Forever Isn't As Long As You Might Think
by imaginentertain

Summary

They say bad luck comes in threes. These are those three things and how they interrupt Will and Sonny's idea of forever.
There are those days that you await with expectation, excitement and outright impatience. Christmas, birthdays, days which are important to you.

The return of a loved one.

The first time Will had gone to California they'd had a long, drawn out goodbye at the airport. Full of little touches and stolen kisses and promises of texts and calls and sleeping in each other's shirts. They told themselves, over and over, that it was just a week and that they could do it. It was just a week. 

A very long and difficult week. A week in which they fell asleep with phones pressed to their ears just to hear the other breathing. A pillow made a poor substitute for the body they normally wrapped themselves around each night and so sleep was hard to come by and fractured.

When he'd come home it had been hugs and kisses and whispered promises into skin that they would never be apart again.

The thing with promises is that they can be broken without meaning to.

The first time it was broken was when Will accepted a return invite from Berkley for further seminars and course options.

The second time it was because Will didn't want what Sonny did.

~

Sonny busied himself around the apartment, nervously checking every last detail. Lunch was prepared and ready to go, the place was spotless and without fault. For once every last toy, blanket and item of clothing that Arianna Grace had amassed in her short life was where it was supposed to be. He nervously smoothed down his shirt; the blue one which was an expressed favourite of Will's. Not that he chose it on purpose of course.

He glanced at the clock and then at his watch as if he wasn't sure he was being told the truth. Then he looked over at the printed flight details affixed to the fridge. He had the best part of an hour before he could feasibly leave to arrive reasonably early to meet Will at the arrivals gate.

On the one hand he was very proud of Will and the progress being made in his writing, on the other he wished Berkley was more than a little closer. After that first week and the repeat invitation for further writing workshops the trips to the west coast had become more common.

Sonny knew that an offer of a permanent place at Berkley couldn't be far behind, and in this latest absence he had begun to consider what that would mean for him, for them, for their family. Sonny had returned to Salem with the intention of seeing his family, going to school (that had been the deal with his parents: travel then education) and seeing where life took him.

And it took him to Will Horton and the best life he could have ever imagined.

So even though his friends and his family and his school and his business were here, they were things that would always be there for him, or things he could move. He realised that all along he'd known so long as he was with Will he didn't really care where he was. Besides, the weather was better in California, right? Will wanted to be a writer, Sonny wanted him to follow his dreams.
"Stop it," Sonny said to himself, "you'll drive yourself mad." But he knew, deep down, that if they had to move he would go wherever Will was.

His head turned towards the door when he heard the key in the lock and he couldn't help but sigh. "Gabi, you promised," he called out, "we get a few hours—"

Sonny's admonishment stilled on his lips as Will dropped his bag just inside the door as he pushed it shut. "Earlier flight," he said, "wanted to surprise you."

"Well you did that," Sonny laughed as he walked over to meet him. "Although you've thrown the whole afternoon off. I had plans."

"Really?" Will grinned.

"Yes," Sonny quipped as his arms slipped around Will's waist. "We have almost two hours to kill before lunch. And as I was going to spend a fair bit of that time travelling to and from the airport I'm not sure what to do with myself now."

"Am sure we'll think of something to keep ourselves occupied," Will continued as he dug his cell phone from his pocket, "seeing as Gabi is keeping Ari from us for the afternoon."

"She told?"

"I texted her. Said I was coming in early and asking after Ari. She came to pick me up. Ari, of course, slept through the whole thing so I still feel like I've not seen her. I think Gabi felt bad about taking her to Rafe's for the afternoon."

"Yeah, I asked for the apartment for a few hours. Sorry?"

"Don't be," Will grinned. "God I missed you."

"I missed you too." Sonny glanced back at the table and then back at Will, who was already shirking his jacket and making no attempt to move his bag or head towards the kitchen. "We're skipping lunch, aren't we?"

"Not hungry," Will said, already heading towards their bedroom. "You?"

"Not in the slightest," Sonny agreed. He may hate Will going, but his coming home? That was pretty good.

---

Will had to hide his laughter when Sonny returned to the bedroom, carrying various bowls and plates balanced so artfully and carefully that he was left to kick the door shut behind him.

"Now that's talent," Will said as a bowl was placed on the bed by him. "Chips, my favourite."

"This is everything from lunch that doesn't need cooking," Sonny explained, "seeing as we don't have enough time."

"You say that like you weren't very happy to—"

"I'm not complaining," Sonny cut him off, leaning over for a kiss. "I missed you."
"I missed you too," Will sighed, his fingertips brushing Sonny’s jaw line. "That's why I'm done with California."

"What? But I thought— I mean, it sounded like they were going to offer you a place."

"They did," Will admitted. "And I just... I couldn't take it."

"Why not?"

"You. Ari."

"You know I'd go with you, right?"

"And Gabi? Ari? Would they come too? I can't just uproot everyone just for me. This is our home, Sonny."

"My home is where you are," Sonny replied.

"You know what I mean," Will replied. "And I see your face every time I go away. I hate it. I hate not being here, I hate not being with you. I love you, this is where I want to be."

"Will—"

"I know you think we should have talked about it, but what's to talk about? It was great and I don't regret the experience. But this? This is where I want to be. This is where I need to be, Sonny."

"Are you sure? I don't want you to feel like you're giving up something you really want, just for me."

Will laughed and moved the plates and bowls from between them. "I remember me saying exactly the same thing to you once," he said, reaching out and taking Sonny's hand, "and do you remember what you told me?"

"I said that this was where I wanted to be," Sonny said.

"And this is where I want to be. I mean it. I didn't say no right away, I thought about it first. I told myself that if I couldn't make up my mind before I came home then we'd talk about it."

"But you did? Make up your mind?"

"Yeah," Will whispered, "I did. You're not mad? That I didn't talk about it with you first?"

"You gave up... an amazing opportunity. For me."

"For us."

"And you think I'd be mad?"

"I don't know," Will shrugged, "we always said we'd do things together and—"

"I'm not mad," Sonny reassured him, moving forward to kiss him gently. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"And you're su—?"

"Yes, I'm sure," Will laughed. "This. This is everything that I want, this is all that I want. You, this home, our family."
"I'm not going to pretend I'm not happy about this," Sonny whispered as he crawled the last few inches towards Will. "I hate it when you're not here."

"Well I'm not going anywhere."

"Promise?"

"Promise," Will grinned as Sonny's mouth was on his and he was pushed back onto the bed.

---

"Get up." Will prodded Sonny in the hip and only got a low moan in response. "Come on. Gabi and Ari will be home soon. We need to get up."

"Don't want to," Sonny mumbled, rolling over and wrapping himself more in the covers. "Wanna stay here with you."

"Well that's still an option, just not right now," he said. "Come on. I am not seeing my daughter awake for the first time in two weeks when I'm... y'know... naked."

"I quite like you naked," Sonny replied and Will could hear the grin in his voice.

"You don't think our family set up is weird enough, you want to add that to the mix? Come on. Get up."

Leaving him behind Will climbed out of bed and grabbed a clean shirt from the draw along with a pair of sweat pants. He ventured out into the living area and grabbed his bag from where it still remained by the door. When he turned around he saw Sonny standing in the bedroom doorway, hair mussed and sweat pants sitting low on his hips.

"What?" Sonny asked when he caught Will staring.

"Just... you," Will replied. "Just you."

Sonny gave a soft laugh and started to clear up the kitchen. "Are you going to tell Gabi about the offer?"

"No, I don't want her to think I'm doing this for anything other than the fact that I want to. That goes for Mom too."

"Are you kidding me? She'll be thrilled you're staying here."

"Yeah, right after she's decided that I'm staying because I can't bare to leave her," he laughed. "Shame your mom won't be happy I'm staying."

"Hey, don't do that."

"Do what?"

"Be like that. I don't care what my mom thinks of you."

"No, but—"

"But nothing," Sonny said. "It's not up to her who I fall in love with, who I spend my life with. Last time I checked that was down to me."
"Yeah, like you'd choose to love me," Will said quietly.

"And why wouldn't I?" Sonny asked, putting down the cloth in his hand and walking over to Will. "If it worked like that, if I got a choice? Then I'd choose to love someone who makes me feel complete. Who gives me a home and a family and shows me that you can love in so many different ways, so completely. I'd choose to love someone that I would, without any hesitation at all, do anything for."

"Really?" Will whispered.

"Really," Sonny replied. He took Will's hands in his and pulled him in close.

As Will settled against Sonny's bare chest he understood what he meant. Here was home. Here was comfort.

"Mom isn't the one making the decisions here," Sonny continued, "you don't need to ask for her permission or anything," he then laughed.

"No danger of that," Will laughed, pulling back and kissing Sonny gently.

"I know," Sonny whispered. He grabbed his cell from the side and woke the screen up. "Damn, Gabi texted... a while ago now. She said they'd be back around six."

"It's half five now," Will said. "We have a little time."

"For?"

Will grinned and reached out, his hands grabbing at Sonny's shoulders to pull him close. They stumbled backwards towards the couch before falling, somewhat ungracefully, onto it.

~~

"Is it safe?" Gabi called out from the other side of the door.

Still tangled up in each other on the couch Will and Sonny looked at each other and then giggled. "It's safe," Will said as he tried to stand up.

By the time Gabi had managed to open the door and wheel the pram in they'd tried and failed to return limbs to their original owners, and the sight of his daughter for the first time in weeks prompted Will to try and stand up anyway, toppling Sonny to the floor.

Will ignored the mixed laughter and protests from Sonny as he stumbled to the pram and peered in, meeting his daughter's gaze. As she grinned up at her dad Will grinned right back, reaching in to undo the clasp in order to lift her up.

"Oh, I've missed you," Will said as he settled Arianna against his chest. She settled immediately and Will turned to Sonny, his face lit up in pure joy. "There really is no place like home."

"She's missed you," Gabi said as she hooked her finger into Ari's hand. "They both have," she added with a grin. "If she didn't need the sleep I'd have woken her up—"

"Don't worry about it," Will said, kissing the top of Arianna's head. "We're all home now."

"It's definitely not the same without you," Gabi said as she grabbed her bag from the buggy.

"Well I'm done going away."
"What?" Gabi asked. "I thought this was going well?"

"Yeah, it was," Will said, "but all good things you know? It was fun and really good, but... I guess the program came to an end," he covered. "At least I get to spend more time with you, sweetie," he cooed towards Arianna. "That OK? Yeah? Awesome!"

Sonny pressed his lips together and said nothing.

---

Will was vaguely aware of the bedroom door closing so he rolled over in anticipation. Sure enough the bed soon dipped and a warm body slipped under the covers.

"Sorry," Sonny whispered, "didn't want to wake you."

"Already 'wake," Will mumbled, his hands reaching out.

"If you say so," Sonny laughed softly, lifting an arm so Will could settle on his shoulder. "How was she tonight?"

"Hate teeth," Will mumbled into Sonny's chest. "She's so unhappy and in pain and I just want to make it stop. I can't believe she's been like this for days now and I wasn't here? I'm so sorry."

"You say that like I mind," Sonny replied with a gentle kiss to Will's head. "OK, so maybe I mind a little, but it'll be over soon."

"Not soon enough." Will sighed and wrapped his arm around Sonny's waist. "Missed you tonight. Miss you every night you work late."

"I miss you too," Sonny replied, pressing a soft kiss onto the top of Will's head. "It's weird but I almost wish the club weren't doing as well as it is so I could be here more."

There was a moment's silence before Will said, "Hire someone. Please. With Chad away you need help and I know you feel like you're missing out."

"I just want—"

"To support us, I know," Will finished. "But you can do that here too and you want to be here. Please. Ari misses you."

"I miss her." There was a beat, then – "I'll advertise tomorrow."

"Thank you."

"You know I'd much rather be here than doing late nights, right?"

"I know," Will mumbled as he settled back into sleep.

"Love you."

"Love you back."

---

It's all he can do to raise his head to meet the next guy taking the empty seat across from him, but Sonny is about seven for zero on applicants to employees. His favourites so far included the guy who
didn't want to work evenings or weekends, and the girl who was most put out to realise that she and her family wouldn't be drinking here for free. And that was before he even considered the guy who actually asked what the "dibs" situation was on "hot chicks" who came into the club.

"So Luke," Sonny began, glancing at the name on the form, "tell me—"

"About myself?" Luke interrupted. "Sorry, but isn't that standard interview patter?"


"And I could give a standard response which would tell you what? That I know how to answer these questions? How does that help? Ask me something different. Something you actually want to know. Something that'll actually help you decide if I'm right for this place."

"OK," Sonny said, sitting back in his seat. "Friday night, last group of guys to leave get a little loud and aggressive. Door staff are, for some reason, nowhere around. They won't leave without another drink."

"See that makes assumptions," Luke said. "Why are they being aggressive? Something's wound them up so the trick is to deal with that first. And if it's the fact that I can't serve them another drink then it comes down to a simple choice; do they want to be able to come back for all the drinks? Or do they want one now that will land us all in trouble with the cops for breaking the law?"

Sonny looked at Luke for a moment, trying to size him up. Young enough to be relatable, old enough to give an air of authority. He certainly came across as being confident which was half the battle. Plus he wasn't bad looking which was a good chunk of the other.

"Music taste?" Sonny asked. "What gets you moving?"

Luke grinned. "Changes every time I hear something new. There's far too much out there to get tied into one genre or group. But if you can move to it? Then I probably will. There's not a no-dancing policy behind the bar is there? Because I won't be able to stick to that.

"But I like a lot of stuff, make it a point to leave every new place having heard and added something new to my iPod."

"You're travelling then? Just across the US?" Sonny added, moving the application form a little more into view.

"Yeah, at first, but that doesn't mean I'm going to cut and run at a moment's notice."

"Why here? Chicago or Boston are close enough—"

"But everyone does them," Luke finished. "I want to see the places people don't get to. Before I leave I ask someone where they've been to or where they're originally from and I put it on my travel... what?" he asked as he saw Sonny suppress a grin.

"Don't ever ask me."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm from a Greek family and before returning to Salem I spent the best part of two years backpacking my way around the world. So you'd get a long list and very little of it local."

"Good," Luke grinned. "I have no intention of returning to San Francisco until I really have to. Until
then I want to see where I end up."

"And you ended up here?"

"Next closest location on my list," Luke said. "The ad said about mostly doing night and weekend shifts, right? Works great for me. I can use the days to go see a few places and then be back here for the close shift. I mean, so long as it's not every night."

"We have a few members of staff, don't worry," Sonny said. "You're just taking the pressure off me. I have a baby girl at home I don't see as much as I'd like to and I'm hoping you can help rectify that."

"Sounds like this could work out for both of us," Luke said. "Although I do have one question of my own."

"Shoot."

"How do you take your coffee? Only in my experience it's good to keep the boss sweet and that often means bringing a drink over without being asked."

Sonny laughed. "Black, one sugar. Shot of peppermint at Christmas because you have to."

"Simple, classic, I like it."

"You?"

"Straight black," Luke said, "which is ironic because—"

The way he cut off made Sonny realise that it was a joke he'd probably made a hundred times before in the company of friends or family. Now he was nervously biting his lip because he'd just outed himself to a complete stranger who was interviewing him for a job.

"My boyfriend's the same," Sonny said with an air of nonchalance to put Luke at ease, "although he does have one hell of a sweet tooth." Because he knew what he was looking for he could see the relief flood through Luke's body. "I know there are a dozen horror stories for every good one, but Salem's an OK place to be... who you are," he said. "After a couple of years they're used to us at any rate. But if anyone does give you hassle then let me know, OK? Zero tolerance."

"Anything else I should know?"

"Yeah," Sonny laughed, "don't expect to keep anything secret in Salem."

~~

After doing the basic introduction to the club, Sonny took advantage of the quiet night and a fully staffed bar to leave Luke in capable hands and go home. He returned just in time to feed Arianna, a task Will happily relinquished.

"Got someone then?" Will asked as he vacated his seat in front of Ari's high chair.

"Yeah, he's there now."

"So does this mean you're going to be home more?"

"It does," Sonny said, his face breaking into a smile as Ari's mouth closed around the plastic spoon. "So I get to do dinner and bath time more often. Yes I do!"
As if in response Ari grinned. Her mouth opened in delight and as it did some of her dinner dribbled out. Sonny immediately wiped it off and returned to feeding her without missing a beat.

From where he stood in the kitchen Will watched them, not for the first time wondering how this was actually his life.

"I think Daddy is having one of his moments," Sonny said to Ari as he continued feeding her. "Shall we interrupt or leave him be?"

"Very funny," Will droned. "I'm happy, leave me alone."

"He's happy, Ari," Sonny continued. "We like happy."

"You're happy too, right?"

Sonny looked over at Will. "Perfectly," he replied.

As he pulled Ari's bedroom door to Sonny mentally stopped for a second and let himself just soak in everything that he had. He caught Will's eye over by the kitchen and he smiled.

"Penny for them," Will said as he held out a bottle of water to Sonny.

"Not sure you want to hear them."

"Sounds ominous."

"Not really, but... don't judge me, OK?"

"OK," Will said cautiously.

"It's just... this has been one of the best evenings of my life."

"It's not been anything special," Will started.

"It's not about that," Sonny continued. "It's just... you, her, this? Just the three of us together, as a family? I never thought that this would be my life, and for a while I know I rejected it. When I found out about Ari? What I did—"

"It was understandable."

"No, no it wasn't. It was unfair of me and I shouldn't—"

"Hey, it's done with, it's over, it's OK," Will soothed, pressing his lips gently to Sonny's. "Doesn't matter anymore."

"It scares me sometimes, how close I came to not being a part of all this. I know it sounds bad, but what if Gabi hadn't had that scare? What if we'd not spent the night in the hospital, or gone back to the coffee house that morning?"

"What is all this?" Will asked, leading Sonny to the couch. "You're being strangely reflective. And scaring me a little I think."

"I don't mean to," Sonny said, taking Will's hand. "Just appreciating what I have I guess. I'm a very lucky guy."
"You and me both," Will said, his fingers lacing with Sonny's. "I mean, I nearly didn't have you in the first place, never mind getting you back. I should have gotten my act together a lot sooner than I did."

"We could have done a lot of things differently," Sonny said, his fingertips running lines over Will's fingers. "But we didn't and we're still here. Still us. Still together."

"Guess we're just meant to be," Will said, leaning forward for a kiss. "No matter what."

"No matter what," Sonny affirmed, pulling Will across him until he was being straddled. "You and me, OK?"

"Always," Will said as he took Sonny's face in his hands and kissed him. "You... you are everything to me, you know that right?"

Sonny managed to nod as his hands started to push up Will's shirt.

"I would do anything, anything—"

"I know," Sonny all but growled. "There is nothing I wouldn't do for you, or her. You two are my world."

"I—" Will cut himself off and sat back on his haunches, to properly look at Sonny. "You and me. This really is for keeps isn't it?"

"Hope so," Sonny grinned. "That OK?"

"I just... I spent so long thinking that I was never going to have what everyone else had. I was never going to find love or someone to share my life with. Thinking that I was... wrong somehow."

"Will—"

"No, this isn't just about coming out," Will said, "this is... Just promise me we're not going to make Arianna's life any more dysfunctional than what the world will do to her?" When Sonny nodded he continued. "Good. Don't want her being screwed up like me."

"Hey," Sonny said firmly, his palms spreading across Will's skin under his shirt, "you are not screwed up."

"Feels that way. Everything normal I should want, I don't. Everything I should be, I'm not."

"I don't understand," Sonny whispered. "Will..."

"No, I'm not... I'm doing this wrong, aren't I? All I know is that I love you, more than anything and pretty much anyone. I want to spend my life with you. Beyond that I have no idea. And I wish I could set out a map of where we're going and what's going to happen to us but I don't. Is that OK?"

"There's no plan, no guide to this," Sonny said. His fingers moved in small circles on Will's body, revelling in the way that it warmed and seemed to ripple under them as always. "There's no timetable, there's not even a set list of events. We can do whatever we want to do and we don't have to do anything we don't. And all I want is to spend my forever with you."

"Is that enough? I don't mean, this isn't about you travelling or anything like that. Is it enough? That I can't promise anything more?"

"I've never asked for anything more, I'm sorry if you've ever thought or felt—"
He was cut off with a kiss, Will surging forward to press up against Sonny's body. "Never," Will panted against Sonny's mouth. "Never. You're... perfect... just... god, Son."

"Just you," Sonny said, "just this. Always you."

~~

Trying to balance his bag in one hand, manoeuvre the buggy with the other while keeping the door open with his foot was harder than it should be after the practice he'd had. When Will had eventually managed to get inside the club he dropped everything onto the nearest table and fished his cell phone from his jeans pocket. After sending a quick text to Sonny – *We're here, be quick!* xx – he turned to the bar to order the largest coffee they could make him.

And then the colour drained from his face.

"Hey," Luke said. "So... still black and so sweet it's a wonder you don't have diabetes yet?"

"...yeah," Will confirmed.

"Coming right up. And then I think you probably have a few questions."

"More than a few," Will said as he dropped into the seat by Ari's buggy.

~~

"Let me go first," Luke said as he brought Will's drink over. "One, I'm not stalking you."

"That's good," Will said as he pulled the coffee over, instinctively glancing into the buggy to check Ari was still asleep.

"Two, I wasn't expecting to see you here. Last we spoke you'd been offered a place on the course."

"Turned it down," Will said. "Obviously."

"For the boyfriend?"

"For me. This is my home. Which I mentioned to you but..." Will sighed. "You couldn't make an exception to your travel rule this once?"

"If I cheat now—"

"You can't stay."

"Why not?"

"Luke!"

"Look, I didn't think there would be a problem. It's not like anything happened—"

"*Will you keep your voice down?*" Will hissed, glancing around him for anyone familiar.

"Sorry," Luke said quickly. "I didn't think it'd be a problem—"

"You're working in my boyfriend's club, why on earth would there be any problems?" Will quipped.

"Wait, what? Sonny's your... *he's* the boyfriend?"
"Yeah, and he doesn't know anything about it. I'd like to keep it that way."

"Will—"

"I mean it, Luke. And I think it'd be best for everyone if you moved on as soon as possible."

"I'm not leaving Sonny in the lurch," Luke said firmly, "and he told me the reason for hiring me was so that he could spend more time with his little girl. Who I'm guessing is...?" He gestured towards the buggy which Will's hand moved possessively and protectively towards. "I'm not going to cause you any hassle, I promise. I just wanna work, earn some cash, then I'll move on."

"Soon."

"I told Sonny I was sticking around for a bit. Don't you think he'll ask more questions if I just up and leave?"

"I don't care."

"Face it. Me being here means Sonny is home with you and Ari. And surely that's better than me being gone and him working all hours?"

"Luke—"

"I'm not the guy who steals other people's boyfriends. Never have been, don't intend to start now. I promise you, Will. Sonny isn't going to find out what happened from me."

Will seemed to study Luke for a moment, taking in his expression to see if he was serious or not. For a moment he was back in that club but then he shook his head to rid himself of the memory.

"Fine, thank you. I... I appreciate it."

"Appreciate what?" Sonny asked, surprising them both.

"...The coffee," Will covered. "Finally someone to make it the way I like without commenting."

"Even if it means your teeth will fall out before you're thirty?" Sonny asked, moving to Will's side and dropping a kiss to the top of his head. "I see you've met Luke."

"Yes, we were just getting to know each other," Luke said smoothly. "I can see why you'd rather be at home of an evening."

"Doesn't take long for the gossip to spread," Sonny said as he settled on the arm of Will's chair.

"Not that I pay any attention to it," Luke said. "Your life is your business and it's none of mine. I shall keep myself to myself and hope one day I meet a guy who makes me as happy as you two seem to be."

"Thank you," Will covered, busying himself with the pretence that he was checking on Ari.

"Well, I'd better be getting back to work before the boss accuses me of slacking," Luke grinned. "Nice to meet you, Will."

"You too," Will said, not looking up from the buggy.

"You OK?" Sonny asked.
"Yeah, why? What?"

"You didn't bat an eyelid when Luke talked about finding a guy. I mean, I knew, but—"

"Be a bit hypocritical of me to have an issue with it," Will said.

"Did he mention it?"

"No," Will said immediately. "Maybe my gaydar is finally kicking in?" he added to try and cover it.

"Maybe," Sonny said, hooking a finger under Will's chin to lift it. "But I only feel it fair to warn you that it's the last time you'll get that coffee here."

"You'll just force me to go to the pub," Will quipped. "Grandma Caroline doesn't mind how I have my coffee."

"My boyfriend, supporting the competition?"

"If I have to."

"Good thing I love you, bad taste in coffee aside," Sonny grinned, kissing Will gently. Just as Ari stirred from her nap and Sonny moved to settle her, Will's eyes flickered over to the bar where he caught Luke watching them, just for a second.

---

Sonny kept checking his watch every thirty seconds and took to glaring it when it wasn't telling him the time he wanted to know.


"Just expecting someone."

"Will?"

"No, a... delivery."


"Something like that."

"Will's birthday? Anniversary? Sorry, none of my business."

"No, it's fine. Yes, it's for Will but it's a surprise so no mentions or hints, OK?"

Luke grinned and mimed zipping his lips shut. Then he unzipped them. "Do I get a hint for my silence? Payment for this lonely man?"

"Your time will come," Sonny said. "You just have to wait."

"If you launch into some heart-warming story about you and Will I swear I'll... do something," he finished with a laugh.

"I'm serious."

"Some people get all the luck," Luke muttered good naturedly. "Mine tends to revolve around
straight and unavailable guys."

"Mine too at one point," Sonny laughed.

"Yeah, but you ever hit on—" Luke started before he stopped. "Never mind."

"Oh no, there's a story there. Tell."

"And why would I want to give you any gossip on me?" Luke asked.

"Because otherwise I am going to launch into every cute and soppy story that I can think of about me and Will."

"Fine," Luke sighed. "Last guy I hit on... very much taken."

"Happens to the best of us."

"No, I mean really taken. Home, family, the works."

"Ouch."

"Yeah. Thankfully he let me down gently but I felt like an idiot."

"Obviously not meant to be," Sonny said. "Trust me. When it's the right one? It works out."

"From what I hear you and Will didn't exactly work out from the first moment."

"Yeah, but we got there," Sonny said, suddenly distracted by the delivery man putting the package onto the bar and offering a clipboard for him to sign. "Thanks," he said taking the box and eagerly removing the wrapping. "We got here," he repeated to Luke, lifting the lid so he could see.

"Really?" Luke asked.

"Hopefully."

"Well. Good luck."

"Remember; not a word."


"What?"

"Successful business, boyfriend, family... You have it all."

"Worked hard for it," Sonny replied. "You good here?"

"Yeah, go on. Enjoy your evening."

"Plan to," Sonny grinned.

~~

Checking the box was safe in his jacket pocket, Sonny hesitated outside the apartment door. For some reason he couldn't settle the nerves in his stomach or stop his brain working at a hundred miles a minute. Taking a deep breath he opened the door, and then let it out when he saw the assembled family members taking up every last space.
"Hey, there you are," Will said, meeting him at the door and grabbing his hand.

"Yeah, what's going on?" Sonny asked.

"We have something to show you," Will grinned. "Well, I don't. But someone does."

"You ready, sweetie?" Sami cooed to Ari.

Sonny saw her, clinging to the edge of the table as she'd been doing the last few weeks. Only this time she let go and walked, very unsteadily, towards Sonny. He dropped to his knees and held out his hands to her, grabbing her tiny fists as she reached him.

"There's my clever and brilliant girl," he said as Arianna laughed in his arms.

"Sorry about the ambush," Will said, dropping down beside him. "Mom was here when Ari did it, thankfully she managed to video the whole thing, but then of course she called everyone and I've been putting up with them for the last half hour."

"It's fine," Sonny whispered.

"I know it's supposed to be our date night—"

"We can rearrange. Tonight is her night," he said. "We can go for dinner any time."

"Well she's happy now she's shown you," Will said. "Been excited all evening, haven't you?"

"That's my girl," Sonny said, pressing a kiss to her cheek which garnered a soft squeal of delight from her.

~~

"You don't look like the happy, proud daddy that you should be," Abby said as she joined Will by the fridge. "Is your mom taking over again?"

"No, nothing like that," Will said. "She's actually been pretty good tonight."

"Wonders will never cease."

"I know."

"So how come you don't look that happy?"


"Tell that to your face," Abby said. "Are you and Sonny OK?"

"What? Yeah, we're great. Fantastic. Really," he added when he noticed the look on her face.

"Good. Because I'm not taking sides."

"Wouldn't expect you to, cousin dear."

"Hey, enough of the cheek," Abby laughed, playfully hitting him. "So let me get this right. You and Sonny are great, your daughter took her first steps today... so why are you miserable again?"

Will didn't respond at first, he just watched Sonny. "Have you ever kept a secret from someone, not because you don't want to tell them, but because telling them will only make things worse?"
"Will—"

"This isn't like before," he said quickly. "There's nothing he can do and nothing has changed between us. I still love him, still want to spend my life with him."

"So what then?"

"It was... nothing, it really was."

"But you've not told Sonny about this nothing?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because it would hurt him. And that's all that would happen. He'd be hurt and I'd have been the one to do it."

"There's more to it, I can tell," Abby said.

"It's just... We promised each other, Abs. We said no more secrets."

"You want to tell him."

"But I don't want to hurt him."

"Tough call."

"Yeah, thanks for the help," Will said. "Sorry. That was mean."

"This... nothing. Any chance it might happen again?"

"None," Will said quickly. "Less than none."

"And if you told Sonny?"

"It'd kill him."

"So there's your choice," Abby said. "You need to decide if you can live with this or if your promise to Sonny is more important."

"I was afraid you were going to say that," Will sighed. "Look, Abs—"

"I know, I know. I will say nothing. I promise."

"Thank you," Will said, not saying anything more when he noticed Sonny heading over to them.

"What is it with people hiding in the kitchen at parties?" Sonny laughed.

"It's where the food and drink live, stupid," Abby said. "But I think I've hidden long enough. Time for cuddle with my baby cousin before I have to go."

"She OK?" Sonny asked when Abby had gone.

"Yeah, think so."

"She's not still upset over Chad?"
"Not that I know, why?"

"You two looked quite serious, I just thought—"

"It's fine, it's nothing."

"You sure?"

"Yeah," Will said, reaching out and slipping his hand around Sonny's waist. "So... How long before we can kick everyone out?"

"I knew it, you are avoiding your mom."

"No, I just... want it be just us."

"Us and Ari and Gabi?"

"Well, yeah," Will conceded, "but she has her room and we have ours..."

"Will Horton, you are..." Sonny trailed off and just smiled at him. "I really love you."

"I know," Will said. "And I really love you back."

"Love me enough to come join us? Because I think your mom and EJ are wondering if they've done something and if I have to hear them go on about it one more time—"

"Yes," Will said. "I mean, yes. I love you enough to do that. I'd do anything for you."

"...Thanks?" Sonny laughed, unsure as to why Will was being this way. "Come on," he said, taking Will's hand in his. "Proud grandparents await."

"She's walking, not finishing her PhD," Will muttered as he followed. But he said nothing else.

~~

Sonny closed his book and set it on the nightstand when Will finally came to join him. "Talk to me," he said.

"What?"

"Something's been off all evening. Talk to me."

"It's nothing, really," Will said, pulling back his side of the covers and getting into bed. "I'm just... sulking."

"Why?"

"Because tonight should have been us. It should have been... And once again everything gets taken over by my mom and half of Salem."

"She's just excited about it, Will, we all are. Our little girl is growing up."

Will couldn't help but laugh as he shuffled down and pulled the covers back over himself. "Have I said how much I love that you say that?"

"What?"
"Our girl."

"Well... yeah. She is. Kinda."

"No, not 'kinda'. She is. You are her dad."

"Feels like it."

"Well good," Will said, moving in closer. "We make a weird little family, don't we?"

"It works, that's what matters," Sonny replied, shuffling under the covers himself. "And we're all in this for the long haul."

"How long do you think that'll be?"

"I was hoping for forever," Sonny said, a note of worry in his voice.

Will laughed and gave him a soft shove under the covers. "Not us. This. The four of us here. I mean, Ari's walking now, sleeping in a proper little bed. She can't room in with Gabi for much longer, most kids her age have already got their own space."

"You're really worried about this, aren't you?"

"I just... I love our life, I love our home, and I don't want it to change."

"Hey, I could see if our old apartment is going to be free soon. The landlord said they'd only signed a short lease. We could move back, be across the hall."

"Maybe," Will sighed. "But it wouldn't be the same, would it?"

"Nothing will be the same as this," Sonny said, his hand finding Will's wrist. His thumb swept soothing patterns over the skin and he felt the muscles flex in his arm as Will's fingers starting moving; finding the dip in Sonny's hipbone and settling there as if they belonged. As if they always lived there. "But that's not a bad thing."

"I know. It's just... she's still that little baby that was put in my arms at the hospital. I still remember her grabbing my finger and not letting go. And she's teething and walking and growing up and—"

"She will still, and always, need her daddy," Sonny cut across, sensing where Will's concern was actually coming from.

"Promise?"

"I promise," Sonny laughed, stealing a quick kiss. He smiled as he felt Will's fingers press in a little more on his hip. "And even when she thinks she doesn't need us we're going to be here for her."

"I am so glad I have you," Will whispered, moving a little closer until they were almost nestled together.

"You always will. Nothing is taking me from you or Ari, ever. You're stuck with me."

"I just... I don't want to lose you. Not again."

"Hey, not happening, OK? That's all in the past. Done with." Sonny moved his hand so it was cradling Will's jaw, his fingertips now brushing over his cheek. "This is forever."
Sonny pressed forward a little more so he could kiss Will, a gentle and soft kiss with the unspoken promise of love and so much more. He felt Will's gentle fingertips become a grasp on his hip, the thumb pressing to indicate that Sonny should roll over.

So he did, taking Will's body with him.

Will covered Sonny, holding himself up with two hands planted either side of the head which he was covering in kisses. Sonny's hands now lightly scratched down Will's chest to the hem of his shirt, before decisively moving under and back up to discard it somewhere to be found later when it got too cold for just body heat.

Sitting astride Sonny, Will only made contact in two places; his mouth and his hips. He rocked forward, finding pressure where he needed it most, but the most erotic thing for him were Sonny's hands on his body. The sense of being held, grounded, desired, all in one touch.

And when he slept it was with Sonny's hands on his bare skin, warding away the nightmare that crept on the edges of his consciousness.

~~

Luke was aware of someone waiting at the bar and so he quickly finished stacking the shelves before turning around, the last two glasses in his hands. "Will, hey. Um, Sonny's not here."

"Yeah, I know. I need to talk to you."

"About...?"

"San Francisco."


"Sonny was talking about you this morning."

"Oh?"

"About the guy you hit on. The 'pretty much married' one."

"Will—"

"You can't do that. You can't talk about it."

"I didn't mention names—"

"That's not the point. He'll ask, he'll get more details from you. He won't let it go. You'll end up mentioning the bar or something we talked about. I don't want him putting the pieces together."

"Will—"

"I mean it, Luke. Not another word. Say it's too painful to talk about, say you're embarrassed, say you made the whole thing up. But you cannot say another word about it."

"I'd never drop you in it, I promise."

"Not intentionally, no. But I don't want him to know. I can't hurt him like that and I won't."
"And you think lying's the better option?"

"No," Will admitted, "but it's better than the alternative."

"Look, it was one kiss. And not even that when you think about it. There's nothing to talk about, nothing to worry about, nothing—"

"Just promise me. Promise you won't say anything to Sonny, to anyone."

"Yes, fine, I promise," Luke said. "I mean it, Will. I like you and Sonny's been good to me. So I'm not going to drop a bombshell into your life and I'm not going to wreck anything for you."

"I just..." Will started before trailing off. "I hate it. I hate lying to him and I hate keeping this from him but I can't... It was one kiss, one stupid kiss and I wish I could just pretend it never happened, just forget about it."

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have... Do you want me to go?" Luke offered. "I can move on, give me a week or so to get something sorted and—"

"No," Will sighed, propping himself up on the bar. "No, this isn't your fault. I'm sorry, I just... I just don't want to lose him."

"Why would you?"

"Because this... this is the one thing that would do it. Me and—"

"Me?"

"Me and anyone," Will said with a soft laugh. "Would you take it the wrong way if I said that I wish I could go back and have it not happen?"

"Not in the slightest," Luke said. He sighed and put the last two glasses away. "Give me a week, OK? I can set something up, move on."

"No, don't. You're good here and because you're here Sonny gets to be at home. And I don't want to mess things up just because you and I had a moment in some bar."

"Good moment though, right?"

"Before or after the kiss?" Luke laughed. "Fine. No more talk, no more mentions, no more—shit," he muttered.

"What?" Will asked, before noticing that Luke was now looking over his shoulder.

He followed Luke's gaze to Sonny, standing in the doorway. Who then turned and walked out, letting the door shut behind him.

~~

There was a moment's silence after Will got home, closing the door behind him and just waiting, watching Sonny sit on the couch and stare into space.

And then it started.

"Another secret."
There was nothing harsh in his voice, it was calm and flat.

"After everything—"

"Because of everything," Will interrupted, moving forward and dropping to his knees in front of Sonny. "Because it was nothing, not even that. We were chatting, I didn't realise he was trying to flirt until he kissed me. And it wasn't even that because as soon as he did it I backed off and I set him straight. He apologised, no hard feelings, that was it."

"You didn't tell me."

"Because I didn't want this," Will said gently. "You're hurting."

"What did you expect?" 

"Sonny... Son, please. Look at me. Please?"

"I'm not mad."

That threw Will for a minute. "What?"

"I... I'm not mad. You say it wasn't even a proper kiss and I believe you. I don't think you're having an affair, I don't... I trust you, I do. But that's not the point here."

"Then what is?"

"It's... It's everything, Will. The whole time, and I mean the whole time not just these last few weeks, it's been like... like a moment I've been waiting for."

"I don't understand—"

"I have been in love with you for so long. Some days it feels like I've always loved you. Every other relationship I've had doesn't compare to this. I mean, I can't think of a single moment with anyone else in which I was as happy as I am with you."

"It's the same for me," Will said, reaching out to put his hand on Sonny's knee.

"Yeah? And who are you comparing me to? Mia? Or Gabi?" He pulled back before getting to his feet. "You don't... It's only ever been me, Will. You have nothing to compare this with."

"So?" Will asked as he got to his feet. "What does that matter?"

"It matters because... because you were the guy in the bar with Luke. You were the one he chatted to and had fun with. You connected with someone else—"

"I didn't even know he was flirting with me!"

"—and you've missed out on so much."

"M-missed out?" Will stammered. "What exactly have I missed out on?"

"When I first came out it was all about finding my feet, finding who I was, who I wanted to be with—"

"And I want to be with you," Will stressed. "I have only ever wanted that. I came out, I found my feet and I found you."
"You were alone and then you found out I had feelings for you—"

"No, you are not doing this," Will snapped. "You are not making this, us out to be something that it's not. So what, you think I kissed Luke because I... I missed out on playing the field? Wondering if the grass is greener?"

"It makes sense—"

"Not to me it doesn't," Will said. "There is no way that makes sense. Why would I want to see anyone else? Be with anyone else?"

"I just think that if you had the chance to see—"

"What? Other guys? Is there some minimum number of guys I have to date before I get to say, 'yeah, this is him'? Because if so then let me know and I'll start lining them up."

"Will—"

"If this is what you've been waiting for then let's get on with it," he snapped.

"You think I want you out with other guys?" Sonny asked, his voice rising. "I loved you and I waited for you and—"

"And you don't think I know that? You don't think that I wish, every day, that I'd gotten my head out of my ass sooner and just been honest about how I felt? But I didn't and I have to remind myself that because I waited, because I didn't just jump in the first time I realised how I felt, that things are good between us. Because we became good friends, really good friends and we went from there.

"And yes, I screwed up. Yes, I made a mistake. Maybe I should have told you about Luke but I didn't want to hurt you. I didn't want you to feel like I wasn't completely happy with you, completely in love with you and wanted to spend my forever with you—"

"And yet you don't know where we're going," Sonny cut across. "You tell me, again and again, that you can't make me any promises."

"So you think I'm, what? Unsure? Sonny I have never been more sure of anything in my life." Will sighed and ran his hands down his face. "This is not how I thought this would go, I'll be honest with you." He turned and headed for the door. "The stupid thing is," he started again, turning back, "I know I've been the insecure one. I know I've pushed you away and I know that I've done some crazy things... But did it ever occur to you that the reason I did that, that I've been so hesitant is because it scared the hell out of me that I could screw this up? Because the idea of not being with you, of not having a forever with you? I couldn't even imagine that.

"You said you went and you saw what was out there. Well I went out there and you know what I saw? I saw you. I have only ever seen you. I only want to see you."

"Will—"

"I didn't tell you about the kiss because it didn't mean anything to me." He turned back towards the door but waited, his hand on the handle. "You are the only one who does."

~~

"Thought you'd still be awake," Sami said quietly.
"Sorry, did I--?"

"No," she said, gesturing that Will should move over. Once he'd done so she sat on the couch next to him, pulling the blankets over her legs. "You know there are one or two spare rooms upstairs."

"I don't want Johnny or Allie to worry," Will said. "This way we can say I fell asleep watching a movie or something."

"So that's their story, are you going to tell me the real one?"

"Mom—"

"You don't have to, I said that when you turned up. But I'm your mom and I worry. Especially since you not only walked out on Sonny but Ari too."

"I've not walked out," he said, his voice raising a little. "Sorry," he then hushed himself. "I've not walked out. We had a fight."

"About?"

"Nothing."

"Sure," Sami whispered. "If there's anything you need—"

"I'll be sure not to ask," Will laughed. "No, really, it's... Difficult."

"Relationships tend to be. I mean, look how many goes EJ and I had before we ended up here."

"Does it make a difference?" Will asked. "All the... goes I mean?"

"What do you mean?"

"You and EJ both say this time it's for real—"

"And it is."

"—but how can you be so sure? Is it because you've... tried before?"

"In part, I guess," Sami said. "But mainly it's because we've grown since then. We're going into this with our eyes open. We know what it's like being together and we know our strengths and weaknesses."

"But what about... others?" Will asked.

Sami straightened up a little. "Will, did Sonny do something?"

"What? No! No, Mom he didn't."

"Oh. Right. Sorry." There was a pause and then a very hesitant, "Did you?"

"...Define 'did something'," Will sighed. "It was when I was in California."

"Oh Will..."

"Just hear me out, OK?"

"OK."
"I was out with a few of the guys from the course and we went to this bar. This guy then starts talking to me but I only realised he was hitting on me when he... he kissed me. But I backed off and set him straight and that was that."

"But Sonny doesn't think so?"

"No, he accepts that."

"So what's the problem?"

"He said... he said that I've not 'played the field' enough."

"He actually said that?" Sami's voice rose in indignation.

"I never even thought about anyone else, Mom. It's him. It's... it's just him."

"I know, love," she soothed, pulling him down to rest on her shoulder. "And for what it's worth? I think you can find the right one first time."

"Not exactly first time though, is it?" Will said with a soft laugh.

"There is that," Sami laughed. "But he's the one that matters."

"He's the only one who matters."

"And I think he knows that."

"Then why—"

"I don't know, love."

"I have never felt like this about anyone. Ever. And I really thought I love Gabi. I still love her in a way, is that weird?"

"No, of course not. She's your friend, the mother of your child. Of course you're always going to love her. I still love your dad in a way, but that is weird," Sami quipped.

"I can't imagine my life without him. I don't want to. It doesn't matter to me that he's the only guy I've... It's still just him. And I thought I was it for him. I really, finally, thought that he was happy with me and that we were going to spend the rest of our lives together."

"You still could. Couples fight, love, all of them."

"Yeah, but about whether or not one of them should go out on a few more dates with others guys to be sure?"

"Will—"

"I feel like he's been waiting, all this time, for me to what? Get distracted? Cheat on him?"

"Honey, some guy kissed you."

"Yeah. Kissed me. I backed off."

"You know when you were worried about, what was his name?"

"Brian?"
"Yeah. You told me that he was doing everything he could to get Sonny's attention but that Sonny wasn't interested. Didn't stop you feeling bad about it, and I know that you probably had more than one thought about how Sonny would be better off with him." When Will shot her a disbelieving look she smiled. "You're my son, I know you. I think this guy is your Brian."

"But I'd never—"

"I know, he knows, but right now things are just all... You'll sort it out."

"What if we can't? What if he insists? What if—"

"Enough now," Sami said. "I know how much he loves you. Twenty bucks says right now he can't sleep either because he's missing you just as much as you're missing him."

~~

"Sorry, did she wake you?" Gabi asked as she carried Ari out from their room.

"No, couldn't sleep," Sonny replied as he got up from the couch. "She OK?"

"Another tooth coming through, bad dream, wet diaper, take your pick."

"Don't do things by halves, do you sweet pea?" Sonny laughed as he lifted Ari from her mother's arms. "It's late and you should be asleep."

"So should you be," Gabi countered. "Everything OK?"

"Yeah, I told you—"

"Yeah, couldn't sleep. So why are you out here instead of curled up in bed with Will?"

Sonny raised an eyebrow at her. Really? it asked.

"I'm just saying, it's better than being cold out here."

"Nah, I'm fine. Got my blanket, some stupid late-night movies—"

"—and an empty bed," Gabi finished. "I know Will's not here."

"...How?" Sonny settled for.

"Because we've been living together as a family for almost eight months now."

"It's nothing."

"What is?"

"We... had a fight."

"Where is he?"

"His mom's. I got a text saying he was staying the night."

"That's something then. What was it about?"

"It's nothing," Sonny said in the hope it would be the end of it. As he turned his attention back to Arianna he discovered, to his ironic dismay, that she was settling back into sleep without the aid of
the milk Gabi was making. So she wasn't going to be a distraction from this line of questioning.

"What nothing drives Will away from Ari?" Gabi asked, folding her arms.

"He... kissed someone."

"Wait, what?" she snapped. "He did what?"

"There was this guy in California—"

"I can't believe he would cheat on you."

"It was one kiss, Will backed off—"

"Wait, say that again?" Gabi asked. "Will backed off?"

"Yeah. Will was out and then Lu—some guy kissed him."

"That doesn't count!"

"It does to me."

"Sonny, I don't know if you've noticed this, and I hate to be the one to break it to you, but Will? He's kinda hot."

Sonny gave a nervous laugh and shifted Ari so she was a little more comfortable in his arms.

"Hey, I'm not blind. And neither was this guy apparently."

"He didn't tell me about it."

Gabi walked over to him and carefully lifted her daughter from him. "He was out, missing you, and some guy hit on him. Will sets him straight, comes home early and keeps it from you because you didn't need to know it. And in response you fight and he leaves?"

"Gabi—"

"Hang on, didn't you have a thing with Brian?"

"What? No! Well, a moment when Will and I weren't together but that was... a really bad attempt at trying to get over him. Turns out I can't."

"But after that?"

"Nothing. I wouldn't. I couldn't do that."

"Why not? Will told me about how smart he was. And there was that other guy, the one who did the club? Isn't he into all the adventure stuff you are?"

"Was," Sonny corrected. "Yeah, I could have been with either of them and it would have been good and fun, but that's not what I want." His hand moved protectively to the back of Ari's head and he cradled her gently. "I want this. I want Will and Ari and this life."

"So does Will," Gabi said.

"Maybe."
"What? No. No maybe. Will is the guy who wants this life. He's all about home and family and security. You know he proposed to me when I told him I was pregnant?"

"He did what?"

"It was stupid and I set him straight," Gabi said, giving a soft laugh at her word choice. "He did it because that's who he is."

"No it's not," Sonny corrected, "because when I mention marriage he can't change the topic quickly enough."

"What? Since when?"

"Since pretty much always. So that just proves my point."

"What does?"

"That Will doesn't know what he wants. He came out, we got together—"

"Why does that mean he doesn't know?" Gabi challenged. "I'm confused. One guy kisses him, Will backs off, but you think he doesn't have enough, what? Experience? Seems to me that he does know what he wants, otherwise I don't think he'd have stopped at a kiss. Don't you?"

"Gabi—"

"If he really was curious about who else was out there then what would he have done, hmm? This guys hits on him, kisses him? And there's Will, miles away and in a different state and he's got an interested guy... If he was curious, even slightly, then would he have pushed him away?"

"You know, no one would blame me for hating Will. No one. After what happened between us? But he was hurting and he didn't mean to hurt me. We got past that and I accepted that he is who he is. He is gay, he is madly in love with you, he is a great father to Arianna and a good friend to me."

"And he is, without any doubt, committed to you."

"Then why—"

"Ask him," Gabi cut across. "Tomorrow morning you are going over there and saying whatever you need to say in order to get him home."

"What if—"

"No," she said firmly. "Make it up with him. Get him home."

"But—"

"But nothing. You love Ari?"

"You know I do," Sonny said.

"Then get her daddy home. She realised he wasn't here tonight, same as I did, but I'm not having her thinking he's left. Understand?"

Sonny just nodded mutely as she turned and returned to bed.

~~
Will was just folding over the last of the blankets when Sami brought him his coffee. "Get much sleep in the end?"

"A little. Maybe a few hours?"

"So. What are your plans for the day?"

"I know I should talk to him, Mom, but why do I need to do the running?"

"OK, you gotta stop thinking about it like that. In a relationship there is no running, there is just communication and sorting things out. No matter who starts it you both have to end it."

"And if he still thinks I need to date other people?"

"Then you tell him that you're a one-man man and that he's the lucky winner."

"I wouldn't exactly call him that," Will said, averting his gaze in self-deprecation.

"I would," Sami said.

"You have to say that. You're my mom."

"Actually, it's because I'm your mom I don't have to say it. And you don't have to do anything right away. Breakfast?"

"Not sure I could eat anything."

"Come through anyway. Johnny and Allie will be down in a bit and I know they'd love to see you."

"OK, I'll think about it," Will said. "What?" he asked when he noticed he didn't have his mother's attention anymore. He followed her gaze over his shoulder to where Sonny was standing in the doorway.

"Sorry to intrude, I know it's early—" Sonny began.

"Oh hush," Sami said. "You are welcome any time." She turned back to Will. "As are you," she added quietly. "But that doesn't mean I want to see you, understand?"

"Yeah," Will whispered.

Then Sami left, leaving them alone, standing on opposite sides of the room.

And without a word they closed the distance and wrapped their arms around each other.

~~

Somehow they made it back to their apartment without saying a word, or letting go of each other. There were times when it felt like any other day, any other moment between them when they were as they'd always been; just them. Together.

Once they were home it was a different story.

"I'm so sorry." The words tripped off Sonny's tongue before he could even register what he was saying. He grabbed for Will again, pulling him haphazardly back into his arms and repeated it, over and over, how sorry he was and how much he loved him. Words he tried to burn into the fabric of their relationship.
"I don't want anyone else," Will said into Sonny's shoulder. "I don't."

"Good. Because the idea of you with anyone else? I can't stand it."

"There is no one else. Never has been and if I have my way there never will be."

"You mean that?" Sonny asked, pulling back. "You and me--?"

"Always," Will said, pressing a firm kiss against his lips. "You're my forever."

"You're mine," Sonny replied, pulling him back in for a quick succession of further kisses.

"I might not have your... experience—"

"Will—"

"But that doesn't mean I don't know what I want."

"I know, and I'm sorry I... projected my doubts onto you. And after I gave you such a hard time over when you did it to me."

"It doesn't matter—"

"It does," Sonny said, pulling him towards the couch. They fell down together, a tangle of limbs and overlaid bodies. "I'm so sorry."

"Can I ask... why?" Will ventured once Sonny had settled, back against his chest.

"It's... hard."

"It's OK, I just—"

"No, it's... You should know. I made you talk about... Just, none of it's your fault, OK?" Sonny's hand moved to grab one of Will's, lacing their fingers together. "When we met you were with Gabi and after that was over it was so hard to see you go through everything... But I supported you because we were friends and it was what you needed.

"And it wasn't just about being there for you when you came out... When I saw you with Neil? It was like I realised something. I realised that one day you were going to find someone and be happy with them. I loved you, so much even then, and... And I realised you were going to find someone.

"We were friends, Will, good friends. For the longest time I thought that's all we were ever going to be and I'd just started to... Well. Things changed. Quickly."

"They should have happened sooner," Will said, pressing a kiss into Sonny's hair. "I'm sorry."

"Hey no," Sonny said, bringing Will's hand to his mouth. "Don't you ever apologise for that."

"So this is from, what? You not thinking I want to be here?"

There was an awful silence for a moment.

"Sonny?"

"You were scared, alone, and—"

"So what? You were the easy option?" Will asked. "Did you not see how things worked out?" he
laughed softly. "You are not... safe, Sonny. You are the exact opposite of that."

"What?"

"You scare me sometimes. This scares me sometimes. You, me, Ari. There's a whole future ahead of us and... it's forever. We talk about it and we mean it but when I actually think about it? It's so big and so much and every so often I have to catch my breath.

"But that doesn't mean I don't want it. Because I do, with every breath that I manage to catch. Because this... this is where they get that story from, isn't it?" he continued. "the first love, the happy ever after? It comes from somewhere."

"Yeah, the gays are the best example of that," Sonny laughed, kissing the back of Will's hand again.

"I mean it. I know I'm not... your first. But you're mine and I want you to be my only. If that's OK with you."

"Yeah," Sonny breathed, "it is."

"You're my forever."

"You're mine too."

~~

When Will walked into the club he hesitated for a moment. Then he took a deep breath. "Hey, Luke."

"So how much trouble did I cause last night?" he asked. "I'll be honest, part of me wondered if I should turn up this morning."

"We talked, we're fine, really."

"So Sonny's not going to fire me? Come after me with a bat?"

"Well I thought about it," Sonny said, coming in behind Will, "but this one reminded me that you working here means I'm not."

"I swear, I had no idea he was taken and when he told me... I felt like crap and I couldn't apologise enough. I'm not that guy, I swear, and since I turned up—"

"Breathe, Luke," Sonny laughed. "Look, I'm... I'll be OK."

"Good. If it counts for anything this one never shut up about you once he started."

"I did not," Will laughed. "Two coffees, we'll be over there. Somewhere. Far away from where you are going to embarrass me."

"You do that all by yourself, love," Sonny said as Will was shepherded away. "And he gets one sugar, Luke, no more."

"So... you really OK with it?" Will asked when they were out of earshot.

"I... yes. I am. Really." He reached over and took Will's hand in his. "I love you, I trust you. And we're forever."
"Yes," Will said, pulling him in for a kiss, "we are."

Gabi narrowed her eyes and folded her arms. "Why?"

"Because I asked nicely?" Will replied.

"For me and Ari to 'have a sleepover' tonight?"

"Please?"

"Look, if you and Sonny want the place to yourself then you just need to ask."

"Sonny and I would like the place to ourselves tonight," Will asked, "Well I would. Sonny doesn't know anything about tonight and you can't tell him anything. Promise?"

"Fine, promise," Gabi laughed. "One of us should have a fun evening. Ari and I will go stay at Rafe's."

"Thank you," Will enthused. "Also... text when you're coming home?"

"I will stay away until summoned, how's that?"

"Sounds like a plan. Now. One final favour?"

Gabi sighed. "What?"

"I have a shopping list," he said, "and I have no idea what half of this stuff is and—"

"Fine," she said, taking the piece of paper from his outstretched hand. "I-- Wow. Going all out. You take Ari, I'll go shopping."

"But—"

"Will, this will involve trips to three, no four different stores. I can do it quickly with the baby or not quickly with. Spend the day with your daughter while I try really hard not to think about what your night is going to be like."

"I need to go shopping too—"

"Well tell me, I'll get it while I'm out."

"No, it's... personal."

"What—" Gabi started before pulling a face. "I do not want to know, OK? You never, ever, ever even hint at that again, you understand?"

Will just laughed and nodded. "It's fine, I'll take her."

"He'd better appreciate this," Gabi muttered.

"Sure he will," Will grinned.

"So... you're not firing me?" Luke asked.
"No, just closing for the night. Private party," Sonny said as he affixed the sign to the door.

"Surely you need staff for that?"


"Sounds interesting."

"OK, so we're... sort of friends, right?" Sonny asked, gesturing between the two of them. "The last few weeks haven't been that bad?"

"Yeah, we're good. Why?"

"Because I'm swearing you to secrecy. You can't tell Will about tonight, can't even hint at anything. It's a surprise."

"A romantic night in with the club to yourselves? Why does that need to be a surprise?" Luke asked.

"You remember that delivery I was waiting on a while back? The box?"

"Yeah," Luke said carefully. He watched as Sonny pulled it from a bag and set it on the bar. "Oh. Is that...?"

"Yup."

"Tonight?"

"With a bit of luck."

"I don't think you need luck," Luke said, "not for a certainty."

~~

Will put the finishing touches to the table and then checked the time on his cell. Sonny's shift would have finished half an hour ago, so if his calculations were right then he would be walking through that door any minute now.

Any minute.

He'd be walking up the corridor, getting his keys out, and opening the door... now.

Give or take a minute or so.

Fifteen of those minutes later he grabbed his phone.

To: Sonny
Hey, you home soon? Xx

From: Sonny
Still at club. Can you come over? Xxx

To: Sonny
Stuck here. :( How long until you're home? Xx

From: Sonny
Not sure. Please come over? There's something here for you.
To: Sonny  
What?

From: Sonny  
Come over and find out. Xx

Frustrated at getting nowhere he called up the dial menu. "Can't you just bring it home?" he asked when Sonny answered. "I've got dinner ready."

"You didn't have to do that," Sonny replied.

"I'll keep I guess. It was nothing fancy," he then lied.

"Come down, please?" Sonny asked. "I promise I'll make it up to you."

Will shot a look at the table; candles ready to be lit, glasses waiting for drinks to be poured, plates and linen and then the little box in the middle of it all. "How long?" he asked.

"Not long, I promise."

"Then we can come home for dinner?" Will asked. "We have the place to ourselves."

"What?"

"Gabi and Ari are out for the night. I thought we could... take advantage."

"Will—"

"I'll be there as soon as I can."

"No, wait, don't worry about it," Sonny said, "I'll be home soon."

"No, I'll be down in a bit. If you're stuck there—"

"It's fine, wait there, I'll be home soon. Love you."

"Love you too."

Will knew what 'soon' meant when it came to work. If Sonny had been caught up at the end of his shift then his version of 'soon' could be anything up to an hour. Sighing he grabbed his jacket and left, figuring some free pre-engagement drinks would be required.

~~

Club Closed  
Private Party  
The Management apologizes for any inconvenience or disappointment caused

"Sonny?" Will opened the door and stepped into the empty club. "Hello?"

Silence greeted him. It wasn't until he rounded the bar that he saw the table, beautifully set out, with a bottle chilling beside it. Laughing a little to himself he moved forward and then he stopped.
In his pocket his cell began to ring.

"Where are you?" Sonny asked when Will answered.

"The club," Will replied, not taking his eyes off the table.

"I'm... at home," Sonny admitted.

"So..."

"Yeah..."

Will couldn't help but grin when he said, "Looks like we had the same idea."

"Your dinner looks amazing, but—"

"No, Son. The same idea," he stressed. "Middle of the table, behind your napkin."

There was a moment while Sonny looked, and then Will heard a soft intake of breath. "Oh. OK."

"Stay there, I'm coming home."

"Meet you halfway," Sonny countered, and Will could hear the smile in his voice.

"Son? Bring it."

"You too."

Will ended the call quickly and grabbed the small box from the middle of the table before running out of the club as quickly as he could.

~~

They met, without ceremony or fanfare, about halfway between the club and their apartment. Both of them were a little breathless, both of them couldn't stop grinning at the other. They slowed to a quick pace and met halfway again, immediately falling into a kiss which both asked their question and gave their obvious answer. In one of their hands they held the other's box.

"Wait, are you sure?" Sonny asked, pulling back. "If this is because I—"

"No, no, no," Will replied, punctuating his response with short kisses. "This is because I want to. Because I get it with you, I get why people do this. Why they take that step and make those promises. I've told you, so many times, that I want to spend the rest of my life with you and that I will love you with every breath I have until my last one... But it doesn't feel like it's enough. You... you are my heart, Sonny, my heart and my world. This is where I belong, this is what I want. You are what I want. And I want to spend my forever with you. So... marry me?"

Sonny smiled softly at him, kissed him once, and then whispered against his lips, "I have been halfway around the world, seen and done so much, and putting all of those seconds and feelings and experiences doesn't even come close to matching what I feel when I'm with you. I've seen the world, but you and Arianna are mine. You're my home, I came here and I found my home and nothing is ever, ever going to make me leave it. I want to marry you. I want us to be as entwined as it's possible for two people to be. I want to stand beside you, to lie with you, to live and love with you for every day I have. And I will love you for every day that I get."

"You should have gone first," Will laughed. "But you've not—"
"All those times I never thought you'd be mine," Sonny continued, "I drove myself mad thinking about what it would be like if I was that lucky. About how things would be and what we would be. And we're not what I imagined. We're better, stronger, and... and I had no idea what love actually was," he laughed, pressing his forehead against Will's. "But I imagined this. I imagined, I hoped that one day I would be so lucky as to ask you this."

Will nodded briefly, the slightest dip of his head in permission. This? This could be his.

"Will... I could make some speech but it wouldn't be enough. There will never be any words to be enough. All I have is... Marry me."

Will managed to breathe his agreement before they were kissing again, out on the street where everyone could see but they didn't care. Their arms were tight around the other, a hand holding a ring that was now theirs.

~~

Will tried very hard to keep his gaze on the ceiling when he felt Sonny's hand creep across his chest. His breathing was only just returning to normal but there was still that sense of not quite there for his arms and legs.

"You OK?" Sonny asked.

"Yeah," Will breathed.

"We should have engagement sex more often," Sonny laughed before kissing Will's shoulder, then his collar bone. "We seem to be good at it."

Will laughed and moved his arm so he could wrap it around Sonny, who was soon draped across his chest. "I'd like to think we're good at a lot of things."

"And only getting better."

For a moment Will allowed his thoughts to drift. They were engaged, they would be married. He pictured what the ceremony would be like, how cute Ari would look in her dress, then the idea bloomed into a future vision of the three of them, joined by another child. A boy with dark hair and eyes to match and suddenly in the present day Will felt like he was going to cry. Not only for how much he wanted that scene, but for all the time he'd wasted on being scared of the two greatest things in his life; his love for Sonny and the joys of being a parent.

Then, as minds are want to work that way, he suddenly came up with a different thought and he froze.

"...Will?" Sonny asked with a note of serious concern in his voice.

When he came back to himself he realised where Sonny's hand was, low on his hip, and he realised what it must have looked like. "Just thinking," he tried to clarify. "Please, feel free to distract me."

"Can't have been a good thought to get that reaction."

"It doesn't matter."

"Will—"

"No, really. It's not something we should talk about now."
"Will, please. Don't do that."

"I'm saying not now, not... not ever. Just trust me on this, it's not a bedroom conversation."

"But it's affected you so—"

"Fine," Will said. "I was just thinking about how your mom is going to react to this. And then how my mom will react to her reaction. And then I pretty much started dividing up the whole town into those who will be happy for us and those who won't and how we could have those as our sides in the church. Only then I realised that while we can legally get married we can't do it in a church, which then made me wonder if Uncle Eric would even be able to come or if he'd have to follow some party line which Mom would not be happy about, and Grandma Marlena will try and keep the peace but that wouldn't work and I froze because I realised that this is not going to be easy."

As he talked Sonny had rolled away and was now lying parallel to him on the bed, staring up at the same spot on the ceiling. "Oh."

"Yeah. So that's a mood killer."

"You know," Sonny said, turning his head to face Will, "maybe Mom will be OK with it."

"Sure. And maybe we'll have a wedding which goes without any hitches. But seeing as we're going to be Salem's first same-sex marriage, I'm not betting on it."

"I..." Sonny started, but then he realised that while pessimistic, Will made good points. "We'll think of something."

"Like how we're going to tell our without World War Three erupting?"

"...Like that."

~~

In the end a plan was formed. Sonny called Luke and threatened him, under pain of dismissal, not to mention anything about closing the club. Gabi was easily convinced that they just had a date night to themselves so beyond that no one knew any differently. The rings which had been so excitedly placed on fingers the night before were sadly removed and hidden away until they could get the biggest hurdle of them all over with.

The parental announcement.

They agreed on somewhere public where there was limited chance of anyone making that big a scene. (To which Will had rolled his eyes and asked if Sonny even knew their moms at all.) It would be informal, nothing that would tip them off. Lunch at the club, a simple pre-Christmas get together. Sonny arranged for his parents to be there, Will asked his, trying to tactfully dissuade his mom from bring EJ out of no other reason than they agreed parents first.

They agreed that they'd have to get it over with quickly, so they'd greet, seat, then just tell them.

And it was such a good plan. In theory.

When Sonny pushed open the door to the club his mom's voice was loud and unmistakable as she declared, "Well I for one hope it's not."

"How can you say that?" Sami replied. "Our sons are in love, they're happy. Why wouldn't they
"And tie Sonny down further than he already is?" Adrienne snapped back. "He's young, they have plenty of time to figure out what they want."

"They already have: each other," Sami bit back.

"That doesn't mean they're getting engaged."

"Dammit," Sonny muttered to Will as they hung back just outside the door. "Our parents are smart."

"And angry," Will commented.

"Am I the only one who saw this coming?" Sami asked. "As soon as same sex marriage was legalised in this state I knew it was going to happen. And it will happen, no matter what you have to say."

"Sonny is smarter than that. He'll know there's no rush," Sami said. "I'm right, aren't I?"

Justin gave a resigned look to his wife and just shrugged. "I think Sonny's capable of making his own decisions."

"You're very quiet on the subject, Lucas," Adrienne continued. "What's your take?"

"My take? I think... I think Will and Sonny love each other, they're good for each other, and if – that's a big if mind – they are about to tell us they're engaged then it's our jobs as their parents to be supportive of that."

"No if about it," Sami said. "As soon as Will asked EJ not to come I knew it had to be this. Parents only, right?"

"You don't know that, Sami," Lucas said. "Adrienne is right about something; they're young and they have time. They're new parents and that's a lot to deal with."

"Will's a new parent," Adrienne corrected.

"Now come on," Justin said, "you know how much Sonny adores Arianna."

"That's not quite the same as being a parent, is it?"

"So what? Biology is the only thing that matters?" Sami asked.

"Maybe not in your world," Adrienne bit back. "But most of us don't change who plays daddy."

"OK, enough," Lucas said, stepping in front of Sami to prevent her from lunging at Adrienne. "I think it best we just wait for the boys and see what it is we're dealing with."

Outside the club Sonny let the door close and then stepped back to lean against the wall. "So this won't be fun."

"I don't want to go in there," Will said. "I think our moms will actually kill each other."

"So what? We don't tell them?" Sonny sighed, letting his eyes close as he tried to think this through. Will stopped. "Why not?" he asked.
Sonny opened one eye and looked at him.
"Why do we have to tell them?"

Sonny opened his other eye. "Because they're our parents. Because it's what engaged people do."
"Unless they elope."

"No. No way. I am not doing this quickly and slyly. Especially after hearing that," he said, gesturing to the door. "I am standing up in front of everyone and I am not hiding the fact that I love you and want to marry you."

"Even if I am tying you down too young?"

"You're younger than me," Sonny pointed out.

"Or making you play dad to my daughter?"

"You don't have to make me do that," Sonny laughed.

"So why tell them?" Will asked. "We don't have to tell anyone, not really."

"So we have... what? A secret engagement?"

"Yeah," Will grinned. "We plan it all, and then just invite them to a party. They turn up, surprise! We're getting married. That way our moms don't spend the next few months tearing into each other, stressing out our entire families as well as making our lives hell."

"Not to mention the fact that your mom would want to organise everything," Sonny said. "We'd have to fight for everything we wanted."

"But not if she didn't know."

"This feels wrong somehow."

"Look, it's simple. If we want our moms to survive to the wedding, and for our dads to not lose their sanity trying to keep them in line? We don't tell them. If we want our wedding done the way we want it? We can't tell them. And not telling them doesn't mean we're hiding or we're ashamed or anything. It just means that we're in control of our lives and we're making our own decisions."

"...Fine," Sonny sighed. "But you know that this town is a fish bowl. As soon as we start booking..."

"We'll figure something out," Will said. He held out his hand to Sonny. "Come on, let's go diffuse this situation."

"And say what?"

"I have a plan," Will grinned as Sonny took his hand. They walked into the club that way, a nervous silence having fallen over their parents once they were spotted.

"Everything OK?" Sami asked as soon as they were seated. "I must admit it's got us all guessing why you've brought the parents together."

"Oh it's nothing," Will said dismissively. "It's just we wanted to let you know about Christmas."
“Ch-Christmas?” Sami stuttered.

Trying to ignore the satisfied (and slightly relieved) smile on Adrienne's face, Will calmly explained that they didn't want to move Ari from home to home on her first Christmas, so they were going to have a small one at home. They would do the family thing Christmas Eve, and of course they were all welcome to join them Christmas Day morning, but after that it would just be the four of them.

As they left the club Sonny pulled on their joined hands, bringing Will in for a lingering kiss. "Should I be worried that you came up with that lie quickly and easily?"

"Oh, it's not a lie," Will said. "Gabi and I talked about it last night. Rafe's still recovering, and I think part of her wants to avoid Nick? And with our families being as close as they are," he said with a small laugh, "we thought it best that we do our Christmas. Together. Is that OK? I know family's a big thing for you."

"It is," Sonny said. "But you're my family so it works."
Secrets

The third time the promise was broken was when they were on the verge of bigger promises.

~~

Will closed the door behind his uncle and leant against it. "So... is there some kind of priest-nephew privilege we can invoke here? Do I need to give you a dollar or say something that will mean you can't tell anyone about what we're about to talk about?"

Eric laughed as he took a seat. "If you don't want me to tell anyone then I won't. You have my word. Although now I'm worried."

"Ignore him, he's being dramatic," Sonny said as he handed Eric a coffee. "But the secrecy bit is important."

"Not sure why, I assume I'm here to talk about Arianna's christening?"

"Not exactly," Will said as he sat next to his uncle. "And by that I mean not at all. See... Sonny and I... we're... well... we're getting married."

"Congratulations!" Eric enthused. "You two are clearly made for each other, and I know you're going to have a long and brilliant life together. Although I don't know why that's a secret."

At the same time Will replied "Mom" as Sonny said "Sami", prompting another laugh from Eric.

"No but seriously, she can't know," Will said. "She'd only take over and we'd have no chance of doing this our way. And Adrienne has some... interesting views on me."

"Are you planning to do the whole thing in secret?" Eric asked.

"No, we're going to invite them to the wedding," Sonny said, perching on the back of the couch and putting a hand on Will's shoulder. "We just want to get everything organised first."

"Good plan."

"And we're hoping you can help."

"How?" Eric asked. Then he noticed Will's expectant look. "Oh, Will... look... I know things have changed in terms of the law and general acceptance but—"

"Oh no, no, we know that," Will said quickly, "and we knew right away that the church would be out. I was just hoping that... you... weren't?"

"Me?"

"We're planning to have the ceremony in the Square," Sonny explained, "and we'd love for you to be involved."

"Only if you want, and we'll totally understand if you'd rather not," Will said quickly. "I know that you're OK with this, with us, and are very much in our corner. But I know that your faith and the Church is important to you as well and if you can't do this because of that then I get it, we get it. I, we... just wanted to ask."
"I'm honoured," Eric said. "Really."

"It wouldn't be religious," Sonny explained, "just a simple ceremony. No collar required, just a decent suit. We wouldn't even call you Father if you'd like."

"Can I think about it?" Eric asked. "See if I can without ruffling too many feathers? The Bishop is understanding and somewhat liberal, but even he has his limits."

"Yeah, sure, yeah, of course, totally understand," Will babbled and then caught himself. "Sorry. Yeah. Just, not a word to Mom please?"

"I promise, not a word."

"Thank you."

"So, when did this engagement happen?"

"Last week," Sonny said.

"We have rings too," Will grinned. "They make guy engagement rings."

"So I hear," Eric laughed. "Although can I ask what is probably a really tactless question?"

"Shoot," Sonny replied.

"Who proposes to whom when it's two guys?"

"Actually," Will laughed, looking up at Sonny and grinning, "we sorta... proposed to each other."

"Two dinners, two rings, two locations and it happened in neither."

"And at the same time?" Eric asked. "How did that even come about?"

"You got time?" Will asked.

"For a good story, always."

~~

Dropping the last of the glasses on the bar, Luke eyed Sonny suspiciously. He'd spent the majority of the night on his iPad and messaging back and forth with Will.

"I know what you're up to," Luke said, enjoying the momentary flash of panic on his boss' face. "You've barely been off that thing all night."

"So?"

"So you and Will. Planning anything special?"

"...What?"

"That would be a yes," he grinned.

"Nothing special."

"Which means that it is."
"Luke—"

"You bought a ring."

"You seen Will wearing it?" Sonny challenged.

"That doesn't mean anything," Luke grinned. "If I guess you have to tell me."

"No I don't."

"Those are the rules."

Sonny gave a small scoff. "What rules?"


"No."

"Which means yes."

"Don't ever use that line on anyone. Ever."


"So do you. And like with a partner, no means no."

"Which you'd only say if you had something to hide. Rules of the game."

"The rules which mean I have to be honest?"

"But you have something to hide. So you'd lie."

"I'm confused."

"...So am I," Luke admitted. "Look, you and Will are planning something and the only screen I saw involved catering so I'm thinking party. And it's neither of your birthdays, Ari is eight months old, and the only Christmas parties we're doing involve drinks so—"

"We both have parents," Sonny said. "And siblings. Cousins. Two shared cousins actually. But my cousin Stephanie? It's her birthday next month."

"Oh yes, that cousin you always talk about, who's always hanging out here," Luke droned. "No birthdays, no anniversaries, no events. There is no reason for you to be throwing a party, and yet you are. So I'm thinking engagement party."

"Still no."

"Is that a lie no?"

"That's a no," Sonny said. "It's a mind-your-own-business no. It's also a I-will-fire-you-if-you-keep-this-up no."


"Weird? You hit on my boyfriend and kissed him. What would be weird about that?"

"You promised you'd stop bringing that up!" Luke half-heartedly protested. "I hate you."
"I know. The floor needs doing."

"I'll find out eventually, you know that?"

"Floor. Now."

~~

"Sorry," Sonny whispered as he closed the bedroom door gently behind him and Will sat up slightly. "Didn't want to disturb you."

"Wasn't asleep," he replied groggily.

"You didn't have to stay up."

"Wanted to."

"Well I'm not complaining," Sonny laughed as he kicked off his shoes, stripped down to his boxers, and climbed into bed. "I'm just sorry I couldn't get home sooner."

"It was busy, I know that," Will hummed as he shuffled over. "At least you're earning lots of money to pay for this wedding."

"Did you get the catering sorted?"

"Yeah, I emailed the menus over when I got back. The invoice will come to the club, they have our cells as contact numbers and are under strict instructions to discuss nothing with anyone who doesn't provide the password."

"Same as last time?"

"Yeah."

"I'm sure that weddings are not supposed to be military operations," Sonny said. "But it'll be worth it."

"I know," Will replied as he curled in more to Sonny's side.

"I'm sorry I didn't get to spend as much time with you tonight as I wanted."

"It's fine, really."

"No, it's not, we were supposed to talk and—you're wearing the ring," he said as his fingers found Will's. "Why are you wearing the ring?"

"OK, don't judge me," Will said as he sat up. When Sonny gave him a why would I? look he laughed at himself. "When I was at the club earlier and it was getting busy? This group of guys came in, and they were... they were talking about you."

"About me?"

"Yeah. Took me a moment to work out that a couple of them are gay. Anyway, one of them was saying how... how it was a shame you were off the market."

"It is such a tragedy that I am no longer available," Sonny quipped. "I hear that the gay community has declared a mourning period in which they will forgo their usual clichéd bright attire for
something sombre, but still fashionable."

"Really? I heard they're finally glad that you and your lovesick sighs aren't cluttering up the gar bars anymore."

"When was I lovesick?" Sonny laughed.

"Always Will-this and Will-that. You pining after me was, apparently, quite tragic."

"But with a happy ending," Sonny whispered, pressing a kiss onto the top of Will's head.

"Yeah, but... Did you know that you 'settled' for me?"

"What?"

"Yeah. Me, Ari, this life? Such a comedown for the 'Great Adventurer' who was the catch of the century."

"Will—"

"And I just wanted to, you know, grab them and tell them that they don't know what they're talking about," he said quickly, pressing a hand to Sonny's chest. "I wanted to tell them that they have... no idea what our life is like. That if they just saw you with Ari? If they saw us together? They'd know that you'd not settled for anything."

When Sonny grinned at him he couldn't help but laugh. "Hey, you've been telling me for ages that you love me and you're happy here, and now I'm actually paying attention you laugh at me?"

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. You were saying?"

"It was just... Once upon a time those comments? They'd have got to me and I'd have spent so long obsessing over it. But tonight? Tonight I knew... I knew, without any doubt that you love me, that you want this, want me, and we're getting married. I guess I just wanted to... have the ring on. Not to remind me but... to celebrate it. That's the whole point of these, isn't it? I mean, beyond the marking of territory," he laughed. "It's a promise of forever."

"I can understand that," Sonny whispered, his fingers running over the metal. "I hate not wearing mine. Actually—" he said, reaching over to pull at and then fumble through the drawer. "OK, so this is awkward with only one hand," he laughed.

"Let me," Will said, using his free hand to open the box and lift the ring out. "You know, I wish we could just... tell people. But then," he continued as he slipped the ring on Sonny's finger, "the grief and hassle would not be worth it." When the ring was in place he lifted Sonny's hand to his mouth and kissed it gently. "Few more weeks and it'll be wedding rings and... yeah."

"Such a powerful and strong ending," Sonny laughed.

"Thank you, I worked really hard on it," Will laughed, dipping his head for a kiss.

~~

"I think you need to take a break," Luke said. "Before that boyfriend of yours explodes."

"What?" Sonny asked.

"He's been at the end of the bar for ten minutes now and he is acting like a kid on Christmas Eve. So
"Take five, go see what he wants, I'll cover here."

"Yes, boss," Sonny quipped. He handed the tray to Luke and headed over to the door where Will was waiting.

"He said yes," Will blurted out.

"I... what?"

"He said yes."

"You asking someone else to marry you now?" Sonny joked.


"Really?" Sonny laughed, grabbing him into a hug. "That's perfect!"

"Yeah, he's cleared it with his boss or something. No collar, no religious stuff, party line and all that, but he said yes."

"Everything's coming together," Sonny whispered in his ear. "It's going to be perfect."

"I'm marrying you," Will whispered. "Everything else doesn't matter."

"You say that after we've laid out thousands of dollars for the 'party' that's shutting down the club?" Sonny laughed. "So what now? We just nip off to the courthouse?"

"Yeah, you free now?"

"No, sorry, I'm swamped here."

"Oh, OK. Another time?"

"Yeah, I'm free in a few weeks? Got a whole day set aside not long after New Year so we can make a thing of it?"

"Sounds awesome. Do I need a new tux?"

"If you want. I mean, I think you look hot in the one you have, but if you wanted to make the day a bit more special—"

"Good thing I have that fitting in a half hour then."

"That is good fortune."

"Yeah. I seem to have a lot of that with you in my life," Will whispered before pulling Sonny in for a kiss.

"I hate to interrupt this, I really do," Luke said, "but we are getting kinda busy and—"

"Yeah, coming," Sonny said. "You... go get fitted."

"See you later," Will said, kissing his cheek.

"Fitted?" Luke asked.

"It's nothing."
"I wouldn't call his wedding suit nothing, but sure, you keep up the dumb act. It suits you."

"I—what?"

"OK, I know it's a big secret and a surprise for your families and I'm not going to ruin it for you or blackmail you or anything like that."

"How... how did you find out?"

"Well let's see. You bought a ring, you did a whole romantic night and then there was nothing. And at first I thought it was just that it didn't happen or he turned you down, but then there's that mysterious party that's booked out the whole club and anyone involved in catering it won't speak to anyone but you."

"Why does that mean--?"

"By itself? It doesn't," Luke said, "but when you have your mom going on about how you and Will getting married is one of the signs of the apocalypse, and from what I've seen and heard of Sami I know that the last thing you and Will would want is her getting anywhere near your wedding plans, and then there was that morning when I was a bit early for my shift and you'd forgotten to take your ring off."

"Luke—"

"I'm just saying this because I like you guys and you need someone to run interference, deflect attention, and just generally help you out. Also maybe take messages when these guys call because you're not here a lot and you leave your cell lying around too much for someone planning a surprise wedding."

"I... thank you."

"Hey, I'm the one who made a move on the groom. One of the grooms. Gotta make it up somehow."

"You're doing just fine," Sonny laughed.

"So yeah. You need anything, I'm your guy. " Luke then stopped short and held up a hand. "But I do have one condition."

"What?" Sonny asked with trepidation.

"I work bar at the reception."

"What?"

"Do you know how well people tip at a wedding reception? I'm funding my travels, remember?"

"Fine, yes, you work the reception."

"Deal."

As Luke returned to work, effortlessly serving (and flirting) with the girls waiting at the bar, Sonny sighed and shook his head.

To: Will
Luke knows about the wedding. When he's not working bar he's apparently an amateur detective. Forced him into secrecy, just wanted you to know.

From: Will
Thanks for that. I jumped and the guy stuck me with a pin. I'm maimed for life.

To: Will
I'll kiss it better tonight.

From: Will
And this fitting just got SO much more awkward.

"Will?" Luke asked as Sonny pocketed his cell.

"Yeah, just letting him know you know."

"Who else knows?"

"No one, and it's staying that way, OK?"


When Sonny arrived back at the apartment block he saw Will waiting for him by the door, almost bouncing on his feet.

"You look happy," Sonny said.

"Why wouldn't I be? My extremely adorable, kind and sexy fiancé agreed to kiss my war wound better."

"Oh, it's a war wound now is it?"

"Seriously, you should have seen the size of it. I think there are smaller swords."

"Then you were very brave," Sonny mocked, grabbing Will's hand and pulling him in for a kiss as they reached their door.

Somewhere in the fumbling they managed to find a key and get the door unlocked, stumbling inside and only pulling apart when Gabi coughed loudly to get their attention.

"Sorry, didn't know you were home," Will said as they pulled apart.

"Obviously," she mocked. "And I'm going out, but not until we've talked."

"OK, about what?"

"About the fact that you two are getting married and haven't said anything to anyone."

"OK, can you just listen to me first?" Will asked as he sat Gabi down. "You know what my mom is like, how she just... takes over. I mean you've heard her go on about Ari's first Christmas, all the
things she wants to do. Can you imagine what she'd be like with a wedding, my wedding to plan?"

"And that's before we get onto my mom," Sonny chimed in.

"We want to do this our way, we want our wedding to be about us. No family dramas, no warring mothers."

"No involvement from anyone?" Gabi asked.

"It's not that we don't want people to be involved. Just... on the day," Will said. "No Sami taking over every last detail, no Adrienne making comments and starting World War Three. Just... me and Sonny. Our wedding, our way."

Gabi sighed, looking from Will to Sonny.

"It's not that we like keeping people in the dark," Sonny continued, "it's just so much easier this way. We'd gathered our parents together, fully intending to tell them, and... well—"

"It didn't go well," Will said. "It won't go well so we want to give them the smallest window possible in which to make any issues or scenes or turn this into a huge production starring themselves."

"I know it's a lot to ask, but please. Don't say anything to anyone. Not even Rafe."

"But people will be so happy for you guys and—" Gabi started.

"It's not about that," Will said. "This is about me and Sonny maintaining ours and our family's sanity while getting the wedding that we want."

"And right now that's only going to happen if you agree to keep it quiet," Sonny said.

"Nice bit of emotional blackmail there," Gabi said, playfully narrowing her eyes. "Just when I was starting to like you."

"Look at it this way. We all know what Sami's like when it comes to outfits, yes? Nothing but the best. Remember that outfit she bought for Arianna's coming home? How awful it was? Imagine her picking Ari's little flower girl outfit?"

Gabi shuddered at the memory of so much silk and lace and she sighed. "OK, fine," she relented, giving a small shriek when Will wrapped her up into a hug. "One condition, one condition."

"What?" Will asked.

"Can I be there when you tell your mom? Because I have to see to look on her face when she realises she's missed out on all this planning!"

"Yes, fine, whatever," Will laughed.

"So when's the big day?"

"Just after New Year," Sonny said, sitting beside Will and draping his arm over Will's shoulder. "The plan is to invite everyone to a post-holiday family gathering, then tell them what's really going on."

"But not a word," Will said, grabbing Gabi's hand and squeezing it gently. "We mean it. Not to anyone, please. Just... two people know now who shouldn't and we'd like to keep it that way."
"One question though," Sonny started, "how did you find out?"

"Leaving aside the fact you left the marriage license application on the kitchen table," Gabi said, earning Sonny a hit from Will, "the other night you guys got up with Ari and—"

"The rings," Sonny sighed. "We are getting really bad at this."

"Right, that's it. We can't risk it, not even in here," Will declared, "because next time it won't be a friend who will agree to stay quiet. The rings stay in the box. No matter how much we miss having them on."

"It's OK, we just have a little longer to go."

"Hey, I'll keep you guys right," Gabi assured. "Wait, you did say Ari's going to be the flower girl, right? You're not leaving your daughter out of this?"

"Of course not," Sonny replied. "Found her the most beautiful little dress, she'll be adorable."

"She always is," Gabi countered. "Can I see it? That way I know what I should be wearing. Can't upstage my own little girl."

"You're really OK with this?" Will asked when Sonny had disappeared into their room.

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"Because when we came home you looked ready to kill us and I don't think it was over the fact we'd left you out the loop."

"It's nothing, I was being daft."

"Tell me," Will said, giving her a playful shove with his shoulder.

"No, look, it's daft, it really is. Things were always going to change, I just thought I'd have more than two weeks' notice."

"Change?"

"Well... yeah. I mean, you guys are getting married, Will. It's a big deal, trust me. I know mine was a bit of a disaster from start to finish but there were some good moments. He wasn't that bad a husband, sometimes anyway. But believe me, it changes things. In a good way."

"I figured that," Will said, "but there's more to it. Tell me."

"I guess it's just the timing of it. The holiday season, it'll be hard to find somewhere soon—"

"Whoa, find somewhere? What are you talking about? Are you—are you moving out?"

"Well, yeah, I'll have to," Gabi said. "You guys—"

"Are not kicking you out," Will said firmly. "If you're going because we're getting married? Gabi, no," he said, pulling her into a hug. "It doesn't have to change that."

"But you—"

"No. Tell her, Sonny," Will continued, noticing Sonny's return. "Tell her she's not moving out just because we're getting married."
"Well we'd tie you to the doorframe but my dad tells me that sort of thing is frowned on," Sonny quipped.

"You... really don't want me to go?"

"Of course not," Will said. "In fact I'd pictured Ari staying until she went to college, maybe even after then."

"Yeah, we'll take it one step at a time," Gabi laughed.

"This is your home," Sonny said, "for as long as you want it."

~~

They left the conversation there, but Will knew it wasn't settled. Gabi seemed to just nod and move on, asking about Ari's dress and flowers and was there anything she could do to help as if she'd not had a minor meltdown over potentially being evicted.

"I'll go," Will whispered that night when they heard Ari crying.

"Ga...i," Sonny muttered, his face pressing into the pillow a little more.

"Go back to sleep," Will said, kissing his forehead, "I'll be back soon."

When he stepped out of their room Gabi was already up, Ari on one hip while her free hand was digging around in the cupboard where the bottles were kept.

"Next one over," Will said quietly as he lifted the fussing baby from her mother. "There's a clean one at the back I think."

"Thanks," Gabi said. "I don't know how she gets through them so quickly. We must have like a hundred of them. For someone so small you have a lot of stuff," she joked as she grabbed the juice from the fridge and poured some in.

"Yeah, almost as much as your mom," Will added. "Wow, she's really warm."

"I think I went overboard with the blankets," Gabi said. "I don't know, it's her first winter and I don't want her to be cold."

"Is Mommy trying to cook you, is that it?" Will asked Ari as he settled her against his hip and took the offered bottle. "Let's see if we can cool you down a little."

Ari took the bottle quickly and began drinking, almost immediately happier.

"Remind me to do some boiled water for her in the morning. I can't believe I didn't replace that jug. I mean, I was going to but I had to move some papers and I... Well, I forgot."

"Hey, it doesn't matter. Ari loves her juice, don't you? And it's not like midnight juice drinks will become a habit so this once won't hurt." He looked over at Gabi who still seemed rattled. "You can put the water on now if you want," Will said.

"No, go back to bed. I got this."

"I think you'll find I have this," Will joked. "We're good here, aren't we, sweetie?"

Gabi reached out a finger and gently stroked Ari's cooling cheek as she nuzzled in a little closer to
Will's chest. "She loves you."

"Feeling is very much mutual."

"I'm sorry about before. I guess I just... panicked over being on my own."

"Hey, you're a great mom."

"If I am it's because I have your help and support. You and Sonny. I don't know if I'm cut out to be a single mom."

"Well you're not so stop worrying. We meant it earlier, you don't have to move out."

"Yeah, but we can't stay here forever can we? Ari's growing up, she'll need her own room soon—"

"I know," Will said, "we're already looking at bigger places."

"What?"

"Well I like the idea of a house with a garden for her to play in. We were going to wait until after the wedding and then talk to you about it. I know he arranged this place for us, but the next move will very much be a family decision. Sonny's a little more realistic and thinks we'd have more luck finding a three bedroom apartment. There's a few near the club and Uni and Rafe's new place we can check out after the wedding."

"Three bedroom?"

"Well we didn't think you'd want to sleep on the couch," Will laughed softly. He lifted the near-empty bottle away from Ari and grinned as he realised she'd fallen asleep on him. "The four of us, we're a family, OK? We love you. All of us."

"I don't think Sonny—"

"He does, in his own way," Will said. "And you two certainly bonded while I was in Berkley for those trips."

"They offered you a place, didn't they?" Gabi asked. "And you turned them down. For Ari? And Sonny?"

"For all of you," Will said firmly. "I know what we have going on here is weird but it works."

"Yeah, it does doesn't it?"

"And I meant it, Gabi. I do love you and I don't want you feeling like you're in the way here. We want you here because we want you here, not because you come with Ari."

"But—"

"I mean it."

"But what happens if you and Sonny decide you want more kids? Where will Ari and I fit in with that?"

"OK, if that happens then we'll talk about it," Will laughed softly. "And Ari would be an amazing big sister and you'd be... we'll figure it out. We've figured out everything else so far haven't we?"
"I guess."

"You guess? Gabi, if we can work through Nick blackmailing me to give up my rights we can get through this. If you and Sonny can actually be in a room together without things being thrown? We can get through this. And I'm telling you, without any strings or conditions, that you and Ari will always have a home with us. Understand?"

"Thank you," Gabi whispered.

"Of course you realise that when you meet someone, fall in love and get married, we're keeping Ari, right?" Will joked.

"Hey, maybe we can get adjoining places," Gabi added, "knock through between them and put in an internal door? We could just come and go between them as we please and be one big, very weird happy family."

"I have no idea what a happy family even looks like, do you?" Will quipped.

"All I need to do is find someone who will be happy with that."

"If he's right for you and he loves you? Then it'll be fine."

"On which date should I bring up that I have a daughter with my gay ex-boyfriend, and the plan is I live with or near him and his... his husband," she added with a smile. "Oh god you're going to have a husband."

"I know," Will grinned as he pressed a kiss onto Ari's head. "There are days it just doesn't seem real. I never thought I'd have this, not-- When I first came out I told Grandma Marlena that it felt like I'd given up on some of my dreams."

"Like what?"

"Like being a dad. Getting married." He gave a small laugh. "I just wish I could go back and tell him that it really does get better, that it'll be OK."

"I'm glad it's worked out for you, Will, I really am. You deserve it."

"And so do you," Will said. "It'll happen, I promise."

"Hope so," Gabi said. "We should get her back to bed."

"Aww, do we have to? I'm happy like this," he protested with a whine.

"I bet you are but she'll sleep better in her bed."

"OK, but ease up on the blankets, OK?"

"OK," Gabi laughed as Will carefully moved Ari over to her. "Night, Will."

"Night, Gabi."

"And thanks. For everything."

Will gestured towards the sleeping baby. "I could say the same to you." When he got back into the bedroom he saw Sonny was awake, half-sitting up and waiting for him. "Sorry. Did we wake you?"
"You leaving woke me," Sonny said. "I'd have come out but it sounded like you had everything under control."

"You heard all that?"

"Yeah. She OK now?"

"I think so. I think she just feels a bit... lost, you know?" Will said as he climbed back into bed. "We should set her up with someone. So she's not at the wedding by herself."

"Yes, because nothing says sad case more than your gay ex and his fiancé arranging you a date for their wedding," Sonny mocked.

Will gave Sonny a playful hit before settling down next to him. "We're getting married," he then announced.

"You just realised that?" Sonny laughed.

"No, but... well, yeah in a way. Gabi's right, it's going to change things. It's... more, somehow. Being married, to you? It's..."

"Everything?" Sonny prompted with a whisper. "Yeah, I know."

"I really don't want to screw this up."

"You won't. Not if we keep things simple."

"How do you keep things simple in a marriage?"

"Easy," Sonny replied. "We don't forget that we started this crazy about each other. That we'd spend the entire day in bed, I'd sneak off from work if it was quiet and you'd get someone to take notes for you. We don't forget that we started this as friends who would talk to each other, ask advice, tell secrets and confessions to. We don't forget that we built a home together, are raising a child together, and are conducting a military operation to organise a wedding mere days after New Year without letting either of our families in on the fact.

"We don't forget that we chose each other, time and time again, over easier or potentially more interesting options. We don't forget that even when we weren't together we couldn't help but gravitate towards each other and when we are together? We can't help but be together," he said, running his fingers down Will's arm. "We don't forget we promised each other many things before we even got to our vows, and we have tried so hard to stick to them.

"We don't forget that we will fight and we will argue but that it doesn't mean we don't love each other. We don't forget that talking is our strength and I really hope I get to talk to you for the rest of my life."

Will stared at Sonny for a moment, trying so hard not to burst into tears, grab his face and kiss him until neither of them could breathe. "I really want to say that I love you right now," he finally managed, "but I'm beginning to realise that's not the case."

"Why not?"

"Because the first time I told you I loved you I thought I meant it. And I did. But that is nothing like what I feel for you now. And every time I've said it afterwards I've loved you more and more and I don't know. I'm looking at the rest of our lives together and how I feel about you now and... I just... I
really, really like you, OK?" he laughed. "Because if I keep falling for you more and more with every day then I can't be in love with you. This can't be love, OK? Not yet."

"Any idea on when you might be?" Sonny grinned as he started to push Will onto his back.

"No, but we should work on that," Will replied as his arm snaked around Sonny's neck to pull him down.

~~

Christmas and New Year seemed to disappear into the past far too quickly for either of their liking. Families were suitably distracted by Arianna's first Christmas that, with the support of Luke and Gabi, they were able to attend final fittings, pick up their rings, meet Eric for "coffee" in which they discussed ceremony details, and generally make it to the night before feeling like everything was sorted.

The Hortons were to meet at the pub, the Kiriakis side at the club. (There'd been a minor argument over who "got" Abby and JJ, and in the end Sonny won out.) From there each of them would break the news, lead them to the square, get hitched, then back to the club and party until they dropped. After Gabi had asked what they'd planned to do for their wedding night (even to the point where she offered to take Ari and stay at Rafe's), they booked a night in Chicago.

(What Will didn't know was that Sonny had booked them into the Ritz. He was starting this marriage giving Will everything it was possible to give.)

Everything had been sorted, arranged, checked to the last detail and checked again. Sitting down for what felt like the first time in weeks, Sonny settled against Will's chest, his fingers idly running up and down the third finger on Will's left hand, and thinking it was the last time he'd do that without a ring in the way. A ring that wasn't going to be removed the second they were in public anyway. The last of the wine had been poured into generous glasses, the soft light from the Christmas tree danced on the ceiling, and Ari had gone down to sleep the easiest she'd done all holiday, seemingly over the worst of the cold she'd developed. Life was pretty good.

Right up until Gabi asked a very simple question.

"So, what's the plan for tonight?"

Sonny tilted his head back, craning his neck so he could sort of see Will. Then he shrugged. "This," he replied. "Wine, food, bed."

"Yeah, but not together," Gabi said as she sat on the edge of the table and stole the nearest glass. "It's bad luck."

"To see the bride before the wedding," Sonny countered. "We don't have one. We'll be fine."

"But it's tradition!" she protested. "It's supposed to make it more exciting, seeing each other for the first time when you're at the... well, OK, you're not having an altar, or even an aisle of sorts, but you know what I mean."

"I say we start as we mean to go on," Sonny said, sitting up just enough so he could reclaim his wine glass. "And that means waking up together."

"Yeah, but she's right," Will said, "it's supposed to be bad luck. And I'm not taking any chances."

"It's superstition, that's all," Sonny countered, turning a little so he could properly look at Will. "It's
an outdated tradition stemming back to arranged marriages when they would see each other for the first time at the altar, and they didn't want the groom to back out. I'm not baking out," he said, leaning in for a kiss, "so I don't care if I see you on the morning of."

"I'm not backing out either," Will said, "but that's isn't the point."

"Come on, we're not doing anything traditional. Not to mention that most of those wedding traditions relate to the bride. No old, new, borrowed, blue. No bouquets to throw. No top layer of a cake for a christening. Just us and what we want."

"What if I want this?" Will asked. "What if I want to see you for the first time as you walk into that square tomorrow?"

"Will—"

"You're right, we're not doing anything traditional. So why not do this? This one thing."

"Because..." Sonny started, then he sighed. "You see what you've started?" he asked Gabi, turning back towards her.

She reached out, took the wine glass from him. "Sorry," she said without a hint of sincerity before she took a sip.

"Where are you going to go?" Sonny asked. "You can't go to your mom's, she'll ask too many questions. So would Marlena."

"Why am I leaving? Why can't you go?"

"Where would I go then?" Sonny asked. "My parents would be even worse."

"You could stay at the club—"

"And what? Sleep on that couch in the office? I'd be cold, cramped and miserable."

"A hotel?" Will asked.

"This late on in the day, just after New Year? Good luck getting a room that won't cost as much as all the outfits put together."

Will sighed and looked down for a second, before his eyes flicked up. "I could sleep on the couch," he suggested, then he met Sonny's gaze. "But you'd just sneak out or I'll sneak in and—"

"My room," Gabi interrupted. "Will can stay in my room, I'll take the couch. That way you two spend the night apart and I'll keep watch, prevent any... sneaking around. Then in the morning Sonny can head off to the club to get ready, and Will can get ready here."

"You know, that sounds suspiciously like a plan that could work," Will said.

"There's one drawback," Sonny pouted, "I'm not spending the night with you."

"Yeah, but you get to spend every night with me afterwards."

"True," Sonny grinned, leaning forward for a kiss, "but I want this one too."

"I'm gonna go... check on Ari," Gabi muttered as she got up.
"She took my wine," Sonny realised when she'd gone.

"Are you going to make out with me in the hour and a bit we have left before midnight," Will said, "or are you going to complain about your wine?"

Sonny laughed and surged forward, pushing Will back against the arm of the couch. "I'm going to make out with you, complain about my wine, and try to convince you to stay with me tonight."

"I want to, I do," Will managed to get out between kisses, "but—" He put his hands on Sonny's chest and just held him away for a moment. "You remember what it was like, all those times I came home from California?"

"Of course I do," Sonny grinned.

"Well we'll get that tomorrow. But it'll be so much more because... Because we'll be married, Son. I'll be your husband. And I just want it all to mean... something."

"It always means something."

"Yeah, but..."

"I know, I know," Sonny said quietly, indicating his defeat. "OK. You'll stay in Gabi's room and I'll stay in ours and I will see you in the square tomorrow. But I warn you, if I've not seen or held or kissed you in hours then I won't be held responsible for my actions when we are together, OK?"

"OK," Will laughed as he moved his hand and allowed Sonny to close the gap between them.

---

Gabi had literally set the timer before disappearing into her room to collect the last of her things for the night.

"I still think this is stupid," Sonny muttered as his arms tightened around Will's waist. "I hate it when you're not there."

"I hate it too," Will whispered, "but it's one night."

"You can still change—"

"Not happening," he laughed, pulling back enough to kiss him gently.

"I love you so much," Sonny whispered against Will's mouth. "You have no idea. Some days even I don't realise how much I... I had no idea it was possible to love someone this much."

"I had no idea it was possible to be this happy," Will replied.

"This is it, you know? The start of our forever. Rest of our lives together."

"I... thank you," Will breathed. "I'm going to forget to say it tomorrow, I know I am, but... thank you. For everything."

Sonny mouthed Will's name before moving in for the kiss, slow and sensual, until Gabi's alarm went off signalling their final 60 seconds. Reluctantly they pulled apart, moving just past the door frames of the room, but their finger remained linked until Gabi physically separated them a little after midnight, sending them off to bed.
To: Will
I miss you. :(  

From: Will
Go to sleep.

To: Will
I can't sleep when you're not here.

From: Will
I can't sleep when you're texting me all the time.

To: Will
Sneak in here? I think Gabi's asleep.

From: Will
No. Go to sleep.

To: Will
I hate you.

From: Will
Love you too.

As soon as he'd sent the last text he heard the now-familiar whimper come from the bed in the corner of the room. Ari had been just as restless as him all night; he waited a few seconds before realising she wasn't going to settle, and so got up to see to her.

"Somehow I don't think you're excited about tomorrow," he said as he lifted her up. While she did settle a little it wasn't enough for his liking and he glanced in the direction of the door. "Missing your mommy? Is that it?" When Ari buried herself into his shoulder he knew that wasn't the case. "Guess you really are getting sick, huh. Of course you would do this on your daddy's wedding day."

"She up again?"

Gabi's voice from the doorway startled Will a little, and the fact that he jumped caused Ari to whine a little in complaint. "I don't know what's up with her."

"I spoke to Kayla earlier today, she said it's probably just a cold or something. Ari's not got a proper immune system yet so little things like this will feel like the worst thing to her."

"She say anything else?"

"Usual stuff, really. Rest, fluid, Tylenol if her temperature spikes. Other than that just keep an eye on her."

"I hate it when she's not well," Will hummed, hugging her close to him. "Feel like I should do something to make it better."

"Me too. Apparently that feeling is called 'parenthood'."
"Well it sucks," Will laughs.

"We're gonna feel that for the rest of our lives," Gabi said, running her hand over Ari's back. "Every time she's sick, hurting or in pain? We'll give anything to make it better."

"And this is just a cold. What about when it's worse?" Will joked. "You know what? And this never leaves this room, OK? But I'm starting to get why my mom does all these crazy things for me. Because there's nothing I won't do for her."

"I know," Gabi smiled.

"It's OK, I got her if you want to go back to bed. The couch," he corrected.

"Wasn't asleep anyway," she said, but her yawn betrayed how tired she was. "I keep listening out for her and she's been up so many times already—"

"Get in the bed," Will ordered.

"What?"

"Get into bed," he repeated. When she'd finally done so he brought Ari over and laid her next to Gabi. Then he got in the other side so they bracketed her between them. "Better."

"Just until she settles," Gabi said.

"Stay, it's fine," Will said. "Hey, can I ask you something?"

"Sure," Gabi said as she adjusted the covers over Ari.

"Why... why did you forgive me?"

"When?"

"After we broke up, when I told you I was gay. You could have hated me and no one would have blamed you."

"You were my friend," she said, "and to be honest it actually made sense. I couldn't understand why you didn't want me, why things weren't right between us, and when you told me? It made sense. So I could either be angry at you for something you couldn't control, or I could remember that you were my friend first, and a part of me still loved you."

"Thank you."

"Why do you ask?"

"Just... curious I guess."

"About?"

"About how different things would be if you'd hated me and not had anything to do with me."

"Ah, no Ari."

"No Ari."

"I can't even imagine what that would be like," Gabi said.
"Me either, that's just... weird," he laughed. "This time last year, no, two years ago she wasn't even a thought and now I can barely remember what I did with my time."

"Me either. I guess they're right, when you become a parent your whole life changes."

"I wouldn't change it back for the world."

"Are you OK? You're... It's like you're in a really weird mood."

"Just thinking, that's all. I mean, I'm getting married in... ten hours," he said, glancing over Gabi's shoulder to the clock. "And that's supposed to be the start of a new life but you know what? I don't think it is. I know I said it's supposed to change things, and it may do, but... look at our life, Gabi. Look at what we have and what we're doing. I don't see how marriage is going to change that.

"Sonny and I... We share everything, we were already making plans for our future, for Ari's future. We've already promised each other forever."

"Don't you want to get married then?"

"Of course I do," Will said quickly. "I'm just... in some ways I guess it feels like we already are."

"You certainly act like it sometimes," Gabi quipped. "I see you two together and you're the very definition of an old married couple. And I'm so happy for you, really I am."

There was a moment's silence where Will just watched Ari sleeping between them. Then he looked up at Gabi. "I'm sorry I hurt you."

"You didn't mean to, and I know that you did everything you could to make it right."

"Except end things when I should have."

"Sometimes you need someone else to be brave. It helps you be brave for them," Gabi yawned.

"I did love you. Still do."

"Love you too," she hummed in response as her eyes drifted shut.

For a moment Will watched them both sleep; mother and daughter, two of the most important people in his life. He gently touched Arianna's forehead and smiled as he felt she was a little cooler now.

Then his phone buzzed.

From: Sonny
You're talking about me. I can tell.

To: Sonny
Only good things, I promise.

From: Sonny
The wedding can't come soon enough. I miss you.

To: Sonny
I miss you too. But it's just a few hours. We can manage that.
From: Sonny

Doesn't mean I want to.

To: Sonny

Get some sleep. It's your last night as a single man.

From: Sonny

Pfft. That was a very long time ago. I've not felt like a single man since I fell in love with you.

To: Sonny

Hopeless romantic.

From: Sonny

Hopelessly in like with you.

To: Sonny

Like?

From: Sonny

You started it.

To: Sonny.

Fine. I like you too.

~~

Will woke and stretched as carefully as he could, mindful of Arianna who was now starfished in between her parents. He caught Gabi's eye and gave a soft laugh.

"What?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"What?"

"It's just... I woke up on my wedding day in bed with someone else."

"God you are your mother," Gabi quipped.

"Take that back," Will laughed, grabbing a pillow from behind his head. "You take that back right now."

"You can't hit me, the baby is here!" she protested.

Will narrowed his eyes playfully. "Fine. Go make me a coffee."

Gabi scoffed lightly. "And why do I need to do that?"

"Because Sonny might be out there and you were the one saying we need to stay apart. So go out there and run crowd control because I need coffee and I need to pee and I'd like both of those things to happen with me seeing my husband-to-be."

"You're lucky I like you," Gabi said, but she got out of bed anyway and, after grabbing her gown, left the room.
"Hey, guess what," Will whispered to the still-sleeping Arianna. "Your daddy is getting married today. And I know you already think of Sonny as your daddy too, and he loves just as much as if you were his own. So I guess not much is changing there. But when you grow up and we talk about this, you're going to be so confused as to why we couldn't always get married. But the world is getting better, Ari. And I promise you that Sonny, your mom and I? We're going to make it the best place for you to grown up in."

He pressed a kiss to her forehead and watched her sleep, her eyes flickering with her dreams which he silently prayed were good ones.

~~

Fidgeting with his tie, Will checked his watch for the twentieth time. People had started to arrive and he was trying to avoid answering any questions until everyone was here.

"Stop looking like the condemned man," Gabi whispered as she joined him.

"Can you do me a favour?"

"Sure."

"Can you go over to the club? Check Sonny's there, everything's OK—"

"It'll be fine," Gabi said, "and he will be there."

"Can you still go and check? It's just, he left the apartment hours ago and we've not heard anything since and—"

"Breathe, Will, breathe," Gabi laughed, putting a reassuring hand on his arm. "If it'll make you feel better I'll go over and see him, but you're keeping Ari here. I think if I tried to take her away Marlena might yell at me or something."

"Probably," Will laughed nervously. "Thanks, sorry, I know I'm being—"

"You're just nervous, it's fine."

"Just... don't tell him I sent you. Make some excuse."

"Like what?"

"Like... you left something at the club? No, that won't work."

"Will, he'd see through any line or story. I'll go but he'll know why I'm going and if you're OK with that—"

"Just go, please?" Will said. "I know, I'm pathetic."

"You're adorable," Gabi said, pushing up on her toes so she could kiss his cheek. "I'll be back in bit. Don't tell Sami without me."

"No promises," Will called after her as she left.

"And what are we not promising?" Marlena asked, making Will jump.

"Nothing," Will replied nervously. "I thought you were with Ari."
"Plenty of others in line for a cuddle," she said, "your dad being the first! So I thought I'd come spend time with you."

"You're not going to cuddle me, are you?"

"Only if you want me too," she laughed. "Good New Year?"

"You saw me yesterday," Will said, "you know the answer to that already."

"Well, we're one more day into the New Year. Maybe I was talking about the year in general. Maybe things have changed since we last spoke," Marlena said, "or maybe there's something you haven't told me."

"I... don't know what you mean."

"I'm sure," she smiled. "You look very handsome today, I love this tie."

"Thanks, thought I'd make an effort for the family."

"Well, we're honoured. Is Sonny joining us?"

"Oh, yeah, later. He's got some family stuff of his own on first."

"So I hear."

"What?"

"Oh, I ran into Adrienne on my way here. She was meeting Sonny at the club. In fact, it looked like the entire Kiriakis clan were heading that way."

"Really?"

"You know, you and Sonny are a family unit in yourselves, you shouldn't have to divide up like this. The two families should come together, especially at a time like this."

"T—time like what?" Will stammered.

"The holiday season of course," Marlena smiled. "What else would I mean?"

"I... Yes, holiday season. Of course."

"You seem nervous. Is there anything I can help with?"

"No, it's fine. Just... Mom's running late and I just want everyone here."

"Well, you did say one and it's only a little after."

"I know, it's just..."

"I know," she smiled. "I remember it well."

"What?"

"Trust me, what you're feeling now? Be a million times better when you two get out there."

"I don't—" Will started.
"I love you, I know you, and I'm pretty good at reading the signs," Marlena said quietly. "And I will run whatever interference you need me to with your mother when she finds out she's been kept out of the loop."

"OK, now I really love you," Will laughed as he was pulled into a hug. "Even if you did work it out."

"Didn't take a genius to know you two would get married one day," she whispered. "You rarely see a couple so meant for each other as you are."

"Thank you."

"And once things have settled you have to let me get you a suitable gift."

"That's really not needed," Will said, pulling back. "The whole point of this was that there wouldn't be a fuss."

"I'm your grandma. I'm going to fuss whether you want it or not."

"Yeah, well, I have everything I want," Will grinned. "Yes, yes you do," she smiled. "Well, I see your mother so I guess it's time to get this started?"

"Hey, Mom," Will turned to greet her, being swept up into a hug.

"Sorry we're a little late, Allie couldn't find her coat." Sami finally let Will go and took a half step back towards EJ.

"No, it's fine, you're here now."

"We are," EJ said, "so perhaps it's time to tell us why we're here?"

Will took a deep breath before saying, "Yeah, I should. Um, everyone? Thank you so much for coming out, I know it's freezing out but I really appreciate it. I, we, that is, Sonny and I wouldn't have done this without a very good reason. And we have one. A really good one. See, we're... Sonny and me... we're getting married. Today actually."

~~

"No."

Even though Sonny had suspected that his mother wouldn't be happy with this, he'd at least hoped she'd be respectful enough of his wishes. Apparently not.

"I'm not exactly asking for your permission, Mom," he said.

"No, but you are asking me to attend. And I can't do that, not when I don't support this. I'm sorry, baby, but I can't."

"Can't what? See me happy? See me marry a guy I love more than anything?"

"I'm sorry, I can't," she said, turning and walking out of the club, almost pushing past Gabi as she went.

"Want me to go after her?" Justin offered.
Sonny clenched his jaw first and then his fists. "No," he said firmly. "She's made her decision."

"But—"

"No, Dad. I'm not wasting time on her."

"Well I'm happy for you," Justin said, "and I think you and Will are going to be very happy together."

Gabi let the door swing shut and, wrapping her coat around her, hurried back to the pub.

"I can't believe you kept this from me!" Sami protested.

"Can you blame William?" EJ laughed. "I bet the boys have planned this wedding exactly how they want it."

"Yes, thank you, we have."

"I wouldn't have stopped them from doing that," Sami said. Then she caught herself. "Well, I might have offered advice."

"And I think that advice was exactly what they were trying to avoid."

"Well do I at least get to buy my son a wedding present?"

"Yes, Mom, you can do that if you want," Will sighed as he was pulled back into another hug.

"Hey, I'm sorry to interrupt but I need to borrow Will for a moment," Gabi said, gently pulling Will away. "It's... I need you to go grab something for Ari."

"Can't someone else do it?" Sami asked. "He's—"

"No, he knows where it is and it'd be quicker," Gabi continued, dragging Will outside.

"Sorry I told Mom without you, only everyone was there and you already knew and Sonny was telling his family and oh god, he's not there is he?" Will panicked. "He's bolted and—"

"Actually no, it was Adrienne who did that."

"What?"

"I turned up just as Sonny was telling his family, Adrienne refused to stay and walked off. Justin offered to go after her but Sonny—"

"Well, I'd love to say I'm surprised..."

"I just thought you should know. And that you needed rescuing from your mom."

"Thanks," he said. "Look, I'll be as quick as I can."

"Wait, what? Where are you going? You know that thing for Ari was a ruse, right?"

"Yeah, and it'll buy me some time."

"But where are you going?" Gabi called after him.
"There's someone I need to see," Will called back without turning around.

He hadn't thought about what he was going to say, but now he was standing in front of Adrienne he found himself wishing he'd prepared at least something.

"I'm not changing my mind," she declared, folding her arms and all but staring him out.

"I'm not here to ask you to," Will said. "I just want you to know what this means to us. To Sonny."

"Will—"

"You have made your feelings about me... very clear. And you're entitled to your opinion, of course you are. But you're acting like Sonny's not capable of making his own decisions. I pushed him away so many times, told myself that he'd be better off with someone else or doing all the things he loves doing.

"Turns out that all he wants is to be with me and Ari and we are getting married today, whether you're there or not.

"You have some concerns about me and my family, and I'm the first person to admit that my family is more than a little screwed up. But I'm not the same person I was when I first met him. He makes me a better person.

"And I love him. Completely, without any reservation or conditions. I love him. I had no idea that you could love someone like this and your son taught me that. He's nothing short of amazing and there will not be a day of my life where I don't love him and be grateful for him and happy that he is in my life.

"And whether you like it or not? He loves me. He chose me, wants me, and wants this. We're going to get married, raise Ari together, maybe even have other kids. Whether you're there today or not that's going to happen. You not being at the wedding won't stop it happening. You not being there won't change Sonny's mind, it certainly isn't going to change mine.

"What is going to happen is that you won't see the life we build together. You won't be there for your grandkids, you won't see them grow up. No more birthdays or Thanksgivings or Christmases or holidays. No weekends with the family. You won't be a part of our life and the only reason will be because you'll have cut yourself out of it.

"Sonny isn't here, he didn't come after you because he thinks you've made your choice. I'm just letting you know what that choice actually entails. He's not going to make that move, you have to if you don't want to lose him.

"You're not the first parent to disprove of their child's partner, and I'm sure when Ari starts dating I'll have more than a few words to say on the matter. But if there's one thing that this has taught me? It's that when she tells me she's found the one? That one person who makes her happier than she's ever known, that she can't imagine a single day of her life without them? Then I don't care what I think about them. I hope that I'll like them but if I don't then I will remember that my daughter, the one person I love more than the guy I'm marrying today, thinks that they're everything. I will try so hard to remember that because there is nothing in this world that would make me do anything to lose her. So when she finds her everything? I'll be there on her wedding day, no matter what.

"Sonny's my everything. He's my forever, he's my heart. And I'm his. You may not like it and I may not understand it, but he knows how he feels. He loves me, he loves our little girl, and he wants to
spend the rest of his life with us. That's the man you raised, Adrienne. That's who he is.

"Just... think about what you're giving up. Because I'm not giving up on him."

With that Will turned and left, leaving Adrienne standing in the doorway.

~~

He made it back to the pub with minutes to spare, fully prepared with a cover story that he couldn't find whatever it was that he was sent to get. He expected questions and arguments, but instead he was met outside the pub by Gabi, a strip of fabric in her hand.

"What--?" he started.

"Abby called me," Gabi grinned, "and we have our own plan."

"No, but—"

"Shut up and put the blindfold on," Sami chimed in as she left the pub, flanked by the rest of the Horton clan. "Hey, you wanted a surprise wedding, you're getting one."

"Yeah, but—"

"Just do it!" Gabi ordered. "Or do we have to hold you down?"

~~

The fabric covered his eyes completely, leaving him blind and literally in the hands of Gabi and his mother as they led him in the direction of the town square.

He hoped at any rate.

All around him was the noise of excited friends and family and he tried to tune them out, thinking about the route he'd walked a million times before so he could work out where they were.

And then there was more noise, more chatting and laughter and he knew they were in the square and that had to be the Kiriakis side. From the sound of their laughter and, in one memorable moment, a noise of complaint from Sonny, Will realised they'd blindfolded him too.

On Will's right Gabi moved forward a little, extending his arm out as she moved away from him. In one second he became aware of the crowd around them falling silent, the next he felt fingers being placed against his.

He wrapped his fingers tightly around the hand and pulled in.

Sonny's free hand found his neck, pulling their heads in closer before they kissed, ignoring the catcalls and whistles from those around them.

"Very trusting," Will heard Abby say, "we could have put their hands in anyone's!"

Will parted just enough from Sonny and rested their foreheads together. "I will know his hand anywhere," Will said. "I held it in friendship, in support, in love. I know the feel of it in my hand, on my body. I know all of him. Every single part of me knows every single part of him."

"I will know him no matter what," Sonny added. "I know him as he knows me because when he's with me? My whole being knows it's finally whole."
The blindfolds were untied by whoever was still near them, but all they saw was the other.

"Hey, you," Will whispered. "You look... amazing."

Sonny's hand moved to Will's tie, adjusting it slightly. "Don't look so bad yourself."

"You still sure you want to do this?"

"Never more certain of anything," Sonny grinned. "I—" He faltered for a moment, his eyes flicking over Will's shoulder, but then he looked back. "I like you. A lot."

Will gave a soft laugh and he glanced to the side where Eric was standing. "Inside joke," he said to appease the look of confusion on his uncle's face.

"If you two are done," Eric said with a grin.

"Actually, we're just getting started," Sonny laughed, stealing a quick kiss.

"There'll be enough time for that afterwards," Eric said, "just let me do the required bit first, OK?"

"OK," Will whispered, taking Sonny's hands in his but only parting a little.

"I've always believed that love is love," Eric started, "and it isn't more evident than in these two. I'm not supposed to bring religion into this, but I will say this. He made us all in His image, and so I can only trust that He made Will and Sonny the way they are for a reason. They found each other, they love each other, and today they make promises to each other that will last them a lifetime.

"Early love is easy. Caught up in the excitement and the passion you are discovering new things about each other every day. But over time you run out of new things, the initial passion and desire can fade and the excitement of being in love gives way to the constant of love, something that can be taken for granted and forgotten in the heat of an argument.

"You two have built this love on a foundation of friendship and support, and strengthened that into a family. That love has brought you to today to this ceremony. It has been a long road, full of battles and challenges, and you have worked and grown together to overcome them.

"The vow you will make today should serve you as a reminder that love takes work, it is an effort and marriage even more so. But the benefits of that work are tenfold and working through the hard times will only make you stronger as a unit. For today you come here as two people, two families gathered in this square. Today you create your own family, your own unit that will serve as the foundation for your forever."

~~

"So if anyone here present has any objections—" Eric started, stopping when there was a sharp cry of protest from the crowd. In the second between Will's breath catching and it being released in a soft laugh, his heart recognised it as his daughter, now being swept up into her mother's arms.

"Sorry," Gabi laughed as she ran a soothing hand over Ari's back.

"So long as she's not objecting to the marriage," Eric said.

"Are you kidding me? She loves her daddies, don't you, baby?"

"She OK?" Will asked, starting towards her.
"She's fine, she's fine. Probably just tired seeing as she barely slept last night. She'll be fine, don't worry, just get back there and get married!" Gabi laughed.

Will felt Sonny's hand closing around his and he was drawn back to him and Eric. "Sorry," he said quietly.

"Don't be sorry," Sonny whispered. "She's your little girl, of course you're going to go to her."

"She's our little girl."

"That too," Sonny grinned. "And it took everything I had not to run over there myself."

"Are we ever going to stop feeling like that?" Will asked.

"Never," Sami called out, "now will you two please just get married!"

"You heard my mom," Will said to Eric. "Where were we?"

"I think you were saying something about objections," Sonny said, not taking his eyes off Will. "And I think, our overtired and not very well little girl aside, we're all good?"

"We're more than good," Will said.

"So... no objections then?" Eric asked.

For a moment Sonny seemed distracted, glancing over Will's shoulder, but then his attention was back on Will, nothing but smiles and love on his face.

~~

"You are my heart, my guide, my everything," Will said. "You have my honesty, my fidelity, my every moment. As long as I have you, and Arianna," he added to the giggles of those assembled, "then I have everything I want and need out of this life. With you I can breathe, with you I don't feel as alone as I once did. I will love you for the rest of my life and I will spend every day of that life making our lives the best they can be."

_You already do_, Sonny mouthed.

Unable to stop himself, Will leaned forward and kissed Sonny gently. "I had no idea you could love someone like this," he continued. "I never thought I would be loved the way that you love me. I never thought that I would have this and... And you taught me that everything is possible. I want to marry you because you make my world a better place, you make me a better person, and you make you make this make sense," he finished with a soft laugh, knowing that Sonny would understand.

"I... I never imagined this would be my life," Sonny then said. "I hoped I'd find love, build a home with someone, raise a family together. Instead I've been thrown into this life with you and I couldn't be happier. This is everything that I want, everything I need, and every day I get to spend with you and Arianna? It's the best day of my life so far.

"I found a love like no other, I have an amazing family I would do anything for, and my forever is... It's everything. I want to marry you because I love you, because I can't imagine my life without you, without our family. I spent so long waiting for you, dreaming of you, imagining what could be.

"I never imagined this. I couldn't have imagined a life as... as perfect as this," he laughed. "People tell us that our love isn't perfect, our life isn't perfect, we're not perfect – no matter how many times
you try to tell me that I am," he joked, "but it is to me. This is my definition of perfect."

~~

The people around them seemed to blur from view as they spoke words and slid rings onto trembling fingers with trembling hands. They held each other close and held each other's gaze, and heard rather than listened to Eric's closing remarks.

The word married registered, and Will felt himself being pulled in for a kiss. The first with his husband.

~~

The next hour seemed to pass as if on fast forward for Will and he had to take a moment, withdraw to a corner of the club, just so that he could process it all. His right hand drifted to his left, the fingers running over the metal that was on his finger and never ever ever coming off. This was it, this was for keeps. He was married. Time was he never would have imagined this, but then again time was he never would have imagined any potential wedding would be to a man.

The food was disappearing, drink was flowing, music was filling the air. Everyone assembled seemed to having a great time and it was everything that they hoped it would be.

Looking around the crowds Will tried to find his husband, his husband, and he eventually found him; deep in conversation with their late arrival wedding guest.

~~

"So why did you come back?" Sonny asked.

Adrienne took a deep breath before answering. "Because... because you're my son. Because I shouldn't have left."

"None of this is new information."

"Because Will came to see me, OK?" she admitted. "Because he reminded me that if I wasn't here then I wouldn't be a part of your life from here on out."

"So that's the only reason you came? So you could stay in my life, interfering and making comments —"

"No," she interrupted. "No, it just... It made me think, OK? Hear me out, please."

"Go on."

"I love you and I want what's best for you. And I thought that... I didn't think that was Will. But you do and that's what should be important. I lost sight of that for a while. Hearing the way you talk about him, hearing your vows to each other? I should have heard you both when you were telling me all of that a long time ago and I'm sorry about that.

"You love each other and I should trust that you are the boy I raised," she said, lifting a hand to his cheek. "You know what you're doing and even though you threaten to give me heart attacks with some of the decisions you made—"

"See, this is why I only told you about the bungee jumping after I did it—"

"I know, I know. I'm a protective parent. Something I think you're starting to understand?"
"Wh--?

"You and Ari. I see how much you love her. And yes, how much you love Will. And if he makes you happy then I..." She took another deep breath. "Then I shall try to remember that he might be Sami's son but he isn't Sami. So long as you're happy? I'm happy."


"Hey, I was a newlywed once too," Adrienne grinned, "I think I have a good idea how you're feeling."

"OK, so this just got a little weird," he laughed. "But really, I just want you to give him a chance."

"And I will, I promise. Although if he loves you half as much as he says he does then... Then this mother would be proud to have him as her son-in-law."

"Thank you," Sonny whispered. He gave her a hug, smiling as he felt her squeeze that little bit harder than she normally would, then pulled back. "Now if you'll excuse me, I have a husband to go and find."

"You do that," Adrienne smiled. "I might just go find mine and see if he'll buy this fool a drink."

"Love you," Sonny said, kissing her cheek before disappearing into the crowd.

"Love you too," she whispered to herself.

~~

They found each other somewhere between Will's vantage point and the mother and son reconciliation point. With ease their arms circled the other and they swayed gently in time to the music.

"Thank you," Sonny whispered into Will's cheek. "I spoke to Mom and... thank you."

"I know you wanted her here."

"She's never been your biggest fan—"

"Doesn't change the fact that she's your mom and you love her."

"Well, she's convinced of how much you love me," Sonny laughed.

"So I'm no longer taking advantage of you?" Will mocked, pulling back to look at him. "You do know that I'm still only in this for the fortune this club makes and the fact you're an unpaid babysitter for my daughter, right?"

"Oh totally," Sonny replied. "I know your true intentions towards me, don't worry."

"Yup, use and lose, that's my motto."

"Glad we know where we stand," he laughed, pulling Will back in close. The music changed around them, the tempo a little more upbeat now, but still they stuck to their rhythm.

"Can I ask you something?"

"We're married now, Will, I think somewhere in there it gives you the right to ask me anything..."
"In your vows you said you imagined this. Us? Being married?"

"I think dreamed would be closer to the mark," Sonny replied. "But it was just a fantasy, something I never could have admitted to anyone, let alone myself." He moved a little so he could catch Will's eye, and for a moment there was a hint of sadness there which Will was desperate to kiss away. "I'd dream of what it would be like to hold you," Sonny continued, his arms tightening a little around Will's body, "to kiss you," he added before doing just that. "To be with you and have a relationship with you. Date you and spend time with you and all of the early stuff we did.

"But anything more than that? It hurt to dream of that because at one point I never thought it would happen. I didn't think I was ever going to be with you and it felt like I was just torturing myself by thinking up all these things for us that were never going to happen. Only they did happen and..." He stopped, blinking away tears and any trace of that sadness. "And I can't even say it's a dream come true," he said. "I dreamt of candlelit dinners but I love it best when we just end up on the floor eating pizza or cereal straight from the box. I dreamt of walking into a party with you on my arm, but we skip more parties than we go to because it's time we can spend together. I dreamt of what it would be like to take you to bed," he added, his voice dropping to barely audible above the music, "and yet somehow you made it... different, better, more than I ever could have thought it would be."

"You need to stop talking," Will said, shaking his head a little, "because you keep coming out with all these speeches and I have no idea what to say in response!"

"Just say you love me, say this is the start of something for us, and say... Say nothing."

So Will didn't say anything, just kissed his new husband in a way that said that he loved him and that this was the start of everything for them.

~~

"So, how many people have been mad at you?" Luke asked as Sonny retrieved another bottle of champagne from the bar.

"Well, Aunt Jennifer wasn't happy at being robbed of her chance to buy a gift," Sonny laughed, "but I'm sure she'll make up for it soon enough."

"Sure she will. People have been asking me what to get you two," he laughed. "In the end I gave up and started making suggestions. You could end up with more than a few toasters, but that's traditional, right?"

"Watch I don't fire you," Sonny laughed.

"Yeah, not before I quit," Luke said. "OK, so I should have phrased that better. I just... I think it's time to move on."

"Well, the traveller in me certainly doesn't want to talk you out of it. But I'm not happy at losing a good barman." He twisted the cork with practiced ease, not even flinching at the loud pop which drew a bit of attention from those gathered around the bar. "Or a friend."

"...Really?"

"Yeah, well, don't get sentimental on me. Just send a postcard from each new place, and if you're ever back in the area...?"
"Sure," Luke grinned. "Now, take that back to your husband and—"

"Give him a kiss for you?"

"He won't like that."

"Then that's the plan."

"Married two minutes and you're already winding him up?" Luke gave a laugh and shook his head. "You two are going to last—"

"Five minutes total?" Sonny finished.

"I was going to say forever. But hey, if things don't work out tell Will to call me, OK? I still think he's gorgeous."

"He is." And with that Sonny took the bottle and rejoined his husband, running his free hand around Will's waist and pulling him in to fit against his side while he topped up the glasses around him.

---

As the evening stole the afternoon from them the crowd thinned and the party started to wind down.

"You ready to go?" Will whispered in Sonny's ear.

"Been ready for hours," Sonny laughed. "Of course it all depends whether or not our moms will let us go."

"We'll have to sneak out. I'm game if you are."

Sonny laughed again, grabbing Will by the lapels and pulling him in for a kiss. "God I love you. Let's say goodnight to Ari and... just go."

"I know I'm new to this, and we're only a few hours in? But I'm going to go on record to say you? Are the best husband ever."

"You say that now," Sonny grinned, "but the night is still young and there's more to come."

"I... What did you do?" Will asked as Sonny walked away from him. "Son—what did you do?"

Sonny ignored him, walking over to the corner where Ari's stroller had been sitting for most of the evening, their little girl spark out inside it.

"Is it wrong for me to hope that she's sick enough to sleep through the night?" Gabi laughed. "Only otherwise she's going to be up all night and I'm flying solo."

"You know she has half a dozen sets of grandparents who would be happy to do a night shift?" Will said. "Or we could—"

"No," Gabi said firmly. "It is your wedding night, Will. You are not staying home with a baby who has a cold. Say goodnight, go, I'll rustle up some support."

"OK, sweetie, you be good for your mom and get some rest," Will said as he lifted her from the stroller. "And I'll be back in the morning—"

"Maybe lunchtime," Sorry corrected.
"—and hopefully you will feel better soon." He held her in a hug, rubbing her back gently when he felt her stir. And then her body seemed to convulse a little. "Did she just spit up?"

"More like threw up," Sonny said.

"She's... She's burning up," Will said, pressing his cheek to Ari's. "She's really burning up."

"OK, so I don't think this is a cold," Sonny said, helping Will to shrug off his soiled jacket.

"Oh you think?"

"I don't know what—" Gabi started but Sonny already had his hand on her arm.

"Hospital, now. Come on."

"I got her, it's OK," Will said, turning around and keeping Ari close to him. When he noticed his mom and EJ coming over he shook his head. "She's really not well, we've got to get her to the hospital."

"My driver is just around the corner," EJ said, "it'll be quicker; come on."

And just like that the party was over, as word quickly spread and the guests left, en masse, all of them heading for the same place.
The last time their promise was broken was when they put it all on the line for their entire world.

Will couldn't stay in the same position for too long, feeling trapped and useless and desperate to channel his nervous energy into something.

Since they arrived at the hospital it had felt like everything had been taken out of their hands; after settling her stomach she'd had bloods drawn for tests, Kayla and Daniel talking about things that barely seemed to register as the three of them could only focus on Arianna.

Even as a newborn she'd never seemed so small, so helpless to them.

"Go outside, we'll call when there's news," Kayla had said, ignoring their protests and complaints. "Go. You're getting in the way, you're getting upset at what we're doing and that's upsetting her. Go wait outside with everyone."

In the end Sonny had taken them both by the arm and led them out to the waiting area. They'd protested but come anyway, craning their necks to keep their eyes on her until the very last second.

Sonny looked around the assembled crowd, realising with a soft laugh that for the most part? These were his wedding guests. His parents, Will's parents. Rafe had come down, ignoring every piece of advice that he should be resting and not over-exerting himself. Aunts, uncles, cousins, friends... It seemed like half of Salem were here, waiting on news just like they were,

Sonny let his gaze drift over the crowd, frowning when he realised that he'd failed to find Will among their number.

"Hey, Mom, you seen Will?" he asked, pulling her to one side.

"Not recently. You OK, baby?"

"Me? Yeah, I'm fine. Well, you know. I just gotta find Will."

"You know she'll be OK, right?" Adrienne said. "She's come through a lot that little one, but she's surrounded by people who love her and—"

"Love isn't going to make her better," Sonny snapped. "Sorry. Sorry, Mom, I just—"

"It's OK, sweetie. I know." She raised her hand to his cheek. "Go find him. Love you."

"Love you too."

Sonny found him where he thought he would: couched outside Arianna's door.

"I know they told us to go but I... I can't," Will said when he noticed Sonny. "I need her to know that I'm not leaving her, ever. I want to be here for her."

"Then we will be," Sonny replied, pulling Will up into a hug.
"She's going to be OK, isn't she?" Will asked.

"Of course she is. Haven't you been paying attention? When Gabi went into early labour Ari hung in there. She was born in a shed on Smith Island when I had no clue what I was doing, and I still don't know how I got her to start breathing. She's been surrounded by stress and weirdness and that was just Nick until he did us all a favour and was pretty much run out of town by EJ and Uncle Vic. She has to deal with Sami for a grandma, Kate for a great-grandma, not to mention the fact that she's got two dads."

"That's not exactly a stressful thing," Will mumbled into Sonny's shoulder. "If anything it makes all the bad stuff better."

"What I'm trying to say is that Ari is seven months old and has got a very complicated and interesting little life. She's young and already a fighter, I mean look at her family! Rafe's getting better every day, you heard how people are saying he's already ahead of where they thought he'd be. And as for the Horton side..."

"OK, OK," Will said. "She's a fighter. But she shouldn't have to be. Not yet."

"I know," Sonny whispered. "But she is and we'll be here for her."

"Sorry."

"For what?"

"This is supposed to be our wedding night."

Sonny pulled back from the hug to look at Will, one of his hands reaching to brush his cheek. "That doesn't matter right now. Ari comes first, always. We can go to a hotel any other time."

"Yeah, but the Ritz?"

Sonny laughed and shook his head. "How did you--?"

"I saw the last call on your cell," Will answered, "just after we got here."

"Thought I'd let them know we weren't coming."

"I don't know how you can do that, do other things that should be done," Will said, "my head is just full of her. I can't think of anything else and you've organised the club, called the hotel, you had all the insurance details—"

"Well, you focus on Ari. I'll keep everything running around us."

"I don't know what I'd do without you," Will breathed, pulling Sonny back in close. "You realise you have to stay with me now, right?"

"Always," Sonny laughed.

"Where's Gabi?"

"With Rafe and our moms."

"What? Adrienne's here?" Will asked, pulling back in surprise.

"Yeah, pretty much the entire party is. Luke sent me an update; he's cleared up and locked up from
tonight, and he and T will run the club until they hear otherwise."

"That's something."

"All I have to worry about is you."

"But you—"

"I'm OK, I'm OK," Sonny said quickly. "And we all will be too. Few weeks we'll all be at home and Ari will be walking around the apartment and we'll just have another story to tell about our wedding, that's all."

"You promise?"

Sonny took a deep breath before saying, "It'll all be OK. I promise."

~~

They had some time to themselves, just sitting on the floor outside Arianna's room, holding hands and talking quietly to each other. When the door opened they scrambled to their feet, waiting, hoping, praying for some better news.

"You can go in if you'd like," Kayla offered.

"I'd rather know what's going on," Will replied. "Sorry. That was harsh."

"It's OK," she smiled. "She's asleep now, we're rushing through a few tests. When they come back we'll let you know."

"When will that be?"

"Couple of hours, tops," Kayla said. "Go. Be with your little girl."

They didn't need telling twice and barely waited before the room had been emptied before they rushed in. Almost immediately they stopped though, completely unprepared for the sight.

Arianna looked tiny in that bed, the wires taped firmly to her little chest and a breathing tube almost covering her face. Sonny's hand found Will's and gave it a squeeze as he knew, without having to look at him, that his heart was breaking.

"I—" Will started, but his voice seemed to stick in his throat and his feet to the floor. This wasn't his little girl. This wasn't his daughter, it couldn't be.

So it was Sonny who took the lead, guided him to the bedside, and let go of his hand only at the point where he could lay it over one of Arianna's legs.

"We're right here, sweet pea," Sonny whispered. "Right here and we're going nowhere until we can all go home."

"Son, what if—"

"No," Sonny said firmly. "We are not even thinking about that."

"But she was so ill and they panicked and—"

"She's seven months old," Sonny reminded Will. "Everything is serious at this age."
"Exactly."

"And almost everything is treatable."

"Almost," Will whispered, his eyes fixing on Ari. "I just can't help thinking that—"

"Don't."

"I can't lose her."

"You won't. I promise. No matter what it takes, you won't."

Will looked up to meet Sonny's eye, and for a second he could see the same doubt and fear reflected there. Then Gabi came in, Sonny blinked, and the mask was back on.

~~

"...so we're just waiting," Sonny said, running a hand through his hair. "She's just... tiny, Dad. I thought she was small when she was born, when I first held her, but in there she looks—"

"I know," Justin whispered. "But she's a strong kid, she'll be fine."

"Kids get all sorts of bugs, and Gabi said she's had a cold the last few days," Adrienne chimed in. "Little things like that which we just shrug off can make life really difficult for babies. She's still growing and developing."

"I know all of that, logically I do," Sonny said, "but in here—" He placed his hand over his heart before stopping. "I keep saying to Will that she's going to be OK, but what if she's not?"

"Don't do this to yourself, baby," Adrienne said, putting her hand on his arm. "Don't tie yourself up in knots until you know what's going on."

"I'm so glad you're here," Sonny admitted.

"Me too," she smiled weakly before pulling him into a hug. "If you need anything, anything at all I want you guys to call, OK? I don't care when it is or what it is, I will be here. We both will."

~~

It couldn't have been longer than an hour, but to the three of them it felt like forever before a nurse came out to speak to them.

"If you two would come with me," she said, gesturing to Will and Gabi. "Doctor Brady has the results." When Sonny automatically got to his feet she turned on him. "Parents only I'm afraid."

"What?" Sonny managed to say.

"He is Ari's dad. Sort of. One of them," Will tried to explain.

"Sorry, it's policy. Family only."

"OK, no," Will said firmly. "Sonny is my husband, he has been there for Ari literally since she was born. He is family."

"Doctor Brady asked to speak to you two, she—"

"Are you saying he can't go in?" Sami interrupted. "That's ridiculous."

"That's your opinion," the nurse said. "But the hospital rules are clear. Mom and dad only."

"And as Ari has two dads?" Sami asked.

"According to her birth certificate she has one of each," the nurse said firmly. "And in the eyes of the law, whatever your relationship with the child's father—" and with that she looked Sonny up and down leaving little doubt where the real objection was coming from "—it doesn't change the fact that you have no legal rights over the child."

"I suppose the fact that I want, that we want him in there doesn't change it?" Will asked, looking to Gabi for confirmation.

"He can come in, it's OK," she said. "Really. He should be there, Will's right."

The nurse seemed unmoved. "I can't allow that."

"Look... Constance," Justin said, moving around so he could see her name badge. "I know that there are rules and they are in place for a reason, but you have to understand that these three have been raising Arianna as a family. They are all her parents."

"But not legally," Constance replied. "As far as the law is concerned only Will and Gabi have rights, which means that only Will and Gabi should be in there." She turned to Sonny and gave a small smile. "I'm sorry, but I'm sure they'll be right out and—"

"No they won't," Will interrupted, "because they're not going in there. Or at least I'm not."

"Will—" Sonny began.

"No," he said firmly, taking Sonny's hand. "Kayla wants to speak to us in private which means that it's not good news. If it were a cold or some bug or infection or something that was easily fixed then she would have come out here and told us all. But she hasn't which means that there really is something wrong with Ari. They only tell you that sort of thing in private so I'm not going in there to get what will probably be the worst news of my life without my husband," he added pointedly. "So either Sonny comes in with us or Kayla will just have to come out here."

"But—" Constance started.

"I'm with Will on this," Gabi said, moving so she was stood the other side of Sonny. "He was there when Ari was born, he was the first person to see her and hold her and he is as much of a dad to her as Will is. The fact that he's not her biological father changes nothing. So it's all three or not at all."

Without another word Constance turned and walked back the way that she'd came.

"You didn't have to—" Sonny began.

"Yes we did," Will said. "We're in this together, right?"

"Right," Sonny smiled, although it was weak and almost entirely without warmth. "But—"

"But nothing," Gabi said, taking Sonny's other hand. "The three of us. Together or not at all. Because I think we're about to need all the support we can get," she added as she saw Kayla walking towards them. "I'm sorry, it's just—"
"No, I'm sorry," Kayla replied. "The hospital's being really strict on rules at the moment. I know who you are to Ari, Sonny, of course I do, and if it were up to me then I'd have you in there no problems. It's just... not worth the grief from on high at the moment."

"No, look, it's fine," Sonny said. "You two go in there and—"

"Do we have to do it in private?" Will asked. "I mean... pretty much our entire families and wedding party have been here all night and I know they want to know as much as we do. Please... just tell us."

"If you're sure?" Kayla asked. When all three of them nodded she took a deep breath. "OK, so Arianna's blood tests came back and the only thing that showed up in this round were some low iron levels."

"Iron?" Sonny asked. "That's anaemia, right?"

"Right," Kayla said.

"That's treatable, isn't it?" Will said, hope rising in his voice. "People get that all the time, with some extra iron they're fine, so—"

"Will," Kayla cut across before shaking her head. "If these were your results or Gabi's results or any other adult then yeah, it'd be that simple. But in a baby Arianna's age? It usually is an indication of something a lot more serious. I want to do a few more tests to be sure."

"You know what it is, don't you?" Gabi said quietly.

"Not for sure."

"Kayla," she whispered. "Please."

"It might not be—"

"But you think it is," Sonny added.

"A baby Arianna's age, with the symptoms she's presenting with and the test results so far? I think... I think you need to be prepared for the diagnosis that she has childhood leukaemia."

~~

And with that the world stopped spinning.

~~

Around them the crowd thinned, people came and went. Sami and EJ left to change and see to the kids. Adrienne and Justin left but returned with coffee and snack food which was largely ignored. Rafe was sent home and banned from returning for twenty four hours, otherwise he'd stress himself back into being a patient.

The three of them barely registered who was there and when, focused as they were on Arianna.

The only time they ever left her side was when they had to "stretch their legs" (code for: I need a moment to breathe because I'm about to lose it), "take a moment" (code: bathroom break) or "run interference" (code: half of Salem is outside and they need an update). Even though Ari slept through
the whole thing they agreed that she would never be alone, no matter what.

So her parents held her hand and talked to her and tried really hard not to think about the test result that was coming. In the end Kayla just walked into the room and nodded her head. It was all they needed to know.

Now the fight began.

"I think our best chance is to hit it and hit it hard," Kayla said. "It won't be easy and it'll be difficult for all of you to watch Arianna go through it," she added, looking at the three of them around her bedside, "but I don't want to take any chances."

"So what's involved?" Sonny asked.

"Bone marrow donor?" Gabi asked. "I... I watched a lot of daytime soaps when I was pregnant," she explained with a shrug.

Kayla nodded. "It's not the only course of action, but it's the one that's going to have the best long-term results. I won't lie to you, it's a bit extreme, but in my experience it has the highest chance of success."

"So... we get tested?" Will asked.

"We'll start with you two and then branch out from there if we don't find a match."

"But we're her parents. Why won't we be a match?"

"Doesn't always work like that. Sometimes it's a cousin or an uncle or even a complete stranger who's a match."

"So neither of us could be a suitable donor?"

"It happens sometimes," Kayla said, "and often the best matches are siblings. I know that's not an option for Arianna but we'll worry about that if your tests come back negative."

"How long will it take to get a result?" Sonny asked. "Surely it's better if we find someone sooner?"

"Of course sooner is better, but I don't want you thinking Arianna's running out of time," Kayla continued.

"Right, so test everyone, and you can add me to the first batch," Sonny said, already rolling up his sleeve. "That way if Will and Gabi aren't a match we're already looking."

"What? And test the whole of Salem?" Kayla joked.

"Half of them have been calling in to the hospital since last night," Sonny pointed out. "And as most of them are blood family it makes sense."

"You're not," Gabi pointed out.

"So I'll be that complete stranger if it's me," Sonny said. "I want to be tested, same as you."

"I'll get it set up," Kayla sighed, knowing she wasn't going to win this. "You want to tell everyone they're about to become donors?"
"Try and stop me," Sonny said, the first real smile on his face in hours as he was given something positive to do.

As soon as he'd left, Kayla not far behind him, Will turned to Gabi.

"I have... a very big favour to ask. Huge really," he asked.

"OK, what?"

"It's just... what Constance said last night got to me and I want to do something about it."

"About Sonny?"

"Yeah."

"You know I think of him as Ari's dad, right?"

"So how about we make it official?"

"How?" Gabi asked.

"I know a guy," Will grinned. "Be right back."

~~

By the time Will joined Sonny out in the waiting area he found parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, long-term and short-term friends already willing to be tested. There wasn't a single person at their wedding who wasn't prepared to donate if they could, and Will almost laughed when he heard EJ calling the office, telling them to send out an email to all staff regarding the situation.

"Can I have a word?" Will asked as he quietly sidled up to Justin.

"Sure. Everything OK? I mean, aside from...?"

"Not really. There's something Gabi and I need your help on. Legal stuff."

"You sure you want me to do it?"

"You're the only person I want to do it," Will said. "Can we talk? Privately?"

"Sure," Justin said as they moved away from the crowd.

"Will you take an IOU on the dollar? Only I didn't think to put any money in my wedding suit," he laughed, patting down the pockets. "Please? I need this to be between us."

"Pro bono," Justin said, offering his hand for a shake. "Wedding present."

"Thank you," Will said as he shook it, "and apt that you should say that."

"Why?"

"I need some papers drawing up, as soon as you can get them really."

"Regarding what?"

"Arianna," Will said. "She's Sonny's daughter and... and we need that recognised. Legally I mean."
"What does Sonny say about this?"

"I've not spoken to him about it, Gabi and I have only just talked it through. But it's really simple. We want Sonny to have exactly the same rights that we do. Exactly the same. And we'll sign anything that gives him those rights."

"Sure," Justin said, "pretty standard when it comes to kids from previous relationships. The new, well, dad," he said with a laugh, "gets legal rights over the child for the duration of the marriage, in the eyes of the law he's essentially their father."

"No," Will said, "I mean the same rights. All of them, No limitations, no conditions, no nothing. Sonny is her dad and I want that recognised no matter what happens between me and him."

"Are you sure about that?"

"You know how much he adores her. He's out there right now doing a single-handed drive for bone marrow donors because it could save her life. I'm not having his relationship with her tied to his relationship with me. He is her dad for the rest of his life. Can that be done?"

"You write it and sign it, yeah," Justin said. "Can I ask why you're asking me to do this?"

"Because you're his dad," Will explained. "Because you won't put in some get out clause to 'protect' me and you won't sneak in some stupid conditions. I want you to write this to protect Sonny, to make sure that no matter what anyone says or does they can't argue that he isn't her dad, that he doesn't have every last right that I do."

"I want to check myself that Gabi's OK with this, if that's alright," Justin said, "but the principle is fine."

"How quickly can you get it done?"

"Well, once I've spoken to Gabi and had my appointment with a needle," he laughed, "I'll get right on it. End of the day at the latest."

Will let out a long breath and nodded. "OK. Thank you."

"No, thank you," Justin said. "This will mean a lot to him."

"I don't know why we didn't do it sooner. It's stupid, we have every other piece of paper a couple has but we don't have this."

"Because you never thought about it until today," Justin pointed out. "You didn't have to. Sonny has always been a part of Arianna's life and you all have always thought about him as her dad."

"Just takes something like this to make you see where the gaps are," Will said as they reached the door to Arianna's room. "I'll let you talk to Gabi in private."

"It'll be OK, Will. We'll find a donor."

"That's what I'm hoping for," Will said quietly when he was alone.

~~

"How's your arm?" Will asked, running his fingertips around the band aid.

"Fine, I was a very brave boy," Sonny laughed. "You?"
"Yeah, didn't bother me. I just kept thinking that she's my daughter, I should be a match."

"You heard Kayla, it doesn't always work like that."

"I just... I'd do anything for her. Give anything to her if it'll help. And that includes parts of me."

"Well, it's a father's right," Sonny said, his gaze flickering over to the nurse's station where Constance was filling out some paperwork.

"Hey," Will said, getting Sonny's attention back. "You're her father too. It's just biology."

"But when biology is what they're looking at? It matters, Will."

"Fine, so if it comes back that I'm the match then I'm the one in for surgery and you'll be the one left nursing us both back to health. You will still be there for your family."

"I'm always going to be here for my family," Sonny said, grabbing Will's left hand and lifting it to his mouth. He kissed the ring before smiling. "In sickness and in health, right?"

"Right," Will laughed softly, leaning over to kiss him. When he pulled back he thought, just for a second, that Constance had been watching them. "I know neither of us want to leave, but we really should get home and change. Gabi says she's fine, we can send her off when we get back."

"Or," Sonny countered, "we can send someone to our apartment to collect our things and bring them here."

"You really want my mother, or yours, going through our bedroom?"

"I... good point," Sonny laughed. "OK. Home, quick change, back."

"Deal," Will said, getting to his feet and holding out his hand for Sonny.

Almost pointedly Will held onto it all the way past the nurse's station, but he didn't bother looking to see if they'd gotten any reaction.

~~

"Bathroom's free if you..." Sonny trailed off when he saw Will sitting on the couch, shoulders slumped. "Hey, come on," he said gently as he walked around to join him. "It'll be OK."

"You don't know that," Will said, running the back of his hand across his nose. "None of us have any idea how this is going to go."

"No, we don't," Sonny admitted, putting his hand over Will's. "But that doesn't mean we should sit down and give up." When Will's hands shifted a little under his Sonny realised that he was holding something. Will pulled a hand free to reveal it was one of Ari's socks. "They get everywhere. I keep finding them in the most random of places."

"Me too. I think my favourite was the one in the vegetable crisper."

Will gave a short laugh and wiped his nose again as he sniffed. "I think we'll be finding her things around the place for years."

"Probably."

"So if she's not here—"
"Hey, no, stop that."

"I can't help it. I can't. My mind just... defaults to that. It's like whenever I think about her she's in the hospital and she's so ill we could actually lose her, Sonny, and I..." He broke off, tears now falling freely down his face. He made no attempt to clear them, so when Sonny pulled him over and down, reclining them both against the back of the couch, he just clung to Sonny's tee and let them fall. "I don't want to think like this or feel like it but it's all I can do."

"It's OK, love," Sonny whispered into his hair.

"How do you do it?"

"Hmmm?"

"How are you even functioning? I mean, all I can do—"

"I don't know," Sonny admitted. "I just... sometimes I feel like I'm only just holding on, that one slip and I'll be gone. Other times it feels like this is all happening to someone else and I'm just... detached from it all. Does that make sense?"

"A little."

"All I know is that whatever you and Gabi need, whatever Ari needs from me? You have it. No questions or hesitations. I will do anything for you."

"I know. We know."

"I love you so much," Sonny whispered.

"I love you too," Will replied, lifting his head to look at Sonny.

Acting on instinct he pushed forward, kissing him gently at first and then deeper, more passionately. In response Sonny clung to the back of Will's shirt, fisting the material as if Arianna wasn't the only one he was hanging on to for dear life.

For a moment they seemed to forget their lives as Will all but climbed on top of Sonny, his arms bracketing them on the couch. Then Sonny's hands slowed, his mouth pulled away, and they sat there, one on the other, breathing each other's air.

"So—" Will started, but Sonny silenced him with a kiss. "It really isn't that I don't fancy you," he laughed.

"Good to hear, we'd be in serious trouble if you'd gone off me this early."

"Never going to happen," he said. "We're newlyweds, this is... This is not how this is supposed to be."

"We're fine, we're good. We're just... that's on pause until this is over," Sonny whispered. "We've always been more than the physical side of things."

"But I was looking forward to it," Will almost whined. "Honeymoon sex."

"We'll have it. All of it. As soon as Ari is home we'll go somewhere. Somewhere warm and with a beach and we can teach her to build sandcastles during the day and then during the night—"

"God I love you," Will laughed as he dived in for another kiss. "And that sounds amazing."
"First night she's home, we'll book somewhere. Anywhere you want."

"Cayman Islands," Will laughed.

"Got the main resort on speed dial," Sonny joked.

"I don't care. I don't care if it's five star or no star. I don't care if it's a private beach or a nudist one." He laughed when Sonny raised his eyebrows suggestively. "I don't care."

"Well, we'll find somewhere."

"When she's home."

"When she's home," Sonny repeated. "Come on. Get changed, we'll grab some coffees on our way back. I really cannot stand another cup of that brown water."

"You should see if you could set up as their supplier," Will said as he got to his feet. "If only for the next few weeks."

"I'll get right on that," Sonny said. It was only when Will had disappeared into their room that he saw Arianna's sock on the couch. He picked it up, his fingers rubbing the soft fabric before lifting it to his face where he breathed in the gentle and unmistakable smell of her. When he got to his feet he shoved it into the pocket of his jeans without even thinking about it.

---

When they returned to hospital, an array of coffees in hand, it was to no further updates, a group of very appreciative people, and a Gabi who looked like if she didn't have a break she was going to have a meltdown. Will agreed to go in with Ari while Rafe took her out for some "real food" and fresh air as he'd "heard it's all the rage at the moment". Sonny finished handing out the cups, saving the last one for his mother.

"You know, you don't have to hang around. You know I'll call if there's news."

"I know," she smiled, taking off the lid and blowing on it a little. "But I'm not here for Ari. Well, I am, of course I am. I'm praying for her as much as anyone and I know all you want is for your baby to be OK. But you're my baby, OK? Even though you're a married man in your twenties," she laughed, "you're still my baby. Always will be. So no matter what you need or want from me? I'll be here."

"Pretty good for the woman who didn't even want to be at my wedding the other day," Sonny said without thinking. "Mom, I'm sorry, I—"

"No, you're right. I didn't want to be there. And it was the worst mistake I've ever made. Could have made. This isn't me making up for it, this is me being here for you like all parents should be for their children."

"Can I suggest something?" Sonny asked. "A ceasefire? No more comments, no dragging up the past and mistakes. No more arguments? Because... because I really need my mom right now and I don't—"

"Oh sweetie, of course," she said, pulling him in for a hug. "Anything, you know that."

"It's just... I'm so tired."
"Well I don't think you've slept much since—"

"No, not just that. It's just... Gabi and Will, they need me to hold things together. And I can do that. I've got the club staffed, I've got everything sorted out. I even started rounding people up to get tested for Ari—"

"You're there for them, of course you are. But who's here for you?" Adrienne asked. "You need support too."

"Thank you," he whispered. "I know it's a lot to ask—"

"It's nothing to ask," she soothed. "I love you and so you get it, unconditional and unreserved."

"He's so scared, I keep telling him it's going to be OK, that she'll be fine," Sonny said, his voice starting to waiver. "And I want to believe it, I need to believe it. But what if she's not? What if we lose her? What then? How do I support Will through that? Will and Gabi?"

"OK, well you don't know that's going to happen," Adrienne said, "but if it does? You don't need to support them. You should be supporting each other."

"Mom, she's their daughter—"

"She's yours too."

"Yeah, but..." He pulled back from the hug to look at her. "It feels like that but it's not. Not really."

"Oh honey, it is, it is. Biology is... It's nothing. Not when you love someone."

"But it's everything in the eyes of the law," he whispered. "Being told I shouldn't be in there? Feeling like I'm sneaking in every time Constance is on duty?"

"Oh, ignore her," Adrienne scoffed. "If she even looks at you funny then we'll run interference."

"Thank you," Sonny whispered. "I just... I'm really glad you're here."

"Me too," she replied.

"Ah, there you are!" Justin's announcement broke through the moment, and Sonny glanced away to not-so-subtly wipe at his eyes. "Sorry, did I interrupt?"

"Yes, this was a very important mother-son moment I'll have you know," Adrienne quipped. "You'd better have a very good reason for this."

"I do in fact," Justin grinned. "Will wants to see you."


"She's fine, nothing's changed. But there's something we need you to do."

"Wh--?" Sonny started, but he was ignored. He followed his dad through to Ari's room, where Will was stood by Arianna's bed. "What's going on?" he asked when he noticed the look between his father and his husband.

"I need you to sign these," Will said, holding the papers out to Sonny.

"Sure, what are they?" Sonny asked.
"Nothing much, just sign at the end."

"I-- Will, this is not nothing," Sonny breathed when he read the opening lines. "This is—"

"Just putting in writing what you've been for months. And we're sorry we didn't do it sooner."

"We?"

Will nodded a little, indicating that Sonny should turn over. When he did he saw Gabi and Will's signatures already in place.

"You're her dad, OK? You always have been, you always will be. Your dad drew up the papers so just sign them and we can carry on as we have been because you are her dad so just—"

"Wait, no, Will, I can't sign this," Sonny said. "This... this gives me rights and access if we split up? Jackson Kiriakis will maintain these rights detailed here even in the event of the marriage with William Horton ending, including through divorce or death? No, Will, no."

"Yes, Sonny, yes. Not that I'm planning on divorcing you, but I asked for that specifically."

"W-why?"

"Because I would have rights even if Gabi and I weren't living in the same apartment. And as her dad you should have the same."

"But—"

"Shut up and sign it, OK?" Will laughed, holding out a pen. "Gabi agreed to this, she signed it too, see? We both want this because you're already doing this. You're already her dad so shut up, stop complaining and will you just... make it legal?"

"Can you legally have two dads?" Sonny asked his dad as he took the offered pen.

"You sign that and Arianna does," Justin said. "Will was pretty insistent on a lot of what's in there."

"I just... I want you to know that Gabi and I think of you as Ari's dad. And no one, no self-important nurse or judge or anyone is going to stop you being her dad. Ever."

"I..."

"Just sign it, you can figure out what you want to say later," Will laughed. After Sonny had signed his name on the appointed line he handed the form and pen back to his dad. "Can we get a minute?"

"Yeah, I got papers to file," Justin said, holding them up.

"Make sure you do," Will grinned. When they'd gone he turned to face Sonny who'd been staring at him the whole time. "What's mine is yours, right?"

"I don't think children are included in that."

"Well, they are in my deal," Will said. "You... you have always been her dad, just as much as me. And I'm sorry it took us so long to get around to—"

"Hey, no. No. The fact that you did it? It... means a lot. It means everything."
"I don't know why," Will said, closing the distance between them. "You've been... everything," he said with a laugh. "Way I see it? This is just... signing a piece of paper. Just like our marriage."

"Our marriage isn't just a piece of paper," Sonny said, his arms slipping around Will's waist. "It's more than that."

"I know," Will hummed as he looped his arms around Sonny's neck. "But in so many ways? We were already what we are now. We just have... added rings. And now we have added... paper."

"You didn't have to do that."
"You didn't have to marry me."
"Yeah, I did. I love you too much not to."
"Well then. You have my response. Added in the fact that Ari adores you, just as much as I do."
"I..." Sonny began, then he just took a deep breath. "Thank you."
"Same."

The days form a routine for them; shift patterns in which they sit by Ari's bedside, go home to shower and change, and do the supply run for those keeping vigil. There was a look of absolute delight on Sonny's face the first time Constance came to check on Ari; when she gave him a pointed glare he barely looked up from the sleeping baby, his daughter, when he said "legally mine" and silently dared her to say anything else.

She didn't.

Around them people came and went, bringing updates of a world that moved on without them but for which they had little care.

"My entire world is in this room," Will whispered to Sonny late one night. The single chair was their refuge, Will sat across Sonny's lap and safely wrapped up in his arms. "All of it. You two... you're the only ones who matter to me, the only people I can't be without."

"Mine too," Sonny whispered in his ear. "The two people I'd give the world to."

"If I could swap places with her—"

"Me too."

"Kayla said we should have the first of the results back in the morning. We, um," he gave a soft laugh, "we backed up the lab, that many people got tested."

"So in a couple of hours we'll know?"

"I guess," Will said, finding Sonny's left hand pressed firm against his stomach. He ran his fingers up and down the back of his hand, his fingers, enjoying the interruption of the smooth metal. "What if—"

"I thought we agreed, positive thoughts. Besides, Ari is blood related to half the people in town thanks to the Hortons breeding everywhere—"
"Hey!" Will protested lightly.

"—and they said the best chance of a match is a blood relative."

"I hope it's me," Will said, "rather than Gabi. I mean, Ari needs her mom. She can't be laid up in recovery for days."

"She needs her dad too you know."

"Ah, but there's two of us. Logistically speaking, one of us can be out of action for a few days."

"And that's what this is to you?" Sonny asked. "Logistics?"

"I'm just saying, we have options. And if it's me—" Will stopped when he felt Sonny's grip on him tighten a little. "What?"

"You say that like it's not a big deal," Sonny replied. "You heard Kayla. The quickest and best option for harvesting is surgery. I just... I just remember the last time you were in surgery, that's all."

"This is different," Will whispered. "I'm fighting for her now. I fought for you last time, and that was enough to bring me through it. Now I have both of you." He pressed a kiss to Sonny's cheek. "But hey, at least we're talking about there being a match."

"There will be," Sonny said. "There has to be."

"I know you want to be home soon, honey," Will said quietly, addressing the sleeping baby, "and you will be. Soon as we can, your mom, Sonny and me? We'll get you out of here."

She stirred a little but didn't wake.

"I just want to take her home," Will whispered.

~~

"I'm not going to draw this out," Kayla announced, looking around the assembled families, "we got two matches."

"Two?" Will stammered in relief.

"Yeah. Rafe was one, but after speaking to his doctors they're not happy about him donating." She turned to face him, saying, "Sorry, but you're just not strong enough."

"It's fine, there's a reserve apparently," he said, quickly putting on a brave face.

"Yeah, and it's not family," she said. "It's Sonny."

"W-what?" Will stammered. "But how? I thought the chances were higher with blood relatives."

"And they are, Rafe was a match," Kayla explained. "The fact we found two potential donors is, it's amazing, Will. This is pretty much as close to a medical miracle as it gets."

"So when do we do this?" Sonny asked."

"We'll talk you through the procedure, get Arianna started on her chemo, but it'll be a few days."

"Anything I need to do in the meantime?"
"No, but there's something you need to do," Will interrupted, turning to face Kayla. "Find another donor."

"Will—" Sonny began.

"No," he said sharply. "No, you... you can't do this, Sonny. You can't."

"Will—Will!" Sonny called out as Will took off.

"I got it," Gabi said, putting a hand on his arm. "You have doctors to speak to." She made as if to go, but stopped and lifted herself up to kiss his cheek. "Thank you."

"I've not done it yet."

"No. Thank you for being a part of her life. For being a part of Will's. For loving him, forgiving him, marrying him. Because if you'd not done any of that where would we be?"

"I did and we're here. And Ari is going to be fine."

"Of course she is," Gabi smiled, "she's got a Kiriakis fighting her corner now."

"She always did," he grinned.

"I should..." she said, gesturing the direction Will had gone in.

~~

"You want to tell me what that was about?" Gabi asked quietly.

Will didn't look up from Ari. "He can't do it."

"What? Save her life? And why not?"

"I can't risk him to save her. I can't make that choice."

"Firstly, why is it your choice?" she snapped. "Secondly, why are you risking him?"

"It's major surgery, Gabi. Comes with risks."

"Risks you'd have taken if it had been you?" she challenged. "Look, every surgery has its risks but Sonny is young, fit, healthy, and probably had more of them than most of us put together. And more than that he can help save our little girl's life. Look at her, Will. Are you prepared to risk it? To wait and see and hope we find another donor? Or are we going to let her dad do it?"

"I just—"

"No, I'm serious about this. Sonny's a match, he wants to do it, and I'm putting her first."

"It's not your husband you're risking," Will snapped.

"Risking?"

Sonny's interruption made them both jump, and Will looked over at the doorway. "I mean—"

"Can we get a minute?" Sonny asked Gabi. She quickly nodded and agreed, closing the door shut behind her. "What are you risking?"
"You," Will said. "You know the risks that come with surgery, you could—"

"Die?" Sonny finished bluntly. "You think that wasn't just mentioned to me? But you know how many people die during this kind of surgery, Will? A tiny percentage. A tiny, tiny percentage of people. More people die from a gunshot wound," he said pointedly. "And in any case, if it were you would you let that put you off?"

"Would you be happy about me doing it? Me being at risk of dying on that table?"

"I'm not happy with anything that puts you at risk," Sonny said, ignoring Will's I told you so face. "But I also know that if it were you? Nothing that anyone said or did would stop you being a donor. So why would it be any different for me?"

"Son—"

"I know it scares you. It scares me too. But this is Ari we're talking about. This is our little girl. And I don't care what it costs me, I'm doing this."

"But I care about the cost. And you would too if it were me."

"I know."

"So please understand why I don't want you doing this."

"I do," he whispered. "Same as you understand why I have to."

"But—"

"Will," Sonny said sharply, "enough. I know you're scared, you think I'm not? But what's the alternative? Lose her? I'm not risking that for anything."

"And I can't risk you for anything, why can't you understand that? We found two donors in the space of a week. We can find someone else."

"We have someone else. We have me."

"I don't know why you... There are four outcomes for this, do you realise that? One; you and Ari come through this and you're fine. That's great, that's what we all want. Two; the transplant doesn't work. You're fine but Ari isn't. Three; it works and she's fine but you're not. Four... I lose you both. That's three out of four options where I lose someone I can't. A seventy-five percent chance that my whole world? It ends because at least one of you doesn't come home. We find someone else and it's fifty-fifty. I want better odds."

"You make it sound like we're in Vegas," Sonny replied. "You want odds? How about the fact that I'm a match? I have no blood ties to Ari, none. I am that stranger Kayla talked about."

"So we beat them once, we—"

"Won't get this match again. Not any time soon. Not soon enough. The longer she waits the harder she'll have to fight. We're going straight for this option because it's moved so quickly, because it gives her the best chance. Her odds are still fifty-fifty, we wait and they won't be."

"Son—"

"This isn't up for discussion. I don't need your permission to be her donor, I'm not asking for it. I'm going to be fine, Will Yes there are risks but they are tiny. The risk of losing her is greater. Look at
her, Will. Look at her and tell me that you don't want me to do this."

"I..." Will looked back at Arianna and he rested a hand on her head. "I love her so much."

"I know. So do I. Which is why I have to do this."

Will waited until Sonny had left before he whispered to her: "I love you just as much as I love him. I want you to get better, more than anything. But I'm scared that if I lose him because you're sick? I'll never get over that."

~~

Gabi let her gaze drift from the chemo bag, down the tube to Arianna's arm, then across her tiny body to Will who was leaning over the bar on the side of her bed.

"Penny for them," she said.

"We are willingly letting them poison her," he said. "I know why it's needed and that they're killing off all the bad things in her, but... she's seven months old and they're poisoning her." He gave a short laugh. "I don't know, it seems weird."

"You know what else is weird?" she said. "You and Sonny."

"Gabi—"

"What is going on with you two?"

"It's nothing, we're fine."

"No you're not. I thought you sorted the whole donor thing."

"We did. He's doing it isn't he?"

"And you're OK with that?"

"She needs a transplant, Sonny's a match—"

"And you're still scared things will go wrong."

He sighed and looked up at her. "I think I'm always going to be scared about that. I just need for this to be over and for everyone to be home."

"Yeah, I can't wait for that too."

"Sonny and I were thinking about going away, when this is over."

"Late honeymoon?" she smiled. "Sounds good. You'll need a break."

"No, all of us."

"Will. I am not coming on your honeymoon."

"Family holiday," he corrected. "The beach, somewhere hot. We're going to teach Ari how to build sandcastles."

"That... sounds great."
"We could even go see your family? I know they want to come up."

"Yeah, I'm glad Rafe talked them out of it. It's bad enough with the entire Horton and Kiriakis families," she laughed. "If you're sure?"

"We'll all need a break by the end of this."

"Sonny especially," Gabi said. "He's been great, so supportive."

"Yeah, I know."

"How's he doing?"

"What?"

"He's listened to me going on, been there with hugs and supportive words. And I know he's done that for you. But he's not talked to me."

"I—nor me," Will said. "You good here? I—"

"Go," she smiled. "Give him a hug from me."

Will reluctantly moved away from Arianna's bedside, unable to resist a last look back before he was out on the corridor.

~~

"When did you last sleep?" Adrienne said, her fingers brushing through Sonny's hair.

"Oh, um, few days before the wedding?" he replied with a soft laugh. "And leave the hair."

"Sorry," she said, pulling her hand back. "I used to do that when you were a kid. You loved it."

"Yeah, well... Still do, it's just Will..."

"I know, love. It's OK."

"I should go, Ari's having her chemo and—"

"Oh no," she said firmly, putting a hand on his arm, stopping him from getting up. "We need to talk first."

"About?"

"You. Talk to me."

"Mom—"

"I've seen you talk to Gabi, I've seen you talk to Will. I've even seen you with Sami. You are being the same wonderful, caring, supportive guy I know you are."

"I don't—"

"Who are you talking to?"

"Me?"
"Yes, you. You need support too."

"Mom, I'm fine. Really."

"Your daughter is undergoing chemo, you're due in for surgery next week, and you're a newlywed who had your wedding interrupted by a hospital dash. I don't know how that makes you fine, but in the real world—"

"Don't," Sonny cut across. "I'm fine, OK? I don't need... I can't..." He stopped and took a deep breath. "They need me to be strong, OK? They need me to help them, be there for them. This is what I do. I support them."

"And who supports you? You're in this too."

"Mom, they need me to keep it together. I have to. I can't fall apart on them—"

"Why not?" Will interrupted. "Why do you have to be the strong one?"

Sonny jumped out of his seat and started towards him. "Will, I—"

"I don't need you to be strong, I don't need you to be supportive. I just need you. OK? I need you to be here with me, no matter what."

"You know I am," Sonny said as Will pulled him into a hug. "Always."

"I'm sorry, I've been... I just want a life where everyone I love is safe and home, OK? And anything that gets in the way of that I don't want. I love you."

"I love you too."

"Just... promise me you'll be OK?" Will said softly.

"If you think I'm going to leave you, just when I have everything I want?" Sonny replied. "Not happening."

"I'll leave you boys to it," Adrienne said softly. "You need to talk a few things through."

"Yeah, we do," Will said. "Thank you."

"Any time," she smiled. "I'll see you later."

"How about we get out of here?" Will said. "There's a few things at home Gabi wants and we... you need to talk."

"Will—"

"No matter what happens," he said, stepping out of the hug but keeping his hands on Sonny's body, "we face it together. You were the one who said we shouldn't forget that we were friends first. We talked to each other."

"OK," he smiled. "I just... I didn't want to—"

"I know. But that's not your decision to make," Will said. "We're married. We're in this together."

"Yeah, Mom reminded me of that. We're married. It's just with everything I... I forget sometimes."
"Me too," Will admitted, "because we're still us. You know, Gabi called us an old married couple?"

"Is that a bad thing?" Sonny laughed.

"I don't care if it is. Come on. Let's go home."

~~

Will marvelled at Sonny's ability to sleep. However, he reasoned, that supporting the emotional needs of their combined families must be exhausting. Throw in a couple of hours' worth of talking (him), tears (both), and a few bites of food (barely either). They intended to change and head back to the hospital, but Sonny sat on the bed first, Will next to him, and eventually they laid down on top of the covers, curling in together.

So Will just watched his husband, breathing softly and his face calm with sleep. With a soft laugh he realised this was the first time either of them had been in bed together since before the wedding. Snatched moments in hospital chairs, shift patterns coming back and forth from the apartment, nothing that was substantial or in any way beneficial.

Reaching out he ran his fingers gently through Sonny's hair, pushing up the strands that framed his face. In his sleep Sonny hummed, and moved, gravitating into the touch. Even asleep Will could see and feel how much Sonny loved him.

Even after all this time, years of knowing each other, Will thought he had a good grasp on what it was to be loved by Sonny Kiriakis. Then something like this happened and he would realise that he was only just figuring out what that love meant.

Yes, the surgery carried risks, but they were small. Even if they weren't there wouldn't be a single thing anyone could say to talk Sonny out of it. And if there was one thing guaranteed to make Sonny fight it would be for his family.

He thought about getting up, about doing something useful, but when he tried Sonny reached out for him.

"I'm right here," Will said, settling back down against his husband's side. "I'm right here."

"Good. I sleep better when you are," Sonny said quietly, not even opening his eyes.

"So do I."

And so they slept.

~~

And then it was time for the surgery.

~~

"I told Mom I wanted five minutes with you, before she smothers me to... well... you know," Sonny said, trailing off awkwardly. "Just us."

Will said nothing, just pulled him into a hug. "Promise me you're going to fight."

"If I need to, I will, I swear it."

"Good," Will said into Sonny's shoulder. "I'm not doing this without you."
"It'll be fine. Routine. Just, remember that. Few hours in there, few days' rest and recovery. I'll be home soon enough, then Ari, and then we're beach bound."

"Promise?"

"Promise," he laughed. "Few things though. Dad's got a file, few papers, bits and pieces. Stuff so you can run the club, deal with—"

"No," Will said firmly. "Don't you dare keep talking like that."

"Like what?"

"Like... you're putting your affairs in order."

"It's not like I drew up a will."

"No, we did that months ago," Will said. "This is... don't. OK? Please. Don't. Don't wrap things up, nice and neat, so that if... I want regrets. I want things left unsaid because we are just getting started, you and me. We said that at our wedding and we meant it. We are just getting started."

"OK."

"You realise it's been a month, right? Since the wedding?"

"...Really?"

"Yeah." Will ran his hands down Sonny's arms and took a deep breath.

"But if you need anything, my dad—"

"I need you," Will said. "And that's it. No wrapping things up, OK? We're going to have conversations and arguments and... and beach holidays."

"Soon as we're home," Sonny grinned, glancing over at the doorway when he noticed the gathering crowd. "Guess that's my cue."

"I'll see you soon, OK?" Will whispered.

"Few hours."

"Exactly. So don't try and wrap things up," Will said. "In fact... I'm going to ask you something and I don't want an answer until after the surgery, OK?"

"...OK?"

Will leaned forward, whispering something into Sonny's ear. When he pulled back he caught the look of surprise on Sonny's face and put a finger on his lips. "Not a word. No hint of an answer. We'll talk about it when you wake up."

"OK," Sonny grinned behind Will's finger. "And that's not an answer. Not to that anyway."

"Go," Will whispered, "go save our little girl."

"See you soon," Sonny replied. "In a few hours we'll have that discussion."
The thing about lies is that sometimes? You don't even know you're telling them.

As soon as Adrienne walked into the waiting room she held up the coffee cup. "I know you kicked everyone out, but first of all I come bearing gifts, and second of all you shouldn't be waiting by yourself."

"Thanks," Will said, "for the coffee. But I really—"

"I know, you're fine. Know what?" she said softly. "So am I. Totally fine, no really worries at all. So I guess we're both fine because they keep telling us that he's going to be fine. So we're fine. Aren't we?" She smiled weakly and Will understood. "So I thought we could be fine together."

Will indicated that she should take a seat and for a moment they sat in silence. "Can I ask you something?" he said quietly, playing with the lid on the cup. "Anything."

"Can you... tell me about all the times you've done this before? Waited in hospitals for him?"

"Would you believe me if I said this is the first time?" Adrienne replied. "I know, right? My adventurer son, jumping off things and climbing everything in his path? This is the first time he's ever had surgery. No broken bones, not even his appendix."

"Wow."

"Yeah, I know. When he was out there, backpacking in the most remote places that I would have to look up on a map? It worried me no end. Kept wondering where help would come from if he needed it. Those times between phone calls? You have no idea how many scenarios you can come up with."

"I think I do," Will said.

"I think you do," she agreed. "But then he would call or text or send an email with some goofy picture attached and in that moment it felt like..." She put her hand on her chest and sighed. "It felt like my heart was beating again."

"I keep having to remind myself to breathe," Will said, putting the cup and its lid down on the table. "It's just..."

"I know. And that feeling won't go away until you know they're safe. Until you know they're safe and well and with you? And he's always been safe."

"Until he was with me," Will said after a moment. "That's what you were scared of, wasn't it? Will Horton, Sami Brady's son? Tied to the DiMera family? I'm dangerous."

"I... yeah," Adrienne sighed. "And I know that was unfair of me and I'm so, so sorry."

Will gave a half shrug. "Understandable. I had my own concerns."

"What?"

"Well, he is a Kiriakis. In some ways they're almost as bad as the DiMeras."

"Oh you cannot be serious," Adrienne protested. Then she saw the grin on Will's face. "Well, not
entirely."

"I know. But every family comes with their histories, their backgrounds, their problems. Granted mine have, well, more than their fair share. But—"

"You are not your mom." She reached out and put her hand on his arm. "And my son is smart. He's also very much in love with you, and that little girl. I've watched him orbit you two like, like you're the centre of his everything. I'm not surprised, not one bit, that he's in there now. He would do anything for you."

"And me him. If I could switch places with him, with either of them?"

"That's called love," Adrienne smiled. "It's what you do when you love someone so much that they become... become a part of who you are, in here," she finished, removing her hand and returning it to her chest. "And you do whatever you need to do to keep them safe, to protect them and make sure that they continue on. You make those choices."

"Like going in to that surgery?"

"Like going in to that surgery."

"I don't know how to be without him," Will admitted. "It's weird, how... how completely I belong to him. He grounds me, he makes me feel safe and loved and... and whole. And the idea that I might have to spend my forever without him? It terrifies me."

"I know."

"No, you don't. You have that other terror, the one where you could lose your child. Trust me, that's... that's different."

"Still hurts though," Adrienne whispered.

This time it was Will who reached out for her, taking her hand in his.

"You really love him, don't you?" When Will laughed her face creased in confusion. "What?" she asked.

"No, it's just... Before the wedding we talked about love, and how we say it all the time and how we just keep... falling more and more in love. So I said to him that... well, that I liked him. Because with every day it's a little bit more and it's like I'm still falling for him. Sometimes he'll do something and —"

"And it's just like it was the first time you saw them?" she finished. "Yeah, that's the best feeling. That even though you've been together for years, raised a family with them? Fought and made up... I don't know how many times. You can still get that rush of love."

"Really?"

"Really," she smiled. "No matter how long it's been? You can have that feeling, again and again. That's when you know it's right."

"It is, it really is."

"Then you two will be very happy together."

"Yeah. He just needs to come through this."
"He will. If I know my boy... He's a very determined young man. He married you even though I—Well."

"It's fine."

"And so will he be,"

"I hope so."

"We just need to be there for him when he comes out. He'll have to take things easy for a while. He'll hate relying on us."

"He does make the worst patient," Will laughed softly.

"Oh you've only seen him with a cold. When he was eight he got chicken pox. Not badly, but the idea that he had to stay off school and stay in bed? He hated that. Second I turned my back he'd be trying to sneak out."

"You're kidding."

"Nope," she smiled. "One time he actually made it and was halfway down the street, still in his pyjamas, before I caught up with him."

"Where was he going?"

"That's the thing," she grinned, "he wasn't. He just wanted to be out of the house because I'd told him he couldn't. You'd think I'd have remembered that about him; tell him he can't do something and—"

"And he'll ignore you in favour of what he wants."

"Exactly."

"Well we'll make him rest," Will said. "You and me." He stopped and looked at her, giving her hand a gentle squeeze. "I really, really, really... like your son."

She laughed and put her free hand on top of his. "I can see why."

"Stay?" Will asked. "I mean, you are and I think if I asked you to go you'd probably fight me on it, but... I'm asking. Stay. Please."

"I'm going nowhere," she said.

"I'm going to try and see that as a positive thing," he laughed.

~~

For the next twenty minutes or so they passed the time making small talk. Will patiently went through all the photos of Ari he had on his phone, promising to send over one of Sonny holding the little girl. He'd not even noticed that Will was taking the picture, enamoured as he was with the baby he was holding up so she could stand on his thighs. Both of them were grinning, probably laughing at each other, and it was the perfect family shot.

Will stared at it a moment longer before locking his phone screen, looking up just in time to see Daniel walking in. Will was halfway out of his seat before he saw the expression on Daniel's face, and then he all but fell back down.
"Tell me he's not..." he croaked out.

"What happened?" Adrienne asked, her hand instinctively finding Will's.

"There was... a complication," Daniel said as he took a nearby seat. "He's alive, Will, don't..."

Will let out a long breath, feeling his heart thud back into life before it lurched again with a new realisation. "But he's not OK, is he?"

"He had a reaction to the anaesthesia. It's not unheard of, around one in every ten thousand people do."

"What does that mean, 'had a reaction'?" Adrienne asked. "Are you... are you saying he's allergic?"

"Well, as it's the first time he's had a general aesthetic it's impossible to say, but that would be my guess," Daniel continued. "He stopped breathing for a few minutes but there should be no lasting damage."

"Should?" Will whispered. "What does should actually mean? Not breathing that, that can lead to brain damage. Are you telling me that he might not be...him when he wakes up?" Will saw the look flicker over Daniel's face and his breath caught again. "...If he wakes up?" he ventured.

"Let's be very clear about this, that is an absolute worst case scenario. But everyone's different. Our anaesthesiologist is at the top of his game, he spotted the signs long before it got serious."

"Serious?" Will said. "Daniel, you just told us he stopped breathing!"

"OK, Will, honey? I think we should let him speak now," Adrienne said calmly.

"Sonny had what we would call a moderate reaction," Daniel said, "and it was dealt with quickly. We won't know until he wakes up if there was any damage, but the chances of there being any are slim. Just like the chance that he won't wake up."

"Just like the chances of him being a donor match for Ari," Will said quietly.

"I know it's a shock, and you can go and see him as soon as they have him settled in recovery. It might take a day or two, but Will? I've seen enough of these cases to know what I'm talking about. Sonny is young, fit, healthy... everything is in his favour, OK?"

"How did the operation go?" Will asked. "I mean, aside from—"

"Well, that's the good news," Daniel smiled. "We got everything we needed. Arianna will be prepped shortly if you want to go and see her before she goes in?"

"No, Gabi and Mom will be with her, and I think Rafe... I just want to see Sonny."

"OK, well wait here and I'll have someone come get you when he's settled. I mean it, Will. All the smart money is on Sonny being OK."

"We seem to be beating a lot of odds at the moment," Will said, "but thanks. Hey, Daniel?"

"Yeah?"

"Who's the anaesthesiologist for Ari's surgery?"

"Same guy," Daniel laughed. "Don't worry, we'll take good care of her."
"You'd better," Will said, trying to be light-hearted. When Daniel had left he leaned forward and put his head in his hands. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Want me to—?" Adrienne began.

"No, just... some water? Maybe?"

"OK, just breathe, honey, keep breathing." She quickly poured some water out of a nearby jug into a cup and sat beside Will, putting one hand on his back while she held out the cup in the other. "Sip it, don't rush it."

"Yes, mom," Will mocked as he took the cup from her.

"Well, you know me. Always have my boys' best interests at heart." She caught herself as she began to thread her fingers through his hair. "Sorry, I don't know why... I used to do it all the time with Sonny when he was little. Force of habit I guess."

"It's fine."

"I know this is a bit of a setback, but Daniel's right. If there's one thing we know about Sonny it's that he's a fighter."

"He promised me he'd fight for us."

"So that's what he's going to do."

"What if he's—"

"Nu-uh," she said softly, "we're done thinking the worst. So far everything's been going in your favour."

"Yeah, Ari getting sick was very much good," Will muttered.

"Catching it early was. If every parent brought in their vomiting child to the hospital we'd be knee deep in them. But your instincts told you something was wrong and you were right. Sonny being a match? That's nothing short of a miracle, something else in your favour." She smiled before running her fingers through the hair at the nape of Will's neck. "You and Sonny finding each other? Coming through everything you two have been together? Forming a family with Gabi and Arianna? Look at your life, Will. There is so much good in it."

"Doesn't feel like that now."

"It will," she smiled. "Couple of weeks, when this is all behind you? It will."

"I know Sonny wanted us to get along better," Will laughed, "but I didn't think he'd go to such extremes to make it happen."

"That's my boy," Adrienne laughed, "all in or not at all."

"He needs to be OK," Will whispered before biting his lower lip in an attempt not to cry.

"I know," she whispered in reply. "We just have to... have hope. And pray. Really hard."

"You think He'll listen to me?"

"I think your uncle was right. I think He made you just the way you're supposed to be."
The pair of them looked up when they heard someone approaching. "If you want to come with me?" Constance said. "He's just about settled. They've kept him on the ventilator for now, just to help him with his breathing, so don't worry. Right now it's all about making things as easy as possible for him."

"How long will he be on it?" Adrienne asked.

"They'll reassess tomorrow morning," she replied, "but it really isn't anything to worry about." She looked over at Will and for a split second he thought he saw real compassion there. "Not that I think that'll stop you."

"Can we--?" he said.

"Sure, come on."

~

If you ignored the machines and the tubes and the IV line, the hospital linen and single bed, the appalling decor and linoleum floors, if you closed your eyes and thought really hard, Will reasoned, he could just imagine that he was at home and Sonny was holding his hand back instead of it resting limply in his.

Will felt that for a writer his imagination was seriously lacking because no matter how hard he tried he couldn't make this situation anything but heartbreaking, anything but scary, anything but him staring into a forever that was cold and dark and empty.

"Do you need anything?" Sami asked quietly.

Will looked over in shock, trying to cover the fact that he'd not even noticed she'd come in. "No, I'm fine."

"You don't look it."

"Well I am. I'm just... waiting for all this to be over I guess."

"I can imagine," Sami said quietly, leaning over to kiss the top of his head. "Everyone sends their love. They'd be in here but it's family only. I had to sneak in when Nurse Ratched wasn't looking."

"She's not that bad," Will said. "She didn't even stop me coming in."

"Well you're his husband," Sami pointed out, "you have rights."

"Yeah," Will said quietly, not taking his eyes off Sonny. "Is Ari--?"

"She's gone down for her transfusion, moving her into some sort of quarantine room so she's away from infections," Sami said. "Gabi's with her, don't worry. You can go and see them now if you want?"

"I'd rather stay here. I'm sure Gabi's got it covered."

"Yeah, but it's your daughter—"

"And he's my husband," Will snapped. "I'm staying here, OK? Right here until he wakes up."

"Will, I—"
"Just go," he continued. "You said it yourself, it's supposed to be family only in here. I'm OK here, just... leave me be."

"I'll come back—"

"Mom, just go," he said. "Please. For once in your life will you do as I ask?"

Sami didn't say anything else, just turned and walked out, closing the door behind her.

"I'm right here," Will told Sonny, "just like you were for me. Holding your hand the way you held mine. And I woke up early so you'd better get on that, OK? You need to wake up and you need... you need to still be you, OK? Please. Please still be you."

The only response was the humming and hissing of the machines around him.

~~

"...and he just... threw me out!" Sami protested. "I know this has been hard on him but I just want to help."

"I know you do, Samantha," EJ replied, "but William is under a lot of pressure. I think we all need to cut him some slack."

"I can do that, I left didn't I?"

"Yes you did," he laughed, pulling her into a hug.

"Want me to talk to him? If he wants to talk to anyone that is," Adrienne offered.

"What?"

"No, it's just... we're talking and—"

"And you want to mother my son?" she snapped.

"Yes, Sami, I plan to use this awful situation to drive a wedge between you and Will, destroying your relationship because this is just the moment I have been waiting for," Adrienne snapped. "Get over yourself, there is more to this than your feelings. I was with Will when Daniel told us about Sonny's reaction, I saw how he took it. He's fragile right now, and if he needs space then we give him space. If he needs to talk to someone then we will be there."

"Adrienne—"

"My son is in there after risking everything to save your granddaughter," she snapped. "His husband is in there, holding his hand while his daughter is undergoing a transfusion which will hopefully save her life. But Will? He just wants to be with Sonny. Ask me I'm not sure he knows what he wants at the moment, he's being pulled every which way. He can be beside one bed; so who does he choose?"

"If you want to add more choices to that then go ahead, demand his attention, try to get him to talk to you, see how well that goes on. Or shut up, take a step back, and let him come to you." When Sami opened her mouth Adrienne held up a hand. "No. Oh no, we are not getting into this. You don't have to take my advice but here it is anyway. I love Sonny as much as you love Will. I want to be in there with every fibre of my being but I know with every fibre of my being that Will wants to be there by himself. So I am not going to make his life any more difficult or traumatic than it already is. What's your decision?"
Adrienne turned and walked off, leaving Sami standing next to EJ, her mouth open in shock. "I can't believe Adrienne Kiriakis just tried to give me parenting advice," she spluttered.

"I can't believe Adrienne Kiriakis was right," EJ said. "What? She has a point. You need to give William space and let him come to you. You push him and he will snap."

"But—"

"You just want to help, I know. I do too. But we can't help him by pushing him when he's not ready."

"I... was not pushing."

"Of course you weren't, dear," he grinned. "Look, I know you mean well but he is having to choose between his daughter and his husband and is probably still terrified that he could lose them both. The concern you're feeling for William? He's feeling that and more. And given how you just reacted to Adrienne think about how he'll react to someone telling him what to do? Even when that advice is well-meant?"

Sami scowled and pulled away from him. "I hate you."

"I know," he grinned. "He will come to you when he's ready and he will be more willing to talk to you if you've given him the space to do so."

"I can't not be there for him."

"And no one is asking you to do that. But right now he needs to be there for Sonny and Arianna and until he figures out how to do that he will have no time for anyone else."

"I hate waiting."

"Sadly, darling, that is all we can do."

"They keep trying to get me to go and see Ari. And I should, I know I should. But I'm scared, Sonny. Not about losing her – well I am. Still. But it's not that. It's... you're like this because of her. You're like this because you had that operation to save her. And now you're here and she's there and... and what if I blame her? That's what I'm scared of. That I'll look at you and I'll look at that transfusion bag and I... I blame her. She got sick and now I could lose you. I know that's not fair and I know it's not her fault. I know it's not your fault. I know that it could have been me lying here, although maybe not because I'm apparently OK with anaesthesia. But she's my little girl, Sonny, she's our little girl and I don't ever, ever want to blame her for anything. So for that reason alone you have to get better because we both know I blame myself for everything, don't give me something else."

"But this isn't just about me. This is about you. I know you want to see Ari grow up. I know you want to be there for her and... you promised me a life together, Sonny. You promised me we'd grow old together. You have been there for me, through so much and I... I never could have come out, been a father, even thought about getting married if it hadn't been you. And it has to be you, Sonny. Every day for the rest of my life. Because if it's not you then... then it's no one. And I mean that. Forever, remember? You're my forever."

"I knew the second I met you that there was something about you I needed. Turns out it wasn't
something about you at all. It was just you. I needed you. I need you. So you need to stop this. You need to wake up and you need to just... be here. Please. I need you to help me through this because I really am scared now. I can't lose you and Ari has to be OK and we're supposed to go to a beach somewhere and teach her how to build a sandcastle and then when it's dark we'll go back to the water and maybe I'll let you talk me into skinny dipping. And when it's just us and there's no lights except from the moon and the stars we'll laugh about how it's like something out of a movie. And we'll go to bed and we'll talk about that question I asked you.

"We'll find that three bedroom apartment and we'll be a family and I swear, Sonny, I will spend the rest of my life making you happy and thanking you for everything you have done for me, but that's only going to happen if you wake up. So you need to wake up now. You have to. You have to hear me and you need to wake up because I really have no idea what forever looks like without you.

"So please. Please. Wake up."

~~

"Visiting hours were over ages ago."

Will looked over at Constance and sighed. "You're kicking me out?"

"I should."

"Have you kicked Gabi out?" he challenged.

"No."

"So why me?"

"Because you need sleep and you're not getting any in that chair. Gabi, meanwhile, is out for the count. You'll do nobody any good if you're exhausted."

"You married?" Will asked.

Constance held up her left hand. "Almost forty years. Two kids, three grandbabies between them."

"Is he your everything? Your husband? Does he make you feel like you can try anything, but if you fail it's not the end of the world? Does he make you feel safe, not in the way that nothing can hurt you, but safe in the way that it doesn't matter what happens because you're going to be in it together? Does he make you feel loved and desired and the most... secure you've ever been? Can you even imagine your life without him?"

"I don't have to," Constance replied, "I lost him last year. Our babies are grown up, moved on, families of their own so it's... hard. To lose the person you built your whole world around."

"I-- I'm sorry."

"I know love when I see it, and I see it."

"But—"

"Like it or not, rules are rules. And they will come and go and change but while they're here? We have to live by them."

"But you-- Before..."
"Rules are what they are. And sometimes? We... get a little stuck in them."

"Right," Will nodded. He picked up Sonny's hand and kissed the back of it.

"Sometimes we get stuck on breaking them too," she said softly, putting her hands on Will's shoulders. "Even when we shouldn't."

"I'm not leaving him—"

"If he could see you now, he'd be telling you to go and get some sleep."

"And he'd know it wouldn't work."

"But he'd keep trying. Right up to the point where he's worn you down. It's what my Patrick would have done. So go home. Sleep. Come back early tomorrow and you'll be here before they take him off the machine. You'll only have missed this."

"What if something happens?"

"Then we'll call you."

"I should be here."

"Why? You got a medical degree none of us know about?" she joked. "Will, your baby and your husband, they need you to be strong for them. And you can't do that if you're not rested and well yourself. We already got two of your family in here, let's not add a third out of exhaustion."

"But—"

"Your mom's outside, she'll take you home."

"Who's idea was this?" Will asked.

"No one's idea," Constance replied, "my orders. Now get out of here and I don't want you back before seven, OK? Otherwise I will be adhering to visiting hours, even if half your family run this place."

Will was just too tired to argue, so after kissing the back of Sonny's hand once more he stood up. "I'll be back at seven, OK? I'll bring the coffee, I know how you are before your morning cup, might even get Luke to make it so you know it's right. Promise I'll learn though." He kissed Sonny's forehead and then turned to leave. "There are just too many levers and knobs on the one at the club."

"Yeah, give me a good ol' fashioned pot any day," Constance laughed. "Strong, dash of cream if you're getting the orders in."

"Done," Will smiled. "And thanks." He met Sami just outside and she gave him a quick hug.

"Go on, I'll catch up," she said. "Quite the change of heart," she then said to Constance when they were alone.

"I might not get it, I might not even understand it," Constance replied firmly, "but I know love and I know family when I see it. And as I told him, I see it. Sonny's that little girl's dad alright, but the law's the law. All it takes is one person to speak out of turn and that's that. Few signatures, we all got to breathe easy and I don't have to be evicting anyone from anyone's bedside."

"Right, well—"
"From what I hear you weren't always the open-minded and supportive type," she continued, "so how about you give some of us chance to catch up. Now get that boy home for some rest."

As Constance walked away from her, Sami couldn't help but feel that she'd been given her orders for the night – and it would be best to follow them.

~~

Sami knocked gently on the door before pushing it open, dropping the fresh towels on the side. "You got everything?"

"Yeah. Thanks for letting me stay."

"Anytime, I told you that."

"I know."

"And I get it. You don't want to be in that apartment by yourself."

"It's not just that," Will said, sitting up on the bed. "It's just..."

"It's your bedroom, like I said. I get it."

"You don't think I'm being weird?"

"Of course not," she replied, walking into the room and sitting beside him.

"I don't sleep well without him," Will laughed softly. "The night before the wedding, that night here, all the time I was in California—"

"Where were you the night before the wedding?" Sami asked, unable to stop herself. "Sorry, not important."

"No, I was... I was in Gabi's room," he smiled. "She was supposed to be on the couch, having a sleepover thing with Ari but she wasn't well so we ended up all bunking in together."

"You spent the night before your wedding in the same bed as your ex-girlfriend?"

For a moment Will and Sami looked at each other before bursting into giggles. And then all too quickly Will's facade crumbled and he was pulled into a hug.

"It's OK, Will," she soothed, "it's all going to be OK."

"But what if—"

"No, I'm telling you now. No matter what happens it will be OK, eventually."

"Just the idea of losing them—"

"I know, baby, I know."

"How did you... I mean..." He pulled back to look at her, the heel of his hand hurriedly wiping at his eyes. "Grace..."

"It was... the worst thing," Sami whispered. "And even though things turned out like they did I still believed, it still felt—" She put a hand on her heart and took a deep breath. "But hard though it is
"...you can survive it. Just like you can survive anything if you wanted to."

"And if you don't—"

"Oh no, you're not getting a choice in that one," she teased. "Sonny wouldn't want you throwing it all in if... well. You know."

"I love him, Mom. Like... like nothing else."

"I know. And when it's all well that's the best feeling, isn't it?"

"I can't lose him."

"Well let's not focus on that," she said, pulling him back in for a hug. "I think you are due a break given everything that's happened in the last few weeks, so... we'll go back in the morning and we'll see what they say. Hey, he might even be awake by then."

"They said chances are he'll sleep most of tomorrow," Will mumbled into her shoulder. "They're keeping him sedated while he's still on the machine."

"Yeah, and you were supposed to sleep the night away after your surgery but you woke up because you knew you had a little girl to see," she replied. "Sonny's got all of us, waiting for him to stop putting us all through hell, so if he knows what's good for him then he'll wake up sooner rather than later."

"Adrienne did pretty much yell at him earlier," Will half-laughed. "Said she was owed a few family dinners to make up for missing out on all the wedding planning."

"She has a point."

"You're not mad are you? That we left you out of it?"

"I think... that doesn't matter now."

"No, but—"

"It doesn't matter," she said firmly. "Your wedding day is supposed to reflect who you are, and... yours did. It told me, reminded me, that you are your own man now. You're a husband, a father, you're not my little boy anymore. No matter how much I might wish it."

"Can I get that in writing?" Will laughed.

"No," Sami laughed, pulling them both back onto the bed, "because even though I know it I'm not going to just leave you be. Trust me, when Arianna grows up you're going to feel exactly the same way."

"Oh I'm never going to be as bad as you," Will said, wrestling free of his mother's arms and grabbing a pillow. "It's a pact Sonny and I have. Whatever you'd do, we do the opposite."

"I'm marginally offended by that," Sami said, grabbing a pillow herself, "and if you want war..."

"You'd hit your own son? I'm suffering. I'm going through hell right now and you'd—"

He was cut off when Sami took the first playful swipe at him. He laughed and started hitting her back, deflecting her shots as best he could until he'd disarmed her and pushed her off the bed. He sat back on his heels, gasping for breath between the laughs, before tilting his head.
"What?" he asked when he noticed the look on her face.

"Worth it to hear you laugh. Hey, don't," she said quickly when his face fell in realisation. "You are allowed to be happy."

"But—"

"But nothing," she said. "Help your mom up."

Will reached down and offered his hand to her. "Thank you."

"For what?"

"I don't know. These last few weeks I've felt... heavy, like there's something weighing down on me. And right now? It's..."

"That's the power of a good laugh and a bit of a distraction. And it doesn't mean you don't love Arianna and Sonny with everything that's in you. It just means that you remembered to take thirty seconds for yourself. And you need them, if you're going to be there for them in the next few weeks."

"So everyone keeps telling me."

Sami leaned over and kissed Will's cheek. "Everyone is right. But especially me. Now get some sleep."

"I want to be back there—"

"For seven, I know. And you will be. But you're getting some sleep in the meantime."

"Yes, Mom," he laughed.

"Love you."

"Love you too."

~~

"Are you awake?"

The tiny voice whispering at his door got his attention and so Will sat up a little. "I'm awake," he smiled.

"Mommy said not to wake you up," Allie said, shuffling further into the room.

"Well you didn't. So come over here."

She smiled and practically ran across the room, jumping onto the bed. "Can I come see the baby with you today?"

"Oh, sweetie, I wish you could but she's not well enough at the moment. But as soon as she's better I know she'd love to see you."

Allie snuggled in beside Will. "Mom said she could be in hospital for a while."

"Yeah, she could."
"She's really sick, isn't she?"

"I don't want you worrying about that," Will said, putting his arm around her so she could get in closer. "All the doctors in the hospital are working really hard to make her better."

"Sonny helped?"

"Yeah," he smiled, "Sonny helped."

"Mom said we're not supposed to be in here," came Johnny's voice. "She'll be mad."

"No she won't," Will said, "come on, there's room for another."

There was the soft thunder of footsteps before the soft *woomph* as he jumped onto the bed. "Can we go see the baby with you?"

"I asked, he said she's too sick," Allie said.

"As soon as you can, I promise," Will told his brother as he climbed in next to him. "So. Why are you two up this early? It's not Christmas or your birthday—"

"Couldn't sleep," Allie said.

"She woke me up," Johnny added.

"Did not."

"Did too!"

"OK, enough," Will said. "It's still early, you two should be asleep—"

"Can we stay here?"

"Sure," he laughed. "Just... no snoring."

"She's the one who snores," Johnny whispered.

"DO NOT!" Allie protested before they started to laugh.

Within minutes they were asleep, curled up in with him, while Will continued to stare at the ceiling. He wasn't sure how long it was before the door opened again.

"Thought I'd find them in here," Sami said quietly.

"Don't know why you bother having a door, doesn't seem to stop people from coming in," he muttered.

"Shut up and let me take a picture."

"Mom!" Will hissed.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding. But it'd be a lovely picture. My babies together."

"What time is it?"

"Little after eight."
"What?" Will said, sitting up and disturbing the kids in with him, looking over at the clock on the
night stand.

"OK, bad joke," Sami said as Allie and Johnny were startled awake.

"Not on, Mom," Will muttered.

"It's six am," Allie complained, her head flopping back on the pillow.

"I know, go back to sleep, sweetie," Sami said.

"I should get ready."

"Did you get any sleep?" she asked as Will carefully climbed out the bed without further disruption
to his siblings.

"A little, maybe?" he said.

"Will—"

"I'll sleep when they're home," he said.

"As long as that doesn't put you in the bed next to Sonny," she said quietly as he left.

Will balanced the coffee holder as he stepped out of the elevator, putting it down as soon as he was
able. He removed one cup and turned, almost immediately being faced with Constance. "Black, dash
of cream, as requested," he said, holding it out, "and if you enjoy then I know Sonny wanted to
speak to someone about—what?" he asked when he saw the look on her face. "What... what
happened?"

"Will—" she started, but he backed away from her.

"No, you said—"

"Oh stop with the jumpin' unless you're in training for the Olympics," Constance snapped. "Give me
that coffee and go say good morning to Sonny."

"What?"

"Go," she said, lifting the cup from his hand.

He all but ran down the corridor, stopping in the doorway. The last of the medical staff were just
leaving, but in the bed Sonny was very much and unmistakeably awake.

"Hey," Sonny grinned when he saw Will, "apparently I gave you a bit of a scare? Sorry about that."

Will bit his bottom lip before shaking his head. Then he crossed the room and threw his arms around
Sonny's neck.

"They just took me off the ventilator," Sonny joked, "so please don't suffocate me."

"Not letting go," Will mumbled. "Ever. Ever, ever, ever, ever. OK?"

"OK," Sonny whispered.
"Don't ever do that to me again."

"I'll try not to."

"I mean it."

"So do I. But I need you to do something for me."

"Name it," Will said, pulling back just enough so he could rest his forehead on Sonny's.

"Go see our little girl."

"What?"

"Go see her. She'll be missing her daddy."

"Son—" Will stopped, sitting back enough to be able to look Sonny in the eye. "You know."

"That you've pretty much been attached to my bedside? Yeah, I know."

"I just couldn't... I didn't want—"

"It's OK."

"No, it's not. I couldn't go and see my own daughter because I was scared about blaming her for... I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry about," Sonny whispered before giving a slight cough.

"You OK?"

"Sore throat. Can you—" Before he could finish Will was already reaching for the pitcher, filling a cup and offering the straw.

"Teamwork," Will grinned.

"Thank you. Now. Go see Ari, I want all the details."

"I could wait until you're—"

"That will be days," Sonny laughed before coughing again. He waved his hand to dismiss the offered cup, pointing instead at the door. "Go. Give her a hug and a kiss from me."

"OK, but you'll have to give me one to pass on," Will grinned, leaning in for a kiss. "Love you."

"Love you too, but love her more so go!" Sonny laughed.

As Will started for the door it opened quickly, almost knocking him out. He took a step back, giving a soft laugh of relief when Adrienne walked in.

"Well it's about time you woke up," she joked, but the relief in her voice was obvious. "I don't know, anything for a bit of attention."


"Fine, yes, I'm going," he replied. "Visiting time with Ari," he explained.
"Let me know when she's up for more visitors. I'd like to... if that's OK? I mean, she is... kinda... well, I supposed she's my granddaughter now."

"Yeah, I'd like that."

"I'm sure Ari would too," Will said, "another grandma to spoil her rotten."

"That too," Adrienne laughed.

They hugged briefly before Will stepped around Adrienne towards the open door.

"OK, what was that?" Will heard Sonny say. "How long was I out for? Since when were you and Will... friends?"

"Hush, you," she mocked, walking over to the bed. She kissed his forehead and ran her fingers through his hair. "Turns out we have something in common. We both love you to pieces."

"That's nice, but Mom?"

"Yes, baby?"

"The hair?"

She laughed and pulled back her hand. "Will doesn't mind it."

"Well then do it to him!" Sonny half-protested.

Standing outside the door Will smiled to himself before heading off down the corridor.

~~

Carefully he slid open the door, trying not to wake Gabi. The rustling gown meant that he couldn't make a quiet entrance, and high on nerves Gabi was awake at the intrusion.

"Sorry," Will whispered, "I didn't want to wake you."

"It's OK, I'm glad you're here."

"Sorry I wasn't here sooner."

"No, it's OK, you knew she was fine. Is Sonny--?"

"Awake," Will smiled, "this morning."

"You must be so relieved."

"Doesn't even begin to cover it," Will whispered as he crossed over to Ari's bed. "I really don't want to jinx it but I'm actually starting to feel like things are going to work out."

"You are allowed some good luck you know?"

"I think I used all that up when I met Sonny and when this little one came along," Will said, running a finger down Ari's cheek. "But I won't say no to more."

"She's fighting, they say she's doing really well. Not giving up at all."

"That's my girl," Will laughed. "Well, the Brady in her maybe. And some of that Hernandez fire."
Not to mention the dash of Kiriakis she's getting," he added. "Our girl is going to be fierce, you know that?"

"There's every chance she's going to knock this back and she's not even a year old. I think we knew that already."

"You OK? Get much sleep last night?"

"A bit, yeah. Am actually starting to get used to these chairs, not sure if that's a good thing or not. I hear you were pretty much marched out with your mom?"

"Yeah, but didn't get much sleep. Just... too much going on."

"Well there will be a lot more once she's out of here. She won't be unsteady on her feet for long and then she'll be running rings around all three of us."

"Can't wait."

"You say that now—"

"No, I mean it," Will said quietly. "If I ever, ever complain about how much noise she makes or how messy her room is, or who she's hanging out with or dating? Remind me of this, OK? Because I will take every moment of it so long as I get to have every moment of it."

"And have it with Sonny?"

"Yeah." He turned his head to look at her. "And you."

"Will—"

"No, we are not doing this again, OK? The four of us are a family."

"Yeah, a married couple, the ex and the baby. Regular prime time sitcom."

"Gabi..."

"I love you both, and I'm so happy that Sonny's OK, really I am. But you need to realise that things are going to change, Will. I know you want more kids, and when that happens—"

"If," Will corrected. "Sonny and I... we haven't talked about it. I mean, I think he might want—"

"He will," she smiled. "Of course he will."

"Adjoining houses then, wasn't that the deal?" Leaving Ari's bedside he walked over to where she was sitting and knelt in front of her. "If anything this last month has taught me that you can take nothing for granted. I love you, you are part of this family, and I am not having you feeling like you're being... I don't know, pushed out or anything. Understand?" When Gabi nodded quietly, Will pulled her into a hug, rubbing his hand on her back. "Don't hold your breath, but I think we might just all come out of this OK."

Gabi's laugh was muffled into his shoulder, but Will's own was full of relief as he finally started to let some of the worry go.

~~

"So how are you really?" Adrienne asked.
"Tired. Sore. Feel like I got hit by a bus. But they tell me I'll be fine so I guess it's all good."

"Oh, yeah, all good," Adrienne droned. "Never mind the near heart attack you gave us all."

"I'm... sorry?" Sonny laughed.

"No, I am. It's been a long few days."

"Been a long few weeks."

"I can imagine. Your father sends his love, of course, he'd be here if he didn't have to be in court."

"It's fine. I think Will's going to pretty much move in here until I'm released and there's a limit on visitors."

"You joke, but I think he actually would," she laughed.

"So you two... are you good?"

"We're... getting there. We had a lot of time to talk while you were under and... and I'm starting to see why you love him so much."

"Trust me, whatever you see is just the tip of the iceberg."

"I believe you," she smiled.

"It scares me sometimes, how much I love him. How much I love Ari. I'd do anything for them."

"Oh believe me, I know you would. And that's not a criticism," she added quickly. "You... you have always given your all to something and this is no different."

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For giving him a chance."

"Well. As someone just said to me, you'd do anything for the people you love. And I think... if he's someone my son can love then maybe? Maybe I can too."

"Now, let's not go overboard," Sonny laughed softly. "I'll settle for friends first!"

"Baby steps then." She tilted her head to one side and watched him settle himself against the pillows. "You look tired."

"Yeah, I am. You'd not think I'd slept for the best part of two days would you?"

"It's not the same as sleep and you know it. Why don't you get some rest?"

"Will might be back soon and—"

"And all news can wait."

"No, I need to know how she's doing. It's important."

"I told you, they said she's doing fine."
"No, but he will have seen her and—"

"And it's not the same, I know. Well how about this? You close your eyes, get some rest and I'll just sit here and... count the ceiling tiles or something. And when Will gets back we'll wake you up."

"Promise?"

"Promise," she said, standing up and leaning over the bed to kiss his forehead. "Get some rest."

"Jus' for a mo-ent."

"Just for a moment."

~~

He didn't sleep. Will returned soon after with news about how well Ari looked and how she opened her eyes and held his finger and even smiled when he peppered her hand with kisses. Adrienne left after that and Will remained Sonny's constant throughout the afternoon, the steady drip of visitors.

Justin.

Sami.

EJ.

Abigail.

Even T and Luke put in an appearance, "Just to check the boss isn't dead".

Doctors, nurses, family and friends ensured that any alone time they had came in snatched moments here and there where they could just sit together, Will perched on the bed, his arm draped over Sonny's shoulders and just holding him close. They didn't say anything, didn't need to.

Visiting hours came to an end and Will was gently shepherded away from his husband's bedside, parting with lingering kisses and outstretched fingers and promises to be back as early as they would allow him to be.

The night at his mother's passed like the previous one, unsure of whether he was truly sleeping or not, spending most of his time staring at the ceiling before glancing at the clock. Eventually he gave up, dressed quietly and took a slow, long walk to the hospital.

"Why do you look like you've not slept?" Daniel asked as he saw Will walk out of the elevator.

"Because I haven't."

"You and Sonny are as bad as each other," he said. "We ended up sedating him last night because he couldn't sleep."

"Any chance I can get some of that?" Will quipped, taking a nearby seat and rubbing his face in an attempt to at least look awake before he went in.

"You need to—"

"Take care of myself, I know. It's all anyone says to me these days. I should eat, I should sleep, I should be somewhere other than this hospital. But here's the thing. I want to be here because pretty much everyone I love most is here. I don't feel like eating because I barely have an appetite, and I
would do the sleep thing only it doesn't want to have anything to do with me. I've barely slept since before the wedding, which I realised today was almost six weeks ago. My whole world has been turned over so many times I'm getting motion sickness and what is that?"

"A prescription. One sedative. Take it tonight and get some rest," Daniel said, holding out the piece of paper. "Doctor's orders. I think two of your family in here is enough, we don't want you collapsing with exhaustion."

"Thank you," Will said as he took the prescription. "I wish I were like Gabi and could sleep in the chairs."

"No you don't, they are not good for your back," Daniel laughed.

"Buy some new ones."

"That'd only encourage people to stay longer."

"So it's all part of the hospital's plan to keep out the relatives, or cripple us so you get more business?"

"You got it."

"That's... impressively evil."

"We like to think so."

"Well in that case I'd better move to said chairs, wouldn't want to disappoint."

"He might not be awake yet."

"That's OK," Will said as he got to his feet, "I'm not entirely sure I am."

"There would be no point in me telling you to go home for a little longer, would there?"

"None at all."

"Just checking."

~~

"You know they're going to kick me out soon," Will said, his head resting on the bed right by Sonny's hand. "I don't want to go."

"So don't," Sonny joked, his fingers pushing through Will's hair. "Hide under the bed and when they've gone you can sneak back out."

"Cunning plan, one flaw."

"Not enough room under the bed?"

"No. Involves me moving and I don't want to."

"Ah."

"I miss you."

"I'm right here."
"No. At night. I miss you. How did you do it, when I was in the hospital? How did you sleep?"

"I didn't sleep," Sonny admitted.

"Then how were you in better shape than me?" Will complained. "You looked... awesome. You looked like you! People I don't know are now asking when I last slept because I look like an extra from The Walking Dead."

"Because back then I had a coffee shop. You don't want to know how many espressos I had each day. Thought my hand was never going to stop shaking."

"I... why didn't I think of that?"

"This is why you need me," Sonny said.

Will sat up so quickly Sonny barely had time to move his hand. "I need you for more than that."

"Oh, Will... I didn't mean—"

"I just... I need this to be over. I need you two home. Now."

"I want to be at home. Now I understand why you were so frustrated!"

Will sat for a moment, resting forward on the bed until he decisively stood up. "Move over."

"What?"

"I have about thirty minutes until I'm kicked out. Move over."

Taking care not to trap any leads or drips Sonny did so, carefully rolling onto his good side as Will kicked off his shoes. He then held up the covers as Will climbed into the bed, lying so they were face to face.

"Hi," Will whispered.

"Hi yourself," Sonny whispered back.

"This is better. I've missed this."

"Me too."

"When did we get like this?" Will said. "So caught up in each other that we barely sleep when we're alone?"

"You make us sound pathetic," Sonny protested lightly, silenced when Will kissed him. "I just like to think of it as us knowing what we want."

"I want you. I want to spend the rest of my forever with you. When you were... all the time I was just sitting here? I kept thinking forever isn't supposed to be this short. I'm supposed to grow old with you. I'm supposed to... plan your thirtieth and try, really badly, to keep it a secret. I'm supposed to spend nights, sitting up with you when Ari's out on dates and we're going to talk each other down when our baby tells us that she's getting married."

"Our baby," Sonny whispered.

"I haven't forgotten, just... later. Not now."
"OK."

"I just kept thinking that... That you're it. You really are. And if I'd lost you—"

"Will—"

"No, if I had? Then that would be it."

"You can't know that."

"No, I do. You're..." He let out a soft breath and let his eyes drift close. "You make me feel loved and safe and whole and... And I'm making no sense, I know, but—"

"No, I understand," Sonny cut across, "I do. Me too."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"I never thought I'd have this."

"What? A husband and daughter in the hospital?"

"A husband. A daughter. A life. Love. A home of my own and a future that doesn't seem distant and scary. Someone to share my forever with."

"I really, really... like you," Sonny laughed.

"I like you too."

"...Stay," Sonny said quietly, watching Will's eyelids fluttering closed.

"Forever."

He laughed softly and kissed the tip of Will's nose before letting his own eyes shut. Just for a moment.

~~

Adrienne pulled the door shut behind her, turning and almost crashing into Constance. "Oh, sorry. He's... I was going to say goodnight but he's already asleep so..."

"Really? Dr Jonas said he'd probably need another sedative as he's not been sleeping well."

"Guess not tonight," she said, moving a little so she was blocking the door.

"Right, well, I'll just check on him and—"

"Can't you leave him be?" she asked. "He's asleep, you said he's not been sleeping well—"

"I can't do that, you know I can't, so how about you just save us both the hassle and move out of my way?"

Adrienne sighed and moved just enough to let her move past. "They're asleep, they're fine—" She stopped as she watched Constance check the drip, make sure that Sonny's hand with the cannula wasn't in danger of being disturbed given how they were holding each other, rearrange the covers, and then walk back towards her. "Oh."
"I may not get some stuff, I may not like things. And I may do things in response to that."

"Wh--?"

"Kicking Will out breaks my heart. Stupid rules."

"But I thought—"

"What I think doesn't matter. I'm not here to preach or judge, I'm here to act in the best interests of my patient. And right now that patient is asleep, happy, and more to the point so is Will."

"I... thank you."

"What for? I haven't seen anything, I know nothing. Understand?"

"Clearly."

~~

Will woke slowly and naturally, his arms still wrapped around Sonny. Keeping his eyes shut for a little bit longer he breathed in, felt the contentment through to his toes. He felt Sonny curl in a little bit more and he wondered how long they had before an alarm went off or Arianna woke up or—

His eyes snapped open as he remembered, and he quickly took in the hospital room.

"Sorry," Constance said, "but they'll be doing rounds soon."

"What?"

"It's morning."

"I... the whole night?"

"Two of you slept right through."

Will's gaze moved back to Sonny who was still clinging to the last vestiges of sleep.

"Come on, he'll be home soon enough."

"When?" Sonny mumbled, still not opening his eyes. "I want to be in my own bed and my own apartment."

"Two days, three maybe?"

"I like you," Sonny said, trying to pull the departing Will back into bed, all without opening his eyes, "you actually give straight answers, unlike the doctors."

"Well don't go taking my word as law," she laughed, "and don't go getting me into trouble. Let him go, Sonny."

"I'll nip home, shower, be back soon."

"Bring coffee," Sonny said.

"Decaf for him, but I'll have my usual."

"Done," Will laughed as he finished putting his shoes on. He leant over, kissed Sonny's cheek and
then started for the door before doubling back and kissing Constance's cheek. "Thank you."

"Yes. Well. It's not a habit, OK?"

"Let me take him home and it won't have to be."

"Go get me my coffee!" she said, half pushing him out of the door.

Sonny pulled himself up to a sitting position, hissing a little when his hip complained. "Thank you."

"For what? He clearly loves you."

"Yeah, he does. And I love him."

"So I see."

"That OK?"

"Not up to me who you love," she said, busying herself with his chart. "You happy?"

"Very."

"Then that's what matters, isn't it? What I think shouldn't." She turned and smiled at him. "You've all been through a lot these last few weeks, so if you needed last night together? Then you should have that."

"Last night was the first night we've been together, I mean... you know, in... I don't know how long."

"Not much of a honeymoon."

"We weren't really getting one. A night away, but—"

"No break?"

"No, but as soon as we get out of here? There's a beach out there with our names on it. A family holiday."

"Sounds like you have a plan," she said as she finished up.

"Yeah, a forever of it," Sonny whispered to himself.

~~

He could still feel the heat from the shower prickling at his skin when he stepped into their room. Despite their comings and goings over the last few weeks he'd realised that they'd not really done anything except grab new clothes and throw the old ones into the hamper. So Sonny's things were still scattered about from the morning before the wedding, strewn about the place as if it had happened moments ago. The air was cold against Will's skin though, betraying the emptiness of the room for a prolonged period of time.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Will let the coldness and emptiness of the room cover him until he finally broke, curling up on top of the covers and sobbing in a way he'd never been able to until now. Despite everything there was still a sense of loss invading every pore of him. A loss of the idea that everything was always going to be OK, and a loss of the security that came with loving someone. Because they wouldn't always be there. He couldn't say that he would spend the rest of his life with
Sonny, he couldn't say that they would have forever. The only thing he had was the understanding that he would love Sonny forever.

He cried until he slept, until there was no sound left in his throat or tears in his eyes, and he'd never felt so lost in his whole life.

~~

Two days later he stood, arm around Sonny's waist, as the discharge papers were finally signed. They'd have preferred him to stay a little longer but they knew that he was desperate to go home, Will was desperate to have him home, and their combined families were increasing serious footfall through the hospital. So with Arianna due to stay in for several more weeks it was agreed that Sonny could go home, under orders to rest ("Which, I am afraid to say to a newlywed, means... none of that. Sorry."), and instructions that should anything on a very long list of symptoms or reactions happen that they would call for help immediately.

After signing everything and promising everything Will grabbed Sonny's hand and pulled him through the door, down the corridor and into the elevator before anyone could change their minds and make him stay.

Once the doors slid shut Will pulled on their joined hands.

"Hey," Sonny said, his arms wrapping tight around Will. "Hey, it's OK."

"I don't think I'm going to believe this is real until we're home."

"I know, I know."

"You're sure you're ready—"

"I need to be at home, Will. I just... I hate being away from you. I need to be in my own bed—"

"With your own husband?" Will laughed as the elevator slowed.

"Mostly my bed," Sonny quipped, pulling back a little and kissing his cheek.

"Oh, so that's where I rank?"

"Well, actually it's work, food, my bed, then I guess Arianna, my parents..."

"Am I even in the top ten?" Will whined as Sonny stepped out of the elevator. "Twenty? Hundred? Son—Sonny?" He laughed when he realised he wasn't going to get his answer. "I think I liked you better when you were unconscious," he muttered.

The ride home was full of laughs and jokes and little touches (earning them a few knowing looks in the rear view mirror from EJ's driver, sent to cater to their every order. Of which there was just one – "Home, please.") and before long they were standing outside their apartment door.

Will tried to stop his hands from shaking long enough to unlock it and usher Sonny inside, only to have his intentions of doing everything shot down. Sonny took his own bag and disappeared into their room, something that Will was suddenly very grateful for when he had to reach out for the couch in order to steady himself.

His breath stuck in his throat, his heart felt like it was about to give out, and if he didn't hang on for dear life there was a very good chance that his legs were about to give out. Biting his lip he tried to
swallow the sob he could feel burning in his throat, and taking the chance he wouldn't fall he lifted a hand, his fingers pinching across his eyes to the bridge of his nose.

"Hey."

Sonny's voice was soft by his side and then he was safe and solid within his arms.

"I don't—" Will began. "Why am I suddenly like this?"

"When you and Ari first came home, I had a moment. It was three fourteen in the morning, Ari had just settled down again and you were out for the count. I remember sitting on the edge of our bed, looking at the clock and just... losing it. And I couldn't understand why because you were fine and we had this home together and you were there, with me. In our bed together and I could reach out and touch you... It was just everything getting to me. All that worry and sleepless nights and those thoughts you'd have in the small hours about what if and suddenly there's just relief and the future you'd started to doubt you'd have."

"This is stupid."

"No, it's not."

"I just—"

"I know."

So they stood there for a while, holding on and trying to forget about all those what ifs that had weighed on them for so long.

~~

Gabi pushed her plate away from her with a sigh. "I'm sorry, it's probably great but—"

"No, it's fine," Will said, "I get it."

"One down, one to go?" she joked quietly, looking at Sonny who was busy finishing his plate.

"I can come back with you—" Will started, but was silenced when Gabi pointed a finger at him.

"Don't you dare," she said. "Sonny is finally home, you need a good night's sleep, and we can tag team out in the morning."

"But—"

"But nothing," she said. "Besides, I can sleep better in the chairs than you do."

"Listen to her," Sonny said, looking over the top of his glass before he washed down his last mouthful. "She's right."

"Always am."

"Dinner was great," he quipped. "And you barely sleep well on the couch."

"Well, when she comes home we're doing a month of night shifts," Will said.

"We are?" Sonny asked.
"This isn't a score chart, Will. We're not clocking hours here."

"Go," Sonny said quickly, "before he starts to draw up a schedule and timetable and committing us to months of nightshifts. You know I love her—"

"Enough to risk your life for her," Gabi interrupted. "Did I say thank you?"

"Not today," Sonny laughed. "Give her a kiss from me?"

"Always. I'll see you in the morning."

When she'd gone Sonny turned to Will. "Wash up in the morning?"

"Yeah," Will smiled, "sounds good."

~~

When Will finally turned off the last light and climbed into bed he found Sonny was waiting for him, arm outstretched. With practiced ease Will slotted in beside him, his arm draping over the hot and bare skin of Sonny's waist.

"Missed this," Sonny hummed into Will's hair.

"Me too. I'm glad they let you come home."

"I think they realised you were on the verge of kidnapping me so..."

"True," Will laughed, tilting his head up a little to meet Sonny's in a kiss.

It started slow and sensual, but soon Will was being rolled over onto his back. He was about to remind Sonny of their doctor-imposed limits when he felt Sonny's hand skimming across his stomach.

"No, stop," he said quickly. "Son, it's not that I don't... I have missed you and missed this but I'm not... I don't want our first time as... when we're married... not this, OK? Not just me."

"But I want—"

"I know, I know," Will said, holding Sonny's face in his hands.

"The last few weeks you've been there for all of us," Sonny whispered, "I want to be there for you."

"You were, you are," Will assured him, letting his head drop for a kiss. "But I don't need this. I know it's been a couple of months, but... I want it to be right and I want it to be special and I want us both involved, OK?"

"OK," Sonny agreed, kissing him once more before moving back onto the bed. "One condition."

"What?"

"I'm the big spoon tonight," he said in such a way that Will could hear the grin. "Please?"

"That I can do," Will laughed, turning onto his side so Sonny could wrap around him. And for the first night in months, even with that night in the hospital, they both slept well.

~~
Turns out that when there's just one of you in hospital life becomes a little easier to manage. Sonny agreed a compromise of doing the paperwork aspect only of work, leaving Luke and T to run the bar. After two hours with the books he had to agree that they made a decent team and had far from bankrupted him during the weeks after the wedding. T had used the opportunity to ask for a raise. Which, because Sonny was in a good mood, he actually agreed to.

Between their families the three parents had an almost unlimited amount of support, from meals which seemed to turn up on a regular basis, through on-call lifts to and from the hospital, all the way through to a passing comment of not having time to do everything and clean the apartment, and returning home to find a service team making their home spotless.

While their families might be overbearing and interfering and sometimes smothering, there was no doubting that when it came to their kids (or sister in Rafe's case) there was nothing that was off limits, impossible, or not happening.

"How long do you think they'll keep this up when Arianna comes home?" Gabi joked one morning as she unpacked the bag of clothes that had just been returned from Adrienne's laundry service. "I think I could get used to this."

"Doesn't make you feel like a kept woman?" Will asked.

"You feeling like a kept man?"

"...No," he laughed. "No bills, not much cooking or cleaning, no Uni worries? I could live this lifestyle."

"Not sure how we're going to thank them for everything."

"I don't think they're expecting us to," Will pointed out as he saved his file and closed the lid on the laptop. "Arianna has the biggest family in Salem and like most families we're there for each other. A Horton-Hernandez-Kiriakis girl? She's never going to want for anything."

"Speaking of family, where's Sonny?"

"He had an appointment this morning."

"At the hospital?"

"Yeah, just a check up, nothing big."

"Can't have many of them left now."

"This is the last regular one," Will said, "so I guess we'd better start thinking of which beach we want to lie on for two weeks." He thought about it for a second before asking, "Do you think we can get them to pay for that too?"

Gabi laughed and, grabbing a cushion from the couch, threw it at him. "Look, are you sure you want me and Ari there? This technically would be your honeymoon and—"

"How many times?" Will said without a hint of frustration. "Yes, we want you there. We all need this break, and I'm certain that Sonny will have spent some time with Ari this morning because he's just as much in love with her as we are." He walked over to the kitchen, dropping the cushion back on the couch as he did so, and got a bottle of water from the fridge.

"I know," she smiled. "I just... You two are such good parents, you know that? And I don't just
mean about what Sonny did for her. I mean... Are you thinking about... more?"

"Maybe," Will admitted. "Well, I am. I spent so long being an only child and I don't want that for her. I want her growing up in a big family, having lots of people she can turn to."

"Have you been paying attention?" Gabi asked. "We needed a bone marrow donor and pretty much the whole town got tested. She has people."

"You know what I mean."

"So you want them... what about Sonny?"

"I don't know," Will admitted. "I mean, before—"

He was cut off when the door opened, and with a quick look he pleaded with Gabi not to say anything as Sonny came in.

"How was it?" Gabi asked Sonny, diverting her attention and the conversation to different matters.

"Good. Now, if you wouldn't mind getting your coat and being elsewhere for several hours? That'd be great, thank you."

"What?" Will asked. "Son—"

"The appointment went very well thank you, I can now resume every aspect of my life," Sonny added with a grin, "and we'd appreciate it very much if we could have the apartment—"

"I'm going, I'm going," Gabi laughed, grabbing a jacket as she headed for the door. "I'll be with Ari."

"Call before you come home," Sonny called out, but didn't take his eyes off Will, "and unless we say it's OK—"

"Understood!"

"Oh," Will managed to say before Sonny reached him.

Will looped his arms around Sonny's neck while he grabbed at Will's waist, pulling him flush against his body. Will was backed up against the fridge and held there while Sonny kissed him, long and slow and deep.

"I know you wanted special but—"

"Screw special," Will laughed.

"Screw you," Sonny said, his voice low and suggestive.

"OK."

"Glad we have a plan."

"So everything's OK?" Will asked as they started to move towards the bedroom.

"What do you think?" Sonny laughed into the curve of Will's neck as his hands moves down his back to the curve of his ass. "Green light."
"You asked, didn't you?"

"I wanted to be sure," Sonny laughed.

"Oh god, please tell me that you didn't ask a doctor if you could have sex?"

"Are you complaining?"

Will stopped and looked at Sonny. "Not in the slightest."

"Good. Then shut up and get into that bedroom and—"

They were cut off by a knock on the door.

"Ignore them," Sonny whispered, "nothing in this world will—"

"Will?" Sami's voice called. "Sonny? We have Gabi's key and we will come in there, but we're giving you the chance to come to the door first."

Sighing, Will pulled away from Sonny and walked over to the door. He opened it and stared at his mother who was flanked by EJ and Lucas. "I love you, I do. I am beyond grateful for everything that you guys have done for us these last weeks, months even, but seriously. You need to go now."

"Not happening," Lucas said. "Your mom has something organised for today."

"So do I," Will said, "and he's right there and—"

"You'll love this, I promise," Sami said. "Come on."

"You know your mother," EJ sighed, "it will be easier and quicker if you just come with us."

"Mom—"

"Trust me," she said quietly. "Please."

Will turned back to Sonny, almost silently pleading with him to intervene, to make them go and then take him to bed. Instead he seemed to know that they were outnumbered and beaten.

"Sooner we go, sooner..." he said.

"But—"

"Come on, Will," Sonny said. "You going to argue with them?" he asked, gesturing to the three people at their door.

"Yes, yes I am," Will pouted as he was pushed out of the door. "This had better be good, Mom. I mean it. You have no idea what—"

"I do," she cut over, "but trust me."

~~

They were led, unwilling but uncomplaining, to the club, Will counting off every minute that he wasn't in bed with his now-well and doctor-cleared husband. And then they stopped.

"What--?" Will began.
The club was decorated as it had been that night, even a cake stood in one corner with two little men figurines on the top. The same ones from that night.

"You didn't get the start to married life that you should have," Sami explained, "so we wanted to do something to mark this. I know you've been going on about the fact that you two have been like this for ages, and you have, but that doesn't mean we're not going to mark the occasion."

"So this is... another wedding?" Sonny asked.

"More like a blessing. And I promise, no longer than half an hour. We don't expect you to stay for the party."

"You did this?" Will asked his mother.

"Actually, it was... Adrienne's idea," she admitted.

They turned to see Adrienne, waiting with Justin by the bar. Sonny walked over and hugged her, whispering something in her ear that he would later tell Will were not only their thanks but a promise that they weren't going to lose each other again.

~~

This time Sonny spoke first, reaffirming his love and support and desire to be there for Will and their family. Then Will had his turn.

"So much has changed since last we stood here and at the same time nothing has. I still love you, I still want to spend my forever with you. But now? Now I know, deep in my bones, that we are forever. What you did for Arianna was what any parent would, but it struck me then just how much of a family we really are. I promise I will never take that love and support for granted, ever, and I will spend every day of my forever making sure that what we have? Stays this strong and stays this supportive. I couldn't have made it through this without you and we were the reason you fought so hard to stay.

"These last few months I have learned three things. One, I can't sleep without you anymore. I know that's probably ridiculous and maybe more than a little dependent, but that's it for me now. I need you there, I need to know you're there and you're always going to be there because only then can I rest.

"Two, I have learned that while families may drive you insane most of the time, you might argue and fall out and hate each other for a little while, that doesn't mean that they won't drop everything to do anything for you. And even though we could have lost each other we did it for Ari.

"And three... I've learned that love isn't something that just is. I fell in love with you almost two years ago and since then it's... it's more. Every day, every minute, every action and event. It's more, you're more, and I can't believe I get to spend the rest of my life feeling this.

"I don't feel like I have it all figured out with you," he continued. "I don't feel like I know it all and I don't feel like I understand everything. Instead I feel like there's a whole world of experiences out there to explore and the fact that I get to do that with you? For the first time it excites me rather than scares me. And that's what you do, Sonny. Loving you, being with you... All of that pain and heartbreak of coming out and then Gabi and Ari and Nick and... California," he said tactfully, "and everything up until this day? If I get to face what comes with you then I'm not scared. You make me brave, you make me confident, and you make me believe in myself."

"OK, now I'm glad I'm not following that," Sonny whispered before kissing Will, ignoring the crowd and Eric as he finished off the blessing.
They had planned to go home, but on the way EJ handed them a hotel card and said that they could stay hidden as long as they wanted, and neither of their mothers would find them. So, deciding on the better option, they changed their plans.

"I thought engagement sex was as good as it got," Will half-laughed as Sonny propped himself up on Will's body, his arms looped over his shoulders and his legs still shaking a little as he caught his breath. "We need to have all the honeymoon sex, OK?"

"I think that's the point of a honeymoon," Sonny laughed.

"Beach. Soon. Somewhere hot and sunny and just... away from hospitals and all of this."

"Soon as we can," Sonny promised, sitting up a little in Will's lap so he could kiss his husband, a slow and lazy kiss full of love and contentment. "Just like we talked about."

"Good."

"And yes. In answer to what we were going to talk about. Yes."

"Yes?" Will asked in confusion.

"You asked me something, before the operation, and said we'd talk about it afterwards. But we don't need to. Yes."

"Yes?" Will whispered, his eyes pricking with tears. "Even—"

"If that's what you want?"

"What about what you want?"

"I want... I want this. I want us to have a life and a family together and beyond that I want what we can do and what will make us happy."

"You make me happy."

"I mean it, Will. Yes. Let's look into it, see what we need to do—"

"When?"

"After the beach," Sonny whispered, kissing Will again. "After we get our breath back."

Will laughed and turned them over, pinning Sonny beneath him on the soft mattress as they kissed and touched and loved.

"I want to have more kids," Will whispered into Sonny's ear. "At least one anyway. And I want it to be yours. Biologically anyway. I want us to talk about it when you come out of surgery and I want us to figure out how we're going to make it work. I want you to talk to me about how it's a 50-50 chance that we won't have the boy I see in my head, with your eyes and smile which will mean I'll never be able to refuse him anything. I want... I want a baby with you and I want you to want a baby with me and that means you have to come out of this OK. Because now we have something to talk..."
about."

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!