Her vision got blurry when tears started to assault her eyes, but Amelia was still able to notice how affected by his own words Owen also became. It was like he had just had an epiphany.

Too mortified after realizing he had done the same thing he was accusing her of, Owen sat down, feeling the worst he’d felt since he got there.

“Instead of dealing with being hurt and alone and afraid that this horrible, empty feeling is all there is, I run from it.” He courageously admitted, flashing his army cap in surrender. “I run off, and I sign up for another tour of active duty.” Amelia noticed how disturbed he was and in that moment, she felt sorry for him too. It was obvious Owen was hurting just as much and not for the first time, she wondered who was ever there for the man who took care of everybody else with such fiber and courage when he needed a shoulder to cry on.

“We do these things. We run off, and we… And we medicate. We do whatever it takes to cover it up and dull the sensation, but it’s not normal.” Owen exposed the wound, unaware of how much he was getting to Amelia at that moment. His words were describing her reactions exactly, and Amelia had never felt so understood. And by including the simple fact that he wasn’t that much different made Amelia hate herself a little less. Because if Owen, of all people, was capable of failing too, then maybe she wasn’t really that bad as she was made to believe. Amelia had no dimension of just how
much she admired him and to see him share the same feelings as he deeply touched her heart. “We’re supposed to feel. We’re supposed to love, and hate, and hurt, and grieve, and break, and be destroyed…” Owen got up, focusing his entire attention on her again, noticing how affected she had become. “And rebuild ourselves to be destroyed again. That is human. That is humanity. That’s… That’s… That’s being alive.” He explained. “That’s the point. That’s the entire point. Don’t… Don’t avoid it. Don’t extinguish it.”

Amelia stood in silence, feeling her heart swelling as tears assaulted her eyes.

During most of her life, she had been censored every time she expressed any emotion that wasn’t convenient to the people around her. Until all those feelings had culminated with a drug addiction as a desperate measure to shove them all down. Amelia had learned the hard way that it didn’t work. So she just coped with things the way people around her usually did.

And now this wonderful man stood in front of her and encouraged Amelia to do what she had desperately wanted to do her entire life, but never could. Until she had grown too afraid of her own reactions to even consider it.

“Derek died.” Amelia admitted with a broken voice, for the first time processing the dimension of those two simple words. Owen knew his eyes were tearing up too when he nodded affirmatively, anticipating what was about to come. Amelia would break down and his heart would be torn in two, but she had to do it, for her own sake. It was long overdue, and she needed that more than he needed not to see her suffer. “He died. I don’t want to feel it. I… I don’t think I can. I don’t think I even want to…” Amelia felt herself losing control and fought the familiar sensation of spiraling down. Immediately, she reached out for her pocket where the bag of oxy had been shoved down. “I can’t. I can’t. I can’t do this.”

“You have to. If you don’t…” Owen tried to reason.

“No, I can’t. Shh! I can’t do this!” She insisted, sniffing soundly.

“You… You have to.” Owen raised his voice to interrupt her. Once he was sure he had all her attention, he added with certainty. “If you don’t, that bag of Oxy is not going to be your last.”

Amelia looked into Owen’s eyes, breathing in and out heavily. She had a decision to make and she knew it.

She could take the easier route and simply go back inside, make all of her problems disappear with that small white bag and simply live to see another day. It wouldn’t hurt, quite the contrary. It would cause a much needed feeling of bliss that she hadn’t felt in a very long time… Probably ever since she had allowed herself to be happy with Owen while worrying about nothing.

Or, she could give up the drugs, keep her sobriety and drown in the worst sensations. Amelia knew it was the only way to make all that pain go away permanently, but she rejected the sorrow with her entire being. She’d already had to process the loss of too many people she loved, so the neurosurgeon knew how cruel and soul shaping the experience could be. She wasn’t ready for it. She didn’t have any reason to choose this option.

And yet, the man she loved stood in front of her offering Amelia a lot more than she probably deserved. And she had to do it. For him, but mostly for her.

Giving the bag of oxy one last look, Amelia stretched out her hand, finally giving it up. And with that gesture, she also made her choice.
The moment Owen’s hand touched hers to collect the bag, Amelia was assaulted by the weight of nine months of unshed tears. A scream of utter pain and sorrow left her lips and she had to support her hands on her knees not to lose her balance.

Owen heard her weeping and took a deep breath to be able to endure it. Seeing Amelia breaking down like that was worse than anything else he’d experienced in the past months.

Also surrendering and accepting the pain, Owen kneeled down beside her, catching her as she fell. “You’re going to be okay.” He assured her, relieved to finally have her back in his arms. It had been too many agonizing months in which Owen had dreamed of it. Finding Amelia in that condition had certainly not been what he imagined, but he was determined to never let her go again. “You’re going to survive this, okay?” Owen promised, gently caressing her hair, overwhelmed by just how much he missed it. “Everybody does.” Among her cries, Amelia finally wrapped her arms around his neck, giving Owen the confirmation that she too had been waiting for that moment. Now that she was with him, he could finally breathe in peace again. With a smile of joy and relief, Owen finally relaxed, focusing entirely on comforting her. Amelia’s wellbeing was the most important thing at that moment. “It’s perfectly normal. It’s boring, even. It’s so normal.”

Owen closed his eyes and kissed the side of her face, grateful to the universe that he was back home again in time to prevent a disaster, and that she was there, safely kept in his arms. Despite the shape she was in at that moment, the trauma surgeon kept his positivity because from now on, Owen would take care of her. He would make sure she was okay, no matter what.

They lost count of how many minutes Amelia stayed in his embrace, crying her heart out. Slowly, Owen got up with her, but didn’t let her go for one second. Soon enough, Amelia buried her face between his neck and his chest. He could feel her tears wetting his clothes, adding to his own pain. Owen was relieved for her that she was finally letting it all out, but seeing her do it was incredibly devastating for him too.

“You left…” Amelia broken voice interrupted the silence, shattering what little self-respect Owen still had left. “You went away and I thought you’d died out there.”

“Sweetheart, I am so sorry,” Owen tightened his grip around her, cursing the heavens for not having the peace of mind to stay when she probably needed him the most.

“You left and it’s all my fault.” Amelia added with a muffled voice, surprising him. Just as Owen was about to ask what she was talking about, she finally brought her head up, staring at him with those gorgeous silver eyes filled with so much sorrow and regret. “I know I said I…” Her voice broke once again as a single tear rolled down her cheek. “I didn’t mean to…” She pleaded with a trembling lower lip. “I never meant to… Owen,” her voice was nearly a whisper now. “I am sorry… I am so sorry…”

Owen closed his eyes and took a deep breath, or else he’d risk breaking down too. He wrapped his arms around her even tighter, not quite believing what was happening. Amelia was in pain, part of which he’d inflicted not only by leaving but also by adding to her concern and yet now she stood in his arms, asking for his forgiveness for the way she had reacted. And the thing was, Owen couldn’t even blame her.

“You’re going to be okay now.” He assured her, holding her face with one hand while his other arm kept a steady grip around her waist. “There’s nothing to be sorry for… You’re okay now…” Owen repeated, assuring himself just as much as he assured her. His lips brushed on her temple as he felt Amelia melting in his arms again.
They were immersed in a comfortable silence, both dealing with the repercussions of that moment individually.

For months, Amelia hadn’t been able to relax, drowning in work to distract herself from everything that had happened. Her many sleepless nights had only added to her discomfort, causing more anxiety in a pattern that never seemed to break. Just the day before, she thought she lost Owen too, and that had been the final drop to send her in a downward spiral.

But Owen had come back, found her and rescued her in time. Amelia thought back about the many other times when she’d needed him and how he’d never failed to be there.

“Will you…” She hesitated as she looked up to meet his eyes, unwilling to let him go. Amelia looked scared, like she was afraid he would say no to her question. “Will you stay with me tonight?”

Owen felt the soft touch of her hand on his chest as her amazing blue eyes stared at him with so much vulnerability and pain that he knew what he was going to say before he even processed the question. He dug his fingers through her locks of soft brown hair, rejoicing in the familiarity of her scent.

Amelia smelled like home.

“Please, don’t leave me again.”

Her voice was so broken and her expression so desperate that Owen felt one tear rolling down his face too. She thought she had to convince him. Owen leaned over, kissing her forehead for long seconds, trying to assure her that he wasn’t going anywhere.

It was his first night back in the city. He had barely even gone to see his mother yet. His trailer was neglected, being locked for so long and he’d barely had any time to rest, spending nearly a day flying halfway across the world to come back. Everything in his life had been put on hold. His job, his house, his family.

But the only thing that would bring him any peace of mind tonight was being with the one who’d occupied his thoughts every day for the past nine months. And luckily for Owen, she didn’t seem to want to leave his arms any more than he wanted to let her go.

Using his thumb to wipe another stubborn tear from falling on her gorgeous face, Owen tenderly smiled at her, eager to comfort her in any way he could.

“Of course I will stay.”
Part Twenty Three

Chapter Summary

This one sets entirely between episodes 11x22 and 11x23. After Owen comes back and finds Amelia about to have a relapse, he comforts her and talks her out of it. Amelia then asked him to stay with her. What happens next?

The Journey – Part Twenty-Three

Amelia paced back and forth in the kitchen, trying to concentrate on the task ahead. It was nearly nine in the evening and she was mixing ingredients while looking over her shoulder every two minutes.

After Owen had agreed to stay with her, he’d walked her inside, proceeding to unceremoniously flush the bag of oxy she’d given him down the toilet. Then, after repeatedly asking her if she was okay, Owen said he’d make a quick trip to his trailer to get cleaned up and drop his bag but would be back in no time to spend the evening with her.

Amelia had quickly gone upstairs, suddenly taken by the urge to look her best after the mess she’d just made of herself. The neurosurgeon had gotten in the shower, dried her hair and put on a pair of dark leggings and a fitted long sleeve shirt. Then, she went back to the ground floor and patiently waited. And when it felt like too much time had passed already and maybe that meant Owen had changed his mind about joining her, Amelia looked at the clock and noticed it had only been thirty minutes since he’d left.

Amelia had been so deeply immersed in her grief and the turmoil of emotions that she’d barely paid attention to anything else. Now, after crying tears that had been stored for long months, she finally felt lighter and somewhat even free. Sure, she was still grieving, and probably would be for a long time. But now Amelia also felt like she could do it in a healthy way, so that the pain she’d avoided for so long wasn’t going to destroy her like in previous moments.

And because she was in a better shape of mind, the neurosurgeon could shift the focus from that to more pressing matters. Owen had just come home from a long deployment and Amelia realized he was probably in need of care too. That man was so tough and so grounded that sometimes she forgot that at the end of the day, he was only human. No matter how talented Owen was at concealing his pain, it did not mean he was immune to it.

The neurosurgeon thought back about the first time she’d been alone with Owen in that house. It had been a random weekday, and he’d knocked on her door looking for her brother. Derek had been at work, just like his wife so Amelia had the house entirely to herself. And even though that wasn’t the original plan, Owen had stayed with her and entertained Amelia throughout one of the best evenings she’d had in Seattle.

Back then, she’d made waffles and Owen had complimented her. He was probably hungry after a long day of traveling and Amelia doubted he’d have anything to eat at home.

Feeling particularly inspired and unusually motivated, the neurosurgeon occupied the kitchen, quickly gathering the ingredients she would need. By the time Owen finally made it back, ending her
agonizing anxiety, the house smelled like fresh food, making him instantly realize just how hungry he was.

“What are you doing?” Owen asked with a large smile, surprised to find Amelia in the kitchen looking reinvigorated.

“Cooking us dinner.” She returned his gaze and Owen felt his heart skip a bit. Oh, how he had missed that dimpled smile. “I figured you’d be hungry.” Amelia sheepishly added, slightly blushing.

Owen took a few steps in her direction, seeing she was putting golden, crispy waffles on two separate plates. Her consideration touched him immensely. She didn’t have to do anything, but it looked like she was trying to please him and the intention alone made Owen remind himself as to why he’d fallen for her in the first place.

The trauma surgeon smiled charmingly at her, communicating everything he wanted to say with his eyes. Amelia was flattered by the look of appreciation on his face.

“You know, since you have been gone for so long, I imagined you’d like some kind of homemade, traditional food.”

“So you made me Belgian waffles?” Owen raised one eyebrow, clearly teasing her by the way he smirked adorably.

“No,” the neurosurgeon returned his smile, feeling her heart fluttering with contentment just by having his company back. He had a point but she wasn’t going to give in that easily. “They are Amelia-waffles.”

“Ohh…” Owen pretended to be surprised and convinced. He leaned over, grabbed the small jar of syrup and poured some on the golden waffle before taking a bite. The way he nodded his head as his swallowed the piece showed how pleased he was. “Yeah… They are delicious.” Owen gazed at her, sustaining her look. “The kind I can only find right here at home.”

Amelia’s smile slowly transformed as she felt his eyes heavily lingering on hers. She was deeply pleased that he seemed to really like what she’d made especially for him.

“Do you want another?” She grinned contagiously.

“Sure.” Owen answered with honesty.

When they were done eating, Owen helped her with the dishes, despite Amelia’s protests that he should rest after the long day he’d had. Truth was, after the storm had come and gone, she felt a little awkward to be standing so close next to him without touching.

Just an hour ago, Amelia had broken down and cried in his arms, exposing her soul. And now, they seemed to be talking like two civilized people who were unsure of how to approach a difficult subject.

“So…” Amelia finished putting the last plate back in the cabinet near the sink. “What do you want to do now?”

Owen turned his head and met her eyes. The answer was very obvious to him.

He wanted to take her upstairs, close the door behind them and kiss every bit of her body until he felt her melting in his arms moaning his name as she was assaulted by the most incredibly sensations, just like it had happened many times in the past.
But he knew Amelia was in a particularly rough time of her life and he’d never take advantage of her fragile state.

“Be with you.” Owen settled for saying, watching with delight as her entire face transformed with a smile.

Amelia reached out her hand for him and Owen took it, following her to the living room in silence.

Now that she’d let her guard down and was finally allowing herself to be the woman he’d come to fall for, Owen couldn’t help noticing how her eyes were once again filled with the liveliness he adored so much about her. Not for the first time, he associated Amelia’s image with the one of a child, with such purity and innocence that it inspired the most primitive thoughts of protection and care in him.

But at the same time, there was nothing remotely childish about the way her clothes outlined her feminine body. As she curled up on the couch next to him, so close that he could feel her warmth, Owen felt his pulse racing. Her shapely thighs were covered but the fitting leggings left very little to imagination, especially when he could easily remember each one of her delicate curves.

There was something very domestic about the way she would relax with her back on the couch, gazing at the TV while distractedly flicking her hair. Owen could very well think they were frozen in time, redirected back to a moment when nearly a year ago, they’d spend nights just like that one, comfortably sitting beside each other while doing something as mundane as watching TV.

But of course, everything was different now. They weren’t together anymore and Owen couldn’t simply lean over and randomly kiss her, no matter how much he wanted to.

“Did you call your mom?”

Amelia’s voice interrupted his thoughts and Owen blinked repeatedly, trying to focus on the question before shifting his attention to her.

“Hm, I went to see her before I came here.” He replied, impressed that she’d bothered to worry about that. He saw the look of approval on her face and imagined if there was more to it. “Why?”

Amelia shrugged her shoulders, as if the subject embarrassed her, but decided to be honest nonetheless.

“She came to see me.” The neurosurgeon confessed, watching as a frown formed on Owen’s face. “She was desperate that she hadn’t heard from you,” Amelia explained, hoping Owen would understand. “She hadn’t heard from you and she told me…” Her voice trailed off as a lump formed on her throat. Evelyn’s words were replaying in Amelia’s mind and all the fear she’d felt was promptly coming back to her. “She said there were gunshots fired.”

Owen noticed the way Amelia bit her bottom lip at the same time she defensively wrapped her arms around legs that she was trying her best to keep her emotions in check. Without thinking, he reached out his hand and took hers, rubbing it with his thumb.

“I am sorry you had to hear that.” He said with honesty. Earlier that day, when Owen had gone to see her, his mother had already expressed how terrified she’d been after spending nearly two weeks without hearing from him, especially after knowing that his camp had been under attack. He had no idea Amelia had shared her concern, and could only imagine how that must have added to her stress.

“What happened?” Amelia asked with genuine interest, looking him in the eye with fear.
Owen smiled tenderly, touched by her reaction. There he was, safe and sound, but the idea of the danger he’d gone through was still enough to make Amelia so bothered that she couldn’t hide her reaction.

“It was nothing.” He replied with a gentle smile, determined not to worry her.

“Owen,” Amelia pleaded, getting nearer, “talk to me about it. Please.” Her fingers grabbed the palm of his hand that was still touching her. “You have to talk about it too. You need to.”

Owen took a deep breath and studied her gaze with interest. Amelia was genuinely concerned. He’d lived much worse than what had happened in this last tour, so he didn’t feel like he was unbalanced or too traumatized. But she surely couldn’t imagine that nearly being shot wasn’t the worst he’d been through.

“We were celebrating Christmas one night and this hmm… This rebel group that had been joining forces against the government for a while took advantage of the distraction caused by the holidays and opened fire against our camp, even though we were only in a medical mission.” He told her, watching as Amelia’s eyes enlarged with alarm. She looked so adorable worrying about him that Owen wanted to smile. “It is okay, it was no big deal.” He couldn’t contain a chuckle and leaned over, with every intention to hold her and make her not worry too much about it. She’d had enough on her plate already.

“Wait, what?!” Amelia fired back, splaying a hand on his chest to push him away. “Are you serious?”

Owen noticed how worked up she was and frowned in confusion.

“Are you honestly telling me that while I was worried to death that you had died you were getting aimed at by terrorists and it was no big deal?” Amelia’s voice lost its pitch as she stared at him with incredulity stamped all over her face. “After lecturing me on how I shouldn’t hide from my pain?” She stared at him accusingly. “You could have died! You could have been shot!” She closed her fist and hit the side of his arm. “I seriously want to punch you right now for being so… so…”

Owen waited until she finished her sentence, but Amelia seemed unable to come up with an adjective that described what she was feeling, making him raise his eyebrows in a mock expectation. As anticipated, she didn’t take it very well, scowling with fury.

“God, why do you have to be so frustrating?” Amelia complained, breathing in and out irregularly. “Why can’t you just for once admit to how you feel?” She gazed into his eyes and asked with propriety. “You don’t have to be so tough all the time, you know? You can tell me things. I can take it.”

Owen’s smile slowly faded as he kept staring into her eyes. She was actually mad at him because he had dismissed what she considered to be a great trauma. Owen wasn’t naïve enough to think that this last tour hadn’t accounted to anything traumatic for him, but he also knew that it was far from being the worst he’d been through in a war zone. If he were to be completely honest, operating on Danny Hill while the boy fought for his life had been scarier than anything else, making the gunshot noises outside seem distant and oblivious.

But Amelia sat up straight with her back erect, furiously looking at him while accusing Owen of not letting his guard down. Deep down, he knew it was true. Owen was much more comfortable taking care of the people he loved than letting them be there for him.

And very few people had ever offered to do so, anyway.
In all honesty, less than very few people had ever given Owen the chance to actually feel secure enough to let his guard down and trust them with his vulnerabilities. But only one amidst them all had given him a good enough reason to do so.

And right now she stared at him with an almost pleading look, expecting him to reciprocate her bravery and actually access his emotions.

“The night we got attacked there was this kid who got shot.” Owen was surprised when he heard his own voice. He wasn’t sure what reaction exactly he was expecting, but in Amelia’s eyes he saw sympathy and understanding, so he felt comfortable enough to keep sharing. “He was nineteen years old.”

“God…” Amelia whispered, taking his hand between hers and giving it a reassurance squeeze. “Did you know him?”

“Yeah.” Owen let out a breath and distractedly looked around the room, too touched by the subject to sustain eye contact with her. “His name was Danny.”

“What happened to him?” Amelia asked with interest.

“I operated on him that same night.” Owen narrated the events, recalling the awful moments of tension. “Our supply room and ward area had just been completely destroyed by a bomb but he was bleeding, so I had to do something.” The trauma surgeon exhaled slowly, for the first time getting in contact with the emotions he’d felt at the time. “Danny had a grade four liver laceration and I had to use a Pringle Maneuver to make sure he wouldn’t bleed to death.” Owen scanned his eyes from the TV back to her face. “Our supply tent had also been nearly destroyed and of course in the middle of nowhere we didn’t have a blood bank. I was scared he was going to die in my hands, and all for nothing.”

“Owen, I am so sorry…” Amelia got closer to him and rubbed his forearm affectionately, deeply touched. “What did you do?”

“What I could.” Owen replied with honesty, letting out a heavy sigh. “After six hours and a full sternotomy to access the inferior cava so I could stop the bleeding, I was finally able to reconstruct the vessels.” Owen swallowed hard and nodded his head in denial, rejecting the fear he’d felt that night. “For a moment, after I closed I thought he wasn’t going to pull through…” His eyes got lost but then looked back at Amelia, finding an unknown needed comfort in her understanding gaze. “He was nineteen, Amelia… He took a bullet to warn us we were under attack. And his heroic action saved most of our lives.”

Amelia identified the distress in his face and quickly supported her weight on her knees, unceremoniously wrapping her arms around Owen’s neck to pull him for an embrace.

“Did you feel alone out there?” She asked, hating herself for wanting to know the answer to her next question. “I mean, did you have anyone to keep you company?”
Owen knew by the insecurity in her body language that she didn’t mean someone to talk to, or just some random co-worker. Amelia was actually asking if he had been emotionally or even physically involved with someone during the time he was gone. The realization completely threw him off his game.

“There hasn’t been anyone, Amelia.” He replied with honesty, looking deeply into her eyes. “No one since you.”

Amelia felt shivers running down her spine and sustained the intensity of his gaze. In her heart, she felt relieved at his confession, at the same time she felt stupid for letting the monster of jealousy consume her. But Amelia couldn’t help it. The thought of Owen being with anyone else annoyed her too much because she hated to think his care and his affection might have been shared with another woman who perhaps had been there for him when she couldn’t be.

She noticed how Owen kept staring at her, as if waiting for her to answer the same question he’d just had.

Amelia’s shaky voice confessed, failing to contain the intensity of her confession.

“You are the only one too.”

Her reply numbed him, but as he realized Amelia had spoken in present tense, Owen felt something bursting inside his chest and couldn’t help himself any longer. Leaning over her, this time he didn’t give Amelia any room to resist. But she didn’t seem to want to. Her expression showed how much she welcomed his touch when Owen held her face between his hands, looking deeply into her eyes as he gently laid her on the couch.

Amelia had just admitted that he was the only one who had occupied her thoughts and it was too much for Owen’s already fragile self-control. Giving in to the urge that had been consuming him for quite a while now, he covered her lips with his, feeling his entire body igniting at the familiar and yet mind blowing contact.

Slim, feminine arms wrapped around his neck, pulling Owen closer. He lost himself in the familiar touch of her lips, deepening their kiss as Amelia’s familiar scent numbed his senses. Owen couldn’t begin to explain how much she’d missed that proximity, the warmth of her touch and the affection she reserved for him whenever they were together.

Reaching out for it, his hand slipped under her shirt, urging to feel her closer. Amelia shivered as his open palm slid on the curve of her waist, gently giving her a firm squeeze before finally splaying on her back. When she felt the reaction of his body pressed against her thighs, Amelia took one of her hands to his leg, unceremoniously pulling him closer to her body in an obvious signal she was fully on board with taking things further. The neurosurgeon had already lost her breath, eager to pull off Owen’s shirt when he abruptly pulled apart.

“No…Wait…”

Amelia was caught off guard and simply stared at him in confusion, watching as he stood up and kept his distance, running his fingers through his hair in obvious frustration.

“What’s wrong?” She slowly sat up, trying to make sense as to why she’d been so suddenly rejected.

Owen seemed to struggle but finally made eye contact with her. In his eyes, Amelia could see he was a tortured man.

“Nothing is wrong,” he whispered back at her, exhaling deeply. Owen tried to contain the intensity
of his reactions at the same time he focused on keeping rational so he wouldn’t lose his mind. “The problem is just how right this is…”

Amelia kept staring at him in obvious confusion. Owen seemed to pick up on that because he took a deep breath before finally sitting down next to her.

“We can’t do this, Amelia.” He turned his head and looked into her eyes. “Not like this.”

“Why not?” She asked, hating to feel that insecure. Owen had just made her believe he’d missed her and he’d also just admitted he hadn’t been with anyone else. Amelia had interpreted that as a signal he was still into her, but maybe she’d misunderstood it?

“Because you’re grieving.”

The neurosurgeon frowned slightly. Owen noticed that was not what she expected to hear, so he forced himself to explain.

“You’ve just been through an emotional rollercoaster and you’re still too fragile.” He reached out for her hand and gave it a reassuring squeeze. “You’ve been distant from people and from human contact for all these months and it’s only normal that you’re craving for some intimacy.” He analyzed, noticing as she was following his trail of thoughts. “But, it’s not going to fix anything,” he affirmed with conviction before softening his expression, “and it’s most definitely not going to help both of us get back on track with our lives.”

“What do you mean?” Amelia asked, confused about his last statement.

“You’re not sure this is what you want.” Owen said with conviction. In his mind, he was pretty sure what he wanted. He had always been. Ever since they had started seeing each other, Owen had always been serious about dating her. But Amelia still had some personal things to work on before she could devote herself to a relationship and he had to respect that, for her sake and his. “And before you can work it out and figure out for sure what you want from now on, it’s not fair to me or to yourself that we keep confusing ourselves like this. Sex is only going to make this even more complicated.” He finalized, looking away to control his urges.

“I thought you wanted it too…” Amelia said with a broken voice, clearly thinking he’d rejected her.

Owen lost his patience completely.

“You think I don’t want you?” He breathed out nervously, digging one hand through her mass of dark hair to force her to look into his eyes. Amelia was startled with his reaction, but not intimidated. She sustained his gaze as he nervously kept on staring deeply into her eyes. “You think I haven’t spent every night in that goddamn hell house thinking about you? Wishing I had you?” Owen closed his eyes and sighed with frustration, unable to help himself. Pulling her closer, he fought the urge to crush her lips with his and settled for brushing them on her temple with agonizing gentleness.

“Amelia, for God’s sake I want it more than anything… The problem is, I don’t want a one night stand with you.” Owen pulled apart to once again look into his eyes. He wanted a lifetime. But to go ahead, he had to be sure she was on the same page. “A one night stand is not enough and if I can’t have it all, then there is no point torturing me. Please, understand.”

Amelia didn’t notice she was tearing up. Owen’s eyes were exhaling so much intensity that she was awed by his raw honesty. She understood exactly what he meant. Being with him for the night and then having to figure out her entire life in the morning sounded too complicated. No matter how much Owen tried to deny it or pretend it didn’t matter, he was grieving too. Of course he was just as confused. And she knew he had a point.
“I am sorry.” She apologized for things not being as easy as she wished them to be. “I know you deserve better than all of this.”

Owen tilted his head in compassion. Amelia couldn’t seriously think she wasn’t worthy of him.

“So do you.” He affirmed with conviction. “You deserve better than going through all of this. You deserve better than not feeling good enough.” Owen kissed her forehead, hoping she believed his words. “I hope you know how much you deserve to be loved…” He confessed, thinking about the promise he’d made to Danny and not yet kept. “And maybe one day you will allow yourself to be loved.”

Amelia felt a familiar constriction on her throat at the sound of his sweet words. Somehow, Owen seemed to always know where to go to touch her the deepest.

“And if that day ever comes, you have to know one thing.” He used his index finger to gently tip her chin up, forcing the neurosurgeon to look into his eyes. “Whenever you’re ready, I am here.” Owen smiled gently, containing his overwhelming emotions. “And I will never say no to you.”

Amelia felt her heart fluttering at the meaning of his words. She knew he meant he would never reject her physical advances, but that was not all to it. Owen was admitting he wouldn’t reject loving her and she felt profoundly touched by his loyalty to protect both of their feelings when he could have easily given in to temptation.

Wrapping her arms around his torso, Amelia buried her face in his chest, feeling strong arms surround her in response.

“I know we shouldn’t go there,” her voice sounded muffled through the barrier of his shirt. “But can we please just give ourselves one night?” Amelia looked up to meet his expectant eyes. “I am not talking about sex, I am talking about you and me, just… Just staying here and going to bed without worrying about anything.” Her voice faltered. “Just like old times.” She smiled sheepishly, embarrassed about her proposal. “Maybe we can forget that my family is gone, or that you just came back from war or that… I don’t know… That everything is a mess and we don’t know what’s going to happen next.” Amelia listed, anxiously. “And maybe… maybe just give ourselves this night to take a break from everything?” She saw Owen’s eyes sparkling after hearing her proposal. “I know in the morning all the issues are still going to be there, but maybe tonight they don’t have to be here.” She looked around the room, eager to spend some time with his company. There was no one else in the world Amelia would rather be with and she wanted to enjoy that evening to the fullest. “Just be here.” She nearly begged, out of words to convince him further and then remembered of what he’d replied when earlier that evening she’d asked what he wanted to do “Be with me.”

Owen took a deep breath and exhaled slowly at the same time he took both his hands to her face and gently cupped her cheeks.

“I’d love that.” He smiled contagiously at her. Owen needed that break as much as she did and he wasted no time in letting her know it. “I haven’t had a good night of sleep in months.” He confessed, recalling the makeshift beds in the desert.

Amelia thought back about the past nine months in her life. She couldn’t remember one night in which she’d slept peacefully. Every day, she just felt more tired. But it was like her mind just wouldn’t shut down and she’d figure it was more productive to simply avoid sleep altogether than to lie awake in bed at night, staring at the ceiling while the worst thoughts ran through her head.

And then as Owen’s hand joined hers and they calmly went upstairs, she figured that even if she spent the entire evening awake, it would still be an upgrade just for having his company.
Once in her bedroom, Owen couldn’t help drawing some parallels. During the intense few weeks he had been with Amelia, they had spent nearly every night in his trailer, with the exception of the times one of them had to stay at the hospital or were engaged in something else. He’d been to Amelia’s room a few times before, but they’d never been together on her bed.

The surroundings were exactly like Owen remembered, except the room looked like it hadn’t been used in a while. The bed was made and everything was neatly in its place, which he knew wasn’t very much like Amelia.

“You’ve been cleaning.” He pointed out with an amused smile.

Amelia looked at him, blushing.

“Sometimes, when Richard kicked me out of the hospital for being there too long and I didn’t have anything to do, I’d tidy up my bedroom.”

She tried to make it sound unimportant but Owen could easily imagine Amelia engaged in an intense physical activity like heavy house cleaning just to clear her mind off disturbing thoughts.

“You must be exhausted.” She commented after seconds of silence. Owen was still looking around and Amelia felt her stomach churning once her eyes saw the vacant spot on the wall where a painting had once been. She followed his gaze and realized he’d just noticed it too, but was too polite to ask anything. “I… I accidentally broke it.” Amelia explained, feeling like somehow she owed him an explanation. After all, the object had been a present from him.

“It was too ugly, anyway.” Owen looked at her with a forced smile but Amelia could see his eyes were slightly clouded by something that resembled sadness. She felt guilty to remember she had angrily thrown the painting on a wall during a fit of rage.

Amelia felt like she should say something but she couldn’t quite figure out what. So she settled for looking at him while Owen pulled the covers to her bed. The neurosurgeon felt like an awkward atmosphere was forming so she let him do the task while going to one corner of the room looking for a comfortable shirt.

Owen had just finished arranging the pillows on the bed when he turned his head to ask Amelia if the temperature of the room was okay. But he wasn’t prepared for what he found instead.

With her back turned to him, Amelia had just finished taking off her top, unintentionally exposing to him the gracious curves of her body. Owen didn’t realize he held his breath at the very moment his eyes got a hold of her, or how his heart rate accelerated as he studied the familiar shape of her feminine waist.

Her skin looked as flawless as Owen remembered it to be, and he wanted more than anything to go to her, feel her warmth under his touch and bury his face on her neck, exploring every bit of her body. Her delicate round shoulders rotated in a gracious movement as she reached out for a piece of clothing inside a drawer. He hadn’t meant to look, but now that he was watching her, Owen couldn’t get himself to stop staring. The surgeon wondered if, even months later, being with her would still be as delightful as he remembered it to be.

And once Owen spotted the soft fabric of an old shirt swiftly hiding her tiny figure, he realized how dumb he must have been to ask himself a question to which the answer was very obvious.

Of course Amelia was as adorable as he remembered. And it physically hurt him that he couldn’t
Feeling frustration building up in his stomach, Owen forced himself to divert his gaze and got inside the covers, taking a deep breath to calm his racing heart. Soon after, Amelia asked if she could turn off the lights and when he nodded affirmatively in response, the neurosurgeon engulfed the room in total darkness, sneakily joining him in bed seconds after.

Owen felt the discreet movement on the opposite side of the mattress as she silently got beneath the covers. He desperately wanted to touch her, but had no idea if he should. Amelia had invited him there, but they’d made the promise not to cross any lines. And now Owen was starting to regret his decision of agreeing to spend the night there, because it felt like absolute torture to lie down next to her without touching or even speaking.

It was obvious Amelia was just as restless because she wouldn’t stop moving, apparently trying to get comfortable. But only when she finally turned to face him and her voice interrupted the silence, Owen figured out she was actually struggling with something.

“I am so sorry…” She cried with a broken voice, wrapping one arm around his chest at the same time she buried her face on his neck, like a kid who was too embarrassed after being caught. Owen was just about to ask what was happening when her muffled voice explained, “I didn’t accidentally break the cow… I threw it against the wall… I didn’t mean to…” Her voice faltered and Amelia didn’t realize she wasn’t making any sense, since she had consciously done it. Owen immediately held her closer to him, wondering why she seemed so affected and upset. “I didn’t want it to break and now it’s completely destroyed and…”

“Shh….” Owen kissed the top of her head to interrupt her, hating to see how distressed she was. Amelia’s delicate body was nearly shaking next to his and he wanted more than anything to end her suffering. But he still hadn’t made complete sense of the situation and in order to know what was going on, Owen needed to find out what had really happened. “Why did you throw it? What happened?” He asked patiently.

“I was mad at you.” Amelia sheepishly confessed, still unable to lift her eyes from the crook of his neck, too mortified at her childish reaction.

Owen couldn’t contain a chuckle as he gently lifted his upper body, directly forcing her to bring up her eyes to meet his gaze.

“You were mad at me?” He frowned, distinguishing her eyes even in nearly total darkness. How could she be mad at him if he had just returned home that same day?

“Because I thought you’d died.” Amelia hysterically admitted, hearing his fit of laughter following her irreverent confession.

Owen wrapped both his arms around her and brought her body closer to his. He just couldn’t believe how amazing that woman was. Amelia was so spontaneous and honest that it completely won him over. After kissing her forehead, he explained with a gentle tone.

“I plan to live for many more years, Amelia.” Owen struck her hair with one hand, while the other aimlessly played with her fingers on his chest. He wanted to add that he hoped to do it by her side, but perhaps that night wasn’t the best moment to do that. “I am not leaving you anymore. I promise.”

Amelia heard the comforting sound of his words, feeling her body and mind relaxing with the trustworthy words he’d spoken. It felt amazing to be in the security of his arms, because in that moment, Amelia was sure Owen would never let anything bad happen to her on his watch.
“I am so sorry I broke our painting.”

Her voice was nearly a whisper, but it was the way she claimed they shared possession of the object that made Owen’s heart sink in his chest.

“I’ll buy you another.” He stated, kissing her forehead. He would buy her the world if it meant seeing her smile again. “You can choose one that’s even uglier than the first.”

Amelia chuckled with lighthearted contentment, relaxing completely. She had just opened her mouth to reply, but exhaustion was winning the battle against her reason. It had been months since she had properly slept through the night. It would usually take her hours to fall asleep after going to bed.

And yet now, for some reason, being inside Owen’s embrace and hearing his reassuring words worked like magic to soothe her into calmly dozing off.

The sound of Amelia’s laughter was the last thing Owen focused on before the promise he’d made to Danny Hill came to mind. Owen knew that he had to keep it, because he’d given his word. And even though the sentiment was true, the trauma surgeon wasn’t sure if Amelia would be prepared to hear it.

But Owen also knew that if he kept overthinking, he wouldn’t get to do it, which would ultimately add more guilt and anxiety to his already restless heart. Taking a deep breath, he decided to gather up the courage and finally say it, before he missed the opportunity to do so.

“Amelia…” His voice sounded hoarse when Owen gently caressed her hair, unsuccessfully looking down in search of her face in the darkness of the room. “I love you.”

He held his breath in response, startled that the lack of response from her could mean she was rejecting his confession.

But her body language didn’t confirm Owen’s suspicion. She was still very much relaxed, leaning against him with an arm wrapped around his chest and the side of her face comfortably lying on his shoulder inside his embrace.

Owen stretched his neck looking for eyes, and it was only when he noticed they were closed that he realized Amelia had already been sleeping when he’d spoken the words. Lying against the soft pillow, the trauma surgeon let out a heavy sigh of relief to see she hadn’t freaked out like he feared she might have.

Owen still blinked a couple of times as he stared at the ceiling, thinking about how life had a funny way of doing things. He’d kept his promise, but Amelia hadn’t been able to hear it. Maybe they just weren’t meant to be. Maybe that one night was all he was ever going to get before they each went their own way. As much as it hurt, it was better to accept that.

But as Owen closed his eyes, finally joining Amelia in a deep sleep, he failed to see that the happy smile lingering on her face after his confession proved the complete opposite.
Part Twenty Four

Chapter Summary

So guys, this chapter pretty much wraps season 11 for Omelia. Thank you all for the amazing ride and for sticking with me all the way to the end. You guys are awesome. I have to add, though, The Journey isn’t fully finalized. I am still going to write the chapters pertaining season 12. For now, I am just taking a break but I plan to come back and write the “second season” for this story.

Timeline for Part 24:

It picks up exactly after the last scene of part 23. Owen and Amelia have spent the night together after he returns home and she keeps her sobriety. We will go through the events of 11x23 and 11x24 (and a little beyond that lol). I hope you all enjoy this last installment. Let’s go!

The Journey – Part Twenty-Four

Amelia woke up with her back slightly aching, as if she’d just spent too much time lying down in the same position.

Turning her head partially to the right, a coy smile crept on her lips as she slowly recalled the events of the previous evening. Despite the soreness in her muscles, this had actually been the first night in a really long time when she’d managed to get such deep, quality sleep. But happiness quickly faded from her face when she noticed she was alone in bed.

The sheets still felt warm beside her, so Amelia imagined Owen must not have left that long before. She was still trying to process his unexpected absence when an uncommon noise coming from the bottom floor caught her attention. Swiftly getting out of bed, the neurosurgeon wrapped herself in a comfortable sweatshirt and followed the lead of the sonorous muffled clacks. Once at the top of the stairs, Amelia rubbed her eyes to make sure she was getting a clear vision of the scene in the kitchen.

With his back turned to her, Owen leaned against the wooden cabinets opposite to the sink, apparently very caught up in whatever task he was performing that required the use of a hammer.

But Amelia wasn’t that much interested in what it was that Owen was fixing. Instead, her eyes were busy enough studying the outlines of his strong back and shoulders that his casual white shirt couldn’t hide.

As Owen moved his arms to apparently hook back in the defective door of one of the kitchen cabinets, Amelia couldn’t help noticing how his muscles flexed with the slightest movement. She knew the furniture of the house was mostly made of thick wood and therefore probably weighed a lot. But the way Owen would hold the door suspended in place with one hand while skillfully nailing it back with the other suddenly made Amelia think that not only did he repeatedly prove with his actions and decisions that he was a real man, sometimes when Owen engaged in physical labor like that she was reminded of how raw and masculine he could be.

And how that turned her on.
Swallowing hard, Amelia decided it was time to make her presence noted.

“What are you doing?” She asked with a sweet tone, raising one eyebrow in question to hide her look of appreciation.

At the sound of her words, Owen immediately drew his attention to her. She noticed how his cheeks pinked up as if he’d just been busted. The thought made her smile.

“I was just making us coffee.” Owen explained, quickly finishing hitting the last nail and then finally opening and closing the cabinet door, satisfied to see the hinge now worked perfectly well.

“I see,” Amelia smiled lazily at him, taking a seat at one of the stools near the counter at the same time Owen turned his back to her and devoted his attention back to the coffee maker. “How long have you been up? You could have woken me.”

Owen turned on the machine and in a matter of seconds, a delicious smell of fresh coffee delighted them both. Truth was, he had gotten out of bed just nearly one hour before and decided to prepare breakfast for them. But as he’d been searching through the cabinets for a pair of mugs, he noticed how the hinges of one of the doors were dangerously loose, putting whoever might open the cabinet at risk for being hit on the head if it ever dislodged completely.

Without hesitation, Owen decided to fix it while Amelia still slept. She wouldn’t even need to know about it, because the trauma surgeon planned to get it over with in just a few minutes. But of course her timing was as precise as always and she’d caught him minutes after Owen had started the task.

“I woke up not too long ago.” He finally replied to her question, leaning on the opposite side of the counter facing her. “And I didn’t wake you up because you didn’t move a finger nearly the whole night. I don’t remember one single time when you didn’t hog the covers or accidentally punched me in our sleep. So I thought it was obvious you could use the rest.”

Amelia hid her shy smile behind the coffee mug and got busy drinking a sip of the steamy hot mug because she didn’t have an answer for that. It was impressive how Owen could still awe her. She didn’t know what touched her the most: The fact that he had stepped up to fix something at her house, the way he had considerately noticed how tired she was or how he’d decided to make her breakfast in the morning.

But maybe it was the mention of the many nights they’d spent in each other’s arms before.

The memories filled Amelia with longing and nostalgia and she suddenly felt a fit of anxiety. She simply had no idea where to go from there. Owen was just back from the army and she had finally started picking up her pieces after her brother’s death. And at the same time Amelia knew she was in no place to commit to anyone at the moment, it didn’t mean she wanted Owen out of her life.

“Don’t worry.” He stated calmly, looking deeply into her eyes. “You don’t have to make anything out of that.”

Amelia held her breath for a moment, taken aback by the intensity of his words. She felt exposed and vulnerable, as if by just looking at her Owen had been capable of breaking down her defenses and reading her mind. At the same time it alarmed her, Amelia also felt strangely… safe.

“You’re not going to the hospital today, are you?” She asked him carefully. Owen had just been back from long months of back to back work. Not only had it consumed physically, but probably mentally as well. To go from that to instantly resuming his position as chief of surgery at Grey Sloan without a moment’s rest certainly wouldn’t do him well.
“No, not yet.” Owen replied with his usual serenity. “There are a few things I want to get to in the trailer and then I’m probably in need of some time to clear my head as well.” He added with good sense. As much as Owen looked forward to operating inside an actual OR and not a makeshift tent in the desert, he could also use some time off to actually rest after the excruciating journey.

“You mean, more loose screws to fix?” Amelia’s dimples danced on her cheek when she asked the question, knowing it was both literal and metaphorical.

“Something like that.” Owen smiled back, fascinated by how easily adorable she was.

Amelia kept looking into his eyes, trying to think of what to say so they could prolong the moment. But invariably, their interaction would come to an end, and she had this awful feeling they had just gotten there.

“So, I guess the one night is over.” She stated with a sad smile. Amelia didn’t want to let go but she knew they should. Like she’d stated the evening before when she proposed they took a break from everything, in the morning, the issues would still be there.

And both of them needed to deal with their own baggage in order to figure things out.

“You know where to find me if you need me.” Owen gently placed his empty mug on the sink counter and went around it, standing just a few feet away from her.

Amelia noticed the expectant way in which he looked at her and unconsciously held her breath.

“The same goes to you.” She affirmed. Owen was usually a solid rock and she had to admit she’d gone to him a lot more often than he’d needed her. At least that she knew of. But only because she had a lot of stuff going on at the moment it didn’t mean that she would be any less available if he needed her there. Amelia cared about him and he had to know he could count on her too.

“Well… it is goodbye, then.” Amelia said awkwardly. Owen was standing just within her reach and she desperately wanted to feel the warmth of his embrace and lock herself inside of it. The hell, she wanted to suggest that they spend the entire day together, doing nothing. But now it was time to do the adult thing, and that meant taking the first step to rebuild her life.

The previous night, she’d gone home thinking that once again she would hit rock bottom. But it hadn’t been the case, and that motivated Amelia to grasp that new chance with everything she got. She needed to prioritize her well-being and that meant guarding her heart against any possible heartbreak. Especially one she wasn’t sure she could survive.

Before the neurosurgeon could process anything else, Owen took the initiative. She felt his hand reaching out for her face and gently striking her cheek as he seemed to struggle with his own feelings too.

“Take care, alright?” He nearly whispered, reluctant to let go. Amelia closed her eyes, preparing herself for the moment when he’d kiss her. “I want to see you happy.”

His hoarse voice was the last thing she became aware of as Owen abruptly pulled apart and left without saying another word.

Amelia stayed immersed in the silence of the room for long minutes, once again trying to make sense of something that no logic in the world could explain. Owen’s words from the previous night still echoed in her mind, but mostly, her heart still ached with the sad realization that they couldn’t be together now. And it was no consolation to know that despite being the best, this one decision definitely wasn’t the easiest.
Over the following week, Owen was caught by surprise with the news of Meredith’s return to Seattle. After quickly catching up with her at the house while Amelia was at work, the trauma surgeon found out that Meredith had had a child while she was gone, and during one particularly warm day, he got to meet baby Ellis and see both Zola and Bailey after a nearly one-year absence.

Owen could only imagine how that would add anxiety and more confusion to Amelia’s already messy feelings. He knew she would be thrilled to see the kids again but probably torn about seeing her sister in law, especially after the inconsiderate way Meredith had unplugged her brother and then left without looking back or at least informing Amelia of her departure.

During the next days, Owen kept busy working on his trailer and going on a solo fishing trip. He’d found out that being close to nature soothed him, and the handwork at home helped not only to clear his head but also made him exhausted enough to sleep very well at night.

On a Monday about two weeks after his return to Seattle, Owen went back to work. He spent most of his morning catching up with Richard. Throughout most of those few hours, the trauma surgeon cemented an idea that had been growing on him for the past week.

Hearing Richard talk about budget meetings and department issues only made him realize he didn’t miss any of that. Sure, it had been a challenge once, but the job felt like it was already deep in his past, finalized with a sense of closure. Owen didn’t want to go back to spending more than half his work hours engaged in bureaucracy. He still wanted to operate, of course, and to see and treat patients. But he also wanted more hours to dedicate to himself and his personal life. Even if he destined those to carpentry or fishing in the lake.

What he really wanted though was to devote more of his free time to the company of a certain petite brunette with the most gorgeous smile. Amelia’s eyes haunted him every night in his dreams and Owen longed to be able to touch her. But during the day, in the few times he’d occasionally seen her, she was usually surrounded by colleagues or awestruck residents who wanted to learn from her just as much as she wanted to teach them. He hadn’t yet been alone with Amelia ever since the morning he’d left her at the house, but they’d still bump into each other every now and then. And in all of those times, they had exchanged smiles but hadn’t really had a chance to talk. Owen wasn’t spending a lot of time at the hospital, but he’d noticed Amelia had cut back on her insane hours too. He supposed she probably spent the majority of her free time with her nieces and nephew, aware of how happy they made her.

And because Owen had just been back, he’d decided with Richard that the older surgeon should wrap all unfinished business before handing back the position, which was why Webber was still in charge of receiving the new interns, even after Owen’s return. On the morning of their arrival, Owen sat in an OR gallery beside many of his colleagues, most of whom had been taught by Richard and listened to that same speech years before.

While the experienced surgeons welcome the young doctors on the bottom floor, Owen’s gaze invariably traveled to the row above. When Amelia’s eyes met his, she quickly looked away at the same the neurosurgeon slightly blushed, making Owen wonder what she’d been thinking about. He had to admit it was a bit discouraging that Amelia didn’t seem to want to talk to him, but he quickly realized that was not the case when, moments after the speech was over and people had scattered around, she caught up with him in the corridor.

“Hey,” Amelia hurriedly dodged one of the nurses and went in Owen’s direction. “I haven’t seen you in a while. You look tanned.” She smiled, obviously teasing him.
“You mean burnt.” Owen reciprocated her mischievous smile. He’d been out by the lake for a few hours in the past week, which explained his current skin tone. “How’ve you been?”

“Good.” Amelia nodded with her head, walking beside him in the direction of the staircase that accessed the hospital’s entrance. “I’ve been seeing the kids a lot, so it’s been better. Loud.” She chuckled as she added the latest word.

“I suppose you’re enjoying it, then.” Owen replied casually, smirking to let her know he was teasing her too. Amelia had never been too quiet and they both acknowledged it.

“Yeah, a lot.” Amelia commented with lighthearted humor as they went down the stairs. She was just about to ask him what he’d been up to when they were suddenly interrupted by Arizona Robbins.

“How much longer is Richard going to be interim chief? Because I want to expand my department, and he has a kind of different approach to the budget. So, when are you coming back?” Arizona sounded surprised.

“Uh, I am not.” Owen thought with resignation. There was the part he hadn’t missed at all. “The board is going to appoint a new chief.” Owen informed them, ready to resume his walk to the ER.

“We are? When?” Arizona sounded surprised.

“Why?” Amelia asked at the same time.

“Yeah, why?” Arizona showed her disapproval, looking at him with curiosity whereas in Amelia’s eyes Owen noticed a deeper interest in his answer.

“Because I’ve been chief long enough.” He affirmed, on purpose not explaining much. Owen didn’t have a thorough answer to give. All he knew was that he just couldn’t envision himself locked in an office for ten hours straight again. “And it’s time for something else,” he added mysteriously, nodding his head affirmatively before finally going his way.

Because he turned around, Owen missed the spot of fascination in Amelia’s eye, but she didn’t have enough time to ponder about his decision either. A collapsed tunnel had taken the lives of many people, and Amelia was one of the surgeons sent out to the field to assess injured patients.

Being in an accident site really hit too close to home to Amelia, but as if the situation wasn’t stressful enough, she’d had to work beside her sister in law, which only brought up more memories of her brother. Amelia saw a lot of patients that day, but there was one in particular that really messed with her emotions. Maggie, April and Meredith had all been beside her, trying to help Keith Gardner in any way that they could, but at some point, the other surgeons decided there was nothing else they could do for him and gave up when they felt like all options had been explored.

Amelia was taken over by an infuriating sensation of helplessness. When Meredith agreed with the others that the patient had no chance and they’d made the right call, Amelia couldn’t keep her feelings to herself any longer. Her passive-aggressive remarks were noticed by her sister in law and in that moment, Amelia saw the opportunity to finally confront the woman on issues that were long overdue.

For starters, she showed her disapproval but questioning Meredith on how she made the decisions to simply give up on situations and decide that someone no longer stood a chance. It was clear in her speech that she didn’t mean Keith Gardner, but Derek Shepherd. Meredith obviously picked up on it,
but she was saved from having to answer by the arrival of an eager intern who notified Amelia she was needed on a procedure.

It wasn’t until later that Amelia was able to get everything off her chest. By confronting Meredith in a supply closet, the neurosurgeon finally let her feelings come to surface. Her tears had healing powers, and after confessing to Meredith how much it’d hurt that she hadn’t even been informed of her brother’s conditions before he was mercilessly unplugged, Amelia was at last able to think about the situation without a suffocating feeling inside her heart. That conversation had been long overdue and, after finally confessing how she felt, Amelia knew it still hurt. But at least now she could deal with her pain and finally move on.

Amelia had had quite some time to ponder about her personal life too, and she’d ultimately decided that it was better to remain single for a while. Her feelings for Owen still kept her up at night sometimes, leading her to confess to Callie during surgery that it was better not to date anyone they worked with. And from that moment on, Amelia tried really hard to believe her own words.

Taking another look at the clock, Amelia gave up calculating the number of hours she’d been up for. During the last months, she pulled shift after shift, but it was staying up with a baby and two young kids in the house that really worn her out. The neurosurgeon was busy catching up with charts when she noticed Owen arriving and standing by her side on the nurses’ station.

“He’s still alive?” She asked, curious about the boyfriend of the patient she’d just operated on.

“For now. And the girlfriend?”


“Excellent work.” Owen complimented her with a grin and held her gaze a moment longer until Amelia finally broke eye contact.

He’d just focused back on the document at his hand when her voice drew his attention again.

“Meredith told you she’s selling the house?”

“What, her house?”

Amelia noticed the astonishment in his voice and she wasn’t surprised. If Meredith had failed to properly inform her, who actually lived at the house, it was no wonder she hadn’t bothered to tell Owen either. And he had the right to know. After all, he lived in the property and would be affected by the move too.

“Yeah. It was news to me too.” She confessed to him.

“Where are you gonna go?” Owen frowned, unable to pay attention to his chart any longer. He watched as Amelia kept typing on her tablet.

“I’ll find something.” Amelia replied unaffectedly. She liked the house but it was filled with too many memories of her brother. Meredith’s decision to sell it had only reminded Amelia that she should have gotten her own place much sooner. But she’d always hated living alone. “Maybe she will let you keep the trailer.” Amelia added, looking at him with expectant mockery.

“Well, maybe I should just get a house that doesn’t get parking tickets.” Owen replied in the same lighthearted tone.
“Come on.” Amelia embarked on the playfulness. “You won’t miss being able to reach your toaster from your toilet?”

Owen wanted to give her a witty answer back but all he could do was chuckle. He loved seeing her happy and smiling.

“I might.” He settled for saying, thinking back about the many times she’d teasingly made fun of his trailer.

Amelia was assaulted by the same memories. Flashes of happy moments inside his place ran through her head so she forced herself to think about her patient, unsuccessfully.

“I really want this to work.”

The thought slipped her mind before she could hold it.

“Yeah?”

Amelia noticed the expectancy in Owen’s eyes and realized she’d probably confused him with her blunt confession.

“This family. All three of them.” She made up a good explanation.

“Right. Right.” Owen shook his head, hiding his consternation.

“What did you think I meant?” Amelia straightforwardly asked, consciously testing him. She was taking one day at a time now, but already felt a lot more in charge of her own life. Soon enough, she’d have to move out of the house and probably face loneliness again. And even though Amelia knew she wasn’t in the place to give Owen what he deserved in terms of a committed relationship, it didn’t mean she desired it any less.

So to think that he could probably feel still as drawn to her as she felt to him really touched her.

“Oh, nothing, no.” Owen replied, but he tried so hard to sound casual that Amelia picked up on his discomfort. It was clear he was lying. “That. Yeah. Me too.”

During the rest of the day, Amelia kept trying to process the meaning of his evasive reply. But her emotions were soon to be shaken up again when Meredith surprisingly gave her a cell phone containing Derek’s last voice mail message.

Her sister in law’s advice that Amelia should listen to it alone startled her. She knew the one single message it contained was from her brother and the perspective of listening to his voice again both scared and excited her.

She missed Derek deeply. Much more than words could ever explain. Despite all their differences and their fights, she’d always known that at the end of the day, her big brother would be there when it mattered. He was someone she could count on. Amelia had grown up without a father, but she’d always had Derek to lean on. Now he was gone too.

And Amelia had no idea if she was ready to finally, finally acknowledge that.

The next time Amelia was able to smile after that was at Richard and Catherine’s wedding. Somehow, amidst the loss and heartbreak everyone had gone through the past year, the goods things
still found a way to crawl out and contaminate their spirits. Amelia was grateful for that.

During the ceremony, Owen sat on the row behind hers. While the sermon was conducted, he realized he was having a hard time focusing on the couple at the altar. It was much more interesting to study the profile of the woman in the black and white dress sitting a few feet in front of him.

Once the ceremony was over, everyone went back to Meredith’s for the reception. Owen had noticed that, despite seemingly doing better, Amelia still had a shadow of sadness behind her eyes. Whenever she looked at him smiling and Owen identified it, he wanted to go to her and hold her in arms to protect her from all harm in the world.

Being a trauma surgeon, Owen saw people suffering everyday. It was never easy or fun, of course. He knew he had good people skills and a lot of empathy. The surgeon had lost count of the many times he’d have to deliver bad news to family members, or even to patients themselves and still, being hard as it was, it didn’t make him lose his sleep at night.

But to see Amelia sad… That devastated him. It broke his heart. Owen couldn’t even explain why. But with her, it was different.

She was different.

Throughout the party, she seemed to be having a good time but her eyes weren’t sparkling with contentment and mirth like he’d seen many times. Her liveliness, high spirits and general good attitude with the world had once captivated Owen to the point of making him fall madly in love with her. He knew she was still that same person, but her bubbly personality was now overshadowed by a load of emotions she hadn’t so far fully processed but really needed to.

“Hey, Owen, can you do me a favor?” Meredith distractedly asked him. “I don’t know where my keys are, could you go get the spare set so I can open the backdoors to the terrace? It’s getting crowded here and we need more space.”

“Sure.” Owen replied with practicality. “Where are they?”

“Well, if no one took them while I was gone there should be an extra set in the second drawer of my nightstand.”

Owen nodded affirmatively and went upstairs, hoping to be done with the task as soon as possible. Meredith was hosting the reception for the newlyweds and the atmosphere at the party was generally good. The trauma surgeon had been spending a lot of time alone lately and he liked it. But sometimes, Owen missed social events like those.

He opened the door in a hurry, determined to get the keys but it caught him off guard to find out the bedroom wasn’t empty as he’d initially assumed.

Instead, Amelia sat down by the bench on the foot of the bed and she looked like she was struggling with something.

“I’m sorry, I was just…” Owen belatedly noticed she looked on the verge of tears. “Are you all right?”

“I was just about to listen to a message.” Amelia explained, fighting her emotions. She seemed embarrassed and tried to disguise it with a smile. “But I can’t seem to bring myself to hit play.” She confessed and looked deeply into Owen’s eyes, giving up trying to hide her emotions from him.

It had never worked, anyway.
Owen acknowledged the situation and closed the door behind him, gently sitting next to her afterwards. It was obvious something was up.

During most of the afternoon and evening, Amelia had walked around with the cell phone in her pocket, avoiding making the decision to listen to it for as long as she could. But then, once back to the house, she couldn’t help thinking of Derek. The way the place was filled with people, laughter and happiness made her heart ache for her brother, because she knew he would have loved to be there.

Owen didn’t need to ask why she couldn’t hit play. He recognized Meredith’s old phone in Amelia’s hand and figured it probably had something to do with his late friend. He waited for her to say something, but since she seemed to be struggling so much, Owen decided to end her agony.

Without thinking twice about it, the trauma surgeon reached out and pressed the play button. Derek’s voice resonated in the room and her heartfelt reaction didn’t surprise Owen.

He was just about to leave and give her privacy to process the memories of her brother when Amelia’s hand grasped him, firmly holding him in place. Owen understood that was Amelia’s way of asking him to stay and he didn’t hesitate to do so.

When the message was finally over, Amelia was completely in tears. But she didn’t seem sad. In fact, she seemed relieved.

Owen was happy for her that she seemed to finally be able to cope with her brother’s death in a healthy way. Her response was genuine. Amelia wasn’t fighting the tears anymore. Instead, she was crying them. And by allowing her pain to be processed, she was finally moving on with her loss.

“You okay?” He sheepishly asked after seeing her wipe her eyes.

“Yes.” Amelia nodded affirmatively. Among her tears, a smile finally showed. “Yes.” She repeated, looking Owen in the eyes. “I am.”

He realized the amazing breakthrough Amelia had just had. She had also just noticed she was finally in a better place and seeing her genuinely smile made Owen happier than he’d felt all night.

The surgeon was just processing that when a small, warm hand cupped his cheek as Amelia shifted closer. He frowned in response, surprised by her move but didn’t have a lot of time to think it through because a second hand rubbed the other side of his face, pulling him nearer. Silver blue eyes stared deeply into his without saying a word before she finally leaned in.

Amelia covered his lips with hers, feeling the familiar sensation on her stomach whenever she touched him. Almost automatically, Owen’s hands circled her waist, pulling her closer. The way he warmly welcomed her kiss encouraged Amelia, making her move up and support her body on the bench on one knee to seize control of the kiss.

Her arms wrapped themselves around his neck as her lips forced his open, deepening their kiss at the same time she put both feet on the ground, standing between his knees.

When they finally pulled apart, Owen looked deeply into her eyes, trying to ignore the amazing sensation she was causing by lazily caressing the hair on the back of his head.

“What was that for?” He asked, confused but completely pleased.

“For being the man you are.” Amelia replied with no hesitation. She smiled as she closed her eyes
and touched her forehead to his, taking a deep breath before adding. “For being here for me.”

“I’ll always be here for you.” Owen said with confidence.

Amelia pulled apart and opened her eyes. Owen saw the flicker of playfulness in them and his face was a telltale of how much he approved the way she’d used to thank him.

“I should give this back to Meredith.” She said with a mix of awkwardness and flirtation, gently stepping out of his reach.

“You probably should.” Owen returned her flirtatious smile, confused but embarking on the situation.

The last thing he saw was the way Amelia gently bit her lower lip and looked at him from head to toe before sneakily leaving the bedroom.

Damn it, Owen cursed with a heavy sigh. Just when he’d thought he was finally starting to accept their physical distance Amelia went and pulled a stunt like that. But he should have figured. She was unpredictable, untamable… and absolutely adorable.

Owen had no idea what the future reserved for them but when he picked up the keys in the drawer Meredith had mentioned, he tried to decide what was more latent at the moment: the throbbing rush of blood to this lower abdomen after her kiss or the way his heart was racing after realizing Amelia was finally her own person again.

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It was past one am when the last guests finally left the wedding reception. Owen stayed to help clean up the house, but he didn’t see much of Amelia because she had taken on the task of putting the kids to bed.

On the following week, Meredith, Amelia and the kids would finally have to leave the house. Meredith had put it to sale and Owen knew he probably would have to get his own apartment soon too.

It was a shame, he thought, while taking a small cooler to the deck outside his trailer on a Sunday evening. The sun was just starting to set in the horizon. That had been a particular warm day for Seattle, and he didn’t want it to be over. Being outside in the woods or by the lake enjoying the fresh air was definitely what Owen would miss the most in case he indeed have to move to the city so he settled for a final evening of sitting by his deck with a beer in his hand, silently enjoying the surroundings.

It wasn’t until minutes after, when the sun had already fully set, that he noticed a bright light coming through one of the living room windows of Meredith’s house. In a flash of a second, Zola came running through and moments after, Owen spotted Bailey doing the same.

The trauma surgeon smiled to himself, anticipating what was going to happen next. To his delighted surprise, Owen proved to be right in his assumption when he saw Amelia walking forth with baby Ellis on her arms.

Owen took a long sip of his beer, not quite believing it.

Over a year before, he’d sat outside on that same deck with the same drink on his hand, for the first time laying eyes on the woman he’d grown to love over the following months. Back then, Owen had been experiencing a painful break up with the ideals he thought to have build for his failed marriage.
It had been hard to let go of his dreams, but after realizing he couldn’t keep living that unhealthy lifestyle any longer, Owen had divorced his ex-wife and ultimately been in peace with her parting ways.

On the same night he’d sat down to carefully process all of that and ease his pain with a few drinks, Amelia had walked into his life.

And she’d remained in it like she belonged there all along.

At the time, Owen had had no idea who she was, so he’d simply mistaken her for a babysitter. The way she would affectionately interact with the kids had warmed his heart. Back then Bailey was still a baby, and Ellis wasn’t even an idea yet. But now that one more kid had been thrown to the mix, he could firsthand witness how Amelia’s love and affection for them seemed to have multiplied.

On a chilly night months before, Owen’s soul had been just as cold as the autumn wind. But now, on that peaceful summer evening, the warmth in his heart made him feel whole. And it was Amelia the main responsible for that.

Owen kept staring at her, unable to wipe the smile off his face. Barefoot and wearing light blue shorts, the young neurosurgeon tried juggling caring for Ellis at the same time she gave attention to Zola and Bailey. Owen tilted his head to the side, carefully inspecting her shapely legs, slim waist and gorgeous pale skin.

The first time he’d seen her, he was guilty to have sexually desired the woman after just looking at Amelia. Now, months later, he was absolutely sure he wanted her even more. So much had happened between those two different nights that it was hard not to put things into perspective.

Every day, something unexpected could happen. Some people died, some people left, others were born. Owen noticed the short strands of blonde hair on top of Ellis’s head as Amelia brought the baby close to her face and breathed her in. If he could, he would keep that image forever in his head.

And that was when started to allow himself to picture Amelia doing the exact same thing, but to his baby instead.

She was so caring, so warm and loving that he’d had no doubt she would make a great mother. Just like him, Amelia was familiar with loss. But she hadn’t let the many heartbreaks in her life turn her into a bitter person. Instead, she’d maintained her liveliness, bright smile and child-like optimism to live her life knowing the things that mattered the most laid on a simple smile, or a possibility to be with the people they loved.

And Owen loved her.

He wanted them to have a shot happiness again. He still didn’t know how they would do that. Both still have a lot to figure out. But maybe after months of dancing around, of pushing and pulling, they could finally go through that journey together. Owen didn’t know much yet, but after watching how happy it made Amelia to be with the kids and how good she was with them, he had became sure of one thing.

He wanted her.

He wanted Amelia tonight in his bed, tomorrow at his breakfast table and every day in his heart. He wanted to go to sleep and wake up next to her, to make plans together. To celebrate her birthdays, to be surprised when he got home and found out she had booked an unexpected trip for them, or got them tickets to a concert. And maybe, someday, Amelia could also surprise him with the news that
they would share the craziest adventure of a lifetime: parenting a child together.

Owen opened up another bottle and took a long sip, feeling better and more hopeful than he’d felt in the entire past year. Everything had been a mess, but the sun would always rise in the morning and every day was a new opportunity to try again. No matter how long it took him, he was getting Amelia back.

All the heartbreak and loss could remain in the past. Because he foresaw a better future. With Amelia by her side.

Finishing his beer, Owen got up and threw the empty bottle on the trash. He stretched his muscles and turned his head to fondly to gaze at the window on the house, only to realize that from the inside, Amelia had just opened it to look back at him.

And she smiled.

The dimples on her cheek broke all of Owen’s defenses and he knew right then that he was lost forever. Taking a deep breath, he locked eyes with her and took a step forward to the house and their future.

But this time, Owen was absolutely sure that the woman he’d spent the past hour admiring through a window had, somewhere along the way, already become the love of his life.

And Owen just couldn’t wait for what would come next.

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Thats it! Thank you guys for making it here :)