Carried Away

by PatriciaBurtness

Summary

Lucy is bowled over (literally) by a handsome stranger while on vacation in London, what will happen when real life intervenes.
“I am lost.” Lucy declared, finally admitting to herself what she had been denying for the last hour. She had been wandering this section of central London looking for something, ANYTHING that might look familiar.

After finishing her Master’s degree she’d decided to spend her summer off from teaching high school Spanish traveling. She elected to save some money and not get a European phone plan, a decision she was kicking herself for at the moment. Why couldn't the London city planners find another name other than Kensington; Kensington Park, Kensington Garden, Kensington Road, Kensington Garden Road, the map she'd saved onto her phone was useless.

Lucy looked for a tube station to orient herself. But they seemed to have all disappeared. It was a residential neighborhood with not a store or black cab in sight. She had just about admitted defeat and turn on the data on her phone when she found herself sprawled on the ground with a huge black and white dog panting at her.

“Where did you come from?” She asked the dog as if he would give her any answers. “Didn’t your owner teach you any manners, you don’t just go knocking into people. It’s not nice.” The dog at least had the decency to look sheepish, while she looked around for his owner. “You are a handsome fella aren’t you?” She told him, rubbing his ears. She looked for a collar and found his name tag; Kal. “Well Kal, where is your owner, and why did you run away from him?” There was an address on his tag, but of course that wouldn’t help a bit. She was just about to attempt to stand when a deep male voice called out “Kal!” The dog turned in the direction of the voice and started running.

“No, that’s ok, just leave me here. I’ll be fine.” Lucy muttered to herself. She started to look for something to help lever herself off the ground when a large tanned hand appeared in her field of vision.

“Miss, I’m so sorry, please let me help you up.” Lucy’s eyes traced upward from the hand, to a muscular forearm, which led into a muscled bicep, past strong shoulders, and a jaw that could cut glass, and found herself staring into the bluest pair of eyes she’d ever seen. The face surrounding the eyes was nothing short of breathtaking; with a nose and forehead to match the jawline but with a surprisingly soft mouth. She took the proffered hand and stood. “I’m so sorry, he just got away from me. Are you ok? Did you hurt anything?” He asked in a baritone voice that sent a shiver down Lucy’s spine.

“Nothing except my pride.” She said brushing dust off her pants. “You should really learn how to take care of your animals Mr…….” she scolded.

“Sorry, I’m Henry. I’m sorry, as I said, he just got away from me. And you are…”

“Lucy. Apology accepted. Just don’t let it happen again.” She said bringing out her best teacher voice.

“Could I buy you a coffee, as a way to make up for our appalling behavior?” he asked tapping his hand to his heart while indicating himself and Kal.

She lowered her gaze to Kal. “I don’t know Kal, is your owner better behaved than you are?” The dog shook his head and they both laughed.

“There’s a coffee shop just down at the end of the block and around the corner. Give me 5 minutes to bring this naughty boy home, and I’ll meet you there.”
“I’ll meet you there, then.” She said giving Henry an incredulous look, recognizing a brush-off when she heard one. Kneeling down to Kal, she said “You be a good boy, and don’t run away anymore.”

She turned and walked in the direction of the coffee shop feeling ridiculous. “Of course the gorgeous British man is not going to be joining me.” She scolded herself. “At least I’ll have an interesting story for my blog” She thought.

Henry watched the American woman walk in the direction of the coffee shop for a moment before turning toward home, tugging at Kal’s leash as he did so. “Come on boy. How many times have I told you, don’t run away. What if you had really hurt her? She could have sued me, or worse, sold the story to a tabloid.” Kal just smiled up at his owner. “She scolded me, like I’m a toddler. Did you hear that?” Henry could have sworn that he heard the dog laugh.
Henry let Kal in the house, before locking the door and hurrying to the coffee shop. He’d told her 5 minutes, and he would be pushing it to get there. As soon as he entered, he saw her sitting with her head down over her phone, typing furiously.

Lucy decided she’d wait 10 minutes before getting a drink to go then ask for directions to the nearest tube station. She seated herself at a table near the door and started to compose a few texts to send when she returned to the wi-fi at her hotel that night. Her surprise was evident when she felt a tap on her shoulder though she had barely finished her first message. The handsome stranger had actually arrived.

“You came!” she blurted without thinking.

“I said I would, why did you think I wouldn’t?” Henry puzzled.

“Well, because you’re a guy who,” she said pointing at his muscular Greek-God like physique “looks like you, and I’m a woman who, looks like me.” she said indicating her plain, overweight body.

“Why should your appearance make any difference in me apologizing for my behavior?” He asked quizzically.

“I’m sorry, forget I said anything. I spoke without thinking. You promised me a coffee. I don’t care for coffee, but I’d love a cup of tea.”

Henry couldn’t say exactly what it was about Lucy that caught him off guard. His first observation was that she obviously either didn’t recognize him, or didn’t know who he was. As an actor, it was a feeling he was becoming increasingly unfamiliar with. Her surprise at seeing him gave him a pause though. She was obviously a woman who had not been treated right by the male sex. He’d given her a once over as she walked away in the street. She wasn’t conventionally pretty, but there was a confidence about her that made him want to learn more.

Henry stepped to the counter and ordered her tea and a coffee for himself. He watched her measure out sugar, milk to her exact tea specification. Then lead her to a table.

“So, Lucy. Tell me how are you enjoying London?”

“I was loving it until today, when I got lost, then tackled by some dog in the street.”

“Again, I’m sorry about that. He ran after a squirrel, and he’s normally very well behaved He just doesn’t realize he’s not a puppy anymore.”

“I’m only kidding. I’ve loved every minute so far. Though I’ve only been here since yesterday morning.”

“How long are you staying here?”
“2 weeks. I’m spending 6 weeks total over here in Europe. I spent the last 10 days in Holland with my best friend. She moved there 3 years ago, so I finally got a chance to visit her. After London, I’m off to Cardiff for a couple of days. Then I’m flying over to Ireland for 2 weeks, before spending a few days in Paris.”

“You’re traveling for 6 weeks? Are you on a tour?”

“No, I’m by myself, I just finished my master’s degree, so I’m celebrating. I’m single and all my friends are married, so I’m traveling by myself. And I don’t know why I just told you that. That’s one of the first things every blog says. Don’t tell people you’re traveling alone. That’s how you get “Taken” Though I’m not really worried about being sold into the sex trade, I’m about 15 years too old and 100 pounds too heavy for that.” She laughed self-deprecatingly.

“Don’t worry, I won’t tell anyone.” He laughed. “What is your degree in?”

“Education. I’m a school teacher, I teach high school and elementary Spanish. What about you. What do you do when you’re not corralling your dog?” Lucy asked, wanting to shift the spotlight off of herself for a moment.

“Oh, um, well I’m…” He trailed off as he felt a tap on his shoulder, grateful for a distraction to help him think up a convincing lie. He looked over to see two college-age girls. Their t-shirts identified them as sisters of the Alpha Lambda Pi sorority.

“Um…..excuse us sugar, but are you like who we think you are?” The first girl asked with a southern drawl. Henry’s spirits dropped a bit. Here we go.

“I probably am.” Henry replied warily.

“OMG! Can we get a selfie with you. Our sisters are never going to believe this.” They positioned themselves on either side of Henry and did their best duck-face for the picture. “Thank you so much!” The second girl gushed, then kissed Henry on the cheek and they both left.

“What was that about?” Lucy asked, when he saw recognition cross her face. “You’re Henry, Henry...Henry Cavill!” She quietly exclaimed.

“I was wondering how long it would take you to recognized me.” He said a bit sadly.

“Well I think it’s your longer hair, and you're wearing clothes.” She puzzled.

“What do you mean, wearing clothes?” He asked.

“Well in that period show you did, what was it called, The Tudors! Your character, he didn’t spend a whole lot of time with clothes on, he had quite a hard time keeping it in his pants as I recall.” She said taking a sip of her tea to hide her blush, which Henry didn’t fail to notice.

“The Tudors?!? That’s what you recognize me from?” Had this woman been under a rock the last year?

“Have you been in something more recent that I might have seen?” She asked. Henry wasn’t sure he
believed her. His last part was, well Superman. America’s superhero. How could she not have seen it?

“Man of Steel? The new Superman.” He suggested.

“Oh, wow! Good for you!” She complimented as though he were one of her students. “That’s the role of a lifetime isn’t it? I’m more a Marvel gal though.”

So she hadn’t seen it. That did explain her not recognizing him.

“So, to answer your question, before we were interrupted, I am an actor.”

“Were you actually going to tell me that, before we were interrupted? You seemed to be stalling for a moment there.” Henry was surprised by her attitude. It hadn’t changed at all, and she was calling him out. Every time she opened her mouth, he became more interested.

“Do you know, I honestly don’t know. Lately people tend to change when they find out who I “actually” am.”

“Well, I mean I’m impressed that you’re the new Superman, but I didn’t see it. Like I said, I’m more a Marvel girl, and being in graduate school while working full time the last 2 years, I haven’t had much time for anything else. So I guess in my head, you’re not that big a star. Now if you had been Tom Hiddleston. Completely different story. I’d probably be fan-girling left, right and center.” She laughed nervously.

Henry found he was enjoying simply sitting and talking with Lucy. She spoke animatedly about her travels and her students using grand hand gestures to emphasize her stories. She also asked pretty insightful questions of him, and seemed genuinely interested in his answers. He got the feeling she wanted to know Henry the man instead of Henry the actor.

He felt comfortable with her. The more he learned about her, the more he wanted to learn. She spoke with a passion and excitement that was so rare in a lot of the women he had dated recently, who were scared to have their own opinions at the risk of him losing interest, when it was their lack of opinions and interests that usually had him breaking off the relationship.

Henry tried to hide his disappointment when she looked at her watch and exclaimed “We’ve been here for almost 3 hours! I should really get going. I wanted to visit Kensington Palace this afternoon. I hope it’s still open! Henry, it was a pleasure meeting you. Thank you for the tea. Tell Kal, all is forgiven”

“I’d really love to keep talking to you. Would you like to have dinner with me this evening?” Henry heard himself ask. Dinner? Why had he invited her to dinner? The shocked look on her face saddened him. Could she not feel the chemistry flowing between them?

“Ummm sure, I’d love to….ummm what time?” Came her startled reply.

“Why don’t I pick you up at, say, 7:30? Where are you staying?” She mentioned the name of a hotel out by King’s Cross station. “7:30 it is then. Lucy, it’s been a pleasure talking to you. I shall see you later.” He rose and stared at the hand she offered him. He took her hand, and using it to pull her closer, leaned in to kiss her on the cheek. He smiled at the blush that stained her face and neck, she was a basket of contradictions at once confident yet she blushed at the slightest provocation.

He walked her to the door of the coffee shop, pointing in the direction of the tube station. He couldn’t help the grin that split his face as he watched her walk away. He waved when she looked back before turning the corner, letting her know he was still watching her.
Henry walked back to his house smiling like a fool. When he opened the door, Kal came running to meet him, jumping in excitement at seeing his owner after their separation. Henry knelt and ruffled the dog’s ears. “Kal, you’re such a good boy. I have a date tonight. You chose well.” He laughed, wrapping his arms around the dog’s neck in an affectionate hug.
Lucy found the tube station with no problem. Once she was on the train, she finally started processing what had just happened. A gorgeous, funny, intelligent man, had just asked her to dinner. And kissed her! Sure it was just on the cheek, but that was gorgeous man lip contact, she was counting it. What was happening? No man had ever shown an interest in her before, and now she had literally Superman asking her out to dinner. This called for backup.

The first thing Lucy did upon entering her hotel room, was open her FaceTime app and call her best friend Sarah. Sarah would understand, plus she was almost on the same time zone, being in The Netherlands.

“Sarah! Emergency! Emergency!” She started when the call connected.

“What’s wrong? Are you hurt? Did you get mugged?” The panic evident in her voice.

“No Sarah, nothing like that, sorry to worry you, but….I have a date!”

“A date?!?! You’ve been in London for less than 48 hours and you have a date? You really are making the most of this vacation.”

“Sarah, I need help. Do you know how long it’s been since I was on a date? Never, that’s how long it’s been! And this isn’t an ordinary date. His name’s Henry Cavill, he’s an actor. Google him, I’ll wait.” She said chewing on the side of her thumb nail while she watched Sarah type.

“Santa mierda! He’s gorgeous! How did you meet him?!”

“His dog tackled me in the street.” Lucy replied.

“Is that a euphemism for something? Because I’m lost.” Lucy quickly explained the whole situation about the dog and the coffee and even the sorority girls and the kiss.

“What do I do, Sarah? What do I even talk to a guy like that about?!?”

“Well from what you’ve already said, you had no problem talking to him already. What’s different now?”

“Now I know that it’s not just an apology drink, my nerves are going to take over and I’m either going to clam up or word vomit all over him.”

“Well honey the only advice I can give you is: Number one: Have a drink before he picks you up, don’t get sloppy drunk, just enough to calm you down. You know how your Spanish improves after a drink or two, get to that level.” She counted the points on her fingers. “Number two: Be yourself. You already know he likes you enough to ask you out to dinner. And number three: If you get a chance, jump him! He’s guapisimo.”

“Sarah! Behave yourself! Thanks for your advice. I’ll call you when I get back from dinner.” Lucy promised.

“I’ll behave if you promise not to. Don’t be such a scaredy-cat, good girl. And if you don’t call me until breakfast I’ll be cheering you on sweetie!” Sarah laughed as she disconnected the call.

Lucy went to the front desk first and asked about the nearest liquor store. She might be a bit crazy,
but Lucy knew Sarah had the right idea. She needed to relax, and a drink would be the perfect way to do that. Upon returning to her room, Lucy mixed a drink and got to work. She showered and shaved, with Sarah’s suggestion in the back of her head, then attempted to style her hair. It had never the in the history of her life done what she wanted it to do without professional help. Lucy wasn’t sure if it was the drink, or the gravity of the event, but her hair (mostly) followed instructions. She pinned the waterfall of curls she had created back away from her face.

She took more time with her make-up for this one dinner than she had in the past six months combined. Lucy knew she didn't have a beautiful face, but she did have pretty eyes. She played them up with a smokey eye in a deep sapphire color. Finally just before 7:30 she slipped into one of the two dresses she’d brought with her. “Unfortunately,” she thought “I don’t have any going out shoes,” as she hadn’t planned on going on any night time activities. The sandals would have to do.

She walked out the front door of the hotel at exactly 7:30, and there he was, in a navy suit with a white rose in his hand, waiting for her. Her heart stopped for a moment. Her inner monologue panicked. “What am I getting myself into? This man is waiting for me. Me, unexceptional, plain, school teacher, me. I don’t know what to do.”
“You look amazing.” Henry said handing Lucy the rose, and kissing her cheek in greeting. And she did, it wasn’t just a line, Henry thought to himself. She’d curled her hair, and done something special to her eyes. Did she really not see how beautiful she looked?

“You don’t look so bad yourself. I didn’t know how to dress, will this be ok for where we’re going?” She asked nervously, biting her lip. He could sense the trepidation about tonight’s dinner coming off of her in waves.

“It will be perfect, let’s not delay so we’re not late for our reservations.” Henry said and helped Lucy into the back seat of the waiting cab, then ran around to the other side and got in himself. He gave the name of a restaurant to the driver and they were off.

“Kal asked me to apologize again for his appalling behavior earlier.”

“Well, you tell Kal, that so long as he doesn’t do it again, all is forgiven.”

The cab pulled up outside a chic little restaurant. Henry paid the driver, then came around to open Lucy’s door. He offered his hand to help her out, and gave his name to the maitre d, who led them to a table in a dark corner of the restaurant, popular with couples who wanted a bit of privacy with their dinner.

When they were seated, the sommelier came to inquire about wine. Henry asked Lucy if she had a preference. “Oh, no. Whatever you pick will be great I’m sure.”

The sommelier poured a small amount of the wine Henry chose into a glass for testing. Henry gave it to Lucy. She took a sip and let out a low “Mmmm.” that hit him low in his belly. It made him wonder what kinds of noises she would make when he made love to her.

“Stop, Henry. You’ve known this girl for less than 12 hours. Stop thinking about taking her to bed.” He mentally chastised himself. When they’d both placed their orders, Henry turned to Lucy. There was a sparkle in her eye he hadn’t noticed before. “I’m so glad you agreed to come to dinner with me.”

“I’m glad I came. This place is lovely. Where exactly are we, in London, I mean. What neighborhood?”

“This area is called Knightsbridge. We’re not far from Kensington Palace, and we’re about 6 blocks from my house. Hyde Park is right over there.” He indicated the green space they had passed on their way to the restaurant.

Henry was surprised by how easily the conversation flowed between them. They talked about their families, and hobbies. Favorite books, and movies. Throughout the night whenever Lucy made one of her grand hand gestures, the bodice of her dress dipped a little, showing him an increasing crescent of her ample cleavage.

Henry grew even more uncomfortable when their food arrived. It seemed every bite Lucy took elicited a small “Mmm.” He had to force himself to focus on the conversation at hand.

When she discovered he spoke French, she asked him to say something. He told her every lewd and lascivious thing that had crossed his mind; thankful to be able to say what he’d been thinking all night.
“I’m almost positive you just said some very naughty things to me, Mr. Cavill. I don’t speak French, but I know a few words my colleague taught me. What was that you were saying about my bouche?” She leaned toward him.

“I said, it’s had me captivated all night. I’ve been so distracted thinking about what you might taste like.” He murmured low and deep, leaning closer to Lucy with each word. Finally when there was a mere breath between them, she met his lips with hers.

Her lips were soft and supple, and she tasted of wine and chocolate tarte. Just when he moved to take the kiss deeper, she pulled back. “I think we should probably go. I think I need some fresh air” She stammered.

After Henry paid the bill, they stepped outside. “It’s a beautiful night.” Henry started. “Would you like to see a bit of the park?”

“That would be lovely.” Lucy replied, looking up at him. Henry took her hand and led her into the park. They continued their conversation from dinner while wandering hand in hand. They turned a corner in the path to find a busker playing Think of Me from Phantom of the Opera on a violin. Lucy reached into her evening bag pulled out a few coins, and dropped them into his violin case.

“I love this piece.” She said turning to face Henry.

“Would you care to dance, m’lady?” Henry asked, swinging Lucy into his arms to sway along with the music. They simply swayed with the music, holding each other close, as one song turned to two, turned to Lucy wasn’t sure how many, ensconced in a world all their own. Henry leaned down to kiss her. He raised his hands to cup her face as he took the kiss deeper. He thought he would bust a seam in his trousers when she made the same “Mmmm” sound that had been driving him crazy all evening. He pulled away slightly and whispered in her ear “Come home with me.”

She instantly stiffened. “I, I, I’m sorry, I have to go.” She stammered, and ran away as fast as her legs would carry her. For a moment he was stunned, he couldn’t move. Once his senses returned, he chased after her, but by the time he reached the street, she was already in a cab driving away from him.
I’m sorry Sir, but Miss Claussen has asked not to be disturbed. You may leave her a message, and I can assure you it will be delivered first thing in the morning.

“No, no thank you. No message.” Henry walked away from the desk of the hotel. “How could you be so stupid?” He chastised himself. “You weren’t going to take her to bed tonight. Why did you ask? Now she most assuredly thinks you’re some sex crazed play boy just out for a good time. You need to make this right. But how can I if she won’t see me?” He argued with himself. “I’ll just have to wait for morning. I’ll wait for her and apologize then.” Pleased with his plan, he went home to take a cold shower, and try not to think about Lucy and her soft lips, and sparkling eyes.

Lucy couldn’t remember crying harder in her life. She needed a friend and she needed one now. Sarah would know what to say.

“Oh Sarah! I made a mess of things! He wanted me! ME! And instead of just going for it, I ran away. Literally! I RAN away from him! He must think I’m some kind of weirdo, glad that he dodged a bullet there.”

“Sweetie, it’s ok. I wish I could be there to give you a hug. Now explain. Tell me exactly what happened.” Lucy explained about the dinner and the wine and the dancing in the park. The kiss that had fried her synapses with it’s heat and intensity.

“I ruined it! He wanted me! Now I’ve ruined the whole thing. I don’t even have his phone number or know where he lives to explain myself.”

“Honey, I’m sorry. Why don’t you get some sleep, and maybe everything will seem better in the morning. If nothing else, please don’t wallow in this. You’re in London! Go out and see the city, do all of the things you had planned, and try to forget about it.”

“Thank you. I know it’s silly. I only met this guy today, I shouldn’t be so messed up over this. I’ll call you tomorrow. Love you.”

“Love you too. Get some sleep.”

Lucy contemplated the pint bottle of vodka she’d purchased earlier in the day. She hoped that by finishing it, she could at least sleep through the night. She finished the bottle and fell into a fitful sleep, full of jumbled dreams, where Superman was flying over head while Henry laughed at her.

She awoke to a jackhammer in her brain, and a roiling in her stomach. The vodka probably wasn’t the best idea she’d ever had, she decided. After a long shower, a bottle of water, a handful of ibuprofen, and a gallon of concealer she finally felt ready for a day of exploring the city. The first item on her agenda; buy a map of the city. No more getting lost in strange neighborhoods. Only trouble came from that.

She put on her Jackie O. sunglasses to hide the dark circles the concealer didn’t quite cover, stepped out the front door of the hotel, and almost ran right into Henry.

“Good morning. I brought you a cup of tea.” He said handing her a paper to go cup.

“Henry! What are you doing here?” Lucy paled at his appearance.

“I came to apologize. I obviously came on too strong last night. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to scare
“No, I’m sorry. I DID get scared, and I ran away, instead of facing my feelings. Would you like to go get some breakfast, and maybe I can shed some light for you.”

They made small talk as Henry led her to a nearby restaurant. Perusing the menu, she asked “What does a ‘full English’ breakfast consist of?”

“A ‘Full English’ is usually fried eggs, sausages, bacon or black pudding, some sort of veg, beans, and toast.”

“And people say Americans fry too much. How can anyone eat that much fried food this early in the morning.”

“There’s nothing better after a night at the pub.” He smiled. Lucy had planned on skipping breakfast today, but it seemed since seeing Henry, her stomach had forgotten all about the vodka incident.

“I feel like I owe you an explanation.” Lucy started after giving the waitress their orders. “First of all, again, I’m sorry for how I left last night. I really did have a wonderful time, it was probably the best evening I’ve ever spent. Then you...made your...request....and I didn’t know how to handle it.”

“I’m sorry I said it. It was incredibly forward of me to even suggest that we might take things to that level, we’d known each other for less than 12 hours. I didn’t mean to imply that I thought that you were…..” And he just trailed off.

“It’s not that I was offended, or didn’t want to. I did, oh good lord how I did, it’s just….I can’t believe I’m telling you this…I’ve....um...never...um...well you know.”

“Had a one-night stand?” He suggested.

“Had ANY night stand.” She supplied, not meeting his eyes.

“Oh...OH! But you’re what 26, 27 ? How does that happen? Is it a religion thing?”

“No, it’s a never had the opportunity thing, and I’m a month shy of 31 thank you very much for reminding me. I wasn’t popular in high school, and in college I was focused on my studies, then well, guys have never shown an interest in me. Which is why I was so surprised when you actually showed at the coffee shop yesterday.” She explained fidgeting her hands on the table. Thankfully their food arrived at just that moment, halting Lucy’s rambling and giving them a few moments to take in what had already been said.

After a few minutes of thoughtful eating Henry finally broke the silence. “So what is on our schedule for today?”

“Our? What do you mean our?”

“If you wouldn’t mind, I’d like to accompany you around town today.”

“What? Why?” Lucy asked, genuine shock crossing her features.

“Because, I’d like to get to know you better. And I’d like to see where this could lead.”

Lucy sat dumbfounded, and stared at Henry “You, want to spend the day with me? Even after how I behaved last night, and all that’s been explained over breakfast?”

“Why is that so hard for you to comprehend?”
“Because. No man has ever wanted to...get to know me.”

“Well, then they are supremely daft. Because I’ve thought about nothing but getting to know you since the coffee shop yesterday.” She gaped at him slightly. “I would like to keep spending time with you while you’re here in London.”

“I’m just planning on doing standard sightseeing, nothing that you’d want to do, I’m sure.”

“I have a few days before we start filming on my latest project. I would like to spend as much of those few days with you as you’ll allow.”

For a few seconds Lucy couldn’t speak. Had he just said that? he wanted to spend more time with her. Her brain could barely fathom the idea. “Well I was going to go to the Globe, followed by the Tate and St. Paul’s

“Wow, that’s quite a bit for one day.”

“I’m only here for a few days, I want to see as much as I can.”

“Well then, we had better be off, but before we go, I want to tell you, my ‘offer’ from last night is on the table, so to speak. But I will leave it up to you to decide if you want to pick it up. There will be no pressure from me” Lucy gaped after him as he stood up to pay the bill.

Once they were outside, he donned a pair of sunglasses, and a hat. “Disguise.” He explained. “It’s not a great one, but it’s better than nothing.”

Lucy and Henry spent the entire day together. Talking, laughing, learning a little bits about each other, like her love for Picasso, and his aversion to black olives. Lucy surprised herself. She was normally a very selfie-phobic person, but she found she would take as many selfies as possible as long as Henry was by her side.

That evening, they enjoyed a lovely meal at a little bistro near Leicester Square, before Henry accompanied Lucy back to her hotel. When she tried to say good night at the front door, he insisted on seeing her to her room.

Her room was at the back of the hotel, through an outdoor courtyard. When they arrived at her door, Lucy unlocked it and turned to say goodnight to Henry.

“Is this your entire room? He asked peering inside. “This may be the smallest hotel room I’ve ever seen.”

“The bathroom is so small that in order to turn around, you have to step out of it.” She laughed, gesturing in, indicating he should have a look.

He stepped into the room and what had once been a small room, seemed positively minuscule. He turned to Lucy. He had planned to say goodnight, give her a simple kiss and be on his way. But the nervous look on her face nearly undid him. He took the 2 steps possible to cross the room, and framed Lucy’s face in his hands. He lowered his lips to hers. She responded with abandon. Wrapping her arms around his neck, pulling him in closer. She opened her mouth, and her tongue dueled with his.

He slowly sat down on the bed, pulling Lucy with him. She sat next to him, and buried her hands in his hair. Henry turned to lay her down on the bed, her hands slid down his back to slide under the hem of his shirt. His hand left her face to slide down her neck, moulding his palm to her breast. Lucy moaned against his mouth.
His hand continued its downward slide to her waist, toying with the hem of her shirt. When his hand slid under to touch the bare skin of her stomach, she started. She put a hand to his chest. “Stop.” She gasped. “We need to stop. I...no. Not yet.” She could barely get the words out around her gasping for breath, sitting up, she left the hand at his chest.

“Yes. Stop. Good idea.” Henry agreed once his brain started working again.

Lucy stood up and pulled Henry with her. “You should go.” She said kissing him again, all but pushing him out of the room. “Good night Henry. Thank you for a wonderful day.” She said, kissing him once more, before shutting the door and falling back onto it.

Henry simply stood staring at her door. He started back toward the hotel exit, before he turned and knocked on Lucy’s door. She answered with a slightly dazed expression on her face.

He grabbed her and kissed her one long, deep, thorough, kiss. Resting his forehead against hers, he breathed heavily. “I’ll go now, but think about this. When we do finally make love. We’re going to set the sheets on fire.” Then he kissed her again for good measure, and walked off. As last words went, that was one for the record books.
Over the next several days Lucy and Henry barely spent a minute apart, during the day. They toured all around London. Henry was perfectly content to let Lucy pick the itinerary. He teased her about her insane sightseeing schedule. The nights were full of dinners, and clubs and shows. Henry managed to get tickets to the shows Lucy already had tickets for.

Each night ended with kisses at her hotel room door. But never anything more. Henry was the perfect gentleman, waiting for her to take the next step. Lucy could feel herself blossoming under his attentions.

After several days of sightseeing in London proper, one morning, Lucy announced they were leaving London.

“Where are we going?” Henry inquired.

“Leavesden? I think it’s called.”

“I know it well. Why are we going...oh, we’re not.” Henry said incredulously.

“Yes we are! The Harry Potter Studio Tour!” She exclaimed gleefully clapping her hands in front of her face. “This has been at the top of my list since I heard it was a thing. You have to pre-purchase tickets, and I managed to get you one!”

“You’re not going to be dressed up are you?”

“Of course not. I’m a 30 year old woman. Hogwarts’ robes are only for Halloween, and dress up days at school.”

“You own Hogwarts robes?”

“Not really, it’s a black graduation gown, but I wear a blue and silver scarf with it, and carry a wand I made with hot glue and a chopstick. The kids love it.”

“It’s as if I’m seeing a whole new side of you.”

“I told you I was big nerd. You were warned.” She smiled before giving him a playful peck on the lips. “Why do you know Leavesden so well?”

“We filmed sections of Man of Steel in the studio next door.”

“Really? Are they filming anything there now?”

“I’m not sure.”

A week after their fateful meeting, Lucy had planned a day trip to Oxford. As usual Henry came to the hotel in the morning, but he was significantly underdressed even for a sightseeing trip.

“Good morning.” She said kissing him. “You look...interesting, I know Oxford is a University town, but I think sweatpants are a bit too casual.”
“I’m sorry darling, I got a call last night from my agent. They’ve pushed up the schedule on a project I’m working on, and I have to be in final fittings all day today, so I won’t be able to accompany you to Oxford. But instead, I would like to make dinner for you tonight, to apologize for having to cancel on you.”

“You don’t have to apologize.” She said. “You’ve essentially put your life on hold this last week to spend it with me. I understand having to work.” Then what he said finally struck her. “You want to MAKE me dinner? Like you’re going to cook for me? At your place?”

“Yes. I thought I would come this morning, escort you to the train station, and give you my address. Meet me there at 7:00. Does that give you ample time in Oxford? Or should I push the time back a bit more?”

“No, 7:00 should be fine. But you don’t have to see me off, if you have somewhere else to be. I can navigate the tube system on my own. I’m a big girl.”

“I want to see you off, plus it gives me a chance to spend a bit more time with you.” He said kissing her, then handed her a piece of paper. “This is my address, please take a cab, we both know your sense of direction in my neighborhood…” He grinned cheekily at her.

“Ha, ha. Very funny. If it weren’t for my sense of direction we would never have met. But, let’s get going, I have a ticket already booked.”

“Of course you do. I don’t believe the Queen has her trips so rigorously planned.” He teased as they walked to the tube station.

“I don’t have much time to travel, and as a teacher I have to budget carefully. I saved money by pre-booking a lot of things.” He continued to tease her about her planning all the way to Paddington station. He waited while she retrieved her tickets from the automated machine.

“Have a fantastic time, darling. Have a pint at the Turf Tavern for me. I’ll see you at 7. I’ll miss you.” He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her slow, and deep. By the time he’d finished, Lucy could barely remember her own name, let alone where she was.

Lucy felt oddly bereft as she sat alone on the train to Oxford. She was used to being alone, had planned on spending this whole trip alone, now suddenly she was lonely? What was going on? She passed the time reading her guidebook, trying not to think too hard about what tonight might bring.
Chapter Notes

NSFW
This is my first time writing anything NSFW, please be kind.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lucy enjoyed her day in Oxford, touring the Bodleian Library, and the School of Divinity, and visiting several of the colleges she had read about in a novel trilogy she had enjoyed. She had the requested pint at the Turf Tavern which advertised offering an “education in intoxication”, and bought her sister-in-law a sweatshirt from the University. She returned to London sooner than she had originally planned though, she had made a decision, and had some shopping to do.

Upon returning to the city she hailed a cab. “Where can I take you madam?” The lovely old driver asked in a Welsh accent.

Lucy gave him the name of a shop she had found online that specialized in what she was looking for, something to bring Henry to his knees.

The driver pulled up in front of a little lingerie boutique. “Thank you sir.” She handed him the fare plus a generous tip.

“No, thank you madam.” He said giving her a wink. Lucy laughed.

She entered the store and started browsing through racks of lace and satin.

“Can I help you?” A woman, about the same age as Lucy asked.

“Yes. I need something pretty.” Lucy managed to stutter out.

“Well, you’ve come to the right place. Are you thinking pajamas or a robe, or something a bit more revealing.” She asked giving a little shimmy of her shoulders.

“I’m planning on...seducing my…..man...friend, I need some wrapping paper for him to open.” Lucy blushed.

“Well, you’ve come to the right place, I’m Genevieve, and you are?

“Lucy.”

“Well Lucy, let’s see here. Are you thinking, sweet and innocent, or dark and naughty?”

“Um, I’m not sure. I want something that’s going to cover my...problem areas,” she indicated her stomach area, “but shows the girls to their best advantage, but something that’s not going to be too complicated to remove when the time comes.”

After looking at and trying on a dozen different items. Lucy settled on a sheer black and teal chemise with matching lace panties. “Well, I don’t know about this bloke of yours, but I’d shag you.” Genevieve said when Lucy came out of the dressing room. “Good luck tonight. That’s one lucky
bloke you’ve got there.” she said with a wink.

The cab pulled up in front of Henry’s house at exactly 7:00. Lucy looked up and laughed. It turns out she had walked past his house 3 times while lost. She remembered it distinctly because she’d commented to herself how pretty the hunter green door was. She paid the cabbie, and mounted the stairs to the door. Her small evening purse swung heavily at her side. It was almost full with a change of underwear, contact solution, and tooth brush. Lucy had no intention of returning to the hotel tonight.

The door flew open almost immediately after Lucy rang the bell. Henry stood barefoot in a pair of khaki linen trousers, a dark blue button down shirt with the sleeves rolled to his elbows, and an apron. His eyes were alight. “You’re here! Come in. You look great.” He said kissing her on the cheek and ushering her inside. “I hope you’re hungry, I made quite a bit of food.” He lead her to the kitchen, where he stirred something in a small saucepan, and wiped his hands on a towel. That task completed, he turned and kissed her. He wrapped his arms around her as he took the kiss deeper, as if he couldn’t get enough. When he finally pulled away, they were both breathing heavily. “Hi.” Lucy blushed.

Henry handed her a glass of wine and went back to the stove. She wandered over to look out the windows to his back garden. “How was your day? Did you enjoy Oxford?” He asked chopping tomatoes.

“I did. It’s a beautiful city.” She nattered about some of her favorite things she had seen. “Well, Lucy, it’s now or never. Just do it before you lose your nerve.” She gulped the entirety of the glass of wine and wrapped her arms around him from behind; moulding herself to his back. She knew she would never be able say what she needed to say if she was looking him in the face, “Say, will dinner hold a while?” She asked, in a tone she hoped was nonchalant.

“Hi.” Lucy blushed.

Henry reached behind him to turn off all of the burners and the oven, before crushing Lucy to him in a barely restrained kiss.

Henry couldn’t believe it. After a week of cold showers, she would finally be his. He had hoped to seduce her tonight, but he hadn’t expected her to make the first move.

He was so hot for her, he could take her right there on the kitchen floor. But he restrained himself. This was her first time, a fact he still couldn’t wrap his head around. He was going to be the first man to love her. It was both a gift and a tremendous responsibility.

Henry’s hands trailed down Lucy’s back to her bum, lifting her into his arms, urging her to wrap her
legs around his waist.

“Put me down, I’m too heavy. I’ll hurt you.” He didn’t respond but captured her protesting mouth in another searing kiss. He was so pumped on adrenaline he could have carried her for miles. He carried her all the way up to his bedroom, thankful he’d thought to light the candles before she arrived. She deserved romance, and he was going to give it to her.

When they reached his bedroom, he set Lucy down by the bed, letting every inch of her body run down every inch of his, before following her. Despite her bravado in the kitchen, he could see the nerves on her face now.

He kissed her, slow and deep, trying to calm himself before he embarrassed himself. She wrapped her arms around him, trying to take the kiss deeper. He pulled back.

“Baby, we’ve got all night. This isn’t a race.” He said, dropping slow kisses on her lips.

He reclaimed her lips, kissing her deeply, their tongues dancing in a beautiful prelude of what was to come. His mouth left her lips and trailed down her neck to her shoulder, pushing the strap of her dress off, she stalled his hand.

“Henry, I um, I got you something today.” She said in a breathless voice that was barely hanging on. She reached down to pull the dress off over her head, revealing the lingerie underneath.

“This may be the best present I’ve ever gotten.” He said pressing a kiss to her collarbone, as he lifted her to lay on the bed, stretching out beside her.

“I thought maybe if you had some pretty wrapping paper, you wouldn’t be disappointed with what you found underneath.” She said, not meeting his gaze.

“That is not physically possible.” He said grabbing her hips to press them against the hard ridge of his erection. He lifted her chin, forcing her to look him in the eyes. “Do you feel that? You do that to me. I appreciate the gift, it’s sexy as hell, but you’re sexy without it.” His lips returned to her collar bone, kissing and sucking their way to her breasts.

He pushed the straps of the chemise off her shoulders and down her arms, baring her breasts to his gaze. His hands came up to frame her breasts, his thumbs grazing over the nipples before dipping his head to taste first one nipple then the other.

Lucy’s hand buried themselves in his hair, more for something to hang on to as wave after wave of sensation his her, than to control his movement. He took his time, laving and sucking each nipple until it came to hard peak, and Lucy’s breaths were shallow and frantic.

He continued pushing the chemise lower down her body, and his lips and hands followed. She gasped when he hooked his fingers into the sides of the black lace panties, and slid them all the way down her legs to join the chemise on the floor.

Henry’s hands slowly retraced their route, up her legs, first kissing the seashell tattoo on the top of her foot before learning the curves of her legs.

Lucy nearly jumped out of her skin at the first press of his mouth to her. He nibbled and suckled and licked at her sex until she was writhing and squirming beneath him, her breath coming in shallow gasps.

He entered her with one finger while he licked and nibbled. A second finger followed soon after, stretching her. He began to gently twist and pump them in and out, while his tongue kept up its own
rhythm.

“Henry, please.” Was all she could manage before her orgasm hit her. Her entire body tensing with the power of the pleasure. He continued to stroke and lick through her climax, feeling her muscles clench around his fingers, before slowly kissing his way back up her body. She struggled to regain her breath.

“Why” She asked breathlessly, “Are you still wearing so many clothes?”

“Tonight is about you darling. Not me.”

“Well, I want you naked, right now.”

“Yes ma’am” he said undoing the first button of his shirt. “Would you like to help?” He asked seductively.

Lucy’s hands shook as she reached for the first button, sliding it free from its hole. Slipping her hands under the fabric, she buried her fingers in the hair liberally sprinkled across his chest. Lucy leaned forward, pressing her lips to his chest, while her fingers continued opening the buttons of his shirt. Henry helped her slide the shirt over his shoulders, before throwing it behind him.

Lucy gasped when his shirt was finally removed. Her hands roamed over his wide muscular chest, and followed the ridges of his abs to where they disappeared into the waistband of his trousers.

Her hands dropped to the button and zip holding his trousers on. Very carefully she lowered the zipper past the erection barely contained by his boxer briefs. Her hands slid inside the waistband of his boxer briefs before he stopped her. “Let me help you.” he said and lowered his trousers and pants in one motion. Lucy's eyes were transfixed, unconsciously she licked her lips.

Henry climbed back onto the bed beside her, and claimed her mouth in a soul searing kiss. Lucy reached out to feel the crisp hair on his chest, swirling her fingers through it, to his nipples. She leaned forward to kiss first one then the other paying him the same attention he had paid her while her hands trailed down toward his hips.

She wrapped her hand around his erection, and he groaned his appreciation. She ran her hand up and down the shaft, slowly, lightly, getting a feel for his member.

“Henry. I want you. Inside me.” She said against his mouth.

He didn’t speak, instead he rolled her onto her back, bracing himself above her on his hands. He grasped his penis one hand rubbing just the head along her slit. He stilled, to look her in the eyes as they came together.

“Henry, wait.” She said, stopping him. He thought he might actually die if she stopped him now.

“It’s ok.” He said breathlessly. “If you’re not ready, we’ll wait.”

“No, please dear god, no. Do you have a condom?”

He laughed to himself, thank god, but how had he forgotten a condom? He reached into the nightstand, to grab one of the condoms he’d put there just hours before, making quick work of sheathing himself, before meeting her eyes again.

“Are you ok?” He asked kissing her.
“Yes, please Henry” She groaned.

He pushed himself into her opening, just an inch, then withdrew. His eyes searching for any sign on her face that she wanted to stop. She nodded her encouragement before he leaned forward, sheathing himself inside her, inch by delicious inch. He heard a “mmmm” come from deep within her throat. When finally he slid all the way home, her eyes closed and she groaned her approval.

His hips slid backward, until her legs wrapped around his waist, holding him in place. His hips slowly pistoned back and forth, letting her get used to his size.

“Henry please.” She moaned, and his control almost snapped. He thrust into her with an intensity he hadn’t planned on. Her hands came up to wrap around his shoulders, holding on against the onslaught of sensations. Her nails scored down his back, urging him to go faster.

He reached between them to find the little bundle of nerves, guaranteed to make her lose herself, and rubbed with his thumb. Her climax hit her like a bolt of lightning. She screamed his name, he could feel her muscles clenching him. Finally he let go of all his control, pumping into her as his climax tore through him. He groaned her name as he finished, taking care to turn as he flopped onto the bed, dragging her on top of him, panting.

“I don’t think I can feel my legs.” Lucy said breathlessly “Is it always like that?” She asked panting in between words.

“I didn’t hurt you did I? I’m afraid I was a bit more…enthusiastic…than I had planned on. I had planned to gentle, but if you’re going to run your fingernails down my back, I can’t be responsible for my actions.” He said kissing her deeply.

When they finally came up for air Lucy asked, “Wait a second, planned? Were you planning on seducing me tonight?” She asked innocently looking around and noticing an excess of candles on every surface of his bedroom.

“I know I told you I’d wait, but I had thought maybe if I asked again, you might say yes.”

“I had my suspicions…” she responded, kissing his chest. Snuggling up next to him, she swirled her fingers in his chest hair. “You know, I didn’t think I went for a guy with chest hair.”

“And now?”

“You don’t hear me complaining do you?” She laughed. Lucy would have been content to lay there the rest of the night, warm in Henry’s arms, until her stomach grumbled.

“Well, now that we’ve fed one appetite, I believe I was promised dinner. I was so worked up about the possibility of tonight, I couldn’t eat anything.”

“You are quite demanding tonight. I like it. Henry said while sliding out of bed and kissing her. He pulled on his boxer briefs and started out of the room. She went to the bathroom to put herself to rights a bit before slipping back into her lace panties and contemplating her dress on the floor, she snatched up Henry’s button down shirt before padding downstairs to the kitchen to find Henry on the phone. He disconnected just as she turned the corner into the kitchen.

“It would appear that dinner will NOT hold. Pizza will arrive in about 30 minutes.”

As he talked, she surveyed the over-cooked remains of dinner on the stove, and in the oven. “You made me tapas! Oh! That’s so sweet! I’m sorry it was all ruined.”
“I’m not.” He smirked pulling her close for a kiss. “I like that shirt on you by the way. While we wait for the pizza, why don’t I give you the grand tour?”

“I’d like that.” He explained that his bedroom and en suite occupied the entire second floor, while the third floor held an office and storage space. The first floor contained the kitchen, dining room, living room, as well as 2 guest rooms with a guest bath.

“Where’s Kal?” Lucy asked, curious as she hadn’t seen the dog all evening.

“I have him stashed in one of the guest bedrooms.” He opened the door and Kal sprang out, knocking Lucy down.

“Oh! You again! She laughed rubbing Kal’s ears. “What is it with you tackling me?!?”

“Kal! Off! I’m sorry there must be something about you. Though now that I think about it” He offered her his hand to help her up off the floor, and pulling her in for a slow deep kiss. After the tour, Henry refilled their wine glasses and they ate their pizza on the living room floor.

Lucy excused herself to the bathroom, and when she came back all of the lights had been turned off, dozens of candles were lit and music played softly in the background. She called out for Henry, but he didn’t answer. She returned to their spot in the living room to find a trail of rose petals leading from the coffee table, around the couch, and up the stairs.

Their second round of lovemaking was sweet, and gentle. Taking time to learn each other’s bodies, They both drifted off to sleep on a cloud of pleasure, making love twice more before the morning came, each time more wonderful than the last.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone so far for all the Hits and the Kudos and the Comments. They mean so much to me. Muchas Gracias!
When she awoke in the morning, Lucy was alone in the bed. Feeling a bit perturbed, she slipped on the same shirt from the night before and went to find her lover. Her lover! She played the word over and over in her head, liking the way it sounded. She couldn’t stop the grin that crossed her face when she thought about the night before.

Henry was in the kitchen making breakfast. Lucy felt a sudden shyness in the bright light of the morning. She bit her lip and said good morning. He turned, a smile splitting his handsome face. “You’re awake! I didn’t want to wake you, I thought you could use your sleep after last night.” He pulled her in for slow deep kiss, which ushered the shyness away. “How are you feeling this morning?”

“I’ll admit, I’m a little tender, and I’m pretty sure my lips are going to be swollen like this for eternity, but I wouldn’t change a thing about last night.” She said curling into his side.

While Henry scraped scrambled eggs onto 2 plates and added 2 pieces of toast to each, Lucy made her tea in the mug waiting by the kettle.

“So what is on the agenda for today?” Henry inquired as they tuck into their eggs.

“I had planned on going to Bath today. Do you have more fittings?”

“No, I can come with you, if you don’t mind me tagging along.” He smiled.

“Why would I mind? I love having you with me, but I need to go back to my hotel, to get a change of clothes.”

“Well then, we had better get moving. I’ll take Kal for a walk, while you take a shower.”

“Ok, just don’t let him knock over any pretty girls this time!” She called back as she climbed the stairs.

Henry got ready for the day, then escorted Lucy back to the hotel so she could change clothes. As she passed the front desk, the receptionist flagged her down. “Ma’am, I have a couple of messages for you.” she took the pink slips of paper the girl offered. There were 3 messages, 2 from Sarah, and 1 from her mother. “Apparently my public has noticed my lack of blog entries, and they are growing concerned. This might take a bit, do you mind?”

“Hey, they’re your plans, I’m just along for the ride.” They returned to her room and Lucy changed her clothes for the day before opening FaceTime on her phone. Sarah was the first call to make, as she knew more of the story than her mother. She at least knew about Henry, though Lucy hadn’t talked to her since the afternoon she’d met him.

“Why haven’t I heard from you! I’ve been worried about you. Why are you smiling like an idiot? You had sex didn’t you! Finally! What’s that noise? Is he there with you?” Sarah didn’t let her get a word in edgewise.

“Hi Sarah. Sorry I didn’t call, or text, or e-mail, or blog,” she grimaced a bit more with each failed communication method she mentioned, and Henry chuckled in the background. She moved the phone to include Henry in the frame “I’ve been busy. Sarah, this is Henry, Henry, my best friend Sarah.”
“How do you do Sarah, it’s a pleasure to meet you, I’ve heard so much about you.”

“So you’re the guy huh?” She gave him an assessing look. “I guess you’ll do. You treat my girl right, or I swear to all things holy, I will come there and cut off the protruding parts of your body.”

“Duly noted.” Henry replied with a look of trepidation on his face.

“Whoa! Sarah! Down girl! But thank you for that. I have to go, I still have to call mom, then we’re off to Bath for the day.”

“Ok, thanks for checking in. Nice to see you took my advice for once! Henry, remember what I said.”

“Yes I will.”

“Well that was intense, sorry about her, she’s a bit over protective.”

“What was her advice that you took?”

“Well that first night I called her, she told me to relax, and jump you should the opportunity present itself.”

“Good advice I think.” He smiled, kissing her.

“Ok, I need to call my mother, and you can’t be in the frame. Go into the bathroom and don’t make a sound!”

“Hi mom!, oh sorry did I wake you? I forgot about the time change. I just wanted to check in and let you know I’m fine. I’ve just been busy, you know lots to see, lots to do. Yes I’ll try to call more often. Love you too. Bye.”

“She worries. I’m all alone in a big city.”

“Why didn’t you want to tell your mom about us?”

“I don’t know, I guess it’s too new. I don’t want to share it with her yet. I mean I barely know what this is, and if she knew, she’d be asking all kinds of questions, questions I don’t even have the answers to. You understand don’t you?”

He contemplated for a moment before answering. “Of course, sorry I asked. Let’s get going.”

They spent a beautiful day in Bath. Strolling through the Roman Baths, they learned of their shared love of Ancient Egypt, and their shared backup career as archeologists. “Who knows, if things had been different, maybe we still would have met.” Henry theorized.

At the Jane Austen House Lucy practically swooned over the display for Mr. Darcy. “Fitzwilliam Darcy. Oh. They don’t make men like that any more.”

“You, tried to sleep with me on our first date. Mr. Darcy didn’t even kiss Lizzie until they were engaged.”

“If I recall, he also insulted her and her entire family, several times.”

“Yes, he was a pompous ass at the beginning, but her came around at the end, and so did she.” She conceded. “You’ve read Pride and Prejudice?” She asked incredulously.
“I thought it would help me meet girls in school.” He admitted sheepishly.

“And did it?”

“No,” he admitted “though that was probably more to do with how I looked than them not being impressed by me reading Austen.”

“What do you mean how you looked? Were you one of those kids that got hit with the good puberty stick, as opposed to the mean puberty stick?”

“Well my nickname growing up was Fat Cavill.” He said very matter-of-factly.”

“Oh that’s horrible. Kids are so mean.” She said, concern coloring her features.

“Yes, they are, but we’re not kids any more, and I’m Superman now, so none of that matters any more.”

“Of course it still matters. Adolescence can leave scars for life, if not tended to properly. And if it makes any difference, I would have talked to you. We could have been fat friends.” She said raising on tip-toe to press her lips to his.

Their final stop for the day was the fashion museum. Henry surprised Lucy when, upon finding the Regency dress-up room, he unabashedly dressed up with her, like they were Lizzie and Darcy. Lucy asked one of the museum workers to take several pictures. Lucy wanted a picture of the two of them that wasn’t a selfie.

On the train back to London Henry looked a bit nervous.

“What’s on your mind?” Lucy finally asked when she couldn’t take it any more.

“I’ve been thinking, and I have a proposition for you. How many more days are you in London?”

“Just three” she said sadly.

“What would you say to giving up your hotel room and staying with me for the rest of your stay?”

“Oh Henry, I don’t know, can I think about it, and give you an answer when we get back to town? It’s not that I don’t want to, it’s just, oh, I don’t know!” He could see the gears of her brain churning.

“Sure, you run it over in your head, I’ll be right here when you decide.” He replied slipping his arm around her.

Lucy weighed the decision in her head all the way back to London, but really it was a one-sided battle. She wanted Henry. She wanted to be with Henry, it didn’t make sense to pretend otherwise, and told him so. They returned to the hotel to cancel the rest of her reservation, and collect her luggage
In the cab on the way back to his house, Henry looked very much like the cat that ate the canary. Lucy was about to say something when his phone gave a chirp. He took it out, read the screen and smiled. “My mate Chris is in town, he wants to know if I can meet him for a dinner. Would you like to meet him?”

“I suppose, you met Sarah, it's only fair I meet one of your friends. Will he be bringing a female companion along with him?”

“I don’t know, I’ll check.”

“Because I don’t want to tag along on a boys night. I’ve been a third wheel too many times.”

“He says it’s just him, but he doesn't mind if I bring you.”

“Of course he’s going to say that!” Lucy argued.

“Listen, we’ll go, have 1 drink you can meet him, he’s a great bloke, and then we, just the 2 of us, can get dinner nearby.”

“How about, I stay at your place, and I’ll make something for dinner, while you go have a drink with your mate, it will give me a chance to catch-up on my emails and texts and blog posts. And I’m exhausted. I’ve been going for almost 3 weeks now non-stop, and I didn’t get much sleep last night.” She gave him an incredulous look. “I think a night in, would be wonderful. I’ll make dinner, we can watch a movie, just the two of us. Just don’t stay out all night and leave me all alone. You’ve opened pandora’s box big boy and I plan on taking full advantage.”

Henry took Lucy to his local market to get supplies for dinner. She insisted on paying. “You’ve paid for all of my meals since I met you. Let me pay for this dinner.” He grudgingly agreed and took Kal for a walk before leaving to meet Chris.

Lucy set-up her laptop on the coffee table in the living room and got to work slogging through a backlog of emails she had ignored for the last week. Kal curled up next to her, promptly falling asleep. Lucy’s guilt about withholding information from her mother that morning finally overcame her. She called and chatted for a few minutes before dropping the bomb. “Mom, I’m not staying at the hotel I gave you the information for anymore, I’m staying with a….friend. I’ll be here until I leave for Cardiff, like the original itinerary I gave you.”

“A friend? What do you mean a friend? I didn’t know you knew anyone in London. Who is she? Why didn’t you stay with her the whole time?”

“Mom, it’s not a she, it’s a he. His name is Henry.

“How long have you known him? Where did you even meet, did you meet him when you were in Spain?”
I took a deep breath. “Actually mom, I met him a week ago. I was lost and he helped me with directions after his dog tackled me in the street.”

“And now you’re living with him! What do you know about him?”

“I’m not LIVING with him, I’m just staying at his house for the next 3 days until I leave town.”

“What do you know about him! He could be a serial killer or worse!”

“I know enough mom. I’m not going to discuss this with you, I just didn’t feel right lying to you this morning, so I had to clear the air.”

“Lying to me. What did you lie about?”

“It wasn’t a full lie, but the reason I haven’t called or emailed is because I’ve been with Henry.”

“Well can I meet this mystery man, put him on the screen.”

“He went out for a drink with a friend of his. I told him to have fun so I could catch up on emails and phone calls.”

Her mother sighed heavily. “Well at least give me a last name so I can stalk him on Facebook, since you’re so tight lipped about this.”

“He’s not on Facebook, mom”

“Don’t be silly, everyone’s on Facebook. Just give me his last name.”

Lucy sighed in a perfect mirror of her mother, she might have smiled if she hadn’t been so exasperated. “Cavill, Henry Cavill.”

Lucy watched her mother type on her tablet. “Well let’s just see here, I’m not finding anyone other than this actor. Do you have a middle name to try adding to the search.”

“No, mom, that’s...him…” she said trailing off.

“What! You’re dating SUPERMAN!”

“Mom we’re not dating, I don’t know what it is, we haven’t really discussed it, plus I’m leaving in 3 days, which kind of throws a wrench in the works.” Her voice falling with each word.

“Oh honey, Ok, I’m staying out of it, just please be safe, protect yourself, and your heart. You are using protection aren’t you?”

“Yes mom, we are.” Lucy rolled her eyes.

“Well that’s a relief.”

“I’m going to go now, I’ve got a bunch of blog posts to write. I love you, tell dad...well tell dad however much you think he can handle, and tell grandma I’m fine. I’ll call her when I get to Cardiff.”

Lucy spent the next hour updating her blog. Henry was mentioned in her posts, but never with his full name, and none of the pictures she posted had him in them. They hadn’t discussed how public this relationship was, and Lucy was very self conscious about being in the public eye. She also didn’t want her extended family asking a lot of questions she didn’t know how to answer.
By the time she caught her blog up to the present, and posted pictures to her facebook page, it was about time to start preparing dinner. Lucy loved cooking, but it was hard when she was traveling to prepare her own meals. She just hoped Henry didn’t expect that she’d cook him dinner for the rest of her stay with him.

Henry entered his favorite dimly lit pub and scanned the room looking for Chris. He saw a flash go off at the far end of the bar and saw him posing with a pretty brunette. Henry waited a few minutes until the girl had left before approaching him.

“Been waiting long?” Henry asked, settling his hand on his friend’s shoulder.

“Long enough.” The other man replied, standing to envelop Henry in a brotherly hug. Chris Evans pulled away and studied his friend’s face. The handsome Brit couldn’t stop smiling. Chris searched for a time he’d seen his friend of over 8 years this happy, and came up blank. The two men had met in their early 20’s on set for a small movie they both had parts in. They had instantly clicked and had been friends ever since.

“You look happy.” Chris commented as they both took seats at the bar.

“I’ve met someone.”

“I guessed that, when you asked to bring her along. Tell me about her.”

Henry hadn’t intended to tell his friend the whole story, but it all came spilling out; from Kal in the street to the dance in the park, and now her staying with him.

“So she’s a regular woman. What’s she do?”

“She’s a school teacher.”

“That’s hot, man.” Chris replied, while Henry just laughed.

“I can’t put my finger on it, but she’s gotten under my skin. And I want her to stay there. I mean I’ve known her a week, and she’s alone in my house. I’m either crazy or…” and Henry didn’t finish the statement as he realized he might actually be falling in love with his nerdy American teacher. Chris watched the emotions play over his friend’s face.

“You’re thinking the big one, huh? Love?”

“It’s only been a week. Plus she’s leaving in a few days. We have chemistry, but we don’t really have much in common. Our lives are completely different.”

“Who are you trying to convince? Me or you? I don’t know anything other than what you’ve told me, but she sounds great. Give this one a chance, why don’t you. See if this could be something. You deserve to be happy.”

“Ok, enough about me. What are you doing here?” Henry asked, desperate for the spotlight to be off of himself. Chris allowed the conversation to flow toward himself, though he made a mental note to check in on his friend periodically.

Henry unlocked his door feeling happier than he could remember being in quite a while. He liked the idea of having someone waiting for him when he came home; someone other than Kal to talk to at night. He replayed his conversation with Chris over in his head. He was infatuated with Lucy. It
couldn’t be love yet, he almost had himself convinced.

Once the door was open he was met with the New Kids on the Block telling him to Hang Tough. His smile widened. After dropping his keys by the door he made his way to the kitchen to see Lucy dancing with a pair of salad tongs in her hand, singing along. She hadn’t noticed him come in, so he leaned his shoulder against the door jamb, crossed his arms, and watched the show. His resolve of his conviction slipped with each goofy dance move she performed. Once the New Kids were done, Whitney Houston starting singing about wanting someone to dance with.

Periodically Lucy threw a piece of food to Kal who was laying on the floor, which explained why the dog hadn’t greeted him at the door, he smiled wider. He watched Lucy chop something green with an impressive amount of skill. When she turned to get something out of the refrigerator, she finally saw him, and screamed.

“Henry! I didn’t hear you come in. How long have you been watching me?”

“Long enough to know I should hang tough. You’ve got some moves.” He said pulling her close for a kiss. “I missed you.”

“It’s only been 2 hours.” She kissed him rolled her eyes. “But I missed you too.” She said giving him one more kiss, before pushing him out of the kitchen. “Dinner will be ready in about 10 minutes. Why don’t you grab us some wine, and tell me about your drink with Chris.”

Henry did as instructed, and opened the bottle white wine she’d purchased at the market to accompany the light pasta dish.

“Chris told me to tell you hello.”

“Well, hello back, Chris, though I’m sure we’ve never met.”

“No probably not.” Henry laughed “Though I’m sure you know of him. You said you were a Marvel gal.”

“Chris. Not Hemsworth?” Lucy thought out loud while she sauteed bacon on the stove, and checking on the pasta water.

“No, the other Chris.”

“Chris Evans?! Oh my homeroom girls are going to be so upset with me if they find I had a chance to have a drink with him and bailed. You’re friends with Chris Evans? Isn’t that against the rules or something? Marvel, DC?” She teased while adding the pasta to the water, taking the pan of bacon off the burner and draining it. “This pasta is going to take a few minutes. Let’s pick out a movie to watch. I want to just veg tonight.” She said wrapping her arms around Henry. He turned her in his arms and walked into the living room still wrapped around her.

“What are you in the mood for?” Henry asked opening a hidden cabinet door to reveal his movie collection.

“That’s where it is! I was trying to find your movies, but I couldn’t find them anywhere. Let’s see what do you have.” Lucy rested her hands on his arms which were resting on her clavicles. She scanned the titles. “Ooooh! Man of Steel! I haven’t seen that yet. But no, I don’t want you to see me watch that for the first time. I might embarrass myself. So nothing you’re in.” She turned and lifted her head to kiss the underside of his chin. She ran her fingers over the titles on the shelf. “Oh! I can’t believe you have this movie. I love this movie!” She said sliding a fantasy movie from the shelf. “You said nothing that I’m in. So that one’s out.”
“You are not in this movie. I’ve seen it probably 20 times.”

“I can assure you, I am in this movie.”

“What as an extra, maybe one of the lesser pirates?”

“No, I play the character of Humphrey.”

“Humphrey?” Lucy searched her brain for the character in the film. “Oh! Who went ‘all the way to Ipswitch’ to get the ring! Oh now we have to watch it. I’m going to finish dinner, you pour the wine and pop the movie in.”

Henry just smiled and laughed to himself, but did as instructed. When he returned to the kitchen for the wine he watched as Lucy combined ingredients from several bowls to one large bowl, tossing everything constantly. With deft hands she separated the pasta into two bowls, topped them with grated cheese and the herbs he’d seen her chopping.

She inserted a fork into each bowl and carried them to the living room. Henry had dimmed the lights, and lit candles. Kal was curled on the floor by the end of the couch, having lost his spot, next to Henry, to Lucy. Henry started the movie before taking his first bite of pasta.

“This is amazing. You made this? In my kitchen?”

“It’s just a simple carbonara. Really no big deal. Now shhh. I want to watch the movie.” She explained tucking in to her own bowl of pasta.

They enjoyed a cozy dinner together, Henry briefly paused the movie to take care of their dishes and Lucy helped him clean the kitchen before returning to the living room to finish the movie. Henry sat on the couch, pulling Lucy down to sit on his lap. She played at pushing his hands away when they started roaming her body, but she couldn’t hold out long. Much of the remaining movie was ignored in favor of exploring hands and some serious snogging.

The following morning, they were awoken early by a pounding on the front door.

“Who could that be? It’s not even 7:00.” Lucy groaned.

“I don’t know, maybe if we ignore it, they’ll go away.” He said nuzzling into her neck. The pounding only increased.

“It’s your door, they won’t be asking for me.” She said pushing him away. “Now go answer the door so I can get back to sleep.” She grumbled.

Henry stalked down the stairs pulling on a t-shirt and cursing whoever happened to be knocking. He opened the door to find his publicist looking annoyed. “Finally! What took you so long?”

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s 7:00 in the morning, I was sleeping like most normal people. Now tell me what you are doing here so I can go back to sleep.”

“Sleeping alone?” He asked pushing past Henry and handing him a celebrity rag. The front cover had a picture of himself and Lucy kissing, he recognized his clothes from the train station the day she went to Oxford without him, with the headline ‘Who is Superman’s new Lois Lane?’
Decisions, decisions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You didn’t feel the need to tell me about a new woman in your life? Especially when you’re traipsing all over town together? And snogging at the train station like you’re in some 50’s flick.” Will nagged while Henry skimmed the article and pictures inside the paper.

“Sorry I didn’t tell you, it’s new, I didn’t think the photogs would glom onto it so fast.”

“So who is she?”

“She’s a school teacher, from America. She’s on holiday. Kal tackled her in the street, I took her out for coffee to apologize, and we just clicked. I can’t explain it. She’s not glamorous, and she’s a lot nerdy, but she’s beautiful inside and out.”

“Is she upstairs? I assume she is given the dreamy expression on your face. Go get her, so we can talk about this. All three of us.”

Henry trudged upstairs with some trepidation. He wasn’t sure how Lucy was going to handle this new development. He could only hope she took it well.

She was sitting up on the bed when he entered the room. Her hair was a tangled mess, reminding him of the passion they’d shared the night before. Her eyes were still sleepy, as was her voice when she asked, “Who was at the door?”

He sat down next to her, kissing her lightly. “My publicist, Will Turner, is downstairs. He came to show me something.” He handed Lucy the paper.

“Oh my god.” Lucy exclaimed, reading the front cover, then the story inside. She vaulted out of bed with her hand over her mouth, and ran to the bathroom. He heard the sounds of her retching, and rushed in. He held her hair and rubbed her back while she finished emptying her stomach. This was not quite how he hoped she’d take the news.

Once she had finished, he ran a flannel under the cold faucet, and filled a glass for her to rinse out her mouth.

“I didn’t expect that you’d be pleased, but that was a bit worse than I expected. Are you going to be ok?” He asked as she sat on the bathroom floor.

“I don’t know. This is insane. I don’t even take selfies, let alone have my picture in the paper!” She said in a half-panicked voice, hugging her knees to her chest.

“Listen, Will is downstairs. He wants to talk to you, and I’d imagine you want to talk to him too. You collect yourself, I’ll go down and make you some tea.” He kissed her on her clammy forehead, before giving her some privacy.

“So, is she coming down?” Will asked when Henry reappeared in living room.

“Yes, she’s coming, but you’ll have to give her a minute. She didn’t take it well.”

“When you say didn’t take it well, like she started crying…”
“She was sick.”

“Oh, well, that’s something different entirely. Let me think for a minute.”

Will moved to the the kitchen table and started scribbling furiously in a notebook. 10 minutes later Lucy came in, still looking a bit dazed.

Will rose and extended his hand to her, she shook it limply. “You must be Lucy. Will Turner, Henry’s publicist. I hear you didn’t take today’s development well.”

“No...I....didn’t. How did this happen? Henry was wearing a hat and glasses, and hardly got noticed at all, and I’m a nobody, and I haven’t even seen any photographers, and they don’t know my name do they, and what do we do? I’m rambling.”

Henry handed her a mug of tea, kissed her on the cheek, and directed her to a chair.

Will chuckled. “Well I’ll tell you one thing, your reaction gives me hope. You’re obviously not with our boy here to try to further your career.”

“Further my career?!? I’m a teacher! I don’t even like yearbook picture day!”

“So tell me, what is this?” Will asked folding his hands looking from Henry to Lucy and back again.

“What is this?” Lucy asked, confused.

“Well where is this going? Is this something I’m going to have to handle, or is it a holiday fling, as they call them, that’s going to be forgotten in a fortnight.”

Lucy looked at Henry, Henry looked back at Lucy. The panicked expression on her face gave him a pause. He turned to Will.

“Will, could you give us a few minutes, we need to talk, I think.”

“Ok, I have some phone calls to make. I’ll go to the coffee shop around the corner. I’ll be back in half an hour. You need to decide by then how we’re going to handle this.” With that he left them to their silence.

“So...I guess it’s time to address the elephant in the room.” Lucy said, carrying her mug of tea to the living room, Henry followed.

“I suppose it is.” Henry replied. “I personally would like to see where this relationship could go. I know it won’t be easy, as I have several big projects in the near future, and of course you don’t live here, but I will be filming in the US for a number of months, so it could be easier to continue seeing one another.”

“You want to see where this could go?” She asked, incredulously. “You barely know me. And the me you DO know isn’t the REAL me. You know summer Lucy. Summer Lucy is fun, and adventurous, and likes to go out to restaurants, and clubs. Winter Lucy doesn’t go out. She works 12 hours a day at least, then spends her non working time obsessing over grading, and fundraisers, and special education plans, and prom! She’s impatient and has a temper and a six-pack a day Diet Coke habit. Right now this is a Cinderella story. I’m going to turn into a pumpkin come September. Are you sure you want to be around for that?” She rambled.

Henry just laughed. “I happen to like pumpkins.” he said cradling her face in his hand before kissing her. “I understand that right now this is all very exciting, simply because it does have an expiration
date, but I feel like I’ve learned enough to decide I want to learn more. I told Chris last night that you got under my skin, and that I want you to stay there. I know you’re leaving in a few days, and I’m not going to ask you to stay. I’m not even going to ask to travel with you, even if I could, which I can’t due to my next project. This is your celebration trip, you need to do all of the amazing things you planned to do. I’d like to keep in touch with you while you’re traveling, hear about everything, and see if we still have this chemistry when we’re apart. If we do, then we’ll figure things out from there. One step at a time.”

“That might be the sweetest thing I’ve ever heard, my very own Mr. Darcy.” She replied and kissed him, crawling into his lap. Their kisses deepened until they were both breathing heavily.

“How I want to take you right now and show you how sweet I can be, but Will will be back much too soon for that.” He grinned down at her.

Henry and Lucy ate a quick breakfast while waiting for Will to return.

Once Will was back and they were all seated at the dining room table Will started, “SO I’m assuming you’ve decided what this thing is.”

“Yes, it’s a relationship. We’re going to see where it leads.”

“Ok then. Well the firm’s position is always that we don’t comment on the personal lives of our clients, but I will try to minimize the press exposure, since you are obviously uncomfortable with it, Lucy. Now, Lucy, how much longer are you in London?”

“2 days” she replied sadly.

“Then you return to the states?”

“No, I’m still traveling for another 2 ½ weeks. She laid out her itinerary for him.

“And Henry, will you be accompanying her on any part of this trip after she leaves London?”

“Well I thought I might go with to Cardiff, but otherwise, no.”

“That may actually work in your favor, because even if you are photographed together over the next 2 days, once you leave London, Lucy, you’ll most likely drop off their radar. They’ll bother Henry a bit, but only for a few days.” Will laid out the entire strategy he had devised for them. After some tweaking Lucy and Henry agreed. Will left looking a bit more stressed, but happier than when he’d arrived. Henry walked him to the door.

“I like her Henry, try to keep that one, will you?”

“I’ll do my best.”

“You should probably talk to Dany too. She’ll have gotten wind of this. I’m surprised she hasn’t called you yet.”

“I’ll get right on that.” Henry replied sarcastically, though he grabbed his phone, calculated the time difference and texted his agent to call him when she could. He also included a link to the tabloid’s website.

Henry returned to the kitchen to find Lucy cleaning up the breakfast dishes.

“So, girlfriend, what is on your sightseeing agenda for today?”
“Actually, boyfriend, God I hate that word, it makes me feel like I’m 15, but I’ll take it. I was wondering, what YOU would be doing today? I mean if you hadn’t met me, what would you have done today?”

“Well, I’m not sure, there’s a rugby match I would probably have gone to.”

“Well, then, why don’t you take me to a rugby match. You’ll have to explain what the hell is going on, but I’d like to learn. If it’s something you enjoy, I’d like to learn about it.”

Lucy and Henry sat in a box overlooking the Rugby pitch. And it was a Rugby pitch not a Rugby field Henry had stressed. Henry explained the basic rules and procedures for the game.

“So in order to score a point they need to cross the goal line and touch the ball to the ground? Like football, er, American football.”

“Yes, but it’s called a try, and a try is actually five points.” Henry explained.

Lucy continued asking questions throughout the first half of match, by the second half she was just as invested in the game as he was, leaning forward in her seat, yelling about calls, cheering completed tries. As he stared at her, biting the side of her thumb nail in nervous anticipation, he felt himself slip closer to love.

Henry and Lucy had just returned to the house to change clothes before going out to dinner when Henry’s agent called.

“Dany. Thank you for calling me.”

“So you’ve managed to find a woman. Thank god. Tell me about her.” Henry gave Dany all of the pertinent information.

“That all sounds wonderful. Where do you see this going?”

“Dany, we’ve been dating officially for less than 12 hours. I’ve only known her just over a week.”

“What I mean is, is she going to be your special friend that gets a hook-up whenever you’re in the area, or are you off the market, as it were.”

“Off the market. I’ve never been a more than one woman guy. And I know she wouldn’t put up with being a ‘friend with benefits’ even if I were willing to go that way, which I’m not.”

“Well, you know where I stand on client’s relationships. If you need assistance with anything, you let me know. An American, and a regular gal. This should be interesting.” Dany disconnected the phone and called in her assistant.

“I want you to do a full background check on Lucy Claussen. Criminal past, facebook, twitter, the works.” If one of her top clients was going to fall in love, she wanted to go in eyes wide open.

Lucy and Henry spent her last 2 days in London splitting their time between her original planned itinerary, and him showing her his favorite spots in and around the city. On her last night in London Henry treated Lucy to a special dinner at his favorite restaurant, then a stroll along the Thames.

The following morning Henry finally asked. “Why are you going to Cardiff? It’s just well,
it’s…..Cardiff.

“Why the Doctor Who Experience of course!”

“Oh lord you’re a whovian! Lord help me.” Henry teased covering his eyes with one hand.

“Is that making you reconsider keeping in touch with me?”

“Maybe a little.” He joked.

“Like I said with the Harry Potter thing. I warned you, I’m a big nerd. You should have come into this with your eyes wide open.”

Lucy and Henry spent two nights in Cardiff. The last night they didn't sleep much, wanting to spend as much time together as possible. They talked about their childhoods, her plans for the rest of her trip, his upcoming projects, anything but what the next day would bring. When they couldn’t talk anymore, their bodies said all the things their words couldn’t.

When it came time for them to part, Lucy couldn’t hold back her tears. Henry left her with promises of calls and emails and video chats that would keep them in touch during their separation.

They said their final goodbyes outside the security checkpoint at the airport. Henry waited for her to go through, then watched her disappear down the concourse, before letting go of the tears he’d held off. Neither of them had said the three little words they each so desperately had wanted to say, and needed to hear.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you SO much everyone for following me on this risk I decided to take. There is MUCH more to Henry and Lucy's story, so keep checking back, I'm curious, what do you think? Please leave comments: good, bad, indifferent I want to know what you think. Muchas gracias! - Catalinda04
3 weeks later

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lack of chapter yesterday, I was at a wedding. Originally chapter 11 was supposed to be Lucy and Henry's communication while she was traveling through Ireland and Paris, but it just wasn't working. If it decides to shape-up, I'll post it at a later date.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

3 weeks later

“This is crazy. What if he’s not home? What am I going to do? Just sit on his porch until he comes home, that could be hours?” Lucy berated herself as she stood in front of Henry's house. She had changed her tickets, at no small extra charge, and given herself 48 hours in London. But now that she was here, she was nervous. She was never this impulsive.

She mounted the steps and rang the bell, before her resolve could fade. She heard Kal inside bark at the sound of the bell. Then the door was opened. By a woman. She appeared to be in her mid 60’s with beautiful blonde hair. Lucy recognized her from pictures strewn around the house, as Henry’s mother.

“Can I help you?”

“Hi, Mrs. Cavill, is Henry home?” Lucy asked nervously.

“I’m sorry he’s not right now, was he expecting you?” She asked, then recognition crossed her pretty face. “Oh! Are you Lucy? Oh my dear it’s so lovely to meet you.” She exclaimed pulling Lucy into a hug. “Come in dear. Henry didn’t tell me you were coming.”

“Well, he doesn’t know. I changed my flights so I could see him before I go back home to America.”

“Oh he’ll be so excited to see you. He’s been moping around here for the last 4 days. Probably longer than that, but I’ve only been here 4 days. He said he hoped for an early wrap today. Are you hungry? Why don’t you go put your suitcase upstairs and then let me take you out to lunch, so we can get to know each other better.” Lucy was surprised at his mother’s casual mention of her suitcase going to Henry’s room, but didn’t question it.

Marianne and Lucy had an enjoyable lunch. Marianne had Lucy in tears telling her stories of Henry and his brothers growing up. Lucy talked about herself and about her trip. Marianne seemed impressed After lunch they returned to Henry’s home. Marianne made them both mugs of tea, they sat down in the living room.

“Now, Lucy, tell me. What are your intentions with my son?”

“Wow, you don’t mince words at all do you?”

“My dear I raised 5 boys. Subtlety is not a luxury I was given. We’ve all seen him hurt before. Women who use him to advance their career, or to be in the limelight, and I don’t want to see him hurt again.”
“Well, Mrs. Cavill, I care very much for your son. I know it hasn’t been very long, and we’ve actually been apart longer than we’ve been together, but I feel….drawn….to him.”

“Do you love him?” Marianne asked softly.

Lucy’s face took on a soft, pensive look, before she gave a small smile. “I feel like I should tell him that, before I tell you that.” Lucy said dipping her head before continuing. “I know he has a career that will take him away a lot, but I’m used to being alone. I live alone, and have a comfortable life, but I want more. I want love and a home, and babies, eventually. If that’s with Henry, great. But we need to discuss a lot of things before any of that happens. The biggest of which is that I live 4000 miles away. If anything his fame is a check in the con column, I don’t want to be famous. So I’d like to tell you I know where this is going, but I don’t. Right now we’re just….living for today.”

“Good answer.” She smiled. “Well, I promise to keep my nose out of your business, as much as a mother can, of course. Which is why I’ll be going home tomorrow morning. To give you two some time alone.”

“Oh you don’t have to do that. I’m only here for another day and a half. I don’t want you to change your plans because I decided to be impulsive.”

“My dear, impulsive is a good thing. Now why don’t you take Kal for a walk, and I’ll call one of my friends about seeing a show tonight.”

When Lucy returned she found Marianne on the phone. “No, I’m not cooking you dinner, silly boy. I’m your mother, not your housekeeper. In fact I think you should take me out to dinner, somewhere nice. French. I’m feeling French tonight. Make sure to make a reservation. Yes I am bossy. I love you too dear.” She disconnected her phone call. “Well it looks like you have dinner plans, dear. Do you have a dress?”

“Actually I do. I bought one while I was in Amsterdam.”

“Well let’s see then.” Lucy went to retrieve the dress from her suitcase. “Oh my! That is gorgeous.” Marianne gushed as Lucy held up a dress with a full circle skirt and a cinched waist. Van Gogh’s Starry Night was printed on the fabric. “You’ll look divine in this dear. Why don’t you get yourself ready. I should get ready myself. I’m meeting my friend for drinks before the show, then dinner after. Just to give you a timeline.” Marianne winked at Lucy. Lucy blushed furiously.

By 6:00 both Lucy and Marianne were ready for their evenings. When a cab stopped in front of the house, Marianne rushed out to greet Henry.

“Oh good dear. You’re just in time. I’m meeting Geraldine for drinks, then we’re going to a show. It completely slipped my mind that we had these tickets. We’ll get a bite to eat after, so don’t wait up.” She kissed Henry on the cheek in way of greeting and goodbye, then slid into the waiting cab he had just exited, and was off. Henry stood on the sidewalk with a confused expression on his face. First his mother all but demanded to be taken to dinner, then fled the minute he returned home. Something was going on, though he had no idea what.

He trudged up the stairs and unlocked his front door. He went straight to the kitchen to get a bottle of water, but did a double take, returning to the front hall.

“Hi.” Lucy said shyly, standing on the stairs.

“Lucy?” Henry stared in disbelief. “Are you really here?”

“I changed my flight. I’m here.” She descended the 4 steps to reach the ground floor. Henry met her
at the bottom of the stairs. He cradled her face in his palms and claimed her mouth with his. He poured all of his longing into his kiss. When he pulled away, he didn’t release her face, he simply looked. Taking in every inch of her face.

“Hello.” He said simply. “I’ve missed you so much, I can’t even explain it.”

“Feeling’s mutual. Why do you think I came here? I had to see you one last time before I went home. And I wanted to tell you, before I go back to America, Henry, I love you. I don’t expect you to say it back, but I wanted” her words were cut off my his mouth claiming hers again.

“Oh, my darling, I love you too. It’s been a torture these last weeks, not being able to touch you, to tell you that.” He confessed pulling her close, and relishing the feel of her in his arms.

Eventually, he noticed her dress and appearance. “You look spectacular, darling. But you’re wearing far too many clothes.” He noted, and slipped the strap of her dress down her shoulder, kissing the tanned skin that was revealed. Lucy wrapped her legs around him and he carried her upstairs to ecstasy.

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“You know, I had actually convinced myself in the last 3 weeks that I had just imagined how good you were. But my fantasies pale in comparison to reality.”

“I thought I was hallucinating, when I saw you on the stairs. That dress does amazing things for you. It’s a shame we didn’t make those reservations.”

“Well, I know you don’t have any food in your kitchen. So we need to go somewhere to get food. We could even do take away, or have something delivered. But, your mother is expecting that you were a good boy, and took me out to dinner.”

“The way you looked when I came in, that deserves to be seen. We could make an 8:00 reservation if we hurry. And I’m not sure how I feel about you colluding with my mum.” Henry said dragging himself from the bed.

“It was entirely her plan. I just went along with it. She gave me the wink before she left. That was weird.” Lucy said with a bit of puzzle in her voice as she walked into the bathroom.

“She is under no illusion that I don’t have sex every now and then.”

“I think she likes me. We went to lunch today. She asked me about my intentions.”

“What did you say?”

“That I’m just in it for the sex, and the second Tom Hiddleston crooks his finger at me, I’ll be dropping you like a hot potato.” She grinned at him in the mirror as he came in. He gave her one swift swat on her tush for her sass. She laughed. “I told her the truth. We’re not 100% sure where it’s going, but for now we’re living in the moment.”

She smiled at his reflection in the mirror as he wrapped his arms around her from behind. He kissed the top of her head, “Well, this moment is pretty spectacular.” He said, and gave her one more swat on his way out.

Lucy laughed and studied her reflection in the mirror. “Well, there goes the hour I spent on my hair.” She muttered, though the smile on her face proved she wasn’t really all that upset. Grabbing her brush and some pins, Lucy pulled her hair up into a dressy ponytail.
She came out of the bathroom to find Henry slipping on a starched pale blue shirt over dove grey trousers. He looked up when she entered in just her underwear. A smirk darted across his handsome face when she made a noise of appreciation low in her throat.

“Do you know how much that sound drives me crazy?” He asked sauntering toward her.

“What sound?” Lucy asked.

“That little ‘mmm’ noise you make. You make it when you eat something delectable. Or when you see something you really like. Or when I’m inside you.” He murmured nuzzling her neck, his hands exploring her curves. She groaned in appreciation.

“I don’t make a noise when I eat. Do I?” she asked breathlessly.

“Not all the time, just when something is really delicious. That first night at dinner, I could barely think. All of my blood had rushed straight to my bollocks the first time you made it. Then it continued. I thought I was going to burst right there at the table.” He whispered in her ear. “It’s one of the reasons I love so much to watch you eat.” He dropped a kiss on her nose and smirked while walking back across the room to retrieve his tie.

Lucy just stood transfixed for a second, before rescuing her dress from the floor, where Henry had flung it, and stepped into it. Two can play that game she thought. “Since we’re making confessions, I have to tell you that that suit is probably the sexiest thing I’ve seen you in. It makes me want to unwrap you. Slowly, one button at a time.” She all but purred as she walked over to him, sliding one hand up his chest to curl around his neck, bringing his face down for a deep, slow kiss. While her other hand took a more southerly route across the front of his trousers. She stepped away from the kiss and turned. “Will you zip me up?” She asked coyly looking over her shoulder at him.

His hands settled on her waist, before slowly skimming their way up to her shoulders. When he attempted to push the straps off, she turned. “No, no, no, naughty boy. You promised me dinner.”

“Witch. I’ll make you pay for that later.”

“I’m sure you will. But for now, I want dinner, and I want something delicious.” She strung out the last word to tease him.

Henry led her out of the house, and down to his car.

Lucy paused when Henry opened the door of a low slung silver roadster for her. “What kind of car is this? Is this an Aston-Martin?” She fanned herself. “Whooo, I’m going to need to sit down. You. In that suit. In this car. My legs are a little weak. This will definitely cause a scene when we pull-up in front of the restaurant.”

“No, no, no, naughty boy. You promised me dinner.”

“Is that ok? I know you’re not big on the pictures thing.”

“Tonight, in this dress, and you in that suit. They can take as many pictures as they want.” She grinned at him.

Henry had managed to change his reservation at the restaurant he had originally chosen. He ordered a bottle of champagne to be brought to the table.

“Are we celebrating something?” Lucy asked.

“We’re living in the moment. And in this moment, I have the most beautiful girl in the world sitting across from me.
“Henry don’t. I know I’m not beautiful. I know that on my best day, with a lot of professional help, I can hit a 5.”

“You are beautiful to me. Beauty is more than looks, which you have even if you can’t see that, it’s the inner goodness I see shining out of you. It’s your sense of humor. It’s the love I can see shining in your eyes when you look at me. It’s all of those things rolled together, that make you the most beautiful woman I’ve ever known.”

“Henry.” Lucy couldn’t manage more than his name, before she leaned in to give him a watery kiss.

“I’m sorry to interrupt, but would you like to order, or do you need a few more minutes? Their waitress asked.

“I think we’ll need a few more minutes, but I’ll tell you now, we would like the chocolate soufflé for dessert.” Lucy winked at Henry.

After ordering, Henry asked “Do you have anything planned for tomorrow?” He gave a quiet laugh, “Look who I’m asking, of course you have something planned for tomorrow. I’m guessing 6 historical sites, 2 museums, and a concert in the park.”

“No smart guy, I actually don’t have anything planned for tomorrow. I didn’t think past changing my tickets.”

“Who are you, and what did you do with my Lucy?” He feigned a shocked expression. “I asked, because I thought if you wanted to, would you like to come to the set with me tomorrow? Watch what I do all day? It’s probably going to be quite boring for you, but I’d love to have you there.”

“Boring? Are you kidding. I’d love to come see you work. You’re not doing any love scenes or anything, right? I don’t know if I can handle that. I know it’s just acting, but well, those lips belong to me now!” Lucy said a bit sheepishly.

“No, actually, there’s no snogging in this one, lots of implication of things happening, but none on camera.”

The waitress arrived with their dinners, and talk turned to safer topics. When the waitress delivered their chocolate soufflé all bets were off. Lucy dug her spoon into the rich chocolatey goodness. Henry watched the spoon’s entire journey from the dish to Lucy’s lips. Lucy’s eyes met his as she slowly removed the spoon from her mouth with a long groan of approval that sent a lightning bolt straight to Henry’s groin. “You should try some of this.” Lucy suggested, dipping her spoon into the dessert and offering it to Henry. He captured her wrist and took the spoon into his mouth.

“Good, right?” Lucy asked, dipping her spoon for another bite. “I’m curious though. You said, back at home, that I would pay for my winding you up.” She said while licking her spoon clean. Keeping her eyes locked on Henry’s. “What exactly did you have in mind as my punishment?”

“I guess you’ll just have to wait and see.” He flagged down the waitress and paid the bill. Soon they were back in Henry’s car speeding toward his house. Once he parked, Lucy turned to him, using his tie as a rope, she pulled him to her for a deep steamy kiss. He responded by moulding his hands to her breasts. “We should really take this inside.” Henry suggested several breathless minutes later.

They both exited the car and started up the stairs to his door. All the lights were ablaze on the ground floor. Henry’s mother was back already. Henry had never been more displeased to have his mother around. Lucy turned to him, straightened his tie, and smoothed his hair, before checking her dress.

Henry opened the door and called out for his mother. “Well look at you two. You look happier than
I’ve seen you in weeks, Henry. I’ll be going home tomorrow, to give you two a little alone time.”

“Mum you don’t have to do that. It’s ok if you stay.”

“Really, Marianne, I’m leaving after tomorrow.”

“No, it’s time for me to go home. Your father will be missing me.” She winked at the pair. “I’m off to bed. See you in the morning.” She kissed both on the cheek and retreated to the guest room on the ground floor. “By the way dear, I think that shade of lipstick looks much better on Lucy than it does on you.” She called over her shoulder.

“I think I like your mom.” Lucy laughed, leading Henry up the stairs.

“She has her moments.” Henry agreed, wiping the back of his hand across his lips.

Chapter End Notes

Remember to leave comments, they make me feel all warm and fuzzy inside.
The following morning Marianne left with a huge smile on her face and Lucy’s number in her phone. Henry drove them to the studio and grabbed Lucy’s hand while she gawked. “Is that Hugh Grant?” Lucy whispered.

“Yes, I’ll introduce you later.” he replied with a smirk.

She sat with him while the makeup and hair team made him into a 1950’s spy. After make-up they went to the wardrobe department. Henry’s first ensemble for the day was a bespoke suit. When he came out of the dressing room, Lucy’s jaw dropped.

“Well, what do you think?” He asked in that American accent peculiar to 50’s movies.

“Damn you.” She said when he got close. “You come in here, looking like that, and I’m not allowed to touch. You are a sick, sadistic man. I will make you pay for it later.”

“Yes, well until then, why don’t we go out to set. They’ll give you a chair, just remember not to talk when the filming is happening.” He continued to speak with the American accent, it made her belly clench. This was going to be a long day.

Lucy was right. It was a long day, but a fascinating enjoyable day. Henry had 2 more costume changes during the day. Each one made her head swim. He was such a handsome man.

He introduced her to his co-stars, and sat with her when he wasn’t needed on set. Lucy couldn’t help but imagine him spending a day with her at work. Watching her in the classroom, interacting with students. Her girls would spend most of the class hour drooling over him, though she wasn’t 100% sure that she wouldn’t do the same thing.

When filming wrapped for the day, Henry and Lucy were invited out for drinks with a couple of the other actors. Not wanting to be rude, they agreed to go out for one drink. One drink turned to two, which became dinner. Henry enjoyed how easily Lucy slipped into his life. He couldn’t help wondering if she would ever be willing to make the change permanently.

The following morning Lucy insisted that she didn’t want Henry to bring her to the airport. “I want the cab ride out to the airport to compose myself before I have to be in public.” She rose on her toes and pressed her lips to his. She poured all of her love and longing into her kiss. Henry carried her suitcase out to the cab, paid the driver, much to Lucy’s consternation, and extracted a promise for her to call him when she landed, no matter the time. They had made plans for Lucy to fly to London for her Christmas holiday break. Lucy wasn’t sure how she was going to afford that, but she knew, even if she had to take out a loan, nothing could keep her from reuniting with him.

Lucy managed to hold in her tears until after the cab pulled away from the curb. “How long will it take to get to Heathrow?” She asked the driver her voice thick with tears. “About 25 minutes mum, unless we run into traffic.” Lucy sobbed for the first half of the ride, giving in to the grief she felt about leaving London, and Henry behind. Then she pulled herself together. She had to, she realized, she couldn’t spend the foreseeable future as a big puddle.

By the time the cab pulled-up in front of the departures area, she was mostly back to normal. The driver helped her with her bag and shrugged off her tip. “It’ll be ok love. Love always finds a way,
believe me, me missus and me have ‘ave been together going on 43 years this September.” She thanked him and walked toward the check-in desk.

Lucy stood in line for what seemed an eternity, but was actually closer to 10 minutes. She handed the agent her passport, who scanned it and frowned. “Oh dear I’m sorry mum, but you’re in the wrong line.” Dread filled Lucy’s stomach. Had something gone wrong with her rescheduling her tickets? Lucy was so busy worrying she almost missed what the agent said next. “Your tickets are for First Class, this is an economy line. I’m sorry you queued when you didn’t have to. If you just go to the next counter over, my associate can help you there.”

First class, Lucy wondered to herself. Had she accidentally booked a first class ticket? She couldn’t afford that. The ticket change fee had completely maxed out her credit card as it was. She handed her passport to the new agent who smiled warmly. “Can you please tell me, how did I get a first class ticket? I’m almost positive I booked an economy ticket.”

“Let me just look here.” She tapped a few keys “It says the ticket was upgraded yesterday morning.”

“Does it say how the ticket was paid for? It wasn’t charged to the original card was it?”

“No mum, it was a card ending in 6742.”

“Was there a name on the card?”

She tapped a few more keys. “It was an H. Cavill. Are you ok?” She asked noticing Lucy start to tear up.

“I’m fine. It’s just I’m very touched by what my...friend did for me. Thank you.”

Lucy worked to control her emotions all through check-in, security and the walk to her gate. She wanted to call Henry. It was then that she realized that first class passengers had a lounge. After a bit of searching she found the lounge with it’s ubiquitous free wi-fi, and found a quiet corner to herself. She called Henry. He answered on the sixth ring, just when she was sure he wouldn’t anymore.

“Lucy, what’s wrong? Was your flight canceled?” He asked sounding almost hopeful.

“No, my flight is right on time. But it turns out my seat has been moved. Somehow, I’m in first class on my way home. You really shouldn’t have done that.”

“Why shouldn’t I? I knew, or at least hoped you would, be miserable, and it’s easier to feel horrible in first class. And before you say it’s too expensive, it’s not. I bought the ticket because I care about you, let me at least know you’ll make it home comfortably.” He said in a tone he knew she wouldn’t argue with. “Now, have a drink in that lounge, and enjoy your flight, and don’t forget to call me when you’ve landed. I love you.”

“I love you too.” she said in a watery whisper.

Lucy perused one of the many newsstands in the terminal, looking for a book or magazine to get her through the flight. A small picture on the front cover of one of the tabloids caught her attention. It was a picture of her, and Henry, having dinner 2 nights previously. She was feeding him the soufflé they shared for dessert. “Superman’s romantic dinner” The headline read. Lucy purchased the magazine along with a copy of people, a new paperback bestseller, and a chocolate bar. Inside the magazine were more pictures from that night, them arriving at the restaurant, and leaving. There were also pictures from the week they spent earlier in her trip. Lucy was unsettled, but not as much as the first time. There was no mention of her name, and the worst adjectives they used were plain, and overweight.
Even through her misery Lucy was determined not to miss a second of “living the high life” as she called it. She peeked into coach as she boarded the plane, and smiled about not having to squeeze in next to 4 other people for the almost 9 hour flight back to Minneapolis. She tried not to gape at the amount of leg room she had, or how wide her seat was. Her eyes did get a little wide when the flight attendant asked if she wanted anything to drink before boarding had even finished.

When mealtime came, Lucy was surprised to actually enjoy her meal, an entirely new experience for her on a flight. Her enjoyment was hampered of course whenever she thought about why she was sitting in first class. Henry, with his adorable smile, funny dual colored eye, and big heart, every minute that she flew, she got further and further away from him.

It didn’t help that Man of Steel was one of her options for on demand entertainment. Having never seen it, she immediately chose it as her first option. The first time she saw his handsome face on her screen she started crying. How was she going to manage the next 5 months, until Christmas came?

Chapter End Notes

I'll be on vacation in the wilds of Northern Minnesota for the next 2 weeks, so expect sporadic updates, when wi-fi is working.
Once she had landed and gone through customs and Lucy pulled out her phone to call Henry while she waited at the luggage carousel. It was after 10 in London, she calculated in her head, and he had an early flight the next morning, but he told her to call no matter the time. She found a quiet corner away from the bustling travelers, and dialed Henry’s number.

“How?” Came a groggy voice on the other end of the line.

“Hi babe. I’ve successfully made it back to the US.” She said cheerfully, trying to not let him hear how much the mere sound of his voice affected her. “I’m just waiting for my bag, then Anna and the kids will be here to pick me up. I’ll be at their house tonight, then drive home tomorrow.”

“How was your flight?” Henry yawned into the phone.

“It was great thank you, but I’m going to go, you need to get up in the morning and look gorgeous. I miss you. Love you.”

“Love and miss you too.” Henry said already laying back down in his bed.

After Lucy collected her bag, she walked out to the arrivals gate. There were her babies, her niece and nephew, waiting with a big, hand made sign colorfully exclaiming, “Welcome home Auntie!” She ran to give them big hugs and kisses. Her sister-in-law Anna gave her a hug as well. The two kids chattered all the way back to the car, but quieted once they were on the road.

“So, how was your trip?” Anna asked.

“It was amazing. I didn’t want to come home.”

“Though I’d imagine that had more to do with the guy you met.” She said accusatorially.

“Mom told you about that, huh? What all did she tell you?”

“No much, just you met a guy in London and stayed at his house for several days while you were there.”

“She didn’t say anything else?”

“No, why is there more?”

“There is, but let’s wait until the kids go to bed, then you and big brother can grill me just the once.”

“Fine.”

They chatted all about the rest of Lucy’s trip. Anna was happy to have her sister-in-law home, but was jealous of all the amazing things Lucy had experienced, but she was also concerned, as was the rest of the family, about how this relationship was going to affect their Lucy.

The kids were anxious to play with their favorite auntie and Lucy was thankful for the distraction from thinking about Henry. They squealed with glee at seeing all of their presents.

Once the kids were in bed, Lucy sat on the couch sipping a glass of wine, trying to keep the jet-lag at bay. Anna and Lucy’s brother, Clint, sat opposite her.
“So kiddo, mom says you found a guy in London.” Clint said matter of factly, ever the big brother.

“I did. And he’s wonderful. Lucy replied, smiling while sipping her wine.

“So, what’s the plan? You always have a plan for everything. How is this going to work? Are you going to move there, is he moving here? What’s the plan?”

“Clint, we’ve only been seeing each other since last month, and have only spent 2 weeks of that time actually in each other’s presence. Right now the plan is to call, text, and email as much as possible, and I’m going to London for Christmas.”

“You’re going back over there, why doesn’t he come here?”

“Well, I’ll be on break from school, and I think it will be nice to get away for a few days.”

“What does he do?” Lucy had been dreading this question. Her brother, in the way of most older brothers, was a bit protective of her.

“He…he’s an actor.”

“Christ, he’s not some “in between gigs” guy that you’ll end up supporting is he? That’s why you’re going over there instead of him coming here isn’t it?”

“Clint, for crying out loud, give me some credit. He’s…….Superman.”

“What? What do you mean he’s Superman?”

“His name is Henry Cavill, he played Superman in the last Superman movie.”

Clint simply stared at his younger sister, willing her words to make sense in his head. As the gears in his head just about started to smoke, Lucy tossed a newspaper onto his lap. It was a British tabloid with a headline about Superman’s new Lois Lane. Accompanying it was a picture of his sister with a tall good-looking guy, that had obviously been taken from some distance away.

“What’s this?”

“That would be Hello! magazine. It’s a celebrity rag over there.”

“So…you’re dating a celebrity?” He couldn’t quite fathom his little sister dating let alone dating someone in the public eye. “Are you sleeping together?”

“That’s none of your business.” Lucy said giving her brother a withering look.

“I just hope you know what you’re getting yourself into.”

“Clint, right now I’m exhausted, it’s almost 3:00 in the morning where I woke up today, I’m missing my new boyfriend and staring down 5 months without seeing him, so if you don’t have any more inappropriate questions, I’m going to bed.”

“I’m sorry. I’m not trying to upset you, we just don’t want to see you get hurt.”

“Then stop trying to hurt me. I’m a big girl, I can take care of myself, and my heart, and if I DO get hurt, at least I will have taken the chance. So, now I’m going to bed, and I’ll see you both in the morning.”

Lucy did her usual night routine, then grabbed her phone, and crawled in to bed. She did the time
calculation, and decided Henry wouldn’t be awake yet. So she took a picture of herself including the empty half of bed she wasn’t occupying. She sent it off to Henry with the text ‘Miss you, wish you here here’ with an arrow pointing to the empty space. Then she put her phone down and passed out with complete exhaustion.
Birthday Surprise

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! It's my birthday! It's also Lucy's birthday! (I know funny coincidence huh?) So to celebrate our birthdays, I'm posting 2 chapters today! Read on!

Henry awoke 2 hours later and checked his phone. He smiled when he saw his message notification from Lucy. His gut clenched when he saw the picture, wanting so much to be where she suggested he belonged.

“Well two can play that game,” he thought. He laid back down and took almost the same picture she had, and sent it with the same text. The only difference was the capitalized HERE. Then realizing he was running late, jumped out of bed to shower and finish packing for his flight to Italy for filming. He was disappointed that he didn’t have a response from Lucy by the time his plane touched down in Naples, but sent her a picture of the Welcome to Naples sign, so she would know where he was when she awoke.

Lucy awoke to a knee in her stomach as her niece and nephew jumped onto her bed.

“Good morning auntie!” they yelled while bouncing. Normally this was Lucy’s favorite way to wake-up, seeing her “babies”. But this morning she felt hollow. She missed Henry, but she knew that she had to keep on the smiling face for her “babies”, as well as Clint and Anna.

“Good morning! Why don’t you guys go upstairs, auntie will be up in a few minutes. Tell mommy that auntie wants pancakes for breakfast. Chocolate chip pancakes.”

“Yay! Pancakes!” They both cheered and ran from the room anticipating the sugar high that was to come. Lucy grabbed for her phone and saw 2 messages from Henry waiting for her. The first made her laugh, the second made her jealous. Italy had always been on her list of places to go, and now Henry was there, without her. She sent him a quick “buongiorno” then went to face her family.

Lucy and Henry continued their texts, punctuated with several pictures per day. She sent him a picture of her house, he a picture of himself on the Spanish steps in another of his tailored suits from the movie. Each picture only seemed to highlight the differences in their lives.

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One sunny Monday afternoon, about 3 weeks after Lucy returned from her trip, was Lucy’s 31st birthday. She awoke to texts from her 3 closest friends, and a slew of Facebook notifications, but nothing from Henry. Lucy was bit disappointed. “My first birthday actually HAVING a boyfriend, and he forgets. Typical.” Though she was determined not to wallow.

Her father arrived around 10:30 that morning to start helping her replace the decking and railings of her front porch. Lucy found the demolition portion of the project quite therapeutic.

“Not even a good morning. Or a have a great day.” Lucy thought to herself. He’d been sending those messages almost daily so she had something from him when she woke-up, but today, of all days, nothing. “Well, fine.” Lucy thought “I’ll play it cool, as if today is just another day. Then when
he realizes he forgot my birthday, I’ll enjoy the groveling.”

Lucy and her father had just about finished for the day, Lucy was screwing down the second to the last board to finish the decking, when a black SUV stopped in front of her house, on the opposite side of the street. She looked up, didn’t recognize the vehicle, so went back to her boards. She heard a car door slam, and footsteps approach.

“I’ll be with you just a second.” She said, setting the last screw.

“I was just stopping by to see if you’d turned into a pumpkin yet.” said a deep accented voice behind her. Lucy froze, the drill fell from her hand as she turned around. There he was. In all his tanned gorgeous glory. A smile split her face, even as tears filled her eyes. She ran and jumped into his arms, wrapping her legs around his waist, and kissed him like she had been dying of thirst, and he was an oasis in the desert.

“You’re really here.” She said sliding down his body. “Damn you. I was just starting to really get my mad on about you forgetting my birthday.” she said slapping him on the chest.

“We have a couple days off from filming, I had to see you.” He spoke plainly, his head dropping down for another kiss.

“Are you going to introduce me to your friend, Luce?” Her dad’s voice cut into the haze clouding Lucy’s brain.

“Dad, this is Henry, my…..boyfriend. Henry, this is my dad John”

“Henry Cavill, sir, it’s a pleasure to meet you. Lucy’s told me so much about you.” He said offering his hand to her father. Her father took it

“So this is Henry.” Lucy’s dad said to Henry. “My daughter has told us almost nothing about you, so it’s nice to finally meet you in person. So what brings you to our neck of the woods, I assume you weren’t just in the area.”

“No, sir. We had a short break in filming on a project I’m working on. I thought I’d come surprise Lucy for her birthday.”

“Her mom, and grandma and I were going to take her out for dinner, but I suppose we could change those plans, Lucy, what do you want to do.” Lucy was stymied for a single answer. She wanted to be alone with Henry, but this seemed like as good a time as any to introduce Henry to her family.

“No, why doesn’t Henry just join us for dinner, dad. I’ll call and change the reservation to 5.”

“Well, I’ll just finish cleaning up here, and be on my way then.” Lucy’s dad said, eyeing the other man suspiciously.

“Oh! I still have one more board left! Henry, help me with this board.” Lucy exclaimed, grabbing her drill and turning to the deck. Henry held the board while she quickly screwed it down, then he helped her father load supplies into his truck.

“Well, I guess I’ll see you at the restaurant? 6:00?” Lucy’s father said awkwardly.

“Yeah, 6:00. Could you and mom pick up grandma on your way?” He nodded.

“Sir, it was a pleasure to meet you.” Henry said shaking John’s hand firmly.
“Likewise.” Lucy’s father replied, always a man of few words. He gave his daughter and the tall man one last look over his shoulder, and pulled away from the curb.
Lucy led Henry into the house, and showed him around. “It’s a bit smaller than yours.” She said a bit self-consciously.

“No, I like it. It suits you.” He said sitting down on the couch, and pulling Lucy down with him. She sprawled across his lap, giggling as she fell.

“I can’t believe you’re here.”

“I wanted to be here earlier, but I didn’t realize how long it would take to drive here. You said you lived in the middle of nowhere, but this is really the middle of nowhere.”

“It’s referred to as god’s country. It’s a vacation destination. The city-folk love to come up here to ‘experience nature’ though that’s a little further north than here, this area is mostly mining.” Lucy said rambling a bit. She was suddenly nervous. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him close. “I’ve missed you so much.” She whispered and kissed him.

He moved to take the kiss deeper, but she pulled away. “We don’t have enough time to do that properly, right now I just want to BE with you.” She sighed laying down on his chest. Enjoying the feeling of having him close.

He told her funny stories from filming in Italy, she listened intently.

“How long are you here?” She asked hesitantly, she didn’t want to know just how little time they had together.

“I fly out on Friday.”

“Friday? You get to stay the whole week? Oh, thank god. This has been the longest 3 weeks of my life! I know it will be easier once school starts and I have something to occupy my time during the days and evenings, but right now, I’m just sitting here at home missing you.”

“So you won’t miss me when you’re a pumpkin?”

“Oh, I’ll still miss you, but I won’t have time to miss you until late at night, when we’re both asleep. Right now, I’m “relaxing” and “enjoying the last days of summer” But all that really means this summer is my brain is free to miss you. Next week I’ll start easing back in to school prep. Planning lessons, and working on decorations for the room, but right now, Right now, I’m here with you, on my couch, in your arms, there is no other place I’d rather be.”

“Me, neither, but don’t we have a dinner to be going to in a bit. Now tell me everything I need to know going in to this dinner.” Lucy laughed then told him all about her parents and grandmother.

Lucy just smiled to herself as they tripped over each other to get ready in her small bathroom. He finished before she did and went to watch something on TV while she finished. She came out in the dress she wore for their first date. He stood, wearing a simple pair of khaki trousers and a white dress shirt open at the neck with the sleeves rolled to his elbows, when she entered the room. Lucy groaned deep in her throat, and stalked over to him. She grabbed him by the forearms and kissed him hard. “I didn’t tell you this, but I can’t handle rolled shirtsleeves. They just do something to me. It’s
dangerous to my nervous system. Mmmm.”

“I will have to remember that one.”

They arrived at the restaurant just ahead of Lucy’s parents and grandmother. Lucy let out a deep breath at the same time Henry did. “Are you nervous?” She asked incredulously “You’ll do an interview panel in front of thousands of people, yet you’re nervous about meeting my mom and grandma. That’s so sweet.” She leaned over and gave him a quick peck for luck, then they got out to meet the family.

“Mom, grandma, this is Henry. Henry, this is my mom, Marie, and my grandma Joanne. And well, you met dad earlier.”

“Henry, it’s so nice to meet you.” Lucy’s mom said pulling him in for a hug. Then taking his arm to walk in the restaurant. Leaving Lucy to walk with her grandmother.

“He’s a handsome man isn’t he? Reminds me of Carey Grant. Now THAT was a handsome man.” Lucy just laughed with her grandma.

Dinner went well. Henry kept trying to steer the conversation away from himself, claiming to not want the night to be about him, as it was Lucy’s birthday. “No, that’s ok, they already know all about me.” She replied cheekily and winked at him.

When Lucy excused herself to use the bathroom, Lucy’s dad took his chance. “So Henry, what exactly are your intentions with my daughter.”

“Well, sir, right now we’re still in the getting to know you phase of the relationship. It doesn’t help that I live 4000 miles away. But we’re interested in seeing where this could go.”

“Would you take my daughter to England with you, if this relationship went that far.”

“I’m not sure, sir. I know her career is here, and mine takes me all over the world. I think it’s something that we would have to discuss. But let me assure you, that IF we do get that far, and IF Lucy does come to live in England with me, you would always be welcome, whenever you wanted to visit, and of course stay at my house in London.” Henry was starting to sweat.

“I’m just going to say this one last thing, then I’m done. That is my baby girl. Yes I know she’s 31 and full grown, but she’ll always be my little girl. You take care of her, and you treat her right. You do that, and I think we could be friends one day.”

“Thank you sir. I will do my best not to let you down.” Henry said solemnly and reached out to shake John’s hand. Lucy came back just as the handshake was breaking up.

“And what was that about?” Lucy asked Henry and her father at the same time.

“Nothing, just making sure we’re on the same page.” Her father replied.

“Dad.” Lucy said, bringing out her teacher voice.

“No, darling. It’s ok.” He leaned in to kiss her cheek and whispered “I’ll tell you later.” The rest of the dinner went surprisingly well. Henry charmed Lucy’s mom and grandma with very little effort.

After dinner was over, Lucy’s grandma took Henry’s arm “Walk me out to the car young man.” Lucy just shrugged her shoulders and gave him a smile.
“So, mom, what do you think?”

“He seems nice. And so handsome. I think you got yourself a good one there.”

“You know mom, I think so too.”

Lucy hugged each member of her family as a goodbye. Marie and Joanne both gave Henry hugs, and John shook Henry’s hand, squeezing it just a bit harder than was necessary. “You’ll remember what I said now.”

“Yes sir. Have a nice night everyone.” Henry waved them off with Lucy.

“Well, that was...yeah. I’m glad that’s over.” Lucy said as Henry opened the car door for her.

Once he had seated himself in the passenger seat he replied “You’re glad? You just sat there. I feel like a piece of well done steak, they grilled me so hard.”

“But you did masterfully. My grandma said you reminded her of Carey Grant. That’s high praise coming from her.”

“Your dad mentioned something about a place in the woods where even wolves wouldn't find me...”

“Oh, I’m sure he knows of a few. He was a forester for 40 years.” Lucy said laughing. Henry gulped.

Chapter End Notes

Check back tomorrow to see how Henry and Lucy celebrate Lucy's birthday alone...
Henry lay in Lucy’s bed, with Lucy wrapped close to his side, recovering from his second orgasm of the night. Lucy ran her fingers up and down his chest, swirling her fingers in his chest hair.

Lucy propped herself up on her elbow, looking down at Henry. “Roll over.” Lucy ordered.

“Hmmm.” Henry asked sleepily.

“Roll over. I want to see your backside.” Lucy repeated.

Henry laughed quietly, but did as commanded, pillowing his head on his arms. Lucy straddled his hips, before sitting on the back of his thighs, her hands smoothing from his lower back all the way up before tangling in his hair.

“How I ever told you how much I love your curls?” She asked, wrapping them around her fingers. “They’re thick and glorious,” she continued, scratching his scalp with her nails.

“It can get a bit unruly if it gets too long.” Henry replied.

Lucy’s hands de-tangled themselves, gliding down his neck to his shoulders. She leaned forward and pressed her lips to each of the red marks her fingernails had left there. Her hands continued their slide as her lips and tongue traced the outline of every muscle rippling in his back. Henry was becoming very uncomfortable lying on his stomach.

Lucy slid herself off his legs, before skimming her hands over and around his ass. She pressed a kiss to each side before continuing her explorations down his legs, dropping kisses down to his ankles.

Her hands reversed their path, until Lucy’s mouth was at his ear, “roll over darling.” she whispered huskily. Henry complied carefully.

“It looks like you were enjoying my explorations.” Lucy commented, her eyes taking in the impressive erection standing proud off his abdomen.

Henry sat up to capture Lucy’s mouth in a steamy, searing kiss, attempting to lay her down beneath him. Lucy pressed a hand to his chest. “No, no, no, darling. I’m not done exploring yet.” She pressed his shoulders back down to the bed. Keeping her hands on his shoulders, she pressed a brief hot kiss to his lips before working her way down his torso.

Her hands traversed his torso, her lips claiming every inch of skin as hers. Her nails scraped down his legs, avoiding where he wanted her touch most. She teased and tormented her way up and down his body, studiously avoiding his groin.

On her third pass down his body, Henry nearly jumped out of his skin as Lucy’s mouth around the tip of his erection.
“Lucy!” Henry exclaimed, she laughed, the vibrations echoing down his length. Her lips and hands worked in tandem up and down his shaft. Lucy brought him right to the brink of oblivion, before he stopped her.

She raised her head in time for him to capture her mouth with his, laying her on the bed before quickly sheathing himself, and sliding home in one swift thrust.

“Henry!” Lucy cried out as Henry set a punishing rhythm, exciting every nerve ending with each deep thrust. He slid his hand between them to the button of nerves, guaranteed to make her scream.

Her orgasm hit like a tidal wave, gripping him, pulling him over the edge with her.

“I should have teased you as much as you teased me.” He stopped to kiss her, “but I was afraid I wouldn’t even last those few minutes. You have magic hands darling.” He commented, once his breathing had returned closer to normal.

“Why thank you.” She pressed a kiss to his chest, before rolling to turn off the bedside light. She curled herself to Henry’s side again, stroking her fingers up and down his sternum. After several pensive minutes, Lucy spoke. “Henry? Are you awake?” He made a noise in the affirmative.

“I’ve been thinking.” she started.

“Oh, oh.” He joked.

She ignored him and continued, “I was thinking of asking my doctor about going on birth control, so the next time we’re together, maybe we could skip the condoms.” She said tentatively.

Suddenly awake, Henry responded, “If that’s something you want to do, I’d support that decision.”

“Oh you would, would you?” She laughed.

“It’s your body, but if you feel comfortable not using condoms, I’ll gladly stop using them. I’m clean, in case you’re wondering.” He said kissing the top of her head, combing his fingers through her hair.

“Good to know, me too. So I’ll make an appointment to talk to my doctor, it won’t make a difference for this week, but for Christmas…” she trailed off.

“Darling, I’ll find a way to see you before then. I promise. Christmas is much too far away.” He said, cupping her face in his hands, bringing his lips to hers.

“I love you Henry.”

“I love you too Lucy.” And they slipped into sleep wrapped around each other.
The following morning, Lucy and Henry were awoken by the doorbell chiming. Lucy heard it but immediately snuggled back in to Henry’s arms. The bell then chimed 3 more times in quick succession, and was followed by pounding on the front door.

“Lucy! I know you’re in there, waky waky. I don’t care if you’re hung-over, I’m up so you better be too.” The voice of Lucy’s friend Emma floated to them.

Lucy groaned. “Ugh, I forgot to text Emma that our workout this morning is cancelled.”

“Just ignore it. She’ll go away won’t she?”

“No, she has a key, she’ll let herself in. We made a pact, if the other shows at your house, the workout is on, unless you’re dying, and you’re allowed to pull the other out of bed if need be.”

“Well then go let her in.” Henry groaned tiredly. Between jet lag and Lucy’s birthday explorations of his body, he was knackered. Lucy slipped into her robe and went to greet Emma before she used her key.

Lucy opened the door to her friend, and stepped out onto the porch, closing the door behind her. “You were still asleep, weren’t you?” Emma smirked. “How much did you have to drink last night. You look like you barely slept.”

“Em, I don’t think I’ll be able to make a workout this morning.” Lucy replied, smoothing her disheveled hair.

“Are you hungover? Because if you are, that’s even more reason to get the workout in, you’ll work off some of the booze.”

“Em, it’s not a booze hangover, it’s a sex hangover.” Lucy whispered.

“Sex hangover? With who? What about hot British guy, what’s his face? Henry?”

“That would be him. He surprised me by showing up yesterday! So as you can see, I’m really in no shape for another workout.” Lucy said, a small smile creeping across her face.

“Bullshit. I got up, I came over here, and I’m ready for a workout. Now I don’t care how many calories you burned last night, you’re coming out with me this morning.” Emma demanded

“Fine, give me 5 minutes.” Lucy grumbled going back to the bedroom. “Bitch won’t let me out of the workout. So, you just...make yourself at home. I’ll be back in about an hour and a half, and in desperate need of a shower.” She winked and kissed him, then headed out to meet Emma.

Emma was sitting on the new, unfinished, front porch smirking when Lucy came out.

“So...happy birthday to you, huh?” Emma laughed and elbowed Lucy as they started stretching.

“Oh, my god, Emma you have no idea.” Lucy groaned.

“So when do I get to meet this gorgeous man of yours?”
“Why don’t we get together for dinner tonight. You bring your hubby, I’ll bring my boyfriend, and...omg, it’s a double date! I feel like I’m 16! I’m giddy.” Lucy replied, gleefully clapping her hands in front of her chest.

“Regular sex will do that to you.” Emma replied as they started walking.

“Oh, it’s anything but regular.” they both laughed. “But there’s something I need to tell you.” Lucy said with trepidation in her voice.

“Oh, what’s that?”

“I lied to you.” Lucy confessed.

“About....”

“Henry. You asked what he did. Well he doesn't work for the government.”

“What does he do then?” She asked cautiously.

“He’s...an actor.”

“An actor like, plays, or an actor like TV and movies?”

“The second one.”

“Has he been in anything I would have seen?”

“I don’t know did you see the Tudors, or Man of Steel?”

“The Tudors? The series? I watched the first couple of seasons. What part did he play?” Emma’s eyes rolled to the side as she searched her brain.

“Charles Brandon, the king’s friend.”

“The sex maniac?” Emma asked after taking a minute to remember the show.

“Yes.”

“I knew he looked familiar! Wait a second, Man of Steel...Tudors? Are you telling me you’re dating Superman?”

“I am.” Lucy said with a grin.

“Ok, I’m going to need to sit down for a minute. You’re dating a celebrity. He’s in your house right now, probably in bed, waiting for you? And this is the first/only guy you’ve ever had sex with? Good lord lady, nothing like going for the gold your first time out. He is HOT.” She said fanning herself.”That's just not even fair. You need to suffer through several “uh, uh, was that good for you?” guys’ before you get a guy like that. It’s just not fair, bitch.” She said laughing

“He was worth the wait.”

“I almost feel bad for dragging you out this morning, almost.”

“Well, it’s good for him to see that I’ve got a life without him, plus between last night and jet lag, he’s probably dead to the world. I’m afraid I tuckered him out.” Lucy said with a wink.
“So, how is this going to work? You being here, him being there? I’m guessing lots of sexting, and naughty Facetimes?”

“We made it work the last 3 weeks since I got back. The timing for Facetime works right now, but come September, there won’t be as much. I’m going to see him for Christmas. He gave me a ticket voucher for my birthday. First Class.”

“Ooooh. Fancy.”

“I know, did I tell you he upgraded my seat for my flight home from London?”

“No, but that’s awfully sweet.”

“It is, but it makes me uncomfortable. It’s SO much money. I don’t want him to think I’m with him for his money or his fame. If anything, his fame is a mark in the con column.”

“Did you ask him for any of the expensive things he’s given you, or hint that you wanted them?” When Lucy shook her head, Emma continued, “Then don’t worry about it. He’s spending the money because he wants to, and because he can.”

“Ok, enough about me. What’s new with you?” Lucy and Emma finished their loop around town and Emma left Lucy at her house, with plans to do some internet stalking of her friend’s new man.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter is giving me fits. Not sure when it will be up, especially with still being on vacation, but I’m hoping it won’t be more than a couple of days.
“Honey, I’m home.” Lucy called, walking into her house. She found Henry in her over stuffed arm chair reading. He quickly put the book behind his back when he saw her come in.

“How was your walk?”

“Well we did 5 miles, so pretty good. It’s a hot one out there today.” She said fanning herself, before raising her brow in question, “What are you reading?”

“Nothing.” He said much too quickly.

“Come on let me see,” she said jumping on the chair, straddling his lap, reaching behind him to rescue the book. It was a well worn paperback romance novel. “Nothing huh? Did you like it?”

“It’s…..inventive, I’ll give the author that. How many times have you read that?” He asked noting the well worn cover.

“Probably a dozen or more. It’s an old friend.”

“The sex scenes are quite…erotic.”

“Well, they’re supposed to be. That particular book always made me wish I had a jacuzzi tub, big enough for two.” She said a bit wistfully, as she lowered herself from her knees to sit on his lap, rocking her hips forward. “What’s this? It seems I’m not the only one affected by my books.” She said cupping the growing bulge in front of her. “Why don’t we see if my shower is big enough for two?” She slowly rose, took his hand, and led him into the bathroom.

After several banged elbows, stubbed toes, and many giggles, it was decided, that Lucy’s shower was not a two-person shower, her bed however, was just right.

Much later Lucy was showing Henry all the sites of her little town. There was the lake in the center of town, the mine pit at the very edge of the city, and the lush green park. It was while they were shopping that Lucy finally got the full effect of what having such a good looking significant other meant in public.

Henry and Lucy ran a few errands, which included a trip to Target. While strolling down one of the aisles, they heard a voice call Lucy’s name. Henry noticed how her spine stiffened upon recognizing the voice. Lucy’s head rose to see a bleached blonde woman pushing a cart toward them.

“How are you? It’s been so long.” The woman asked, with what even Henry could tell was false familiarity. Henry slipped his arm around Lucy’s waist.

“Hi! How are you? It’s been so long.” Lucy said through a strained smile.

“Oh, I’m great. The kids are driving me nuts, and Kevin is no help whatsoever.”

“He always was kind of useless.” They both laughed.

“Did you do anything fun for your summer break?” Sandra asked eyeing Henry next to Lucy.

“Actually I did, I spent 6 weeks in Europe. This is Henry, my boyfriend. We met while I was in London.”
Henry extended his hand to shake Sandra’s “Pleasure to meet you.” When he spoke her mouth dropped open in slight shock. Lucy completely understood, his voice did crazy things to her too.

“He came for my birthday yesterday. Isn't that sweet?” Lucy continued, her voice almost saccharine. “But we should really be going, lots to do. Nice talking to you.” Lucy finished and walked off.

Once they were out of sight, Lucy turned to Henry and pulled him down for a kiss. “That was amazing! I just won! I finally won!”

“Won what, may I ask?”

“I won the “who’s doing better” contest. She was the biggest bitch in my graduating class. At our last class reunion she was so smug, look at me, and my perfect life, and my perfect kids, and my hot husband. Ugh. But, did you see how she looked at you, I totally won, she was jealous of ME!” She raised her arms as though she’d just won a marathon. “Is that petty?

“Maybe a little.” Henry admitted. “But it’s nice to know you have a flaw.” Henry grinned down at her.

“Nobody’s perfect.” She smirked.

Henry and Lucy met Emma and Joshua at a favorite local dive bar. As the night before, the conversation centered around Henry, though Henry was better at asking questions tonight. They talked and laughed like the four of them had been doing this for years. Joshua and Henry were so different, but somehow found endless things to talk about.

“Henry, do you play?” Joshua asked, indicating the dart board in the back of the bar.

“Indeed I do.” Henry replied with a grin.

“Join me for a game?” Joshua asked, standing, exchanging a look with Emma.

“Be prepared to lose.” Henry taunted as they walked to the board. The first several minutes were mostly silent, as the men decided on a game, and evaluated each other’s skill at the game.

Henry spoke first. “So, are you going to threaten me now, or wait until you let me win a game first?” Henry threw his dart, scoring 20 points.

Joshua laughed. “Naw, I’m not going to threaten you. But I am supposed to let you know that Lucy is special to Emma. And since Emma is my wife, what’s special to her, is special to me.” Joshua replied, scoring 19 points.

“She’s special to me too.” Henry threw his dart.

“I can see that. Like I said, I’m not going to threaten you, you seem like a decent guy. Just don’t mess with her man, if you realize it’s not going to work, make it a clean break, Emma and I don’t want to see Lucy get hurt.”

“I’ll do everything in my power to not hurt her.” Henry said, extending his hand to Joshua. Joshua clasped his hand in a quick shake and released. Awkward conversation over, they could now enjoy their game.

While the guys played darts, Emma leaned over to Lucy “So what’s wrong with him? I’m looking,
and I can’t find anything.”

“Well, he calls cookies, biscuits” Lucy suggested jokingly.

“That’s it dump him now.” Emma laughed, “But seriously, he’s charming, and ridiculously good-looking, and apparently fantastic in bed. What’s wrong with him.”

“You mean other than he lives 4000 miles away?”

“Ok, that’s not great, but he lives in London, one of the most fabulous cities in the world. But yes, the distance could be problematic.”

“Problematic? Understatement of the year right there. But I’m hoping I’ll be so busy this year I won’t have time to miss him. I have juniors this year for advisory, so you know what that means.”

“Prom” They said in unison, rolling their eyes.

“Hmmm, maybe I could get Henry to chaperone with me. Imagine that in a suit, it is a sight to behold.” Lucy suggested with a far-away look in her eyes.

“Nope, not going there, or else I won’t be able to stop. He is a handsome son of a bitch isn’t he? Why doesn’t my husband look that good in a t-shirt?”

“You should see him out of it. Oh Em, he’s amazing...Whoo.” She fanned herself “I’m going to need another drink. Do you want anything?”

“I’ll have another. Joshua might just get lucky tonight.”

“Oh you newlyweds. So cute.”

Lucy walked up to the bar and signaled the bartender. She placed her order, and while she was waiting, Henry wrapped his arm around her from behind, nuzzling her ear. “Hey, hot stuff, come here often?”

She half-turned to face him. “You’re drunk. Silly man.”

“I’m not drunk, just a bit buzzed. Is that the expression?”

“Yes, buzzed. You’re cute when you’re buzzed.”

“You’re cute when I’m buzzed too.” He said with a grin on his face.

“Ass.” She rolled her eyes at him.

“You like my ass.” He retaliated.

“I do.” She agreed, smacking in just for good measure “Here help me carry these back to the table.” Lucy had switched to water, as someone needed to be able to drive home. But enjoyed spending time with the great people around her, trying to live in the moment, and not think about Henry’s imminent departure.
Oh brother!

Chapter Notes

Short chapter, sorry, but the next chapter will be much longer!

Friday came much too quickly for either of their liking. Lucy had taken Henry to see her classroom one day, where they christened her desk for good measure. One day was spent at the beach enjoying the last rays the Minnesota summer had to give.

The nights were Lucy’s favorite part. Aside from the lovemaking which she was quickly becoming addicted to, they mainly talked, and watched movies. Lucy shared her favorites with Henry, and he shared his. Enjoying their time in their private little bubble without the outside world interfering.

Henry enjoyed his time with Lucy; where he could just be. If he went out for a run, no one recognized him. He could relax and be at peace, something he had only ever felt back at home in Jersey.

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When Friday came, Lucy drove the 3 hours to the airport to see Henry off. They returned his rental car, before going to meet Lucy’s brother and his family for lunch.

They all met at a fast food restaurant where the kids could play while the adults talked. Her niece and nephew ran to give Lucy hugs when they saw her.

“Auntie, who’s dat?” Quinn asked pointing to Henry standing next to Lucy.

Lucy picked up the little girl, bringing her closer to Henry’s eye level. “Quinn, this is auntie’s friend Henry.”

“Hello, Quinn. It’s very nice to meet you.” Henry greeted the little girl, who looked like a blonder much younger version of her auntie.

Quinn’s eyes went wide. “Auntie, why does he talk so funny?”

“Because he’s from England, and that’s how they talk there.”

Lucy’s brother had lifted Thomas, who was enthralled by Henry.

“Hello, there’s a fine chap.” Henry turned his attention to the little boy. He smiled and and lifted his arms in Henry’s direction. Henry scooped the little boy to his chest, in a move that showed his ease with young children. Lucy felt an ache deep in her belly watching him interact with her young nephew.

“Henry, this is my brother Clint.” She introduced him to a man that he would have picked as her brother out of any line up. The similarities were quite noticeable. Henry switched the young boy to his left side, and extended his right hand to the other man. Lucy’s brother gave him a wary look but took the extended hand.
“Clint. It’s great to finally meet you.” Henry greeted Lucy’s brother.

“Henry, this is my wife Anna.” Clint turned to introduce him to the short brunette woman standing at his side.

“Henry it’s so great to meet you.” Anna said enveloping Henry in a hug that went on a beat longer than normal.

“Anna, hands off, this one’s taken.” Lucy joked.

“He’s hot AND British, give me a break, I’m only human.”

“And married. To my brother.” Lucy reminded her. They both laughed.

“Well, this is suitably awkward, should we go inside now? Henry has a flight to catch.” Lucy announced.

Lucy’s niece and nephew were instantly smitten with Henry, insisting on sitting on either side of Henry during the meal. Her brother was a bit harder to win over, but Henry managed to smooth his concerns with his confidence. Showing his obvious love and, more importantly to her brother, respect for Lucy.

“So I think that went well.” Lucy commented once they were driving back to the airport.

“Certainly, it’s been several days since anyone had threatened me, so it’s good, I was feeling safe for a moment.”

“Oh, he didn’t?” Lucy sighed, “We’ll that’s all there is, you’ve met the family, you’re done. Meanwhile. I’ve only met your mum. You had one sibling to win over, I have four!” Lucy said with mild panic in her voice. “Though Anna said you were so charming, you were like my own Mr. Darcy. She’s a librarian, so she makes a lot of literary comparisons, but I like it, Mr. Darcy. You could definitely give Colin Firth a run for his money.”

“I suppose I could get used to being Darcy” He laughed, they were both avoiding the big thing, his leaving in just a few minutes.

Once they arrived at the airport Lucy to parked her car, and accompanied Henry to the departures hall.

“I’m so glad you came. I missed you so badly.” She said kissing him deeply. “But remember what I said. I’ll be busy for the next several weeks, as I’m sure you will be too. Text me as often as you can, and we’ll figure out times for phone calls.”

“Ever the planner, aren’t you?” He leaned down to kiss her lightly. He walked off to check in for his flight.

“I’ll check my schedule when I get back to London. I WILL find a time for us to be together before Christmas.” Henry said before gathering her in his arms for another long, deep, kiss” They said their tearful goodbye, then Lucy watched him until he disappeared through security. She missed him already.
Back to School

Lucy was kept very busy in the following weeks, getting ready for the new school year. She and Henry texted several times a day, but the six hour time difference made phone calls difficult to plan, especially with Henry’s demanding shooting schedule. But they made it work as best they could. Usually Henry was just waking up when Lucy was just getting ready to go to sleep.

The morning of the first day of school, Lucy awoke to a text from Henry. “Knock ‘em dead today. I love you” It brought a smile to her face. Once she was ready for the day, she sent him a picture of herself in her “teacher clothes”, a maxi skirt with a tank top and cardigan over it, with the caption “Still think I’m sexy?” Knowing her long skirt and modest top were about as far from sexy as she could get.

The day passed like any other first day; the kids asking about her trip that summer, her asking them about their summers, greeting new students, and reviewing the syllabus with her classes. In her second year class one boy raised his hand “Hey, Ms. C. Are you still offering an A for the year if we can get Tom Hiddleston to come take you out to dinner?” The student asked, bringing up a joke she had made the previous year. “Sorry, Santiago, not this year. You’ll have to do the work if you want the A.” Lucy laughed, making a mental note to tell Henry about it.

“Que lastima.” He said while the other students laughed.

When lunch hour rolled around, Lucy went to the office to check her mailbox, but was stopped by one of the secretaries. “There’s a delivery for you. It’s in the lounge.”

“Thanks Gretchen.” Curious, Lucy went to the lounge to find a huge arrangement of close to three dozen tulips in a myriad of shades of pinks and purples in a vase, with pencils sticking out of the arrangement. She smiled at the whimsical bouquet. There was a card slipped into a holder toward the back of the vase. “Pumpkin, have a great first day of school. Love Darcy.” She laughed at his use of their nicknames as she had officially become Pumpkin Lucy today.

“That’s a beautiful bouquet. Who are the flowers from?” Anne-Marie, Lucy’s former teacher and best friend in the school asked.

“From the guy I met in London this summer.” Lucy gave a small half smile.

“You met a guy? In London? And this is the first I’m hearing about him? Tell me more!”

“I don’t have time to tell you the whole sordid tale right now, but meet me for coffee after last period, We’ll talk then.”

“He must be pretty special to put that look on your face. Those flowers are gorgeous, and that’s a fun little touch of adding the pencils.”

“I know.” Lucy replied dreamily, staring at the flowers. “I’ve got to go, but here’s a picture of us.” Lucy said pulling out her phone with the picture of herself and Henry in front of Big Ben.

“Wow, that’s a very good looking guy you’ve got there. What’s he do?”

“I’ll tell you all, at coffee. I gotta go, they’re playing my song” Lucy responded when the bell rang signaling the end of lunch period. She carried her flowers to her classroom. How did he know her
tulips were her favorite flower? She was almost certain she hadn’t mentioned it. She would find out though. Lucy took a picture of the arrangement and sent it to Henry with the message “Thank you! They’re beautiful! How did you know I love tulips?”

She was surprised to hear her phone buzz just a few moments later.

“I have my ways. And yes I think you’re sexy as hell.” Accompanied by a winky face emoji.

Once school released for the day, Lucy met with Anne-Marie at the cafe in town. They sat in a booth, each ordering a soft drink, as neither of them cared for coffee, and sharing a basket of french fries.

“So, you met a guy in London. Tell me about him. What do your parents think?” Anne-Marie asked. She had known Lucy since she was in the 3rd grade, when Lucy started at the school, they developed a close friendship.

“Well, His name is Henry. He’s the same age I am. He’s super sweet, and kind, and gorgeous. He surprised me by coming for my birthday, so mom and dad, and even Clint have already met him, and given their stamp of approval.”

“Well, that’s good. But tell me about him. He is very good looking. What does he do? Where is he from?”

“He originally grew up on the island of Jersey. He has four brothers, and he’s an actor.” Lucy explained, in as few details as possible.

“An actor, like West End?” Anne-Marie, the theatre buff asked.

“Like Superman.” Lucy said taking a drink of her pop, to hide her face.

“Wow. Well, that’s...different.” She replied, stymied by Lucy’s response.

“That’s all you have to say?”

“Your parents obviously already approve, and you look happier than I remember seeing you in quite some time. If you’re happy, I’m happy.”

“Thank you Anne-Marie, that means a lot to me.”

Once the big news was dealt with, Lucy and Anne-Marie finished their drinks and fries, and caught up about each other’s summers. Driving home Lucy felt at peace. She had a great guy, who her family and friends approved of, and her year was shaping up to be a good one. She was halfway home when her phone rang. It was Sarah’s mom, Sharon.

“Hi Sharon. How is the world of flowers treating you?” Lucy asked, after pressing the button to connect the call through her car’s phone system.

“Good, I’m calling to ask how you liked your arrangement.”

“My flowers! You did the arrangement! That’s how he knew about the tulips! Sneaky bugger.” Lucy exclaimed, a smile splitting her face.

“Well he called the shop and asked if we delivered to the school. I said we did. He originally ordered roses, but when he told me they were for you, I told him about the tulips. It was my idea to add the pencils. He wanted me to put a mini pumpkin in the arrangement as well, but we don’t have any of
those yet. Besides, a pumpkin with tulips, it wouldn't look right.” Lucy could almost hear the shudder in Sharon’s voice at the possibility of making such a tacky addition to a bouquet.

“It’s an inside joke. Thank you, they were beautiful.”

“I’m glad you liked them. So, who’s the guy. His accent was delicious.”

Lucy went through the whole story with Sharon including Sarah’s talk with Henry back in London. Sharon howled with laughter. They chatted for a few more minutes before disconnecting.

When she got home, Lucy texted Henry. “I know your secret…” And signed it with a kiss.

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Henry awoke the following morning to find Lucy’s message, and smiled. His day was light, for him. He had a session with his trainer, getting him back into Superman shape, before a meeting with his agent.

The trainer worked him hard, but he liked the training, it took his mind off of Lucy. After nearly 5 hours with his trainer, he took a cab into the heart of the city to meet with his agent. Dany was only in London for a few days, and requested a meeting with him. After covering a few general items Dany asked about Lucy.

“How are things going with the teacher?” Dany asked skeptically.

“Her name is Lucy. And things are great. She’s been busy the past few weeks, with school starting, so we don’t get a chance to phone every day, but we text several times a day.”

“So are you bringing her to the Britannias next month? If you are, I need to get her name on the list.” Dany asked, shuffling some papers around on her desk.

“I’m not sure, I haven’t asked her.” Henry shrugged.

Dany stared at Henry for a long moment. “You didn’t ask her? Why the hell not?”

“She’s a private person, and I don’t know if she’d enjoy it.” Henry defended.

“Well, why not let her decide if she wants to go or not. You should ask her soon though, because I’m guessing she doesn’t have anything appropriate to wear, and we’d need to get on that ASAP.” Dany switched from business to personal, “Do you want her there?”

“Of course I do, but…”

Dany interrupted him. “Then ask her. When you ask her, if she says yes, give her my number and we’ll figure out a dress for her. Now go home, call your girl, and take a shower, you smell.”

“Always a pleasure Dany.” Henry grinned, leaving the office. The thought of seeing Lucy again putting a spring in his step. He just hoped she’d say yes.

Checking his watch, he calculated that Lucy would still be in class, so he texted her to call him when she had time. No matter how late it was.

Lucy heard her phone ping in the middle of giving a lesson on cognates to her level one students.

“Senorita, no phones in class.” One of her smart-alek students said.
“It’s in my purse, not on my desk. I forgot to turn off the sound this morning. Now back to the
lesson.” She checked her phone between classes to find Henry’s message. “What does he want?”
Lucy thought out loud, but was interrupted by the next class filing in. Her lunch would be after this
class. “Guess I’m eating lunch at my desk today.” She thought to herself. At once concerned and
excited about the prospect of talking to Henry soon.

Lucy found it hard to concentrate on her lesson plan, her imagination was running wild with reasons
why Henry would need to talk to her. Once the kids finally filed out of the room, she sat at her desk
and pulled out her phone. After taking 3 deep breaths she opened FaceTime and connected to Henry.
“If he’s going to give me bad news,” she thought, “he’s going to do it to my face.”

The look on his face calmed her fears that he had bad news. The look of pure joy on his face almost
made her cry.

“Hi! Are you done with school already?”

“No, I’m on my lunch break. Your text sounded important. I thought I should call right away.” Lucy
replied, before eating a spoonful of the yogurt she had for lunch that day.

“No, it’s not important, really, but it is time sensitive.”

“I’m intrigued, go on.”

“Well, I’m presenting at the Britannia Awards next month with Chris, and I was wondering if you
would like to accompany me. To the show.” Henry asked stiltedly.

“You want me to go to an awards show with you? Where is it, when is it?” Lucy’s brain was
working overtime. She couldn't focus on one emotion. Seeing Henry would be amazing, but awards
shows meant lots of people and TV cameras.

“It’s in LA, at the end of October.” He mentioned the date. “Would you be able to come? Maybe
take a day off, fly to California, hob nob with some other British actors?”

Lucy consulted her big desk calendar, he face dropping, “I would love to accompany you, but I can’t
that weekend. That’s the same time as my foreign language teacher’s conference. I’m already
registered for it.” Lucy said disappointedly.

Henry’s face fell too.

“I’m sorry honey, this is the one weekend a year I can talk to other Spanish teachers. It’s really
important to me.” Lucy explained.

“I understand, but I’m disappointed. Where is your conference?”

“It’s near Minneapolis on Friday and Saturday.”

Henry was silent for a moment, but the look on his face told Lucy his brain was working hard.

“What’s that look for?” Lucy laughed.

“You’ll already be in Minneapolis? The awards are Friday night, would you be available for dinner
on Saturday?”

“With you?” she asked, her eyes bright.

“No, with Tom Hiddleston. Of course with me.” He laughed.
“Well, if Tom’s not available, you’ll do. I can’t wait to see you! Where will you be staying?”

“I don’t know, I just made this plan 2 minutes ago. I’ll arrange everything, and let you know.”

Just then the bell rang signaling the end of lunch period. “Well, when you know, let me know, but I have to go. The kids will be in here any minute.”

“I guess I’ll see you at the end of next month then. I love you.”

“I can’t wait, love you too.” Lucy said, blowing him a kiss before disconnecting the video call just as the first students came in.

“Who was that, Ms. C.? Was that your booooooyfriend” Patricia, one of Lucy’s favorite students asked, drawing out the word boyfriend.

“As a matter of fact, it was.” She said with a grin.

“Oooooooh. Can we see a picture?”

“Not right, now we’ve got a lesson to get to.”

Lucy thought later that it was a good thing the principal hadn’t been visiting classes today, her lesson was a little disorganized. She had braced herself for not seeing Henry until Christmas, now she had a date scheduled in 6 weeks. She couldn’t keep the grin off her face.
Weekend Away

Chapter Notes

NSFW

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As was usual, the first part of the school year flew by for Lucy. Between getting to know her new students, Homecoming, and almost nightly talks with Henry, Lucy found herself busy all day. Between their schedules, the pair could only find time to talk on weekends.

Lucy had been caught off guard when Henry asked her to attend the awards show with him. Lucy generally tried to have as few pictures of herself out in the world as possible, but if she was going to stay with Henry, she knew the possibility of another award show or movie premier was quite high, and if she was going to be more comfortable having her picture taken, she was going to have to be more comfortable with her appearance. That meant losing some of her weight. Henry claimed to like her just as she was, but she told herself, she was losing the weight for herself, not him. She threw herself into a new exercise regimen, regularly attended an aerobic Latin dance class at the school two evenings a week, and watched her diet. She had more energy, and found her attitude had lightened, though she suspected regular FaceTime sessions with Henry were a more likely cause of her mood adjustment.

The week of her conference arrived faster than she had anticipated. This was her favorite weekend of the school year; networking with other Spanish teachers, learning new tips and techniques, and finding new resources to use in class, but she couldn’t help but wait for the end of the last session on Saturday so she could see Henry again. She found her attention wandering while listening to speakers talk about the latest techniques in foreign language instruction.

Finally the last session ended, and Lucy all but ran out of the building. She input the address of the hotel Henry had booked into her GPS and forced herself to drive the speed limit. She found the hotel in downtown Minneapolis easily. Lucy took a minute to freshen herself before giving her name at the reception desk. The girl behind the desk gave her a slight once over, she’d obviously checked Henry and told her he was expecting a guest, before handing her a key card and a room number.

“Enjoy your stay ma’am.” The young woman stressed the word ma’am.

“Oh, I most definitely will.” She replied, unconcerned at being called ma’am.

Lucy’s anticipation grew as the elevator crept higher. The doors finally opened at the 21st floor. She let out a long sigh and exited the elevator. She double checked the room number she had been given, and walked briskly to it. She stopped outside the room, staring at the number. Should she knock? Just go in? Unlock the door then knock? Deciding, she had been given a key for a reason, Lucy unlocked the door and let herself in.

Lucy was surprised that Henry had booked a suite, given they’d be there less than 18 hours, but was impressed by the plush surroundings, so different from her budget hotel room for the conference. The suite had a sitting room with dining area, kitchenette, bedroom, and bathroom. Leaving her suitcase by the door, Lucy went in to find her Henry. She found him looking out the window in the bedroom. She caught his smile in the window when her reflection appeared.
He turned to face her. “Hello Pumpkin.” Lucy’s breath took a sharp intake. How had she forgotten the effect this man had on her in person?

“Darcy.” She sighed, and before she could even register that he had moved, she was in his arms. She reveled in the feel of his arms around her, letting his scent surround her. She looked up into his handsome face, and he captured her lips with his. The kiss wasn’t full of passion, but full of welcome, of longing. The kiss said their “I’ve missed yous” better than words ever could. When their lips parted, Lucy laid her head on Henry’s chest, and just held him.

When Henry finally broke the silence, he asked, “Are you hungry? I made a reservation if you are, or we could get room service.” He suggested, the look on his face suggesting that was his choice.

“I’m famished.” Lucy replied. “Let’s stay in. I want to keep you all to myself.”

“I’ll order, is there anything particular you want?”

“You know what I like, order me something delicious.” Lucy said grabbing her bag and disappearing into the bedroom, while Henry perused the room service menu.

Henry called to place their order, “Yes we’d like that as soon as possible.” and was about to hang-up the phone, when he heard Lucy cough behind him. He turned to see her standing in the bedroom doorway, wearing a short teal satin robe, her elbow propped against the door frame.

“Actually, we’d like that in one, no make that two hours.” Henry corrected, before replacing the handset. “I thought you said you were hungry.” He said walking toward her.

She reached her hand up, circling around his neck. “I am hungry. I’m starving for you.” She said bringing his mouth down to hers.

Henry’s arms wrapped around her waist, crushing her to his chest. His hands roamed her back while his tongue plundered her mouth. His hands rose, pushing the robe off her shoulders while he walked her backward toward the bed, his mouth trailing over the newly exposed skin.

When they reached the edge of the massive king sized bed, Henry pulled at the loosely knotted belt, and Lucy’s robe slithered to the floor, leaving her completely naked. He gave her shoulders a slight push, and she fell onto the bed. He stared at her, taking in the full length of her body, before divesting himself of his clothes.

Lucy scooted herself to the head of the bed and raised up on her elbows to watch Henry strip. Her arousal heightening with each new piece of Henry’s skin that was revealed. When, finally, he was as naked as she, he knelt on the mattress at her feet. He pressed a kiss to her ankle, her shin, the inside of her knee. Lucy felt as if his hands and lips were everywhere as he very thoroughly worked his way up her body, re-learning every curve and dimple. His lips and hands very carefully avoided the places Lucy wanted them most. Lucy was quivering with need by the time he reached her mouth.

Henry claimed Lucy’s mouth in a kiss so erotic that she almost came undone. Her hands roamed down the muscled tanned skin of his back. Henry’s lips left Lucy’s, trailing across her jaw, back down her neck to her breasts. His lips finally found her sensitive nipple, Lucy gasped as he took it into his mouth, suckling first one then the other, His hands continued their exploration while his lips worked, they found her heated core. His fingers played along the sensitive flesh that had been neglected up to this point. She gasped as he entered her, first with one finger, then two.

Between his mouth on her breast, and his fingers inside her, Lucy knew she wouldn't last long. She pushed against Henry’s shoulder, rolling with him as he moved. Lucy felt bereft at the loss of both Henry’s hand and mouth. She straddled his stomach, teasing his length with her moist heat. When he
could take no more teasing, Henry tried to roll Lucy underneath him, but she waved her finger at him.

“No, no, no. I think it’s my turn to be on top.” She said wrapping her hand around him. She rose onto her knees, and sank down onto him, finally joining them to each other skin to skin for the first time. She released a long moan at the sensation of Henry being inside her. Stretching her. Filling her.

Henry gritted his teeth, holding himself back from thrusting against her. Slowly she rocked her hips forward in a tentative, teasing, testing motion. Henry groaned in appreciation. Lucy’s confidence slowly grew, varying her speed and intensity. Henry rested his hands on the curves of her hips, helping her guide herself to ultimate fulfillment. He reached between them to press his thumb against her core, and her movements became frantic, driving them both toward climax.

Lucy’s world shattered into a million stars, and Henry followed her several frantic thrusts later. She collapsed against him, both breathing heavily, she rested her forehead against his shoulder.

“Where did that come from?” Henry asked, once his breathing had slowed slightly.

“Mmm, I’ve been distracted all day, thinking about you. About seeing you, feeling you, tasting you. It’s been 3 months. I wanted to show you just how much I’ve missed you.”

“I definitely feel missed.” He said running his hands up and down her back before cupping her bottom. “Care to miss me some more?” He asked capturing her mouth and rolling her underneath him.

Lucy was stepping out of the shower, when the knock on the door signaled the arrival of their room service order. She heard Henry open the door and direct the waiter where to place the cart. Lucy donned the fluffy white robe folded on the counter and went out to the main part of the suite to find Henry, wearing a matching robe, pouring red wine into two glasses. He looked up and smiled, “Just in time.” He gestured to one of the chairs at the table. She sat and Henry lifted the metal cover off her plate to reveal, a steak, baked potato, and Caesar salad.

“Oooh. Gracias cariño. After 2 days of conference food, this will hit the spot.”

“I’m glad you approve.” He said sitting across the small table from her, cutting into his own steak. “What did you call me?”

“Cariño. It’s like sweetie or honey in Spanish.”

“I like it.” He flashed her a crooked smile.

“Then I’ll have to remember to use it more.”

After several quiet minutes of eating Lucy finally asked the question that had been niggling at the back of her head for weeks. “Do you have to rush off back to London? Or can you stay for a few days?”

“I’m afraid so. We’re right in the middle of filming. They specifically set the schedule so I could attend the show this weekend. I have to fly back tomorrow.”

“Oh.” Lucy said, her face failing to hide her disappointment.

“I’m sorry darling. I wish I could stay, but we’re almost done filming this section. We’re scheduled to break from filming around in early November, while they finish making arrangements for shooting on location while we’re be moving filming to Detroit.
“Detroit? You’ll be in Detroit?! That’s only an hour different, and a very short flight”

“We’ll be shooting there most of November and December, before we wrap just before Christmas.”

“Wow. It sounds like a big project.”

“These types of films always are. Lots of running, and jumping, and wire work for me.”

“Since you’re shooting in the US, do you have a break for Thanksgiving? If you do, would you want to come spend Thanksgiving with me, and my family?” Lucy asked hopefully.

“That sounds extraordinary. If we have a break, I would love nothing more than to spend Thanksgiving with you.” He rose to kiss her across the table. “I’ll check with the schedule when I get back to London.”

They brought their wine glasses and the chocolate lava cake, Henry had ordered for dessert to the living room area of the suite. Lucy asked about the awards show, and the after party. Henry gave her a detailed description of everything. She asked about the red carpet. She’d always loved watching the red carpet at awards shows. The dresses, the jewels, the hair, the shoes. It all seemed so glamorous to a young girl growing up in the middle of nowhere Minnesota.

“They asked about you, you know, on the red carpet.” Henry commented.

“Me?” Lucy asked apprehensively.

“Well, not specifically you, but the girl I was photographed with this past summer in London.”

“And what did you tell them?”

“I told them that my beautiful girlfriend couldn’t make it because she had a prior work commitment. To which they asked what you do. I very vaguely told them you are a teacher in the states. That’s all I told them. Will said a specially vague answer like that would get them to stop asking, at least for last night.”

“Thank you for that. A few people at school know about us, and of course my family. But most of the school has heard a rumor that I’m seeing someone, but of course I don’t have any pictures of the two of us up anywhere, so they’re not sure what to believe. Though I did use you as an example when I was teaching personal adjectives. Henry Cavill es muy guapo.”

“What did you just call me?” He asked quirking is eyebrow at her.

“I said you were very good-looking.” She pecked him on the cheek.

“Well, gracias.”

“De nada.”

Lucy scooped a bite of the cake onto her spoon. A dollop of chocolate sauce accidentally dripped off the spoon on its journey to her mouth, and landed on the exposed slope of her breast, peeking out of the neck of the robe. She made a move to wipe at it with her finger, when Henry stalled her. He spread the robe open even wider, before licking up the chocolate with one long stroke of his tongue. After that, none of the chocolate drips were an accident.

Chapter End Notes
I have to start heading back to work this week, updates will not be as quick, or regular, but I'll try to update at least every couple of days.
Lucy awoke the following morning to light kisses across the back of her shoulders. “Mmm, Tom.” She groaned. “Hurry up, we need to finish before Henry comes back.” She felt a sharp pain on her bottom. He’d pinched her!

“That’s not funny.” He murmured against her shoulder.

“I thought it was.” She laughed as she turned toward him. “Good morning.” She whispered and leaned in to kiss him, her hands caressing his bare torso under the covers.

“Good morning.”

“I can’t remember the last time I slept so well.” She said, planting a kiss on his hairy chest.

“Me neither.” He kissed the top of her head.

She snuggled against him. “What time is your flight?” She asked apprehensively.

“1:30.”

Lucy quietly did the math aloud “Get there two hours ahead of time, half hour to drive there, so you need to leave here by 11:00. What time is it now?”

“9:00” He replied, smiling into her hair, she couldn't stop planning if she tried.

“That leaves just enough time.” She said before wrapping her hand around him. Their lovemaking was sweet, and slow, both wanting to make the moment last as long as possible.

They said their goodbyes in the hotel room, to not make a spectacle in the hotel lobby. “As soon as I know about Thanksgiving, I will let you know. And I’ll be in Detroit in just a couple of weeks.” He reminded her. Lucy wasn’t sure if it would be easier having him so close, or harder having him so close and not being able to see him.

5 Weeks later - Detroit

Henry sat with his co-star Amy Adams eating a quick lunch in between takes. The filming had been going remarkably smoothly, no one wanted the upcoming break for Thanksgiving to be cut short. “Do you have any plans for the break? If not, you’re welcome to come spend Thanksgiving with Darren and I. I know Aviana would love to see you again.” She joked. Amy’s toddler daughter had grabbed Henry’s ass when she first met him several weeks earlier.

“Actually I’ll be spending the break in Minnesota.”

Amy pulled a face. “Minnesota? Why Minnesota?”

“I’ll be spending the holiday with my girlfriend and her family.” He smiled at the thought.

“So the rumors are true. You are seeing someone. So spill, Who is she? What does she do? How did you meet?” Amy asked leaning forward with interest.
Henry related all of the pertinent details and the story of Kal knocking Lucy over in the street.

“That’s adorable. Do you have a picture?” Henry produced his phone and flipped to the picture of himself and Lucy at the Fashion Museum in Bath. “She’s not the usual kind of gal you go for.”

“No, she’s so much more.” Henry replied with a wistful look in his eyes. “She’s got a brain, and heart, and I love her.”

“Well, tell her I say hi the next time you talk to her.” Amy said offhandedly.

“I was just going to text her, let’s send her a picture.” Henry said opening the camera on his phone.

“Yes! Tell her I wanted to say hi to my boyfriend’s girlfriend!” They leaned toward each other, looking a bit incongruous, him in his Superman suit, her in a dress shirt and vest. Amy flashed her biggest smile, and waved at the camera. Once he had a picture they were happy with he sent it off to Lucy with the message Amy had suggested.

Lucy heard her phone vibrate just before the bell rang signalling the end of class. She reached for her phone, saw the message was from Henry, and thumbed her phone open, and gasped. She took a minute to compose herself before sending a reply. “OMG! Giselle just said hi to me! A literal Disney princess just said hi to ME. My life is complete! Tell Amy hi back, and that I love her, and to have her daughter keep her hands to herself. Love you!” She finished the text just as the bell rang to signal the start of class.

“What’s up with you Ms. C?” One of the girls asked, noting the smile on Lucy’s face.

“A friend of mine just sent me a funny picture. Now get to the review question on the board.”

Henry was surprised to get a response from Lucy so quickly. He opened the text and roared out a laugh.

“What’s so funny?” Amy asked. Henry showed her Lucy’s response. She laughed too. “Well she’s got a good sense of humor.”

“Yes she does.” Henry replied, shaking his head.

Lucy picked-up Henry at the airport on the Monday night before Thanksgiving. Because of the short visit, Henry flew into a smaller airport closer to Lucy’s house, and was not renting a car.

Lucy waited anxiously for him to disembark the plane. Henry was one of the first people off the plane. He scanned the few people waiting in the terminal and spotted her running toward him. He caught her, and using her momentum, swung them both around. He lowered her to the ground as she wrapped her arms around his neck to bring his mouth down to hers.

“Hi babe.” She said a bit breathlessly when they parted, lowering her arms to wrap around his waist.

“Hello darling.” He said staring, taking in the face he had missed so much. Lucy laid her head on his chest. They stood, oblivious to the stares and smiles of the other disembarking passengers, reveling in the feel of being in each other’s arms again. It had only been six weeks since Minneapolis, but it felt like a lifetime.

Lucy finally looked up, and realized they were alone at the gate. She took Henry’s hand. “Come on babe, let’s go, it’s a school night. Have you eaten? Are you hungry?”
“I’m famished.”

“Why don’t we grab some dinner before going home?"

“That sounds great.” Lucy led him out to her car and drove to a local family pizzeria. All through dinner they couldn’t take their eyes off each other. Once they were back in the car on the way back to Lucy’s house, Lucy outlined the coming week.

“I have to work tomorrow and Wednesday. Thursday is Thanksgiving obviously, and we’re scheduled to stay at mom and dad’s Thanksgiving night. Friday is spent with the family. Friday night at mom and dad’s again, then Saturday and Sunday is just us back at my house.”

“So what am I to do while you’re at work?”

“I don’t know, whatever you want. Watch TV, sleep, snoop through my things.”

“Is that permission?” Henry asking jokingly.

“You snoop, you be prepared for what you find…” Lucy cautioned.

“Why? Do you have bodies hidden in your attic?”

“No, of course not. Nobody hides bodies in the attic, that’s so last year. They’re buried in the basement.”
Lucy wasn’t sure how her life had led to her being pinned against the wall, having her mouth plundered by Superman, but she was thanking every god she had ever heard of, for the path that had.

Lucy had spent the last 20 minutes of the drive back to her house running her hand up and down Henry’s thigh, teasing him to a frenzy, but always stopping short of the fly he had unbuttoned.

Lucy buried her hands in his hair as his mouth traveled down her neck, nipping, sucking, licking, marking her as his. His hands moulded themselves to her breasts, tweaking her nipples through her shirt and bra. Lucy moaned before dragging his mouth back to hers, her tongue invading his mouth, while she dropped her hands to his ass, pulling him even closer.

Lucy’s hands still firmly clamped to his ass, he walked them toward her bedroom. After several stops for hands to rove and mouths to duel, finally they were standing next to the bed. Henry’s hands gripped the bottom of her silky blouse, carefully lifting it over her head. He lowered his head to kiss the exposed skin of her chest and shoulders, his hands reaching around to unclasp her bra, hands raising to cup her breasts.

When she could take his tortuously slow pace no more, Lucy pushed his shoulders away, and stripped his t-shirt off over his head before running her hands up, down, and around his muscular chest, pressing her nose to his sternum, breathing in the unique scent that was all Henry. Her hands lowered to his fly, which was still open, sliding her hands inside, lowering his jeans and boxer briefs. His length sprang free. Lucy wrapped her hand around him, stroking him teasingly.

Henry pressed against Lucy’s shoulders; she fell gently to the bed. Henry slid her trousers down her legs, taking her stockings with. When finally she was as naked as himself, he joined her on the bed. Kneeling between her legs, he joined them with one slow, smooth thrust. Finally bringing them to where they both wanted to be.

Lucy slapped at her alarm clock, that was ringing much too early, before snuggling into Henry’s side. She groaned when the snooze alarm rang, but, not wanting to disturb Henry, she shut off the alarm, and got out of bed, to get ready for her day.

Lucy wiped the steam off the mirror and gasped at the purple mark on the side of her neck. She tried two different concealers and foundations, but nothing would cover it to her satisfaction. She dried her hair and went in search of a scarf to cover her neck, it wouldn’t do to have a teacher show up with a hickey, she shook her head. She was surprised Henry didn’t wake when she blow dried her hair, or when she’d stubbed her toe trying to find clothes in the dark bedroom. But he’d looked so exhausted when she’d picked him up the night before, she understood his need for rest.

She left him a note in the kitchen, and dropped a kiss on his sleeping forehead, before going out to the waiting carpool.
“You’re smiling quite wide this morning.” Ryan, a math teacher at school, and one of her carpool companions commented.

“I told you I was picking up Henry at the airport last night.” She reminded him, smirking.

“Aha, yes, the infamous Henry. I still have no proof he actually exists.” Ryan joked, driving to pick up their third carpool companion.

“He doesn’t live here.” Lucy defended.

“And you don’t have any pictures of this elusive boyfriend?”

“Here.” Lucy said producing her phone, open to a picture of herself and Henry from the night she surprised him in London.

Ryan took the phone while they waited for Mindy, the school’s librarian, to come out. “Wow. he’s a hottie.” Ryan teased her. It had been like this since the first time they’d met, like brother and sister. “He looks really familiar though. You said he’s from London? What’s he do?”

“He works for the government. Maybe you saw him giving an interview on the news or something.” Lucy lied, not sure how much of the story to tell her friend. They both greeted Mindy as she opened the door.

“And what’s his last name?” Ryan asked, still probing.

“Cavill.” Lucy supplied.

“Cavill, Henry Cavill. Why does that name sound so familiar?” Ryan wondered aloud, while navigating them to the highway.

“He plays Superman.” Mindy supplied from the back seat. Holding her phone up for Ryan to see in the rear view mirror. Mindy was the same age as Lucy’s parents, but being a media specialist, she knew how to find information, not that finding information about Henry was hard, a simple google search had revealed his entire biography.

“No, we’re talking about Lucy’s boyfriend. His name is Henry Cavill.” Ryan corrected Mindy.

“No, Ryan, she’s right.” Lucy grimaced at being caught in her lie.

“You’re dating Superman?” Ryan asked incredulously.

“No, I’m dating Henry Cavill. He PLAYS Superman as part of his job. He’s also been a Greek demi-god, and soon he’ll be an American CIA agent.” She was tired of everyone boiling her boyfriend down to a one-word character description.

Ryan was silent for several minutes after Lucy’s impassioned speech. But finally he had to speak. “You’re dating a celebrity. How are the kids not all over this?”

“Because shockingly few of them have access to British tabloids. We were all over Hello magazine in June. And I know if you did an image search for Henry, about halfway down in the results, you’d find a picture of the two of us, but the kids aren’t searching for him.”

“How did you even meet him?” Ryan asked.

“Everything else I told you was the truth, I only lied about what he does for a living.”
“So, are you going to be going to awards shows and movie premiers and stuff like that now?”

“Possibly. If Henry is going, and if I can get the time off. I suppose.”

The rest of the trip to school was peppered with questions from both Ryan and Mindy about Henry, and their relationship.

Henry awoke around 9:00, groggy and disoriented, until he remembered he was at Lucy’s. The hellish shooting schedule, coupled with all the stunt and wire work that was required of him, made him appreciate the extra sleep this break afforded him.

He wandered into the kitchen to find coffee, and found a note from Lucy next to the coffee maker. He smiled at her messy handwriting scrawled across the paper.

Darcy -
I didn’t know when you’d be up, so I didn’t make coffee, but it’s all ready to go, just add the water. My car is in the garage, keys by the door, if you want to go anywhere, just don’t get lost. I should be home a little after 4. Take some time to rest today. You’ve been beating yourself up for weeks (or letting Ben do it), relax, take a nap, watch some horrible daytime TV, whatever you want to do. I miss you already.

I love you.

Lucy

She left a lipstick kiss next to her name.

Henry heard the vehicle stop in front of the house. He opened the front door in time to see Lucy exit a silver car, driven by a good-looking blonde man. The man saw Henry and waved, before driving off.

Lucy bounded up the steps of the porch into Henry’s waiting arms, and lips. “Hmm, this is nice.” She commented as they walked inside. “Having someone to come home to.”

“Who’s the bloke?” Henry asked a bit perturbed.

“What bloke?” Lucy asked, confused.

“The good-looking blonde in the car.” Henry asked trying not to get upset.

“That’s Ryan, Ryan Williams, he’s one of the math teachers at school.”

“Why was he driving you home?”

“It was his turn to drive the carpool toda...you’re jealous!” Lucy realized. “You’re jealous of a high school math teacher.” She covered her mouth with her hands trying to hide her smile, while controlling her laughter. “I don’t know if I’m upset, or endeared, or amused.”

“I’m not jealous.” Henry denied, a bit too vehemently.

“Henry. You have no reason to be worried about Ryan. Primarily because I’m in love with you, you big dork.” She said, giving him a quick peck on the lips. “But also, he’s married, I made his wedding cake last summer. He’s like a little brother to me. I think you’d like him.”
“I wasn’t jealous, I was just…” he searched for the words “Ok, damnit I was jealous. I don’t know why. I don’t think you’d ever cheat on me, but this feeling just bloomed in my chest, and I couldn’t stop it.” He admitted.

“Oh, honey.” Lucy said, barely containing her laughter. “No, I would never cheat on you, and besides, you know how I feel about math.” Finally he laughed, she pulled him down onto the couch, and sprawled on top of him “Now, kiss me like you mean it, then tell me about your day.”

Chapter End Notes

WOW! Over 1100 hits! That's at least 1000 more than I ever thought I'd get. Thank you so much for everyone who's been reading, and leaving kudos and comments. Thank you! And leave more comments, let me know what you're thinking!
Lucy sat across from Ryan at a table in the teacher’s lounge on Wednesday at lunch. “So, Henry wants to meet you.” Lucy told him casually.

“Henry wants to meet me?”

“That’s what he said. Do you and Andi want to come over for drinks tonight, or maybe the four of us could go out for dinner.”

“It’s Wednesday, why don’t we go to The Mill for wings?”

“Yes! That sounds great. It’ll be just like grad school.”

“You guys are going to The Mill tonight?” Kelsey, one of the English teachers asked. “Tyler’s band is play there tonight at 9:00.” She said, mentioning her husband’s country cover band.

“Sounds like a plan to me.” Lucy said “I’ll text Henry, see what he thinks. Why don’t you text Andi, and let me know on the way home tonight.”

Lucy and Henry met Ryan and his wife Andi at the local bar/restaurant The Mill, which the three (minus Henry) had frequented while they complete their graduate degree program together. The restaurant was nothing special, known for it’s hamburgers and cheap beer, and it’s chicken wing special on Wednesday nights.

“Andi! It’s so great to see you.” Lucy said, embracing the tall willowy blonde.

“I know, it feels like its been forever.”

“This is my boyfriend Henry. Henry this is Andi Williams, Ryan’s wife.”

“How do you do, Andi. It’s lovely to meet you.” He said, kissing the woman, on both cheeks. Her jaw dropped, as she looked from Henry, to Lucy, and back to Henry.

“Luce, where did you find him?” She asked, envy dripping from her every word.

“London.” Lucy laughed.

Over wings and beer Ryan and Andi asked Henry all about himself. At one point Andi excused herself to the bathroom, and demanded Lucy come with her. As soon as the two women entered the bathroom, Andi rounded on Lucy. “Lucy! You’re dating a celebrity? What the hell? You didn’t even give me any warning?”

“Ryan didn’t get you a heads-up? That’s not cool. I’m not trying to hide it or anything, but he’s just Henry. I don’t want people bothering him.”

“I understand that.” Andi conceded, the two did their business and washed their hands. “He’s ridiculously good-looking.”

“Oh, my god. I know. It’s been a trip.” She exclaimed as they walked back to the table. “Do you know I was in a tabloid this summer. It’s crazy. I met Hugh Grant for cripe’s sake!” She laughed.

The foursome finished their dinner amid many laughs and many, many glasses of beer. By the time the band was due to start playing, Lucy was quite tipsy. “Darling, I don’t understand how four beers
is affecting you so.” Henry commented, confused.

“This, is pumpkin Lucy. Pumpkin Lucy barely drinks. Summer Lucy is damn near an alcoholic, especially when she travels.” She slurred “Do you not like pumpkin Lucy?” She asked, her eyes wide with fear.

“I think pumpkin Lucy is adorable. You drink as much as you want tonight. I'll switch to water to get us home.” He kissed her forehead.

The foursome made their way to where the band was performing. Kelsey was there along with several other staff members from the school and their significant others. Introductions were made all around, and it didn’t take long for word to spread through their group about Henry’s identity.

Lucy had a great time dancing with her friends, though Henry refused to dance to anything other than the ballads. Lucy made sure to put a little extra swing in her hips while dancing with the other women. Henry started to get uncomfortable.

Around midnight Lucy claimed she was ready to go home. Henry helped her out to the car, and later, into the house. She started shucking clothes as soon as she entered the house. Her shoes were kicked off in the closet by the door, and her jacket was dropped in a heap on the floor. Henry picked it up and hung it on a hook, before following the trail of her clothing through the house. Her shirt was draped over a chair in the dining room, her necklace and earrings were on the coffee table. Her jeans were bunched up outside the bathroom. Henry smiled when he found her, in her underwear and stockings, standing in front of the bathroom mirror taking out her contacts.

She turned her head, saw him, and smirked. “See somethin’ you like cowboy?” She slurred as she approached him.

“Definitely.” He smiled, lifting her in his arms, kissing her sweetly as he carried her to the bed. When he set her down, she made quick work of dispensing with the rest of her clothes, and laid down on the bed, patting the other side invitingly. Henry pulled his shirt over his head, and unbuttoned his jeans. As he was pulling them down his legs, he heard a soft noise. He looked over at Lucy to find her sleeping. He couldn’t suppress his protective smile, as he pulled the covers over her, before getting himself ready for bed.

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Thanksgiving morning dawned bright and sunny and cold. Lucy awoke warm and rested cradled in Henry’s arms. She attempted to extract herself without waking him, but succeeded in moving less than 6 inches before Henry pulled her back to him, nuzzling the back of her neck.

“We have to get going this morning. We’re due at my parents house for breakfast in 2 hours.” She groaned, not feeling as horrible as she was expecting to.

“That means we have an hour and a half. It’s not much time, but I can be quick.” He murmured rolling Lucy underneath him.

45 minutes later Lucy was standing under the steaming shower spray, smiling a very satisfied smile. She normally didn’t like to rush, but with a wake-up like that, she couldn’t be too upset, sex with Henry was the best hangover cure she’d ever had. She gathered her hair and makeup supplies as she exited the bathroom to let Henry get ready for the day.

“Bathroom’s free.” She called bringing her things to the bedroom to finish getting ready

Henry whistled to himself as he showered and shaved. He had never celebrated Thanksgiving, and
was looking forward to celebrating with Lucy and her family.

Not used to the tight quarters in the bathroom, he reached for his shaving kit, bumped into the box of tissues, which fell off the counter and knocked over the small garbage can. He laughed at himself as he started picking up the few things that had spilled out of the can. He picked up a stick that had skittered across the tile floor. The blood drained from his face as he recognized the shape, his heart starting beating faster, and turning it over, he saw a plus sign on the front. His heart stopped all together.
Thanksgiving

Henry stared at the pregnancy test in his hand. The plus sign staring him in the face.

“Lucy?” He called questioningly with a slight crack in his voice.

“Yeah hon?” She asked coming to the bathroom door. “Whatcha’ need?”

“What is this?” He asked holding up the pregnancy test.

“Oh….that.” She laughed awkwardly. “Umm...my period was late, so I took a test, and it came out positive.” She explained carefully.

“I threw-up, took another and it was negative. I went to my doctor the next day, and she said I’m not pregnant. So don’t worry.” She rushed out in one breath.

“Worry?!?! You might have been pregnant and didn’t think to tell me?”

“I didn’t want to worry you unless there was something to worry about. My doc said it was just a perfect storm of stress, and a cold, and whatever else. But, as I said I’m not pregnant, so there’s nothing to talk about.”

“Were you going to tell me?” He questioned accusatorially.

“Probably. Most likely. If it had been positive I definitely would have told you, but since I’m not, it’s no big deal.”

“You said you threw-up when you took the first test. Is the idea of having my baby really that repulsive to you?”

Lucy’s head was spinning. Was he mad that she hadn't told him, or upset that she wasn’t pregnant? “No, not repulsive. But you have to see things from my point of view.” She ticked off fingers as she made her points. “We’ve been together less than 6 months. of that 6 months, we’ve spent less than a month total actually together. You live 4000 miles away. As far as most of my world knows, I’m single, which means I would have been an unmarried pregnant teacher. That's frowned upon in this part of the country. And number 5, I really don’t want the introduction of our relationship to the media to be ‘look who’s pregnant!’ She only got pregnant to trap him. You know that’s what everyone would say”

“So you don’t want to have a baby with me?” He accused.

“Not right now I don’t. For all the reasons I just laid out.” She defended herself. “Why? Do you want to have a baby with me?” Lucy asked her anger turning to apprehensive shock.

“I won’t say I haven’t thought about it. In the abstract.” Henry said, his original anger and concern turning to sincerity and pensiveness.

“Yes, in the abstract. I’ve thought about it too. But the time is just not right, right now. It’s too soon.”

Henry released a sigh. “Well, then, we shall just have to be more careful in the future.”

“Definitely.” Lucy agreed. She stepped to Henry and leaned into his warmth and strength. He wrapped his arms around her. They weren’t all better yet, but the initial conflict had passed.
“I was so scared. It was the longest 24 hours of my life. I’m not ready to be a mom, well I suppose I am, but not really. I felt so alone, just waiting to see if my life was going to change forever.”

“Which is why you should have told me. We could have worried together.” He chuckled.

“I didn’t know how you would take it. I didn’t want you to think I was trying to trap you. It was my idea to stop using condoms.” She said into his side, not wanting to meet his gaze.

“Hey,” He said raising her chin to look her in the eyes. “I know you better than that. You wouldn’t do something like that.”

“It’s just we never talked about any of that.” She said lowering her eyes again.

“Well, why don’t we talk about it?” He suggested.

Lucy opened her mouth to speak, noticed the clock radio on the shelf and started. “Because we need to leave in 20 minutes, and you’re not even dressed yet. Let’s table this discussion until we get back on Saturday. I really am sorry I didn’t tell you. I’m not used to...not being alone.” She confessed. “Now hurry up, we need to get going.” Lucy ordered giving him a peck on the check and a smack on the ass before she danced out of the bathroom.

They managed to leave on time, though Lucy wasn’t sure how it happened. They stopped at a convenience store to get newspapers and caffeine, (diet coke for her, coffee for him). They arrived at the house with 2 minutes to spare. Entering the walk-out basement, they dropped off their bags in the bedroom they would be staying in the next 2 nights and proceeded upstairs to the kitchen/dining room. They could hear the noise of her family getting ready to sit down to a holiday breakfast. Lucy opened the door and peeked around it. “Gobble gobble! Happy Thanksgiving!”

Her greeting was met with shouts of “Auntie!” as she knelt down to gather her niece and nephew in giant hugs. “We went to wake you up, but you weren’t there!” Quinn said in a chastising tone.

“I’m sorry, punkin. Henry and I were at my house last night. But we’re staying here tonight and tomorrow night.” And the mention of his name Quinn looked up at the big man standing behind her auntie, and suddenly became very shy.

“Hey, what’s this? You remember Henry don’t you? Auntie’s friend? You met him this summer.” The little girl shook her head, meanwhile her little brother was attempting to climb Henry’s leg. Henry lowered himself to eye-level with the little girl while gathering Thomas in his arms.

“Hello Quinn, it’s a pleasure to meet you, again.” He said in his most proper voice, extending his hand to her. She giggled and hid her face in her auntie’s neck. Lucy’s mom saved the day by announcing that breakfast was ready and everyone should take their seats.

Henry stood, still with Thomas in his arms and Lucy felt her stomach clench. What would he look like with his own little boy? Their little boy? For the first time, Lucy was disappointed that the test hadn’t been positive.

They feasted on piles of French toast with every topping anyone could have wanted, from maple syrup to fruit to Nutella, while everyone caught up with what everyone else was doing.

Henry and Lucy spent the rest of the morning playing with Quinn and Thomas. Henry and Thomas built several Duplo towers, which were promptly knocked over to be built again. Quinn wanted Henry to read her stories with his fascinating accent. Lucy took numerous pictures, and tried not to swoon all over him.
That afternoon, after eating more than he had in recent memory, Henry reclined on the couch, holding his stomach. Lucy plopped next to him, and rubbed his belly. “Are you ok Darcy?”

“I’m so full.” He groaned. “Why did you let me eat so much?”

“It’s your first Thanksgiving. You need to learn through experience. There’s still pie for later. You can have pumpkin or apple.”

“I think I’d definitely like some pumpkin pie.” He murmured suggestively, pulling her into his lap. She kissed him deeply, before laying her head on his shoulder.

“Ugh, get a room.” Clint whined jokingly. Lucy stuck her tongue out at him. “Anna and I are going to see the new Hunger Games movie tonight, if you two are interested.” Clint offered. Lucy and Henry looked at each other, speaking through a series of head tilts and raised eyebrows.

“Sure, Clint. We’d love to come.” Henry answered for them.

“We thought we’d leave around 5:00, grab a quick supper before the show.” Clint explained.

“Sounds good, we’ll be ready.”

Before the foursome left, they all received goodnight hugs and kisses from Quinn and Thomas. Lucy’s heart melted watching Henry embrace the small boy and girl.

“Oh, seriously.” Anna said sitting next to Lucy in the back seat of the car, Henry and Clint occupying the front seats with their much longer legs. “He’s gorgeous, British, has a phenomenal job, and is great with kids.”

“I know.” Lucy said smugly. “I’m going to need your support tomorrow.” She said, changing the subject. “I’m supposed to go to London with Henry around Christmas. I’m going to see if mom would be willing to do family Christmas the weekend before, so Henry and I can be with his family on Christmas Day. Do you think she’d go for it?”

“Are you going to London for Christmas Day no matter what?”

“That is the plan.” Lucy admitted.

“I think if you tell her that, that it’s either early Christmas with you, or no Christmas with you at all. She’ll probably come around. Be prepared for a guilt trip, but yeah, I think she’ll go for it.”

“So you’ll support me when I ask tomorrow? Because I need to book plane tickets soon.”

“Yeah, Clint and I will back you up.” Anna agreed.

They had a light dinner in deference to the large lunch they’d had, and to leave room for popcorn at the movie. Henry earned more than a few brownie points with Lucy’s brother by paying for dinner as well as the movie tickets. During the movie, Lucy flipped-up the armrest between them and snuggled into Henry’s side for the duration of the movie. On the way home, Clint and Henry talked like old friends, while Lucy smiled happily in the backseat, imagining many more holidays spent exactly like this.
Lucy and Henry were awakened in the familially traditional way the morning after Thanksgiving. Quinn and Thomas burst in, and jumped on the not quite sleeping pair, having been awakened by the kids clomping down the basement stairs. Having been warned of the tradition, Henry slept in pajama pants and a t-shirt, which was quite different from his usual nothing. Lucy had also switched sides of the bed, so she was closer to the door, and would therefore receive the brunt of the young children’s pounces.

“Auntie, Unca Henry! It’s time to wake up.” Quinn announced, bouncing on the bed.

“Thank you sweetie. We’re up, now go wake-up mommy and daddy.” Lucy said, kissing each of the kids on the cheek.

“You weren’t kidding about the wake-up.” Henry said, sitting-up, wiping the sleep from his eyes.

“They’re quite enthusiastic. I don’t know where the energy comes from.”

“Quinn called me Unca Henry.” Henry said, wrapping his arms around Lucy.

“I noticed that. How do you feel about that?”

“I think I like it.” He leaned to Lucy, pressing his lips to hers. She wrapped her arms around his neck, and leaned, until he was flat against the bed her chest pressed to his. Lucy’s tongue plundered Henry’s mouth, her hands resting on his chest. Henry’s hands moved to Lucy’s back and started a slow slide south, but before his hands could reach anywhere interesting, they heard the kids’ feet thundering toward their room. They broke apart just seconds before the door flew open and Quinn came bounding in.

“Auntie, Unca, mommy said to ask you what you want for breakfast, so I could go tell grandma.”

“You tell grandma whatever you want to eat, and we’ll eat the same as you.” Lucy told the little girl.

“Mickey Mouse pancakes, yay!” Quinn yelled and ran out of the room, her steps could be heard pounding up the stairs.

Henry stood, searching through his clothes, finding his workout gear.

“Where are you going?” Lucy asked, watching Henry put on his outdoor clothes.

“If I’m going to eat another big breakfast, I need to go for a run, especially after yesterday. The suit is not forgiving.” He said, dropping a kiss on Lucy’s lips as he exited the room. Lucy slipped on her slippers and followed him.

“Don’t get lost, and be careful, the roads might be icy.” Lucy cautioned, giving Henry one more kiss before he went out into the frigid November weather. She turned to see Anna standing at her own bedroom door.

“Where’s he off to?” She asked.

“For a run, he’s still filming, and wearing a super suit is not holiday binge eating friendly.”

A thoughtful look crossed Anna’s face for a moment before she spoke. “No I don’t suppose it is.”
Henry returned from his run just in time to take a quick shower and join everyone for breakfast. Yesterday he’d eaten whatever he wanted, today, however, he was going to have to limit his calorie intake if he didn’t want his trainer to kill him when he got back to Detroit.

While spending the day with Lucy’s family, Henry realized that all the things he loved most about Lucy came from these people: her sense of humor, her quick wit, her easy way of showing affection. Even her laugh was just like her mother’s.

In the afternoon, the whole family went sledding on a small hill in the yard. Henry was going to suggest to his trainer they add sledding to his training regimen; trudging up a snowy hill in heavy boots, while pulling a sled with 2 kids on it, was wearing him out more than any workout his trainer had come up with.

When Quinn and Thomas fell asleep in the living room before supper, Lucy volunteered to run to the grocery store for her mom. She indicated with her head that Henry should “volunteer” to come with. Lucy drove them around the corner from the house before putting the car in park and crawling over the console to straddle Henry’s lap, her mouth attacking his.

“I forgot how little privacy there is in that house.” She moaned as Henry kissed her neck.

“My hands have been itching to touch you all day.” Henry said looking her in the eyes. She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him deeply. “Please tell me we’re not all staying at your parents house for Christmas?”

“No, we, as well as my brothers and their wives, will all be at a hotel. Only the kids stay at the house, so they can be spoiled by grandma and grandpa.”

“Thank god!” She sighed, before capturing his mouth again.

The close confines of the car made anything more intimate virtually impossible, but the make-out session was enough to tide them over, until they could be truly alone.

The following morning, after another big family breakfast, Clint and Anna packed up the kids to spend the rest of the holiday weekend with Anna’s family, while Lucy and Henry went back to the quiet and privacy of Lucy’s house. The closer they got to her house, the more nervous Lucy became. The big “kids” conversation loomed on the horizon, and Lucy wasn’t sure how to handle it.

Lucy had barely taken off her coat before Henry attacked her. Apparently their almost 2 days of celibacy had just been too much for him. He carried her to the bedroom and spent the rest of the morning showing her just how much he’d missed touching her.

It was while they lay in their smiling afterglow; Henry running his fingers leisurely up and down Lucy’s back, while she swirled her fingers in his chest hair, that Henry brought up their tabled conversation.

“I know it must have been a shock, and I know you don’t handle stress well initially, but I don’t understand why the thought of being pregnant with my baby would make you sick.” Henry said to the ceiling.

Lucy slid out of bed. “Where are you going?” Henry asked, concerned.

“I’m just getting my robe,” she said, sliding on the black satin hanging on the closet door. “This isn’t a conversation I want to have naked.” She explained, before coming back to sit cross legged next to him on the bed. She took her pillow and put it in her lap to fidget with it while she talked.
“You know I’m a planner?” She asked.

Henry smiled, “Yes, I had noticed that about you.”

“Well that positive result was something I didn’t know how to plan, for all the reasons I already told you. My mind was racing and a thousand different thoughts went through my head all at once: He’s going to think I’m trying to trap him! No he won’t but how’s he going to deal with this? Do we get married? Do we not? That would go over big in my world. And if we do get married, where do we live? What do I do? Would I be able to work? How do I deal with the paparazzi? How do I deal with the paparazzi with a baby? Twins run in mom’s family. That’s 2 babies at once! But those twins haven’t manifested in a few generations, so does that mean I’ll have like quadruplets?! That’s 4 babies! Then I definitely won’t be able to work! And we’ll have to hire a nanny! She can’t be a young woman, look how well that worked for Sienna Miller! Then it would have to be an old woman, and she’ll probably judge me! And you’ll resent me for shackling you with 4 kids, and you’d leave me! And I’d be a single mom with 4 kids!” Lucy babbled, her hands flailing about wildly with each new layer added to her stream of consciousness ramble.

“No wonder you vomited, I wanted to vomit hearing that tirade.”

“I tend to go to worst case scenario first, then when I can convince myself that that’s not actually going to happen, I can start with more realistic ideas.”

Henry laughed before leaning in to give her a lingering kiss, meant to soothe her overworked nerves.

“Now, let’s unpack that ‘worst case scenario’ as you call it. I know you wouldn’t try to trap me with a pregnancy, but I would want to be married by the time the baby came. We would have to discuss where we would live. As far as the press are concerned, you remember Will, that’s his job to help us handle the press and especially the press around a baby. Remember I have an entire team of people that make my life run smoothly, and as long as you’re in my life, they’re there to make your life smoother as well.” He pulled Lucy into his arms. “I would be thrilled if we had twins. I’m not sure about quadruplets, but I think anyone would freak out about 4 babies at the same time.” He laughed. “And nannies are just a way of life, if we had a baby, and if you wanted a nanny, we would decide together.” He pushed Lucy away far enough to look her in the eyes “But you know that I would never be unfaithful to you.” He said seriously.

Lucy threw her arms around his neck, holding him close. “Oh, Henry. I do know that. I don’t think you’d cheat on me. Like I said, my brain goes to the worst case first.”

“I still wish you’d told me at the time. I don’t like the idea that you’re keeping things from me.”

“That’s something I need to work on. I’ve been on my own for so long, I have myself convinced that I don’t need anyone. I can do everything myself, But I’ll make more of an effort to not do everything for myself. There’s two of us in this relationship.”

“Yes there are. Thank god, because through you can do everything for yourself, and that’s something I’d like a front row seat for, I’m really glad you let me help you.” He murmured suggestively in her ear, before tickling her.

When they were a breathless heap on the bed, Lucy asked the question she’d really been wondering since the kids issue arose. “Henry, how many kids do you want?”

“I think I’d be happy having as many as we had, but I grew up in a big family. It always felt like there was never enough time for everyone. I was lucky, Piers is 10 years older than me, so he was already grown and at school when I was really young, but when everyone was home, it was quite
chaotic. How many do you want?”

“I think two, maybe three, but no more than three, after that you’re doing less raising, more crowd control.” Henry’s laugh rumbled through the room.

After several quiet minutes, Lucy pondered, “Do you think if we had a boy, he’d have your curls?”

“If we had a girl would she have your eyes?” Henry wondered.

They spent the rest of the day decorating Lucy’s house for Christmas. Periodically one of them would ask aloud, would a baby have your, and insert body part or feature here. Lucy hated seeing him off at the airport the next day. The separation was hard, but she felt closer to him than when he’d arrived. She was counting the days until Christmas, when they would be together again.
The Start of Winter Break

“Hey Ms. C, you got any fun plans for break?” One of Lucy’s students asked during the last hour of the last day of class before break.

“Not really, just hanging out with some friends. Grading projects, binging Netflix. The usual.” Lucy replied. Even with almost half of the high school staff knowing about her relationship with a famous actor, they had respected her wishes, and kept that information from the kids.

“Does anyone have big plans for break, it’s a long one this year, enjoy it.” Several kids spoke-up about trips with their families, basketball tournaments, or work. Lucy found herself counting the minutes until the bell rang. Henry would be flying in the next day, along with Kal, before they spent the rest of the day celebrating Christmas with her family. It had only been 4 weeks since Thanksgiving, but she missed him terribly, and felt almost giddy about being able to spend 2 solid weeks with him.

Once the bell rang, and all the students had left, Lucy took a few minutes to organize her room, and gather anything she would be needing over break. She was just packing the last of her things into her teacher bag, when Ryan appeared at her door.

“You ready to go?” He asked bouncing on the balls of his feet.

“Yes I am. You’re in a hurry today.” She commented to him as they walked down the hall.

“Andi and I are going skiing over break. We leave tomorrow morning, so we’re driving to Minneapolis tonight. I want to get on the road.” He explained,

“Henry flies in tomorrow, then we’re flying to London on Monday night.”

“So just the two of you for Christmas?” Ryan asked.

“No, we’re going to Jersey, and spending Christmas with his whole family; his parents, all 4 of his brothers, their spouses and kids.” Her nerves evident in her voice.

“4 brothers? That should be interesting.”

“At least I’ve already met his mom, and she likes me. I haven't met any of the rest of his family though.” They stopped outside the Library to wait for Mindy.

Lucy waited impatiently for Henry’s flight to unload. It seemed forever between watching the plane touch down and drive to the gate, before the doors were actually opened.

Lucy saw Henry’s head over the others walking up the jetway. She waved to him and his mouth widened into a grin. He released his hold on Kal’s leash and let the dog run to her. She knelt down to envelope Kal into a big hug. The dog had such an expressive face, he grinned at her, happy to see her again. Once her arms released Kal, Lucy felt a pair of strong hands under her arms, lifting her to Henry’s mouth. His lips were warm and soft and welcoming.

“Welcome back, Darcy.” Lucy finally greeted

“It’s good to be back, Pumpkin.”
Lucy and Henry loaded his bags and Kal and into her car, and pointed it North. Lucy updated him on their agenda. She had managed to convince her mother to agree to early Christmas, but Lucy had to agree to spending 2 nights at her parents’ house during the weekend.

“So tonight we’ll get there in time for dinner. Tomorrow morning we’ll all go to church, before coming home to do presents from each other, then a big family dinner with everyone, plus grandma and mom’s sister Izzy and her husband and 2 kids. Then we’ll do more presents, from grandma and such. I had to promise mom we’d stay Sunday night too, so Monday morning we’ll have breakfast then leave, so I can do laundry and pack for our flight.”

“So we’re two nights at your parents’ house?” Henry asked, sounding very dejected about the idea.

“Kal will love it, lots of room for him to run around, snow to play in, and kids to play with.”

“I’m sure he will, but it’s been over a month since I’ve seen you, touched you, held you, kissed you.” He murmured, his voice going deeper with each word.

“That’s why we’re not going straight there. I made some time for just us, before we go celebrate Christmas. Our own private celebration.” She smirked at him.

“Ever the planner, aren’t you.” He smiled at her.

“You love it.”

“I do love it, I love you.” He leaned across the console to kiss her. She linked her fingers with his while she drove, needing to have some kind of connection with him.

Later, after Henry and Lucy had their celebration, as Lucy was moving Christmas from under her tree to a box to be brought to her car, she set a box aside. Once their bags were loaded, Lucy pulled Henry to sit with her on the couch. She handed him the small box she’d set aside.

Henry looked at the box with it’s blue snowflake paper, and silver bow, then shook it. It rattled a little. The box couldn't hold much, it was only about 4 inches square, he puzzled about what she might have given him.

“It’s not much. You’re an incredibly hard person to buy for.” She pouted a bit. “Anything you want you could buy yourself, or I couldn’t afford. So, I went with this. I hope you like it.”

“Darling, you didn’t have to get me anything. And I’m going to love whatever you give me.” He gave her a quick peck. “Can I open it?” He asked with all the glee of a 4-year-old.

“Please do.” Lucy held her breath as she watched him tear the paper on the small box. He set the paper aside, and pulled the lid off. Inside nestled on a bed of fluffy, cottony, filler, were 2 keys on a Minnesota shaped key ring. He picked them up, and eyed them.

“Are these the keys to your heart?” Henry asked with a slightly confused, slightly silly look on his face.

Lucy gave a short giggle. “I suppose you could say that, but they’re actually much more practical than that. They’re the keys to my house. I wanted to show you that you’re welcome here anytime.” She explained worrying her hands in her lap. Had she been totally wrong in her thinking he’d like the gesture?

Lucy watched as Henry’s eyes started to shine with water, before he wrapped her in a tender, crushing embrace. “Darling, this means so much. Thank you. You said you didn’t know what to
give me. You’ve given me the only thing I want. You.” He said, pulling her in for a kiss that could 
demonstrate his love more than he ever could with words.

Lucy and Henry arrived at her parents’ house an hour before dinner was to be served. Lucy wanted a 
chance to settle in and let the kids settle down from their greeting before they all sat down to eat.

There was the usual exuberant greeting from Quinn and Thomas, and hugs from everyone when 
they arrived. Lucy went to the living room to put all the presents she’d brought, under the tree, and 
stopped so abruptly that Henry ran into her.

Hanging on the wall where all of their stockings normally hung, was a stocking with Henry’s name 
on it. While the rest of the family had hand-made stockings that Marie had made, Henry’s was a 
classic fuzzy red with a white fur cuff, but his name was embroidered on the cuff. “Mom?” Lucy 
called while walking to the stockings.

“Yes?” She entered the room, seeing Lucy stroking the stocking. “I didn’t have enough time to make 
a stocking for Henry for this year, so that one will have to do.” Marie explained to her daughter.

Lucy looked at her mother with a tear glistening in her eye. “Oh mom.” Lucy whimpered, wrapping 
her arms around her mother, touched that she had thought to make sure that Henry felt included.

“Thank you.”

“It’s really nothing, honey. There’s no need to get so emotional about it, it’s just a 99 cent stocking.”

“It’s the thought mom. Thank you.” She kissed her mother on the cheek.

“Yes thank you Marie. It’s a lovely gesture.” Henry echoed, giving Marie a quick hug as well.

Dinner was a simple affair, before the orgy of rich food that would follow the next day. Once Quinn 
and Thomas were asleep, Lucy, Henry, Clint, and Anna all went into the local bar, both Lucy and 
Clint had plans to see old high school classmates.

The two couples entered the loud, dimly lit establishment together then went their separate ways. Lucy 
quickly found who she was looking for, “Jenn!” Lucy called, waving her arm high. Jennifer 
saw her and pointed at the table she and her husband Lee had already claimed. Lucy mimed that she 
and Henry were going to get a drink first.

Despite the crowd in the bar, they were served quickly and made their way to Jenn and Lee’s table. 
Jenn jumped up from her stool and squealed when Lucy came close enough to hug. Henry laughed 
watching the two women devolve into 13 year olds. “Jenn, this is Henry, Henry, my sister, Jenn, and 
her husband Lee.” She introduced the man still sitting at the table He looked to be about 5 years 
older than the girls. Jenn wrapped Henry in a hug, and he exchanged a handshake with Lee.

Once they were all seated, Lucy exclaimed, “You didn’t tell me you were pregnant!” She indicated 
her friend’s prominent belly.

“We decided we were ready for number two. Due in April, so still a bit of time to go.” Her friend 
said, patting her belly.

“Congratulations! Another baby to spoil! Yay!” Lucy cheered, taking a sip of her drink. “Speaking 
of number 1, how is my boyfriend doing?” Lucy asked.

“He’s good, adorable as ever. So curious about everything.” Jenn’s eyes lit up as she exclaimed,
“The whole troop is getting together tomorrow with the kids. You guys should come!.”

“Troop?” Henry asked confused.

“Our Girl Scout troop.” Lucy and Jenn said in unison, which caused them to dissolve into giggles.

“You were a Girl Scout?” Henry asked incredulously.

“Does that surprise you? Really, name a goody two-shoes stereotype, and I probably meet it. I was a very good girl in high school.”

“I’m a good girl I am!” Lucy and Jenn exclaimed, imitating Eliza Doolittle, and erupting into laughter, before Lucy explained why they wouldn’t be able to come.

Jenn wasted no time in grilling Henry for every detail of his life, past and present. She needed to make sure that Henry was “good enough” for her friend, and made no qualms about telling him that. Jenn and Lee announced they could only stay for one drink. Number 2 was doing a number on Jenn, and staying up past 10 any night was pushing it for her.

Lucy and Henry walked them out. There were hugs all around as the four said their goodbyes. Lucy and Henry decided to call it a night then as well. Lucy texted Anna to tell her they were going home. Between him wrapping up filming, and her dealing with kids right before Christmas, they were both exhausted.

Kal met them at the door when they returned to the house. Henry went outside with him, while Lucy got ready for bed. As she was plugging her phone in, Lucy noticed a text from Jenn. “I like him. I give my tentative approval. I reserve the right to withhold full approval until the year mark.” Lucy smiled.
Christmas Presents

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for sticking with me. I know Chapter 27 wasn’t my strongest, but trust me things are about to heat up!

After the traditional “jump on auntie” wake-up, and a rushed breakfast of cold cereal, the whole family, all 10 of them, made it to church with time to spare. Henry sat next to Lucy, her hand clasped in his. During the sermon, Thomas asked, or rather demanded, to sit in Henry's lap. Lucy watched out of the corner of her eye as Thomas curled-up in Henry’s lap, while Henry absentmindedly rocked back and forth with the small boy.

After service while everyone was enjoying coffee and treats, Lucy spent some time catching up with high school friends, or acquaintances, that were also home for the holiday. Lucy had never enjoyed small talk, and it seemed that everyone she’d ever known wanted to say hello to her today. The striking British man at her side being the cause, she assumed.

“Lucy, I didn’t expect to see you until Wednesday.” Meredith, the female pastor, joked, opening her arms for a hug. Lucy embraced the other woman warmly.

“Well, I had to come today. I won't be here Wednesday. Henry and I will be in England. By the way, Meredith, this is my boyfriend, Henry.” Lucy explained.

“Henry it’s a pleasure to meet you.” The short brunette woman greeted, before enveloping Henry in an embrace.

“And you as well. I very much enjoyed your sermon today.” Henry complimented.

“Thank you. So Henry, how did you come to meet our Lucy? You’re obviously not from around here.”

Henry laughed, remembering the day. “We met while Lucy was in London this summer. I’m afraid my dog trampled her in the street. I asked her to coffee to apologize, and I’ve been under her spell ever since.” He explained, his eyes meeting Lucy’s as he recounted the story.

“That’s a very endearing story.” Meredith sighed. “And Henry, what do you do?”

“I am an actor.” Henry said simply.

“Well that’s exciting. Have you been in anything I might have seen?”

“He just finished principal photography for the new Superman movie.” Lucy supplied. Meredith visibly startled.

“Well. Good luck in your future endeavors, Henry. Lucy it was wonderful to see you, safe travels, Merry Christmas, and a blessed New Year.” Meredith finished, giving them both another hug and an air kiss on the cheek.

“She seems nice.” Henry commented as they walked toward the coat rack.
“I love her. She helped me through a rough patch a few years back. She doesn’t tend to give me too much grief about not attending regularly. It was actually her that encouraged me to be brave enough to travel on my own. I was so nervous.”

“Well, I’m certainly glad she did.” He replied, kissing her forehead.

Everyone returned home for a light lunch of chicken noodle soup, before going outside, to watch the kids play with Kal. Lucy was impressed. He was such an exuberant dog with adults, but he was so gentle with the little ones. Lucy took several pictures of the kids playing with Kal, Henry playing with the kids, Henry, Kal, and the kids all together. She hoped one would be good enough to frame for her living room.

When everyone came back inside, Henry was surprised by the change in the kitchen. Where the counter had been, was now a veritable feast of horrible-for-you foods. There were 8 different kinds of christmas cookies, and fudge, and chex mix, and some kind of warm cream cheese based dip that smelled amazing and tasted even better.

“You’d better pace yourself. Everything for dinner tonight is rich, and if you graze too much on the goodies, you’ll be a sorry boy come bedtime.” Lucy explained, popping a cookie into her mouth and grinning.

“Then I shall have to pace myself.” He grinned back at her, leaning down to give her a smiling kiss. Just as they were ending their kiss, Quinn sprinted into the room.

“Auntie! Grandma says we can open presents now, but not until everyone is in the living room!” The little girl explained excitedly.

“Well, then we should get to the living room before someone steals our presents.” She reached out to tickle the little girl, who scampered off in the direction of the living room.

When they arrived, they found piles of presents spread around the room. Lucy found her pile and sat next to them, she noticed there was a box for Henry next to hers. It was a long flat rectangle. Identical to the boxes each family member had, in addition to their other presents. Lucy looked to her mother. “Mom, did you?” She indicated Henry’s box.

“I did, now just shush, until it’s time for him to open it. Let it be a surprise for him.”

Lucy handed him the box. “We don’t open these until the very end.” Lucy explained, pointing out the other boxes each family member had. Henry was intrigued, but waited his turn.

The kids started by opening their mountain of presents. Being the only grandchildren, they were spoiled on all sides. Henry noticed that Lucy’s presents tended toward the more sentimental for the adults, while the children’s presents were, for the most part, educational.

Finally, the only presents left were the flat rectangles. Thomas opened his first, to reveal a pair of light blue pajamas with Thomas the Train printed on them. The pajamas were the traditional pajamas with a pair of pants and a shirt that buttoned up the front. Quinn’s box also contained pajamas, but her’s were lime green and printed with Tinker Bell.

Lucy opened her box, just an inch, before closing it again, and burst out laughing. “What?” Henry asked, intrigued. Lucy opened her box to reveal her pajamas. Henry’s laugh echoed throughout the room. Lucy’s pajamas were navy blue and printed all over with Superman’s “S”. “Really mom?” Lucy asked holding up the top to show the room.

“Well. It seemed appropriate.” Marie answered.
“Mom, makes our pajamas to represent something that we did during the year, or something we especially like. We all wear them Christmas Eve night and then have breakfast in our new jammies Christmas morning.” Lucy explained. “Let’s see yours.”

Henry opened the box to find his pajamas were cream colored with Union Jacks printed all over. He grinned.

“I hope they fit. I had to guess on some of the measurements. I did a drawstring waist instead of elastic, so you can cinch it as much as you need.” Marie explained.

“Marie, you made these?” Henry asked disbelieving.

“That’s why I didn’t have time to make you a stocking, I was making your pajamas.”

“Thank you Marie. They’re great.”

“That’s it’s official.” Lucy said, grabbing Henry’s face, giving him a loud smacking kiss on the lips, “You’re part of the family now.”
Lucy laid on the bed, on top of the comforter, in her regular pajamas, groaning. Her hands moved over her stomach in large circles.

“Why did you let me eat so much?” She whined up at Henry who was trying on his new pajamas.

“Didn’t you warn me of this very thing?” He asked, tying the cord at his waist.

“I’m horrible about heeding my own advice! I know I shouldn’t eat so much, but everything tastes so good.” She whined again.

Henry laid down next to her, his hand replacing hers on her stomach. “My poor pumpkin.” He sympathized, kissing her on the forehead.

Lucy’s eyes closed, “Mmmm, that feels nice.” she sighed. “I like your jammies by the way.” Lucy commented, placing her hand on top of Henry’s stalling his movements.

“They fit pretty well.” He was amazed. His current physique was a bit unwieldy. While the pajamas were too large in some places, they fit across his chest and arms, which was where he usually had problems.

“Mom’s been doing this long enough, she has a pretty decent eye.” She felt him move and opened one eye, to see him pulling the covers out, to slide underneath.

“You know you don’t actually have to sleep in the pajamas. I never do. Ugh! I can’t sleep in flannel, it’s too hot. You just have to wear them for breakfast. And mom’s going to take family pictures with everyone in their jammies in front of the tree.” Henry heaved a sigh of relief, and changed into his much lighter sleep attire.

With her stomach finally settling, Lucy curled into Henry’s side waiting for sleep to overtake her. She thought back on the day. After everyone had opened their presents, everyone relaxed in the living room and watched the Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer specials. It was a nice quiet hour before the rest of the family arrived.

Grandma Joanne had arrived first, coming into the house, requesting someone to fetch the presents from her car. Henry volunteered, and returned with a pile of gaily wrapped boxes to be put under the tree. Not long after Lucy’s aunt Isabelle, Izzy to everyone, arrived with her husband Steven, and their kids 13 year old Sam and 8 year old Howie. Lucy smiled to herself as she recalled Sam’s face when he saw Henry.

“Holy shit! You’re Superman!” Sam had blurted upon seeing Henry.

“Samuel, language!” Izzy admonished, while everyone else laughed.

“Sam, this is Henry. Henry, my cousin Sam. I think he’s a fan.”

“Nice to me you Sam.” Henry offered his hand. Sam stared at it for a long second, before slowly extending his hand to grasp Henry’s.

“Can I get a selfie with you?” Sam asked excitedly once he had control of his voice again.

“Sam, you’re being rude.” His mother commented.
“No, it’s ok. Sure Sam, but maybe in a few minutes, ok?” Henry agreed. Lucy had definitely earned some “cool points” with her young cousin today.

The rest of the evening had flowed easily, Henry was enfolded into the group like he’d been there for years. It warmed Lucy’s heart to see her family accept him so readily.

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Lucy awoke early to do some primping before breakfast. She changed into her new Superman pajamas and went to the bathroom to spray some dry-shampoo in her hair, and apply a little eyeliner and lip gloss. Her mother always insisted on taking family pictures on Christmas morning, and then posting them everywhere, including on the following year’s christmas card. She had learned early to not go to breakfast with bedhead.

Lucy and Henry went to the kitchen to find Marie, in her new pajamas with golf clubs on them, making Belgian waffles in bulk. The table already laden with any toppings anyone might want.

“Good morning mom.” Lucy greeted, snitching a piece of strawberry from a bowl on the table.

“You look nice this morning.” Marie commented.

“I woke-up like this.” Lucy said with a straight face, before both she and Marie broke into grins. It had become their traditional Christmas morning greeting.

After everyone had gorged themselves on waffles, the photo shoot commenced in front of the Christmas tree. There were pictures of everyone, the original 4 family members, Clint, Anna, Lucy and Henry, Clint, Anna, and the kids, just Lucy with the kids, Lucy, Henry, and the kids, just Lucy and Henry, just Clint and Anna, and any other combination that someone wanted. Clint, as always, would email the pictures to Lucy later that day.

It came time for Lucy and Henry to leave. Lucy had laundry to do before they drove to the airport for their overnight flight to London. They exchanged hugs with everyone as they readied to leave. Marie handed Lucy a container full of christmas cookies, her eyes shining with unshed tears.

“Thanks mom. I love you. Merry Christmas.” Lucy said with one final hug.

“Merry Christmas. Drive safe.” Marie responded.

Everyone stood at the front window waving until the pair had exited the driveway. Lucy drove in silence, until Henry finally asked, “Are you ok, love?”

Lucy’s voice was thick when she spoke. “It’s stupid, I know. It’s just, this will be the first time I’m not with my family for Christmas. I’m excited to spend Christmas with you, and your family, don’t get me wrong.” She babbled.

Henry took her hand and brought it to his lips. “Darling, I understand. I’m excited to show you my home. And everyone will love you. They’ll love you not just because you’re an amazing person, but they’ll love you because I love you.”

Lucy and Henry went their separate ways when they reached Lucy’s house. Lucy, to separate and wash the clothes she was going to bring to London; Henry to walk and exercise Kal. When Henry and Kal returned, Kal laid down in the living room, and Henry heard Lucy call to him.

“Babe, can you come here for a second?” Henry followed Lucy’s voice to the bedroom.
“What do you nee…” Henry’s voice trailed off as he saw Lucy, laying on her side on the bed wearing nothing but a pair of lacy knickers, her head propped up on one hand.

Lucy sat up onto her knees, and looked up at him through her eyelashes. “It turns out all of my clothes are in the laundry. Whatever should I do?” She asked innocently.

Henry’s mouth widened into a grin before lowering his mouth to hers. His mouth ate at hers hungrily while his hands traced the lines of her body. He pushed on her shoulders, lowering her to the bed, before taking a second to divest himself of his clothes.

They came together in a cacophony of moans, and sighs, and gasps. Their hands and mouths staking a claim to each other’s bodies. They finished together, breathless, and trembling, and sated.

Lucy curled into Henry’s side, “I can’t believe we get to spend 2 whole weeks together. I’m going to get spoiled.” She kissed his chest, running her fingers along his sternum.

He kissed the top of her head sweetly, “I’m looking forward to spoiling you pumpkin.”

“I think I’ll even let you, Darcy.” She smiled.

When they emerged from the bedroom, they found Kal laying in the middle of the living room floor, one of his paws over his eyes. Lucy barked out a laugh. “You know, sometimes I think this dog is more human than canine.”

“I’ve suspected that myself. He’s too expressive to be all dog.”

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Their flight to London left late Monday night and would deliver them around noon. Kal, due to his therapy dog certification, was allowed to fly in the cabin. He curled himself up at Henry’s feet in the spacious First Class cabin of the jet. Lucy had never flown in such opulence. Her seat folded flat into a bed, so she might actually sleep on the flight. Her only disappointment was that she wasn’t sitting directly next to Henry, he was across the aisle.

Once the plane had taken-off and they reached cruising altitude, Henry crossed the aisle with something in his hands. “Darling, did I mention that our hotel room has a whirlpool bathtub?” He murmured suggestively.

“No, I think you neglected to mention that.” Lucy said, excitement giving her eyes a twinkle.

“I thought you might want to brush-up on your moves.” He said handing her the paperback romance novel she’d caught him with that summer. Her jaw dropped in surprise while he chuckled and kissed her forehead before returning to his seat.

“And here I thought I might actually sleep on this flight.” Lucy muttered to herself, her mind whirling with the possibilities that awaited her.

From the moment they landed in London, Lucy felt like she’d stepped on a motorized banana peel. Once they were through customs, and collected their bags, they caught a cab into the city. They stopped briefly at Henry’s house, just long enough for him to deposit his luggage from filming, and pack some lighter clothes to accommodate the much warmer weather on Jersey, and get the box of presents for his family. Lucy stayed in the cab with Kal.

The went from Henry’s house to the kennel where Kal would be spending Christmas. Henry hadn’t wanted to subject Kal to any more flights, so he had booked Kal into a doggie spa for the Christmas
holiday. When they arrived to Barkingham Palace, Henry asked the cab driver to wait while they brought Kal in and got him settled.

Lucy was impressed with the operation at the doggie spa. While he was there, Kal would get groomed and pampered like he was one of the Queen’s corgis. Lucy gave the dog a hug around his big furry neck. “I’ll see you in a couple of days boy.” She said before planting a kiss on his head, he grinned up at her.

Finally the taxi took them to Victoria station to catch the Gatwick Express. Once they were seated on the train, Lucy finally felt like she could breathe. They’d been all over London but she had barely seen any of it, they had been so busy.

“Bollocks!” Henry exclaimed softly.

“What’s wrong?” Lucy asked concerned.

“I’m sorry darling. I forgot your present at home.”

“That’s ok. I’ll get it when we come back. It’s no big deal, honey, really.” She soothed, kissing him sweetly.

“I just, I wanted you to have something to open on Christmas Day.”

“Honey, I’m not concerned. What I AM concerned about is remembering everyone in your family. You have a significantly more family members than I have.” Lucy recited the names she could remember while Henry filled in the gaps.

They checked in for their flight, and ate a quick dinner before going to the gate to wait. They were approaching the gate when Lucy heard a loud, deep voice call out, “Hank!” Lucy was surprised when Henry stopped, and scanned the nearby seats. His face split into a grin.

“Chuck!” He called, dropping Lucy’s hand to embrace the man striding toward them. He was tall, almost an inch taller than Henry, with the same dark coloring, and dimpled chin. Lucy smiled at the violence displayed in the brothers’ embrace. Why did men always hug so violently?

When the two brothers finished their hug, Henry turned to the shorter brunette woman standing off to the side, behind Charlie. “Heather!” Henry called, wrapping her in a hug, lifting her off the ground.

“Henry, put me down!” The woman giggled. Henry finally set her feet back on the floor, before turning to Lucy.

“Lucy, this is my baby brother Charlie. Chuck, this is Lucy” He introduced the other man.

Lucy extended her hand to Charlie, “It’s really nice to finally meet you.”

Charlie bypassed Lucy’s hand, and clasped her shoulders, pulling her close to kiss her on each cheek. “It’s a pleasure to finally meet the one and only Lucy. This one,” he indicated toward Henry with his thumb, “hasn’t stopped talking about you since you met.”

“All good things, I hope.” Lucy replied nervously.

“Only the best.” Charlie confirmed. “This is my wife Heather.” He indicated the woman standing next to him.

Heather also leaned in to kiss Lucy’s cheeks, though she was prepared for it this time. “Lucy it’s
great to finally meet you.” Heather greeted. Lucy was surprised to not hear an accent from the other woman.

“Great to meet too Heather. Are you not British?” Lucy asked.

“No, actually I’m Canadian. Charlie and I live in British Columbia.” Heather explained.

Lucy and Heather made small talk while Charlie and Henry caught-up. They were all 4 seated together on the short flight to Jersey. Both couples arrived at the hotel at the same time. Lucy was starting to feel the effects of 18 hours of traveling, she was grateful to finally be at their final destination.

Lucy stood next to Henry, her hand gently rubbing his back, as he checked-in at the front desk. When Henry and Charlie had gotten keys for their rooms, they turned away from the registration desk, a voice called to them from the bar, “Hank! Chuck!” All four of them turned to see three men and three women approaching from the bar. What followed was a series of violent hugs and insults that could only be exchanged between brothers. Lucy felt her nerves build watching everyone greet each other. She hovered toward the back of the group, until Henry grabbed her hand to drag her into the center and introduce her to everyone. Lucy’s head spun, matching names with faces, and exuberant greetings.

When Piers, Henry’s oldest brother, invited them to the bar for a drink, Henry turned to Lucy to gauge her response. The panicked look in her eyes, coupled with the tense smile, made him refuse, claiming fatigue from their day of travel, but left them with promises to see everyone the following morning.

Lucy collapsed against Henry when the elevator doors closed, sighing in relief. “I was not expecting that.” Lucy commented.

“We can be a bit overwhelming en masse. But the worst is over. All that are left are the nephews, and dad.”

“Thank god. Now I need a bed, and several hours of hard sleep.” She sighed, leaning on Henry as they made their way to their room. Lucy saw flashes of light Provençal colors, a kitchenette, and a sitting area, before focusing on the very large bed. She kicked off her shoes, and stripped out of her clothes, before crawling under the covers to fall asleep instantly. Sometime later, Lucy awoke just enough to feel Henry crawl into bed next to her, and drape his arm across her torso.
Christmas Eve morning Henry awoke curled around Lucy, his arm wrapped around her waist, and her bottom nestled into his groin. Lucy awoke to Henry’s hands gliding over her body, and his lips caressing her neck. She sighed warmly as his hands explored her curves. Lucy turned her head to kiss his sleep warm lips.

Her hands reached behind her to grasp his hair, as his fingers plundered between her legs. As her body responded to his caresses, Lucy’s hands slid south, to return his intimate attentions.

When at last he lifted her leg to wrap around his hip and entered her with one long smooth stroke, Lucy let out a groan of approval, her body welcoming him. Their bodies rocked together, drowsily greeting day with their shared moans of pleasure.

As Lucy rested her head on Henry’s chest, listening to his heartbeat, he spoke their first words of the day. “Do you know what my favorite thing is?” he asked, absentmindedly running his hand up and down her spine.

“Morning sex?” she replied cheekily.

His laugh reverberated against her ear “No, though that’s pretty high on the list. It’s waking up with you; waking up and knowing when I open my eyes, you will be the first thing that I see.”

After a moment, Lucy spoke, her voice wavered slightly, “That’s my favorite thing too.” She agreed.

Much later, as they considered getting out of bed to start the day, Lucy asked, “What’s on the agenda for today?”

Henry couldn’t stop his smile, planning was in this woman’s DNA. “Sometime after breakfast, we’ll all go to mum and dad’s. My brothers will go shooting this morning, before returning for lunch. Mass is at 4:00 before we return home for dinner. Tomorrow everyone will meet for breakfast to watch the little ones open presents from Father Christmas, before our big Christmas lunch.

“If your brothers are going shooting, what are you doing? Are you not going with them?”

“I thought I’d stay with you.” Henry replied kissing her forehead.

“If your brothers are going, and if this is something you do every year, you should go. I’ll be fine back with the other women. I’m sure your sisters-in-law will be nice to me. Your mom already likes me.” She reminded him.

Lucy and Henry were the last to arrive at the house that morning. After some good natured ribbing about having a hard time getting out of bed that morning. Henry and the boys left to shoot skeet, leaving Lucy with his mother, and 4 sisters-in-law.

The women chatted about their lives, and their husbands. They asked Lucy questions about her life
and her relationship with Henry. They were all friendly, but there was an icy distance about them. Lucy got the feeling she was being very stealthily interrogated.

About an hour before lunch, Henry’s sister-in-law Eva stood-up when a baby cried from the next room. She returned with a chubby baby in a hunter green sleeper.

“Oh, my goodness. Who is this sweet little one?” Lucy asked, her eyes bright.

“This is Benjamin. Would you like to hold him?”

“Oh, my goodness.” Lucy whispered, gathering the little boy close.

“How old is he?” Lucy inquired, bouncing the little boy in her arms.

“8 months.” Eva replied.

“He must be the christening that Henry mentioned this summer.” Lucy said, putting the pieces together.

“Yes, Henry is his godfather.” Eva confirmed.

The ladies continued to talk while Lucy played with the little boy, occasionally adding her own input.

“You’re a natural there, Lucy. I don’t think he’s giggled that much with anyone else.” Eva commented.

“I have a niece and nephew of my own. I just love babies.” she explained.

“Any plans for any of your own?” Sienna, Nik’s wife, asked.

“Oh, well. In the future, yeah. I’d love to have kids, but right now, well it’s a little complicated. Henry and I don’t even live in the same time zone, and it’s only been 6 months. Though I’d love to have a baby with Henry,” She gestured to the kids playing on the floor, “The Cavill men obviously make very pretty babies. But I’m just old fashioned enough to need to be married before I get pregnant.” Lucy didn’t mention that she and Henry had already discussed babies, and how they might fit into their lives. She’d leave that for maybe her second visit.

The men arrived home just in time for lunch. Henry walked into the living room to find Lucy. She was there with his brothers’ wives, and she was holding his nephew Ben. Her smile practically lit-up the room. She looked up when he entered. And though it seemed impossible, her smile grew even wider.

“Hi babe.” She greeted him. He walked over to give her a kiss, before seating himself on the arm of her chair.

“Hank, not in front of my kid would you.” Simon called from the doorway. At hearing his father’s voice, Ben’s head turned. He smiled and lifted his arms to his daddy. Simon crossed the room to take his son in his arms before claiming a spot next to his wife.

Lunch was a very informal affair with sandwiches and “crisps” as Lucy was corrected, when she called them chips. After lunch was eaten and cleared, Henry announced he was going to take Lucy for a walk to show her around.
“Just be sure not to take her too far, there Hank” Charlie said suggestively, ever the little brother.

Henry opened his mouth to respond, but Lucy beat him to it. “What would be the fun in that?” She winked at him as Henry took her by the hand and led her out the door. She wrapped her arm around his waist, and he draped his arm across her shoulders as they walked along the road.

“I can’t believe how beautiful it is here. And warm.” She commented lifting her face to the sun.

“This is actually quite a chilly day for the island. Ordinarily I would have said cold, but given the temperatures when we left Minnesota, this seems practically tropical. London will be cooler, and probably rainy.” He said leading Lucy down a track that crossed the road.

“Where are you taking me?”

“You’ll see. This was my favorite spot when I was a boy. It’s where I came to do all of my big thinking, or get some peace from my brothers.”

“Do they like me?” Lucy asked self-consciously.

“I’ve heard good things. That comment before we left, will no doubt raise you in their esteem.” He chuckled.

“I don’t think your sisters-in-law like me.”

“Why do you say that?” He puzzled.

“They weren’t rude or mean, but it was a bit frosty in the room this morning.”

“I’m sure it’s all in your head. They’re all amazing women. We Cavill men have spectacular taste in women.” he said pulling her closer to kiss her temple.

They arrived at a waist high stone wall, in the shape of a U, obviously the remnants of some long forgotten building, with what appeared to be a seat built of some of the fallen stones. “Here it is. My fort.”

“Your fort. How cute.” Lucy, covered her mouth, picturing a young Henry, tromping out to this place to be away from his brothers for a bit.

“It’s not cute, it’s rugged and adventurous.” He defended.

“Of course it is.” Lucy replied sitting on the wall. “So what kind of things would you think about when you came here?”

“Mostly girls.” He laughed sitting on the wall beside her.

“And how many girls have you brought here?”

“Including you? One.”

“Now, that sounds like a line.” She laughed.

“It’s true. This has always been my place. I haven’t had anyone else I wanted to share it with.” He confessed, sliding his arm around Lucy, pulling her close for a kiss. He kept his arm around her, as she laid her head against his chest.

“If I asked you to marry me right now, what would you say?” Henry asked quietly.
Christmas Eve afternoon

Chapter Notes

I don’t know the names of any of Henry's sisters-in-law, besides Heather. Here is a list to help you keep things straight.

(arranged oldest to youngest)
- Piers - Olivia
  - 3 children
  - Thomas
  - Alfie
  - Oscar
- Nik - Sienna
  - 2 children
  - Ethan
  - Daniel
- Simon - Eva
  - 1 child
  - Benjamin
  - Henry
- Charlie - Heather
  - No children

“If I asked you to marry me right now, what would you say?” Henry asked quietly.

Lucy jolted upright. “What?!?”

“If I asked you to marry me right now. What would you say?” He repeated looking into her eyes.


“I’ll take that as a no, then.” He laughed uncomfortably.

“No, Henry, it’s not a no, it’s just. It’s too soon to get married.” She replied, standing, starting to pace.

“I wasn’t proposing we get married tomorrow.” He laughed.

“But you are proposing?” She questioned.

“Let’s call it a hypothetical.” He said carefully.

“So if I hypothetically said yes, do you have a hypothetical ring in your pocket?” Her voice bordering on hysterical.

“Hypothetically, no I don’t. But hypothetically we will be in London for the next week where some of the best jewelers in the world are located.”

Lucy exhaled heavily, “I think I need to sit down.” She said fanning her face. She sat on the seat
formed from the fallen stones. She opened her mouth several times as if to speak, before closing it again without making a sound.

“Oh Henry. I want to say yes. But…”

“Then say yes.” He interrupted.

“But I can’t. I do love you, and I think I would love to spend the rest of my life with you, but I can’t say yes right now. You understand don’t you? I mean we haven’t even had a real fight. I only want to get married once, I want to do it right, with my eyes wide open. I’m not saying no, I’m saying, not right now.”

“Well, if you’re going to bring sense and rationality into this discussion, how can I be upset?” Henry asked, walking to stand in front of her.

“There’s no need to rush.” Lucy defended.

“But you’re not saying no? So if I were to ask again in say six months time?”

“Henry…” Lucy threatened.

“I’m just checking. But as I am now standing before you a rejected man, broken hearted at having been rebuffed by his love, why don’t you come here, and make me feel better.” He said, pulling her close by the front pocket of her hoodie.

“Oh, dear. Broken-hearted and rejected. What did you have in mind?” She asked saucily.

In response he claimed her mouth with his, his tongue plundered her mouth possessively. He turned them to sit on the stone seat, and Lucy straddled his lap without breaking the kiss.

“Henry you know I love you, right?” She asked breaking the kiss, breathing heavily, her hands framing his face, looking deep into his eyes.

“I do.” He said ironically, meeting her gaze.

“So you’re not mad, or upset, or…” she trailed off, searching his face for a clue about his emotional state.

“I will admit, I am a bit disappointed, I had hoped for something to celebrate.”

“Well, it is our 6-month anniversary. We became official” she said using air quotes “exactly 6 months ago today.”

“And what a 6 months it’s been.” He said giving her a chaste peck. She wrapped her arms around his neck to pull him closer in her embrace.

They walked along the trails, hand-in-hand for another half hour before Henry declared, “We should be returning soon, if you want to change for service.”

They returned to the house, which was alive with the energy of almost 20 people getting ready at the same time. Somehow they all arrived at the church with time to spare.

After service they all returned to the house for a big family supper. Lucy smiled to herself watching Henry completely at ease with his family. His brothers asked her questions about herself, and teaching, about her travels and her life in Minnesota. None of their questions seemed intrusive, seeming to come from a place of genuine curiosity about the woman their younger brother had
When the main meal was done, and the plates had been cleared, Marianne brought in dessert, or pudding as Lucy was corrected yet again. She carried a plate with a bundt-shaped cake, and what looked like a gravy boat of cream. Lucy could see dark spots in the cake, indicating there must be some kind of fruit in the cake. She turned to Henry and asked, “That looks delicious, what is it.”

Henry’s face assumed an almost impish expression. “That is a spotted dick.”

Lucy’s eyebrows shot up and her mouth opened in confused shock. The other adults at the table laughed at her expression. “Are you messing with me? That’s actually what it’s called?”

Eva replied from across the table, “Yes, that’s actually what it’s called. They did the same thing to me 2 years ago.” She said in a comforting tone. “It’s quite delicious, despite the name.” Everyone laughed again, this time Lucy joined in. She eyed the slice of cake on her plate drizzled with warm custard. She felt everyone’s eyes on her as she cut off her first bite and brought it to her mouth. She let out an involuntary “Mmmm” when the flavors all coalesced in her mouth.

“This is delicious Marianne.” Lucy complemented once she had swallowed her bite.

“That you dear. Everyone does love my dick.” She said, and the whole table erupted into laughter again.

Once the pudding had been consumed and all the dishes cleared, everyone retired to the living room to open presents. Thomas, being the oldest grandchild, was given the task of distributing presents. Lucy was settling in to watch when a shiny blue package was deposited in her lap. The tag indicated the present was from Marianne and Collin.

“Oh, Marianne, you shouldn’t have.” Lucy protested.

“Nonsense, it’s not much, just a little something.

“Well thank you.” Lucy eyed the package until her turn arrived.

She unwrapped the pretty paper to find a 3 ring binder style hardcover book with a pale floral cover. She looked to Marianne.

“You mentioned this summer that you like to cook and bake. Well that is a copy of the family recipe book, I’ve marked all of Henry’s favorite recipes.” Lucy noticed the sisters-in-law glance at each other with raised eyebrows, and made a mental note to ask them later about it.

“Thank you Marianne. It’s fabulous. I’ll treasure it.” The rest of the evening passed in a blur of color and noise. Once the children had all been put to bed, all of the adults returned to the hotel for some christmas spirits. Everyone gathered in Henry and Lucy’s room because they had enough seating for everyone.

Once everyone had a drink, the men congregated on the balcony to enjoy cigars, and the women lounged on the couches. Lucy turned to Heather, she felt like she and Heather had bonded the most of the sisters-in-law, probably because of their similar ages. “What was with the look you all exchanged when I opened my present?”

The women all exchanged another look but didn’t say anything. “You just did it again. What am I missing?”

Olivia, Piers’s wife finally spoke-up. “We’ve all gotten a copy of the family recipe book.”
“Ok, that makes sense. But…” Lucy asked.

“But,” Olivia continued, “I didn’t get mine until Thomas was born, four years after we were married. Sienna got hers for Christmas after she and Nick got married. Heather and Eva got theirs as wedding presents.”

“Oh, I see. Why am I so special that I’m getting mine now, when Henry and I aren’t even committed yet?”

“Oh we all have our theories.” Olivia said.

“Really? Do tell.” Lucy asked, intrigued.

“I think she’s scared that Henry will move to America to be with you, so she’s trying to send a piece of the family home with you.” Sienna said.

“I figured she was telling Henry that you have her stamp of approval to make it legal.” Eva suggested.

“I just assumed she liked you better than all of us.” Heather said as they all dissolved into giggles.

“I assumed that Henry said something about asking you to marry him, so she jumped to give it to you.” Olivia supplied.

“He told you about that?” Lucy asked shocked.

“About what? Did he actually ask you to marry him? Are you engaged and haven’t told anyone?” Heather asked. All 4 women leaned forward and stared intently at Lucy, looking for a ring on her left hand.

“I shouldn’t have said anything. Just ignore me.”

“No, you’re not getting away that easily, now spill. Did Henry ask you to marry him, are you two engaged?” Heather asked point blank.

“Umm, yes….and no. Henry did ask me to marry him, but I said no.” Lucy admitted sheepishly.

None of the other women spoke. Lucy stared into a sea of dumbfounded, wide-eyed faces.

“I told him we needed more time. I don’t want to rush into marriage. I only want to get married once. I want to do it right.” Lucy defended herself and her decision.

The women exchanged another look and a nod before finally Heather spoke. “Well, Lucy. I would like to be the first to welcome you to the family.”

“Didn’t you hear me, I said I turned him down.”

“Oh, that doesn’t matter. Unless he does something supremely daft, I see this lasting. We’ve been holding you at an arm’s length today. We have to be leary of anyone Henry brings home, his fame can attract the wrong type of person. But we can finally say, we approve.” The women all raised their wine glasses in a salute. Lucy felt tears sting the back of her eyes.

“So you really like me?” Lucy joked. All the women laughed. The conversation flowed much more smoothly for the rest of the night, at one point Piers came inside, and he and Olivia said their goodbyes. Nik and Sienna retired shortly thereafter. Henry, Simon, and Charlie came in, to sit with the women.
“What have you ladies been chatting about in here?” Charlie asked innocently.

“Cookbooks.” Eva said, and all three women laughed.

Lucy turned to Henry, “I was hoping maybe this next week while we’re at your place, you could help me make a recipe or two from the book your mom gave me.” Simon and Charlie burst out laughing.

“Why is that funny?” Lucy asked.

“Because our Hank here can barely boil water, let alone cook a meal.” Charlie replied laughingly.

“That’s not true, he made me tapas one night when I was in London this summer.” Lucy defended him.

“Did you actually see him cook anything?” Simon asked pointedly.

“No, but…” Lucy trailed off, she turned to him, one eyebrow raised. “Henry?”

Henry’s face turned pink. “It may have been take-away.” He confessed.

“I think he was just trying to get into your knickers.” Simon concluded laughing.

“Henry William, were you planning on seducing me under false pretenses?” Lucy asked, mock insulted.

“As I seem to recall, there was a reason we didn’t ever get around to eating that dinner, and it had nothing to do with anything I did.” Henry shot back, this time it was Lucy’s face that went pink, while the rest of the room laughed.

“New topic.” Lucy declared laughing, and talk switched to safer topics, but it wasn’t long before Simon and Eva took their leave.

Heather and Charlie seemed in no hurry to leave. Henry and Charlie had always had a special bond, being several years younger than the other three brothers.

“So Hank,” Heather started, “Lucy told us you had some excitement this afternoon.”

“What are you talking about?” Charlie asked his wife conspiratorially.

“Hank proposed, and Lucy said no.” Heather said conspiratorially.

“You knew?” Heather demanded of her husband “And you didn’t tell me?”

“I was sworn to secrecy. Henry mentioned during the shooting this morning, that he was planning to ask Lucy to marry him.”

“You told them?” Henry asked Lucy.

“I didn’t mean to. Olivia made a comment that make me think you had already told them. I really didn’t mean to.”
“So, Hank here asked you to marry him, and you said no.” Charlie stated.

“She said not yet.” Henry clarified, taking Lucy’s hand in a show of solidarity. “She doesn’t want to rush into anything, and she made some good points, I had to agree with her.”

Charlie didn’t reply, but had a pensive look on his face. “Well, my dear, on that note, I think it’s time we leave these two alone.” Charlie said standing. “We’ll see you both bright and early.” He said helping Heather to her feet.

“Good night you two. Sweet dreams.” Lucy said, while Henry walked them to the door. Henry hugged his brother and sister-in-law in turn. “Hank, you’ve got a good gal there. I approve.” Charlie said before leaving

“Thank you Chuck, that’s exactly what I was missing, my little brother’s approval.” Henry replied sarcastically.

“Well, needed or not, you have it.” He said before draping his arm across Heather’s shoulders and walking down the hall to their room.

Henry returned to the seating area of their suite to find Lucy carrying wine glasses to the sink. She turned to him, a worried look on her face. “I’m not in trouble am I? I really didn’t mean to spill the beans.”

“Of course you’re not in trouble. I’m not upset, but how did the topic even arise?”


“Are we ok?” Lucy asked concerned.

“We’re better than ok, darling. We’re in love at Christmas, what could be better?” He wrapped his arms around her, swinging her around.

“You’re not upset about earlier? I want you to know, 49% of me wanted to say yes.”

“No, I’m not upset with you. You followed your head and your heart. I don’t want you going in to our engagement with anything less than 100% agreement. No reservations.”

“Thank you Darcy. I love you.”

“I love you too Pumpkin. Happy Christmas.” He responded, lowering his mouth to hers.
Christmas Day

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay in posting. School is back in session and finding time to write has been hard between meetings and lesson planning and grading. Thanks for sticking with me!

Christmas morning, Lucy and Henry arrived at the family house at the same time as everyone else. She was pleased to see that everyone else was dressed as casually as she was in jeans and a simple sweater.

The boys were very excited to see their parents, Nana and Papa wouldn’t let them open their presents from Father Christmas until everyone had arrived. Everyone piled into the living room to watch the young boys open presents. When they filed past the kitchen, Lucy peeked in to see Marianne standing at the stove with 2 large frying pans in front of her, she was swirling batter in one of them. Lucy recognized crepes in the making.

“Is your mother making crepes for breakfast?” Lucy whispered to Henry.

“It’s tradition. Christmas Eve is our English dinner, then Christmas Day is French.”

“But she’s making crepes for 17 people. How long has she been making them?” she asked.

“She has it down to a science.”

“I should go see if she needs any help.” Lucy worried.

“No, you should not. Ask to help with dinner if you feel the need to help, mum doesn’t like anyone else in the kitchen when she’s doing a breakfast. You’ll disrupt her rhythm.”

“Are you sure?” Lucy asked incredulously.

“Positive, now let’s go claim a vantage point for the unwrapping.” He took her hand to lead her into the room. Henry claimed a spot on a couch, and Lucy wrapped her legs underneath her and snuggled into his side. She smiled as she watched Henry interact with his brothers and his nephews. She’d asked yesterday if there were any granddaughters, to which Marianne replied “The Cavill men apparently only make more Cavill men. There hasn’t been a girl in 3 generations.” And the sisters-in-law joked that the first one to produce a granddaughter would be the favorite for life.

Lost in her thoughts, Lucy was startled when 6-year-old Alfie approached her, carrying what looked like a paper tube. Both ends had been tied and a smaller tube of paper extended from each end. He offered her one end while he held on to the other. Lucy took the end offered to her and pulled. She jumped and released a small startled shriek when the paper ripped and a small POP accompanied the rip. Alfie, who held the larger end of the tube, cheered. He dug in the tube to reveal a small whistle and a piece of paper that unfolded to reveal a tissue paper crown.

Henry requested another cracker from one of his nephews, and offered one end to Lucy. This time she expected the pop, and giggled. She ended up with the smaller half of the cracker again and gave Henry a small, joking pout. His reach inside the tube revealed a plastic silver ring, with a purple gem
on top. He offered it to Lucy, meeting her gaze with mischief in his eyes. Her hand jokingly flew to her heart, as she held out her hand. The ring slid halfway down her pinkie before it stopped. She held up her hand to admire the sparkle of the plastic gem, before turning her head to drop a kiss on Henry’s cheek.

It was a Christmas dinner unlike Lucy had ever had. It started with champagne at breakfast. Dinner was served around 1:00. Lucy had to have Henry tell her what all of the dishes were, from the Boeuf Bourguignon, to the Ratatouille. Dessert was a decadent roll shaped chocolate cake that she was told was called a Buche de Noel.

After dinner, everyone packed up and went to the beach to fly kites, and let the boys run off some of their excess energy. Lucy took several pictures of Henry and his nephews playing. The rest of the holiday passed uneventfully. On Boxing Day Henry brought Lucy around the island to see his favorite spots. She was fully enchanted. She was amazed that an island she hadn’t even realized existed could become one of her favorite spots she’d ever been to.

Everyone left for their respective homes on Sunday. Lucy left with several new numbers in her cell phone, and was even included in the Cavill wives’ group text. Lucy and Henry flew to London where they would stay until Lucy flew home in a week. They arrived home with Kal, just before noon. Kal was torn between being ecstatic at seeing Henry and Lucy and pouting at being at the kennel for so long.

“Why don’t you unpack,” Henry suggested, “I’ll take Kal for a walk, then we’ll go somewhere for lunch.”

They ate lunch at the coffee shop where they had their first non-date. When they got back to Henry’s house, Lucy asked “Do I get my Christmas present now?” She asked and grinned showing all her teeth.

“I suppose that could be arranged.” Henry teased. He went to his bedroom and came back with a small, black, velvet box.

“Henry…” Lucy said threateningly.

“It’s not a ring. Just open it.” He said handing her the box. She opened it to find a pair of earrings. A small hoop made of diamonds attached them to her ears. From the hoops hung a small marquise cut diamond that connected the hoop to a large teardrop shaped white opal. The opal was surrounded by more diamonds and 3 small diamonds dangled from the bottom of the teardrop.

“Oh, Henry,” Lucy exclaimed, covering her mouth “they’re gorgeous.”

“You said once that you liked opals. They’re white so they’ll match anything, but I was thinking you could wear them to the party on Wednesday.” Wednesday was the New Year’s Eve party he had asked her if she would want to attend. He had brought it up as a casual gathering of friends for the holiday.

“Exactly what kind of party is this that we’re going to? That these earrings would be appropriate.” She asked, suddenly nervous.

“I told you it’s being thrown by my mate David…and his wife Victoria…” he trailed off idly massaging his neck as he revealed the new information.

“David? And Victoria? We’re going to Posh and Becks’ New Year’s party?”

“Yes.”
“I don’t have anything nearly nice enough to wear with these earrings to that kind of party.”

“Yes you do.” He said with a smirk.

“What did you do?”

“Come with me.” He took her hand and led her up to the bedroom. He pointed to his closet. “Go in there, and put on what you find.” He said lowering himself onto the bed.

Lucy walked to the closet, uncertain about what she might find there. At the back of the closet, she saw it. The dress was a dark teal, floor length dress, with cap sleeves made of the same colored lace. The sweetheart neckline and bodice were encrusted with sequins and the waist was cinched with a jeweled belt. The skirt floated down from the belt in several layers of tulle. The back dipped low across the back. Lucy gasped, and called to Henry.

“Put it on, let me see.”

“Please fit, please fit, please fit.” Lucy chanted, getting undressed. She slipped the dress off the hanger and shimmied into it. It fit like a glove. Lucy admired herself in the mirror before walking out to show Henry.

“Well, what do you think?” Lucy asked, toying with the full skirt, biting her lip nervously.

“You’re breathtaking, darling.” Henry replied, standing.

“And you’re sure this dress will be appropriate for the party? I don’t want to be overdressed. Or under-dressed.” She said turning to the full length mirror on the closet door.

“Victoria approved the dress before I bought it. Actually her stylist picked it out” He said coming to stand behind her in the mirror.

“Victoria Beckham’s stylist picked out a dress I’m going to wear, to a party that she’s throwing. What has my life become?” Lucy said to her reflection.

“This is just a taste of what life could be, if you’d say yes to marrying me.” He met her eyes in the mirror while wrapping his arms around her waist.

“Henry.” Lucy threatened in her best teacher voice. “Don’t make me seem unreasonable for taking things slowly. Let’s just enjoy being young-ish, and alive, and together.” She said, turning in his arms, looping her arms around his neck.

“I know what I would enjoy.” Henry said seductively, nuzzling her neck while reaching for the zipper of the dress.

“Mmmm, I just bet you would, but no you don’t. You’d just push this dress off and leave it in a puddle on the floor where it would become irreversibly wrinkled. I’m going to put this amazing dress away. When I come back, I’ll show you just how thankful I am for my beautiful dress. And the earrings.”

She called over her shoulder while she disappeared into the closet, “But I’ve been doing some reading, and there’s something I want to try with you.” She peeked around the closet door. “You’re going to want to stretch while I’m gone.” She said with a wink and a blush. Henry’s head spun at the sudden loss of blood which had rapidly pooled in his groin.
Lucy and Henry enjoyed the beginning of their time alone together. Henry brought Lucy to see all of the sights of London decorated for the holiday, and he accompanied her as she spent hours perusing the book shops of London.

Lucy took most of the day Monday to grade assignments on her laptop, and Henry, wisely, decided to spend that day out with Kal. Lucy wasn’t sure what he did on his day, and when she asked, he was quite cagey with his answers. That evening Lucy and Henry joined Chris Evans, who was in town for the Beckham’s party, and his girlfriend Alicia for dinner. Henry was happy to finally introduce Lucy to his friend, and thought the New Year’s party might be easier for Lucy if she knew someone else.

Lucy and Henry arrived at the pub after Chris and Alicia. Chris stood when he saw them approach. The two men embraced.

“Henry, this is my girlfriend Alicia. Alicia, Henry Cavill.” Lucy was grateful to see the slightly shocked look in the other woman’s eyes. The rest of her face was a mask of serenity. Henry squeezed her shoulders and kissed her cheek, before he spoke.

“Chris, this is Lucy. Lucy, Chris and Alicia.” Lucy wasn’t sure how to greet them, but Chris solved that by pulling her into a hug.

“It’s great to meet you finally Lucy. I’ve been listening to this guy talk about you since June. This is Alicia.” He turned toward the tall blonde standing next to him. She was a couple of inches taller than Lucy’s own 5’8”. She had her hair pulled into a simple ponytail. She opened her arms to hug Lucy as well.

“It’s nice to meet you Alicia.” Lucy said sincerely, happy to have another woman at the table.

“You too.” She said as they all sat. “I’m glad Chris thought to set this up, we haven’t been to many events together. It will be nice to know someone other than this meatball on Wednesday night.”

“Yes! I was getting nervous about it. I haven’t done any events with Henry yet.” Lucy explained.

“We’d only been together a few months when Chris brought me to the Winter Soldier premiere. I didn’t walk the red carpet, but I was so overwhelmed with the whole event.”

Lucy and Alicia found so much to talk about. Both women were Americans, with “regular” jobs (Alicia was a Nurse Practitioner). They bonded over how to deal with their famous boyfriends, occasionally bringing the men into the conversation. Lucy was having such a great time, she had almost forgotten that the 2 men seated at their table were 2 of the hottest men in film at the moment. That point was brought back into focus when the foursome left the pub. As they were walking down the street a pair of girls recognized Chris, then Henry, and before long Lucy and Alicia were pushed off to the side while the men signed autographs and took pictures.

“Does this happen a lot?” Lucy asked Alicia.

“It depends. Most days it's fine, but sometimes it can be really annoying, especially if he’s not in the mood to deal with it. You just have to remind yourself, it’s part of the job, it’s just part of loving him.”

Lucy and Alicia exchanged phone numbers before they all parted, and assurances to see everyone on Wednesday night.
New Year’s eve dawned crisp and sunny. Lucy and Henry lazed the morning away, Lucy read a book, with her head in Henry’s lap, while Henry watched some sporting event on the Telly, while he absent mindedly ran his fingers through Lucy’s hair. Around 1:00 Henry announced that Lucy should get dressed.

“Why? Am I going somewhere? Is someone coming over, that I need to look presentable for?” She asked looking down at her leggings under Henry’s t-shirt that she had claimed as her own.

“No, no one is coming, but your appointment is at 2:00, and you won’t want to miss it. Your cab will be here in 45 minutes.”

“My appointment? Where am I going.” Lucy asked confused.

“The hair stylist. I’ve made you an appointment to have your hair styled, and they will apply make-up for you as well, if you want them to,” Henry explained.

“Oh, Henry. That’s so sweet.” She said before kissing him deeply.

“Before I take too much of the credit, it wasn’t my idea. Victoria suggested you might like the star treatment before the party tonight. I simply made the appointments where and when she told me to. And it’s all paid for, so all you have to do is enjoy yourself.”

“But you did as you were told, like a good boy.” She said pinching his face in her hand. “Then I guess I had better get moving.”

A cab arrived and whisked Lucy to a posh salon and spa.

“Good afternoon, can I help you mum?” The young girl behind the desk asked.

“I have an appointment.” Lucy said tentatively, giving her name.

“Miss Claussen, welcome. We have you booked for several treatments today. If you’d follow me, I can show you where you can change.”

“Change? Aren’t I just getting my hair styled?”

“It says here you’re scheduled for a massage, face mask, manicure and pedicure, hair style and make-up.” The girl said, reading from her computer screen.

“Wow, when he said star treatment, he meant star treatment.” Lucy murmured as she followed the girl to a small room, where she changed into a fluffy white robe.

“You can leave your belongings here.” The girl who came to collect Lucy said. Lucy was led to a dimly lit room, which smelled of vanilla. Lucy spent the next hour having every bit of stress rubbed from her body. When she was fully relaxed and bundled back into her robe, she was led to a chair where her face was smeared with a purple mask, guaranteed to moisturize her skin. While the mask went to work, 1 woman worked on her hands while another worked on her feet. Lucy had never felt more pampered. Once the mask had finished its job, and french tips had been painted on both her hands and feet, Lucy was directed to dress again before being shown to a styling chair.

She was greeted by a handsome olive complexioned man, with black curly hair. “Lucy? I’m Antonio. I’ll be styling your hair today. What do you have in mind?”

“I don’t really have anything specific in mind, but my boyfriend gave me a dazzling pair of earrings to wear tonight, so I’d like to have it pulled back enough to show them at least.”
“Do we want it up then?” He asked piling her hair on top of her head.

“Ummm, maybe not all the way up. I’m sorry, I’m not really being much help here. I’m putting myself in your hands. Make me look gorgeous.” She smiled at the man in the mirror.

“I will do my best.” And he began twisting her hair in a set of hot rollers. “So tell me, how did you come to be in my chair today? You’re obviously not from around here.”

“I’ve been asking myself that same question.” She laughed “Actually, my boyfriend lives here. We’re going to a party tonight, apparently it’s black tie.”

“And he arranged this whole afternoon for you? He sounds like a keeper.”

“Don’t I know it.” Lucy agreed.

“You have gorgeous hair. It’s so thick and healthy,” Antonio commented running his fingers through the curls he’d just created.

“It also doesn’t hold a curl to save my life, so when you’re done, glue it in place if you need to.”

“Duly noted.” Lucy and Antonio chatted while he curled and pinned and sprayed her hair. When he was done, Lucy was amazed at the results. A mass of soft waves spilled over one shoulder, pinned back just enough to showcase the earrings that would grace her ears in a short while. She looked elegant and sophisticated; two adjectives she had never used to describe herself.

“Antonio, you’re amazing. Thank you.” She exclaimed meeting his eyes in the mirror.

“Thank you. Now go over there, and get some makeup to match this spectacular hair.”

Lucy stood and was met almost instantly by a tall willowy woman with short chestnut hair. “Lucy, I’m Sandra. I’ll be applying your make-up this afternoon.”

She brought Lucy to a chair identical to Antonio’s. “So, what kind of look are we going for? Natural? Glam?”

“Um, I’m not sure, just make me look as beautiful as you can. I know you’re not starting with the best canvas, but please do your best.”

“Honey, you have beautiful skin, that’s always the best canvas to start with. The rest can be faked with makeup. That’s my job.”

“Then do what you have to do to make me gorgeous but chic. I’m at your mercy.”

“Adventurous, I like it. Let’s get started.” Sandra applied creams and lotions and sprayed a number of products on her face. Lucy was astounded that none of it felt heavy on her skin. When she was finished, Sandra spun Lucy around to see the finished product.

“OH! Oh, my. Is that me? I barely look like me. How did you get my face so thin?” Lucy asked, turning her face to see both sides.

“That’s the contouring honey. Takes a bit of time, but look at the results.”

“I barely look like I’m wearing anything! I look beautiful. You made me beautiful.” Lucy awed at her reflection, tears pooling in her eyes.

“No! No crying. You cry, it will ruin everything and we’ll have to start over, and I don’t have time
“Ok, no crying. Thank you Sandra.” Lucy said wrapping her in a hug.

“What are you doing?” Sandra asked.

“I’m from Minnesota, this is how we show our thanks. When I remember this night, you’ll be a huge part of it. Thank you again.”

“Go. Now. Before you make me cry.” Sandra pointed at the door.

Lucy laughed and returned to the reception desk.

“You look gorgeous. How are you feeling?” The girl who greeted her asked.

“Thank you. I feel amazing. Could you call a cab for me please?”

“I would mum, but I believe there is a driver here to collect you.” She said signalling to a man in the waiting area.

“Mis Claussen? Mr. Cavill has sent me to collect you, if you’re ready.”

“Yes, I am thank you.” She replied, following the man out to a waiting black tow car.

Lucy let herself into Henry’s house and was greeted by Kal, who came to investigate.

“Hi, boy. Thank you for not running me over.” She said rubbing the dog’s ears.

“Love, is that you?” She heard Henry call from somewhere in the house.

“Who else would it be?” She called back. “Where are you?”

“In the bedroom.” came his response.

Lucy followed his voice up the stairs, and stopped dead at the bedroom door. Henry turned at the sound of her approach. In jeans and a t-shirt, the man was gorgeous, in a suit, he could stop her heart, but in a tuxedo, her legs went weak.

Henry turned to find Lucy leaning on the door frame. His face split into a smile. He always thought she was beautiful, but tonight, even in her jeans and sweater, she was gorgeous. He saw her face freeze in a half smile.

“What’s wrong?” Henry asked, suddenly concerned.

“You should have warned me you were in your tux already. A gal needs some time to prepare for that.” She said fanning herself.

“You don’t look half bad yourself. Why don’t you go put your dress on. We’ve reservations for dinner in 45 minutes.” He watched as Lucy walked to the closet to put on the dress he’d arranged for her. He knew she felt uncomfortable about him spending money on her, but it gave him such joy, he did it anyway.

She exited the closet several minutes later, wearing the dress, carrying her shoes, and fiddling with one of her earrings. She stopped by the bed and dropped the shoes. Resting one foot on the bed, she lifted the hem of her dress, pulling it up almost to her waist to fiddle with the top of her stocking, showing Henry the lace band holding it in place. Henry thought he might explode at that very
moment. She sat on the bed to slip into the shoes; a very sexy pair of silver heels with a strap that wrapped around her ankle.

Lucy stood. “What do you think?” She asked. He saw her motion to bite her lip, but stopped herself, probably in an effort to not smudge her lipstick.

“You’re almost perfect.” Henry replied.

“Almost?” Lucy asked incredulously, lifting one eyebrow in question.

“Almost. I know I gave you the earrings to wear with the dress, but now I’m not sure. It’s missing something.” He said, slipping a long, skinny, velvet box from his pocket. “I noticed it when you tried the dress on the other day, That dress needs a necklace.” He explained, handing her the box.

She opened it with a gasp. “Oh, Henry, you shouldn’t have! It’s too much.” Lucy protested.

Henry lifted the delicate chain from the box. On it hung a large teardrop white opal, encircled by diamonds. While it didn’t match the earrings exactly, they were identifiably part of the same collection. Henry stepped around behind Lucy and slipped the necklace around her neck before fastening the clasp, and kissing the nape of her neck. He spun her around, and held her at an arm’s length. “It’s just enough. Now you’re perfect.” He said, drawing her in for a kiss.

“Henry.” Lucy said dreamily. “It’s too much, the dress, and the shoes, and the jewelry, and the spa day. I can’t ever repay you.”

“I don’t want you to repay me. I enjoy doing these things for you, so let me do them.”

She gave him an exasperated look. “Thank you. I feel beautiful.”

“You look beautiful. You’ll be the most beautiful woman at the party tonight.” He said, taking her hand as they walked down the stairs. She laughed.

“Have you been drinking? I won’t even make the top 10 of most beautiful women tonight. I don’t know who else is invited, but I know Victoria is going to be there.”

“I really wish you wouldn’t do that. That’s the woman I love you’re talking about. I wish you could see yourself as I see you; a beautiful, confident, sexy woman. The woman who holds my heart.” He said looking into her eyes, he raised their joined hands to his lips. “And tonight especially, you sparkle. I picked those earrings because they reminded me of the sparkle I saw in your eyes at our first dinner.” Henry explained shrugging into his coat, before taking Lucy’s to help her into it.

“That wasn’t a sparkle. I was hammered.” Lucy said, buttoning her coat.

“What?” Henry asked, opening the door, and ushering Lucy out.

“You remember, I called Sarah, when I got back to the hotel after coffee. I was a bit nervous about the prospect of having dinner with you. She suggested I have a drink, to calm myself down. I was really nervous, so I had two.” Lucy said sliding into the waiting car. “Two large drinks.”

“So that confidence you had at dinner?”

“Was actually vodka.” she laughed.

“It worked out ok in the end though.” Henry replied, slipping his arm around her shoulders, and she rested her head against his shoulder.
Henry made reservations at the same restaurant where they’d shared their first dinner together. “I’m glad you brought me back here.” Lucy said. “I didn’t get to really appreciate it last time.”

“I just hope tonight ends a bit better than that night did.” Henry teased.

“Oh, I’m quite sure it will. Did I tell you, I bought some new undergarments to wear with this dress.” Lucy said, her voice going low and husky. Henry visibly swallowed. “I want you to think about that tonight at the party.” Lucy said raising her wine glass to her lips. “Unless of course, you want to skip the party all together, and just go straight home after dinner.” She teased, tracing designs on the palm of Henry’s hand.

“No idea has ever sounded better.” He groaned. “But we’re committed to attending the party. If for no other reason, than Victoria wants to meet you, and you do NOT disappoint Victoria Beckham. We’ll go for an hour, if you’re not enjoying yourself, we’ll leave and be back home by 11. How does that sound?”

“Mmmm, heavenly.” She whispered, gazing into Henry’s eyes.

Just then, their food arrived, breaking the spell between the two. It was then that Lucy finally realized what Henry had actually said.

“Victoria wants to meet me?” She asked taking a bite of her pasta.

“I’ve spoken about you, and yes, she wants to meet you, especially after she orchestrated most of the afternoon for you, or rather, had me orchestrate it for you.”

“Do you know who else might in attendance tonight?”

“I can’t be certain, but I would imagine that some of David’s football mates will be there, and Victoria’s fashion people as well.”

“Will there be anyone that I might recognize?”

“More than likely. And Chris and Alicia will be there, so you will know someone other than me.” He said reassuringly.

“I’m sure it will be fine, great even I can’t imagine those two throwing a dull party.”

“You’ll have fun. I know it.”

Once they had finished their dinner and dessert, their car brought them to a posh hotel in central London.

“The party is at a hotel?” Lucy asked.

“You didn’t think it would be at their house did you?” Henry said, taking her hand.

“Well, the last party of theirs that I attended was on a boat in Nice, so honestly, I didn’t know what to think.” Lucy quipped. Henry led her inside, where they checked their coats, before walking to a short red carpet.

“You didn’t tell me about the red carpet.” Lucy whispered nervously.
“It’s all local paps. Inviting them inside for a set period of time, keeps them from hovering outside. It’s a necessary evil of the party scene. Now just follow my lead, keep smiling, and it will be over quickly.” He said, planting a brief kiss on her lips, before taking her hand.

Lucy was astounded at the number of flashes that assaulted her eyes. She didn’t think there had been that many photographers, but after the first dozen flashes had blinked, her eyes became numb to the bright light. Henry’s arm stayed around her waist the entire time, reminding her of his calm, safe presence.

When they finally they entered the ballroom, Lucy noted that several different areas had been arranged for the evening. A dance floor had been constructed at one end of the large room, surrounded by high tables. On the other end of the room were a number of couches, perfect for conversations. In the middle, between the two areas was a bar with every liquor Lucy had ever heard of, and several she hadn’t. Waiters circulated carrying trays laden with glasses of champagne, and hors d’oeuvres.

They were greeted at once by their hosts. Henry escorted Lucy to meet them. First Henry and David shared a hug, before he embraced Victoria, accompanied by a kiss on each cheek. Then he introduced Lucy.

“David, Victoria, I’d like to introduce you to my girlfriend, Lucy Claussen. Lucy, David and Victoria, our hosts for the evening.”

“David, it’s a pleasure to meet you.” Lucy said extending her hand to David, who took it and kissed her knuckles. Lucy blushed, before turning to Victoria who put a hand on her shoulder, pulling her in to kiss on both cheeks, in way of greeting.

“Lucy. It’s so great to finally meet you. Henry has told us so much about you. You look fantastic. That color suits you.”

“Thank you, and as I understand, I have you to thank for my afternoon at the spa as well.”

“Well, we women must stick together. I know how nerve-wracking it can be to attend one of these, and the hair, the make-up, the dress, it’s all armor. You really do look fabulous. I’m looking forward to talking with you later.”

“That would be lovely. Thank you for inviting me.”

Henry wrapped an arm around Lucy’s waist and led her further into the ballroom. “How did I do?” Lucy asked nervously.

“You were wonderful, my dear.’ Henry said, kissing her temple. “Would you like a drink?”

“Only as much as I want oxygen.” She laughed.

He caught a passing waiter and took two flutes of champagne. “Let’s make a round. Let me introduce you to a few people.

The next 45 minutes were filled with new people; most Lucy recognized, by face if not by name. Everyone was charming and polite. At one point, Victoria, approached the two standing at one of the high tables. She and Lucy were engrossed in conversation, so Henry decided to find someone to talk to as well, Lucy barely registered his departure.

When Victoria left, Lucy found herself alone at the table. She scanned the room. She saw Henry talking to a group of be-suited men, laughing. She was about to join him when she spotted Alicia.
She made eye contact with the other woman, who waved her over. Alicia introduced Lucy all around. All of the women seemed endlessly interested in Lucy, though she sensed a cooling of their interest when she told them she was a teacher. Lucy found she couldn’t add much to their conversation, which seemed to center around who was cheating on who, and any other gossip that happened to crop up. After about 10 minutes, Alicia, excused the both of them.

“Thank you.” Lucy sighed, leaning on Alicia.

“I couldn’t handle much more of them. They seem to think anyone who works for a living is beneath them.” Alicia commented, rolling her eyes.

“It’s ok. I’ve been dealing with girls like that my entire life. Why don’t we go find our men and make them dance with us.”

“That sounds like an excellent idea.” Alicia replied, weaving her arm through Lucy’s. They found Henry and Chris standing in a group of men, laughing riotously. Both men’s eyes lit up when they saw the women approach.

Henry wrapped his arm around Lucy, bringing her in for a kiss, before speaking. “I have someone I want to introduce you to.” He said, his eyes sparkling with mischief, and steered her back toward the group he had just vacated.

“Tom, this is Lucy.” Henry said by way of introduction. Lucy looked up into the blue-green eyes of the actor she had admired for years.

“Lucy, it’s lovely to meet you.” Tom Hiddleston said, wrapping her in a hug. Lucy was positive she was smiling like an idiot, but she couldn’t make herself stop. Had this been a year ago, she would have been over the moon, with only eyes for the man now embracing her. As it was she felt a warm tingle at the casual embrace, but nothing more.

“Hello. Tom. Hiddleston.” Lucy covered her mouth to hide her fan girl smile, but was unable to stifle her nervous giggle.

“Would you care to dance, Lucy?” Tom asked extending his hand in her direction.

Lucy’s eyes went wide, she turned to look at Henry “Do you mind if I dance with Tom.”

Henry put his hand on her waist, and kissed her cheek. “Have a great time pumpkin.” He said with a grin and a wink.

Tom led Lucy to the dance floor as a new song started. It was a swing style song. Tom led Lucy expertly through the steps. It took a few beats for her to figure out her footing, but quickly she was able to follow his lead and hold a conversation.

“I knew you were a fantastic dancer, but I didn’t know you could swing.” Lucy complimented.

“Just something I picked up along the way.” Tom replied humbly “Henry tells me I’m his competition for your affections.” Lucy removed one of her hands from Tom’s to cover her face, all the while keeping up the steps.

“I can’t believe he told you that! That is kind of our running joke. I used to think you were the perfect man, and who knows you probably are, but I’m afraid my fire for you is down to a small ember. I love that man so much.”

“Are you sure?” Tom asked picking Lucy up to swing her around, setting her down and drawing her
close as the song ended.

“Sorry, but I’m sure. But thank you for the dance.”

Tom kissed Lucy on the cheek, and whispered in her ear “Good answer.”

Henry met them at the edge of the dance floor, ready to sweep Lucy up into a slow dance that had just started.

“Tom, if you don’t mind, I’ll take my girlfriend back now.”

“She’s all yours. And I do mean ALL yours.” Tom said with a wink.

Henry pulled Lucy close, their bodies touching from chest to pelvis. Lucy laid her head on his chest.

“Was I just tested?” She asked him incredulously, not looking at him.

“No really. I mentioned your affinity for Tom to him, and he made a joke about stealing you. Of course he’s much too gentlemanly to actually try to steal you, but I thought you might like that just a bit.”

“Oh, I did. He’s a phenomenal dancer. Don’t you dance?”

“We’re dancing right now.” He replied.

“You know what I mean.” She pulled away slightly to look in his eyes.

“I don’t dance like that if I can help it.” He laughed.

They held each other close through the song. Just before it ended, Henry lowered his lips to Lucy’s ear. “If I ask you go home with me tonight, are you going to run away?”

Lucy smiled. “Who would be so foolish as to do something like that?”

After several more dances, with Henry and other friends of his, including Chris, Lucy excused herself to use the bathroom. After washing her hands, Lucy fished in her small evening bag for her lipstick, which had been rubbed off through kisses and several glasses of champagne.

A blonde woman, who stood a couple of inches taller than Lucy stepped up to the mirror next to hers. Her wavy blonde hair was pulled into a sleek twist, and she wore a gold sequin mini-dress that hugged her body like a second skin. She looked over at Lucy and smiled. “Those earrings are to die for.” She said in a posh London accent.

“Thank you, they were a Christmas present from my boyfriend.”

“Is that Tom? I saw you dancing with him earlier.”

“No, Tom and I were just dancing together. My boyfriend isn’t big on dancing, so he suggested we dance together. How about you? Are you here with anyone?”

“I’m here with my husband, one of David’s football mates. Who IS your boyfriend, if not Tom?”

“Henry Cavill.”

“Oh, Henry. Well lucky you.”
“Yes, I do believe I am. I’m Lucy by the way.”

“Emily, pleasure to meet you.” Pleasantries exchanged, they both turned away from the mirror to exit the room.

“Pleasure meeting you too Emily.” Lucy said as they parted ways just outside the bathroom. Lucy hadn’t taken more than half a dozen steps before she was surrounded by the group of women she and Alicia had been talking to earlier.

“Oh, my god. What did she say to you?” One woman asked, her eyes shining at the possibility of some new gossip.

“Who?” Lucy replied dumbfounded.

“Emily.” Another woman replied.

“Nothing really, we just introduced ourselves.”

“Well you know who she is don’t you?”

“Emily…” Lucy supplied stupidly.

“Yes, Henry’s Emily. Henry’s ex-fiancé, Emily.” The first woman said with a malicious gleam in her eye.
Kitchen Talk

The words echoed inside Lucy’s head. Ex-fiancé. Henry’s. Ex-fiancé. Lucy called on every trick she knew to school her features. She was not going to let these women see her emotions.

“Oh, that Emily. I didn’t realize she was going to be here.” Lucy said with a casualness she didn’t feel.

“I’m sure Henry didn’t either. He was so torn up when they split. He didn’t date for two years after her.” The woman elaborated, a maliciously gleeful expression on her face.

“Well, that was a long time ago.” Lucy said casually, hoping she was right. “He’s with me now. If you’ll excuse me I’m going to go get myself a drink. See you later ladies.” She gave a little wave and fled the group as calmly as she could. She took several deep breaths while looking for Henry.

She finally found him standing near the bar talking to a man she didn’t know. She made a beeline for him. When she stood next to him, he pulled her close to his side, and kissed her temple.

“Darling, this is Taylor, we were just discussing the possibility of working together in the future. Taylor, this is my girlfriend Lucy.”

“Taylor, it’s nice to meet you.” She said extending her hand, he shook it cordially. “I’m sorry Taylor, but I need to steal Henry away.”

“We’re done here anyway. It’s a party, enough shop talk for one night.” Taylor said in an American accent, that surprised Lucy.

Once they were out of earshot of anyone, Lucy extricated herself from Henry’s arm. “I’d like to go home now.”

“But darling, it’s almost midnight. Are you sure you don’t want to stay for just another half hour?”

Lucy took a deep breath, not wanting to make a scene. She crossed her arms to keep her hands from shaking and very calmly responded, “I said, I want to go home. So I’m going home. You’re free to stay if you want, but I’m leaving.” and she started toward the exit.

“Darling, are you ok. Is everything alright.” He asked, catching up to her.

“I don’t want to talk about it here, let’s just go.” She wanted to be out of the public eye before her tears started falling.

“I’m sorry, just give me 5 minutes to find Victoria and David and give our goodbyes. I’ll meet you in the lobby.” He said, concern coloring his voice. True to his word, just over 5 minutes later, the two were in the car, on the way back to Henry’s house. While, on the way to the party, Lucy couldn’t stop touching him, now she sat as far from him as she could get in the backseat of the car.

He reached for her hand, only to have her pull it away. “Please don’t touch me.”

“Darling, please tell me, what’s wrong. Is it something I’ve done? Did someone say something to upset you?”

“I’d rather wait until we get home to talk about it.” She said, looking out the window, exceedingly aware of the driver in the front seat.
At least she’s still calling my house home, Henry thought to himself. It didn’t make any sense. She was having a great time, then she goes to the bathroom, and suddenly wants to leave. It didn’t take a genius to figure out something happened in the bathroom, but why wouldn’t she talk to him?

When the car parked at the curb in front of his house, Lucy exited the car, before Henry could open the door for her. She waited for him at the top of the stairs to unlock the door. Once the door was opened, she walked straight to the kitchen, draping her coat on one of his kitchen chairs. She poured herself a glass of water and downed it in one gulp.

“Please, will tell me what’s bothering you?” Henry pleaded.

“I met Emily tonight.” Lucy said deadpan, staring him in the eye.

“Oh.” Henry said at a loss for words.

“Oh. That’s all you have to say? I have to find out from some snobby bitches, who think I’m beneath them, that you were engaged before, and all you can say is Oh.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. We were young, and we rushed into a relationship, it lasted 6 months before we realized we weren’t right for each other. You knew I had other relationships before you.”

“I’m not upset that you were engaged before. I’m upset that you were engaged before, and you didn’t tell me. I’m upset that I had to find out from a group of women who look down their noses at me because I work for a living. I’m upset that I had to act like I knew, so I wouldn’t give them the satisfaction of catching me off guard.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. As I said we were young and we rushed into the engagement.”

“That seems to be a habit of yours.” She fired back icily.

He paused for a second to shoot her a hurt look. “Darling, I am genuinely sorry I didn’t tell you. It didn’t even cross my mind to tell you about Emily. It was so long ago, and it seems so inconsequential right now.”

“You loved her enough to want to spend the rest of your life with her. And you call that inconsequential.”

“I was 20 years old, she was my first. I thought I was in love, but what I felt for her is just a shadow compared to how I feel about you.”

“The women said you didn’t date for 2 years after her.” Lucy said, seeking an answer.

“I was 21, and suddenly I was getting attention from beautiful women. I became a person I wasn’t very proud of. I didn’t date any one girl. But I did see a lot of people.” He reached for her. She backed away.

“Please, Henry. I need to think. I’m going to bed.” She said starting out of the room.

“I’ll be up in a few minutes, darling.” Henry sighed, rubbing his hand over his face.

“I think I’m going to sleep downstairs.” She said quietly.

As she passed, he grabbed her hand and pulled her to him for one lingering kiss. “Happy New Year.” He said, letting her go. He knew he needed to give her space. She said she wanted to think, to process, so he would let her. He waited until her heard her come back downstairs before venturing
Kal, who had been laying on the floor in the kitchen watching the whole ordeal, stood when Henry turned off the kitchen light. When he turned to start up the stairs, Kal continued straight toward the guest room. “Kal, come.” Henry commanded. Kal turned his head to look at him, then turned back, and ambled to the room where Lucy slept. “Traitor.” Henry mumbled, though he was happy Kal would be there to comfort Lucy when he couldn’t.
Henry found it hard to sleep that night. His bed felt too big, too empty. Even Kal had deserted him. He kept playing the conversation with Lucy over and over in his head. He could have handled if she was just angry, but she was hurt too. It killed him that he had caused her any pain. Finally around dawn he drifted off to a fitful sleep. When he awoke around 7:30 he went down stairs to find Lucy. The room she had occupied was empty, though the bed was rumpled. She wasn’t in the living room or the kitchen either. He found a note on the dining room table.

Henry,

I need some time to think. I’ve gone out. I will be back this afternoon.

Love,
Lucy

“She hasn’t left me,” Henry released the breath he hadn’t realized he had been holding. Now he just needed to figure out how to prove to her that their relationship wasn’t the same as his relationship with Emily.

“Sarah!” Lucy yelled embracing her best friend. Sarah held Lucy. She hadn’t been anticipating a meeting with her friend, but when she had called that morning, Sarah knew her friend needed more than just a listening ear. When Sarah pulled away, there were tears in Lucy’s eyes.

“Ok, tell me what’s going on. Not that I’m not thrilled to see you, but you sounded miserable on the phone this morning.” Sarah pressed as she led her friend to the parking lot.

“Everything’s a mess. Henry proposed.” Lucy started, wiping her eyes.

“What!” Sarah stopped abruptly. “Why didn’t you tell me that on the phone. Why are you so miserable? When Paulo and I first got engaged I couldn’t keep my feet on the ground.”

“I said no.”

“Ok, there’s obviously more to this story, but I can’t drive and concentrate. It’s about 20 minutes into town, then we’ll station ourselves at a cafe, and you can tell me everything.” Sarah kept up a steady stream of conversation during the short drive into Amsterdam. Her brain was overflowing with questions. Key among them was what was going on. Her friend was obviously hurting. She was just glad she had the chance to help.

Sarah brought Lucy to a little cafe in the center of Amsterdam. When they opened the door, Lucy’s eyes were assaulted. The walls of the cafe were a Barbie pink, while the decor was a strange combination of a vintage grandmother’s kitchen and a psychedelic version of the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party. The second thing she noticed was the unmistakable smell of chocolate permeating the air. Lucy took a deep breath and could feel herself relaxing.

Once they had placed their orders and were seated, Lucy asked, “What is this place?”

“The best bakery I’ve ever visited. Yes the decor is a bit loud, but their chocolate is a religious experience.”

Lucy attempted to read the name in Dutch, and failed miserably. “It translates to My Aunt’s Cake. Now, enough stalling. Tell me what’s going on.” Sarah demanded.
Lucy explained the whole story, from the proposal to the recipe book, the earrings and the dress, to Emily. “I did the right thing didn’t I? I mean we’ve only been together 6 months, and we’ve spent what, 6 weeks of that time together. Half the time I feel like I love him so much it hurts to even think about not being with him, and the other half of the time I feel like this is just one big camp romance. We’re never together long enough to really learn anything about each other. We’re barely catching up with what’s happened since the last time we saw each other.”

“Wow. That’s a lot to sort. Let’s start at the beginning. If you didn’t feel like it was right to say yes, then you did the right thing. Being ready to get married is not just about love. But it sounds like he came around to your way of thinking when you talked it out. That tells me that he sees a future with you. Does it suck majorly that he didn’t tell you about this Emily? Yes. But as he said it was 10 years ago. Are you the same person you were at 20? Good god I hope not. So don’t judge 31 year old Henry too harshly for what 20 year old Henry did. Do you love him?”

“Of course I do.”

“Do you want to continue being in a relationship with him?”

“I do, but something has to change. We need more time together.”

“Then tell him that. And together come up with a solution.”

“But what solution. He’s got an insane shooting schedule, and I don’t have any extended amount of time off until June.”

“I can’t tell you what the right solution is for you two, only you can figure that out. But talk to him. He sounds like a decent guy, who made an honest mistake. A stupid mistake, but an honest one.”

“And I’m not upset that he was engaged before, I mean he’s over 30 for crying out loud, and she seemed like a nice woman, but it was the way I found out. Mean girls will always be mean girls, and I let them get to me. I’m mad at myself about that.”

“You’re only human. Now are you good? Anything else we need to fix?”

“No. I’m good. How are you?”

Lucy and Sarah spent the next 2 hours sipping drinks and eating their way through the bakery’s delights. Lucy bought a cake to bring home as a present for Henry, before Sarah brought her back to the airport.

“It was so good to see you. I miss you so much.” Sarah said hugging Lucy.

“I miss you too. Thank you for all of your help, and the calories.” Lucy laughed.
When Lucy hadn’t returned by 3:00 that afternoon, Henry started to panic. He called Charlie, who was staying with friends in London for the week, to see if Heather had heard from her.


“We had a fight last night, and she left me a note this morning, saying she was going out. She’s been gone all day, and I haven’t heard from her.” Henry said, pacing circles around the living room.

“Wow, what did you fight about?”

“She ran into Emily at the party last night.”

“Did Emily say something to her? That doesn’t seem like her.”

“No, Emily was her usual self apparently, I didn’t talk to her, but see, Lucy didn’t know about Emily.” Henry admitted.

“What?!!!” Charlie all but screamed into the phone, “You didn’t tell her about Emily? Sorry brother, but I’m on your side.”

“I’m on her side too. I should have told her, and now she’s off thinking and I have no idea where she is.” Henry’s voice rose with annoyance and concern with each word.

“Listen Hank, she’s hurt, but she loves you. She’ll be back. You’ll need to be prepared to grovel. But listen to what she’s asking for, even if she doesn’t come out and say it.”

“How did you get to be so smart about women?”

“Thanks Chuck.”

“Anytime Hank.”

Henry disconnected, set his phone on the coffee table, and continued pacing in his living room. A half hour later, her heard a key in his front door, and there she was. Standing in the doorway, looking as beautiful as ever, holding a bright pink bakery box.

“She’s holding up cue cards for me.” He laughed.

“Thanks Chuck.”

“Anytime Hank.”

Henry disconnected, set his phone on the coffee table, and continued pacing in his living room. A half hour later, her heard a key in his front door, and there she was. Standing in the doorway, looking as beautiful as ever, holding a bright pink bakery box.

“Lucy.” It was all he could do to get her name out, as his emotions choked him. He had almost started thinking that maybe she wasn’t going to be back, yet here she was.

She walked toward him, setting the box on the coffee table next to his phone. He remained immobile as she approached him. She slowly wrapped her hand around the back of his neck, bringing his
mouth down to hers, in a kiss that felt like coming home.

She wrapped her arms around him, holding him close, resting her head on his chest, he returned the embrace and released a sigh of relief, no matter what came next, she was here, and she was in his arms. Without releasing her, he moved them both to the sofa and sat.

“I’m sorry I was gone so long, but I brought back a cake.” She indicated the pink box. He glanced at the it, noting the name and the address on the label.

“You went to Amsterdam?” He asked incredulously.

“I wanted to talk to Sarah. The phone just wasn’t cutting it. She helped me process everything. I’m sorry I left.”

“No, you have nothing to apologize for. I should have told you.”

“I should have just talked to you. Sarah helped me realize that I shouldn’t be upset with you for things 20 year old you did. And I’m not upset that you were engaged. Emily seemed nice enough, it’s just the way I found out. Mean girls will always be mean girls, and for some reason I let them get to me.” She ran her hand over her face in frustration. “I think it just hit a nerve. I feel like I barely know you. We’re never together long enough to even have a fight, with the exception of yesterday. 6 months in, and we’re not to the point of being really real with each other. It feels like we’re one step up from fuck buddies. Couple that with, I never feel like I’m good enough for you, and well it was just the perfect storm.”

“What’s this talk about not being good enough. You are an amazing woman, who I love. No you’re not an actress or a model, which I love about you. You’re more concerned about the state of the world, and the future of your students than you are in the number of calories in your dinner. Most of the time I wonder what you’re doing with me. You deserve someone who can share your life, not just drop into it from time to time.”

“Henry, I love you, and I will take any time with you that I can get.” She replied, raising her face to his. His lips met hers in a kiss that was sweet yet yearning. He leaned back so she was laying on top of him. She pulled away from his kiss. “There’s no other big news that you’ve just forgotten to tell me about, is there? Kids? Any other fiancés, I should know about?”

“Other than my wife and 3 children in Scotland, there are no others.” he replied cheekily.

“I’ve known about them for ages.” She smiled back, kissing him again. Once she had kissed her fill. She laid her head on his chest, reveling in the feel of him, listening to his heartbeat, feeling his big strong arms wrapped around her.

“I still can’t believe you flew to Amsterdam.” Henry marveled.

“Neither can I. But I was so grateful to have Sarah so close. Plus it was nice to see her again so soon.” Lucy said sitting up. “But Henry, we need to talk.”

“Uh, oh. No good has ever come from those words.”

“Maybe not, but that doesn’t mean it’s not something that needs to happen. I feel like we barely know each other. Half the time I’m certain that I love you and want to be with you forever, but the other half of the time, I wonder if this is just a holiday romance that we’re trying to force into something it's not.”

“I’ll admit, I’ve been thinking about that too. Which is why I wanted to ask you if you would be
agreeable to me using my christmas present.”

“Your christmas present?”

“Yes, the one you gave me.” He smiled.

“You want to use my house key.” Her mind refusing to make sense of his words.

“Yes. I was thinking, daily. Or even several times in a day.”

“You want to come live with me?” She asked, her brain finally catching up to the situation.

“Yes. I don’t have any other projects scheduled until April when I have to do press for The Man from U.N.C.L.E. So I’d like to spend it with you. A lot of ordinary days, where we can learn all sorts of things about each other. I’ll probably have to fly out to meetings here or there, but that will be much easier if I’m based in the U.S.”

“Henry, I,” Lucy stammered. This was the result she had hoped for, without realizing it, but now that she was actually hearing him say the words, she couldn’t believe her ears. “Yes! I would love to have you with me in Minnesota.” She replied, throwing her arms around his neck, knocking him back into the couch, claiming his lips with hers. “But what about Kal? My house is barely big enough for 2 people, let alone 2 people and that that bear you call a dog.” Kal, who had been sitting at the end of the couch lifted his head when his name was mentioned.

Henry couldn’t hold in his laugh as her sudden change of topic. “I’ll see if one of my brothers, or my parents can watch him.” Henry said after a moment.

“He’s not going to like that.” Lucy warned, looking over at the dog.

“I’ll Skype with him at least once a week. He’ll be fine, and with the kids to play with, he’ll be in heaven.” Henry assured her.

“So we’re really going to do this? We’re going to live together for more than a few days.” Lucy said, her nerves starting to build.

“Yes we are.” Henry smiled, then pulled her close. “I was so worried. You were gone all day, and I didn’t know where you were.”

“I’m sorry I worried you. I really didn’t mean to, i just needed to get my head right.”

“And is it? Is it right now?” He asked looking into her eyes.

“Yes, though I’m disappointed you never got a chance to see what I was wearing under my dress last night.” Lucy smirked.

Henry felt the temperature in the room raise 10 degrees. “Why don’t we go upstairs, and you can show me?”

“How about we take that shower of yours for a spin instead?” Lucy suggested, standing, tugging on his hand to follow her.

Lucy and Henry made it to the bathroom in record time, just inside the door, Henry spun Lucy around to face him, ad claimed her mouth in a searing kiss. When they parted Lucy had a dazed look on her face, and she swayed a moment before her senses returned.

While Lucy’s head spun, Henry turned the water on in the big glass enclosed shower, before
returning to press his lips to Lucy’s. As their tongues dueled, Henry’s hands dropped to the hem of
Lucy’s shirt. They parted only long enough to slip the shirt over her head. His hands tangled in her
hair, keeping her mouth right where he wanted it. Lucy’s hands smoothed over the planes of Henry’s
chest, taking her time to map each ripple of his abs, before gripping the bottom of his soft shirt,
pushing it up, until he took it over his own head.

When finally they were both naked, Henry walked Lucy backward, his mouth still staking claim to
hers, into the shower. She groaned at the first contact of the hot, pounding water against her skin.
She dipped her head back, letting the water saturate her hair and sluice down her back. Henry turned
her, and rested his hands on her shoulders, his strong hands massaging the tense muscles of her neck.
Lucy groaned when his thumbs found the knot that always formed when she was stressed.

His hands migrated from her neck to her breasts, each hand cupping their weight, as his thumbs
stroked over her sensitive nipples, bringing them to hard peaks, while his mouth feasted at her neck.
Lucy’s hand rose to bury itself in the curls at the nape of his neck.

The small glass walled cube trapped the steam, wrapping the two in a world where only they existed.
When Henry’s hand dropped even lower to play over her folds, Lucy’s gasps were lost in the sound
of the water pounding around them. When her cry of ecstasy echoed off the tile walls, Lucy’s hand
flew out to brace herself against, her hand slipping in the condensation there, but Henry’s arm,
wrapped around, her kept her upright.

When Lucy’s legs would hold her again, Henry turned the water off, and grabbed two towels, they
spent long minutes stroking the fluffy cotton over every inch of each other’s bodies.

Lucy led Henry back into the bedroom, and pushed him down onto the bed, dropping her towel, she
spread her legs to straddle his lap, sliding his length all the way inside, joining them completely. She
wrapped her arms around his shoulders, fusing the two together from pelvis to shoulders, each
craving the closeness, before undulating her hips slowly, rocking her hips against his.

Henry let her lead. Her torturously slow pace, teasing him, but there was no rushing them this time.
This was about connection, coming together, being close to each other. When at last they did climax,
they did so together staring deeply into the other’s eyes.

“I love you Henry.” Lucy whispered, her arms wrapped around his shoulders, her lips pressed to his
ear.

“I love you more, Lucy.” Henry responded.
Henry and Lucy talked over their plans while they ate Chinese take-away in the living room. His brother Piers had agreed to take Kal while Henry went to Minnesota. It was while they were digging into the cake she’d brought from Amsterdam, that Lucy stopped talking.

“You’ve gotten very quiet darling.” Henry commented, bringing a forkful of the light cake with its distinctive green marzipan to his lips.

Lucy worried her lower lip between her teeth while she picked at the cake in front of her, they hadn’t bothered with plates, instead preferring to just dig into the whole confection with their forks. “I guess I’m nervous. If this is going to work, we’re going to have to be real. Warts and all, as they say. What if you don’t like what you discover?”

“I agree we need to be real, but have you been hiding things from me?” Henry asked concerned.

“Not hiding, but I’ll admit I’ve been on my best behavior. And more than that, what if you get bored with me. I wasn’t lying in June when I said I don’t do much during the winter. I’m not a winter sports person, and most weekends I have speech meets to go to, or I’m so exhausted from the week of teaching that I don’t want to do anything other than veg.”

“Darling, I’m not a cold weather sports person either, I’d much rather be on a tropical beach than a snowy mountain. This time is for us to discover new things about each other. Maybe you won’t like what you discover about me.” He pointed out.

“I can’t see that happening, but I see your point.” She smiled, leaning toward him to give him a quick peck, before turning back to the cake. “What do you think of the cake?” she asked.

“It’s delicious. Splendid choice pumpkin.” He said taking another bite.

“I saw it on the Bake-Off, it was one of their technical challenges, I saw it in the display and had to get it. I hoped I wouldn’t be disappointed. I’m not.” She grinned.

The following morning Henry awoke at 7:00 to an empty bed. Lucy’s side was cold, indicating she’d left the bed some time ago. He slipped into a pair of sweatpants and shirt to take Kal out, when he noticed Kal gone as well. He padded down to the kitchen to find Lucy at the kitchen table, a notepad in front of her, already deep into her third cup of tea. He circled around behind her to read what she was writing. It was a to-do list, there were a dozen things written and crossed out and written again. He kissed the top of Lucy’s head. “What are you doing pumpkin?”

“There’s so much to take care of if you’re going to come live with me. Do you need a visa? You’ll
need a vehicle of your own. Where is that going to come from? And I decided I’m going to hand off Speech Team duties to my assistant coach, so that will free up weekends to spend together.” She looked at him, her eyes wide.

He couldn’t help the smile that split his face. “My darling Lucy,” he started, kissing her forehead, “take a breath. We have time to arrange all of this. And anything I don’t know how to arrange; I can call someone who does know. And as for this Speech team, please don’t give it up for me, if it’s something you enjoy, we’ll work around it.”

Lucy released the breath she’d taken, seeming to deflate as the air left her body. “It’s just there’s so much to do.” She protested.

“Darling, I’ll make a deal with you. I will let you stress about this for another 45 minutes while I bring Kal for a nice long walk, but when I get back, we’re going to put the list away until this evening, and we’re going to go out and do something in town. Whatever you want. It’s your last day in London,” Henry smirked, “for a while at least. For now just make the list of things you think you need to accomplish, and we’ll pare it down tonight.” he said standing, kissing the top of her head before snapping his fingers for Kal to follow him.

Lucy stared at the list she’d made for another 20 minutes, before taking Henry’s words to heart. She put the list aside. The prospect of spending the day on the town with Henry filling her with joy. She flipped to clean sheet of paper and started thinking of things she wanted to do in town with Henry.

Henry arrived back to the house to find Lucy in the same spot he left her, though this time she had a smile on her face, and she wrote something on her paper and then scribbled something else out. “Ok, it’s time to put the list away.” He declared, reaching for the paper in front of her. She snatched it back. “This isn’t my to-do this, this is my today list. I think I’ve decided what we’re going to do today!”

“Heard.” He encouraged.

“First we’re going to the Doctor Who shop. Then we’re going out to King’s Cross, to the Harry Potter shop, then we’re going to take a ride on the London Eye, and topping it all off with afternoon tea at Kensington Palace.” She gave him her biggest grin, clapping her hands in front of her chest in glee.

“How could I possibly decline something that’s put such a smile of your face.” He laughed, kissing her quickly.

“I’m going to get ready, though there’s no rush, we’ve got all day.” She smiled at him before prancing up the stairs.

While Lucy was showering, Henry left a message for Dany, his manager, to call him at her earliest convenience. She should probably know about his change of location.

Lucy thoroughly enjoyed her day in London. She protested when Henry offered to buy her River Song’s Sonic Screwdriver, but acquiesced and let him but her a couple of small Doctor Who toys for the top of her monitor at school. She bought the Ravenclaw scarf she’d been dreaming about, refusing to let Henry pay for it. It was her scarf. On the London Eye Lucy and Henry took numerous selfies, including one of the two of them kissing with Big Ben in the background. She intended to make it her profile picture if she ever got brave enough to post about her relationship online.

They had just arrived back to Henry’s house to drop off Lucy’s purchases before going to Kensington Palace, when Henry’s phone rang. Dany was returning his call.
“Hello Dany. How are you today?” Henry asked jovially.

“I’m good Henry, what’s up.” Dany asked, having little time for small talk.

“I thought I should let you know I’ll be spending the foreseeable future in the states. I’ll be staying with Lucy in Minnesota.”

“Are you engaged? Did you get married and not tell me?” Dany asked, her mind going to the worst case scenario immediately.

Henry’s laugh put her at ease though. “No, none of that Dany, we just want to spend some time together.”

“I want to meet her. When can we arrange a meeting. When are you flying over? Any chance you can swing through Miami on your way?”

“Lucy flies back tomorrow, she has to work on Monday. I’ll be joining her on Tuesday, so no. No hope of swinging through. Why don’t you come up to Minnesota. We’d be happy to host you. It’s only 3 ½ hours to Lucy’s from the airport.” Henry informed her.

“Um, no. Minnesota in January is not something high on my list of things to do, but I could fly in for a meeting on Saturday, if that works with your schedules.” Dany compromised.

Henry consulted with Lucy and they agreed to meet the following Saturday, before disconnecting the call.

“Why does Dany want to meet me?” Lucy asked on the short ride to Kensington Palace.

“I’m not sure. She didn’t say, but I’m sure it’s nothing bad. She probably just wants to meet the woman I love.” He soothed, kissing her.

Lucy let Henry drive her to the airport the following morning. While it wasn’t easy to say goodbye to him, it was easier knowing she’d see him in only a few days.

“I’ll see you on Tuesday.” Lucy said with an air of giddy despair in her voice. “Dive safe, and I’ll see you when you get to the house. Don’t forget to call me when you land, so I know you’ve landed safely.”

“Darling, you couldn’t stop planning if you tried, could you?” Henry laughed.

“Nope,” she agreed easily, “but you love it.” She joked, kissing him deeply.

“I do.” Henry agreed, pulling her close for one last deep kiss, before sending her through security. He watched her until she disappeared down the concourse, before going home to make all of the arrangements needed for his trip, for as much as he teased Lucy about her planning, he did have several things to arrange or clarify in just a few short days. He couldn't keep the grin off of his face as he drove back home, thinking about getting to spend countless days and nights with his Lucy.

Chapter End Notes

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Sarcastic remarks?
Lucy spent most of the day Sunday trying to overcome her jet lag, and preparing for the coming week. The first week after a break was always a little rough, with everyone trying to get back into the rhythm of the school day.

Lucy was dragging when she arrived to her classroom on Monday morning. Her body clock was refusing to acclimate to the new time zone, and she was in need of a serious influx of caffeine if she was going to make it through the day.

She was sipping on her second can of Diet Coke when one of her homeroom students knocked on her door. Lucy looked up and beckoned the girl in.

“Feliz Año Nuevo Patricia.” She greeted the small brunette senior.

“Happy New Year Ms. C.” Patricia replied. “Did you do anything fun over break?” The girl asked conversationally, sitting on one of the student desks near Lucy’s teacher desk.

“No really. The usual. Some friends had a get together for New Year’s. I made an appearance. Otherwise not much. How about you? How was your break?” Lucy asked the girl.

Patricia ignored her teacher’s question and handed Lucy two folded pieces of paper Lucy hadn’t noticed she’d been holding. “So that isn’t you, dancing with Tom Hiddleston? Because it really looks like you.” Lucy looked at the blurry pictures in shock. They had obviously been taken during her swing dance with Tom. The pictures were blurry enough, due to the low light in the room and their enthusiastic dancing, unless she confirmed, no one would know it was her in the picture.

“No, sorry hon. That’s not me.” Lucy lied. “Though she’s obviously a very lucky lady, getting to dance with Tom.”

“Are you sure? Because she’s wearing the same dress as this woman who looks just like you, from the red carpet of that event.” Patricia said, handing another paper across the desk. This one was perfectly clear. She stood sparkling next to Henry on the red carpet before the Beckham’s party. There was no denying this one WAS her.

Lucy heaved a sigh. “How many of you guys know?” She asked.

“Oh, it’s everywhere. Stephanie posted one of the pictures to her Instagram, and it spread like wildfire. “So who are you dating? Tom, or Henry Cavill?” Lucy pinched the bridge of her nose in an attempt to stifle the migraine she could feel forming behind her eyes.

“Henry. Tom and I just danced together.” Lucy smiled at the memory, then stood. “I have to go talk to Mr. Andersen. Thank you for letting me know Patricia.” Lucy stood, and walked with the girl to the door.

“So is Tom a good dancer?” she asked before they parted.

Lucy smiled warmly, “Oh yeah.”

Lucy knocked on the door to the principal’s office, Patricia’s pictures in hand. “Erik, can we talk?” She asked tentatively.
The sandy haired man looked up from his computer. “Sure Lucy, come in.” he indicated the chair in front of his desk.

Lucy entered the office, and shut the door behind her.

“This must be serious. What’s going on?” He asked, concern coloring his features.

“It’s nothing in my classroom, everything’s going great. But I think my personal life might be making a rude intrusion into the classroom.”

“Are you pregnant?” Erik blurted out.

“No, I’m not pregnant, but while I was in London this past summer, I met someone and we’ve started dating. A few of the other staff know, but the kids don’t, or rather didn’t know until just a few days ago. He’s in the public eye, and we were photographed at a New Year’s party together. One of the kids saw the pictures and now they’re everywhere. The pictures aren’t bad, mostly red carpet, and one of me dancing.” She handed the pictures across to him.

He examined the pictures, noting the tall, dark, handsome, man next to Lucy. “I’m not sure where your concern is coming from though. Teachers have dated before.

“The American press don’t know who I am, so if they do, it could become an issue for the school. And aside from that, one of Henry’s, that’s his name Henry Cavill, biggest roles had a lot of nudity. Like a lot. Not porn or anything, but Showtime.” Erik nodded in understanding. “So I’m just giving you a heads up in case a parent decides to take issue, or if I send a kid down here for making inappropriate remarks.”

“Well, Ms. Claussen, I appreciate you keeping me in the loop. And if a parent decides to make a fuss, I’ll simply remind them that your personal life is none of their damn business.”

“Thank you Erik.” Lucy said gratefully.

“Anytime. Though before you go, I have to ask, what’s he been in? He looks so familiar.”

“The Showtime thing was the Tudors, and then there was Man of Steel, he plays Superman.”

Erik’s eyes grew wide “Superman?! Do you think he’d…”

“No.” Lucy cut him off with a smile. “Have a good day Mr. Andersen.”

“Keep fighting the good fight Ms. Claussen.” the principal said as Lucy left his office.

Lucy walked back to her room, trying not to make eye contact with any of the students trying to gain her attention. Upon entering her room, she found 3 students standing in a group by the door, waiting for her. She slapped on a fake smile, “Hey guys, what can I help you with this morning?”

“We’re just wondering if it’s true?” Jay, one of her drama students asked.

“Yes, Jay, it’s true, we’re back from break. You have to be in class all day. I’m sorry.” Lucy replied, deliberately misunderstanding him.

“No, Ms. C. Is it true you’re dating Henry Cavill?”

“Jay, darling, I love you, but my personal life is none of your business. Now I need to make a phone call, so if you three don’t need anything from me other than to pry into my personal life, I’m going to ask you to go, and I’ll see you all at rehearsal after school. You all better be off script by this
afternoon.” The three students looked dejected, but did as they were asked. Lucy knew that would not be the last of that kind of questioning she would receive before the day was out.

She locked her door, to avoid any more intrusions, and called Henry first. “Good morning pumpkin!” Henry answered cheerfully on the third ring.

“Good morning Darcy.” Lucy replied, not quite as cheerfully, which he picked-up on.

“What’s wrong?”

“The cat is out of the bag. The kids know about us.” She admitted.

“You knew this had to happen sooner or later.”

“I know, I was just hoping to have more control over when and how it happened.” Lucy admitted.

“Like just showing up to an event with you, letting the kids draw their own conclusions.”

“What are you worried about?”

“First I don’t like the kids prying into my personal business, but more than that, the American press doesn’t know who I am. That’s bound to change now. Not to mention knowing that about 80% of my students have seen my boyfriend’s ass is a little disconcerting.” Henry’s laugh barked over the phone connection. “I just don’t want to cause any problems at the school.”

“Well, darling, you knew it was bound to happen.”

“I did. I guess my biggest worry is that one of the kids is going to tip off the press, and it's going to become a headache for me and the school.”

“Tell you what, I'll call Will and then tell you what he thinks.” Henry soothed.

“Actually, why don’t I call Will? Then nothing can get lost in translation. I need his number though.” Lucy asked. Henry supplied her with the number and after a few more reassurances that everything would be fine, they disconnected.

Thankful for her first hour prep time, Lucy called Will right away. She explained the whole situation, and he gave her some tips on how to handle it, should press start showing up at the school, which both he and she felt was pretty unlikely.

Lucy felt much better about everything by the time the bell rang for her second period class. She noticed some odd looks from kids as they filed in and took their seats. She took attendance and started class.

“Now hopefully all of you logged onto your Drive over break and saw that I graded your projects. Overall I was pleased with your results. Does anyone have any questions about why something was marked the way it was, or how it should have been done?”

A girl with raven black hair raised her hand. “Yes, Pabla, what is your question?”

“Are you really dating Superman?” She asked with wide eyes. An awkward silence fell over the room as the seconds stretched on. Lucy gave the girl her best, “I am not amused” look.

She heaved a sigh, deciding to face this head on. “It seems we’re not going to get anything done today until I address this. No, I am not dating Superman. Superman is a fictional character. I AM, however, dating the actor that is currently playing Superman. He and I went to a New Year’s Eve
party thrown by friends of his. No, I will not get you an autograph, or connect you with some other minimally linked celebrity. That is all I am going to say, because my personal life is none of your concern and I would appreciate if you all respected my privacy as well as his.” Lucy felt like she was going to need to print that line on a t-shirt.

The raven haired girl spoke-up again. “But it IS true? And you danced with Tom Hiddleston.”

“Yes, I also danced with Chris Evans, David Beckham, and Luke Evans. It was that kind of party. Now enough. Does anyone have any questions pertaining to this class and your project scores?”

By the time lunch rolled around Lucy was mentally exhausted. Lucy dragged herself to the staff lounge, needing the caffeine in the Coke machine located there. She plopped into a chair and cracked the can with a satisfying kschhhhh.

“You’re the talk of the building today.” Anne-Marie commented from across the table. Lucy rested her head on her folded arms on the table.

“I know. I don’t know what surprises the kids more, the fact that I’m dating a celebrity, or the fact that I’m dating in general. Hopefully the glamour will wear off quickly.”

“So how is everything going between you two?” Anne-Marie asked.

“Great, he’s flying in tomorrow to come stay with me until he’s needed for press for his new movie.” Lucy informed, with a smile even her exhaustion couldn’t stifle.

“That’s a big step, moving in together.”

“It’s not REALLY moving in together, he still has his place. It’s just, his place is in London. Being together over the holiday made us realize we need to spend more time together to get to know each other better.”

“Well, my dear, I wish you the best. And good luck with the rest of the day.”

“Thanks.” Lucy said sarcastically.

The last two hours of the day went similarly to the first three. She made similar speeches in each class. Stating the facts, and telling the kids to butt out, as tactfully as she could. Once the final bell rang Lucy heaved a sigh of relief. She had survived the day, all that was left was play practice.

She had managed to convince her assistant Speech coach to take on all of the meets for the year, in exchange for her getting the head coach’s stipend instead of the assistant coach’s. But she couldn’t, and wouldn’t, give up her drama kids. The One Act Play competition group were her babies. She’d formed a special bond with the group, and they were counting on her.

The group was sitting together laughing on the stage in the school’s commons when Lucy approached them. They stopped talking when she moved in front of them.

“Ms. C, it’s really not cool that you’ve been keeping this from us.” Audrey, one of the more dramatic members of the group accused.

“Audrey, please watch your tone. As for the rest of you. As I told Jay this morning, my personal life is none of your business, but I am sorry that I lied to you. I will answer one question from each of you, provided it’s an appropriate question.

Jay asked the first question. “How did you two meet?” Lucy smiled as she recounted the tale of Kal
and the coffee shop.

“Are you going to leave us?” was Audrey’s question.

“Honestly guys, I can’t tell you yes or no. I can guarantee I’ll be here this year, that’s all I could ever promise. You never know what life is going to throw at you. But I promise I will be honest with you if I plan to leave.

The rest of the questions were similar, either banal questions about her relationship, or worry about the future of the group. Lucy was proud of her kids. They respected her as much as they liked her.

That night as she was getting ready to go to bed, Henry called.

“I am on my way to the airport my darling. While you’re dreaming of me, I will be winging my way toward you.” Henry said, before stifling a yawn.

“I WILL be dreaming about you, Darcy. Have a great flight, er, flights. Please text me when you land and when you’re driving north. I miss you.”

“I miss you too, but we will be together soon my Pumpkin. I love you.”

“I love you more.” Lucy replied, disconnecting the call. She found it hard to sleep, her excitement building even though it would be more than 18 hours until Henry was there. Lucy wasn’t sure what the coming weeks would bring, but she knew she would not be the same after.
Chapter Notes

Sorry it's been so long since my last update, it was Homecoming week this past week, I haven't had a chance to do much else. I hope you like it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Tuesday was smoother for Lucy than Monday had been. The students were starting to come to grips with the whole “our teacher is dating a celebrity” thing. Instead of questions about their relationship, it was requests to bring him to school for a visit. Lucy managed to shake off those requests by reminding the kids that Henry lived in London. Though she couldn’t help smiling to herself when she thought about him flying to her as they spoke.

Toward the end of her lunch break, Lucy’s phone pinged, indicating she had a text. Butterflies swarmed in her stomach as she opened the message.

“Pumpkin, I’ve just landed. I didn’t want to call because I’m sure you’re in class right now. Dany made my arrangements, so I hope to be on my way to you within a couple of hours. I’ll call when I’m driving north. I love you.”

Lucy’s afternoon classes were vaguely controlled chaos. Lucy’s attention was on thoughts of Henry, and the students took advantage of her distraction. By the time she arrived at rehearsal, she was exhausted and a bit irritable.

After snapping at the cast for the fourth time in ten minutes, Patricia spoke up. “Ms. C, is something wrong? You’re biting our heads off for nothing.”

Lucy pillowed her head on her arms. “I’m sorry guys. My attention is somewhere else today. Why don’t we stop rehearsal for a few minutes, take a break, and play a game. I’ll even let you guys pick which one.” The kids were very open to taking a break, and picked a game that never failed to elicit huge laughs from everyone involved. It helped to center Lucy and bring her back to the task at hand.

As rehearsal drew to a close, Lucy gathered everyone for a sit-down. “I have a few reminders before I let you go for the night. First we’re still searching for some props, you all have the list of what we need, ask around please. We don’t have much of a budget to buy these things. Second practice will only go until 4:00 tomorrow. That’s tomorrow only, expect to stay until at least 5:00 on Thursday.”

Lucy looked around at the faces around her, all excited to have a short rehearsal the next day. “But because we have a short practice tomorrow, I need you all to be on point. We have a couple of rough spots. We’ll work on blocking hard next week, this week, work on your timing; there are some extra long pauses in the middle. Otherwise, good work today crew, go home.” Lucy smiled as she watched the kids waste no time in gathering their things to leave the school for the day.

Lucy hurried back to her classroom, hoping to find a message from Henry. There wasn’t a message, but there was a missed call. She noted he’d tried to call almost 2 hours prior. She quickly gathered her purse and coat, anxious to get home to wait for him. Once she was driving, she called Henry.

“Hello Pumpkin.” Henry answered cheerfully
“Hey! Do you know how much longer it will be until you get here?” She asked hopefully.

“My sat nav tells me I will arrive at your address at 7:46.” He said precisely.

“Do you want me to hold dinner, or will you grab something on the road?”

“I think I’ll eat on the road. Don’t go to any trouble.”

“Ok then. I’ll let you focus on driving and I’ll see you soon! Love you.” Lucy’s smile could be heard through the phone line.

“I love you more.” Henry replied, disconnecting the call.

Lucy’s mind was on Henry as she drove home. “He’s coming here.” she thought outloud, coming to share her life. She still couldn’t quite believe it. When the alarm on her phone signaled the reminder she’d set in before her break from school, she jumped. Looking at the screen, it simply said “Snack”. She swore, and adjusted her course to stop at the grocery store, before going home.

The first thing Lucy did upon entering her house, was turn on her oven, before getting to work mixing batter. Once the first trays of cupcakes were in the oven, she surveyed the refrigerator, looking for something quick to eat for supper. When she didn’t find anything she went to her tablet and ordered a pizza, before getting to work on frosting.

While she was removing the first pans of cakes from the oven, and inserting the second set of pans, she heard a noise at the front of the house. “Lucy! I’m home!” Henry called in a horrible Cuban accent.

Henry heard Lucy’s giggle, before she called out, “I’m in the kitchen.” He followed the sound and the delicious aroma of something sweet, and found his Lucy, licking a dollop of frosting off of her index finger, a smile splitting her face. She bounded to him and he wrapped her in his arms, capturing her mouth. She tasted of cream cheese frosting, and something that was just Lucy. Breaking the kiss, he cupped Lucy’s head to his shoulder, holding her close, enjoying the feel of her in his arms. “How could I have missed you so much, it’s only been 3 days?” He murmured into her hair.

“It’s been a long 3 days.” she replied, not making any attempt to remove herself from his embrace. The oven timer beeping was the only thing that pulled her from his arms.

“What are you making?” He asked as she rotated the pans in the oven.

“Chocolate Cheesecake Cupcakes. It’s my turn to bring snacks to the staff meeting tomorrow afternoon, and if I’m bringing snack, everyone expects cupcakes. They’re what I’m known for.”

“Well, they smell amazing.” He said looking over the cakes on the cooling racks on the counter.

“They taste even better.” Lucy said, while loading frosting into a piping bag. “These cupcakes have inspired 3 people to propose to me. One was even a guy.” She joked.

“So mine was not the first proposal you’ve turned down.” He commented, wrapping his arms around her from behind, resting his head on her shoulder.

“No, but it’s the only one I considered taking.” She said, turning her head to kiss his cheek. “Now, why don’t you go unpack, and leave me to my baking. I cleared some space in the closet and the dresser for you.” She pried his arms from around her waist, and turned him toward the bedroom, swatting his ass for good measure.
While she was frosting the first pans of cakes, the doorbell rang, she called out to Henry, “would you get that? I’m up to my elbows in buttercream.” She heard the rumble of low voices and then Henry appeared in the kitchen with her pizza.

“I didn’t have anything that didn’t require cooking.” She explained as she swirled frosting on the last of the cakes.

“Darling, these look amazing.” he looked at her, a slight pleading in his eyes.

“Yes you can have one.” she laughed, taking a plate from the cupboard for her pizza. As she slid 2 slices onto her plate, she heard a groan from behind her. She turned to see Henry chewing, his eyes closed in ecstasy, another moan reverberated from deep in his chest. “Do you two want to be alone?” she laughed.

His eyes met hers, “Darling, this is delicious. I think I’m going to have to call you cupcake from now on, instead of pumpkin.” He said following her to the table, the remaining portion of his cupcake held reverently in his hands.

“That would be ok.” She smiled, “I don’t actually care for pumpkins.” She watched as he took his second bite of cupcake, accompanied by another almost orgasmic groan. “You’re going to have to stop making those noises. They’re getting me quite excited, and I don’t have time right now to be going to the bedroom.”

“Darling these really are phenomenal.”

“I know. I’ve had them. There’s a reason why I’ve done wedding cupcakes for 4 weddings now. But thank you.” She gave him a quick peck on the lips before standing. “Now I’m going to finish the last of these cakes, you’re welcome to sit in here and keep me company, but you don’t have to.”

Henry sat at one of the kitchen table chairs, watching Lucy finish her baking, frosting, and decorating. They chatted about the last few days since they’d last seen each other. Once she’d finished her clean-up and the cupcakes were safely tucked into the refrigerator, Lucy turned off the light in the kitchen and turned to Henry, and pulled him to his feet.

“That wasn’t really how I wanted to welcome you.” she said unbuttoning the first couple of buttons of his flannel shirt, pressing a kiss to the skin exposed there.

“Oh really? What did you have in mind?” He asked, wrapping his arms around her, to cup her bottom, starting to walk them toward the bedroom.

“Well, I have some of that frosting left over…” she trailed off, pointing to the small bowl she’d left on the counter. Her laugh came out as a squeak, as he picked her up, wrapping her legs around his waist, and snatching the bowl of frosting, he carried her to the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

The weather here in Minnesota is starting to turn cold, comments make my heart all warm and fuzzy.
Lucy pressed a kiss to Henry’s forehead before leaving the next morning. The whole drive to school she smiled. Henry was here. They were together, for at least the next 3 months. While she was overjoyed to have him with her, there was a small part of her that was worried. Worried that, when there wasn’t the urgency of time, their chemistry would fizzle. She tried to bury that part deep where it couldn't surface without help.

She parked in her customary spot at the school, just after Ryan and Mindy parked. Due to play practice she was not carpooling the month of January. She called a friendly good morning to her colleagues.

“You’re in a good mood this morning.” Ryan commented falling into step next to her.

“I am. I have a visitor. From the east. A british visitor.” She explained, her smile growing as she thought about Henry.

“Really?” Ryan commented. “And how long is he here for?”

“Until he’s needed for press for his latest movie at the end of March.” She informed, her voice almost giddy.

“Wow. What brought this on?” Ryan asked, holding the door for her.

“We realized over christmas, that we don’t know each other very well, and that we need more time together. He doesn’t have any major projects, so here he is.”

“Well, we’ll all have to get together sometime.”

“I think we’d like that. Listen to me. We’d like that.” She emphasized the we in her response.

“I’m glad to see you so happy.”

“I’m glad to be so happy.” She smiled at him as they parted ways to their individual classrooms.

The day passed without incident. It finally felt like the first normal day since school had re-started. Play practice followed without incident. The students were struggling with a section involving some large emotions students weren’t accustomed to. She made a note to work with the students involved in that scene.

Driving home, she received a call from Henry. “Darling, are you ever coming home?”

“I’m on my way now. I cut play practice short today. I should be there in about 20 minutes. I thought we could have supper then go to the grocery store, maybe find you some food for lunches.”

“That sounds great, cupcake, but what play practice?” Henry asked, searching his memory for her mentioning a play.

“My one-act play group. I’m sure I’ve mentioned it.”

“I don’t think you have. I feel like I would remember something like that.” Henry insisted.

“Oh! Well, I’ll explain it over supper then, see you soon. Love you.”
“Love you too cupcake.” Henry disconnected his end of the call. He looked around the kitchen. Lucy had soup warming in a crock-pot for them. He might be useless in the kitchen, but even he could set a table. He found all of the appropriate dishes and cutlery. He searched for wine to accompany the meal, but was unable to find any. He made a mental note to ask Lucy where she hid her alcohol.

Lucy unlocked the back door of the house, and let herself in. “Honey, I’m home!” she called. Henry popped his head around the corner and smiled at her. Her face lit up upon seeing him. “Would this feeling ever fade?” she asked herself. This all-encompassing joy simply being in Henry’s presence. Logically she knew it must, but she hoped it never would.

Henry took her bag while she shrugged out of her heavy winter coat, before sweeping her into his arms for a welcome home kiss. “I missed you cupcake.” He said once he’d kissed his fill of her.

“I missed you too.” she smiled.

Lucy oohed over the table Henry set. She took milk out of the refrigerator and poured two glasses before sitting down. “I couldn’t find any wine to go with the soup darling, where do you hide it?” Henry asked, serving himself some soup from the crock-pot on the table.

“I don’t usually have wine around. I told you I don’t really drink during the school year. I’m usually so exhausted by the end of the day, that a drink usually just puts me to sleep.” she explained, starting to eat her soup.

“That would be a very good reason why I was unable to find any.” He laughed.

“Yes it would be.” she agreed. “So I decided, that I’m going to let you make the plans for this weekend. We’re going to meet your agent, so you get to make the plans. Just keep me in the loop, so i know if I need to pack an overnight bag or not.”

“You’re letting me make the plans? That’s a big step for you. Are you sure?” Henry asked reaching out to cover Lucy’s hand with his.

“I’m sure. Just please keep me in the loop. I need to know what’s going on, but I don’t need to always control what’s going on. It’s my New Year’s resolution, let go of control more often.”

“Well, darling, I’m impressed, and I will not let you down. I will make arrangements tomorrow and let you know over dinner.”

“Thank you Darcy.” she smiled, leaning close to give him a peck on the lips.

Lucy spent the rest of the meal explaining to Henry what her One-Act Play group was about. He seemed intrigued, and impressed.

Friday night found Henry and Lucy driving to Minneapolis. Henry made reservations at the same hotel they’d stayed at in October, and Dany would be meeting them in their room around mid-afternoon, before all 3 of them went to dinner together.

Saturday morning, Lucy brought Henry first to REI to buy an actual winter coat. The one he’d brought with him was suitable for a London winter, but was woefully inadequate for a Minnesota winter. He added a pair of boots, snow pants (which he called ski trousers, and she laughed at him), a hat and gloves to his purchases.

Once Henry was properly outfitted for a Minnesota winter, they spent the next several hours at the Mall of America. Henry had never been and wanted to check it off of his list. Lucy actually enjoyed
her trip to mall for the first time since she’d first gone in Jr. High. Going shopping with someone who had money was an entirely different experience than shopping with her friends. The stores that Lucy normally walked right past, treated them with reverence. Henry purchased several outfits that were a bit more cold weather friendly than his normal wardrobe. Thought the clothes looked mostly like what everyone else was wearing, Lucy almost choked when the cashier gave the total. He was spending more in one store on maybe 4 outfits than she would spend on clothes in the next 5 years. Henry just handed over his charge card without a blink.

They returned to the hotel for their meeting with Dany.

“Is this ok to meet your agent in?” Lucy asked, gesturing to her jeans and sweater.

“It’s fine darling. Dany will most likely look like a million bucks, because she doesn’t leave the house without at least 3 designer labels on, but this is what I’m wearing.” He indicated his own attire, similar to hers.

“What about dinner?”

“Dany made the reservations, but there will be time to change. I assure you. Now breathe. There’s no reason to be nervous.”

Lucy took several deep breaths, and sat on the sofa. At precisely 3:00, there was an authoritative knock on the door. Lucy stayed seated, while Henry went to answer the door.

Henry opened the door to find a muscular latina woman on the other side. “Dany how are you?” Henry said ushering her in.

“Henry, I’m frozen. You couldn’t have chosen to winter somewhere warmer, like Aruba? Do you know what the pilot said when we landed? The high today is 4. 4 degrees Henry!”

“At least it’s above zero.” Dany heard, from the sitting area, from a chubby brunette woman standing beside the couch, smoothing her jeans. The woman had a nervous smile on her face. This must be Lucy, she thought to herself.

“You must be Lucy. Hi, Dany Garcia. It’s a pleasure to finally meet you.” She said extending her hand. Lucy took it and gave an assertive shake in return. Dany was impressed, the woman was obviously nervous, but could still stand up for herself.

Henry watched as his agent met his girlfriend. He could sense Lucy’s nerves, but could see very few of them. Why don’t we all sit. Dany would you like something to drink?” Henry offered. “Darling?”

Both women asked for a glass of water, before sitting opposite each other across the coffee table. Henry went to get ice from the machine down the hall. When he came back he could hear the chattering of female voices, but couldn’t understand anything they were saying. They were speaking in Spanish.

Henry brought 3 glasses of water to the sofas, and sat beside Lucy. He didn’t know what they had been talking about, but she looked infinitely more relaxed. “You two look like you’ve made friends.” Henry said tentatively.

“She’s funny Henry. It’s hard to be funny in your second language.” Dany commented. “She was telling me her version of how you two met. It’s still an adorable story.” Dany smiled at the couple.

“Now, why don’t we get down to business. Lucy I have some forms for you to sign.” Dany said, retrieving a leather document folder from her bag.

“Nothing much, just your standard NDA, and some other forms required by the company.”

“NDA? What’s an NDA?”

“Non-disclosure Agreement.” Henry clarified without elaborating further.

“What am I not disclosing, and who am I not disclosing it to?” Lucy asked, her confusion mounting.

“Relax, it’s all very normal, standard A-list celebrity stuff. Henry is living with you. Henry has a couple of very big projects coming up. In order for the scripts to be first delivered to, and stored at, your house, you need to sign these stating that you won’t tell anyone about the scripts or anything you might read in the scripts. These are very sensitive materials we’re talking about.” Dany explained.

“DC stuff.” Henry elaborated.

Understanding blossomed in Lucy’s eyes. “Ah. I get it. The big franchises are secretive.” Lucy said, taking the document. She read through all 3 pages. “Ok, so explain to me what I just read.” She looked at Dany.

Dany laughed. “It essentially says you agree not to talk about the scripts, or anything in the scripts and if you do, DC or it’s subsidiaries can sue you for everything you have.”

“Got it.” Lucy replied, signing her name where Dany indicated. “Anything else?”

“This form states that, should you and Henry choose to dissolve your relationship, you agree not to sell or post any pictures of Henry of a private nature. Henry has to sign that one too.”

Lucy looked at Henry, her eyebrows raised. “This seems wrong, signing something talking about our relationship ending, but I get it.” Lucy said, picking up the pen.

“You don’t have to sign it Lucy.” Henry said, stalling her hand.

“No, I’ll sign, it makes me feel better that you have to sign it too. I don’t think you’d ever do that, but it would be far more detrimental to my career than to yours if that ever happened. Not that I’d ever send you, or let you take those kinds of pictures.” Lucy said, signing her name to the form. Henry signed right after.

Dany’s shoulders dropped. “Well, now that business has concluded. How are you doing?” The three talked in Lucy and Henry’s room for another hour, before Dany left to change for dinner.

Dany made reservations at a steakhouse just around the corner from their hotel. Lucy enjoyed the meal immensely. She and Dany often switched to Spanish during their conversation, and Dany shared all kinds of stories of Henry. Lucy wondered why she had been nervous at all.

They all walked back to the hotel together. Henry and Lucy said goodbye to Dany at her floor. She hugged them both before walking back to her room. Entering her room, she sent Henry a text. “Approved. Try not to screw up with this one.” followed by an emoji with a big toothy grin.

Henry felt the buzz in his pocket, as he was unlocking the door to their suite. He read the message and smiled, before Lucy grabbed him by the tie to lead him back to the bedroom.
Thank you all for sticking with me. Sorry it’s been so long since I last updated. I’m hoping to have Chapter 43 ready for next weekend. Keeping my fingers crossed.

The idyllic haze Lucy had been living in since Henry’s arrival, was washed away when she arrived home from work on Monday evening. After a Monday where her students had all decided to not be prepared for class at the same time, and her drama students were still struggling with their scenes, she wanted nothing more than to get home and relax. Even after the horrible Monday she’d had, the idea of Henry being at home when she arrived, made her feel better, until she actually arrived home.

Lucy parked her car in the garage, and trudged into the house. She climbed out of her winter boots, heavy parka, scarf, and mittens and went in search of Henry. She found him in her reading chair, with a paperback fantasy novel. She climbed into his lap, looping her arms around his neck, resting her head on his shoulder, she sighed.

“Hello darling. Long day?”

“Ugh, yes. I’m just so happy to be home.”

“Well if it makes you feel better, I’m happy to have you home.” Henry cooed into her hair. They stayed cuddled together, not talking, just absorbing each other’s nearness. Lucy let the stress of the day slip away, and Henry continued reading his book. When he finished the chapter he was on, he folded over the corner of the page, and closed the book.

“So, what’s for dinner?” He asked Lucy. He felt her stiffen against him.

Very slowly she sat up, and looked him in the eye. Her brow had taken on a quizzical expression, and her mouth was slightly agape. “Excuse me?”

“What’s for dinner darling?” Henry said carefully, aware he had made a misstep, but unsure what it was.

“Would you like to rephrase that question?” She asked icily.

Henry paused for a long moment before asking, “What should we have for dinner?”

“That’s better.” she replied, without smiling. “The first question seemed to imply that I, after working a full day plus, should come home and make dinner for you, who were home all day.” she said seriously.

“Well, darling, you know my culinary skills end at scrambled eggs and toast.”

Lucy blinked at him several times, her face an impassive mask. “So you ARE implying that I should cook you dinner every night?”

“No, that’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying that if I wanted to cook dinner, my skills are not at the
level to make a meal.” He replied carefully.

Lucy didn’t speak, her face remained impassive.

Very carefully, Henry continued, “But I would love to learn if you would help me.”

Lucy laughed at the look of trepidation on his face. “Are you saying that because that’s what you really feel, or because you think it’s the right answer?”

“Both?” Henry answered. “If you’d be willing to teach me.” His eyes searching her face for a sign he’d said the right thing.

Lucy closed her eyes and sighed. “I’m sorry I snapped at you. It’s been a horrible day, and I shouldn’t have taken it out on you. Of course I’d be willing to teach you how to cook.”

“No darling, you have nothing to be sorry for. I guess I was expecting that you’d always be the one to cook dinner and that’s not fair to you.”

“Thank you Darcy.” She replied, kissing his temple, before levering herself off his lap and reaching for his hand. “Come with me. I had planned to make dinner; why don’t you help me?”

“It would be my pleasure.” He said, rising to follow her.

The process of making a simple meal took twice as long as it normally would have, because Lucy found herself explaining basic things, like how to operate her oven, and the difference between a pot and a pan, but she enjoyed every minute of it. Henry was an attentive student, whose attention focused more when he found out he could get kisses as rewards for right answers.

While they ate their simple skillet chicken dish, Henry asked about Lucy’s day and Lucy asked Henry about his. Once the plates were cleared, Lucy set up camp at the kitchen table to work on correcting a set of quizzes, while Henry ‘did the washing-up’ as he put it. It was the type of domestic scene Lucy had always envisioned.

Tuesday morning, Lucy kissed Henry’s forehead as she left the bedroom for the morning, before going to the kitchen. While eating the previous night, Henry had suggested that she leave him a recipe to follow, and he could try making dinner on his own. Lucy had incredulously asked if he was ready for such a task, but he insisted that he could do it. She smiled as she looked over the basic recipe, and double checked they had all the ingredients. She left him an encouraging note, including what time she’d be home, and left a lipstick kiss at the bottom, before slipping on her boots to leave for work.

Lucy arrived home that night to find her kitchen in a complete disarray, but the table was set beautifully, and Henry looked proud of himself. Lucy took her seat at the table, and watched as Henry brought the baking dish to the table. He dished up white rice, then a chicken breast on each plate, spooning the creamy sauce from the pan over everything.

“This looks great! I’m so proud of you honey!” Lucy said, laying her and along Henry face, kissing him.

“Thank you cupcake. Let’s eat. I’ve been smelling this for too long, and I’m anxious to try it.”

Lucy cut into her chicken, glad to see it had been cooked through. She loaded her fork with the piece of chicken, a bite of rice and swirled everything through the sauce. She brought the bite to her mouth, and coughed. She managed to chew and swallow the bite, though she wasn’t sure how. Henry looked on worried, as Lucy lifted her glass and took a long drink, before meeting his eyes.
His face fell.

“You don’t like it.” Henry said disappointed.

Lucy’s mouth opened and closed before she spoke. “Have you tried it darling?” Lucy asked diplomatically.

Henry constructed the same bite Lucy had, but spit it out before he could swallow. “That’s horrible!” He exclaimed.

“Not horrible, but too salty, yes.” Lucy said, attempting to placate him.

“I don’t understand, I followed the recipe.” He said disappointed.

“My guess is where it said teaspoon of salt, you read tablespoon.”

“There’s a difference?” Henry asked.

Lucy barked out a short laugh, “Yes, a big difference. But the rice is cooked well, and the chicken is cooked through, so other than the salt explosion, everything else is done well.”

“But it’s inedible.” Henry argued.

“Yes, it is.” Lucy conceded. “But as a first try on your own, it’s more good than bad. Ask my parents some time about some of my early cooking fails. I once read 1 ½ teaspoons as 1 ½ cups! That was an epic failure, this is a misstep. Why don’t you call and order us a pizza, I’ll go change my clothes, and help you clean the kitchen.”

Once they were sitting together eating pizza straight from the box, Henry asked Lucy about her day. Her shoulders sagged and her head dropped.

“My drama kids, they’re just not getting it. There’s this one scene in the play, admittedly it’s a difficult scene, lots of big emotions, but they’re so wooden, I can’t seem to make them understand how to play it. I’ve been trying not to do this, but would you be willing to come in and talk to them? You’re an actor, you can give them some insight.”

“Darling, I’m not a stage actor. The stage and the screen are completely different animals.”

“I know, but I’m at my wit’s end. Please would you come help? I’ll buy you dinner to say thank you.” she pleaded.

“I can’t say no to you. Of course I’ll come help.” he answered, and watched her face alight. He would do anything he could to put that look on her face.

The following day, Henry arrived at Lucy’s school at precisely the time she’d indicated, when most of the students would be gone from the building, but still early enough to give enough time to the drama club. He checked into the office and was directed to the stage in the commons area of the school. Lucy saw him first, and met him in the middle of the commons.

“You made it! Thank you for doing this.” She took his hand and walked with him toward the group of students lounging on the stage. Lucy clapped three times to get their attention, en mass their head turned toward their teacher, and their eyes went wide.

“Chicos and chicas, this is Mr. Cavill. He’s here today to help us with scene four.”

Audrey raised her hand, and spoke when Lucy called on her. “Uh, Ms. C, is that Superman?”
“No, as I said, this is Mr. Cavill. Superman is a fictional character.”

“You know what I mean.” Audrey replied, unamused.

“Yes, Audrey was it? I have played Superman.” He turned to address the whole cast. “But today I’m here to watch you all perform. Ms. Claussen tells me you’re having a difficult time with a particular scene. I’d like to watch the whole thing through once before I give any critiques though.”

“Oh, you heard the man, to your places. We’re going to do a full run through. Beginning to end.” she clapped again, and the kids split to their starting places. Lucy led Henry to a couple table to sit down. She handed him a copy of the script and a clipboard with a pen to take notes. After taking a few moments to settle in, Lucy called “Action!”

Henry watched the play with a critical eye. The kids were doing very well, for teenagers. Lucy hadn’t told him which scene was the problem, but Henry didn’t need to be told. It was the climax of the action and emotion. The teenagers’ delivery was wooden, and they all looked awkward on the stage. Henry scribbled some notes on his clipboard. Then last scene of the play was better than the previous scene, but the awkwardness from the previous scene seemed to seep into the final scene. When they finished, Lucy and Henry clapped, while the kids took their bows.

“Oh, guys take 5, while I confer with Mr. Cavill, then be back here for critique.” Lucy called, before turning to Henry. “What did you think?” Henry gave his honest opinion, which Lucy agreed with.

When the students came back together, Henry addressed the group. “First of all I’d like to say well done. It takes a lot of courage to get up on stage and perform in front of people. So I commend you.” He gave small tweaks to several of the students, like cheating their stance toward the audience while engaged in conversation, or to make any motions exaggerated so they could be seen at the back of the theater.

When he got to the emotional scene, he called out Jay and Patricia. They were the only actors in the scene. He asked to see them off to the side, while Lucy worked with the rest of the cast. Lucy couldn’t hear everything he was saying, but she could hear snippets, “It doesn’t matter that you have a girlfriend that’s not Patricia. In this play, Patricia is your wife, and you’re begging for her forgiveness. If you need to picture your girlfriend in Patricia’s place. Patricia, this is your husband, the man that you’ve promised to love, he’s hurt you, but he’s making the grand gesture to apologize. How should you react?”

Lucy was impressed with his method for getting the kids to understand. She watched him out of the corner of her eye, as he had the two teens run through the lines, physically moving them into different positions as the lines demanded. After about 30 minutes, the trio returned.

“Do you think we’re ready for another run through?” She asked.

Jay nodded his head. “Well then, places everyone, from the top.” Lucy and Henry took their places at the table and watched the play for the second time. There was a marked improvement in the scene between Jay and Patricia. It wasn’t completely better, though Lucy hoped with just over 2 weeks left until competition, they could work out the small kinks.

“Well, chicos and chicas, I’m so impressed with your hard work today, I’m going to let you go home early today!” She paused for the cheer that went up. “Be ready to work tomorrow though. Keep in mind what you rearranged today, remember it for tomorrow. And read through your lines, I shouldn’t be helping with the script as much as I am. Now go home.” It was a good 10 minutes before the kids left; they all wanted to meet Henry officially and get a selfie with him. He was a good sport about the whole situation.
Thursday morning, Lucy’s phone rang while she was driving to school. She didn’t check the number, whoever would be calling her this early, would have a reason to call.

“Hello?” Lucy answered.

“Hello, is this Lucy?” came an English accented voice through the phone.

“Yes, this is Lucy.” she said hesitantly.

“Lucy, darling, it’s Tom Hiddleston.” said the voice.

Lucy cut off the voice, “Very funny. Who is this really? Simon, is that you?”

“No, darling, it’s really Tom. Henry sent me a video of your students’ play, and asked if I wouldn’t give some tips, as he’s not as well versed with the theater as I am.”

“Are you shitting me?” Lucy asked.

“Eheheh.” Came Tom’s distinctive voice over the line. “No darling, I’m not. I was wondering if you have time to listen to my notes.”

Once Lucy had regained her composure, she answered, “I have the time, but I’m driving, so I can’t write anything.”

“Well, I’ll give you my notes now, and why don’t you give me your e-mail and I can mail you them for later.”

“That sounds great, or,” she broke off, “you know what would really make the kids lose their minds? If you recorded yourself giving the notes directly to them, maybe include an encouraging message? I mean, if you have time. I’m sure you’re busy with some major project right now.”

“No, actually I could do that. I’ll still need your e-mail though.” Lucy recited her school address, before listening intently to Tom critique her students’ performance. She thanked him for his help before disconnecting the call when she arrived to the school.

She sent a quick text to Henry as she walking to her classroom. “You could have warned me I would be getting a call from Tom Hiddleston. I was driving! I could have gone in the ditch!”

She received his reply before her 2nd hour class, it was just the blushing emoji.

Lucy checked her e-mail at lunch to find the e-mail from Tom. She watched the video, which was almost 15 minutes long, while she ate her lunch, all the while grinning like a loon. Her kids were going to flip.

Lucy called the kids to her room after school, she prefaced the video, “A friend of mine saw your performance, and has some notes. He sent a video message.” There was an audible gasp from the group when Tom appeared on the screen. He mentioned many of the same things Lucy and Henry had been telling them, as well as adding some new hints Lucy hadn’t thought of. He ended the message with his wishes of good luck and to break a leg.

“Ms. C. with both Henry Cavill and Tom Hiddleston helping us, we might just win this year!” Audrey commented.

“If you follow their advice, yes we just might.” Lucy agreed, before sending the kids to the stage to get the set pieces in place for their run through with Tom’s notes in mind. She was going to have to
come up with a special thank you for Henry.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for your comments. Keep them coming. Lucy and Henry enjoy your comments too!
Though Lucy had asked the drama club students to keep Henry’s involvement in their production quiet, once Tom got involved, the kids found it all but impossible to keep quiet. Lucy had expected it, so she wasn’t that disappointed in them. Friday Lucy made her way to the stage for rehearsal, and found no less than 20 additional students waiting around the stage.

“Are you all here to volunteer?” Lucy asked them excitedly, knowing full well they were waiting for Henry to arrive.

The students looked at each other awkwardly. Lucy smiled. “Henry isn’t coming today guys. That was a one time thing. Now you’re all welcome to stay and watch rehearsal, but if you’re not here for drama club, you have to go leave. You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here.” Lucy smiled at their disappointed faces as they turned to leave.

Rehearsal went the best it had gone up to that point. There were still some awkward spots, as the kids remembered the hints and tips that Henry and Tom had given them. Lucy had high hopes for the competition.

Lucy called Henry to tell him she would pick up a pizza on the way home. Over dinner Henry commented to Lucy, “Darling, I’m glad tomorrow is Saturday. You’ve been working too hard. We’re just going to relax together this weekend, right?”

“No, tomorrow night is the Movie Night fundraiser for my Travel Club, the group of students that I’m bringing to Europe this summer. You’re welcome to come, but you don’t have to.”

“Do you get to rest next weekend?” Henry asked concerned.

Lucy pulled up her calendar on her phone to show him her January events. “Next weekend is the dessert and drama fundraiser for the drama club, then the following weekend is competition. January is kind of a crazy month for me.”

Henry looked over the colorful phone screen. “Cupcake, when do you do anything for yourself?” he asked, concerned.

Lucy took a moment to think, “June. June is when I get to do stuff for me, except this June, because that’s when the student trip is. So maybe July this year.”

“This can’t be healthy, you need time to unwind.”

“This is how my winters go. I run myself ragged, doing 101 different events, until I inevitably get sick, then I’m forced to stop for a couple of days. But that can’t happen until the end of the month. We have our competition on the 31st. If we take first or second place, then we move on to the state level, so that will mean more rehearsal time, with a trip to the cities the following weekend.”

“Darling, that isn’t healthy. You need to take care of yourself.”
“It’s just January. February, you’re going to get sick of me being around all the time!” Lucy joked.

“I don’t think that could happen.” Henry smiled at her.

That night, Lucy fell asleep on the couch watching a movie. Henry carried her to bed, and tucked her in, before crawling in beside her. He glanced at the alarm clock on the night stand. It read 10:02. “In bed by 10:00 on a Friday,” Henry thought to himself, “never thought I’d see the day.” He smiled to himself and pulled Lucy into his arms, before dropping into a deep sleep.

Lucy awoke Saturday morning, feeling refreshed. As she ambled to the bathroom, it occurred to her that she didn’t remember going to bed the night before. “It’s like I’m a kid again, fall asleep on the couch, wake-up in bed. Sweet.”

Deciding, she didn’t want to be up for the day yet, Lucy returned to the bedroom. Henry wasn’t awake yet, but a part of him was definitely “up”. She climbed back into the bed, and snuggled herself against Henry’s side. Kissing his shoulder, she stroked her hand over his chest. He smiled in his sleep. Lucy’s hand continued its exploration across his abs, while her lips sought out his nipple, hiding in his swirls of chest hair. Henry groaned in his sleep.

Lucy’s hand dipped lower across Henry’s torso, finally wrapping around his impressive manhood. Henry’s eyes popped open. “Good morning Darcy.” Lucy murmured, pressing another kiss to his chest, her hand slowly pumping up and down his length.

Henry groaned. “Good morning. This is quite a wake-up,” he sighed, working to not let the sensations overwhelm him.

Lucy smiled, “Well, I was awake, and so was he. I didn’t want to let it go to waste.” she explained, sliding her leg over his torso to straddle him, releasing twin sighs with Henry when she slid his length into her.

“Yes, we wouldn’t want to be wasteful.” Henry grinned sleepily at her, weaving his hands with hers he sat up, bringing their lips together. Henry drank in her mouth like a man in the desert. His hands caressed her back, gripping her bottom to bring her closer, his lips tracing patterns across her neck.

When he could take no more, he rolled Lucy under him, wrapping her legs around his arms, and leaned heavily into her, his hips rolling to caress every nerve she possessed. He watched her come apart in his arms, before increasing his pace for the last frantic thrusts that would send him over the edge after her. He collapsed on top of her, both of them breathing heavily.

When Henry made to roll off of Lucy, her arms tightened around him. “Stay. I like the weight. I like feeling you on top of me.” He stayed for several more beats, before rolling them to lay on their sides, face to face, her leg thrown over his hip. Lucy sighed contentedly. “This is what I pictured when I pictured us living together; lazy weekend mornings, waking up together.”

He leaned close, to kiss her. “It is a pretty spectacular way to spend a morning,” he agreed.

Lucy found Henry to be almost more of a hindrance than a help during her travel club’s movie night fundraiser. Many of her drama students were also in the travel club. They were so excited to talk to Henry, that Lucy had to shoo them away to do something productive, though she smiled wistfully from across the room watching him interact with her students. He was never impatient at their questions, and let them show him what needed to be done.

The rest of the weekend passed easily, though Lucy could tell Henry was starting to go a bit stir crazy. He needed a hobby.
Tuesday evening, Lucy arrived home to find every towel she had ever owned draped across just about every surface in her kitchen. “What happened?!?” she asked, trying to find a dry place to set down her purse.

Henry looked sheepish. “Well, you know how the kitchen faucet has a drip, well I thought I could mend it. I watched several videos on youtube; it didn’t look very difficult. It’s harder than it looks.” Henry explained himself. Lucy bit her lip attempting not to laugh at the image in her head. “And is it fixed?” she asked turning to the sink, to see the faucet drip more than it did before. “I’m guessing not.”

“No, it isn’t. But tomorrow, I head to the DIY store, to buy a new faucet, which is apparently something I need to get, and your father is going to come assist me. So tonight, if you would, please go online and pick which faucet you’d like, so I know which one to buy.”

Lucy shook her head at the onslaught of information Henry had thrown at her. “You, and my dad, are going to do a plumbing project? And I won’t be here to film it? I should call in sick tomorrow, this could be funnier than anything I’ve ever seen before.”

“Why do you say that?”

“My dad is very...precise in the way he works. Just do whatever he tells you, and you’ll be fine.”

Lucy showed Henry how to use the clothes dryer, so that they could use the towels the next day, should the plumbing decide to attack again. It wasn’t until later when they were watching something on TV, that Lucy remembered she had a question for Henry.

“Ryan and Andi want to know if we want to go curling with them on Friday.”

“Curling?” Henry asked confused.

“You know, the ice sport, with the brooms.” she made a sweeping motion with her arms.

“I know what it is, but I’ve never done it before.”

“Would you like to try? It’s one of the only winter sports I like, because it’s inside.”

“I think that would be fun. Plus it will keep you from falling asleep at 8:00 on a Friday night!”

“I’ll tell Ryan tomorrow then. I think you’ll like it.”

Friday, Lucy and Henry met Ryan, Andi, Emma, Joshua, and another teacher that Andi worked with and her husband, at the curling club for a quick bite before going to the ice. Henry proved to be a decent curler, especially for someone who had never done it before. The four couples went to a bar nearby after finishing their game for a few drinks. They didn’t close down the bar, but it was after 11 when they got back home. Henry had accepted a place on Ryan’s men’s league curling team. Lucy was happy to see her boyfriend and guy friend getting along.

“Darling, how far is Duluth?” Henry asked out of the blue Sunday morning. Lucy was grading a stack of papers and Henry was answering e-mails.

“It’s about an hour.” She called back, and was answered by a laugh from Henry. “What’s the laugh for?”
“Do you know you do that? I asked how far it was, and you told me how long it would take to get there.”

“Well, that’s what you really want to know isn’t it?” She called back logically.

“I suppose.” Henry acquiesced, seeing the reason in her argument.

“What are you doing in Duluth?”

“Dany found a trainer for me to work with. I need to get back to the gym. The trainer is in Duluth. I’ll be going 4 days a week.”

“It’s not a horrible drive, unless it snows, then it could be miserable. When do you start?”

“Tuesday.”

“Well, at least it will give you something to do during the day. You’ve been prowling around this house for 2 weeks. I was afraid you were going to get cabin fever and go crazy!”

“No, I knew the training was coming, so I was just enjoying my time doing nothing. You may enjoy packing in historical sites on your vacation, but I like to do nothing.”

The day of the One Act Competition arrived. Lucy was nervous for her kids. They had worked so hard, but only the top 2 plays went on to the state competition. She knew, and they knew, statistically it was a long shot, but they were going to give it their all.

Lucy’s phone buzzed in her pocket while she was helping the kids with their costumes and makeup. She looked at her screen to find a message from Tom. It was a video message to the kids. She gathered them around to watch.

“Hello thespians. I know you have all worked incredibly hard, and put in countless hours to make this show as perfect as you can make it. I want to wish you luck, break a leg, and remember to have fun. Drama lets you live in someone else’s shoes for a time, do them proud.” He then kissed both of his hands, blew them at the group, and waved goodbye, before the video stopped.

“Well, guys, if nothing else comes of this, you’ll be able to say that you know Tom Hiddleston.” She glanced at the clock. “We’re almost up, everyone ready? Then let’s go.” She led the group out of the room they were using as their dressing room, and backstage. Henry caught-up with them just before they reached the stage door. He helped the group arrange their minimal set pieces, and went to find a seat in the auditorium. Lucy stayed backstage to watch, and help with a tricky costume change.

At the end of the day, the group finished third. They would not be moving on, but did receive a trophy for the case at school. Lucy snapped a picture of the whole group with the trophy for the school’s newspaper, and sent a copy to Tom.

“Ms. C? How could we not win?” Patricia asked dejected. “We had both Tom and Henry helping us!”

“Patricia. Honey. We finished third. Out of eight groups. Last year, we finished seventh out of seven. Don’t look at it as not winning. Look at how far you’ve come. The school’s that won, those kids spend weeks every summer at drama camp. They eat, sleep, live, drama. And you guys almost beat them. I’m so proud of all of you. Though I was proud of you last year in seventh place too. You all set out to put on a play, and you did. And you did a great job at it too. Now, grab a pillow and let’s finish loading the van so we can go to our celebration dinner!”
After the competition, the whole group went out to dinner to celebrate their third place finish, finishing the play, and having their free time back. They invited Henry to come with. While they were eating Lucy handed out awards. There were the standard MVP, and Rookie of the Year awards, but there were also several funny awards, such as the turtle award, for Audrey, who was perpetually late to practice, and the Songbird award, to Jay who even last week had asked if they couldn't switch to a musical. Once Lucy was done handing out awards, she sat to eat her dessert, and Audrey stood.

“Ms. C. We have a couple of things we’d like to say. I was chosen as the speaker for the group. First we’d like to thank Henry for his time and willingness to help.” She opened a bag Lucy hadn’t noticed before, and produced a hoodie with the school's logo emblazoned on the front. Henry’s eyes misted over as he accepted the sweatshirt from the kids. Lucy could barely see through the tears in her eyes. She was unaware of the gift the kids were presenting, but was so proud of them for the gesture. Audrey continued, “We also have one for Tom, if you would be willing to send it to him Ms. C.” Audrey produced a second hoodie and handed it to Lucy.

“I can take care of that, though I think you should all write a little note, and we’ll send it along with the hoodie. This is very sweet of you all to do this.” Lucy commended her group.

“We’re not done yet. We have something for you too.” Audrey stopped her. “Ms. C, our fearless leader. You’ve put up with a lot from us, but you’ve never stopped believing in us. This is just a small token of our thanks.” Audrey finished, producing an enormous, 5 lb. Hershey bar out of the bag. Lucy laughed through her tears.

“Thank you all. You’ve worked so hard this year, and though we aren’t moving on, please don’t let that diminish all that you’ve accomplished. Now let’s get the check and get out of here, it’s been a long day, and I want to go home!”

“The check has already been taken care of, dinner is on me tonight everyone.” Henry announced, standing. “Thank you for the sweatshirt, I will wear it proudly. I just hope that when you become famous actors and actresses, you remember to thank me and Ms. Claussen in your awards speech.” Lucy couldn’t contain herself, she wrapped her arms around Henry and gave him a quick kiss, for being so sweet. Which earned a rousing “whoo” from the group.
Henry consulted the recipe on his tablet. The search he had done for a simple Bolognese recipe had turned up literally thousands of recipes. He had chosen one that seemed simple enough. He didn’t know how wrong he was until he was already too far in to turn back.

“What the hell does chiffonade mean?” He asked to the empty kitchen. He found himself looking for videos on YouTube to reference what the recipe meant with each new culinary term. This was the first time, since the disastrous salt incident, that he had attempted cooking anything more difficult than a baked pork chop and a vegetable. He was determined to show Lucy, and himself, that he could, in fact, make a meal without messing something up. He also wanted to treat Lucy. She had been working so hard with the play, we wanted to see that she was taken care of, since taking care of herself was not her priority.

Lucy arrived home and took in the wonderful aroma filling the kitchen. She walked to the stovetop, and lifted the lid on the sauce simmering away. She picked up the spoon laying next to the pot, and dipped it in the sauce for a taste. She let out an involuntary groan when the sauce touched her tastebuds.

“I take it you approve?” Henry asked from the doorway. Lucy spun around, the spoon still in her mouth, a startled expression in her eyes.

“Henry, this is delicious! Did you make this?” she asked, emphasizing the word make.

“I did.” He confirmed.

“From scratch?” She asked disbelieving.

“Well, the tomatoes came from a tin, but yes, everything else is from scratch.” He replied proudly. Lucy walked to him, and gave him a celebratory kiss.

“Cariño, this is amazing. But you really don’t need to go to all this trouble. I don’t think I’ve ever made spaghetti sauce from scratch. My recipe, is open jar, pour into pot with browned hamburger. Ta-da!”

“It was something I wanted to attempt, after the Great Salt Disaster of 2015, I wanted to prove that I was capable of making edible food. And I want to pamper you a bit, since you won’t take care of yourself, I’m making it my job to take care of you.” Henry explained walking her back to the stove. He took a wine glass from the counter and filled it from an open bottle sitting next to it. “Here, take this, and go change into your ‘comfies’, as you call them. This will take another 20 minutes, according to the recipe.”

Lucy did as she was told, and took her glass of wine into the bedroom. She quickly traded her professional casual attire, for black leggings, with an oversized long-sleeved t-shirt over the top. She
Lucy went to the bathroom to wash the grime of the day off her face, and throw her hair in a messy bun. She went back to the kitchen “Can I help with anything?” Lucy asked, watching Henry chop ingredients for a salad.

“No, I have everything well in hand, you go to the living room, and don’t come until you’re called.” He said, kissing her cheek, before turning her back toward the living room and swatting her bottom to send her on her way.

Lucy ambled to the living room, sipping her wine. She sat in her favorite arm chair, with a view of the kitchen, so she could watch Henry work. And idea struck her and she pulled out her phone, and snapped a picture of Henry chopping what, she couldn’t tell. She sent it to the Cavill wives group text. “Came home from work, and was told I’m not allowed to help. Sitting here with my wine, enjoying the view.” It didn’t take long before she got a response. It was from Heather, Charlie’s wife.

“He’s making dinner? Are you going to eat it? Brave girl.”

Lucy laughed before responding, “I’ve been teaching him how to cook, he claims he made Bolognese from scratch, and I believe him, he wouldn’t try that one twice.”

“You’ll have to let us know how it is.” Heather wrote back.

The next reply came from Simon’s wife Eva. “You’ve domesticated him. Never thought we’d see the day. Enjoy sweetie!”

“Gracias!” Was Lucy’s response to Eva.

Finally Lucy was allowed in the kitchen. Henry had plated the pasta and sauce and set the table. He poured them each another glass of wine. “Two glasses of wine on a school night, I’ll be asleep by 7!” she laughed.

“I shall try to keep you from falling asleep in your pasta.” Henry joked.

Lucy lowered her face, close to her plate and inhaled deeply. “This smells amazing.” She inserted her fork and twirled a few strands of the pasta. She brought the bite to her lips; Henry’s eyes followed her every movement, waiting with baited breath. Lucy groaned when the flavors hit her tongue. “This is delicious!” Lucy confirmed, at Henry’s questioning look. A smile spread across his handsome face, and he started on his own plate.

“Why do I feel like I’m being buttered up for something?” Lucy said, after they’d both enjoyed their first few bites.

“I just want to make sure that you’re taken care of.” Henry defended. “Though, now that you mention it. I received a call today, that they’re scheduled re-shoots for The Man from U.N.C.L.E. I have to leave the 6th.”

“The 6th as in this Friday?” Lucy yelled.

“No, sorry, the 6th of March. It will hopefully not be more than 10 days. I’ll need to fly back to London on the 6th, so I can be ready for shooting on Monday.” Henry explained.

“So, not for another month. Ok. Well Kal will be happy to see you, and you can sleep at home at least, which will be nice I’m sure.”

“Yes, I will be happy to see Kal, but it means leaving you.” Henry insisted.

“Admit it, you’ll be happy to have some personal space again.” Lucy quipped.

“I’ll be happy to not have you kicking me all night.” Henry laughed.
“I’ll be happy to not have a space heater in bed with me. You’re so hot in bed.”

“That’s not something you’ve ever complained about before.” Henry said suggestively. Lucy laughed.

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Lucy met Emma for coffee after school later that week. Once they’d both gotten their drinks and treats they retreated to a table to have some girl time.

“Do you have to rush home?” Emma asked.

“No, Henry has curling tonight, so I won’t see him until he gets home.”

“I still can’t believe that Ryan convinced him to be on his curling team.”

“I’m glad. He doesn’t have any friends here, so for him to get to do a guy’s night once a week is good for him. Plus it gets him out of the house once a week.”

“Doesn’t he get out of the house otherwise?”

“Well he goes to a trainer in Duluth 4 days a week, but that’s during the day. Otherwise, he’s just ALWAYS there. I love him, and I want him with me, but I’ve never lived with anyone before. This is totally new territory for me! Sometimes I just need a little bit of alone time. Like a couple weeks ago. I had a horrible day, my 9th graders were being extra 9th grade-y, and every driver I encountered on my way home was driving like an idiot, I was just done dealing with people by the time I got home. And I told Henry that. I said, “I need 10 minutes where I don’t have to deal with anyone right now. I’ll be in the bedroom.” And he followed me to see if he could do anything, I mean it was really sweet, but I snapped at him, then I felt horrible, and I had to apologize for being in a bad mood.”

Throughout Lucy’s tirade, Emma, just smirked. “Welcome to being in a relationship.” she said and laughed. “So other than the constant togetherness, which I understand, it can be overwhelming, how is everything going?”

“Other than that? It’s been great. I mean, we’ve had our little squabbles about wet towels and dirty laundry on the bedroom floor. He’s way neater than I am; my house has never been so neat. But other than the little stuff, it’s amazing. I taught him how to cook, he gave my number to a strange man, who happened to be Tom Hiddleston. Did I tell you that? Tom Hiddleston has my phone number, I have HIS! We’re learning so much about each other. We definitely needed this time.”

“Well, I’m happy for you. I’ve never seen you so happy.”

“I am happy. I’m not looking forward to next month though. He has to go back to London for reshoots, so he’ll be gone for almost 2 weeks. You should come over some night while he’s gone and we’ll have a girls night in; pedicures, movies, carbs, it’ll be great!”

“I’d like that. I feel like I haven’t seen you much since he came.”

“It was January, you never see me in January. Between the play and the end of the semester, I don’t have time for anything not school related.”
“I know. I’m glad the play is done, and I’d love to have a girl’s night.”

“Yay!” Lucy clapped her hands in front of her face. “Now, what’s new with you?”

One week after the Bolognese dinner, Lucy came home to an empty house. There was a note from Henry on the counter telling her he’d gone to the grocery store, well actually he said market, but Lucy said grocery store, and that he would be bringing dinner home. Lucy sighed in relief, and went to change her clothes.

Once she was in her favorite leggings and Henry’s flannel shirt, she sat in her favorite chair to catch something on TV. When Henry arrived 30 minutes later that’s exactly where he found her. In her chair, with the TV on, sleeping.

He smiled at the sight of her in his flannel. After he set down his shopping bags and put the food he’d purchased away, he walked over to Lucy. She looked so serene sleeping, he hated to wake her, but he knew if he didn’t she wouldn’t sleep that night. He smiled as a thought came to him, and he lowered himself to kiss her awake, like Sleeping Beauty. Unlike Sleeping Beauty, Lucy startled awake, screamed, and punched him in the collar bone.

Henry jumped back, rubbing his chest where she’d hit him. Lucy’s hands covered her mouth in horror. “Oh, my god, Henry! I’m so sorry. You startled me! I must have really been out!”

Henry rubbed at the spot, not altogether convinced he wouldn’t have a bruise, “It’s ok darling. I wasn’t thinking. That’s quite an arm you’ve got on you.” He laughed.

“Well, I used to take martial arts lessons in high school, they must have stuck around,” she said standing. “What time is it?”

“About 5:15. So you can’t have been out long.”

“Long enough.” Lucy yawned. What did you get for dinner?” she asked, sniffing.

“Just a pizza. Nothing we have to cook.” Henry replied.

“Good, I’m too tired for anything complicated.” She said, wrapping her arms around Henry to give him a quick kiss before wandering into the kitchen to get plates and silverware.

Once they were seated and eating, Henry asked, “Darling, can I ask you something, it might sound offensive, but I can’t figure a way to word it, that doesn’t come off offensive.”

Lucy gave him a skeptical look. “Ok… How about you ask, and I’ll try not to be offended. But no promises.”

“I don’t understand how you’re so tired every evening. It’s not as though your job is physically demanding.” Henry said, stumbling over his words.

Lucy stared at him for several long seconds, her brows drawn together.

“Is that a terribly offensive thing to say to a teacher?” Henry asked.

Lucy opened and closed her mouth several times before answering. “I’m going to go with ignorantly offensive. I know you weren’t trying to belittle me, or my career, but when you say something like
that, that’s how it comes across. Why is it that you think I do all day?”

“Lecture, provide lessons, lead discussions. Nothing really physical.”

“I suppose you’re right, it’s not a physical job, except the whole standing for 6 hours thing. I mean it’s not doing a fight scene over and over and over again, but it’s more mentally exhausting than physically exhausting. Those things you mentioned, that’s about ¼ of my job.”

“What else is entailed? I’m asking because I’m genuinely curious.”

“Well, while I’m presenting lessons, the kids don’t just sit there passively, so there’s classroom management, lesson planning, grading. Then there’s my duties as class advisor that give me migraines just thinking about them.” She said, and after a short pause she smiled. “Why don’t you come observe my class for a day? See what really goes on in a classroom. I saw how you work, it’s only fair you see how I work.”

“I think I’d like that.” he smiled.

“I’ll get the paperwork going tomorrow, and you should be able to come sometime next week.” Lucy grinned.

“I can’t wait.” Henry replied.

The following day, Lucy got approval from her principal to have Henry in the school for a day, then on the way back to her room she was struck by a bolt of inspiration, and made a detour to the elementary side of the school. She knocked on a door to see a pretty, blonde woman, about 2 years older than herself, sorting papers into mailbox cubbies.

“Hola Señorita! What can I do for you this morning?”

“Hey Lindie. I was wondering if I could ask you for a favor.”

“So my boyfriend, he doesn’t understand why I’m so tired everyday when I get home, so I’m going to bring him in to shadow me for a day. I have first hour prep, could I possibly bring him in here for the first hour of the day?”

“You want him to see Kindergarteners at the beginning of the day?”

“Yeah. And if you could do any art project involving glitter or something that would be great. He doesn’t understand, and I want him to have the whole spectrum of experiences.”

“Definitely not the glitter, but I can definitely take him on for first hour.” Lindie said smiling evilly.

“Great! I’ll bring him down just after the bell rings, and come get him just before the end of first hour. He’ll be here for about 50 minutes. I’m thinking it will be next Thursday. Does that work?”

“I’m writing it in my calendar right now.”

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The day arrived for Henry to shadow Lucy. They had to do some gymnastics to get them both ready to leave at the same time, but it happened. It was Lucy’s day to drive the carpool. Both Ryan and Mindy were surprised to find the new occupant in the carpool. Ryan and Henry obviously had a relationship, but Mindy had yet to meet him. It took less than 5 minutes for Mindy to be completely
enchanted by Henry.

“Henry, with that voice, you should do audiobooks.” Mindy commented.

“I’ve never been asked to do one, but I think it would be fun. I enjoy reading. I’ll have my manager look into it.”

The four chatted amiably during the drive to the school. When they arrived, Lucy got Henry signed-in and procured him a visitor’s badge, before introducing him to Erik, the principal, before bringing him to her classroom. She kept her door locked, so as to keep Henry’s presence a secret for as long as possible.

When the bell rang signalling the start of first hour, Lucy stood from her desk, “Well, we should be going.” She announced to Henry.

“Go where?” He asked.

“I have prep first hour. I didn’t think you’d want to watch me make copies and correct papers, so I arranged for you to spend first hour with my friend Lindie.” She brought him to a door decorated with brightly colored paper. She knocked twice and entered.

Henry first saw a blonde woman sitting on a small chair. He next noticed the 20 small children sitting in a circle in front of her. The woman’s face split into a large smile, “Señorita! Friends, this is Miss Claussen. She’s the Spanish teacher. Señorita, how do we say good morning in Spanish.”

“Buenos dias.” Lucy pronounced slowly for the group.

“Friends, can we all say buenos dias to Miss Claussen, and her friend?”

The group of children greeted them enthusiastically.

“Chicos and Chicas, this is my friend Mr. Henry. Mr. Henry is from England. He’s here to visit today.” All of the children waved, and Lucy turned her attention to the teacher. “I’ll be back at about 9:25.” She turned to Henry, “Have fun.” And with those final words, she left.

Henry stood tentatively by the door, surveying the crowd of small children.

“Mr. Henry, why don’t you come and sit down and tell us about England.” The woman brought out a globe so Henry could show the kids where England was located in relation to Minnesota. Everything was going great, Henry thought, until he asked the question he regretted. “Does anyone have any questions?” Every child’s hand shot into the air. The questions ranged from, What do you do, to are there unicorns in England, to have you met the queen. Henry’s head spun trying to keep track of all the questions.

Lindie was impressed with his calm demeanor. He answered most of the students’ questions calmly, but with a bit of humor. Before he knew it, there was a knock on the door, and Lucy appeared. “I’m sorry chicos and chicas, but I have to take Mr. Henry now. Say adios.” All of the children made a sad groan as Henry stood. They all waved goodbye to him as he and Lucy exited the class.

Once they were in the hallway, Henry sighed. Lucy laughed. “Did you have fun?”

“Did you know a small child can ask approximately 100,000 questions per minute?”

“I did.” She laughed.
“She does that everyday?”

“All day. And this is her 13th year of teaching.” She informed him. He shivered in response. “That is why I teach high school.”

They made their way back to Lucy’s room and Lucy assigned Henry a spot for the day. When the bell rang, Lucy’s entire demeanor changed, his Lucy was replaced by Miss Claussen. This was not the silly woman he had grown to love over the last seven months. This was a professional.

The first few students who entered the room didn’t notice Henry, it wasn’t until one of the drama students entered, that Henry was acknowledged. Once he was noticed, her became the center of attention. Once the bell rang to start class, Lucy raised her voice to be heard above the din of the students. “You have 5 seconds to find your seat or you will be marked tardy. Cinco...cuatro...tres...dos...uno.” The students quickly found their seats and were all quiet by the time she reached uno. “That’s better. Now, who are we missing today?” Lucy asked, consulting her computer screen.

Henry wasn’t able to understand the words Lucy was speaking, but he understood the message by watching what the students did. They all pulled out their folders and took out papers. Lucy began speaking to the students, when a girl in the middle of the class raised her hand.

“Margarita, si?” Lucy asked, calling on the girl.

“Ummm, is that Henry Cavill sitting in the back?”

“Yes it is. Chicos and chicas, this is Mr. Cavill. Mr. Cavill is here to shadow me for the day. Just pretend he isn’t there.”

“Um, Ms. C? Have you seen him? He’s impossible to ignore.” Another girl commented, causing a laugh to ripple through the class.

“Well, Anita, you’ll just have to try.” she said smiling.

Henry watched Lucy’s next three classes. She was in her element. It was obvious to him that her students liked and respected her, and she somehow was funny and professional at the same time. During the second class he was watching, when she gave the students time to work, he stood to run to the loo. Lucy stopped him. “Where do you think you’re going?”

“Just running to the loo darling.” He answered quietly.

“Nope, you don’t get to go, unless I get to go. So not for another 20 minutes.” She smiled and patted his cheek.

After Lucy’s third class in a row, it was finally time for lunch. Henry hadn’t done anything, but the constant contact with the students for the morning had left him exhausted.

“Is it time for a break yet?” Henry asked.

“Ordinarily, yes, but today it’s a prom planning meeting. So let’s go get lunch, and then we’ll bring it back here.” Lucy led him to the teacher’s lounge, where she took a bag out of the refrigerator before turning him back around to return to her room.

After several minutes a group of 8 girls filed into the room carrying trays filled with some sort of food. Henry couldn’t tell what.
“Ok, ladies, let’s try not to make this meeting last all lunch period. Venue committee, what’s the news on linens?”

“Linens are included in the cost of renting the ballroom, which they’re giving us for free. But if we want chair covers, those would be $150. They look really nice, and I think we should get them.” A blonde girl commented.

Lucy closed her eyes, and inhaled deeply. “I don’t think you need chair covers. This is a prom, not a wedding.”

“But they really make the room look nice, the girl argued.

Lucy sighed again, and rubbed her temples. “Ok, this isn’t my prom, I’m just here to sign paperwork and crush dreams. You guys have a budget. Now, if the committee wants to spend $150 on chair covers, I can’t stop you, but I’m telling you, I think it’s an unnecessary expense.”

The girls talked it over amongst themselves for several minutes, before Henry interjected.

“Ladies, if I may, I have been to several black tie events, where the men are all in tuxedos, and the ladies are wearing designer gowns, I don’t recall ever seeing a chair cover at any of these events.”

In the end the chair covers were voted down, and the rest of the committee chairs submitted their reports without much fuss, leaving Lucy and Henry alone in her room for the remaining 10 minutes of the lunch period.

Lucy kissed him hard. “Thank you! That one has been driving me to drink all year. She’s essentially a bridezilla, except for prom.”

Henry asked, and Lucy explained what a prom was, a formal dance with a dinner, and explained that as class advisor she had to oversee the planning and chaperone the event.

“It’s not so bad. It’s fun to get dressed up every now and again. I don’t mind it that much.

“Will I be chaperoning as well?” Henry asked conversationally.

“It’s May 2nd, so if you’re here, then yes, I will expect you to chaperone as well. But I wouldn’t expect you to fly back just for prom. Henry pondered her statement.

The last two classes of the day passed similarly to the morning classes. By the time the final bell rang, Henry was exhausted, and his bladder was about to burst. When he returned from the bathroom he asked Lucy, “Is this what you do everyday?"

“All day, everyday. Though the prom meetings are only once every two weeks, until closer to the event, then they’ll be weekly.” She explained, packing her bag to go home.

“I can see now why you’re so tired. The kids are exhausting. But you’re great with them.”

“I love teaching. I love most of my students. I don’t know what I would do if I wasn’t teaching.” Lucy commented absently, as she surveyed the contents of her bag.

Henry’s head swam as he thought about why Lucy might not be teaching. Could he really pull her out of this world that she loved, and move her across the ocean?

Chapter End Notes
Thank you all so much for your kind words. I’m hoping to have chapter 45 up before Christmas, but I can’t promise.

In the meantime, if you’d like something to tide you over. I’ve started a second story. A Tom Hiddleston story called Galway Girl. Why not check it out. Let me know what you think, and if you think I should continue it.

Find it here: http://archiveofourown.org/works/12910407/chapters/29495574
Comings and Goings

After spending the day in Lucy’s class, Henry had a newfound appreciation for teachers. He was also seeing Lucy in a different light. Up to this point they had been living in their own bubble, separate from the real world in so many ways. But to see her out, living her life, which was completely separate from him gave him a whole new perspective on his Lucy.

One evening Lucy and Henry were snuggling together watching something mindless on TV, talking about nothing. Henry asked Lucy, “Darling, why did you decide to come to London this summer?”

“A bunch of different reasons, I suppose. It was my first solo trip, so I wanted to go somewhere I spoke the language. I’ve always wanted to go to London, and I love Harry Potter, and Doctor Who, and the Royal Family. So I thought, why not go to England. And how does that saying go? When you’ve tired of London, you’ve tired of life. I thought any place that inspires such a comment must be worth my time.”

“You didn’t think of going to Spain, or South America?” He questioned.

“I thought about it, but like I said, for my first solo trip, I wanted travel to be easy. And I love Spain. I’ve said that there is a piece of Spain in my soul, but I wanted to go somewhere different, and I’m going back to Spain this summer, so I didn’t want to go two summers in a row.”

“You studied in Spain while you studied at university, didn’t you?” he asked.

“I did, it was only a month-long summer program, but we were in Spain for 6 weeks for the program, we did a little traveling before and after.”

“Did you ever consider moving to Spain?”

“I did. But it’s so far away, and all my family is here. I don’t really know anyone there. And now with Quinn and Thomas, I think it would be extra hard, I love those kids so much. When I was having a hard time finding a teaching job, I looked into getting my Teaching English as a Foreign Language certification, so I could go somewhere and teach English, but Spain wanted speakers of British English, and all the other placements were in southeast Asia, and that area hasn’t ever really interested me. So I didn’t get the certification.” she shrugged.

“Have you done much traveling, besides for filming?” she asked him.

“Normally I plan a trip for myself and some friends during this time of the year to somewhere tropical. Get out of the cold for a bit. We’ve gone to the Seychelles, Aruba, Bora Bora. Always somewhere warm and beautiful.”

“You didn’t do one this year?” she asked.

“No, I knew you wouldn’t be able to come, and I didn’t want to go without you.” He said, dropping a kiss on her lips.

“A tropical trip sounds wonderful right now. But I don’t have enough personal days to take a trip anywhere outside the continental U.S.” she confirmed. “Did you ever consider moving to L.A.? It’s where all the big stars live.”

“Do you know, I haven’t ever considered it. Britain is my home and I don’t want that Hollywood lifestyle. I thought I might, but after spending some time there, I knew it wasn’t for me. And now
with so many projects being filmed in and around London, it’s actually more convenient to live there.”

“I’m glad. If you had moved to California, we never would have met.”

“It would have made the London portion of your trip much less eventful.” He joked.

“I know. I would have had to go along with my plan to hunt down Tom Hiddleston. Now I have his phone number.” she smirked at him.

“Which you have promised to you only for good, not for evil.” He reminded her.

“Would I do such a thing? How dare you even suggest such a thing sir. I am a teacher, I am a paragon of virtue, and good, and…” her monologue was cut off by his lips.

“I thought I should cut you off before a lightning bolt took you out.”

“Very funny.” she said, giving him one of her best teacher looks.

Sunday morning started the same as the past 7 Sundays had. After a bit of a lie in, Lucy sat at the kitchen table, grading papers and writing lesson plans for the coming week, while Henry had his weekly facetime date with Kal.

The middle of the quarter had just passed. And Lucy’s stack of correcting was unusually tall. She had completed approximately half of the pile when Henry came in from the living room. He poured himself a glass of water, and poured one for Lucy too. Setting the glass in front of her, he set his hands on her shoulders and rubbed the sides of her neck with his thumbs. She groaned in appreciation. Extended periods of grading always gave her a sore neck. She rolled her neck to give him better access.

After a couple minutes, his hands ventured away from her neck, exploring their way south. For a long moment Lucy didn’t react, but eventually, she put her hands over his, stalling them, and lifted them off of her body. “I need to get this done.”

“Are you sure?” he asked, his mouth nuzzling at her neck.

Lucy sighed, “Yes. I need to get this done. If you’re still up for it, after I’m done, we can go roll around together, but I need to be responsible right now.” she said, looking him in the eye.

“You’re serious?” he said, surprised.

“Yes. I need to get all of these tests and projects graded, and I can’t do that with you pawing at me. You know this. You know how stressed I get if I have too much correcting to do.”

“I guess I just thought, with me leaving the end of the week, you’d want to spend time with me. I guess I was wrong,” he said, turning back toward the living room.

She stood to walk after him, “Henry, don’t be like that. You know I love you, but I can’t love you to the detriment of my job. Yes, it does suck that you’re leaving at the end of the week, but it’s not at if you’re leaving for good. You’ll be back in two weeks. Now I’m going to go back and finish my grading, then afterward, we’ll see what happens.” She said, raising on tiptoe to press a kiss to his lips, he didn’t respond, but he didn’t turn away either.
Lucy returned to her pile of work, and tried to brush off Henry’s change of attitude. When she’d finished, he suggested they go grocery shopping, and she agreed, mainly because it was their Sunday ritual, but also she felt a weird tension between them that hadn’t been there before. She went to bed alone that night, He claimed he was answering emails, and she was tired.

On Tuesday Emma ate lunch with Lucy in her classroom. They needed to plan their girls night on Friday. They agreed on a menu and which movies would be shown. Lucy managed to talk Emma into a new facial treatment mask that she’d gotten. It would be a night of girly fun.

“How are you holding up with him leaving?”

“It’s only two weeks, but he’s been acting weird. We haven’t had sex in four days.” Emma gave her a look. “I know, I know. Four days is nothing to worry about, but we haven’t gone that long when I’m not on my period since he came here.”

“Is he stressed about the shooting?” Emma asked.

“I don’t think so. He hasn’t said anything about it.” She told Emma about Sunday morning and about the atmosphere since then.

“Is that seriously the first time you’ve turned him down for sex?” Emma asked incredulously.

“No, but it’s the first time he’s not understood.” Lucy explained. “I don’t know. Maybe this reshoot is coming at a good time. We both need some space. You know what they say, absence makes the heart grow fonder.”

“Maybe. And when he comes back, you’ll have missed him so much, you won’t be able to keep your hands off him, or his off you!” Emma laughed, wiggling her eyebrows.

The atmosphere in the house didn’t improve over the course of the week. Lucy could feel her sad mood about his impending departure weighing on her. Thursday night, Henry went to his curling league as usual. He didn’t arrive back home until after Lucy had gone to sleep.

Friday morning, Lucy awoke early. She’d had a hard time sleeping the whole night. She did her usual morning routine, and found herself with almost 30 minutes to spare before she had to leave. She sat down with a set of stationary she’d purchased years before, and wrote Henry a note. She poured all of her feelings and thoughts into the letter. She spritzed the letter with her perfume, carefully folded the pages, and sealed the set’s matching envelope. She sealed the envelope with a lipstick kiss, and slipped it into the pocket of Henry’s suitcase for him to find when he got home to London.

She gave Henry a kiss on the forehead, and left for work.

Lucy had difficulty concentrating all day. Knowing that when she got home, Henry wouldn’t be there, and missing him already. She had a quick chat with Emma before leaving for the day.

“When I get home, I’ll start the cookie dough baking, so we can have dessert first. When you get back to town, just let yourself in, like usual. I’ll have the wine chilling.”

“Sounds like a plan. See you in a couple hours.” Emma said excitedly.

Lucy dropped off her carpool companions and stopped at the grocery store and liquor store before going home. She was surprised to see Henry’s car still in front of the house. She parked, and grabbed her bags before entering the house.
“Henry?” Lucy called.

“I’m here. Could you come in here Lucy?” Henry called from the living room.

“I’ll be there in a second. I just need to put these things in the fridge.” She called back.

When she entered the living room, she saw Henry, looking gorgeous as ever in simple jeans and knit shirt.

“Hi! I thought you’d be gone by now.” She said, making to kiss him, but he turned away from her. She pulled away, hurt and confusion coloring her features.

“I wanted to talk to you.” He said carefully. “Lucy, I…” he stammered, “I don’t think this is going to work. We’re too different. Our lives are too different. This has been great between us, but I think it’s time we both realized, that it’s not working.” He said, not meeting her eyes.

“Our lives are too different?” Lucy asked, trying to hold back her tears. “Our lives are too different. I’ve been saying that since June. Why couldn’t you just believe me then and saved us both the trouble?” her tears finally breaking free.

“I know. I wish it could have worked. I wish it could have been different. I’m going now. Please take care of yourself.” he said, laying the Minnesota key ring and house keys she’d given him for Christmas on the coffee table, shrugged into his coat, and was gone.

Lucy stood frozen. Not entirely sure what had just happened. She didn’t know how long she’d stood there, but when she blinked, she saw the keys, they keys to her heart he’d called them, laying on the table. A tangible symbol of his rejection. It was then, finally, that she let go.

She managed to make her way to her favorite reading chair before the deluge of tears came, but not by much. She hugged a pillow to her chest and sobbed. Sobbed for her heartbreak, and her loss, and loneliness.

That was how Emma found her 45 minutes later. Most of the sobbing had subsided; Lucy was staring into the distance. Emma rushed to her.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Emma asked, concerned.

“He’s gone.” was all Lucy could mumble out, before more tears started to fall.

“Honey, he’s only gone for two weeks. Don’t you think this is a little bit dramatic?”

“No, he’s gone. He’s not coming back. He left.” She sobbed, pointing to the keys he’d left on the table.
I’m not sure what came over me, but this chapter came much more quickly than I had anticipated. I hope you like it...

“Please take care of yourself.” Henry heard himself say, before he laid the keys she’d given him on the table. His hand shook slightly as he pulled it away from the table. It took every ounce of strength he had to turn from Lucy’s crying face, and walk out the door.

Once he was safely ensconced in his vehicle, he let out the breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding. He stared at the house that had been his home for the past two months. With Lucy, it had felt like a home. She’d filled it with laughter and love. She hadn’t criticized him for not know how to cook, or do his laundry. She had worked with him to better himself. He would always be grateful to her for that.

With one final look at the house, he turned the key, and the engine roared to life. Putting the car in gear, he drove away forcing himself not to look in the rear view mirror.

He drove straight through to the hotel he’d booked for the night. His flight didn’t leave until the afternoon, and he had to return his car in the morning. He passively went through check-in at the hotel’s reception, and once the door of his hotel room closed behind him, he finally let go of the tears he’d been holding in. He knew Emma would arrive soon to comfort Lucy after he left, but there was no one there to comfort him.

“You don’t deserve comfort.” He scolded himself, picturing the look on Lucy’s face as he left. He argued with his inner voice.

“I had to leave. It was for her own good.”

“You love her, you could make it work.”

“But I couldn’t ask her to give up her family and her career.”

“She loves you. You love her.”

“Sometimes love isn’t enough.” he finally said aloud, making his way to the minibar, hoping to drown his inner voice in whiskey.

The following morning he awoke on the floor of the bathroom with only vague recollections of how he’d gotten there and how he’d passed the rest of his night. His eyes felt like sanding paper and his mouth like the Sahara.

He managed to make himself presentable and left to return his car and go to the airport. He didn’t sleep on his flight back to London. Everytime he closed his eyes, all he saw was the hurt expression on Lucy’s face.

He dropped his luggage at home before going to his brother’s house. Everyone was home when he arrived, and he plastered a happy expression on his face. Though he couldn’t fool his sister-in-law.
She wrapped him in a warm sisterly hug, before ushering him inside. “You look awful.” she declared.

“I couldn’t sleep on the flight, there was so much turbulence.” He lied.

“Well, get some sleep tonight. The makeup team is going to have a hell of a time if you don’t get rid of those dark circles.” She chided jokingly.

“I’ll work on that.” He laughed.

“Everyone is in the back garden, come on.” She said, wrapping her arm around his waist, and leading him through the house.

Kal was the first one to notice his presence in the garden. The dog let out a loud woof, and bounded toward his owner. Henry gave him a signal, and the dog’s paws came up onto his owner’s shoulders, Henry wrapped the dog in a hug, and avoided his lapping tongue.

Henry ordered Kal down, and the dog sat, dutifully by his owner’s side, leaning into his legs while Henry greeted his nephews and finally his brother. They all sat and caught up on each other’s lives since Christmas. They managed to talk Henry into staying for lunch.

As he was walking his brother to the door, Piers asked to confirm when Kal would be coming back. “You’re here a fortnight, correct? Then Kal is coming back here, while you return to the tundra?” Piers asked his younger brother.

“Actually no. I won’t be returning to Minnesota. Lucy and I are no longer together.” Henry said quietly.

“What? What happened? You two were so happy at Christmas.” Piers asked, concerned for his little brother.

“We just didn’t work out.” Henry said vaguely. Piers wanted to ask more, but could tell Henry wasn’t in the right mind to talk about it, though he made a mental note to check on his brother regularly.

When Henry and Kal returned home, Kal, sensing his owner needed him, followed Henry everywhere he went. When Henry sat, Kal sat with him, curled into his body. Henry took the comfort Kal offered him, and told him about everything that had happened with Lucy. Henry couldn’t be sure, but he could have sworn that Kal looked at him with disappointment.

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Emma sat with her friend, and let her cry. She brought her glasses of water when she needed them. Once Lucy had cried herself out, Emma forced her to talk.

“What did he say?” Emma asked.

“He said, our lives are too different, that this wasn’t going to work. He’s right. I’ve been telling him that this whole time.”

“Did he say he doesn’t love you any more?” Emma asked, afraid to start the waterworks again.

“No, but he left. He obviously doesn’t love me if he left.”

“Guys are stupid. Maybe after he’s had a chance to really think about it, he’ll come crawling back to
“Why would he come crawling to me, he could have any woman he wants with a snap of his fingers.”

“Honey, he wanted you. I think he probably still wants you. I know it seems like life sucks right now. But I think this is just a rough patch. I think you’ll end up working this out.” Emma said, attempting to soothe her friend.

“What’s to work out? He dumped me.”

Lucy hermited herself away for the weekend. She didn’t answer her phone, or text messages. She didn’t leave the house. After Emma left in the small hours of Saturday morning Lucy went to sleep. She surprised herself by sleeping until noon. She kept the curtains drawn, and spent most of Saturday in bed, staring into oblivion. Sunday was spent wandering her house, back and forth. She glanced at her teacher bag, full of assignments that needed her attention, but she couldn’t make herself care about them.

Monday morning, she woke with her alarm, and stared at the ceiling for several long minutes, eventually dragging herself out of bed to face the day, and her students.

She applied extra layers of concealer, to hide the dark circles under her eyes, and picked a turquoise blue sweater from her wardrobe. She knew she was going to have to act ok in front of her students, and she hoped the bright color would help sell her image. The day dragged on interminably. No one mentioned Henry, though, she thought later, why would they? As far as the kids knew they were still together. She knew the subject would eventually arise, though she didn’t want to think about how to deal with that conversation right now.

Each day passed similarly to the last. Lucy forced herself to go to work, and at night, she wandered her dark house, trying to find the will to care about something again.

Three weeks after Henry left, the week he should have been back from reshoots, Lucy was approached by one of her students before school. She walked into Lucy’s room hesitantly.

“Ms. C?” The girl asked

“Yes, Stephanie, whatcha’ need this morning?”

“I was just wondering,” she awkwardly, “if you’d seen these?” She handed Lucy several sheets of paper.

Lucy unfolded them, and felt as though she’d been punched in the gut. It was Henry. Looking gorgeous as ever, with a blonde actress that she recognized. There were several pictures of them; grocery shopping, hiking, looking very familiar with each other. It was a credit it Lucy’s professionalism that she didn’t let loose her emotions right there, instead asking the girl, “Wow, Stephanie. You’re little miss celebrity gossip aren’t you? I guess now would be as good a time as any for you guys to find out Henry and I aren’t together anymore.”

“When did that happen Ms. C?” The girl asked nosely.

“I don’t think that’s any of your business Stephanie. Now if you don’t mind. I have some things I need to do.” She said turning the girl toward the door. She picked up the papers and gestured with them, “do you mind if I keep these? I don’t feel like paper copies need to be floating around the school. I’m sure an instagram post is already making the rounds. I’ll see you in class.” She smiled at the girl as she left.
Once her room was empty again, Lucy unfolded the papers and stared at the pictures. Henry was with another woman, three weeks after he’d left her. She pulled out her phone and texted Emma, “911”. Emma was in her room three minutes later.

“What’s wrong?” She asked slightly panicked. Lucy held out the papers to her friend. Emma took them and skimmed the pictures. “Son of a bitch!” Emma all but yelled. “Who does this asshole think he is? Dating someone else so soon. Talk about a rebound.” Emma started to rant. “Where did you get these?”

“A student brought them to me. She wanted to see if I knew,” Lucy said without emotion. She felt numb.

“That was a really bitchy thing for her to do.” Emma said.

Lucy sighed, “Yep, and I’ll give you one guess who it was.”

“I’m going to go with little miss online translator.” Emma replied, citing an issue Lucy’d had with the girl earlier in the year.

“Got it in one. That girl is going places. She’s got ninja like research skills.”

“It’s still a bitchy thing to do. How are you holding up?” Emma asked, putting the pictures back on Lucy’s desk.

“Honestly? I’m fine. I think there’s some part of my brain that is keeping me from processing this right now. Want to come over after school and help me liberate some wine from a bottle?”

“It’s a date. Stay strong chica.” Emma said, hugging her friend, before heading off to her first period class.

“Dany, please don’t ever have me do anything like that again. It’s embarrassing.” Henry asked of his agent after spending two days pretending to date someone he’d met just days before.

“Will thought it would be a good idea. It gets your name out in the papers. With so much time between your projects, it keeps your name in the public lexicon.”

“But surely, there must be a better way. Can’t I just make my charity work more public? I’ve got established relationships with Durrell and Royal Marines, can’t we just publicize those?”

Dany thought for several moments before smiling, “Actually, yes. That would be amazing. It plays off your Superman image, and it’s good exposure for the charities as well. I’ll have someone contact Will, and we’ll come up with a plan.” She typed something into her phone. “Are you hanging around the area?” She asked him.

“I’m actually flying home to Jersey this weekend. I’m going home for Easter. My brothers are coming too, it’s going to be big to-do.”

“Well, just remember I need you back here April 10th. We’re starting early with press for U.N.C.L.E., we’ve scheduled you for a number of print interviews, before the usual TV parade. Do you know who you want to bring to the New York premiere?” She asked.

Lucy’s face was the first image that crossed his mind. He still thought about her everyday. Wondered how she was, what she was doing, if she’d ever forgive him. Charlie had called him just days after
he’d left Minnesota. Apparently Heather had texted Lucy, only to have Lucy reply that she didn’t think it a good idea for them to talk anymore. Heather was upset at losing a friend, and both she and Charlie were worried about his brother. Henry wouldn’t talk with him about it.

Normally Lucy loved Easter. Not just because of the unlimited supply of chocolate that always seemed to be around, but because of her niece and nephew. Their joy and exuberance brought a new light to the holiday. Watching them find the eggs she’d hidden was more fun than an egg hunt had ever been when she was young.

This year though, Lucy found herself hiding away from her family especially the kids. The first thing they’d asked up seeing her was, “Where’s uncle Henry?” It took all of Lucy’s already depleted stores of patience to not burst into tears as she explained to the young children that “Uncle Henry” wouldn’t be coming to any more holidays.

Lucy had almost snapped at her niece when she’d asked, for the fourth time, why Henry wasn’t coming. “How much longer am I going to have to live with this broken feeling inside me? Will I ever get to feel happy again?”

Henry needed a break. His family, who he normally enjoyed spending time with, seemed stifling this time around. There always seemed to be someone around, asking him about Lucy, gently probing him to talk about what happened. So far the only the thing that family had discerned was that she hadn’t broken up with him. Whether that meant he’d broken up with her, or it was by mutual agreement, no one knew.

Henry searched his suitcase for the cufflinks he knew he’d thrown there. He eventually found the box in the front pocket of the small suitcase, but his attention was elsewhere. In addition to the cufflinks box, he’d found an envelope. Pulling it out, he saw it was a teal colored envelope, with cupcakes forming and “L” in the lower corners, his name was written on the front in Lucy’s distinctive messy scrawl.

He shoved the envelope into the pocket of his jeans, and announced that he was going out. He quickly walked to his “fort” before taking out the envelope. He stared at it for he wasn’t sure how long. It had been a month since he’d seen her.

Very carefully, he opened the little envelope. Inside he found two sheets of teal paper, with scattered cupcakes creating a decorative border along the top and bottom. His nostrils instantly detected her perfume. He’d woken up to that smell everyday for two months. Her perfume was always the last thing she put on in the morning, and it lingered in the air in the bedroom. He’d missed her smell. He’d missed her laugh, and her smile, and everything about her. He missed her.

His eyes scanned the pages once, twice. Soaking in her words.

Darcy,

I know these last few days haven’t been great between us. I hope it’s just stress coupled with your imminent departure.
I’m not great at speaking my feelings, but I hope you know how much I love you. You have made me so happy these past 8 months. I had started to believe that I would be alone forever, a bit
melodramatic, I know, but you saw me, and loved me for me. You never tried to change me. I hope you know how much that has meant to me.

You are the kindest, most giving man I’ve ever known. I count myself lucky to be in your life. I know your life is crazy, and takes you all over the world. I hope your success only grows, because you deserve it. I would love nothing more than to be your home base.

I feel like these past two months have shown us that we are good together. You complement me. I know it drives you crazy when I leave my dirty clothes on the floor, and I would love to see you add a few new recipes to your culinary repertoire but, at the risk of sounding horribly cheesy, we complete each other.

I guess what I’m trying to say is, when you get back, I think I’d like to revisit our conversation from Christmas. I think you’ll find my thoughts on the subject changed.

I love you, and I’ll miss you. Be safe, and say “hi” to Kal for me.

Love,

Cupcake (Lucy)

Henry re-read the last paragraph Lucy wrote and couldn’t stop his tears. “What have I done?”
Lucy was packing her bag to go home after spending the weekend with her family for Easter, when her mother knocked lightly and entered the room.

“Hey, mom.” Lucy said, not looking up from arranging her suitcase.

“Luce, we need to talk.” She said, sitting on the bed, and patting the spot next to her, indicating Lucy should sit too. “We’re worried about you. We don’t like seeing you like this. You’ve been short with everyone this weekend, and we tried to be understanding, but the kids don’t understand why auntie isn’t playing with them.”

“I’m fine mom.” Lucy defended. Her mother gave her a raised eyebrow, but didn’t say anything. “I am. I just...I just feel so stupid. At first I was hurt by Henry’s words, but now I just feel stupid. I actually thought a guy like that would love someone like me. I was living in a fantasy land.”

“Honey, I have no doubt that Henry loved you. The way he looked at you when you weren’t looking, the way he looked after you. You’d make an off-hand comment about something, and he’d make it a reality. But sometimes love isn’t enough. What’s that line from that movie you watched over and over in high school; the Cinderella one?”

“A bird may love a fish, but where would they live?” Lucy recited, and gave a small smile.

“Exactly. So please don’t think that Henry didn’t love you. But relationships don’t always work out, no matter how much we’d like them to.”

“Thanks mom. I’m sorry I’ve worried you guys.”

“Honey, that’s what family is for.” Marie smiled, embracing her daughter tightly.

Over the next weeks, Lucy employed a “fake it til you make it” attitude. She projected a happier demeanor, and in turn started to feel better, by infinitesimal degrees, but better nonetheless. She wasn’t sleeping well, when she slept she dreamt of Henry, but she slowly began to re-enter her life as an active participant.

Luckily for Lucy, April was a hectic month. Prom planning was in full swing, and the kids were driving her nuts with details. They kept her so busy that she could fall into an exhausted sleep so deep that she didn’t dream. By the time prom week actually rolled around, Lucy was thinking she might actually survive the school year intact.

----------------------------------------------------

While Lucy was finding her way to the light, Henry was sinking deeper into the dark. After finding Lucy’s letter, he started to withdraw from everyone. Before finding the letter he had himself
convinced he was doing what was best for Lucy. She could forget about him, and eventually find someone else to fall in love with and marry. But now he wanted nothing more than to lock himself away where he couldn’t hurt anyone anymore.

Unfortunately, his life would not allow him to become the hermit he so desired to be. He was a successful actor with a movie to be released soon. His agent, Dany, had, after discovering his schedule suddenly wide open, had scheduled him to several entertainment magazine interviews, radio interviews, and entertainment blog interviews. Normally Henry actually enjoyed doing press for his films, it gave him a chance to show his personality, but he couldn’t seem to find the energy to be charming.

After the third in what was to be a string of interviews, Dany came to the hotel suite he was living in. “Henry, what’s wrong?” She asked, brushing past him into the room.

“Hello to you too Dany.” Henry said to the air.

“Henry, I’ve gotten complaints from the editors of both the interviews you’ve given that you’re not answering questions, you’re uninterested, and I caught that radio interview this morning. I’ve never known you to mumble, but I could barely make out a word you said. So I ask you, what is wrong with you? Is this some sort of delayed reaction from your break-up with the teacher? You were fine a month ago.”

“I’m just not feeling the interview circuit right now.” Henry replied, looking out the window.

“Well, you better start feeling it. Someone from the studio caught your radio interview today, and they’re not pleased. You need to put more effort into being your regular charming self, or the studio is going to take action.” She threatened.

Henry did eventually start to “play nice” at the interviews, but refused to “play the game” as Dany called it. He didn’t go out and “be seen,” he had no desire to go to the clubs and parties and make small talk with people he barely knew.

He kept Lucy’s letter in his wallet. He read it every night before laying down to stare at the ceiling. He couldn't sleep. Images of Lucy crying kept him awake. He turned to whiskey and beer to dull the pain of knowing what he’d thrown away.

Dany Garcia stared at the glass doors in front of her. If she wasn’t positive that this would help, she wouldn’t have flown and driven herself across the country to this middle of nowhere town. Now here she was, staring at a small school with students streaming out the front door. The littlest ones wearing backpacks bigger than themselves. The oldest carrying maybe a book and a jacket. It was late April and 55 degrees, she was freezing, and these kids weren’t even wearing coats. “Minnesota is such an odd place,” she thought to herself.

She was happy to see she’d timed it right to arrive at the end of the school day. It would give her time to talk to Lucy without many interruptions. She entered the building, checked in at the office, and was directed to Ms. Claussen’s room.

She followed the directions and found the room easily. The door was open. Dany looked in and saw Lucy sitting at her desk. She was surprised at the changes she noticed. This was not the same happy, smiley woman she’d met in January. This woman had dark circles under her eyes, and a frown on her face. Even her hair seemed duller than before. Dany knocked on the door, as she walked in.
“Un minuto.” Lucy said without looking up, continuing to type at speed on her keyboard. When she finished, she looked up expectantly “What’cha need…” she trailed off seeing Dany standing in the room. “What are you doing here?” She asked coldly.

“I’m here on behalf of my client.” Dany said, slowly walking toward Lucy’s desk.

“What? Does he want the earrings back that he gave me, or the necklace? He can have them, it’s costing me a fortune to insure the damn things. It’ll take me a day or so, I don’t have my safe deposit box key with me.” Lucy said, her anger starting to build.

“No. I’m not here to get back any presents.” Dany said confused. “I came to see how you’re doing.”

“I’m fine. Tell your client,” she practically spat the word, “that if he wants to know how I’m doing, my phone number hasn’t changed.” Dany was confused by Lucy’s tone. She seemed angry simply hearing about Henry. Something wasn’t adding up.

“He doesn’t know that I’m here. I came because he’s hurting. He’s been in a very bad place since you two split. He’s been fulfilling all of his contractual obligations, but people are noticing that he’s phoning in his appearances. I think you’re the solution to his current ennui. I came to see if you would be willing to take our boy back. He hasn’t been the same since the split. He’s in Los Angeles right now, Can I book you a ticket for this weekend?”

“All you’re doing,” Lucy asked incredulously, standing to look the woman in the eye. “Now, Ms. Garcia. I understand that your loyalty is to your client, but honestly, what kind of woman not only suggests that another woman get back together with a man who broke her heart, but suggests that I chase after him to beg him to take me back. I may not be some millionaire Hollywood starlet, but I do at least have my pride.”

Dany’s head spun. It was all starting to come together now. “He broke your heart? Are you telling me that he broke off the relationship?”

“Yes. He told me one day out of the blue that our ‘lives were too different, that this couldn’t work’ then he picked-up his bags and left. I haven’t heard from him since.”

“That’s very enlightening. So the break-up was not your idea.”

“Isn’t that what I’ve said?” Lucy asked caustically, losing what little patience she had remaining.

“But you still love him. Would you consider taking him back?”

Dany watched as the woman in front of her deflated, losing all of the fire that, just a second ago, had been directed at her. Lucy leaned forward, bracing her hands on her desk, her head dropping.

“Dany, yes I loved him. But as I said, he broke my heart. I’m not sure I’m willing to put myself through that pain again. The whispers are just starting to die down, I’m sure they’ll pick back up when the next round of interviews and TV appearances start. My life hasn’t changed, and it isn’t going to. I’m a highschool teacher. I live in Minnesota, and I’m very close to my family. What I had with Henry was great, but I don’t know if my heart could survive if he decided that we weren’t compatible again. Now, I’m sorry you came all this way for nothing, but I don’t think I have anything else to say to you.”

“Well, thank you for even speaking to me. Good luck with everything Lucy.” Dany turned to leave. She had just reached the door when Lucy spoke.

“How is he?” She asked quietly.
“He’s miserable.” Dany said plainly.

“Well, that makes me feel a little better.” Lucy smiled tremulously.

Dany’s head swam with the new information she’d acquired. It would seem Henry had not been honest with her. On her way out of the building, a flyer caught her eye. She took one, forming an idea she hoped would work.

Dany stayed in Minnesota that night, before flying back to Los Angeles the following morning. When she arrived, her first stop was Henry’s hotel room. She knocked, and received no reply. She knocked again, and still got no response. She decided she’d try one more time, before getting management to let her in. Just as she was about to turn from the door, it swung open. Henry stood glaring at her through bloodshot eyes from under a three day growth of stubble. “What.” Was all he could say.

“Good morning to you too.” She said cheerfully, pushing past him into the room. It was dark, and stank of stale beer and staler man. He followed her into the room and shrank back as she opened the curtains to the bright California sun. He sat on one of the couches holding his head.

“Why don’t you tell me why the hell you’re here, so I can go back to bed.”

“Henry, it’s 2:00 in the afternoon. You don’t need to go back to sleep.” She crossed the room to him and raising her hand, smacked him in the back of the head.

“What the bloody hell was that for?”

“You’ve been lying to me. I don’t like being lied to.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Well, you’ve been moping around this hotel room for 2 weeks, only coming out to grumble your way through an interview. The studio is breathing down my neck to get you to shape-up. I needed to do something. I’ve spent the last 24 hours flying and driving, hoping maybe your teacher could cure this funk you’ve fallen into.”

“You saw Lucy? How is she?” Henry interrupted her.

“Yes, I saw her She told me to tell you she’s fine. Though she’s obviously not. I don’t think she’s sleeping much. But I was less interested in her appearance, than what she told me. She told me that you broke up with her. Now how can this be? If you were the one to break. If you still love her, why the hell are you so miserable?”

“I love her. Loved her.” He corrected himself. “I’m not allowed to mourn the loss of a love.”

“Of course you are, but you told me that she was the one who instigated the break. If you still love her, why the hell did you break-up?”

Henry wasn’t in the right mindset to argue, so he told her the truth. “Dany, you should have seen her in the classroom. She’s a natural. She was in her element. The kids love her, and she genuinely cares about them. And with her family. They’re so close, and she loves them so much. She told me her niece and nephew were her world. How could I take her away from all of that, because if we got married, I’d expect that she’d move to London with me, it’s where I’m based. So I gave her some line about our lives not being compatible, which is really the truth, and I left her.” Dany watched his
face fall even more as he recounted the whole situation. She smacked his head again.

“Henry, Henry, Henry. You stupid man. Did you ask her what she wanted? No of course you didn’t. You just unilaterally decided that this was the way it had to be, and that was that. Tell me, have they done away with all of the schools in England? Do phones no longer do video chat? Do phone lines not reach across the ocean? Have you fallen into some sort of financial distress that I’m unaware of that would make flying from London to Minnesota impossible?” Dany berated him, making his entire decision seem insane.

“I just want her to be happy.”

“Well, she’s not. And neither are you. You need to talk to her. Tell her what you just told me. If you both decide then that you’re not meant to be, then so be it, but give the girl a chance. She’s a strong modern woman. You could do a lot worse.”

Henry leaned back on the couch, his hands running over his face. “Dany, don’t you think I know that? She’s amazing and I let her go.” He picked up Lucy’s letter from the bedside table and handed it to Dany. “I found this in my suitcase when I was home for Easter” Henry stood to look out over downtown Los Angeles, his eyes staring into the distance while his agent read the words Lucy had written.

“What conversation is she talking about?” Dany asked.

“I asked her to marry me.” He said quietly.

“Say again. You what?!” Dany asked, sure she’d heard him wrong.

He turned from the window to address her. “Christmas Eve, I asked her to marry me. She said no. Her reasoning was sound, she thought we didn’t know each other well enough, but it still hurt me. The longer I stayed with her in Minnesota, the deeper I felt myself falling. I started to actually think about what being married would mean. And what if I asked her again, and she turned me down again. I don’t know if my heart could handle that.” he explained, his voice strained with emotion as he sank onto the sofa.

“Henry, that’s what love is. You’re giving someone else the power to hurt you, and then trusting them enough not to. Do you still love her?”

“Of course I do.”

“More importantly, do you want to be with her?” Dany asked, sitting down next to Henry.

Henry met Dany’s eyes, “more than anything.”

“Then you’re going to have to do something. She still loves you.”

“What time is it? I’ll call her.” He said, hope entering his eyes. Dany smacked his head again.

“Would you stop hitting me?!” He exclaimed, rubbing his head.

“When you’re done being stupid, I will. But you’re being stupid again. This isn’t a conversation you have over the phone. You have to have this one face to face. And honestly, with the way you’ve acted, you’re probably going to need to do some groveling in order to get her to even talk to you.”

“My schedule is booked for the next week at least.”
“I have an idea about that.” She said producing the flyer she took from the school. Henry’s face split into a grin which Dany hadn’t seen in far too long.

4 days after her unexpected visit from Henry’s agent, Lucy was up to her ears in hairspray, tulle, and glitter. The culmination of her students’ entire year of planning had arrived, prom.

“Emma, thank you so much for being my date for the night. We need all the chaperones we can get.” Lucy said, straightening a young man’s bowtie.

“Of course, you know I love the kids, and it’s fun to see them outside of school. How are you holding up?”

“I’m exhausted. We decorated all day here yesterday, then last night at the hotel. But after tonight it’s all over.”

“No, I meant how are you doing?”

“I know you did, I’m fine.”

“It’s been almost 8 weeks, honey. I’m worried about you.”

“I was actually doing fine, if you remember, then that woman had to show up. But worry about me tomorrow. Tonight, we need to keep this herd of animals off the booze and off each other.”

The students all gathered at the school to participate in Grand March; a chance for the community to see the students in all of their finery. Just before the event was set to begin, Lucy slipped into her Starry Night dress, clasped the opal earrings Henry had given her into her ears, and fastened the necklace around her neck. She couldn’t help but recall the last time she’d worn these jewels, and how happy she’d been. She had debated whether or not to wear Henry’s gifts, but Emma had insisted she wear them. How many opportunities would she have to wear something so extravagant, and while the jewelry was a bit over the top for prom, it made her look sparkly on the outside, even if she didn’t feel sparkly on the inside.

Lucy took her place on the stage in the gym. The spotlight all but blinding her. She cued the student sound tech backstage to start the music that had been chosen to announce each couple. The students walked to the center of the stage, meeting in the middle, then descending the stairs to the gym floor. They paraded in front of the crowd stopping frequently for photos.

After the Grand March concluded and pictures had been taken, the students boarded busses for the 20 minute ride to the local hotel whose ballroom was serving as venue for the dinner and dancing portion of the evening. Lucy ensured that all the students had exited the busses before mounting the stairs to the second floor ballroom. She found all of the attendees standing on the stairs.

“Why are we just standing here? Let’s get this show on the road.” Lucy cheered with false excitement in her voice.

“Ummm…Ms. C? There’s someone here that wants to talk to you.” One of the students called from the front.

What now, was all Lucy could think. Was the hotel mad they’d taped decorations to the walls? What could possibly need her attention right now?

She worked her way through the throng of kids to the top of the stairs, and froze. There stood Henry,
in a suit, holding a bouquet of tulips. Lucy was speechless for a moment before she felt a hand on her shoulder. Ryan gave it a quick squeeze. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and collected herself. She turned to the students standing expectantly behind her.

“Ok, so you all, go into the Ballroom. Mr. Williams, would you please take care of...whatever needs to be taken care of. I’ll be in when I can.”

“You do what you need to do, we’ve got this.” He gave her shoulder another reassuring squeeze before leading the kids into the ballroom. Henry waved at a few of the kids that acknowledged him, while her drama students gave him an exaggerated cold shoulder. Lucy noticed more than one phone pointed in Henry’s direction, this was going to be all over Instagram in under 3 minutes. Emma came to stand beside her.

“What do you think he wants?” Lucy asked, panic starting to build in her voice.

“I don’t know. But he’s got your favorite flowers, that’s always a good sign. Hear him out though. Men are stupid, and sometimes it takes them a while to realize they’ve been stupid.”

“Whose side are you on?”

“I’m on your side, and you’ve been miserable for 2 months. You owe it to yourself to hear what he has to say. Then if you’re not satisfied, you can kick him to the curb, and at least get some closure on this relationship.”

Once the lobby area had cleared, Emma entered the ballroom shooting icicles at Henry the entire way, and Lucy finally approached him. She crossed her arms over her chest to keep her hands from shaking.

“What are you doing here?” Lucy asked expressionless.

“I came to see you. You look amazing. You’re wearing my earrings.” He said, reaching out to touch her. She evaded his hand, he pulled it back as though he had been burned.

“What do you want? I’m working.”

“Is there someplace we can talk?” He looked around.

“I don’t particularly want to talk to you right now, or ever really.” She said turning to walk to the ballroom.

“Please, hear me out. Will you just listen to me?” He asked grabbing her arm.

She looked down at his hand, then back to his face with a look that could freeze boiling tea. He let go. “If I let you talk, will you leave? Leave me to work.”

“Yes, if that’s what you want, I will go, but please will you listen to me?”

“Fine.” She stalked in the direction of the hospitality room the school had reserved to store decorations and prizes. She opened the door and entered, not waiting to see if he was following.

She stood in the middle of the room, and looked at him expectantly. “Well.” She said in the teacher voice she’d used the first day they met. Despite his nerves, Henry couldn’t stop the small smile from crossing his face. The ice that entered her eyes froze his smile before it could grow.

“I love you.”
“You love me?” Lucy asked incredulously. “You have a funny way of showing it.”

“Would you let me talk? Lucy. I love you. I know what I said, that our lives weren’t compatible. And really they’re not, but I was only thinking of myself. I started thinking about a real future with you, then I saw how you were with your students, and your family, and...I just couldn’t live with taking you away from all of that. I love you too much, and want you to be happy.”

“So you broke-up with me? How exactly was that supposed to make me happy?” Her words were angry, but she could feel her heart starting to melt infinitesimally.

“In the short term, it wouldn’t. But I thought you would find someone whose life is more like yours. Who you could be with and stay with your family, and your students.”

“Henry, yes, I love my family, and I love teaching, but none of that would change if I didn’t live here. There’s video chats, and phone calls, and airplanes.” Whose side was she on? Lucy asked herself. She was supposed to be angry, not explaining why he was wrong.

“Dany, said all of that and more. She called me stupid, and she hit me.” He gave a short laugh at the memory.

“Well, you deserve it.” Lucy replied, a small smile cracking the icy mask of her face. That small crack gave Henry’s spirit the lift he needed.

“Lucy. I love you. Please can you give me another chance? I can promise to love you more than I’ve ever loved anyone or anything else.”

“Are you going to talk to me? Or are you going to make decisions that affect both of us without consulting me?”

“We’ll talk. I’ll never leave you out of any decision making process that would affect both of us. But you’d take me back?” He asked, hope shining across his face.

In response she opened her arms, leaned into him, and sighed. He wrapped his arms around her in a lovingly crushing embrace that Lucy felt gluing the pieces of her broken heart back together. She pulled away slightly to look up at his face. He brought his hands up to cup her face and brought his lips down to hers. God he had missed her. Her lips were warm and welcoming, it was like coming home. He felt he could stand there forever, just drinking her in. When he pulled away, to rest his forehead against hers, they were both breathing heavily. He lowered his head to kiss her again, when she put her finger to his lips.

“Don’t think this means all is forgiven. You’re on probation.”

“Of course.” He agreed, trying to kiss her again and she evaded.

“You need to answer a question for me.” She demanded very seriously.

“Anything.” He replied getting worried.

“Did you sleep with that actress you were dating?”

Henry’s relief was so complete he released the breath he’d been holding on a laugh.

“That wasn’t real. That was set-up by our respective publicists. We spent maybe two days together, nothing more than holding hands for the paparazzi. She needed some good press, and we thought it would do me some good to be in the papers as well.”
“I was so hurt when I saw those pictures. I was trying to avoid any sort of entertainment news, but it’s everywhere. I felt like I didn’t really mean anything to you, that you could jump into a new relationship so quickly.”

“I’m sorry it hurt you. If it makes you feel better, I was hurting on the inside just as much. I’ve missed you terribly.” This time when he leaned down for a kiss, she met him halfway, running her hands up his chest to loop around his neck and bring him closer. He lowered his hands to her hips, tugging her closer to fit against him. Henry broke free from the kiss, only to begin raining kisses along Lucy’s jaw and neck. Her head lolled back on a moan.

There was a brief knock on the door, before it swung open. Emma entered. Lucy and Henry jumped apart like guilty teenagers. Lucy blushed adorably. “I take it this means you’re taking him back?” Emma asked sardonically looking from one to the other then back again. “I should be upset that my date is making out with somebody else, but I think I’ll get over it. Are you going to come chaperon this event, miss class adviser?”

“Oh god! What are the kids going to think?” Lucy asked covering her face with her hands.

“Well, I’ll tell you, you’re definitely the talk of dinner. It’s almost time for our table to be served, if you want to eat.”

“We really should get out there.” Lucy said starting for the door, when Emma stopped her.

“You’re going to want to put yourself back together. You’ve been in here for almost 20 minutes. You can’t go out there looking rumpled. Take a minute. I’ll be outside.” And she exited.

Lucy turned to Henry and laughed. She walked over to him, swiping her thumb across his lips, and coming up with a sample of her lipstick. “You straighten yourself, and think cold thoughts. I’ll put myself to rights in the bathroom.” Lucy gazed at her reflection in the mirror. Her makeup was smudged, and her hair had come half down from it’s pins. She righted it, and her face before exiting.

“Come on, honey, let’s get going.” She said extending her hand to him.

“You want me to stay?” Henry asked.

“Oh honey, of course you’re staying. First of all because I want you here, but second this is part of dating a teacher; attending events like this. Consider this part of your probation. And by the way, you’re going to dance with me. And if any of my girls ask, you’ll dance with them too. You’ll take as many selfies as the kids want. This is their night. Prepare to be a chaperone.” She laughed, taking his hand and leading him to the ballroom.

Chapter End Notes

Comments make me write faster! Expect another chapter before the New Year!
Prom and Discussion

Chapter Notes

I was going to wait until tomorrow to post this, but thought, what the heck. Here you go! Happy Boxing Day.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lucy sat at the chaperone’s table watching Henry talk with Ryan, easily slipping back into their friendship from the winter. She leaned to Emma.

“When did my life become a romantic comedy? Because this time last year, it wasn’t romantic, nor was it particularly funny.”

“I’m guessing it was right about the time you had a meet cute while you were galavanting across Europe.”

“It just doesn’t seem real.”

“So what did he say? It must have been something good.”

“I’ll tell you later, though you were right, men are stupid.”

“It’s amazing they manage to tie their own shoes sometimes.” Emma shook her head, then gestured to a nearby table. “Look at those girls. Even after he helped with the play, and the fundraisers, they’re still star struck. They want to ask him for a selfie, but can’t work up the courage.” She said reading the girls’ body language.

“I told him, he would take as many selfies as the kids wanted. This is their night. I’ll be interested to see who the first one to ask is.”

“My money’s on Patricia or Hunter.”

“Hunter would ask him for Chris Evans’s phone number.” They both laughed. Henry turned toward them, hearing their laughter.

“What’s so funny?” He asked.

“Nothing dear.” Lucy said and they both laughed again.

Henry turned back to Ryan, “Should I be worried?”

“With those two? You should always be worried.” He warned smiling.

Lucy stood, “It’s about time for the DJ to start, I’m going to find the manager to get the lights turned off.”

Once she was gone, Emma slid over to sit beside Henry. She slid her arm around his shoulders, pulling him close to speak in his ear.

“What are you doing here? If you hurt her again, I don’t think we can be friends anymore.”
“I’m here because I love her. And I was an idiot. I will be with her as long as she’ll have me. I’m sorry I hurt her, and if I need to grovel to you as well, then I guess I will. But know that I love her, and I wouldn’t willingly hurt her.” He paused for a thought, “Again.”

Emma squeezed his face in her hand, staring straight into his eyes. “That’s good enough for me. You owe me a dance later, since you stole my date.” She released his face and gave his cheek a light smack.

The lights dimmed and the DJ started pumping out dance music. Lucy returned to the chaperone table.

“What do you need me to do?” Henry inquired of Lucy.

“You’ll just circulate around the room, occasionally wandering out to the lobby. The kids aren’t supposed to go any further than the bathrooms. If they go farther than that, you go after them, and bring them back. Keep an eye out for suspicious bottles, and keep an eye on the punch fountain, that no one adds anything to it. Your entire job is to be a killjoy.”

Twenty minutes into the dance the DJ played the first slow song of the evening. Lucy heard the first strains of “Superman by Five for Fighting” and started to laugh. She noticed some of her homeroom girls snickering. She turned to Henry. “Would you like to dance?”

“Anytime, anywhere.” Henry replied, taking her hand, leading her to the dance floor. He placed his hand on her lower back, pulling her close. She put her hand on his chest, pushing him away.

“Keep it PG there mister.” She smiled at him. They swayed together with the music, only having eyes for each other. Henry lowered his mouth to Lucy’s ear and whispered. “If I ask you to come home with me, are you going to run away?” he asked cheekily.

“Never.” she smiled back.

Emma took out her phone and snapped a picture of the happy couple dancing. If her friend’s smile was any indication, the school would be looking for a new Spanish teacher sooner rather than later. She sent the picture to Lucy, to find when she had a chance to look at her phone.

_____________________________________________________

Lucy was just sitting down to take a break when one of her homeroom girls sat down next to her.

“Hi Patricia. Are you having fun?” She asked, taking a sip of her punch.

“Yeah, it’s a blast, but I have a question for you.”

“Shoot.”

“Could I ask Henry to dance?” she asked shyly, averting her eyes.

“I don’t mind.”

“Really?” her head snapped up in shock.

“Yes, really. If you want to ask him to dance, go for it. Give me your phone, I’ll even get a picture of you dancing together.”

“Oh my god. I’ll have my profile pic for life! Thanks Ms. C.” She said handing Lucy her phone, with the camera app open. Lucy just shook her head, and watched as Patricia walked tentatively over
to Henry, lightly tap him on the shoulder, then blush furiously as she spoke. Lucy caught a picture of her expression when he responded. He put his hand between her shoulders to lead her out to the dance floor. Henry flashed one of his million watt smiles at her and Lucy thought the poor girl would faint. Lucy snapped several pictures while they danced. Patricia eventually relaxed a bit into the dance, and Lucy could see them holding a conversation. Her heart was bursting. When the song ended, Henry leaned down to give her a kiss on the cheek. Lucy was glad she still had the camera open. That was the picture, first the kiss, then the reaction. Patricia ran off the dance floor and threw her arms around Lucy. “Oh my god Ms. C. That was great.”

“Wait until you see the pictures. Are you trying to sneak in on my man?” She teased.

“He kissed me! It was only on the cheek, but he kissed me!”

“I saw. Now, go find your boyfriend and assure him you’re still his. I think he might need some reassurance.”

“Thanks again Ms. C.” She rushed off to find her boyfriend. Henry came to stand beside her.

“How did I do?”

“Are you kidding me? I think you made her year. She hasn’t been having the easiest year, so thank you for showing her kindness. Why don’t we go watch the lobby for a bit, it’s getting loud in here.”

Henry went to check the men’s bathroom; Lucy checked her phone and found the picture from Emma.

Lucy took a moment to admire the picture. Her smile could not have gotten any wider, and the look in Henry’s eyes spoke of love and happiness. She sent off a quick text to Heather. “Look who showed up to help chaperone prom tonight.” And attached the picture. She sent a second message to her mother, “I’ll call you tomorrow.” accompanied by the picture as well. Less than five minutes later Lucy felt her phone vibrate. She checked the screen and smiled. The notification showed she had a message from Heather. “Ah! Call me as soon as you can!” Lucy sent a quick reply with a promise to call the following morning.

The rest of the dance passed relatively easily. Lucy only had to calm one crying girl in the bathroom, and chase down two couples who tried to go exploring in the hotel. When midnight struck, the lights came back on and Lucy announced that the busses were leaving in 10 minutes.

Lucy and the rest of the chaperones did a final sweep of the event areas before going out to the busses.

“So we go home now?” Henry asked.

“No, now we’re going bowling.”

“Bowling? In the tuxes and dresses?”

“Yes.”

“Should I follow the bus, or…”

“No, you’re going to ride the bus. Part of being a chaperone is riding with the kids.”

“What about my car?”
“We’ll leave it here. We can pick it up tomorrow. Or’ she paused as an idea formed, “hey Emma.”

“Yes?” Emma responded.

“Would you drive Henry’s rental back to town? Then you won’t have to come back to the school after. We’ll pick it up tomorrow from your house.”

“Sure. I can do that.” She said extending her hand. Henry handed the keys to her.

“I have a bag in the back though.” He said turning to Lucy.

“I can drop that off inside the back door for you.” Emma said.

“She has a key.” Lucy reminded him.

The rest of the night was a blur to Henry. So many kids, so much noise, and Lucy. In the middle of it all. Directing like a military general. She amazed him more every time she spoke, whether she was comforting a crying girl, or chastising a misbehaving couple, there was always caring in her voice. Finally after 2:00 am they were in her car, driving back to her house. Lucy looked dead on her feet.

“What did you think of an American prom?” She asked on a yawn.

“It was definitely interesting. I’m exhausted, I can only imagine how you feel.”

“Luckily it’s only 1 night a year. The kids had fun. How many selfies did you appear in tonight?”

“I don’t know know, 50-60 thousand. I’m still seeing spots.”

“Thank you for being such a good sport.”

“You’ve really got a great group of kids there. How many of your traveling group were there tonight?”

“All of them. In fact I think you danced with most of them. I see why you didn’t want to dance with me on New Year’s Eve. You are what we would refer to as overly Caucasian. Though you slow dance like a pro.”

“That’s easy, it’s just holding your girl close and swaying. I’m disappointed we didn’t get more than that one dance. I’ve missed you.” He said taking her free hand while her other rested on the steering wheel.

She hazarded a glance at him. “I’ve missed you too.” She gripped his hand tighter. “I’m too tired to talk. Why don’t you tell me what you’ve been up to since I last saw you, and I’ll focus on staying awake and not driving into the ditch.”

He told her all about the press events he’d attended for his movie, about his friends taking him out to cheer him up, his family asking about her. In the middle of his rambling, he looked over to see Lucy crying.

“Darling, why are you crying? What’s wrong?” He asked concerned.

“I’m just so tired, and I’m happy, and I’m angry. You hurt me, so bad. It wasn’t just breaking up with me. Then I had to see you galavanting with some other girl, which my students also saw, and commented to me. I had to endure a family holiday with my niece and nephew asking me where you
were. And having to explain to them that you weren’t coming. Having to explain it more than once, because they wanted you there. Chastising myself, first for thinking that someone like you would actually love someone like me, then chastising myself because I realized I effectively spent our whole relationship pushing you away. Questioning your commitment and your feelings. Then your agent comes and all but asks me to beg you to take me back, until she realized you broke up with me, which just reopened those wounds. And on top of all of this, I’m having to go to work every day, with a smile on my face, and pretending for my students that everything is ok, telling them that you’re still a good person. And I AM happy. I’m happy to have you here, and…” Lucy let loose, saying all the things she had been wanting to say for the past 2 months. Henry sat in stunned silence for almost a full minute.

“Lucy. I’m so sorry. I hurt you, and that’s the last thing I ever want to do. I will do whatever it takes, whatever you need me to do, to earn your trust again. If you need to hit me, I’ll let you.” He jokingly suggested.

“No, I let out all my physical anger a while ago. I may have gotten a Superman piñata, and beat the hell out of it. It was quite cathartic.” she laughed sarcastically. “But it’s not a matter of trust. I trust you. I believe everything you told me tonight. My family and friends are going to take a little longer. Though I’ll have Emma to help me on that score. I grieved for our relationship, and it’s going to take at least a little bit for my brain to come to terms with this new arrangement. I’m not handling this very well right now because I’ve been working the last 17 hours and I’m tired. Sleep will definitely help my brain and my emotions. They’re all just really close to the surface right now. But I AM happy. I never thought I’d see you in person again, and here you are. I’ve missed you. My Henry, not the movie star Henry.” She picked up their joined hands and kissed his knuckles. “Tomorrow we’ll have plenty of time to talk.”

When they arrived back to Lucy’s house. Lucy parked her car in the garage, opened her door and stepped out. The second her feet touched the ground, she let out a pained gasp. Henry rushed to her side. “What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing, I’ve just been wearing heels for 12 hours, and my feet hurt.” She said gingerly stepping toward the house. Without a word, Henry lifted Lucy into his arms, bridal style, and carried her toward the house. She used her key to unlock the door, and he carried her all the way to the bedroom. He deposited her on the bed, and dropped on to the end of the bed next to her. Carefully he took her foot and deftly unclasped the buckle holding her shoe on, before repeating with her other foot. Henry rubbed his hands together to warm them before running them up Lucy’s legs, under the hem of her dress.

“Just where do you think you’re going mister?” She asked with a quirked eyebrow.

“I’m just taking off your stockings so they don’t get in the way.” He said continuing the slide to her mid thigh, where he found the top of each. Running his fingers under the band holding them in place, he slowly slid the silk down each leg. He clasped one of her feet in each of his large hands, using his thumbs to rub circles around the soles, lessening the pressure over her sensitive arches. Lucy layed down, and groaned in appreciation. “You know, if that acting thing doesn’t work out for you, you’ve got a future in massage therapy.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” He said continuing his ministrations. Once he’d finished with the soles, his hands traveled north to work on her achilles and calves. He looked at Lucy’s face, only to realize she’d fallen asleep.

“Darling, wake-up.” He whispered once he’d finished.

“Hmm? Oh, did I doze off?” She asked sleepily.
“Yes, and as much as I hate to wake you, I know you’ll be much more comfortable if you get ready for bed first.”

Lucy didn’t speak, but slid off the bed and ambled to the bathroom to take out her contacts, take-down her hair, and remove her make-up. She did all of this while barely opening her eyes. She returned to the bedroom and began stripping. Or rather attempted to strip. She spun in 3 slow circles attempting to reach the zipper on her dress. Henry approached her and covered her hands with his. He lowered the zipper, and slipped the straps off her shoulders. She stood swaying for a moment, before Henry unclasped her bra as well. Lucy barely reacted, he suspected she was mostly asleep standing up.

Henry found a tank top in a drawer and slipped it over her head, before leading her to the bed, and pulled the covers over her. Once he had prepared himself for bed, he slid in beside Lucy. She instinctively turned to him, throwing one arm across his torso, resting her head on his chest, her fingers curled into his chest hair. “My big fluffy teddy bear.” Lucy mumbled in her sleep. Henry chuckled, kissed the top of her head, wrapped his arm around her, and succumbed to sleep himself.

Chapter End Notes

I’m not sure if I’ll get another chapter posted this year, but only time will tell.

If you haven’t checked out my Tom Hiddleston story, Galway Girl, why not check it out? There’s only 1 chapter right now, but I’m planning a full length story. I’d love to hear your thoughts.

https://archiveofourown.org/works/12910407/chapters/29495574
Chapter Notes

Happy New Year dear readers. I want to say thank you to each and every one of you. I started writing this story last October, and then on a whim decided to start posting it here, and your responses have kept me going. So thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Lucy awoke stiff, exhausted, and still wrapped around Henry. She allowed herself a moment to bask in his embrace, before she slowly extricated herself from his arm, she had almost succeeded when Henry tightened his grip, and drew her close again.

“Good morning Cupcake.” He mumbled, kissing the top of her head.

“Good morning Darcy.” She replied lifting her face to his for a good morning kiss. “Would you like to explain how it is that I am wearing what I’m wearing right now?”

“You don’t remember?”

“I don’t remember anything after you took my stockings off.”

“After I rubbed your feet for a bit, you sleep-walked to the bathroom to get ready for bed. You somehow managed to take your contact lenses out without opening your eyes, it was quite a feat to behold. Then I helped you out of your dress, and into that.”

“So we didn’t…” She trailed off.

“We did not, as I mentioned, you were asleep.”

“I missed this. The lazy weekend morning, lounging in bed … snuggling … talking.” Lucy replied wistfully, burrowing into his chest.

“Well, I’m here now, and I wish nothing could drag me away.”

“You wish?”

“Well I have to leave on Wednesday, I have an appearance in Jersey next weekend, that I need to attend. Then from there it’s off to the premier next Wednesday. I would love if you were able to attend with me.”

“May is such a hectic month for teachers. I’ll have to look at my calendar tomorrow and let you know. But you’ll be here for your birthday?”

“It would appear so.”

“I’ll have to plan something special then.”

“Speaking of planning something special, how about I take you out to lunch.”

“I like that idea, as I’m not 100% sure what kind of food I actually have in the kitchen, we’ll have to
Lucy showered and pulled her hair back in a ponytail. She grabbed a book while Henry was taking his shower. Not long after she heard the shower start, Lucy heard a noise coming from the kitchen table. Upon investigation, she found Henry’s phone ringing. The screen indicated that Dany was calling. Lucy answered.


“Lucy?” Dany asked hesitantly.

“That would be me.”

“Well, I guess that answers my question. Is everything back to rights then? Or are you answering his phone because he is currently decomposing deep in some northern Minnesota forest?”

Lucy laughed, “Just about. Henry’s in the shower.”

“Well, I was just calling to see how last night went, but I have my answer, though I do have a couple of things to discuss with Henry, if you’d have him call me later.”

“Sure thing, and Dany, thank you. Henry told me you slapped some sense into him, literally.”

“Men are stupid, some more than most, but you’ve got a good one there, he just needed to have his vision adjusted.”

“Well, again, thank you, and I’ll tell him to call you later.” She disconnected the call and put the phone back on the table. Henry’s phone reminded her to check her own. She was unsurprised to find several missed messages. Not just from Heather, and her mother, but all of the Cavill sisters-in-law had texted her, obviously Heather had shared the news. She also had over 50 Instagram notifications, the kids must have posted their pictures from the night, and tagged her school account.

She called her mom first, assuming that it would be the most difficult call to handle. Lucy dialed her parent's phone number, praying no one would answer. She wasn't that lucky. Her mother answered.

"Hi mom."

"Hi Lucy. How are you this morning."

"I'm good. Did you get the picture I sent you last night?"

"I did. I would seem you had some excitement at prom last night."

"I did." Lucy agreed.

Her mother sighed "Tell me what happened."

“He was waiting for me when we got to the dance. He explained why he’d been stupid. I’ve forgiven him on a probationary basis.”

“That’s it? That’s all you’re going to say?”

“I don’t think you need to know all the details, but he apologized, and explained his side of things. I believed him, and forgave him.”

“I’m just worried, it was two months, and you still weren’t back to your old self.”
"I know mom, I couldn’t get over him because I still love him. But rest assured, I am happy. And if he does hurt me again, that would be the last time. He won’t get another chance.”

Her mother sighed. “You’re a grown woman, and it’s your life. If you’re happy, I’m happy.”

“So you’ll be friendly to Henry when I bring him around?”

“I don’t know about friendly just yet, but I’ll be civil.”

“Can you talk to dad? Get the same promise out of him?”

“I’ll try.”

“I just wanted to let you know what was going on. I have a couple other calls to make, so I’m going to go now.”

“Ok. Bye honey.”

“Bye mom.”

Lucy disconnected the call, and scrolled to Heather’s name in her phone book. She had missed her conversations with Heather. She understood being in Henry’s life better than her other friends. She found Heather’s number in her contacts, and pressed connect.

Heather answered on the first ring.

“Hello!” Heather all but yelled into the phone.

“Hi Heather. I take it you got my text last night.”

“You could have knocked me over with a feather. First when I saw that you had texted, then I saw what you had texted. Charlie thought there had been some kind of accident, from the way I screamed when I opened the picture. So he’s come to his senses? What happened? What did he say?”

“I’m not going to go into all the details, if you want them, ask him when he’s home next weekend. If he wants you to know, he’ll tell you, or he’ll tell Charlie, and Charlie will tell you.” Lucy laughed.

“I’m so happy for you two. We could all tell he was hurting, but he wouldn’t talk to anyone about it. Not even Charlie, they tell each other practically everything. He was glad to see his brother smiling again. So what’s the plan now?”

“Well, we’re going for lunch as soon as Henry’s done in the shower.” Lucy said jokingly.

“You know I meant further than that.”

“I don’t know. We haven’t had a chance to talk about it really. I’ve been working or sleeping since he surprised me, and a noisy ballroom full of teenagers is not exactly the best environment for having any sort of deep conversations about our future.”

“Ok, well, I’ll let you go, but we’ll have to schedule a long talk soon, I want to know what’s been happening in your life. I’ve missed talking to you.”

“I’ll let you know when’s a good time. I’ve missed you too. But I have to go, Henry’s almost ready to go.”

“Ok, bye, Say hello to Hank for me and Charlie.”
“Will do. Bye!” Lucy said cheerfully, and ended the call, just as Henry came around the corner from the bathroom barefoot, in jeans and a t-shirt.

“Heather and Charlie say hi.” Lucy informed him.

“When did you talk to them?” he asked, reaching for his phone and slipping it into his pocket.

“Just now. I texted Heather last night.” She showed him the picture Emma had taken. “I missed talking to her.”

“That’s a great picture, would you send it to me?” Henry asked.

She sent the picture and they discussed where to get lunch. They settled on Mexican. While they ate their meal, they kept the conversation neutral. Both knowing they had a major conversation looming, but not wanting to have that discussion in public.

When the check for their meals came, Henry opened his wallet to retrieve enough cash to cover it. Lucy noticed a very familiar shade of teal poking up from the section of the wallet where the bills are kept. Henry made to put his wallet back in his pocket, but Lucy put her hand over his, stalling his action. She lightly took the wallet, and opened it. Producing her letter from its depths. When she had written the letter, the paper had been crisp and new. Now the edges were tattered and dirty, while the folds had gone soft, as though the paper had been opened and refolded numerous times. Lucy raised her eyes to Henry’s. “How many times have you read this?” she asked tentatively.

“I’ve read it at least once a day for the last month. It’s been the last thing I saw before going to sleep and the first thing I see when I wake for a month. I didn’t find it until I went home to Jersey for Easter. I guess you could say I’ve been torturing myself with it since then.” He said, his eyes shining with remembered pain.

“Oh, Henry.” she said, covering his hands with hers. They were silent for several long seconds before Lucy wiped the tears from her eyes. “Why don’t we go home. I feel like we have a lot to say to each other.” Lucy said quietly, sliding out of the booth. Henry slid out too. Lucy took his hand in hers, needing to feel connected to him.

They drove the short distance back to Lucy’s house in silence, each lost in their thoughts. Lucy poured herself a glass of water, and sat on one end of the couch, with her legs tucked underneath her. Henry assumed a similar pose on the opposite end of the couch. Lucy smiled, thinking how such a large man could look so small. They stared at each other for several minutes, sorting their thoughts, neither wanting to be the first to speak.

Finally, unable to stand the quiet Lucy started. “Henry, I love you.”

Henry cut her off, “Darling, I never doubted that you love me.” he said, but Lucy stopped him.

“Let me say this. Henry, I love you, but you hurt me. You hurt me more than anyone or anything ever has. I trusted you. I gave myself to you, body and soul, and it felt like you just threw it away. Things were so good between us, and then they just weren’t, then you were gone. And I was left wondering what I had done wrong. I cried for weeks. And I tried to pull myself out, but normally when I’m down, I watch Pride and Prejudice. But I couldn’t, at the first mention of Mr. Darcy, I started bawling again. Then I got mad. You ruined Pride and Prejudice for me.” Lucy stopped, as her eyes started to tear again.

Henry saw his window, and jumped in. “Lucy, I love you. Leaving you was the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but I genuinely thought I was doing it for your benefit. First I saw you in your classroom,
with your students. They adore you, and you them. Teaching is what you were born to do. Then you said you didn’t know what you would do if you weren’t teaching. I did some research to find out if you could teach in the UK. I didn’t understand everything, but it seemed like a possibility. So I asked you if you’d ever consider moving to Europe. You said it was too far away from your family. So I did what I thought was the right thing, and I left.”

Lucy’s eyes had taken on a distant look, before she gasped and covered her mouth. “Henry, is that why you asked if I’d ever considered moving to Spain?” When he nodded in response she continued, “Henry, I said I didn’t want to move to Spain because it was too far away from my family, AND because I didn’t know anyone there. If I moved to London to be with you, I would have people. I’d have you, and your brothers, and sisters-in-law, and nephews. I’d have a family there. When I said that I meant I didn’t want to move by myself.”

“I realized that after I read your letter, but by then I had been gone for over a month, and, I guess I was embarrassed at my behavior. I kept your letter with me, as a reminder of what we had shared. Before the letter, I had my conviction that I was doing the right thing for you, but after I knew I had thrown away the best thing that had ever happened to me. It took Dany shaking me out of my head, and hitting some sense into me,” he smiled at the joke, “for me to realize that I had to try. Even if you kicked me out, I could see you again.”

“When I saw you waiting there, I didn’t know what to do. I was angry, and sad, and hopeful. And you looked so good standing there in that suit.” She smiled.

“I’ve never been as nervous in my life, as I was standing there, waiting for you to arrive, then watching you decide if you wanted to come talk to me.” he smiled.

“You’ve got Emma to thank for that.”

“Then I believe flowers are in store for Emma this week.”

“She’d like that.” Lucy said thoughtfully.

“Lucy, I know it’s going to take some time for us to be comfortable together again, but please, tell me what you’re thinking. All of this could have been solved, if I had just said what I really thought. I’ll promise to do the same.”

“I can do that. In fact, I’ll tell you what I’m thinking right now. Right now I’m thinking how long it’s been since I’ve really kissed you.” she said, crawling across the couch to him.

“And I’m thinking that we should change that right now.” he smiled, pulling her to him. Their lips came together tentatively. Taking the time to re-learn each other. Henry unfolded his legs, and scooted down to lay on the couch, with Lucy on top of him. Their kisses varied from sweet and light to hot and deep. Henry’s hands slowly caressed Lucy’s back, eventually resting on her bum. Slowly his hands moved back up to the hem of her shirt, slipping underneath. When his hands made contact with her bare back, she stopped, and pulled away from the kiss.

“Henry, I…” she stammered, “…I don’t think I’m ready for us to make love again. My heart has forgiven you, but my head is a stubborn bitch. She won’t let me forget the pain and heartache so fast. So can we just lay here and snog for a while, but know that it’s not going to go any further than that?”

“Of course, Cupcake. I don’t want to rush you into anything.” He gave her quick peck, “you said, snog.” he laughed at her.
“Before you left, I was trying to work more Britishisms into my speech, and snog is a fun one. Fun to say, fun to do.”

“I agree.” he said capturing her mouth again.

Much later, when both of their jaws had grown tired, Lucy and Henry walked the few short blocks to Emma’s house to retrieve Henry’s rental. They knocked, and Emma answered promptly. One glance at Lucy’s face told Emma all she needed to know. Her friend was happy, and she was going to be supportive.

“Hey Em, thanks for driving it home last night. It saved us a lot of time. And thanks for helping chaperone. Did you have a good time?”

“I did, except my date dumped me.” she winked.

“Sorry, he’s cuter than you are.” Lucy retorted. “But we need to be going. Henry has some phone calls to make and I need to go to the grocery store. See you tomorrow!” Henry drove Lucy back to her house. He parked and went inside to call Dany, while she went grocery shopping.

Lucy wandered the aisles of the grocery store, her head in a fog. Henry was back. He still loved her. He hadn’t come out and said it, but he’d implied that he wanted her to move to London with him. It was amazing how much her life could change in 24 hours.

When she arrived back home, Lucy called Heather. Henry’s sister-in-law had been a great friend to her during the two months they’d known each other, before the split. It had been almost as hard for Lucy to lose Heather as it had been to lose Henry. But now she had them both back.

The two women chattered away like magpies. Catching up on each other’s lives since the last time they’d talked. Lucy heard all about Heather’s photography adventures, and Charlie’s skiing excursions. “Why weren’t you skiing?” Lucy asked Heather.

“Henry didn’t tell you?” Heather asked shocked.

“We haven’t really had much time for talking about another other than us.” Lucy explained.

“I was too sick to go skiing.” Heather said, and Lucy was about to ask what was wrong, when Heather continued. “Morning sickness is a bitch.” She said elatedly.

“You’re pregnant! Oh! Congratulations!” Lucy exclaimed.

“We told everyone over Easter. It’s the reason we all got together for Easter, we normally don’t. But I’m not just pregnant. It’s a girl!”

“Oh!” Lucy screamed! “The first Cavill girl in 3 generations! What did Marianne say? She must have been elated.”

“We haven’t told them yet that it’s a girl. We’re going to tell them when we’re there this weekend, so swear Hank to secrecy.” Heather warned.

“Oh, I will. Oh, Heather! Congratulations! When are you due?” Lucy asked.

“Early October. I’d love if you could come for a baby shower. It’s not that far to fly. I know Marianne will try to come, but the other sisters-in-law I don’t think will be able to come. I’d love to have you there.”
“Just tell me when and where, and I’ll be there. If I lived closer, I’d even bake the cake, but cakes don’t fly well.”

“I’ll keep you posted. Oh Marianne is going to be so happy next weekend. Henry is back together with you, and happy, and she’s finally getting the granddaughter she’s always wanted.”

“2015 is shaping up to be quite spectacular.” Lucy agreed.
Monday morning Henry was awake to see Lucy off to work. They shared a long kiss at the door before Lucy left for the carpool. She all but floated to Mindy’s SUV waiting at the curb.

When she’d taken her place in the car and snapped her seatbelt, Mindy pulled away from the curb. “How did prom go?” Mindy asked.

“It went great. The kids were well behaved, and the food was good, and Henry was waiting for me when we got to the hotel for the dance.” Lucy said grinning.

“He what?” Mindy asked. “He was waiting for you? What happened?” Mindy asked, pulling up to Ryan’s house and honking the horn.

“I had Ryan bring all the kids into the ballroom, and then he and I talked. We worked through the major issue then, and he stayed to help chaperone the rest of the night.”

“And just like that? You’re taking him back?” Mindy asked.

“We spent a good part of yesterday talking over everything. He apologized, and we worked through the misunderstanding. He still loves me and I love him.” Lucy explained.

“Ryan do you believe this? She’s just taking him back.” Mindy asked, as Ryan slid into his seat.

“I believe it. They spent almost 20 minutes before dinner talking. He told me he’ll do whatever it takes to keep her happy.” Ryan commented.

“He told you that?” Lucy asked.

“We had a talk,” was all Ryan said.

“Mindy, thank you for caring, but I’m happy, so please don’t worry about me.”

“Ok. It’s just, I’ve watched you grow-up, and I didn’t like seeing you hurting like you were. You tell him he better treat you well, or I will come after him.”

Lucy laughed, “and I’m sure he’ll be very scared of all 5 foot 2 of you.” Lucy laughed.

Lucy fielded questions from curious students all day. She had been expecting them, and had prepared a canned comment to respond. Whenever any of her students asked about Henry, she responded, “My personal life is not your business.” And kept repeating it until they got the hint.

By the time the bell rang for the end of the day, Lucy was exhausted. The long weekend, coupled with deflecting student comments all day had left her weary. Just a couple of minutes after the bell
rang, when all of the students were gone, there was a knock on her door. “Geez, Ryan. You’re sure in a hurry to leave today.” Lucy said while sorting her papers, before looking toward the door.

“Henry.” She smiled, surprised to see him standing in her classroom. “What are you doing here?” She asked him.

“I was in the area, and thought I could give you a ride home.” He explained.

She narrowed her eyes at him. Her house was over 30 miles away. “You were in the area?” She asked suspiciously.

Henry sighed deeply. “Your father called this morning, and invited me to lunch with him.”

Lucy released a nervous laugh. “Really? And how did that go?” She asked awkwardly.

Henry opened and closed his mouth several times, trying to find the right words to describe his meal with Lucy’s father. “Awkward, nerve-wracking, awkward. But good? I think by the time we finished he didn’t hate me.”

Lucy wrapped her arms around him, resting her head on his chest. “I think you were brave for even going.”

“My girlfriend’s father requested for me to join him for lunch, the day after we got back together. I couldn’t very well say no.”

“No, I don’t suppose you could.” She laughed. “He wasn’t too scary was he?”

“No, he mainly just asked about my intentions again. I’m not sure how many times I told him that I love you, and won’t hurt you, and that as long as you want me around, I’ll be here.”

“Well, thank you for facing my dad for me.” she replied, rising on her toes to press a kiss to his lips.

“God, you two, get a room.” Ryan said from the doorway.

Lucy and Henry jumped apart like teenagers before Lucy turned to her friend. “I have a room. We’re in it. Now go away.” she shooed him with her hand.

“I take this to mean you won’t be riding with us this afternoon.” Ryan said, looking from Lucy to Henry and back again.

“No, I’m covered. Thank Ryan. See you tomorrow.” Lucy waved.

“We should be going too. I got the ingredients to make the chocolate cheesecake cupcakes you like for your birthday tomorrow.” Lucy watched Henry’s pupils dilate with hunger.

Henry helped Lucy make the cupcakes for his birthday. He had become surprisingly adept in the kitchen since January. Lucy demonstrated how to properly use a piping bag to create the perfect swirl on top of each cupcake. His first couple attempts were horrible, but as he gained familiarity with the bag, his swirls looked just like Lucy’s. She snapped a couple of pictures of him with the piping bag, and one of him holding a completed cupcake, with the mini chocolate chip garnish. His look of pride made her heart soar.

Lucy treated Henry to dinner at a local Jamaican restaurant, popular in the area for special occasions. Henry didn’t once push Lucy for anything more physical than serious snogging, but Lucy was
having a hard time keeping the boundary herself. After they’d arrived home from their dinner, they settled on the couch, with glasses of wine, facing each other with their legs entwined, asking each other silly “would you rather” questions.

“Darcy, would you rather be an amazing dancer, or an amazing singer?”

“What do you mean, would I rather be? I’m already phenomenal at both.”

Lucy responded laughingly, “I KNOW that’s a lie. I’ve seen you dance. Though now that I think about it, I don’t think I’ve ever heard you sing.”

“I’m a great singer.” Henry replied earnestly.

“Well then, let’s hear it. Give me some Take That, or Spice Girls. One of the two.”

“Take That, or the Spice Girls?” he asked incredulously.

“They’re the two big names I first thought of. Now, enough stalling let’s hear it.”

Henry sat up straight on the couch, and drew his hand in front of his face to clear his expression.

“You, I’ll tell you what I want, what I really, really want, So tell me what you want, what you really, really want”

Lucy doubled over with laughter. When she straightened, she clapped. Henry took a bow. “I wish I had gotten that on camera! I could have sent it to Victoria!” Lucy laughed.

“Well, then let’s both be happy that you didn’t. My turn.” he said, grabbing her phone that she was reading the questions from. “Cupcake, would you rather, no I know that one, how about this, no I know that one too.” Henry said to himself scrolling long the page.

“Wait a minute. What do you already know?” Lucy asked stalling him.

“Would you rather watch a comedy or a horror, you hate horror movies. Would you rather spend $5000 on travel or a big ticket item, obviously travel, would you rather get up early or stay up late, that’s a trick question, you’d rather have a lie-in and then go to bed early.” Henry said, reading off some of the questions in front of him. “What’s that smile for?” He asked when he looked up from the phone.

“I think you like me.” she said in her best teenage girl voice, biting her index finger.

“Well, I guess, you know, if like, you know,” he replied in his teenage boy voice, before crawling across the sofa to kiss her.

Henry flew back to Jersey on Wednesday afternoon. He hated leaving Lucy again, but knowing that she would be waiting for him, and he could call her whenever he wanted to, whenever he needed to hear her voice, made all the difference.

He drove to his parent house, where he would be staying. As usual, he didn’t knock before entering. “Hello?” He called to whoever might be in the house. “Mum? Dad?”

Marianne came around the corner from the kitchen, her mouth wide in a smile. She opened her arms wide to embrace her son. “Where’s Lucy?” she asked, looking around.

“It’s lovely to see you too mum.” Henry laughed.
“Oh, you know I’m always happy to see you. But where is Lucy?”

“She’s working, like most normal people on a Thursday.” He said, kissing his mother on the cheek. “But she sends her love.”

“I’m so glad you two worked things out. Are you happy?” She asked, framing her son’s face in her hands to look directly into his eyes.

“Yes, mum, I am. You don’t need to worry about me.”

Charlie and Heather were the only other of his siblings that came for the weekend. Charlie was running the route with Henry. Heather had originally registered to run, but had been having some problems with the pregnancy, and decided not to run, but she would be waiting at the finish line for her husband and brother-in-law.

Once they had settled into their rhythm. Charlie and Henry had time to talk.

“So, you and Lucy?” Charlie asked.

“Yes, me and Lucy. I almost cocked it up royally this winter, but we’re on our way back to good.”

“What happened?” Charlie asked, his older brother.

Over the course of the next several kilometers Henry explained everything, from the disastrous Christmas proposal to observing her in class. “I was afraid she would turn me down again if I asked her to move to London with me.”

“Love is about taking risks. I’m lucky I could move my job to Canada to be with Heather, but if I couldn’t we would have figured out a way. I would give up anything to be with her.”

“I know. I’m beginning to see that. So enough about me. You’re going to be a papa.” Henry grinned at his brother who could help but grin back.

“Yeah. We’re excited, but honestly? I’m scared. I don’t know anything about babies. And a little girl. I don’t know what little girls like.”

“Luckily, you’re not doing it on your own. Heather will be right beside you, and I’m sure she’s as scared as you are. Your lives are about to change little brother.”

“I know. Mum is ecstatic. She’s wanted a girl since Nik was born.” Charlie smiled.

“Well, she had you, so that was kind of the same thing.” Henry laughed.

“Says the man who spent 45 minutes primping to run 13k.”

“I’m here as an official ambassador. I need to look presentable.”

“Whatever you need to tell yourself brother.” Charlie laughed. “One last push for the finish?”

“I’ll see you there.” Henry said, quickening his pace.

“We’ll see about that!” Charlie yelled, running to catch-up with his brother.

“Darcy, I couldn’t get Wednesday off to come to New York for the premier.” Lucy told Henry sadly
on Sunday night. “Subs are really hard to find this time of year.” she explained.

Henry’s face showed his disappointment. “I understand. But I wish you could be there.”

“How about I call you just before you go to the red carpet? It will be like I’m there in spirit.”

“I’d like that.” Henry smiled.

After they exchanged their goodbyes, Lucy disconnected the call, and smirked to herself. Still holding her phone, she pressed a name in her contacts list. “Dany? He bought it.”

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Henry spent most of Tuesday and Wednesday in interviews. Talking about the movie, or playing whatever inane game the interviewer had in mind to break-up the monotony of answering the same questions 150 times in a row. His co-stars helped. But what got him through the day was knowing he could talk to Lucy in the evening.

He dressed carefully in the suit that had been chosen for him. The dark charcoal was always a flattering color on him, and the yellow tie added a pop of color, or so he’d been told. He gave himself one last look in the mirror before stepping out of the suite that had been his home for the last three days.

Dany was waiting for him in the lobby. “There you are! You look fabulous. Are you ready?”

“Nearly. I told Lucy I would call her just before we left.” He said, extracting his phone from his inside jacket pocket. He opened the facetime app and pressed Lucy’s contact name. The app rang three times, before connecting with her. Her face didn’t immediately appear on the screen, but his back did, and it was getting closer. Her turned to look behind him, and saw her. His Lucy. His jaw dropped, she looked spectacular.

She wore a dress he’d never seen before. The high, halter neck fell to a cinched waist, and the skirt flared slightly, and stopped just above her knees in the front, but her mid-calf in the back. The dress would have been quite simple, with it’s black fabric, but instead of plain black, it was zebra striped vertically, and where the design would have been white, was a rose gold sparkle. On her feet were strappy black shoes, and the earrings he’d given her for christmas graced her ears.

She smiled at him, and disconnected the video call. “Lucy?” He couldn’t believe his eyes. “I thought you couldn’t get a substitute.”

“I couldn’t for Friday. I have to fly back tomorrow for work. But I wanted to support you in this. Dany helped me.” she gestured to his agent standing just behind him.

He turned to Dany, “You knew about this?”

“Of course I did. Where do you think she got the dress? She flew in around noon and has been hiding in my room all afternoon, letting the hair and makeup team do their magic. Which by the way you haven’t said anything about.” Dany reminded him.

He quickly turned back to Lucy, “Darling, you’re beautiful. Well, you’re always beautiful to me, but tonight you look amazing.”

“Thank you.” she blushed, and kissed him, one slow deep kiss.

“That’s enough of that, we really do need to be going.” Dany said, interrupting the kiss.
Henry held Lucy’s hand out to the waiting limo. On the way to site of the premiere Henry and Dany gave her tips on dealing with the press, how to smile, and poses.

The three exited the limo and waited with the other stars of the film, who remembered Lucy from the previous summer. Armie’s wife was also so Lucy spent time with her, when they weren’t needed for pictures.

Lucy was positive she’d never had so many pictures taken in her life. Her eyes were burning from all the flashes. She heard her name mentioned several times while Henry was giving interviews. “I guess we’re really going public with this.” she thought to herself.

Lucy was surprised at how smoothly the red carpet ran. They were ushered along at a decent pace. Though they stopped every so often for another set of photographers, or for another interview. Through it all, Henry was the consummate professional. This was not her Henry, this was movie star Henry in all his glory. It gave her a pause.

Dany noticed the wary look entering Lucy’s eyes. “You know none of this is real, right? He’s playing a part right now, just as much as if he were in a movie. This is what he does, not who he is. You know the real Henry. Don’t let this Henry scare you off.”

“Thank you Dany.”

“Anytime sweetie.” Dany smiled.

After the red carpet, they had a chance to breathe, and get a drink before being ushered into the theatre to watch the movie. Lucy couldn’t stop her small gasp when Henry first appeared on screen. He looked so good in his suit. Lucy was captivated by the film, but also couldn’t resist looking at Henry. His eyes seemed to be dissecting every detail of his performance.

When the movie ended and all of the proper applause had been shared, they were ushered back to the waiting limo to be whisked off to the after party. Lucy’s head spun from all the action around her. She recognized many of the attendees of the party. She stuck to Henry’s side like glue. She hadn’t been to any parties like this to know how to handle herself on her own. Though she was content to drink the never ending glasses of champagne and nibble on the canapes that were being circulated around the room.

Around 11, when the party looked like it was about to kick up another notch, Lucy leaned over to whisper in Henry’s ear, “why don’t we take this party back to your place?” Henry froze in place as the implication of her words hit him. He raised his eyebrows in question. She nodded in response.

Lucy couldn’t remember what words Henry had used to make their exit, but less than 10 minutes later they were ensconced in the back of the limo, making its way back to the hotel. Their mouths were searching, and their hands exploring. Lucy tugged at his tie, already partially loosened, until it was untied completely, finding the buttons underneath. She slid the first two buttons from their holes, before her lips sought the skin that had been exposed.

They managed to keep their composure through the hotel lobby, but once the elevator doors had closed, their mouths found each others again. When the doors opened on Henry’s floor, they stumbled their way to his door, not separating enough to walk to the door.

Lucy had Henry, pressed between herself and the door, as he fumbled with the keycard. Lucy took it from him, and as his lips attacked her neck, she managed to insert the car into its slot. They tumbled into the room, and before she could breathe, Henry had Lucy’s back against the door. His hand shoved her skirt up before ripping off her knickers, finding her ready for him.
Taking a moment to free himself, and taking a moment to look into her eyes, drove himself into her. Her gasp quickly became a groan, as he drove her to climax. She shuddered against him as his own climax rushed through him.

Slowly they came down from their initial fervor, both breathing heavily. “Think you can make it to the bed?” He asked, laughing.

“We’ll make it there eventually.” she said, reaching behind her neck to unclasp her dress.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I’m back to work now. Not sure when the next update will be coming. Hopefully in the next couple of weeks, but no promises.
“What is he even doing with her? She’s not even pretty. He could do so much better.”

“He looks so happy.”

“How could someone that looks like him be dating someone who looks like her?”

“I’ll sum it up in 4 words: He’s hot, she’s not.”

“She’s a lucky gal, but she’ll have to drop some of the weight if she wants to keep his attention from wandering.”

“She looks sweet, and she obviously adores him.”

“How could someone who spends so much time at the gym be with someone who obviously hasn’t been to a gym this century?”

“Well, he’s definitely not into looks.”

“She won’t last long.”

“So glad he’s found someone, he deserves to be happy.”

Lucy had been torturing herself with internet comment sections since returning from New York 2 days ago. She and Henry had been inundated by paparazzi when they arrived at the airport on Thursday afternoon. Henry had warned her they would probably be there, and Dany presented her with a pair of sunglasses to wear.

She knew it wasn’t healthy for her to be reading the comments on the pictures of Henry and herself from the premiere, but like a car crash, she couldn’t pull her eyes away. The comments seemed to be an even mixture of “good for them” and “what’s he doing with her?”

Lucy’s phone played the sweeping piano music that signaled Henry was calling. She dragged her eyes from the screen to reach for her phone.

“Hi Darcy,” She answered on a sigh.

“Darling, what’s wrong? You’re not reading more internet comments are you?”

“I can’t stop! They’re like potato chips, can’t have just one! How can people be so mean?”

“Darling, please stop reading them. No good will come from reading those.”

“They’re not all bad! Some mention how happy they are that you look happy. More than one has congratulated me for ‘landing’ you, like you’re a trophy walleye in a fishing contest not a human being.”
“Well, you are quite a-lure-ing.” Henry joked.

“Wha, whaaa. Stick to acting, comedy isn’t your strong suit.” Lucy laughed.

“I agree, that was a bad one. But seriously Cupcake, you’re not letting those comments get to you, are you?”

“I’m really trying. I know the majority are really just jealous of me, which I can’t quite wrap my head around, and I know that those people don’t know me, they don’t know you, they don’t know us. They’re just shouting into the void.” She sighed again, “but what’s really gotten to me is the number of phone calls and emails I’ve gotten. I’m hearing from people I haven’t talked to since high school or college. It’s crazy.”

“That will happen. Are you terribly concerned by it?”

“No. I know if I haven’t talked to them in over a decade, there’s probably a reason for it. Though I did want to run something past you.” Lucy said hesitantly.

“What would that be?” Henry asked.

“I was thinking, now that we’re out and official in the press and what not, I might change my facebook status, and profile picture. I want to use the one of us kissing on the London Eye. What do you think?”

“I think you should do whatever you want to do. It won’t bother me if you do that. I like that picture, just know that it will make the rounds too once you make it public.”

“I think I’m fine with that. Did I tell you, I had to make my school Instagram account private? I gained over a thousand followers in a day. I had to go in and remove them, it took like an hour!”

Henry chuckled, “That will happen too. If you haven’t already locked down all of your social media, you might want to look at that.”

“I’ve already got that as locked as I can make it, but my school account is for parents and family to see what we’re doing in class, and for the travel club. It took people less than a day to find me.”

“Have you gotten any threats or anything of that nature?” He asked worried.

“No, just the random Insta-followers.”

“But you will tell me if you get anything like that, won’t you?”

“Probably…” Lucy shrugged.

“Lucy, this is serious. If you get any threats, you need to tell me.”

“Ok, I will.” She said placatingly.

“What are you doing today?” Henry asked, changing the subject.

“It’s Saturday, so I’ve got some stuff to do around the house, but then this afternoon I have our big pre-trip meeting with all the parents of the kids going on the trip. They need to sign a bunch of paperwork, and I collect tip money. It’ll probably take about 3 hours.” she made a face.

“I would imagine that parents can get quite nervous when sending their children on a trip without them.”
“Nervous doesn’t even begin to describe some of these parents. But it’s my job to allay their fears and remind them that everything will be fine.”

“Well, good luck with that.”

“Thanks. Will I get to see you again before we leave for Europe?”

“I think I can stop in for a couple of days on my way to Hong Kong.”

“I’d like that, but if you can’t I understand. I looked at the schedule Dany sent me, and we’re going to be in Madrid at the same time.”

“Any chance I could get you to accompany me to the Madrid premiere?”

“I don’t think so. We’re so exhausted by the end of the day on these tours, all we want to do is sleep. Though I’m sure I could get you an invite to dinner with us.”

“We’ll see what my press schedule is like.”

“I have to go, my laundry is beeping and I haven’t even showered yet. Say hi to Kal for me. Tell him I miss him.”

“I will. I love you, and I’ll talk to you later. And stop looking at internet comments!”

“I love you too. And I’ll try.” She smiled, disconnecting the call.

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May passed like it always did for Lucy, much too quickly. Besides getting all of the arrangements finalized for her trip with her students, she also had final projects to oversee for her students and then grade when they were handed in.

In the end Henry had only managed to get a day in Minnesota on his way to Hong Kong. He flew into the small local airport on a Tuesday night, and Lucy picked him up.

“So Darling, I was thinking, as I only have one day here, why don’t I come to school with you tomorrow?” Henry suggested.

Lucy glanced at him out of the corner of her eye. “I don’t think that will work.” she said sadly, watching Henry’s face fall. “I’m not going to work tomorrow. I took a sick day.” She said and faked a cough. “I just don’t think I’m going to be able to get out of bed tomorrow,” faked another weak cough.

“Why Ms. Claussen, are you playing hooky?” Henry asked playfully.

“Damn straight I am. I was serious about not being able to get out of bed. I don’t plan on leaving the bedroom. Unless of course we get more adventurous, there’s always the sofa, or the kitchen, we tried the shower, that doesn’t work.”

Henry visibly swallowed, and coughed, “You’re going to want to drive faster, darling.”

“Oh, really. And why is that?” She asked on a laugh.

“Because I plan on ravishing you in about 10 minutes, and I’d really like you to not be driving while I am.” He explained, his hand snaking up to her neck, to rub at the spot he knew made her go weak. He felt the vehicle accelerate.
As they neared Lucy’s house, Henry leaned closer to press a kiss to her neck. His lips searching, teasing at the sensitive flesh behind her ear. Lucy moaned in response, before lifting her shoulder to dissuade his ministrations. “I’m going to get into an accident if you don’t stop that.” She warned.

“I said you had 10 minutes.” He teased.

“We can’t ravish each other if we’re dead. And Dany would kill me if you got injured in a car accident while I was driving.” She said, pushing his face away. “Now be a good boy for 5 more minutes, and I promise you’ll get a reward.” She placated.

“As you wish.” He smirked. She stuck her tongue out at him. “Don’t stick that out unless you intend to use it.” Henry warned.

“Oh, I intend to.” She teased.

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“Henry! Please!” Lucy panted, gripping the pillow under her head. “Stop teasing me!”

Henry’s only reply was to slowly curl his fingers inside of her. His thumb brushed lightly against the bundle of nerves he’d been teasing for the past 15 minutes. Keeping her right on the edge, but not allowing her to fall.

He removed his fingers slowly, before entering her again just as slowly. His lips claimed hers in a deep soul searing kiss, before raining kisses down the length of her body. Stopping to cherish her breasts.

His mouth claimed her nipple, sucking it deep into his mouth, teasing with his tongue. Lucy moaned her response, her voice becoming hoarse from his prolonged teasing. His lips made their way to her other breast to lave the nipple with his tongue, before sucking it deep into his mouth.

When his mouth finally left her breasts, Lucy felt on fire. She could feel her climax building, but Henry wouldn’t let her go. When she tried to take matters into her own hand, he brushed her hand away. “Stop that now, keep those hands on your pillow, if you don’t behave, I’ll have to tie you up.” He said teasingly.

“Please, Henry. I can’t…” Lucy begged, unable to finish her thought as his mouth closed over her button and sucked hard. His fingers increased their speed and intensity. It was mere seconds before Lucy flew over the precipice, her entire body tensing with the pleasure finally coursing through her system.

As she started to come down from her high, Henry’s lips traveled back up her body, before joining them in one smooth thrust. Lucy gasped at the deluge of sensations flooding her already overloaded system.

“Come on darling. I know you have another one for me.” He coaxed, thrusting heavily, rolling his hips to hit every nerve ending she possessed. Lucy’s climax built until Henry’s frantic thrusts pushed her over the edge again, just before he spilled himself into her.

He collapsed on top of her, both panting for breath. They laid, a sticky, sweaty, tangle of arms and legs while they caught their breath. Eventually Henry rolled off of Lucy to lay beside her.

“I don’t think I can feel my legs.” Lucy said.

“That’s ok. I can’t feel mine either.”
Lucy and Henry made love off and on through the night and the next morning. They lived in a sex-fueled bubble that only included the two of them. They took a rest on the sofa, snuggled together, watching one of Lucy’s favorite movies.

“Henry?” Lucy asked.

“Hmmm?” Was his only response.

“What’s going to happen this summer?”

“What do you mean darling?”

“I mean, are we going to see each other? What’s your schedule like?”

“I’m not 100% sure, I’d have to look at my calendar, but I know I have publicity for U.N.C.L.E. through June. I’m not certain how far into July it goes. Then I don’t think I have anything, other than training, scheduled until November, when I need to be in Jordan for filming.”

“And I have workshops to attend at least during the last week of August. I don’t think I’ll have any other trainings.” Lucy said.

“So, it would seem we have about 6 weeks. Would you want to spend at least some of that time with me in London? It would give you a chance to see what living there would be like. Experience London like a local.”

“I’d like that. I can finally spend a day in the British Museum. I should see if there are any shows I want to see.” Lucy said, thinking out loud.

Henry laughed, “I seem to remember your New Year’s Resolution being something along the lines of not planning so much.”

“No one keeps their resolutions.” she shook her head.

The final two weeks of school passed in a blur to Lucy. She and Henry talked almost everyday, usually from some exotic locale that was on Lucy’s list of places to experience. She missed him interminably, but knowing that they would be together soon made the separation easier.

Henry tried again to get Lucy to attend the Madrid premiere of U.N.C.L.E. with him with no success, Lucy had contacted her tour leader and asked about him joining them for a meal, or even an excursion, and he’d said it should be no problem. Lucy couldn’t wait to see Henry in Spain.

Lucy sat with the other staff members at graduation. She thought back to the previous year’s graduation. She had sat with these same people, wondering if she was going to be alone forever, ending up the Old Maid teacher, teaching these graduating students’ children in 20 years, and looking forward to her trip to Europe. This year, she had another trip planned, with her students, and then would be returning to Europe, to essentially live for 6 weeks. “What a difference a year can make,” she thought to herself.
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Sorry for the long time between chapters, life and writer’s block teamed up on me. But I’m back with the next chapter, and chapter 53 should be coming soon after. I hope you all enjoy it!

“Does everyone have their passports? Does everyone have their money? Good, then give mom and dad a hug, and let’s get on the move!” Lucy looked over her group of 22 students and two chaperones accompanying her to Europe. The students dispersed to find their parents and give them one last hug before their bus left the school parking lot for the airport. Lucy’s mom, Marie, and Emma were the two chaperones. John Claussen hugged his daughter tight, and gave her a kiss on the cheek before turning to his wife.

Looking around Lucy noted several tearful parents, and more than one tearful student waving goodbye to each other as they boarded the bus. The students were all excited for all the sights they would get to see, the parents were fearful to send their babies out into the world. Lucy felt an even mixture of nerves, excitement, and calm. The students had been raising money for this trip for two years, and it was finally here. She was getting to show her students a couple of her favorite cities in the world, and of course, Henry would be waiting for her in Madrid.

On the bus to the airport, Lucy talked strategy with Emma and Marie, assigned duty days, and talked group dynamics. Each chaperone was assigned a “team” of travelers. Lucy had hand picked her team of her favorite students, mostly consisting of her drama students.

“And Henry is joining us in Madrid?” Marie asked.

“Yes. His premier is the first night we’re in Madrid, then, hopefully, he’ll join us for the next day when we head out to Toledo.”

“Are you going to this premiere too?” Marie asked her daughter.

“No. I can’t leave the group. These parents have entrusted their kids to me. I can’t just go off for the evening and party. Plus I don’t have anything to wear. Can you imagine what a dress would look like by the time we’ve switched hotels three times?”

“I’m sure Emma and I could handle them for one evening.” Marie insisted.

“I don’t doubt that you could, but when push comes to shove, if anything happens, it’s my butt on the line.” Lucy explained.

“You, my dear, are much too cautious.”

“That’s not what you said last year when I said I was going to Europe for six weeks,” she reminded her mother.

“It comes and goes.” Marie laughed.

When Lucy and the group were checked in at the airport and had found their gate, Lucy released
them to find lunch. “Stay in groups of 3 or more, don’t go out of security, and be back here by 1:30.” Lucy told the group before sending them off. She turned to Emma and Marie, “lunch?” She asked, and the two women nodded in agreement. They finally settled on a food court lunch, and went their separate ways before coming back to share a table. While Emma and Marie ate at a normal speed, Lucy sped through her meal.

“Hungry?” Emma asked laughing.

“No, I told Henry I’d call before we boarded. Then if we have enough time in Amsterdam, I’m going to call him after we land.” Lucy said. Emma gagged.

“Very funny. Do I need to remind you what you were like last Spring? And I haven’t seen him in almost a month.”

“Why didn’t he come after the Asia leg of the press tour?” Marie asked.

“I told him not to. Between the end of the year and last minute prep for the trip, I didn’t need the distraction. I mean we’ve talked almost every day, but it’s not the same.”

“Go. Go talk to your ridiculously good looking, British boyfriend. We’ll see you at the gate.” Emma laughed, shooing her friend away.

Lucy found a quiet corner near their gate and called Henry. Lucy could hear the smile in his voice as he answered the call. After sharing their I miss yous and can’t wait to see yous, Lucy commented, “Emma says we’re nauseating. I told her to shut her trap.” Lucy laughed.

“Well done. I’m counting the days until I can see you again.” Henry said, making Lucy swoon.

“Me too. I’m torn. I don’t want the trip to go too fast, we’ve all been looking forward to this for two years, but I want to be in Madrid already so I can see you. I probably won’t be able to call much before Madrid. Internet is usually spotty at the hotels they book us in, and we’re so tired at the end of the day or touring anyway that all we want to do is shower off the day, and sleep. But I’ll be able to check my texts.”

“Remind me what your itinerary is again.” Henry said, loving how excited Lucy was when she talked about all the activities they had packed into very few days. Eventually the time came for the call to disconnect, the travelers were starting to congregate at the gate, and boarding would begin soon.

“Darcy, I have to go. I love you! And I’ll see you in 9 days. If I can call from Amsterdam, I will, but I also promised Sarah that I’d call her, since we’ll be so close.”

“Well, Cupcake, if I hear from you, I will, and if not, have a phenomenal time, and I will see you in 9 days. Madrid or bust.”

“I love you, Henry.” Lucy said thickly, her eyes watering slightly.

“I love you too, Lucy.” Henry said wistfully.

Lucy wiped her eyes and rejoined her group. They were allowed priority board because of the size of their group. Lucy settled into her cramped seat near the back of the plane, an aisle on her right side, her mother on her left. “I miss flying with Henry.” Lucy grumbled.

“Well, you’re stuck back here with us commoners for this trip. When you fly back to London, you can fly in luxury, until then I don’t want to hear it. You at least have an aisle.” Said her mother from
the middle seat.

The flight passed uneventfully, and the group landed in Amsterdam, for a layover of a few hours before flying to Milan to start their tour. Lucy guided the tired teens through customs and they all found their gate. Lucy gave the same instructions as in Minneapolis. The travelers all looked exhausted, and went in search of coffee. Lucy attempted a call to Henry, but his phone went to voicemail. Lucy was disappointed but tried not to let her emotions take over. She was jet lagged and had to be on her game for the kids. She called Sarah, who did answer. They had a brief conversation, mostly about the upcoming trip, and the flight they had just finished. She was smiling by the time she disconnected the call with her friend. The kids were starting to migrate back to their gate. Most looking slightly more awake, and clutching shopping bags from airport stores.

Most of the group, including Lucy slept on the short flight from Amsterdam to Milan. Lucy led the tired but excited group through customs and baggage claim. Finally they met their tour director, Giuseppe, a handsome Italian man with gorgeous olive toned skin, and dark hair. “He’ll be popular with the girls.” Lucy thought as she introduced herself to him. He led the group to a waiting bus to take them to the Cinque Terre.

Once Lucy was sure her kids had what they needed, she approached Giuseppe. She had exchanged several emails with him before the tour, but now that the tour had started, she wanted to reconfirm that Henry would be welcome to join the group in Madrid.

“Ciao, Giuseppe.” Lucy said, taking a place in the seat next to the man.

“Ciao, Lucia. What can I do for you?”

“I just wanted to remind you that my boyfriend will be meeting us in Madrid, and will probably be coming with us to Toledo.”

“Yes, I remember, thank you for reminding me. Will he be joining us for any meals?”

“I don’t know. I’ll text him when I have WiFi. When do you need to know?”

“The day before is fine. But while I have have you up here, we have some things to take care of,” he said pulling a binder from his bag. He and Lucy arranged the students room assignments and talked about any food allergies the group had. Eventually the group arrived at their hotel in time to check in and explore the city for an hour or so before dinner.

Lucy looked around at her students, most looked like they would fall asleep in their pesto. Lucy felt the same. After their dinner, Lucy called a group meeting where she went over the following day’s itinerary, and scheduled curfew time. None of the students complained about the 9:00 curfew she set, they all went straight to their rooms for a decent night’s sleep.

The morning arrived bright and beautiful. The warm Italian air blew through the open window of her hotel room as Lucy readied herself for the first day of actual touring. She met all of the travelers in the hotel’s restaurant area for breakfast, and reminded them to pack or wear their swimsuits.

With more than a little confusion, the group managed to board their bus to the train station, then the train that would take them into the Cinque Terre. They arrived to the first of the five little villages around mid morning. The sign at the train station read, Riomaggiore. There were several people on the platform waiting to catch the train to the next village. Lucy instructed her travelers to disembark and stand clear of the other passengers until the train had departed.

Lucy was doing a quick head count of her team when she heard a voice ask her, “Mi scusi,
Signorina. Dov’è it porto?”

Lucy finished her count, and turned toward the voice. “I’m sorry, I don’t speak it...HENRY!” She exclaimed, recognizing the handsome man in the tank top, cargo shorts, and baseball cap. She ran to him, jumping to wrap her legs around his waist as her arms encircled his neck. She pressed her lips to his in a kiss that felt like coming home.

“Lucia? Scusami, but we’re going this way.” Lucy heard Giuseppe say behind her. Lucy jumped apart from Henry.

“Sorry, Giuseppe. This is my boyfriend Henry. Henry this is Giuseppe our tour director.” Lucy said, making introductions. The two men shook hands.

“I thought he was not joining us until Madrid.” Giuseppe said to Lucy.

“Oh, I’m just here for the day,” Henry explained. “I have to be in Rome for work in two days, so I thought I would pop in to see my girl.”

“Well, Benvenuto in Italia.” Giuseppe greeted, “We’re all going this way.” He indicated behind him, out of the station. Lucy took Henry’s hand and they followed the group off the platform. Giuseppe led the group through the tunnel into the city, and gave directions to different sights, as well as the meeting time to go to the next village.

Lucy called her group around. “Ok guys, You heard Giuseppe. I want to to either be with an adult, or in groups of 3 or more. Be back here,” she pointed to the spot they were standing on, “by 11:20. That’s 10 minutes before Giuseppe’s time. Remember, groups of 3 or more, or with an adult, watch your belongings, and have some fun. You are excused.” Lucy said, sending the kids off. Most stayed for another minute to say hello to Henry, before they took off. Lucy turned to Emma and Marie. “Look what I found!” she pointed to Henry.

“It’s nice to see you again Henry.” Marie said, pulling the tall man in for a hug. This was the first time she had seen him since the breakup.

“Marie, it’s lovely to see you again. How are you?” Henry asked, returning the hug.

“Well, I’m in Italy, so I can’t complain,” she joked.

“Emma, lovely to see you again as well.” He hugged Lucy’s friend.

“Sure, first you take away my prom date, now you take away my travel companion. So rude,” Emma joked.

“Only for today. I’m on my way to Rome for some press obligations. I thought it would be fun to surprise everyone.” He explained wrapping his arm around Lucy’s shoulders. Lucy leaned into his side, smiling like a fool.

“Should we go explore?” Lucy asked the group, and the four set off up the hill through the town. They passed several groups of students.

“Really guys? Gelato at,” she checked her watch, “10:15 in the morning?”

“We’re on vacation,” was their response.

“Fair enough. But make sure you’re drinking water too!” She called to them as they walked on.
The four adults wandered the streets of the little village, popping into shops as they felt like it. Emma and Marie either hung back from the couple, or walked ahead, to give them some space.

At the appointed time, Lucy was pleased to see all of her students gathered on time. They boarded the train to the next village. Manarola, the sign for this village read. Lucy gave the students their gathering time, and let them roam freely. Lucy, Henry, Marie, and Emma found a cafe, and claimed a table. Emma and Henry ordered coffee, while Marie and Lucy ordered ice water. The day had turned quite warm. Henry kept the women entertained with stories from the press tour, most of which Lucy had already heard, but was happy to listen to again, simple because Henry was there in person telling the story.

The four wandered the city, making their way to waterfront, where a group of the students had found a rock and were jumping off of it, into the Mediterranean. Lucy laughed, took pictures, and warned them to be careful.

The group made their way to the last of the villages they would be visiting. Monterroso al Mare. Giuseppe told them they would have the most time here. They would meet back at the train station at 6:00 to go back to their hotel for the evening. Lucy organized her travelers, helping them find places to get lunch. Henry joined Lucy, Emma, Marie and six travelers at a long table at a quaint cafe. Lucy answered questions about Italian cuisine, proud that the students would expand their horizons. When everyone had finished their meals, Lucy asked their server for their checks. The server informed Lucy the bill had been taken care of by the gentleman at the end of the table, and nodded in Henry’s direction. Lucy gave him a look that said, thank you, and you shouldn’t have done that.

“Chicos and chicas, I think you all owe a very large grazie, to Henry. He paid for everyone’s lunch today.” she told the kids. Their eyes went wide, and a couple of the girls stood to give Henry a hug in thanks.

“Mom, Emma, I think Henry and I are going to wander by ourselves for a bit. We’ll meet you at the gelato stand by the train station in, say, two hours?”

“I wondered when you would cast us off. See you then.” Emma said, waving.

Henry and Lucy walked back to the beach. Henry claimed them a couple of beach chairs, and they sat in the shade, soaking in each others presence. Hey took off their shoes and walked down the beach, playing in the gentle waves rolling up on the sand. Then it happened. A girl approached Henry. He had been recognized. Lucy stood off to the side while Henry signed autographs and she volunteered to take pictures. Lucy wasn’t sure how long the picture session went on, but she looked at her watch, and caught Henry’s attention, pointing at her wrist, indicating it was time to go. Henry excused himself politely, took Lucy’s hand and together they walked toward the gelato stand. Lucy looked behind her to see more than one camera phone being pointed in their direction.

“Sorry about that darling.” Henry apologized.

“You have nothing to apologize for. I know that being with you in public carries the risk of attention. It’s just part and parcel of being with you.”

Henry kissed her temple, “Well thank you for tolerating it, Cupcake.”

“I tolerate it because I love you, Darcy.” Lucy replied kissing the underside of his jaw.

Lucy and Henry said goodbye at the train station. Lucy knew the entire bus of travelers was watching them, but she didn’t care. She kissed Henry deeply, and left him with a promise to see him in a week. Henry stood waving as the bus pulled away, and Lucy steadfastly didn’t meet the gazes of
the other Tour Leaders on the bus. She assumed she’d probably get some questions from them at the leader’s meeting that night, but it was nothing she couldn’t handle.

Lucy stared out the window of the bus, when a voice drifted back to her. One of the students from one of the other groups was talking to his Tour Leader. “Superman was here today! I got my picture with him! Check it out!” The boy of about 15 showed his phone to his teacher. She looked at the screen, then back at Lucy. Yes, a lot of questions. Lucy thought to herself.

The rest of the trip passed quickly. Lucy managed to not lose any of her students, and to her knowledge none of them had snuck out at night. On the high-speed train from Barcelona to Madrid, Lucy looked the picture of impatience. Her fingers drummed on the armrest of her seat, she checked her watch, and the estimated arrival time.

“Honey, you need to calm down. You’re doing to give yourself an aneurysm. Settle down. The train will get to the station on time, and Henry will probably be waiting for you at the hotel, just like you arranged. But you need to stop that drumming before I break all of your fingers.” Marie said, putting her hand over her daughter’s.

“Sorry mom. I don’t know why I’m so anxious. I just saw him a week ago!”

“I believe they call it love honey.” Marie laughed, and Lucy managed to settle herself.

The train stopped at Atocha station, in the center of the city. Lucy and the group collected their luggage and began the trek to their hotel, which was just a few blocks from the station. Lucy, who had been at the back of the pack for most of the tour, lead the pack to the hotel. Henry was indeed waiting in the lobby. Lucy flung herself into his arms, ecstatic to see him again, then quickly separated from him. She had told her travelers that everything was hotter in Madrid, and she was right. She was a sweaty mess, just from the three block walk from the train station.

“Darling, I can’t stay. I have to get back to the press. But I will see you later. Leave your phone on, and I can call you when I’m done.” Henry said, kissing Lucy’s forehead before exiting the hotel as the last of the group arrived. Lucy didn’t see the wink exchanged by Marie and Henry.

The group deposited their luggage in their assigned rooms quickly, before heading right back out for lunch and a visit to the Prado museum. After spending their allotted two hours at the Prado, the group returned to the hotel to freshen-up for their evening tour in the Puerta del Sol and dinner nearby. Lucy unlocked the room she was sharing with her mother, and saw a garment bag hanging on the bathroom door that hadn’t been there when she left earlier. There was a note attached to the bag.

Cupcake -

I’ve worked out everything with your mother. Put on the dress, and make yourself look as beautiful as I think you are. A car will be around to collect you at 5:00.

Darcy

Lucy turned to her mother, who was smirking. “Mom, I told you. I can’t just leave the group. I’m responsible for them!”

Marie walked to her daughter, and put her hand on her shoulders. “Dear, nothing is going to happen. Emma and I have this. Go have fun. We’re doing a walking tour and dinner, nothing bad is going to happen. Now, you had better start getting ready, you only have about 90 minutes.”

It was close, but with the help of Emma, Marie, and couple of the girls, Lucy was just being zipped
into the dress Henry had procured for her, when the front desk called, telling her the car was waiting.

Marie surveyed her daughter. The dress was simple, but beautiful. The fabric was light and airy, which was a godsend in the hot Madrid atmosphere. The gorgeous sapphire blue material dipped into a V at Lucy’s neck. It flowed away from her waist gently down to her knee in the front, while the back had a slight train. The dress billowed whenever Lucy took a step, creating a dramatic effect. She looked beautiful. Henry had even thought to supply shoes for her. The simple white strappy sandals showcased the tan Lucy had acquired in the past week. One of the girls styled Lucy’s hair in a sideways braid, ending in curls. Paired with the dress, Marie barely recognized her daughter.

“Mom, here’s my phone. Call Henry’s number if there’s an emergency, and I will call you when we’re done at the premiere.” Lucy said, giving her mother a hug before rushing out the door and down to the waiting car.

Lucy found a driver waiting for her in the lobby. He escorted her out to the waiting car and opened the door for her. He navigated the Madrid city traffic with ease, and pulled up to a plaza near the Plaza Mayor. The driver came around to open the door for Lucy. She exited the car, and easily found the entrance to the red carpet. She showed the pass Henry had included in his note, and gave her name. She was led to a waiting area, but was not left waiting long, before Henry arrived, looking stunning in a cream colored suit with a shirt almost the same color as her dress.

“You came!” He yelled as he saw her, pulling her close carefully.

“I wasn’t really given much choice.” She gave him one of her teacher looks. “You colluded with my mother.”

“Are you terribly upset?” He asked, hoping he wasn’t in serious trouble.

“No. I wanted to come, but if anything happens, I’m blaming you.”

“Fair enough.”

As they walked the red carpet, Lucy thought about how she’d gotten to this point. How she was now going to be in a newspaper in a third country. She, who normally tried to make sure there were as few pictures of her out in the public as possible, was now attending her second movie premiere at the arm of the lead actor.

When the interviewers asked Henry about her and they found out she was a Spanish teacher, they asked her to come forward as well. She begged off in the best Spanish she could muster in the situation. Her nerves had all but pushed all of her Spanish knowledge out of her brain. It took all she had to remember, “No gracias, este es la noche de mi novio. Lo siento. (No thank you. This is my boyfriend’s night.) But she did notice an increase in the number of flashes after her profession was announced. “Aye dios mio.” she thought to herself.
Lucy was surprised to find that she and Henry would not be watching the actual movie at this premiere. She stood next to Henry in the lobby of the theatre hosting the premiere.

“I have to be here for the press, and the red carpet, but staying for the film is optional. Then I’ll need to make an appearance at the after party.” Henry informed her.

“Then what do we do for two hours?” She asked him. His eyebrow went up suggestively. “Please, with Madrid traffic? I doubt we’d even make it to your hotel before we had to turn around.” She laughed.

“We could find somewhere quiet for dinner.” He suggested, Lucy laughed again.

“Honey. This is Spain. It’s only 7:30. We may be able to get tapas, but it’s way too early for dinner.” she told him. They were discussing the possibility of going for tapas, when they were approached by two other couples. His co-stars, Armie and Alicia were accompanied by Armie’s wife Elizabeth, who Lucy had met at the New York premiere, and a tall man that Lucy thought looked a lot like Michael Fassbender.

Armie spoke first, “we were talking about going to find some tapas before the after party. Do you two want to join us?”

Lucy and Henry exchanged a look before Henry turned to Armie, “We’d love to.” The six got a recommendation from an aide working on the premiere, and set off around the corner. Lucy had to pick-up her dress to keep it from trailing on the ground.

The group ordered a variety of tapas and a couple pitchers of Sangria. They talked like they’d been friends forever. When Lucy’s glass of Sangria was empty Alicia’s boyfriend, who turned out to actually BE Michael Fassbender, picked-up the pitcher to refill it. Lucy put her hand over the top to stop him.

“Aw, come now Lucy, don’t be a wet blanket.” Michael said coaxingly.

“Sorry, Michael. I’ve spent the better part of the last ten days trying to keep a group of American teenagers from drinking, I can’t go back smelling like booze. But if you’re in London next week, look us up. I’ll gladly let you buy me as many drinks as you want then.” Lucy laughed.

“Be careful there Lucy,” Alicia warned, “he’ll keep buying you drinks until you pass out.” The whole table laughed.

When the time came, they all walked back to the theatre to catch their rides to the after party, and to take Lucy back to her hotel. Henry accompanied Lucy back to her hotel. Leaving her with a long kiss before heading off to the after party. Before he left, Lucy reminded him to be back by 8:15 the following morning, if he was going to join them on the tour for the day.

Lucy mounted the three steps into the hotel’s lobby and found Giuseppe standing at the registration desk. “Ah Lucia, you are back. I hope you had a good time at the party for your boyfriend’s work.”

“I did, thank you. Did everything go ok for the evening?”
“Ah, yes. All was well. Many students bought gelato for dessert. I did not realize your boyfriend was the Superman, Lucia.”

“Yes, he’s an actor. It’s still ok if he comes with us tomorrow, isn’t it?”

“Sì, certo. Though I would think he would not enjoy touring with high schoolers.”

‘He’s grown quite close to some of my students, and he wants to spend some time with me.’ She told him. “But I should be getting to my room to change before bed checks. Hasta mañana Giuseppe.” She said, turning to the elevator.

“Sì, scusi, fino a domani, Lucia.” Giuseppe said turning back to his paperwork.

Marie was still awake when Lucy got back to their room. She looked up from her phone when the door opened. “How was the premiere dear?”

“It was lovely. We walked the red carpet, then we all went out for tapas and sangria.” Lucy told, her slipping off her shoes.

“So you had a good time?” Marie asked, leadingly.

“Yes, mom, I did. Thank you for making me go. How were the kids? Everything go ok?”

“Nothing we couldn’t handle; a couple of bar fights, three got tattoos, two got married. Standard kid stuff.”

“They got married, and didn’t invite me?” Lucy asked, playing along. “Selfish kids.”

“What can I say, they’re in love.” Marie smiled

Lucy started slipping on her sandals, “I’m going to go do bed checks,” she said, turning to the door.

“No, need. I already did them.” Marie informed her.

“But it was my night to do them.”

“I know, but I did them. Now get ready for bed, we have a busy day tomorrow. Did you see the schedule in the lobby?”

“Yes, I did. Thank you again, mom. I really appreciate you taking the group tonight so I could go with Henry.”

“What are mothers for?” Marie said, turning her gaze back to her phone.

The following morning, Lucy was just slipping on her shoes to leave for the day, when there was a knock on her door. Wondering what, which of the kids, needed, she opened the door to find a smiling Henry, looking super casual in black shorts, and a dark grey tank top with a pair of sunglasses hanging from the neckline. His trademark dark curls were hidden under a Real Madrid hat. She threw her arms around him, and her lips crashed into his. Marie came out of the bathroom asking, “who was at the door? Oh. Good morning Henry.” She said, her gaze landing on the couple.

“How was the after party?” Lucy asked, as she, Henry and Marie made their way down to the hotel’s lobby.
“It was fine. The same people having the same conversations. I didn’t stay long.” He told her.

Henry was surprised that he actually enjoyed his day touring with Lucy and her students. All of her drama students that were traveling made a point to come talk to him, while one-by-one the students from the other groups gathered up the courage to ask him for an autograph or a picture, or both. He always obliged, not wanting to disappoint anyone.

He enjoyed touring Madrid with Lucy. He had been to Madrid once before to shoot a film, but hadn’t spent much time sightseeing. Lucy pointed out places she liked and knew from her many visits to the city. She explained some of the significance of the symbols in the royal palace, and told him stories of her time here with her friend Sarah. Summer Lucy was coming back. He hadn’t truly believed her last year when she explained the differences between Summer Lucy and Winter Lucy, but after spending those months with her in Minnesota and seeing her now in Spain, he understood what she was talking about. She wasn’t a different person, but she could show a different side of her personality. Her transformation wasn’t complete, with her students being in attendance, she was some sort of combination of Summer Lucy and Winter Lucy, a grey area. It only made him love her more.

Henry stayed with the group for the entire day, through curfew. Once Lucy had been assured that everyone was in for the night, she and Henry snuck out to stroll through the nearby Retiro park. They absorbed each other’s company on the sultry summer night in the city. They found a bench and engaged in some serious snogging. Lucy could have sat on that bench kissing Henry forever, but much too soon, her phone alarm signaled time for her to return to the hotel.

“I wish you didn’t have to go.” Henry admitted, walking Lucy back to her hotel.

“I know, but it’s pumpkin time. Besides, I need to get some sleep. We leave for the airport at 6:00 tomorrow morning. Then in will be just five short days, and I will be in London. We’ll have seven whole weeks. You’ll be sick of me. Though I will miss this park.” She said wistfully, looking back at the gate they had just exited.

“I promise you, that one evening, we’ll take a blanket to Hyde Park, and watch the planes come in over London. Or we could watch them from my roof, if you don’t want to go to the park,” he promised.

“You have a roof? With space for sitting?” She asked surprised.

“I do. It’s not much, but there’s space for a couple of chairs and a small table.”

“You will have to show me when I get there. That sounds like a wonderful place to do some reading.”

“I prefer the back garden for reading, but to each her own.”

They had reached the front door of the hotel. “I wish it were Monday,” Lucy said, burrowing into Henry’s side.

“So do I Cupcake, but it will come soon enough,” he said, pressing a kiss to her temple. “I love you Lucy.”

“I love you too, Henry.”

Lucy was proud of herself. She had managed not to cry when saying goodbye to Henry. It helped that she would be seeing him in less than a week, but it was a proud moment for her anyway.
Henry had been right, the five days had flown by. She returned home late Wednesday night, after being awake for close to 24 hours. Thursday was her day for laundry and jet lag. Friday Lucy ticked off items on her to-do list: she arranged to have her mail forwarded to her parents’ house, and completely cleaned out her refrigerator. Saturday was spent baking for Quinn and Thomas. She had managed to convince Anna to hold her niece and nephew’s family birthday party early, so she could attend, and make their cakes, like she always did. When she got home from the party on Sunday she started packing. She finished her packing on Monday morning, just in time for her father to arrive to bring her to the airport for her flight to London.

She hugged her dad tight, before walking into the terminal. She didn’t notice the mist in his eyes as he watched his little girl walk away. He wondered how many more times he would do this, before she flew away for good.

Lucy was grateful for the First Class seat Henry had booked for her. Between the end of the school year, the trip, and the past week, she was exhausted. She managed to stay awake through dinner service, but before long, she was fast asleep in her seat. The flight attendant woke her just before they were to land at Heathrow.

Lucy had expected to take a taxi by herself from the airport to Henry’s but, was pleasantly surprised to find him waiting for her. He wore his normal summer wardrobe, but had dawned a black chauffeur's cap and was holding a sign with her name on it, or rather Cupcake. She laughed out loud when she saw him. She gave him a quick kiss and a long embrace, not wanting to make too big a scene, should there be any photographers around.

Henry insisted on taking her luggage, though she protested that she could roll it herself. He led her to a taxi outside. He only took his Aston Martin out for special occasions. The driver took her luggage, and they climbed in the back. Henry jostled her awake when they reached his house. “Hmm? Oh. I must have fallen asleep. We’re here?” She asked.

“Yes darling. Let me help you out.” He climbed out of the cab and offered her his hand. She took his hand and climbed out, swaying as she stood upright. Henry caught her by the shoulders. “Are you alright?” He asked, concerned.

“I’m fine,” she responded, though she did feel quite dizzy. “My ears must be messed up from the flight. All I need is to lay down for a few minutes and they should be good as new.” She assured him.

Henry paid the driver and escorted her inside. Kal was waiting for them. He hopped around in excited circles until Lucy knelt down to rub behind his ears. “Hi, boy! How are you? I’ve missed you.” She wrapped her arms around the dog's neck. When she stood, she swayed a bit, throwing her hand out to catch the wall. Henry, who had brought her luggage up to the bedroom, saw her grab the wall as he was coming back down.

“Lucy, are you sure you’re well?”

“I’m fine, I just stood up too fast. I’m going to go lay down for a half hour, get my equilibrium back to normal, then I can show you just how much I’ve missed you.” She said suggestively.

The look of concern didn’t leave his face. ‘Do you want anything?’ He asked as she slowly ascended the stairs. She turned carefully.

“Maybe a glass of water, my throat is feeling scratchy, airplanes are so dry,” she said, touching her throat.
Henry poured her a glass of water, concerned about what could be wrong with Lucy. He went up to
the bedroom, to find Lucy wasn’t lying down. He heard the shower running in the next room. He
waited for her. She emerged from the bathroom on a plume of steam, her hair wrapped in a towel,
with another tied between her breasts. She saw him sitting on the bed.

“I wanted to shower off the flight before lying down. I felt grimy.” She explained, digging through
her suitcase for her short leggings and a tank top. Henry watched her dress with hungry eyes. It had
been almost a month since he’d gotten to see her curves. But his concern for her damped his libido.

She walked to her side of the bed, picked up the glass of water he’d brought, and drank heavily. She
pulled a face as she swallowed, as if the glass had been full of glass shards, not cool water. She
pulled back the covers, and climbed in. “Will you come get me in about half an hour? I don’t want to
sleep all day.”

“Of course, darling.” Henry said, kissing her on the forehead before turning to leave the room. Kal,
who had been sitting on the bed changed his position to lay his head on Lucy’s legs.

“Kal, come.” Henry ordered. The dog raised his head to look at his master incredulously, and set it
back back down.

“He’s fine. Leave him.” Lucy mumbled, well on her way to sleeping again. Henry shook his head
and went downstairs to check his email. Almost an hour had passed by the time Henry went to wake
Lucy. Kal was still where he’d left him, with his head over Lucy’s legs. Henry sat next to Lucy on
the bed, and gently shook her shoulder. She groaned, but didn’t wake up. He shook her a bit harder.
“Darling, you need to wake-up. If you sleep all day your body clock with be off for days.”

With a bit more prodding, Lucy sat up in bed. She had a pained expression on her face, and she held
the bridge of her nose. “Are you ok Cupcake?”

“I all of a sudden I just have all this pressure in my sinuses,” she said, massaging her cheeks under
her eyes. “I think I may be getting a sinus infection.”

“Do you want to go to the doctor?”

“No, I get sinus infections all the time. Some pseudoephedrine will clear it up in a couple of days. Do
you have any?”

“I don’t believe I do. Do you want me to go out and get some for you?” He asked concerned.

“Would you please?” She asked, hating how pathetic her voice sounded, but her teeth were starting
to hurt from the pressure in her sinuses.

“I’ll go now. Tell me again what’s it called.”

“Pseudoephedrine. The good stuff. I have to show my ID in the states to buy it because stupid people
use it to make meth. But it’s the only stuff that really works.”

“I’ll be back in a bit. Why don’t you go downstairs and find a movie for us to watch when I get
back?”

“I’d like that.” She smiled at him as he left the room and swung her legs over the side of the bed. She
stood gingerly, hoping the dizzy feeling had subsided. It hadn’t. She knew what that meant, but was
hoping the pseudoephedrine would clear out everything that was blocked. She slowly made her way
down the stairs to the living room. She picked a movie; a romantic comedy that she loved, but that
she was sure hadn’t been there last summer, and when to the kitchen to make herself a cup of tea.
Hoping the steam would clear her sinus and soothe her sore throat.

Henry returned half an hour later with a box of pills, a nasal irrigation bottle like she had at home, distilled water, and a pack of digestive biscuits. Lucy opened the box of pills and took the prescribed dose, before going to the bathroom to rinse out her sinuses. By the time she returned, Henry had made her a fresh cup of tea, and set the biscuits on a plate.

Lucy managed to stay awake for most of the movie, but went to bed early, leaving Henry to worry about her in the living room. He went upstairs to find her using almost all of his pillows to prop herself upright to sleep. It didn’t look comfortable, to him, but to each their own, he thought.

Henry awoke in the morning to Lucy’s side of the bed empty, and the light in the bathroom on. He knocked lightly and entered when he heard her croak a noise. She looked miserable. “I think I’m sick. The pseudoephedrine didn’t work at all, and now my ears are hurting and I have white spots on my throat. I need a head transplant.”

He crossed the bathroom and wrapped her in his arms, resting his chin on her head. “Oh, darling. Let’s get you to the doctor, he’ll make it all better.”

“I’m going to shower first. I’m hoping the steam will let me breathe for a few minutes.”

“Do whatever you need to do. I’ll be downstairs when you’re ready to go.” He kissed her temple and left the bathroom. He took Kal for a short walk, then called for a cab.

Henry sat in with Lucy as the doctor checked her over. He asked her questions about her sleep and work habits. He confirmed what Lucy had suspected; a sinus infection, double ear infection, and strep throat. He wrote her a prescription for an antibiotic, and suggested she continue the sinus irrigation.

The doctor had called in the prescription to the pharmacist that Henry had mentioned, so it was ready to be picked up when Lucy and Henry arrived. Henry had been oddly silent since they’d left the doctor’s office. When they got back to Henry’s house Lucy took her first dose of pills and made herself another cup of tea. She sat on the sofa in the living room and Kal jumped up to sit next to her. Henry looked agitated.

Lucy stared into space for a few minutes, drinking her tea, her other hand mindlessly petting Kal’s head. Finally, Henry sat down across from her and let her have it.

“Damn it Lucy.”

His tone startled her. He’d never raised his voice around her, much less at her. “What?” She asked, genuinely confused by his anger.

“You need to take care of yourself. You run, and run, and run, until you have nothing left and now look at you. You relax and every bug in a 50 mile radius has attacked you.”

“Don’t yell at me. I’m sick.” She said pathetically.

“You wouldn’t be sick if you took better care of yourself. When was the last time you got a decent night’s sleep?”

She mumbled something he couldn’t hear.

“A little louder if you please.” He said, his voice lower, but Lucy could tell he was still upset.
“I said February. Ok?” She snapped at him, meeting his gaze.

“You haven’t had a decent night’s sleep since February?” He asked incredulously.

She couldn't meet his gaze this time, “Not since you left. I had a really hard time sleeping through most of March, then things were almost getting better in April. May is always a hectic month for me, then the student trip, and prepping to come here. No. I haven’t really relaxed since February.”

“So you’re saying it’s my fault you haven’t taken care of yourself?”

“No. I’m just telling you the truth. You asked me a question, and I answered honestly. It’s my own fault I got sick. I do run myself ragged and only stop when my body finally gives out. It’s a bad habit. But it’s not your doing.”

“Lucy, I need to know that when we’re not together you’re taking care of yourself. I can’t be on location worrying if you’re running yourself into the ground. Will you promise me that you’ll start to make more time for yourself?”

“Well, what do you think this next seven weeks is? It’s time for me to relax.”

“I meant after this summer. When you’re back to school. Promise me you’ll say no sometimes, and take care of yourself. I can’t be with you all the time to make you slow down, I need you to promise me you’ll do that.”

Seeing how affected he was, she promised him. And made a mental note to make herself slow down. “I really am sorry I worried you, Darcy. Would you come snuggle with me and Kal as we watch Gwyneth Paltrow see what might have been?”

“Your wish is my command, Cupcake.” He said plopping down on her other side.

Henry had asked her to pause the movie while he went to the loo, when the doorbell rang. Lucy answered the door to find a florist delivery man waiting with the most beautiful bouquet of tulips and roses Lucy had ever seen. She signed for the bouquet and went to the kitchen to read the card.

“Happy 1 year anniversary, Cupcake” the card read, in Henry’s bold masculine hand. She heard him approach.

“Henry, they’re beautiful.” She said through misty eyes.

“It was a year ago today that Will came to my door waving a tabloid rag in my face.” He said smiling. “It’s been the best year of my life.”

“Oh, Henry. I would kiss you, but I don’t want to get you sick. This is so sweet.” She turned back to the flowers. Henry wrapped his arms around her from behind and watched as she arranged the flowers in the vase she had found under his sink.

Lucy hadn’t intended to spend her first week in London in bed, or rather she had, but had hoped for more exciting activities than trying to breathe, or move without getting dizzy. But Henry wouldn’t let her do anything more strenuous than go to the living room. By the time her first week had passed, she was so ready to leave the house.

She arranged a lunch date with Henry’s sisters-in-law Sienna and Eva, Nik and Simon’s wives. The three women met at a little, out of the way bistro near Hampstead Heath. Eva was happy to be away from little Benjamin for a few hours. At 14 months, he was starting to walk along furniture and driving his mummy and daddy insane. Of course Eva also had a gallery full of pictures to show the two women. Sienna was happy to have some adult conversation.
“So, Lucy,” Sienna began, “what have you been up to with your time in London so far?”

“Well, I haven’t gotten out of bed much since I got here.” When Eva and Sienna exchanged a look, Lucy elaborated. “I’ve been sick. I wore myself down, and as soon as I stopped, the sickness came. I’m still on antibiotics for another two days.”

“Well, just make sure you have backup protection,” warned Sienna. “Antibiotics can mess with birth control, that’s how I got Ethan. Don’t get me wrong. I love my boys, but Nik and I weren’t planning on starting our family as soon as we did. But I got sick and well, Ethan.” The three women laughed.

The three women enjoyed a long lunch catching up on each other’s lives since they’d seen Lucy at Christmas. Lucy lost track of how many glasses of wine she’d had after her third, but she wasn’t driving, so she wasn’t concerned. When lunch was finished, the three women agreed to meet weekly for a lunch together, and to include Olivia, Piers’s wife next time.

Lucy caught a cab back to Henry’s house. She danced her way up the steps to the front door, and let herself in, singing quietly to herself. She danced into the living room and found Henry watching a Rugby match on the TV. She plopped herself in his lap, and looped her arms around his neck. “Hey good lookin’ you come here often?”

“You’re in a good mood. Lunch went well, I take it.” He laughed.

“It was so nice. I really like your sisters-in-law. We’re going to do lunch every week. Do you brothers ever get together?”

“Not often, no we don’t,” he said after thinking for a moment.

“We should invite them all over for dinner. We can cook, and it would be a fun casual night. What do you think?”

“Cupcake, I think that is a great idea. Why don’t you arrange it with the other women, and let me know when it will be.”

“Deal.” She replied, kissing him noisily on the lips, before bounding upstairs to retrieve the book she was reading.

Lucy’s days fell into a sort of pattern. She awoke usually around early mid morning. She and Henry would have breakfast together, before he went to the gym for several hours. While he was gone Lucy liked to read on the roof. She had fallen in love with the space as soon as Henry had shown it to her. They had picked out a couple of matching chaise lounge chairs and an umbrella table to put up there. Lucy would bring a book or her iPad and read. Normally Kal would join her, sitting at her feet, soaking in the sun, when it shone. In the afternoons she would go out, trying to find something she hadn’t seen before.

Lucy spent one full day at the British Museum. She had been gone so long, that Henry had called her to make sure she was alright. She spent time roaming the neighborhoods she hadn’t had a chance to visit last summer; Notting Hill, and Covent Garden, and the parks. Sometimes Henry would join her, sometimes she went on her own. She also spent many hours mentally mapping his neighborhood. She still found it very easy to get turned around and lost. She didn’t want that happening again.

Lucy had told her friends back home that she loved London, but with her time spent there this summer, she was starting to feel like London loved her back. She started imaging what it might be like to raise children in the city. When she and Henry wandered through a park or garden, she imagined them pushing a stroller, or carrying a hamper to picnic on the grass as a family. Though she
tried not to daydream too often. Her life, it seemed, was better than any dream.

Chapter End Notes

What are your thoughts? Do you have any questions for Lucy and Henry? I love reading your comments, they really do make my day.
A Birthday Surprise, Again

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this chapter. I’ve spent quite a bit of time on it. I wasn’t planning to post today, but I’m not feeling great, and I thought, if I’m feeling miserable, other people shouldn’t be.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

July passed faster than Lucy was happy with. She only had 3 weeks left in London, before she had to go home to prepare for the school year. Neither she nor Henry had said anything about what would happen when she had to go home. She kept the thought buried in the back of her mind.

Henry had been tempting Lucy that he had a surprise in store for her birthday for over a week. She was curious about what it might be. Was it going to be a big surprise, or a small intimate surprise? All of Lucy’s attempts to make Henry divulge were rebuffed.

The morning of her birthday arrived; Lucy heard Henry rustling around in the bedroom, checked the clock, and sat-up. “What are you doing? It’s not even 7:00.” she groaned

“I’m sorry darling, I didn’t mean to wake you just yet, but seeing as you are awake…” He sat next to her on the bed and kissed her thoroughly. “Happy birthday Cupcake.”

“Thank you. Are you going to tell me what my surprise is now?”

“Not yet.”

“But it’s my birthday.” She whined.

“And you’ll be angry with yourself if you let me ruin the surprise for you. Seeing as you are awake now, I’m going to go take Kal for a walk and get breakfast. You get yourself ready for the day. I’ll be back in about 45 minutes.” He stood and exited the room.

“Wait! What should I wear today?” She asked, sitting up on the bed.

“Wear whatever you want to wear, we’re not going hiking or anything of that nature.” He said peeking around the door frame before disappearing again.

“Thanks for nothing.” she muttered under her breath, while walking to the bathroom.

True to his word, 45 minutes later, Henry came back with breakfast sandwiches from the coffee shop where they’d had their first non-date. He set the bag down on the table, just as Lucy was finishing making her cup of tea. She quirked an eyebrow at the bag. “I do have plans to take you someplace much nicer for dinner. It’s just we need to be driving soon, so I didn’t want to worry about tidying up.”

Once they had finished eating breakfast, Henry announced. “Now, while I take care of these few things,” he said pointing to their two mugs, “I want you to go pack an overnight bag.”

“An overnight bag? Where are we going?”
“It’s all part of your surprise. Now, go. We need to be driving.” He said swatting her bottom as she left the room.

Lucy’s mind raced through all of the different places he could be taking her. She called down the stairs, “Will I need my passport?”

“No, now hurry up.” Henry laughed from the kitchen.

5 minutes later, Lucy was in the front hall, with her bag packed, ready to go. Henry ushered her outside, with Kal.

“Is Kal coming with us?”

“No, we’re dropping him at the groomer’s overnight, and we’ll pick him up tomorrow. He will, of course, be unbearable for a few days after his time at the doggy spa.”

“So, like his daddy then?” Lucy smirked.

“I will turn this car around.” Henry joked.

“You wouldn’t dare. Not after you’ve been torturing me for the last week with this surprise, you sadist.” Henry just laughed.

After dropping Kal at the doggie spa, Henry pointed his car north. The longer they drove, the more anxious Lucy became. After being on the road for over 2 hours, Lucy finally asked.

“Where are you taking me? Are we going to Scotland?”

“We’re not going that far north. We’ll be there in about another hour. I’m taking you to the Peak District.”

“I thought you said we weren’t hiking, Peak District sounds like hiking.”

“It’s one of the things to do, but there are others.” He said cryptically.

Finally, Henry slowed the car and turned off the main road. The signs were directing them to Chatsworth House.

“Chatsworth House. What’s that?”

“It’s a country manor house, it’s a very popular place to visit.”

“Like Downton Abbey?”

“Yes, like Downton.” Henry smiled.

“Is this where we’re staying?”

“No, we’re at an Inn in the next town, this is just a site that I thought you would enjoy seeing. You’ll see it around the next corner.” He said smiling.

Slowly Henry navigated the drive and turned the corner so the house came into view. Lucy gasped. She instantly recognized the large house in front of her. The large reflecting pond in front of it, with it’s fountain praying water high in the air was unmistakable.

“This is Pemberley! You brought me to Pemberley?” She asked, wrapping her arms around his neck,
tears in her eyes.

“I thought you might like it. Now aren’t you glad I wouldn’t spoil the surprise.”

“This is amazing! I love it. Thank you cariño.”

After he parked the car, Henry took Lucy’s hand as they walked toward the house. “Now, I know this isn’t Collin Firth’s Pemberley, but Lyme Park is closed for restoration right now. I hope you’re not disappointed by Matthew McFayden’s Pemberly.”

“No! It’s wonderful! It’s that iconic shot, with the fountain and the facade. Oh! How could I be disappointed?!” She insisted.

Lucy and Henry spent 2 hours touring the house. Lucy gasped each time she entered a new room, whispering to Henry what had happened in any particular room in the movie. Henry barely noticed the ornate furnishings, he only had eyes for Lucy. When their house tour was finished, Henry led Lucy back to the car.

“Aren’t we going to tour the gardens? They look so beautiful.” she said wistfully, looking back.

“We will. I just need to collect something. He opened the boot of car to reveal a picnic hamper, which Lucy hadn’t noticed when they left. Lucy’s eyes teared up again. “You packed a picnic lunch?”

“Part two of your birthday surprise: a picnic in the gardens.” He said smiling.

Lucy stood on tiptoe, and brushed his lips with hers. “It sounds wonderful.”

Henry carried the hamper in one hand, while the other held Lucy’s as they sought a perfect picnic spot. They found a level spot, out of the way. Henry dropped Lucy’s hand and opened the hamper. He spread out a traditional red and white checked blanket, and motioned for Lucy to sit.

While Lucy sat, Henry emptied the contents of the hamper one container at a time, finishing with a chilled flask of lemonade and two cups. He handed one to Lucy and kissed her.

“Happy Birthday darling.” They sat on the blanket, eating cold chicken, bread, cheese, and salads, surrounded by an ornate English country garden. While they were enjoying fudge brownies for dessert Henry asked, “So, how do you like your birthday present?”

“Is this my whole present?” Lucy asked.

“It is. I know you get uncomfortable when I buy you lavish presents, so I thought this would be more to your liking.”

“I love it. Anyone can spend money and buy something. You had to think about this, about what I would like, and then plan it. I love it, and I love you.” She said, leaning to kiss him gently.

When their picnic was finished, Henry brought the hamper back to the car while Lucy visited the bathroom.

When Henry returned, they found a map of the gardens and planned a route. They strolled along the paths, taking in the beauty of the park, though it seemed to Lucy that Henry was distracted. He checked his watch often. “Maybe we have dinner reservations that he doesn’t want to miss.” Lucy thought to herself.
They came to the top of a long flight of stairs that would bring them back into the lower portion of the garden. “I’m glad we’re going down these, not up. I’d hate to die on my birthday.” Lucy quipped. Henry laughed in response.

When they reached the bottom of the steps, they found themselves at the side of a maze. They could go left or right to enter. Lucy looked up at Henry, “Race you to the middle? Winner gets to be on top tonight.” Lucy watched Henry’s pupils dilate.

He licked his lips before he responded. “Deal. You go left, I’ll go right.” He said, grabbing her in his arms, and kissing her deeply, before letting her go and taking off in his chosen direction.

Lucy stood dazed for a moment, “Cheater!” she yelled after him before she started running. Henry had the head start, but Lucy was phenomenal at mazes. She circled into the maze walls, and entered the tall hedges at a run.

Her first three turns lead her to dead ends, she exited the maze and found another entrance to try. This one was an immediate dead end, she ran around to the next entrance. She was on the opposite side of the square maze, the side Henry would have entered on. She was glad no one was in her way, she was a woman on a mission. “That cheaty cheater probably knew that right was the way to get into the middle.” She turned corner after corner venturing deeper into the maze. Finally, she turned the last corner, and found Henry waiting in the center of the maze. On one knee. With a diamond ring in his hand. Lucy stopped dead, her hand flying to her agape mouth.

“Henry?” she asked, when her speech ability finally returned.

“Lucy Claussen. Last summer we met by what some might call an accident, but what I call fate. You were destined to be lost, and I was destined to find you. Everyday since then, you have been at the forefront of my thoughts, and I can’t imagine my life without you in it. I know I made a mess of things this winter, but being apart from you only made me realize more that I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Everyday I spend with you, only makes me fall more in love with you. Please will you marry me and let me love you for the rest of our lives?” Henry’s face was a mask of uncertainty.

Lucy slowly made the last few steps to Henry. Tears streamed down her face; her hands covered her mouth. She dropped her hands and took one stuttering breath, “Yes,” was all she could get out before her voice broke, but it was enough for Henry. The apprehensive look on his face disappeared and was replaced by a smile so radiant it was almost blinding. He slid the ring on Lucy’s finger, and kissed it before standing, wrapping her in a loving embrace. His lips sought hers, and they shared their first kiss as an engaged couple.

When she had kissed her fill, Lucy wrapped her arms around Henry and laid her head on his chest, listening to his heart beat rapidly.

“What if I hadn’t been the one to come around the corner?” She asked laughing through her tears.

“Well, then this would have been a very different proposal.” Henry quipped. “They closed the maze for us. That’s why I kept checking my watch. we had to arrive at the right time.” He explained, before raising his voice, “She said yes!”. A woman in a white shirt rounded the corner carrying a tray bearing two flutes of champagne.

“Congratulations Sir and Mum. With our compliments.” She said, extending the tray toward them. Lucy and Henry took their flutes to a waiting bench and sat.

“To the rest of our lives.” Henry said, clinking his glass with Lucy’s
Lucy sighed, finally looking at the ring Henry had placed on her finger. On a platinum band sat a round solitaire diamond, flanked on either side by smaller round white opals. It was the most beautiful ring Lucy had ever seen. Her eyes teared up again.

“My Mr. Darcy proposed at Pemberley.” Lucy commented wistfully.

“You told me in May, that I had soured Pride and Prejudice for you. I felt I should do something to amend that.” He said pulling her closer than she already was, pressing his lips to hers. She sighed, leaning into the kiss.

Lucy leaned against Henry’s chest, staring at her left hand, watching the sunlight twinkle through the facets of the diamond. “Henry,” she turned her head to look at him, “this has been the best birthday of my life. Thank you.” she laid her hand aside his face, and kissed him sweetly.

“Just wait until tonight.” he whispered in her ear.

The white shirted woman coughed discreetly, “I’m sorry Sir, but we have to be opening the maze again. You’re free to stay obviously, but we must let others in now.”

“I understand. Thank you.” Henry said, standing to hand her their champagne flutes. Lucy looped her arm around his waist, and he draped his arm over her shoulders, and they slowly made their way out of the maze. Henry pulled her close when two boys sprinted past them, racing each other to the center.

They slowly made their way out of the gardens, oblivious to everyone around them, ensconced in their own bubble of happiness. When they reached Henry’s car, he spun Lucy around, and drew her close for a kiss.

“I love you, Cupcake.” Henry said, looking into Lucy’s eyes.

“I love you too, Darcy.” She returned smiling.

Henry opened Lucy’s door for her, before circling the vehicle. He drove them a few short miles and halted the car in front of a quintessentially British Inn; weathered stone walls, multi-paned windows, gabled roof, Lucy was enchanted.

Henry made quick work of checking them in and confirming their dinner reservation in the restaurant on the property. He carried both of their bags to the room he had booked. Room was an understatement. The suite boasted a four-poster bed, two sofas, and a luxury bathroom, bigger even than Henry’s at his house. Lucy took a moment to explore, before taking a running leap onto the bed. It was as fluffy and comfortable as it looked.

She popped her head up, and looked at Henry “Why don’t you join me up here? I’m feeling all alone. Fiance.” She patted the bed covers next to her.

“Oh, well, I wouldn’t want you to feel lonely.” Henry strolled to the bed, dipping his head to press a kiss to her lips. When he straightened himself, she frowned at him.

“We’re engaged for 30 minutes, and already you’re not interested in me anymore.” She playfully pouted.

“Darling, I don’t think it’s possible for me to be more attracted to you but,” he paused, and her cell phone started to ring. “You have a birthday call scheduled with your mother. It’s good one of us remembered.” He laughed, as she jumped down from the bed, and found her phone. She thumbed open the video chat while taking a seat on one of the sofas.
“Happy Birthday!” he could hear Lucy’s mom and dad yell through the screen.

“Thank you.” Lucy smiled.

“What did you do for your birthday?” Marie asked.

“Henry brought me to a country house, the one from the Pride and Prejudice movie that I love, and we had a picnic lunch in the garden.”

“Well, that sounds nice.” Marie commented.

“Then after we wandered around the gardens. They're huge. There’s a big reflecting pool, and fountains, and ponds, and there’s a maze too.” Lucy said excitedly.

“Well, I’m glad to see you made it out of the maze unscathed.” John joked.

“Well, not totally unscathed,” Lucy said, “I went into the maze, and came out engaged.” Lucy raised her left hand to show off the ring Henry had placed there less than an hour before.

Henry plugged his ears to block out Marie’s excited screams. Lucy couldn't stop laughing at her mother’s response.

“Well, it’s about damn time.” John said, smiling. “I’ve been waiting for this since he asked me for my blessing back in May.”

“He what?” Marie exclaimed, staring at her husband.

“When we had lunch back in May, he asked me for my blessing, to ask Lucy to marry him. I told him Lucy is her own woman, but if she would have him, the family would support her.”

“And you didn’t tell me?!?!” Marie slapped her husband’s arm.

“Why spoil the surprise for you. You knew when Clint was getting engaged, I thought I’d let you be surprised this time.” He answered his wife, kissing her sweetly.

“Guys, back here please.” Lucy laughed.

“Sorry. Congratulations honey. Where’s Henry?”

“He’s sitting across from me, laughing.” she waved him over. He rose and sat next to Lucy on the sofa.

“Hello Marie, hello John.”

“Henry, congratulations, welcome to the family.” Marie smiled at him.

“Thank you Marie. I’m glad to be welcome.” Henry replied.

“Lucy, hold up your hand, I want to see the ring better.” Marie ordered.

Lucy did as she was told and held the ring up to the camera.

“You chose well, Henry.” Marie commented.

“Yes, I did,” he said looking at Lucy.

“Well, we will let you get back to your birthday honey. We love you, and happy birthday. See you
when you get home.”

“Bye mom, bye dad, love you both.” She kissed her hands and waved at her parents as the call disconnected.

Lucy and Henry spent the next half hour calling his parents, then her brother, and finally his brothers. The sisters-in-law requested a picture of the ring. His brothers made allusions to wedding day traditions. Lucy made a mental note to ask about what those traditions might be.

Once all the calls had been made, and the well wishes received, Lucy wrapped her arms around Henry’s waist. “Henry, you’ve made me so happy. I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life making you as happy as you’ve made me.” and she pressed her lips to his.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who has read my work so far. This story isn’t over just yet, so keep checking back for more. What did you think?
Lucy was still in a haze of love from a wake-up of leisurely lovemaking, smiling like a fool, as they drove back toward London. Every couple of minutes, Lucy would lift her hand and admire the ring. Admiring its simplicity and beauty. It wasn’t over the top, and had her favorite stones, opals. She smiled, thinking about telling her friends at work about the engagement.

Lucy suddenly it felt as if a bucket of ice water had been dumped on her head. Her brows furrowed, and her teeth chewed the corner of her mouth.

“Out with it darling. I can feel you worrying.” Henry said from her right side.

Lucy hesitated for several long seconds, trying to verbalize her thoughts. “Henry, what does this mean?” she asked, holding up her left hand.

Not 100% sure where her line of questioning was headed, Henry answered quizzically, “it means you agreed to marry me and love me for the rest of your life.” His mouth curved into a smile thinking about the moment she’d come flying around the corner into the center of the maze.

“No, what does it mean for us? For living, and working, and everything.” Lucy explained, panic starting to rise in her voice.

Henry took her hand in his, rubbing his thumb over her knuckles. “Ah, I should have guessed this is where your brain went. I have been thinking about all of that.”

Lucy startled, turning her head to look at him. “You have?”

“You’re not the only one who can make plans.” He said cryptically.

“Would you care to elaborate?”

“Well, I know we haven’t actually discussed this, but I would like you to move to London.” Henry said, glancing away from the road to look at Lucy.

“No, we haven’t discussed that, but it does feel like an inevitability. You’re based here. It doesn’t do for you to be based in Northern Minnesota. It’s too far away from everything.”

“So you’re not opposed to picking-up your life and moving across the pond?” he asked.

“No. Henry I love you, and I love London, and I guess I had assumed that if we continued, it would happen eventually. But I don’t know if I can get out of my teaching contract. When we get back to the house, I’ll have to check when the deadline is to tell them I won’t be coming back.”

“Darling, I wasn’t suggesting that you move today. I’m going to be filming in Jordan for most of November and December. Then splitting time between LA and London for much of April and May. I had hoped to live with you in Minnesota until the end of the school year. It would give us some time to make decisions.”

Lucy smiled, “I’d like that,” and settled back into her seat.

“What about Kal?” Lucy asked suddenly.
“What do you mean? What about Kal?”

“Well, where is he going to be? My house isn’t big enough for the both of us and Kal, and I don’t want you two to be separated for most of the next year.”

“Darling, we don’t need to have all of the answers right now. We will figure everything out. So please, don’t worry about this right now.”

Lucy took a deep breath, and exhaled. “Ok. We’ll figure it out later.”

Lucy asked Henry about the project he would be filming in Jordan, and he explained his part in the military flick while he drove. Henry in turn asked about Lucy’s upcoming plans for the school year. She had been retooling her curriculum gradually throughout her stay. Though he didn’t understand most of what she was talking about, he loved hearing the enthusiasm in her voice.

When they weren’t talking they listened to the radio. Lucy singing along to the songs she knew, which, other than the American hits, were few and far between. They were entering the north London suburbs, having just passed an exit for Leavesden, when Lucy gasped loudly. Thinking she’d been hurt, Henry whipped his head in her direction.

“Darling, what’s wrong? Are you injured?” The worry evident in his voice.

“No. I’m not hurt, sorry, honey. But I just had the greatest idea ever!” She exclaimed, clapping her hands in front of her chest.

“Really, do tell.” Henry asked.

“Well, last summer when I was researching my trip, I read that the Harry Potter studio will rent out the Great Hall set for parties...or weddings...” she trailed off, her intention clear as crystal.

“No.” Henry said seriously.

“That’s it? Just no? No explanation, not even a second to think about it?”

“Lucy, I don’t want to get married on a movie set. My job, my career is playing make-believe. Pretending to be someone I’m not in fake houses, and fake hotels, fake stores, even fake streets. I don’t want to start our marriage with something fake. I want our wedding to be as real as we are.” Henry explained.

Lucy nodded her head at his speech. “I understand. Though it would be cool to get married at Hogwarts, I understand what you mean, by wanting it to be real. Well, if I can’t get married at Hogwarts, I’ve always dreamed of getting married in the same church my mom and dad did. The one where I was baptized, and confirmed, and where I grew-up.” She said sincerely.

“That’s exactly what I mean. Something real, something special. I would love to start my life with you, where your life started.”

Lucy leaned across the armrest and kissed Henry’s cheek. “Thank you, Darcy.” she smiled through the tears welling in her eyes.

They collected Kal from the groomer, and returned to Henry’s house. Lucy brought Kal inside while Henry took care of their bags. Lucy led Kal to the living room, and they sat on the sofa, Kal sitting up tall and proud of his fresh haircut, Lucy facing the smiling dog. She spent a few longs second scratching behind the dog’s ears, before cupping her hands around his muzzle.
“Kal? What do you think about me being your mum?” She asked the dog seriously. In response Kal smiled, and licked her face before trotting over to Henry who stood in the doorway. Lucy laughed, “I think he approves.”

Henry scratched the dog’s head laughing, “That’s good. I’d hate to have to ask for the ring back.”

The next day, Lucy begrudgingly left the house to go to her weekly lunch with the sisters-in-law. She wanted to stay curled up with Henry dreaming of their life together. But, she realized she would be one of the sisters-in-law soon enough, as she hailed a taxi to take her to cafe they favored near Hampstead Heath.

Lucy was the first to arrive, and in deference to the beautiful summer day, selected a table outside for the group. She ordered a lemonade and waited, watching the people walk by, living their busy London lives. She sipped her lemonade, lost in her thoughts, until she spotted a familiar face passing by her table.

A huge smile split her face, as she raised her arm and yelled, “Tom!”

The tall lanky frame of Tom Hiddleston stopped, searching for who had called his name. He spotted Lucy, and smiled as he approached. She stood, and was enveloped in one of Tom’s all encompassing hugs. Lucy felt completely surrounded by the tall man. They kissed each other’s cheeks in greeting.

“Lucy, my dear, how are you? I didn’t realize you were in London.” Tom said, taking a seat in one of the empty chairs at the table.

“Yes, I’ve been here since the beginning of July. Spending some time with Henry during my summer break.” She explained.

“And what are you doing all the way out here? You’re quite a ways from Kensington.”

“I’m meeting Henry’s sisters-in-law for lunch. It’s something we’ve taken to doing once a week. I’m really enjoying getting to know them.”

“And you and Henry? How is everything?”

“Henry and I are great.” She said, holding up her left hand to show off her ring.

Tom’s mouth opened in surprise, grabbing the tips of her fingers to look at the ring, before he wrapped her in another hug. “Congratulations! I wish you both happiness and a long life together.”

“Thank you, Tom. I don’t think we’re really telling anyone just yet, so keep it on the hush hush.” Lucy explained.

“I understand,” he nodded, “I should be going, let you wait for your sisters-in-law in peace. It was lovely to see you again.” He said, standing.

She stood as well, “Thank you. Oh, and Tom, thank you for all of your help and support this winter with my drama students. They were so grateful for your help, and that message you sent before competitions, sent them over the moon.”

“I was glad to help. I got the sweatshirt. I even wear it now and again, mostly around the house.” He laughed.
“I’d love a picture of that, to show the kids.”

“Next time I put it on, I’ll send you a selfie.” Tom replied, giving Lucy one last hug, before continuing down the street.

Olivia was the first to arrive. She and Lucy exchanged hugs. “Congratulations, dear. Piers and I are so happy for you two. When Henry showed up in March saying that you two were no more, we were so heartbroken for both of you. We’re so glad everything worked out.” the older woman explained, pulling Lucy in for another hug. Before they managed to sit down, Sienna and Eva joined them, each giving their own round of hugs and well wishes.

Once they’d seated themselves, Olivia ordered a round of champagne to toast the engagement. “To Lucy and Henry, the Cavill sisterhood is now complete.” she said, raising her glass. They all clinked glasses before taking a sip. After ordering, the other women spent several long minutes oohing and aahing over the ring.

“So, Lucy,” Sienna asked, “have you decided when the wedding will be?”

“No. We haven’t really talked about the wedding much. Just that it will be in Minnesota. In the same church where my mom and dad got married. We haven’t talked about any other details. I hope that won’t make it too difficult for you all to come.” Lucy worried aloud.

“We all flew to Canada three years ago when Charlie and Heather got married, this will be no different.” Olivia assured her.

“That makes me so happy to hear you say that. Now, what do I need to know? What are these wedding traditions that the guys kept referring to. Should I be worried?” Lucy inquired.

The sisters-in-law all exchanged a look before saying in unison, “the cough.”


Olivia started, “When Piers and I got married, Charlie was 15, maybe 16. But Piers was adamant that his brothers be his groomsmen. So anyway, we’re having the ceremony, and the vicar gets to the ‘does anyone object’ bit, and Charlie coughs. Apparently it was a legitimate cough, but of course it was the worst possible timing. He blushed as red as a tomato, his eyes as big as saucers, as he shook his head no, we all tittered a bit and went on with the ceremony.”

There was a brief pause as the waiter set their meals in front of them. “Fast forward to my and Nik’s wedding,” Sienna cut in, “again all of the brothers are groomsmen. It’s been almost 3 years since Piers and Olivia. We get to the ‘does anyone object’ bit, and Piers coughs. Loudly. We both look at him and he has the biggest shit-eating grin on his face.”

“When Simon and I got married,” Eva jumped in, “again all the brothers are standing up for Simon. Simon told me he talked to the guys about not coughing, but when the time comes, Nik coughs, VERY loudly. And the others’ shoulders are shaking with repressed laughter.”

Olivia finished the story for the group. “When Charlie and and Heather’s wedding rolled around, it had been almost 10 years since Piers and I had gotten married. As was the tradition now, all the brothers are groomsmen. If the custom holds, this would have been Simon or Henry’s “turn” to cough. Heather tried to leave out the ‘does anyone object’ bit, but apparently some money exchanged hands with the minister. It sounded like a TB ward in hospital. All four of the brothers coughed like they’d been smoking for 30 years. Heather, who had been forewarned, pulls out four honey drops and hands them to the men, before returning to the altar and giving Charlie a wink.”
they all laughed at the memory.

“So I need to be prepared for someone to cough during the ceremony. That’s not too bad. Anything else?” Lucy asked.

“They will sing. The whole drunken lot of them.” Eva interjected. “At every wedding they have planned a song for the groom. Think that scene from Top Gun, with the blokes in the bar. It will be loud. It will be sloppy. It will be offkey. It will be hilarious.” The four women laughed at the antics of the men they love.

“Well, if you haven’t made any wedding plans yet, have you decided anything about the engagement party?” Sienna asked.

Lucy’s eyes went wide. “Engagement party? What engagement party? We don’t really do those where I’m from.”

“Everyone will be expecting one.” Olivia told her.

“I don’t think I’ve ever even been to an engagement party. What all does it involve?” Lucy asked, slightly panicked.

“There should be drinks, and some kind of food. Really whatever you want it to be.”

“I’m going back to Minnesota in three weeks. I don’t have time to plan a party.” Lucy insisted.

Sienna and Olivia exchanged a look before Olivia spoke, “you know what? We’ll host your engagement party. I’ve been to more than I can count.” She pulled out her phone and started taking notes. “Now, do you want a big party or something more low key?”

“Low key, definitely low key.”

“Do you want to invite other guests, or just stick to family?” Sienna asked, getting into the groove of party planning.

“I suppose it would be nice to invite some of Henry’s friends. I don’t think any of my friends could make the trip on such short notice. Or even my parents for that matter. But if they want, we can have another party in Minnesota.”

“Good, why don’t you and Henry talk it over tonight, and get me a guest a list in the next couple of days.” Sienna suggested. “Now, food. Do you want a sit down dinner or more a cocktail party atmosphere with passed hors d’oeuvres?”

“Cocktail party?” Lucy decided uncertainly. “That seems more informal, right?”

“Yes. A nice informal cocktail party. We’ll get a plan together and see what you think, say Monday?”

“That sounds great.” Lucy said, a bit stunned. She stayed in her stunned mindset until she returned to Henry’s house.

Henry met her with all the enthusiasm that Kal normally did. He placed his palms on the small of her back and pulled her close. “Hello fiance.” he greeted, and kissed her deeply. “How was lunch?”

But even Henry’s kiss couldn’t snap her out of her mind fog. “Your sisters-in-law are throwing us an engagement party. Olivia wants a guest list by tomorrow.”
“That’s nice of them.” Henry commented, missing Lucy’s stunned expression.

“Yeah, nice.” Lucy muttered absentmindedly, walking to the couch.

“What’s wrong, Cupcake?”

“It’s just a bit overwhelming. And they asked about the wedding. I don’t know how to plan a wedding.”

Henry pulled her close, resting her head on his chest. “Darling, we will figure everything out. I don’t want you to be stressed out about this. This is supposed to be a happy occasion. We’re getting married.” he soothed, kissing the top of her head. They stayed, wrapped in each other’s embrace for a long time. Soaking in the comfort of being near their other half.

Finally Lucy asked, “who do you want to invite to the party?” They discussed which of his friends should be invited, several of whom were people Lucy hadn’t met. They debated which of his famous friends should be invited, and which would see it as an affront to not be invited.

“Do you want to invite Tom?” Henry asked Lucy.

Lucy blushed, “would it be horrible if I said yes?”

“No, darling, it would not be. He’s a great bloke and I enjoy his company as well. We’ll put him on the list.” Henry assured, adding Tom’s name to the short list of invitees.

“I ran into Tom today. We talked for a couple of minutes. So he knows about the engagement already. I thanked him for his help this winter. He promised to send a picture of himself in the hoodie for the kids.”

“That sounds like him. Do you have anyone else you want to invite? This list is all my people.”

Lucy thought for a moment, “I don’t think mom and dad will be able to make the trip, or Clint and Anna. But maybe Sarah and Paulo could come. It’s a short flight from Amsterdam. They could stay here, right?”

“Of course they could. She’s your best friend, of course she would stay here.” Henry insisted.

They discussed the guest list for a few more minutes, before setting it aside.

Lucy and Henry awoke the following morning to pounding on the front door. Henry pulled on a tank top over his bare torso as he descended the stairs. Will Turner was waiting impatiently.

“Will, sometime you’re going to have to give me your home address so I can show up at your house at the crack of dawn, banging down the door.”

“Henry, what the hell is going on?”

“What do you mean, Will. Nothing is going on.”

He was carrying another celebrity rag. He handed it to Henry. The front cover showed several pictures; Lucy and Henry from the Beckham’s party, Lucy dancing with Tom at the same party, and Tom and Lucy sitting at a cafe table, her left hand in his, her engagement ring prominently visible. The headline read ‘Tom Hiddleston Engaged, Henry Cavill Heartbroken’.
Sorry for the long delay since the last chapter. Lucy and Henry were just enjoying being engaged, and didn’t want to talk to me for a while. I think it had something to do with what I did to them last winter...

I hope you all enjoy the chapter, AND I hope the next one will be a little faster in coming, but no promises, the end of the school year looms...

As always thank you for coming to read my little story, and for your comments and kudos. Keep ‘em comin’!
Lucy stared at the publication in her hands. The article detailed her “affair” with Tom Hiddleston right under Henry’s nose, culminating in their “engagement” at the cafe in Hampstead.

“This is creepy. I didn’t even see a photographer. Tom was at the table for maybe 3 minutes.” Lucy said, worry marching across her features.

“They’ll write whatever they want to sell papers.” Will told her.

“Henry, I’m so sorry.” Lucy said, turning to her fiancé.

“Darling, you have nothing to apologize for. These rags are wholly unconcerned with the truth.”

“So what do we do now? Do we acknowledge it? Do we ignore it and hope it goes away? Make an announcement?” Lucy asked.

“I’m usually of the mind of letting it go, these will be in the bin by the end of the day, and they’ll be on to their next piece of celebrity gossip. B…”

Lucy cut him off, “but this article makes me seem like some gold-digging, celebrity chasing, harlot.”

Henry looked at her quizzically, “Harlot? Really? Are we in the court of Louis XVI?” He laughed. Lucy gave him one of her icy teacher looks.

“As I was saying,” Will cut in, “this is almost directly attacking Lucy. And in this case, we have a third party. It doesn’t just affect you two, Tom is involved in this. His reputation is being drug through the mud as well. I feel as though he should get a say in this as well.”

“Someone should call him and let him or his people know what’s going on.” Lucy said.

“I called his publicist on my way over here. He’s probably already talking to Tom.” Will informed them.

“Then let’s get them on the phone.” Henry demanded gently. He picked up his phone and dialed Tom’s number. He activated the speaker and set the phone on the table in front of the three of them.

Tom answered on the third ring. “Hello? Is this my fiancé calling?” He asked, a smile evident in his voice.

Lucy piped in, “Yes, Tom, it is. Though I don’t remember your proposal at all. You’ll have to do a much better job next time.”

“Duly noted.” Tom laughed.

“If you two are done,” Henry cut in.
“Good morning, Henry.” Tom greeted. “Congratulations on your engagement, though apparently it’s my engagement too.”

“Thank you, Tom. What have you and your publicist decided?” Henry asked.

“We decided we would defer to you two. However you decided to handle it, we would follow suit.” Tom announced.

“Thank you, Tom,” Lucy said.

Will spoke up, “then I think our best course of action would be to release a statement, announcing Henry and Lucy’s engagement. I know you two didn’t want to announce just yet, but that’s gone the wayside now. We’ll mention how Tom and Lucy have developed a friendship, nothing more.”

“That sounds reasonable,” another voice spoke from the phone, a female voice, who must have been Tom’s publicist. “We’ll release a similar statement, but not the same, detailing Tom’s help with Lucy’s drama student group, and how it grew their friendship. The rag will have to print a retraction, of course they print those in the smallest font possible, buried in the back of the paper, but it will be there.”

“Thank you, Janette.” Will said to the woman.

“Henry, can I just say, I’m sorry for all of this.” Tom spoke through the phone.

“Tom, you know you have nothing to be sorry for. I’ve been trying to convince Lucy of that all morning. Thank you for letting us take the lead on this. We’re having an engagement party toward the end of the month, before Lucy has to go back to school, we’d love if you could come. My sisters-in-law are throwing the party.”

“I would love to come, but it would depend on the date.” Tom answered.

“When we know the date, we’ll let you know.” Lucy chimed in.

“You two have a great day.” Tom said.

“You as well, Tom.” Henry replied, disconnecting the call.

“I will draft an announcement, and send it to you before we release.” Will said, picking up the paper to throw it into the bin.

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to keep that. I kept the ones from last summer too.” Lucy explained.

“Are you sure it’s not just for the headline?” Henry asked with humor in his voice.

“That may be a small part of it...18 months ago, I would have LOVED seeing my name associated with an engagement to Tom. But then I met you first...don’t get me wrong, I love you, and I’m so excited to begin our life together, this is like a fantasy come true,” she said, holding up the paper.

Henry wrapped a hand around her waist, and pulled her to him, “I thought it was me that made all your fantasies come true,” he murmured suggestively, lowering his mouth to hers.

Will coughed, “I’ll just be going then.”

Henry separated from Lucy to shake Will’s hand and show him out. He returned to the living room to find Lucy texting. He sat next to her to wait while she finished her message. She set the phone on the coffee table, and leaned into Henry’s side. “I just texted mom to let her know it was ok to tell all
the aunts and uncles about the engagement. And to warn her if the rumors make it to the US.”

“That’s probably a good idea,” he said, kissing the top of her head.

“Henry, I’m sor,” Lucy began.

“Lucy, I’ve told you over and over, you have nothing to apologize for. You weren’t acting
inappropriately. You didn’t invite the photographer to take the picture. You were sharing good news
with someone you considered a friend.” Henry reassured her.

“Henry? What are we going to do?” Lucy asked, worried.

“About this? Nothing more than what Will sets up.” Henry replied.

“No, about this fall. What are we going to do? I don’t want you to have to be separated from Kal, but
my house is not big enough for two people and your giant dog.”

Henry laughed silently, “Cupcake, I am impressed. It took you over two full days to bring this worry
out. I’m not happy that I know you’ve been worrying about it since the drive home from Chatsworth
House, but I’m impressed that you managed this long before bringing it up again.”

“Don’t laugh at me,” Lucy demanded, sitting up, to look Henry in the eye. “This is serious. I go
home in less than three weeks. Then I have just over a week until the school year starts. We need to
figure this out, so we have time to make arrangements.”

Henry nodded in agreement. “What are your thoughts. I know you’ve been working on this since
Wednesday.”

“You want to live with me in Minnesota. I don’t want you and Kal to be separated for the next 10
months. My house is not big enough for the three of us. Those are the facts. I guess you could rent a
house for you and Kal.” Lucy suggested.

Henry’s face became very serious. “Lucy, I don’t want to stay without you. I know I’ve asked you to
move to London, but if you genuinely didn’t want to move, I would make it work, to live in
Minnesota and keep my career. They say that home isn’t a place, it’s a person. Well you are my
home. Wherever I am, with you, feels like home. If I rent a house, I want it to be for the three of us.
I’m guessing you’d sell your house when we move to London anyway, why not sell it earlier, and
we’ll rent a house together?” Lucy’s face contorted involuntarily. “What’s wrong darling?” Henry
asked concerned.

Lucy sighed. “I don’t want to say. It’s going to sound horrible.”

“Please tell me what you’re thinking.”

Lucy’s gaze dropped to her hands, not wanting to look Henry in the eyes as she spoke her thoughts
aloud. “What happens to me if I sell my house, if you leave again?” Her voice broke as she finished
her thought.

Henry sat stunned for a moment, before crushing Lucy to him, his eyes welling with tears as he
thought about the pain he’d put this woman through. He held her as they both wept out their pain.
When his eyes had dried, he held Lucy at an arm’s length, and lifted her chin, forcing her to look him
in the eye. “Lucy. I will never leave again. You can trust me on this. Did I tell you why I left this
winter?”

“You said because you didn’t want to take me from my life.”
“I did say that, and that is true, but it wasn’t the whole reason. The longer I stayed in Minnesota with you, the deeper in love with you I fell. I was beginning to think about what our life together could be like, and I thought about what would happen if I asked you to marry me again, and you said no, again. I guess I was trying to save myself the hurt of another rejection, so I left.”

“That doesn’t make any sense.” Lucy laughed.

“I know it doesn’t. But it’s what I was feeling. I didn’t want to be hurt in the future, so I hurt myself then.” He laughed at his flawed logic.

“Things really would have been easier if I had just said yes in December, wouldn’t they.” Lucy laughed.

“Yes, they would have!” Henry laughed.

Lucy let herself laugh, to decompress from the weight of everything they’d discussed. She heaved a deep sigh. “So. I’ll put my house on the market, and you’ll rent somewhere for the three of us to live until at least the end of May?” Lucy asked, wanting clarification

“Yes, that sounds wonderful.” Henry agreed.

“If/when my house sells, I want to pay my fair share of the rent. I don’t want to be seen as free-loading off of you.” Lucy insisted.

“Darling, you don’t have to do that, but if it’s important to you, then we’ll split the rent.” Henry agreed.

They spent the next hour discussing where they wanted to look for a rental. Deciding to try to find a place with some land, to let Kal romp, then looking at local listings to see what would be available. Lucy contacted the realtor she had used to buy her house. She explained the situation, and made an appointment with him to look at houses when she came back to Minnesota.

Olivia and Sienna stopped by the house to inquire about the guest list for the engagement party. Lucy handed over the list and the accompanying addresses. The three women talked a bit about decor and possible menu ideas. They left with promises to have all of the details for Lucy when they met for Thursday lunch.

Henry, who had left not long after the party planning had commenced, arrived home just as his sisters-in-law were leaving. He sent each woman off with a kiss on the cheek and a message for her husband. He found Lucy in the living room poring over her iPad screen. He hung Kal’s leash on it’s hook, went to the kitchen to get two bottles of water, and joined Lucy in the living room. He seated himself beside her to see what had her so absorbed.

She was scrolling through a Pinterest page of wedding ideas. He smiled and reached for the book he’d left on the coffee table. “When do you want to get married?” Lucy asked him before he could open the book.

“Lucy, I would marry you tomorrow if you wanted to,” he answered, kissing her lips lightly.

“Be serious. Olivia and Sienna said that people at the party will want to know wedding details. We need to make some decisions. Other than where, we haven’t talked at all about the wedding. After where the biggest decision is when. So, when do you want to get married?”
“I would rather sooner than later,” Henry said. “I know you would like a Christmas time wedding, but would you be averse to a New Year’s Eve wedding?”

Lucy’s eyes narrowed at him. “How did you know I wanted a Christmas wedding? I’m positive I’ve never mentioned that.”

Henry had the decency to look sheepish. “I was looking for a pen one day, and I came across your bucket list.”

Lucy blushed, and hid her face in her hands. “Oh, god.”

“I don’t remember anything embarrassing on the list. But I do remember ‘Have a Beautiful Christmas Wedding’ being on the list. So I ask again, what about a New Year’s Eve wedding instead?”

“You’re talking New Year’s next year, right? Not the one in less than 5 months,” she clarified.

“No, I mean this coming New Year’s Eve,” he confirmed.

Lucy stared at him for a long moment, “are you on crack? Do you know what goes into planning a wedding? Just over four months is not enough time. Most dresses take at least 6 months to come after you order, then there’s time for alterations. And not to mention, if we announce our engagement now, then announce the wedding is in December, everyone is going to assume that a bouncing super baby will be arriving in April.” She threw her hands up, “not that I’m concerned about that. I’m not pregnant, I would love to be, but not at my wedding.”

Henry just laughed at his fiancé’s tirade. “Darling, you forget. I have money. It’s amazing how much having money can speed any process. While I understand if you want to wait until the summer or even next New Year’s Eve, if it were entirely up to me, I would pick sooner over later. I don’t want to give you too much time to come to your senses,” he smirked at her.

Lucy thought for a long moment. “I would love to start next year married to you. I think it might be possible. The dress is my biggest issue. I know they take so long to come, because someone my size can’t just buy one off the rack. It has to be ordered.”

“I’m sure for the right price, you can have your order expedited.”

Lucy sighed heavily, “there’s a part of me, that is screaming that you shouldn’t be paying for my wedding dress. But then there’s this other part that is rationally telling that part, that if you want the sooner wedding, then it will take that money to make it happen. My brain is fighting itself.”

“Don’t think of it as my money, or your money. We are going to be married, it will be OUR money. And if it takes an exorbitant extra fee for you to have the dress of your dreams for our wedding in four months, then I’m willing to pay it,” he explained, pressing a kiss to her lips, before turning to his book.

Lucy typed away on her iPad, making notes about wedding ideas, Henry assumed. “What do you think about cobalt and silver as wedding colors?” Lucy asked, showing him a picture from a Pinterest board.

Henry looked at the picture critically. The bold blue and silver worked well together, and would be fitting for a winter wedding, but something niggled at the back of his brain, until it finally hit him. “Cobalt blue? Are you sure that’s not Tardis blue?”

“No, it’s cobalt. Do you really think I would try to sneak a Doctor Who reference into our wedding?” She asked, her eyes wide in innocence.
“Yes, you would.” Henry answered staring Lucy directly in the eye.

“Ok, so yes, it’s Tardis blue, but it’s a pretty blue. And it’s not like I’m asking to have a Doctor Who wedding. I’m not going to dress up like River Song, or ask you to wear a David Tennant Doctor costume instead of a tux, because I know you wouldn’t do that. You wouldn’t, right?” She asked grinning hopefully.

“No, I would not.” He confirmed.

“It’s just the color. It’s pretty...it works with the season...and it would make your fiancé happy…” she trailed off grinning a big toothy grin at him.

“If that is what you want, darling, I’m not going to deny you it.” Henry conceded.

Lucy leapt across the sofa, wrapping her arms around Henry’s neck, pressing kisses all over his face. She finished with a long deep kiss to his lips. “Thank you Darcy.”

Lucy’s last weeks in London were filled with activity. She and Henry looked at houses online that they might be able to rent for the winter. She met regularly with Olivia and Sienna to finalize plans for the engagement party. She and Henry also discussed plans for the wedding.

One day, about a week after the tabloid incident, Lucy came home from being out. She hadn’t told Henry where she was going, and he hadn’t asked. Henry noticed her demeanor had changed from the morning when she’d left. She didn’t say anything to him; she poured herself a glass of water, and made her way upstairs. When she hadn’t returned half an hour later, Henry went in search of her. He found her sitting crossed legged in her reading chair on the roof; her latest book sitting in her lap, ignored, as she stared off into the distance.

Henry sat at the end of of the lounge chair in front of her. “Darling what’s wrong?” He asked, concerned.

She answered without looking at him, “I went to look at some wedding dresses today.”

“And you didn’t find anything you liked?” He guessed.

“They were mean to me. They ignored me when I walked into the store, then when I did finally manage to get someone to talk to me, they made cracks about not having anything in my size. I told them I didn’t expect that they would, but if I could at least look at some different styles. It wasn’t until I flashed your black card that they started taking me seriously. They brought me a few dresses, which were all hideous, but while I was trying to get into one, by myself, I heard them making bitchy comments to each other about my size, and who would marry someone like me. I stopped trying to get into the dress, put my clothes back on, and left without a word. It just really wasn’t the experience I thought it would be. And I guess I always thought my mom would be there to help me pick out a dress.”

He pulled Lucy into his arms, “darling, I’m sorry that you had to go through that.” His brain whirred as he tried to find a way to mend this for her. “Sarah is coming a few days early for the party, why don’t you two schedule some time to go dress shopping. I’ll text Victoria, if she has any suggestions of shops for you to go to.”

“Thank you Darcy.”

“Anything for you Cupcake.” He replied, kissing her temple.
Lucy avoided looking at wedding dresses until just before the engagement party. Victoria had suggested three shops for her to make appointments with, and she and Sarah were going to spend the day before the party at the three shops.

The day before Sarah and her husband were to arrive, Henry left the house early. He claimed he had a meeting he had to go to, and would be home in time to take her out to lunch. She spent the morning preparing the house for Sarah’s arrival the following day. She put fresh sheets on the guest bed. Went to the shop to have food for everyone, and visited the flower market to put arrangements in most of the rooms on the ground floor.

Around 11:30, Lucy heard the front door open, and Henry call out, “Lucy, could you come help me with this? I found something I thought you would like.”

“Oooh! A present? What is it?” Lucy asked, bounding toward the front door. She stopped dead when she saw her mom and dad standing just inside the door. Lucy’s eyes filled with tears as she looked from one face to the next.

“Mom, dad, what are you doing here?” She asked hugging them each in turn.

“Henry called and said you were having a hard time picking a wedding dress. He planned this whole thing. And we’re staying until you leave next week. He bought us tickets on the same flight.”

Lucy turned to Henry, “I don’t know what to say.”

“You don’t have to say anything darling. I could tell you were depressed about picking a dress without your mum, so I mended the situation.” He grinned.

“I don’t deserve you.” Lucy said, kissing her fiancé.

“On the contrary darling, I’m simply trying to be good enough to deserve you.”

Chapter End Notes

You may have noticed I changed my username. I’m hoping to eventually become an author. You can follow my author Instagram: PatriciaBurtnessWrites

There you will see face claims for both of my current stories, inspiration pictures for ensembles worn by the characters, and location pictures. Feel free to comment there too!

As always thank you so much for taking this journey with me, and I LOVE comments, they make my day.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lucy couldn’t contain her emotions at having her parents in London. That they would be able to attend the engagement party, and that her mom would be there to help her look for a wedding dress.

While her mom and dad were freshening up after their flight, Lucy made an easy lunch of sandwiches and crisps for everyone.

“Is there anything you guys want to see while you’re in town?” Lucy asked her parents over lunch.

“I want to see Windsor Castle, and the changing of the guard, and the Tower of London...” Marie trailed off.

Lucy thought for a moment, “I would suggest we go to Windsor now, then tomorrow we can see the changing of the guard in the morning, and go to the Tower after, then whatever else you guys want to do. Sarah and Paulo are flying tomorrow afternoon, so I’ll have to go pick them up, then we can all go to dinner, and Henry I can see you smirking out of the corner of my eye, just stop.” She said turning to her fiance.

“I can’t help it. You’re adorably efficient,” Henry grinned at her.

Lucy and Henry brought her parents to Windsor Castle. Her mom took pictures of everything, while her dad kept asking under his breath, “how much does something like this cost?” Lucy was able to convince her mom to give up her camera, and she was able to get a few pictures of her parents in the iconic spots in the castle. They spent the remainder of the afternoon browsing the shops of Windsor, before having a pub dinner at a pub overlooking the castle. They all caught the train back to London and Lucy’s parents said their good nights just before 9:00, leaving Lucy and Henry to themselves.

Lucy called Sarah to confirm their flight times for the following day while Henry took Kal for his evening stroll.

“Hey chica. I’m just calling to confirm, you get into City airport at 4:55, correct?”

“Yes. I can’t wait to see you! It’s been so long since New Year’s! I’m so excited to help you pick out a wedding dress, and help you celebrate your engagement. Have you guys set a date yet?” Sarah asked.

“I’ll tell you all the plans tomorrow when I see you. I’m not sure who all will be there to pick you up, but it will definitely be me. Henry flew my parents over for the party. I didn’t know they were coming until he went to a meeting and came back with them.”

“Awww, that man is so sweet. I’m glad you called though,” Sarah said, changing the subject, “my cousin found out that Paulo and I were going to be in London, and has requested we do dinner together Thursday night. I told her I would check if it was ok with you, in case you had some plans, I know how you love to plan things.”

“No, I don’t have anything planned for Thursday night, in fact, when Henry’s parents found out my parents were in town, they requested to have a dinner together with them, before the party. So it actually works out perfectly. I’m so excited to see you tomorrow.” Lucy squealed.
“I know, I can’t wait. See you in less than 24 hours, love you!”

“Love you too,” Lucy replied, disconnecting the call, just as Henry walked back into the living room.

“Talking to Tom?” He teased.

“Of course, he IS my fiancé after all.” Lucy teased back.

“What does that make me, your mistress? Mister? What would be the male version of a mistress?” Henry pondered aloud, sitting down next to Lucy on the couch.

“I’m not sure what that would make you, but it makes me a damn lucky woman.” Lucy said, raising her face to Henry’s for a kiss. “Thank you for bringing my parents here. I didn’t realize how much I wanted them here until I actually saw them. And now I can go dress shopping with my mom and my best friend. I love you.” She said, pressing her body close to his for a long, lingering kiss.

“Darling, I will do whatever is in my power to do to make you happy.” Henry replied.

“You know what would make me really happy right now? If you took me upstairs and showed me how much you love me.” She said, standing slowly, giving his hand a light tug.

“Your wish is my command.” Henry replied, jumping up from his spot, and wrapping his arms around Lucy from behind.

The following morning Lucy’s parents were refreshed after getting a full night’s sleep, and ready for a day on the town. They started the day with breakfast at Lucy and Henry’s coffee shop, before making their way to Buckingham Palace to claim a place from which to watch the Changing of the Guard. Lucy hadn’t ever gone to the event, and was glad to have her parents there as an excuse to play tourist for the day.

The four ate a quick lunch at a chain Japanese restaurant, before getting their pre-booked tickets to the Tower of London. Lucy and Henry had each been to the Tower before, but were happy to escort Lucy’s parents around.

When the time came to go collect Sarah and Paulo from the airport, Lucy turned to Henry. “Why don’t you take mom and dad back to the house, I’ll call you when we’re about fifteen minutes out, and you can start the potatoes cooking. I’ve planned a big barbecue, American style. There are instructions on the potatoes, but if you have any questions, ask mom, but PLEASE don’t let her do anything. She’ll try to take over, and I want her to relax.”

“Yes, dear.” Henry said, his voice a picture of the submissive husband role, before kissing her and grinning.

Lucy, Marie, and Sarah left the house at 9:00 to go to the first of three appointments Lucy had scheduled at the advice of Victoria. Henry told Lucy that he was going to take John, and Paulo to see Churchill’s War Rooms, before “showing them some of the sights,” which Lucy was almost positive meant finding a pub or four.

Lucy was surprised to find the first dress shop Victoria suggested was just six blocks from Henry’s house. The three women entered the small shop, and were instantly greeted by a neat, trim, brunette
woman, in a pale blue suit. She took a moment to look at the three women who had just entered her shop. She focused on the woman standing in the middle, “you must be Lucy, I’m Jessica,” she said extending her hand.

“Yes, I am.” Lucy confirmed.

“When you made your appointment, I did some research on you. You’re not an easy woman to find online. Though I did find some of your appearances in the papers.”

Lucy blushed self-consciously, “yes, I’ve had some headlines in the last year, haven’t I?” She laughed.

“So, Lucy, can you tell me a bit about what you’re looking for?”

“Well, first of all, the wedding is at the end of December, and in the States. I don’t think I’ll be able to make it back to London for fittings. Is it possible to make that work? If not, I won't waste any of your time.”

“December?” Jessica asked, doing some mental calculations. “I think we can make that work, would you be able to get to New York? I have another shop there, where we could do fittings and alterations.”

“I think I could make it to New York. So let’s see some dresses!” Lucy said clapping.

“Just a second, You haven’t told me what you’re looking for in a dress.” Jessica said, holding up her hand to stop Lucy.

“Well, I know I don’t want anything too form fitting. I definitely want some kind of strap, but not sleeves. I want at least a bit of sparkle.” Lucy said uncertainly.

Jessica showed Lucy to a fitting room, while another attendant setup Marie and Sarah with cups of tea and biscuits. The first dress she brought to Lucy was ivory with a deep V neckline and a full skirt made a tiered layers of taffeta. She helped Lucy into the dress, using clips to keep the dress closed, as it was not Lucy’s size.

Lucy stared at herself in the mirror. She didn’t hate the dress, but she didn’t feel like a bride in it. She stepped out onto the dais to show her mom and friend. They agreed, it was a pretty dress, but not the one.

The three agreed the same thing on the next three dresses. Lucy was starting to feel discouraged. Before bringing in the fifth dress, Jessica came to talk to Lucy. “I think I have what you’re looking for. It is strapless, but we can add any kind of sleeve you want. It’s not white, it’s blush. It has more than a little sparkle, but based on your comments from the last few dresses, I think this could be the one.”

“Well, bring it in. Let me see it.”

Jessica brought the dress into the little changing room; Lucy covered her mouth and gasped. It was gorgeous. The blush satin had a very simple shape: sweetheart neckline with slight ruching and a full skirt. But what made Lucy gasp was the sparkle. The entire dress sparkled like a million stars.

Jessica helped Lucy into the dress, but wouldn’t let her look in the mirror. She led Lucy out to the dais where Marie and Sarah were waiting patiently, sipping their third cups of tea. Marie’s cup paused halfway to her mouth. She set the cup down as her eyes filled with tears. Lucy stepped up onto the small platform. Jessica pinned a lace cap sleeve to each side of the bodice and brought them
around to the back of the dress. She fiddled with each one for a moment before deciding she was satisfied, and allowed Lucy to turn around and see herself in the mirror.

Lucy’s eyes filled with tears. The dress was not her size, there was a 4 inch gap at the back of the dress, but Lucy didn’t care at that moment. She could see how a finished dress would look, and for the first time, Lucy saw herself as a bride. She turned left and right, trying to see the dress from all it’s angles, before meeting her mother’s gaze. “What do you think mom?”

“Oh, Lucy, you’re beautiful.” She said, dabbing at her eyes.

“Thank you, mom. Sarah?” Lucy asked, turning to her friend who had been silent up to this point.

“I’m in shock. You look amazing.”

“Thank you. I feel amazing.” Lucy replied.

“Does this mean this is your dress?” Jessica asked.

Lucy’s eyes widened, “Oh, well, I mean, I have appointments at two more dress shops today. But I can’t imagine finding another dress that makes me feel like this.” Lucy paused for a long moment, thinking over all of her options. “Yes, this is my dress.” She exclaimed, her smile almost as bright as the dress.

Jessica clapped, “That’s lovely! Let’s get you out of that dress, and we can discuss what alterations you want done during the initial fabrication.” Lucy walked back to the fitting room in a daze. Jessica took all of her measurements then left Lucy to re-dress.

Lucy and Jessica discussed the final design of the dress for almost an hour, with occasional input from Marie or Sarah. When they had finished and left the shop, Lucy felt a huge weight lift off her shoulders. She made quick calls to cancel her other two appointments for the day and turned to her mom and best friend.

“Should we go find some lunch, then do some shopping? I need a dress for tomorrow.”

“Yes, let’s,” Sarah agreed.

The three women went in search of a cab. “Mom, I just bought my wedding dress.” Lucy said disbelieving.

“I know you did, sweetie. And you looked so beautiful.” Her mom said, hugging Lucy to her side.

“Thank you both for coming with me. It just wasn’t the same when I went by myself.”

“Honey, I know you can, but you don’t have to do everything on your own. Some things are meant to be done with other people. I’m so glad that you found Henry. I think you two are good together.” Sarah said, from Lucy’s other side.

“I like to think we found each other.” Lucy laughed.

Lucy treated her mom and best friend to lunch before they descended on Harrod’s department store. Lucy had never been, and found herself in love with the landmark. Eventually the women stopped gawking, and went in search of a dress for Lucy to wear to the engagement party the following night.

Marie and Sarah each picked two dresses for Lucy to try on. Lucy decided on Sarah’s second dress. The simple silhouette of the white dress was embellished with teal lace that flowed up from the hem,
and down from the cap sleeves. The dress hit just above Lucy’s knee, and the neckline sat straight across her collar bones.

The women managed to beat the men home by almost an hour. They were playing with Kal in the back garden when the men came out. Henry made his way over to Lucy, kissing her soundly hello. He tasted of Guinness and Henry. “Hello, Cupcake. Did you find a dress?” He asked, claiming the chair next to Lucy’s.

“I did,” Lucy beamed.

“Do I get a preview?” When Lucy shook her head, he asked, “can I at least get a hint?”

Lucy thought for a long moment, before answering cheekily, “It has fabric…”

Henry waited for a longer explanation, but realized that no more was to come. “That’s all? That’s all the information I get?”

“Yes. It will be a surprise for you in December.” She smiled, pressing a quick kiss to his lips.

The three couples spent the rest of the afternoon catching-up and getting to know each other, until it was time for them to go to their respective dinners. Sarah and Paulo left first for dinner with her cousin.

Henry called for a cab to take him, Lucy, and her parents to the restaurant to meet his parents. Lucy nervously drummed her fingers on Henry’s thigh as the cab brought them closer to the restaurant. “Darling, please calm down. It’s just dinner.”

“I know, but I want your parents to like my parents.” Lucy whispered to him.

“Everything will be fine tonight. Trust me.” Henry reassured her.

“Do we even need to be here?” Lucy asked Henry as they were finishing their entrees. Lucy’s fears had been unfounded. After relatively few minutes, Marie was talking to Marianne about gardening and flowers, which then segued into wedding plans, while John and Collin talked guns. The parents had barely said a word to Henry or Lucy during the meal.

“I don’t think so, want to leave early, and head home for some private time before everyone comes back?” He whispered suggestively in her ear.

“Oh, my god, yes,” she groaned under her breath before heaving a heavy sigh, “but we can’t. We’re stuck here until after dinner drinks. I just heard your mother mention my name and wedding plans.”

“Damn. Rain check?”

“Oh, it’s going to be a downpour tonight.” She said with a wink, laying her hand on his thigh, causing Henry to choke on the whiskey he’d just taken a drink of.

Lucy talked to Marianne and Marie about the plans she and Henry had already decided on, both for the wedding, and the upcoming year. Marianne was not thrilled about Henry living so far away, but if she had her way all of the boys would still be living in Jersey. Lucy showed her a picture of the dress she’d picked that morning. Marianne gasped, much to Lucy’s delight.
The following day Lucy treated Marie and Sarah to some time at the spa. They all got massages before spending some time in the styling chair.

The house was in chaos, with all 6 people trying to get dressed for a special event at the same time. The men were ready first, and had congregated in the living room to wait for the women to finish their dressing. The look in Henry’s eyes when he saw Lucy descend from their bedroom was something Lucy would never forget.

Henry ordered a limo to take the six of them to the hotel that would be hosting the party, so they could all arrive together, and no one would have to be the sober driver for the night.

When they arrived, only Henry’s brothers and sisters-in-law were already there. Lucy had insisted on being there to greet all of the guests. Other than approving the menu and guest list, Lucy and Henry had very little to do with the planning of the party.

Lucy took some time to explore the venue Olivia and Sienna had chosen. The Sanderson London featured a garden terrace with a bar. It was a perfect place to have a party on a warm summer evening. There was plenty of seating in small groups for people to talk, and an open space in the middle for dancing, should anyone want to. The bar stretched the entire length of one side of the room.

Olivia and Sienna hurried over to Lucy when they had seen that she’d arrived. Nik and Piers, their husbands, had taken up places at the bar. After making introductions, Henry brought John and Paulo to join his brothers.

Henry brought glasses of champagne for Lucy, Marie, and Sarah. Lucy caught his hand when he turned back to the bar. “Once people start arriving, I’m going to need you by my side. I don’t know the majority of the people who will be here tonight.”

Henry kissed her temple, “of course Cupcake. Once the first guest arrives, you won’t be able to pry me from your side.” He turned back toward the bar, leaving Lucy with the other women.

“Sienna, Olivia, in case I forget to tell you later, thank you so much. This is all beautiful.”

“It was our pleasure.” Olivia replied.

When Henry’s parents arrived, Marie and John gravitated toward them. Lucy noted they spent very little time apart all evening. She was happy to see her parents and her soon-to-be in-laws getting along so well. Lucy was also happy to see Sarah and Paulo circulating amongst the guests. Sienna and Olivia introduced them to several of Henry’s other family members. Sarah was having a grand time introducing herself as the Maid of Honor, a title she had agreed to just that morning.

Henry was true to his word. He only left Lucy’s side to get her a drink when a waiter couldn’t be found, or when she had to use the bathroom.

Lucy thanked Victoria when she and David arrived, for opening the doors for her at the bridal salon. Lucy shared the picture Sarah had taken of Lucy in her dress. “Oh, that’s gorgeous. It’s one of my favorite designs. Jessica is a genius when it comes to bridal design.” With that Victoria kissed Lucy and Henry on each cheek and was off to socialize with the rest of the guests.

Tom arrived about 45 minutes after the party had started. It was the first time Lucy had seen him since that day in Hampstead. Tom wrapped Lucy in one of his trademark hugs, and kissed her on both cheeks, before turning to Henry, and doing the same. “Tom, we’re so glad you came,” Henry greeted him.
“Well, I couldn’t very well miss my fiancé’s engagement party could I?” Tom joked, Lucy laughed while Henry scowled jokingly. “You know I’m just taking the piss. I am very happy for both of you. When will the wedding be?”

“Well, we’re still going to send you an invite, just in case.” Henry told him.

“I’d like that.” Tom agreed, before making his way into the party.

Lucy and Henry made their way around the room, making a point to talk to everyone in attendance. They shared two dances on the small dance floor. During their second dance, Henry leaned close to her ear, “tonight will be the first time that we’ve danced together, and you don’t end the night crying.”

Lucy laughed, “it’s still early.

The following morning, after a big English style breakfast, Lucy brought Sarah and Paulo to the airport. She hugged her friend for an extra long time, “Thank you for coming. Both for the party, and to help me pick out my dress. I can’t wait until New Year’s Eve.”

“Honey, I wouldn’t be anywhere else. Thank you for asking me to be your Maid of Honor. I’m sure mom will be thrilled when I tell her we’ll be home for Christmas this year. I’ll see you in December.” Sarah finished, grabbing her friend for one last hug, before entering the line for security.

Lucy and Henry spent the next two days showing her parents around London. When Monday came, Henry escorted them all to their airport. He had business to attend to in London and would be joining Lucy in Minnesota at the end of the week.

When she was safely ensconced in her seat, flying back to Minnesota with her parents, but without Henry, Lucy started her lists. Her first list was wedding business that needed to be attended to. The second list was house things she and Henry would need to sort out. The final list was her school list; being gone for most of the summer, Lucy felt like she was behind on her planning for the coming school year.

Lucy looked at the three lists in front of her, and released a huge breath, before pushing the call button for the flight attendant, she was in serious need of something to calm her nerves.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my story, thank you all for the kudos and kind comments.

If you'd like to see what Lucy's dress looks like, and the venue for the engagement party, head over to my Instagram @PatriciaBurtnessWrites The dress is truly spectacular!
Lucy arrived home late on Monday night, taking Tuesday to organize her schedule, and prepare for the rest of the week. She felt like a zombie all through her start of the year inservice day on Wednesday and still hadn’t fully recovered from her jet-lag by Thursday, yawning her way through staff meetings, and preparing her classroom for the school’s Open House that evening.

Lucy accepted many congratulations and well wishes from parents, students, and fellow staff members on her engagement; many asking details about the wedding. Lucy held them off with specifically vague answers; she and Henry had decided to keep the wedding plans as under wraps as possible. Toward the end of the staff presentation to the parents, Lucy could feel herself start to fade, the only thing that kept her going was the knowledge that Henry would be waiting for her when she got home.

She arrived home after the Open House to find Henry asleep on her bed, with Kal curled up by his feet. She smiled down at his sleeping form, brushed the damp curl that lay across his forehead, and kissed him softly before exiting. When she had ensured all the doors were locked, and she’d finished her nighttime routine, Lucy climbed into bed beside him. Though she tried not to, he awoke when she curled into his side. He curled his arm around her shoulders as she laid her head on his chest. He raked his hand through her hair, as she swirled her fingers in his chest hair.

“How could I have missed you this much? It's only been three days,” Henry commented, pressing a kiss to the top of her head.

“Have you met me? I’m unforgettable,” Lucy quipped.

“Yes, you are,” he replied, tilting her chin up to kiss her lips. His hands caressed down her back to cup her bottom as he took the kiss deeper. Lucy made a move to straddle Henry’s hips when her leg met with an obstacle.

“So, are you going to be the bad guy, or…” she trailed off.

Henry nudged the dog with his foot. “Kal, living room.” The dog whined in protest.

Lucy sat up and scratched behind the dog’s ears, “please Kal, mummy and daddy want some alone time.” Through the low light in the room, Lucy could see Kal give her a side-eyed look, before bounding off the bed, and padding into the living room.

“Mummy and daddy?” Henry asked incredulously.

“Come December, Kal will be half mine. I will be his mum.”

“Well, then mummy, what do you say to letting daddy show you just how much he’s missed you?”

“I’d say that sounds wonderful,” she answered, pressing her body close to his, kissing him deeply,
letting Henry lay her down. Their kisses grew hotter, and longer, as their hands explored flesh that had longed for the other’s touch.

Henry drew Lucy’s tank top up, exposing her stomach to his kisses. He kissed his way from her waist, slowly, teasingly, raising her top a centimeter at a time, until finally her breasts were exposed. He lingered over her breasts, taking time to kiss every inch, before focusing on their rosy peaks. Lucy moaned as his mouth closed over her nipple, teasing it with his tongue. When she thought she could take no more, he moved to her other breast, giving it the same torturously slow treatment.

When he finally lifted her top all the way off, and flung it across the room, Lucy grabbed Henry’s face with both her hands, her fingers tangling in his curls. She brought his mouth to hers. While their mouths ate at each other, Lucy lifted her pelvis, trying to get any sort of contact where she wanted it most, but he evaded her. She tore her mouth away from his, searching his eyes for a clue to his attitude. They twinkled with mischief. It was then that Lucy knew she was in for a frustrating but pleasurable time. He winked at her, before attacking her mouth again, he lowered himself to lay next to Lucy. His hands, suddenly free, slowly mapped her torso, down her ribcage, past her bottom, taking a second to grab a handful, and press her against his growing length, before continuing down to her thigh.

Henry’s hand gripped her knee, hitching it over his hip, creating a delicious friction that sent sparks all through Lucy’s system. He thrust against her twice more, making her yearn for there to be less clothes separating them, when he lowered her knee, breaking the contact. Henry’s lips skinned over Lucy’s neck, and shoulders. They lingered for just a second at her breasts before continuing on their journey.

He kissed along the waistband of the men’s boxers she favored for sleeping, before hooking his fingers inside to pull them lower across her hips. Just as he had with her tank top, he was torturously slow removing her shorts, lowering them a centimeter at a time and taking time to cherish the skin that had been exposed.

He followed the shorts, all the way down her legs, alternately kissing or nipping at her thighs, knees, ankles. When he finally made his way back up her body, and pressed his mouth to her core, Lucy cried out, her fingers digging into his shoulders. His tongue swirled and dipped, driving her closer to the edge. With one final flick of the tip of his tongue, Lucy fell over the precipice, screaming his name. He continued his teasing as she came down from her high, not letting her recover, before kissing his way back up her body.

He entered her slowly, continuing his teasing, keeping his thrusts slow. Lucy wrapped her legs around his waist, urging him to go deeper, faster. Finally, when Henry could tell she was on the brink, his intensity increased, his body driving into her in a frantic rhythm. Lucy screamed out his name, again and again as she clung to him as they climaxed together. Henry collapsed on top of Lucy, while she held him close, both struggling to catch their breath.

Eventually Henry rolled off of Lucy, and drew her tight to his side, her leg thrown across his. “We should look for a house without any neighbors if you’re going to be so vocal.”

“It’s your fault,” Lucy countered.

“I will accept that accusation,” Henry said, pressing a kiss to her lips.

Lucy rolled away from Henry to set the alarm on her side of the bed, before cuddling back up to his side. “We should get some sleep. We meet with the realtor slash rental agent tomorrow at 10:00. This jet lag has been kicking my bum.”
“I shall do what I can to help you sleep,” Henry soothed, planting a kiss to the top of her head while caressing her back.

The following morning Lucy and Henry arrived at the realtor’s office at precisely 10:00, both had bags under their eyes, both suffering from jet-lag, and clutching large vessels full of their chosen caffeine source.

“Hello, I’m Jack Johnson, you must be Lucy and Henry?” A man asked approaching them. He was tall and broad, in his mid-fifties, with salt-and-pepper hair and a slight beer belly.

“Yes, we are.” Lucy confirmed, shaking the hand that was offered. Jack led them back to his office.

“Now, I got your email, Lucy, and I have some sites to show you here at the office before we go out into the field, but why don’t you tell me exactly what it is we’re looking for.”

“Henry and I got engaged last month,” Lucy said holding up left hand to show off the ring Henry had placed their a month prior.

“Congratulations,” Jack interrupted.

Lucy smiled at him, “thank you. Henry is not from here, and our plan is to move to London sometime in June. I’m a teacher, and I need to fulfill my contract for the year. I own a house here in town, but it’s not big enough for the two of us, and Henry’s very large dog. So we’re looking for something to rent through the middle of June at least, as well as putting my house on the market, thought it won’t be ready for that for a little bit.”

“So we’re looking to both rent and sell. We can take care of all of that for you. We’ll make another appointment for me to come look at your house so we can get that on the market to sell, but for now. I pre-selected some properties that fit in the parameters you sent me last month.” Jack said, producing several manilla folders. He handed the first to Lucy and Henry. She opened the folder to see a picture of two story house, in town, with very close neighbors. They read through the specs of the house.

The more Lucy read, the less she liked the house.

“I don’t think this will work for us. I don’t want the only shower to be in the basement, and we want something with some land possibly. Kal, Henry’s dog, needs some room to roam.” Lucy explained.

“Fair enough,” Jack said, taking the folder back, “what kind of dog is Kal?”

“He’s an Akita. And he has the energy level of my four year old nephew,” Henry laughed.

“I understand. I’ll show you this file, since we went to the trouble of compiling it for you, but I don’t think this is what you’re looking for. Give me just a few minutes. I need to run to our file room. I’ll be right back.” Jack said, excusing himself.

Lucy and Henry perused the file Jack had given them. Neither cared for the barn style house that was featured. Jack returned about ten minutes later carrying five files.

“I found these in our files. You didn’t give me a range of what kind of rent you’re willing to pay, so these cover the whole spectrum. Most of these properties are on lakes, and have at least a bit of land accompanying the house.” He handed the stack of files to them.

They rejected the first two properties as not right, either too small, or too far from Lucy’s school. The other three properties had promise, and they requested to view them. They followed the realtor in his car to the first property. In the pictures it had looked idyllic. In reality, the cabin was cramped, and the driveway leading to it was dotted with dips and potholes.
The second property was large. It was almost a lodge, on the lake. Jack spent time showing them all of the amenities from the hot tub on the deck, the flat top griddle in the kitchen, to the movie viewing room. Lucy fell in love with the kitchen the moment she saw it. Though both Henry and Lucy liked the property, they still wanted to see the third place. They discussed the lodge while they drove.

“I love it,” Lucy started, “but don’t you think it’s a bit big for just us? There are six bedrooms. We only need one, two if you develop a snoring problem.”

“I’ll agree, it’s is quite large, but then we’ll have room for guests, such as my parents and brothers when they come for the wedding.”

“There are four bathrooms. I don’t like cleaning one, let alone four.” Lucy countered.

“First, it’s two full baths, two half-baths. Second, I’ll make you a deal. You clean one, I’ll clean the other three. Besides, did you see that fireplace in the living room? You know what would be really fun in front of the fireplace?” Henry asked suggestively.

Lucy made a noise of agreement, “I could read so many books in front of that fireplace,” she sighed wistfully.

“Yes, that is exactly what I was talking about.” Henry deadpanned. “But seriously. What do you think?”

“I’m just afraid that it’s going to be too big for just the two of us, and you’ll be gone for six weeks this fall, and who knows how long in the spring, so I’ll be there all by myself…” Lucy trailed off.

“You’ll have Kal to keep you company.” Henry reminded her.

“If you really like it, we’ll take it, but I’d like to see this third one before we make a decision.” Lucy acquiesced.

Henry took Lucy’s hand to kiss her knuckles, “darling, if you don’t like the lodge, we will find something else.”

“Thank you, Darcy.”

The third house, was also on the large side. It featured five bedrooms, and three baths. While The Lodge, as Henry and Lucy had taken to calling it, had things to offer other than the lake, this house’s main feature was that it was on the lake. A lot of energy had been spent on the outside areas, while the inside of the house was dated bordering on shabby. Compared to The Lodge, it just couldn’t hold up.

They all went to Jack’s office to sign the rental agreement on The Lodge, which Jack told them would be ready for them by the following Friday. They returned to Lucy’s house to tell Kal the good news.

They spent the long Labor Day weekend sorting and packing Lucy’s belongings, what would come with them to The Lodge, what would be sold with the house, what would be sold at a garage sale Lucy was planning.

The first day of school arrived, and Henry and Kal both saw Lucy off for the morning. Once she had Ryan and Mindy in the car, she broke the news to them that she wouldn’t be part of the carpool, but promised to invite them to a barbecue once she and Henry were settled in The Lodge.

Lucy greeted her second year students when they came into class. She handed out the syllabus for
the class, explaining her expectations for the class. “So, if you just remember the expectations, we’ll have a good year. Now, are there any questions?”

A girl with black hair raised her hand, “Is it true that you and Henry got engaged this summer?”

Lucy chuckled at the girl’s question. “Well, Hailey, as much as I would love to tell you that yes I am engaged, I was asking if anyone had any questions about the syllabus.” Lucy replied, tucking a piece of hair behind her ear with her left hand, prominently displaying her engagement ring.

Lucy fielded similar questions from students all day, each time giving a similar non-answer, with a wink. She, Ryan, and Mindy had all decided to stay late that day, to get a few things sorted. Lucy spent her time, getting her plan for the first two weeks of lessons in order.

Lucy’s first week of school passed uneventfully, and Friday evening, she and Henry went to Jack’s office to claim the keys to The Lodge. Lucy had packed most of the things she was planning to bring with her to The Lodge, and she and Henry would spend the next day moving.

Henry awoke around 3:00 am Saturday morning to find Lucy’s side of the bed empty, and cold. He found her, sitting on the floor absentmindedly petting Kal who sat at her side, staring at the pile of boxes and totes that they would be moving later that day.

He sat on her other side, drawing her close to his body. “Darling, what’s wrong?”

“It’s all starting.” She said cryptically.

“What’s all starting?”

“This has been my home for the last five years. I bought it. It’s in my name, and I’m just going to give it all up. For a guy.”

“Hey, are you still worried that I’m going to change my mind?” He asked, tipping her chin up to look him in the eye.

She sighed, stymied for a single answer. “I know you love me, and you won’t leave, but I’ve spent my entire adult life being invisible to men. I keep waiting for you to come to your senses, and when you do, I’ll be left without a home.”

Henry sighed, he grasped Lucy’s face in his hands. “Lucy, listen to me. I love you. I am not going to leave you...again. I want to spend my life with you. I know that you’re having to give up a lot to be with me, and I keep waiting for you to come to your senses and realize that I’m not worth all of your sacrifices. I love you and I want to be with you.”

“Oh, Henry, I know you’re not going to leave me, I believe you when you say it, but there’s still this part of me, the “I don’t need no man” part that I’ve carefully cultivated over the last decade that’s fighting me. Plus change is hard, and so much is changing.”

“But change isn’t always bad. Everything IS changing, but it’s changing for the better. We’re going to spend the rest of our lives together. We’re going to have babies, and we’ll love them more than life itself. Now, will you come back to bed, we’ve got a lot of work to do today.” Henry said, standing, before helping Lucy off the floor.

As they walked back to the bedroom, Lucy commented, “you know, Kal is really good at keeping me calm.”
“It’s part of his training. His emotional support certification isn’t a joke. We went through training. He can tell when someone needs the support, and won’t leave their side until he feels like his job is done.”

Lucy stopped, and knelt down to the dog, rubbing him behind the ears and planting a kiss on his forehead. “Thank you buddy. I love you.” He smiled at her.

The move went smoothly, and Lucy and Henry spent the next several weekends preparing her house to go on the market. Any time that wasn’t devoted to the house was spent making wedding decisions. Before Lucy knew it, it was time for Henry to leave for filming. He left Kal in Minnesota with Lucy.

Lucy only heard from Henry via text for the first four days of him being gone. When they finally had the opportunity to FaceTime, Lucy gasped when the call connected. “What did they do to you?! Where are your beautiful curls?” She all but yelled.

“I told you this is a military film. You didn’t expect that they would cut my hair?”

“I was expecting a side-fade, not that they’d shave your head! Will it grow back before the wedding?”

“Probably not, darling. Sorry.”

Lucy took a deep, calming breath. “Then I guess I have three months to come to terms with that. So, other than them maiming you, how is everything going?”

“Really, well. It’s so hot here, but everyone is really great. There’s a group of us that play poker at night.”

“That sounds like fun. I’m glad you’re enjoying yourself. I miss you.”

“I miss you too. But I’ll be home just in time for Thanksgiving, at which point our wedding will be just a month away.”

“There’s still so much to do.”

“I know there is, but please remember to delegate, or ask your mother to help. I don’t want you stressing yourself out before our wedding. You’ll make yourself sick.”

“Ok.” Lucy agreed on a sigh. “Now, tell me about Jordan. Is it beautiful?”

As October turned to November, Lucy was kept busy with school, the play, Heather’s baby shower, and wedding planning. She watched as RSVPs for the wedding started to trickle in, and she fielded calls and emails wanting to know about the dress code for the wedding. “There isn’t really a dress code, except no jeans. Just wear what you would normally wear for a New Year’s Eve party,” was Lucy’s standard response.

Henry arrived home the Monday of Thanksgiving week, and Tuesday morning before school, Lucy received a call from Jessica letting her know that her dress would be in New York the following week, and could they schedule a fitting. She arranged to meet Jessica at her New York shop the following Saturday. Lucy disconnected the call and let out a “Whoop!” of excitement, which woke
“What’s going on?” He asked, trying to rub the sleep from his eyes.

“That was Jessica, my dress is ready, I’m going to New York next weekend for a fitting!” Lucy exclaimed, doing a little dance in place.

Henry smiled at her exuberance. “Am I going to New York too?”

Lucy thought for a long moment, “I mean, you’re welcome to come with, but you’re not going anywhere near that dress store. You’ll try to sneak a peek, and I won’t stand for that.” She kissed him quickly on the nose, before reaching for her coat to leave for the day. “Let me know what you decide, I’ll book tickets this evening.” Sliding her feet into her boots, she looked up at Henry and smiled, “It’s really happening. We’re getting married.” She couldn’t contain her smile.

Henry smiled at her happiness. He strolled over to where she was gathering her bags, halting her movements. She turned to look at him. He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her gently. Pouring all of the love for her he felt in that moment, before drawing her close. “I love you so much Cupcake. I don’t even have the words to describe it,” he said, into her hair.

“I love you too, Darcy,” she said into his chest. They stayed locked together in their embrace for several long moments, before pulling apart. Lucy looked up at him, and cupped his face in her hand. “Now, go back to bed, get some sleep. Then spend the day playing with Kal. He’s missed you so much. He’s already been fed this morning, don’t let him guilt you into feeding him again this morning.” She said, looking down at the dog who had planted himself at their side. His face a picture of innocence.

Henry pressed on more quick kiss to her lips, “Go. Mold young minds,” he said, turning her toward the door, and swatting her bottom.

Lucy’s smile stayed with her during her entire drive to work. It seemed her life was all falling into place.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for spending your precious free time to read my story. It’s not over yet, but I need to tell you that this story will not be updated again until, at the earliest, mid-July. I am going on vacation to Italy, and will not be writing much, if at all.

Of course, I might be SO inspired by the Italian countryside and culture that the next chapter (the WEDDING!) will jus flow from my fingers. But I don’t anticipate that happening.

If you’d like to check out some pictures of The Lodge, check out my Instagram @PatriciaBurtnessWrites

And as always, I love your comments. I want to know what you think. So please share.
Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

I’m back! Sorry for the long delay, but it was unavoidable. I hope you enjoy this chapter, and that it was worth the wait.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lucy flew, with Henry in tow, to New York late on Friday night for her appointment with Jessica on Saturday. It was almost 1:00 am by the time they reached their hotel in midtown Manhattan. Lucy slid into the bed and fell asleep almost instantly. Henry followed soon after.

The following morning, Lucy and Henry took a short cab ride to Jessica’s store front in the city’s Garment District. The bell over the door tinkled, signaling their arrival. Jessica herself peered out from the back room. Her face splitting into a wide smile upon seeing Lucy and Henry.

“Lucy!” The other woman exclaimed, opening her arms to lightly embrace Lucy, and kiss her cheeks European style.

“Jessica, this is my fiancé Henry. He insisted on coming to New York with me.” Lucy explained.

Jessica extended her hand toward Henry. “It’s a pleasure to meet you Henry.”

Henry shook the woman’s hand lightly, “the pleasure is all mine,” he flashed her one of his movie star smiles.

Jessica turned her attention back to Lucy, “are you ready to try on your dress?”

“I am so ready!” Lucy smiled, barely containing her excitement. Jessica motioned for Lucy to follow her toward the fitting area. Henry started following along behind dutifully. Lucy spun on her toe and put her hand to his chest. “Just where do you think you’re going, mister?”

“With you?” He answered uncertainly.

“No. I told you, you’re not getting a look at this dress until the ceremony. You’ll see it in 26 days. For now, you stay out here. Find a chair, and play on your phone or something. I’ll be out in a bit.” He pulled a face, but did as he was told.

Jessica directed Lucy into a changing room, and left her to change her undergarments while Jessica retrieved the dress. She returned carrying a large white garment bag. She unzipped it to reveal the blush sparkle of the dress Lucy had picked out just months before.

Jessica assisted Lucy into the dress, zipping the back, and buttoning the lace closure holding the back of the neckline together, creating an attractive keyhole back. Jessica fiddled with the hem, spreading it out, before allowing Lucy to turn to see herself in the mirror. She gasped at her appearance. The dress fit almost perfectly. The blush pink played nicely off her paler winter skin, and the lace Jessica chose to construct the straps melded perfectly with the original dress design. Lucy brought her hands to her waist to swish the skirt and see it from all angles. She grasped a small piece of the dress near her right hip, only to find a hole in the dress. She looked down in panic, sure she had ruined the dress. Her hand probed the hole it found, “it has pockets!” Lucy exclaimed.
“Almost all of my designs have pockets. It’s one of my signatures. Now what do you think?”

“Oh, Jessica, it’s beautiful. It’s amazing, it’s...I wish I had a thesaurus to properly describe how I feel about this dress.”

“I’m glad. We worked hard on it, to get to done so quickly.” She and Lucy spent the next several minutes discussing the fit, and what, if any, alterations needed to be made.

“Because of the special circumstances, we’ll get these alterations done, and, can you come in again tomorrow for a final fitting?”

“Tomorrow? The dress will be done tomorrow?”

“Ordinarily, no, but because of the circumstances, I have my top seamstress standing by ready to work on this dress, and only this dress. We’ll have you come in tomorrow, and if it all goes as it should, you’ll be able to leave with your dress. If more alterations need to be made. We’ll courier your dress to you in Minnesota by the middle of the week.” Jessica explained.

“And how much is all of this rushing costing me?” Lucy asked tentatively.

“It’s not costing you anything, Victoria Beckham is one of my biggest investors, and she personally asked me to make sure you got exactly what you wanted, as a personal favor to her. Apparently she’s quite fond of you. Though truth be told, I am too,” she explained, giving Lucy a wink.

“Well, thank you Jessica. This means more than I can say really.” Lucy thanked her, as she helped Lucy out of the dress.

“Ready to go?” Lucy asked Henry, as she walked toward him, shrugging into her winter coat.

“You’re not bringing the dress with you?”

“It needs a few alterations, I have another appointment tomorrow for the final fitting. THEN I get to bring it home.”

Henry offered his arm to Lucy as they exited the store, “well darling, it would seem we have the rest of our day free. What would you like to do?”

Lucy slipped her arm through his as they strolled through the brisk December morning. “Other than the premiere this spring, I’ve never been to New York. Do you have any recommendations?”

Henry thought for a long moment, “I think you would enjoy the MoMA. They have Van Gogh, Dali, Picasso. I know how much you love Picasso.”

“I didn’t think you liked art museums,” she looked up at him.

“I don’t visit them on my own, but with you, I do enjoy seeing them. You make it a whole new experience for me,” he elaborated, kissing her temple.

“Are you just saying that, so I don’t feel bad about dragging you to a museum?”

“No, darling, I mean it. You go into teacher mode, and actually, I think it’s kind of sexy,” he murmured in her ear.

“Then the MoMA it is,” she said, fanning her face.

They spent over two hours, wandering the halls of the museum, Lucy admiring the art, and Henry
admiring Lucy.

After lunch, they took a stroll down 5th Avenue. Lucy marveled at the Christmas display windows, happy just to be with Henry, she had missed him while he’d been away filming. They returned to the hotel for a rest, before going out for dinner. Henry stopped at the concierge when they entered the lobby. “I’m expecting an envelope? Has it been delivered yet?” He asked the well dressed man behind the desk.

“Yes, sir, Mr. Cavill. And your packages have already been sent up to your suite.” The man said, handing Henry a white business sized envelope. Henry thanked the man, and handed in a generous tip.

“What’s that? What are you up to?” Lucy asked as they walked to the elevator. Once inside, Henry handed her the envelope.

“Why don’t you see for yourself,” he suggested.

Lucy took the envelope and gingerly opened it as the elevator made its way to their floor. She lifted the flap to peer inside, and found two tickets. She reached inside to retrieve the two rectangles, and read aloud, “Radio City Christmas Spectacular! You got us tickets to see the Rockettes? How did you know I’ve always wanted to see them?” She asked, throwing her arms around his neck.

“It was on your bucket list. When you said we would be going to New York, I thought it would be a nice surprise for you.”

“But HOW did you get tickets? I thought they were all sold out.”

“I know a guy,” he said, grinning at her, pressing the key card to the touch pad to unlock their hotel room door. He motioned for Lucy to enter before him, she kept her gaze on him as she entered.

“You know a guy? But, I didn’t bring anything to wear to Radio City Music Hall,” Lucy gasped. Henry settled his hands on her shoulders, and turned her toward the closet, which had two garment bags hanging on it, that hadn’t been there that morning when they left. “Henry, what did you do?” Lucy asked approaching the garment bags.

“You’re not the only one who can make plans.” Henry replied.

Lucy reached for the zipper on the first bag. Inside she found a sheath dress in a deep emerald green, with black lace lining the hem. She turned to Henry. “Henry, it’s beautiful, but its too much, the tickets, the dress, it’s all too much. I can’t possibly reciprocate.”

Henry closed the short distance between them, taking her in his arms, silencing her words with a kiss. “First of all darling, you don’t need to reciprocate, mainly because I don’t expect anything in return. But you already DO reciprocate, in a thousand little ways. You love me and care for me. It’s the million little things you do for me that show me you care. I know that it’s not always easy being in a relationship with me, and you never complain You’re willing to completely upend your life for me. I want to show you just how much you mean to me, by making all your dreams come true.”

“You’re too good to me.” Lucy smiled, resting her head on his chest.

Lucy and Henry managed to keep the details of their wedding secret. The only people who knew about the wedding were the people invited, and they had been sworn to secrecy. Lucy didn’t want her students crashing the wedding, while Henry didn’t want any paparazzi ruining their day.
When her students asked if she had any plans for the break, she could barely contain her smile as she thought about becoming Henry’s wife, but managed to lie convincingly that she and Henry would just be having a quiet Christmas with her family.

They spent Christmas Eve with Lucy’s family at her parent’s house, and hosted a Christmas Day dinner for Lucy’s parents and grandmother at The Lodge. The couple took a quiet day to themselves on Saturday before Henry’s whole family arrived on Sunday.

Henry had received a text from one of his brothers that they had all gotten their respective rental cars and were heading north. Everyone had flown in the previous afternoon, and stayed in Minneapolis in order to combat their jetlag before driving to Lucy and Henry’s house. As the time that everyone should arrive approached, Lucy began pacing.

“Why did I say that I was fine with everyone staying here? Am I crazy?” she asked no one in particular, rubbing her temples.

Henry, who was lazing on the couch, stood in her path, halting her pacing. “Well, darling you ARE marrying me, so the jury is still out on the crazy verdict, but I don’t think you are. I think you are unfailingly kind, and you know that I don’t see my family as often as I’d like, so you agreed to everyone staying with us so that the family wouldn’t be separated.”

Lucy released the breath she hadn’t realized she’d been holding, and collapsed against Henry’s chest. “Thank you. I’m sure you’re going to have to talk me down about a thousand times this week.”

“Whatever you need Cupcake, you just tell me,” he replied, kissing her forehead.

Kal barked and Lucy and Henry saw five vehicles crest the small rise in the drive. “The British are coming, the British are coming,” Lucy chanted under her breath, causing Henry to bark out a laugh, as they both donned their shoes to greet the family.

There was a flurry of activity as everyone greeted the pair. All of the boys ran to give their Uncle Hank the first hug, while Lucy went in search of Heather and baby Sophia. She volunteered to carry the baby and carrier into the house, signalling for the other women to follow. “Henry, you guys get the bags.” Lucy called over her shoulder.

“Yes, dear,” Henry said sarcastically, helping Charlie unload their suitcases.

“You’re going to be such a good husband,” Charlie quipped, patting his brother on the shoulder.

Henry entered the house in time to hear Lucy explaining the layout of The Lodge.

“As on the ground floor, we have the kitchen, help yourself to anything in the fridge, a half-bath, dining area, and living room. In the basement is the movie theater, exercise area, game room, and another half-bath, there’s also a bar down there, that Henry stocked. If you want anything, help yourself.”

“As on the first floor are most of the bedrooms. Our room is in the corner, with one of the full bathrooms. The bedroom on the other end has the other ensuite bathroom, which we thought Charlie and Heather could take, because of baby Sophia. The other rooms can share the full bathroom in the hallway, but you’re welcome to use ours as well.”

“The second floor has another full bathroom, two bedrooms, and a second living room area, with a pullout couch. Henry and I thought that might be a good place for the older boys. I guess that’s it for now, so you all can fight over who gets which room, and you can settle in. Dinner is in about 2 hours, so make yourselves at home.”
“Heather, I’ll take Sophia, while you and Charlie get unpacked,” Lucy volunteered, holding out her arms toward the baby. Heather handed over the little girl, and followed everyone else upstairs.

Henry found her 10 minutes later, sitting on the couch, cooing to his niece, “look at you. You’re so little. Look at these little fingers.” Henry watched her kiss the baby’s fingers. His heart warmed, thinking about her holding their own baby. She didn’t hear him approach, she was so wrapped up in the infant. “You’re such a pretty girl,” she murmured.

“Luckily she takes after her mother,” Henry commented, taking a seat beside her.

“She’s so precious. I don’t want to let her go,” Lucy commented to him, not taking her eyes off the little girl.

“Well, I think mum is going to have something to say about that. This is her first granddaughter.”

“I know, but I’m not going to give her up until someone tells me I have to.”

“I didn’t think you would.” Henry laughed. He stood, and first kissed his niece on the forehead, then Lucy, before leaving them together.

That night, Lucy and Henry cooked dinner for everyone, a classic English roast, complete with Yorkshire pudding. Everyone raved that it was almost as good as Maryanne’s, to which Maryanne protested that her Yorkshire puddings had never turned out so light and airy. Lucy felt lighter than the pudding.

Even with everything on her pre-wedding to-do list, Lucy cleared Monday to spend with Henry’s family. They all spent the day enjoying each other’s company, and not having anything that needed to be done.

Tuesday was Lucy’s day with her bridesmaids.

“Are you sure it’s not horribly rude to just leave?” Lucy asked, while getting dressed that morning. Henry sat on the edge of the bed and motioned her over. He pulled her into his embrace, resting his hands on her bottom. “Cupcake, everyone understands that you’re preparing for the wedding. And if anyone tries to fault you, I will remind them as such. Now, go, have a lovely afternoon with your girls, and I will see you home for dinner. I’m making my bolognese.”

“Oooh, that sounds delicious,” she kissed him quickly, “I’ll see you then.”

She met Sarah, Emma, Anna, and Jenn at a local cafe for lunch before going to the salon that would be styling their hair on the wedding day for manicures. At lunch she gave the women their schedules for the wedding day, starting with their hair appointments around lunch time, and finishing with the morning after brunch Lucy and Henry were having catered at the reception hotel.

The women arrived at the salon and decided on their manicure order. They took their seats at the nail stations they had been directed to. Lucy produced several bottles of polish in the exact shade of their bridesmaid dresses.

“Ladies, I don’t care which you do, but please either stick to the blue, or a simple french manicure. I’m going with a classic french manicure.” The women enjoyed their afternoon together, laughing and sipping champagne.

While she was waiting for everyone to be finished, Anna got a text from Clint. He had taken the kids to The Lodge to go sledding with Henry’s nephews, and been invited to stay for dinner. Lucy called
her parents and invited them to dinner as well, then called Henry.

“I hear we have extra guests for dinner.”

“Yes, it’s pasta, it goes a long way.” Henry commented unconcerned.

“Do I need to bring anything home? I’m just about to leave the salon.”

He gave her a short list of things that the house needed, and disconnected.

The dinner at The Lodge was just short of a mad house. With 25 people, space was at a premium, and seating was limited. They managed to eat in stages. First the boys were fed, then their mothers set them up in the theater with a movie, while the adults ate. Lucy leaned into Henry’s side, sipping her wine, as she watched her parents and brother interact with the people who would soon be her family.

Wednesday found everyone at the church for the rehearsal. Everything went smoothly, causing Lucy to hope everything would go just as smoothly the following afternoon. The whole group, all 35 of them, including the wedding party, the nephews and nieces, Lucy’s grandma, and pastor Meredith and her husband, had a dinner catered at the reception hotel, before returning home to change for stag and hen nights.

Lucy hired a limo to pick up all of her girls and take them around. She invited the Cavill sisters-in-law who wholeheartedly agreed, leaving Maryanne and Collin to watch the grandchildren.

“You’re sure it’s not too much trouble? Lucy asked. “I could get a sitter here in half an hour.”

“It’s no bother, they’re all in bed. It’s no different than Christmas.” Maryanne assured her.

Lucy was the last to be picked-up by the limo, she found Sarah, Emma, Anna, and Jenn already deep into a bottle of champagne by the time the Cavil sisterhood joined them. They settled on one of Lucy’s favorite bars, where they proceeded to monopolize the jukebox and work their way through the bartender’s catalog of fruity drinks.

Henry and the guys settled on a local pool hall to play billiards, drink copious amounts of whiskey and smoke cigars. The women collectively declared their plans lame.

When the night started to wind down, the men descended on the women’s party. The men shared a round of drinks with the women as the bartender called Last Call. The whole group bundled themselves out of the bar to make their way home. Paolo, Joshua, Lee, and Clint had driven themselves, and as such, peeled off with their wives to go back to their respective homes.

Jenn, who had decided she was too tired, and tipsy, to walk, requested a piggy-back from her husband. She could be heard yelling from the next block, “Top Night!” causing the remaining partiers to collapse into giggles.

Thursday morning Lucy opened her eyes to find Henry staring at her, his eyes caressing her face. She didn’t speak, just let her eyes roam the planes and angles of his face, until their eyes met and held. A wide smile split Lucy’s face.

“We’re getting married today;” she whispered.

“I knew there was something I was forgetting;” he grinned back at her, before leaning in to kiss her good morning. “Just think, in less than 12 hours, we will be man and wife;” he commented, pulling her close to snuggle into his chest.
“And in just over 48 hours, we’ll have the house to ourselves again!” Lucy quipped

“It hasn’t been so bad having everyone here, has it?” Henry asked

“No,” Lucy conceded, “in fact your sisters-in-law have been a great help, but it will be nice to have some privacy again.”

“That’s why we got the bridal suite at the hotel tonight.” he murmured suggestively. They snuggled in each others arms for a few more minutes, until they heard someone moving around downstairs. Henry rolled out of bed, and slipped on a pair of sweatpants, and a t-shirt. “I’ll see you downstairs in a few minutes Cupcake,” he said before leaving her alone in the bedroom.

Lucy took a few minutes to brush her hair, and trade her pajamas for yoga pants and a long sleeved t-shirt before padding downstairs herself. She found the kitchen a hive of activity. Maryanne had taken up residence at the stove and was swirling batter in a large frying pan. The long counter in front of her was laid out with every topping anyone could ask for.

“What’s this?” Lucy asked in awe.

“Mum’s making crepes for everyone for breakfast.” Henry answered, handing Lucy a mug of tea.

“Oh, Maryanne, you don’t have to do…” Lucy started, but was cut off by her soon-to-be mother-in-law waving a spatula at her.

“Dear, it’s your wedding day, you will be running nonstop, you need a good breakfast.” She thrust a plate in Lucy’s direction. “Now, take this plate, start with 2 crepes, add as many toppings as you would like, and sit down and eat. Mother’s orders.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Lucy replied, following orders. She looked down at her hands clutching the plate and saw the slightest tremble from the excitement the day was about to bring.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much to all of my readers! I hope you’re loving what’s going on in Lucy and Henry’s lives. The wedding chapter will be up in a few days hopefully.

As always, leave comments, let me know what you loved, what you didn’t...

And check out my Instagram for pics to accompany the story. @PatriciaBurtnessWrites
It’s finally here, the wedding you’ve all been waiting for. Let me know what you think in the comments.

Once everyone had eaten, and the dishes cleaned, Lucy called all of the adults to the dining room table, and distributed papers. On the paper she had broken down the day by event, and who would be needed at each event. She could see the brothers giving Henry looks about the schedule.

“Yes, boys, I know this is extra Type-A, but I didn’t want a million questions today. So everyone knows where they are expected and when. Right?” she looked around, getting nods from everyone involved. “Good. You’re dismissed.”

Henry followed Lucy as she went to the fridge to retrieve a bottle of water, “you don’t think the schedules are too much, do you?” she asked him hesitantly.

Henry made a thinking face, “it’s on the border.” he confirmed.

Lucy sighed, dropping her head to his chest. “I don’t want to be a bridezilla.”

Henry raised her chin with his finger, “darling, you are not being a bridezilla. You haven’t screamed at anyone. You haven’t made any ridiculous demands on anyone. You’ve even kept your panic attacks mild. No one thinks you’re being a bridezilla. All you did this morning was distribute schedules. Even those were reasonable.”

“I was going to laminate them, but decided not to.”

Henry laughed, “that would have been a step too far.”

Lucy spent some time, as become her daily custom, snuggling with baby Sophia. The little girl had barely spent anytime when she wasn’t in someone’s arms, between her grandmother, mother, aunts, and even her uncles, who all pledged their loyalty to the little princess. When she fell asleep, Lucy laid her down in her crib, and went in search of Henry. She found him playing a racing game game with a few of his nephews.

When his race finished, she called him out, to follow her. He wrapped his arms around her from behind, “What do you need, Cupcake?”

“I wanted to give you your wedding present, I thought you might like to wear it today.”

“Well, if we’re exchanging gifts, let me go get yours,” he said, kissing her temple before turning back toward the game room.

“You hid it in the game room?” Lucy asked.

“It’s the only place I knew you wouldn’t look,” he grinned at her.
Lucy made her way to their bedroom, retrieving a thick rectangle wrapped in silver paper with a cobalt blue bow. Henry joined her, carrying a flat square, wrapped in shiny blue paper.

Lucy handed her box to him. He eagerly ripped the paper, finding a grey box, with a JL logo that he recognized. His eyes met Lucy’s in shock. He gingerly opened the box to find a watch he had modeled several months before, which he had admired.

“Darling, how did you get this? This is too much. How were you able to afford it?”

“I know a guy, or rather, gal. Dany gave me the suggestion, then she negotiated the whole thing. I used the profits from selling my house,” she explained.

“Darling, it’s too expensive, I can’t accept it,” he protested, trying to hand the box back to her.

“I didn’t want to tell you this right now, but I didn’t pay full price. Like I said, Dany negotiated the whole thing. But you have to wear it to the next several public events.”

Henry pressed a kiss to her lips, “you really are too good to me.” He handed her his box.

Lucy gingerly lifted one of the flaps, not wanting to damage her manicure before the pictures that afternoon. She found a plain white cardboard box, similar to what jewelry from an art fair might come in. She lifted the top to find a set of keys attached to a square keychain sporting the picture of the two of them kissing on the London Eye. She lifted them and they jangled against each other.

“You gave me keys? What do these keys go to?” She asked apprehensively.

“The Lodge,” he answered proudly.

“You gave me keys to our house for our wedding?” She asked becoming more confused by the minute.

“Yes, I did. I gave you the keys to OUR house,” he replied, stressing the word our. “The Lodge is our house now.”

“The Lodge is ours?” She asked stupidly, her brain refusing to comprehend.

“Yes. Now we have a house in Minnesota that we can visit whenever we want to.” He grinned at her.

Lucy’s gaze darted between the keys in her palm to Henry’s face. “You bought The Lodge? Henry, it’s too much!”

“Cupcake, this place cost less than my house in London, and now we have this amazing house for our use whenever we want. We’re near your parents, and it’s big enough to host my family, if we want to do that again. The sale is conditional upon you signing the paperwork, as the house will be in both of our names. If you truly don’t want us to buy it, we won’t,” he insisted.

She looked at the keys one last time, before launching herself at Henry, knocking him back onto the bed. The planted kisses all across his face. “Thank you, Darcy, it’s the perfect wedding present. “You father’s primary concern about you marrying me was that I would be ‘taking away his little girl’ I hope this will show him that I have no intention of doing that.”

“I love you, Henry.”

“I love you too, Lucy,” he answered, pulling her close to rest on his chest.
Before Lucy knew it, it was time for her to leave to have her hair styled. She gathered everything she would need; the next time she entered this house, she would be a married woman. She smiled to herself at the thought.

She pulled Henry to her for a final kiss goodbye. “I’ll see you at the church. Photos start at 3:00, don’t be late.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it Cupcake,” Henry smiled at her retreating form.

Lucy met her mom, Sarah, Emma, Anna, and Jenn at the salon. She planned to wear the earrings and necklace Henry gave her the previous Christmas, and had decided on a simple, elegant modified French twist/braid for her hair to show them off. She laughed and reminisced, and sipped champagne with her girlfriends until it was time to go to the church for the early evening service.

Lucy had stored the dress at her parent’s house, to keep Henry from sneaking a peek before the day. She opened the garment bag, and stared at the blush sparkle. She hadn’t looked at the dress since bringing it home from New York. It was even more beautiful than she remembered.

Her mother helped her into the dress, and pinned the veil into her hair. Lucy looked at herself in the full length mirror and couldn’t contain her smile. She turned toward her bridesmaids, “what do you think?” she asked nervously.

“Lucy you look amazing. That dress is spectacular.” Emma said.

“It has pockets!” Lucy exclaimed, inspiring jealousy from all of her attendants.

“Well, if it has pockets, then you can hang on to these,” Sarah said, handing her several folded tissues.

“What makes you think I’m going to cry?” Lucy asked indignantly.

“You cried at the Hallmark commercial last week,” her mom piped in.

“The little girl was giving her grandpa the toy he’d wanted when he was her age. You’d cry too.” Lucy answered stubbornly, feeling her eyes start to well again. “Fine, I’ll take the tissues.”

When Henry and his family arrived for pictures, Maryanne slipped into the bridal suite.

“Lucy, my dear, you look lovely.” Maryanne said, embracing her soon-to-be daughter-in-law.

“Thank you, Maryanne.”

“I wanted to bring you this. I am an only daughter, and my mother willed me all of her jewelry when she died. I had hoped to pass it on to my own daughter, but as you know that was not in the cards, as they say. I’ve given each of the girls something to wear for their wedding, and I was hoping you’d wear these for your special day.” She said, producing a square felt box. She handed it to Lucy, who opened it and gasped. Inside she found a pair of sapphire earrings. A teardrop shaped diamond stud connected to large dangling teardrop shaped sapphire, the color almost exactly matching the bridesmaids’ dresses. “When you told me your color scheme for the wedding, I knew these would be the perfect thing. I know you already have your jewelry picked out, so if you don’t want to wear them, I understand.”

“No, Maryanne, they’re perfect. Thank you so much.” Lucy interrupted, embracing the older woman. Lucy unfastened the opal earrings from her ears and slipped the sapphires in.

“They look beautiful on you. My mother would be so happy to see how happy you’ve made my
son,” she commented, hugging Lucy again.

Lucy fanned her face, to keep the tears at bay. “Thank you, Maryanne, he’s made me very happy too.”

The photographer chose that moment to collect Lucy for her first look pictures with Henry. The men had been doing their pre-wedding preparations in a separate part of the church, and Henry was now waiting at the altar for his first look at his bride.

Lucy stood at the doors to the sanctuary, seeing Henry in his wedding suit for the first time. His back was to her, his large frame radiating with nervous energy. The photographer took her place before giving Henry the instruction to turn around.

Henry heard the words he had been none-too-patiently waiting for, and turned to the back of the church. There she was, his Lucy, looking more beautiful than he had ever seen her before. His hand flew to his gaping mouth, as he laughed out his emotions. His eyes welled, obscuring his view. He had no memory of moving, but suddenly he was in the middle of the aisle, holding Lucy in his arms. Her face tipped up toward his, he pressed his lips to hers, using his kiss to tell her everything he couldn’t find the words to say.

“I take it you like the dress?” Lucy asked, as she held him at an arm’s length, taking in his wool covered form.

“Darling, I didn’t think I could love you more than I did this morning. This morning pales in comparison to how I feel right now.”

“I could say the same thing,” she smiled up at him. Lucy wasn’t sure how long she and Henry stood, staring at each other in the middle of the church.

“I hate to interrupt this moment, but we do need to keep on schedule,” the photographer interrupted apologetically. “I’m going to go get the rest of the wedding party.”

Lucy thanked the woman, and she and Henry strolled arm-in-arm to the altar. While they waited, Lucy told Henry about his mother’s earrings, causing him to tear up again.

Lucy and Henry posed alone, and with their wedding party and families for, what felt like, a marathon photo session. Lucy had requested several specific shots, her favorite being her garter picture.

Henry knelt on one knee in front of Lucy, while she had her cobalt blue heel resting on his bent knee. Her dress had been hiked up to reveal her cobalt blue garter, with a Tardis affixed to it. Henry’s head flew back as he released a loud boisterous laugh from deep within his chest.

Eventually the whole party retired to the large bridal suite to await their guests. Just before showtime, Charlie, and the rest of the brothers approached the couple. “Lucy, we just wanted to let you know, if you come to your senses while you’re up there, just give us the sign,” he said theatrically scratching his nose with his index finger, “and we’ll provide ample distraction for you to slip out.”

Lucy laughed, “thank you guys, but my gals already have it covered. There’s smoke grenades in the bouquets.” She winked at them as they all roared with laughter.

Charlie turned to Henry, “I knew there was a reason we liked this one,” he commented, slapping his brother on the shoulder.

Finally the time came for the ceremony to begin. Henry left with his brothers to take their place at the
front of the sanctuary, while Lucy and her bridesmaids lined up in the back. Henry gave her one last lingering kiss before walking his mother up the aisle.

Quinn started the procession, looking adorable in her flower girl dress. Lucy and Henry had considered long and hard before choosing a ring bearer, not wanting to slight any of the nephews, on either side. Eventually settling on Kal. Henry had a special cobalt bowtie made for him, and the pillow with the rings was attached to his collar. Quinn, held on to his collar as she made her way to the front of the church.

Lucy’s bridesmaids followed Quinn, each looking stylish in their cobalt gowns, Lucy had let each woman choose a dress that was her own, but all of her ladies had chosen gowns featuring the same sweetheart neckline and cap sleeves as Lucy’s dress. They each held a small bouquet of white calla lilies, wrapped with silver and blue ribbons.

Finally it was Lucy’s time. She slid her arm through her father's as the music swelled to signal her procession. She clutched her bouquet of calla lilies, white roses, and blue orchids, wrapped with a cobalt ribbon. They paused at the door to the sanctuary, as the attendees stood to face her. Lucy took a large breath and released it before her eyes locked with Henry’s and she slowly made her way to the altar.

They had decided on a very traditional service, presided over by Pastor Meredith. Lucy had weighed her desire to write their own vows, with her self-conscious hesitation to express all of those emotions aloud to everyone in attendance. Henry suggested that they write their own vows, and read them to each other that night when they were alone. It was at that moment that Lucy was 100% certain she was making the right choice in marrying Henry.

The service flowed nicely. Kal did exactly as commanded, and sat at Charlie’s feet for the duration of the service. When the time came for Meredith to ask if anyone objects to the union, Lucy gave her best teacher stare to each of her soon-to-be brothers-in-law, none of which made a peep, her bridesmaids, on the other hand, all sounded as if they had contracted bronchitis. Lucy turned to look at them, appalled. They all responded with their best innocent expression, and as she turned back to face Henry, she caught the groomsmen giving each other fistbumps. The audience gave a great laugh of approval. She heaved an exaggerated sigh, and motioned Meredith to continue.

Lucy was thankful for the videographer, because she couldn’t remember a single thing about the wedding, except their perfect first kiss as husband and wife. When the kiss ended, they stayed close, breathing the same breath, before locking eyes, and turning toward their assembled friends and family.

They made a quick dash to the back of the church, followed by their attendants, who found Lucy wrapped around Henry. “Eeeewwww,” Quinn commented as she made her way into the entry of the sanctuary. Henry and Lucy jumped apart like guilty teenagers.

The receiving line seemed to take forever. Lucy’s head spun as she was introduced to family members and friends she hadn’t met yet. She was thankful for the opportunity to thank Victoria in person for her part in helping Lucy procure her dress. Lucy had never enjoyed being the center of attention, but with Henry’s presence there to soak-up some of the limelight, she was the happiest woman in the world.

After what seemed to Lucy like a millennia, they all made their way to the limo Henry had arranged to take the whole wedding party to the hotel that would be hosting the reception. When they had gathered all of their things, and were making their way to the reception, Lucy turned on her friends. “How dare you?” She asked mock indignanty.
“It was their idea.” Sarah said, pointing to Henry’s brothers.

“But you went along with it!” Lucy smiled, letting her friend know she was not, in fact, angry.

“I thought it was pretty funny.” Emma chimed in.

“It was,” Lucy grudgingly admitted.

“Well, Mrs. Cavill,” Henry said handing her a flute of champagne.

“Yes, Mr. Cavill.” Lucy responded.

“I do believe it is time to get this party started,” he said, inclining his flute toward hers.

“Yes, my dear, I do believe you’re right,” she agreed, clinking her glass with his.

Lucy and Henry made their grand entrance to “Shut-up and Dance with Me.” Through the months of planning, Lucy had insisted that, since Tom would not be attending, Henry would have to dance with her whenever she asked.

They took their seats at the head table, and waited for dinner to be served. Lucy had taken control of the wedding ceremony, but Henry had done most of the planning for the reception. She didn’t even know what their first dance song would be.

“We don’t have a song.” Lucy moaned, as they sat together on the big sofa in The Lodge’s living room.

“What about the first song we danced to?” Henry suggested.

“Think of Me, isn’t a wedding song.” She insisted. “Think of me/think of me fondly / When we've said goodbye / Remember me, once in a while / Please, promise me you'll try / When you find that, once again, you long / To take your heart back and be free / If you ever find a moment / Spare a thought for me” she sang the first few lines of the song for him.

“No, I don’t suppose that is. Cupcake, why don’t you let ME worry about finding our first dance song?”

“I don’t know. What if you...No, I have to trust you, trust that you’ll make a good decision. But I have a couple of requirements.”

“Of course you do,” he grinned at her.

“I want it to be something romantic, don’t go for a joke. And it needs to be something we can dance to. Promise me you’ll give this some thought, and not wait until the last minute.”

“I promise darling. Now, what’s next on your to do list?”

Lucy perused the list seriously, before looking up at him. “It says here, make-out with your fiance,” she sighed, “I suppose if it’s on the list…” she said climbing into his lap.

“I love your lists.” He replied.
Unsurprisingly Henry chose roast as one of the main courses offered for dinner. He was a man of simple tastes and was a fan of simple food, executed well. He also chose some sort of fish, and a vegetarian option. Lucy was impressed with his attention to detail. She made a mental note to ask Dany how much help she had given him.

Toward the end of the dinner, Charlie, in his capacity as best man, stood to give his toast. “Good evening everyone, for those of you who don’t know me, I’m Charlie. I’m Henry’s younger, better looking brother. When Hank first called us to say he’d met someone, an American no less, we were a bit hesitant, sorry Lucy.” He gave a short pause to see that Lucy wasn’t offended.

“But he just wouldn’t shut-up about this amazing woman. How she was funny, and sweet, and adventurous, and kind and the list just kept going. My first thought was either he’s dating literal Wonder Woman, or he’s in deep,” he paused for a short laugh from the audience. “We first got to meet Lucy last Christmas. Now we Cavill brothers can be a bit overwhelming, but Lucy gave as good as she got, and we realized, Hank hadn’t been exaggerating. Lucy was all of the things he said she was. So Lucy, Wonder Woman, or not, we are all so happy to have you join the family, and remember, he’s yours now, no returns.” He handed the microphone to Sarah, and embraced first Henry then Lucy.

“What if I have a gift receipt?” She asked him.

Charlie shook his head, “nope, sorry, not even then,” he smiled.

“Damn,” was her only reply.

Sarah stood to give her toast next. “Hi everyone, I’m Sarah, I’m Lucy’s best friend. Lucy and I have known each other since college, where we were both language nerds. But in our capacity as language nerds, we learned the importance of words and communication.” She paused to lay a hand on Lucy’s shoulder, taking a moment to make eye contact with her best friend and the man she knew was perfect for her.

“Lucy, Henry, just like in the language classroom, communication is the most important thing in a marriage. I know you don’t always speak the same language, that whole biscuit/cookie debate has me shook,” she shivered dramatically at the very thought, and the guests chuckled. “but if you communicate with love, I know your marriage will last. Love is truly the universal language, and you two have been speaking it since day one. So, congratulations you two, and Henry, remember what I told you the first time we talked,” she finished with a wink in his direction.

Lucy dabbed her eyes as she hugged her friend, and the DJ announced the time had come for the first dance. Henry took Lucy’s hand and led her onto the dance floor as the first strains of music started to play. He swung her into his arms, as they started to sway and a smooth male voice began to sing.

Something in your eyes / Makes me want to lose myself / Makes me want to lose myself / In your arms / There's something in your voice / Makes my heart beat fast / Hope this feeling lasts / The rest of my life / If you knew how lonely my life has been / And how long I've been so alone / If you knew how I wanted someone to come along / And change my life the way you've done

Lucy’s eyes were locked on Henry’s as she listened to the lyrics of the song he had chosen, tears blurring her vision as the chorus swelled.

It feels like home to me / It feels like home to me / It feels like I'm all the way back where I come from / It feels like home to me / It feels like home to me/ Feels like I'm all the way back where I belong
Lucy laid her head on Henry’s chest as the music continued. She listened to his steady heartbeat as his strong arms wrapped around her.

If you knew how much this moment means to me / And how long I’ve waited for your touch / If you knew how happy you are making me / I never thought that I’d love anyone so much

As the song faded out on a chorus, Henry smiled at his wife, he leaned close to speak softly into her ear. “Did I choose the right song?”

“I think it was the perfect choice.”

“I don’t have to ask you to come home with me this time, like the song says, you are home to me.” Henry murmured.

Lucy looked deep into his eyes, before holding his face between her hands to bring his mouth to hers. “I love you.”

“I love you too, darling,” he replied, smiling at the woman who in such a short amount of time had become his whole world.

When the time came for them to cut the cake, they posed for several pictures, before cutting into the pristine white frosting. Henry had deferred to Lucy’s superior baking knowledge, when it came to choosing the cake. The resulting stack of square cakes was plainly decorated with white icing and cobalt sugar pearls lining the bottom of each tier. A friend of Lucy’s had made the cake topper: a polymer clay Lucy and Henry standing with one arm around each other, and Kal sitting at their feet.

They cut their first slices of cake, and prepared to feed each other the first bites, as was tradition. Lucy broke off a chunk of the white cake, as Henry did the same. She pointed a finger at her husband, “I’m warning you right now, if you smash cake in my face, you’re going back to The Lodge with your parents, and Kal and I will go to the hotel suite.”

Henry leaned across the small table to kiss her lightly, “Cupcake, I wouldn’t dream of it,” he grinned cheekily at her.

The dancing had continued for about an hour before Piers stepped up to the DJ. “Good evening everyone. For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Piers, Henry’s eldest brother. Many of you may know what is coming, but if you don’t, while my brothers prepare,” he motioned to Nik and Simon moving chairs to the middle of the dance floor, while Charlie dragged the bride and groom to them, “let me enlighten you. When I married my beautiful wife Olivia, my darling brothers serenaded us with what can only be described as the worst singing ever heard.” He paused for the laughter that rolled through the room.

“But as awful as their singing was, it started a tradition, that we Cavill brothers prepare a special song for each of our brothers’ weddings. So, I would like to apologize in advance, but we are about to sing.”

Lucy and Henry sat in the places they had been directed to, as the brothers stood on either side of them, each holding a microphone. The music started, an electronic sounding keyboard, that Lucy instantly recognized, and started laughing, even before the Cavill men’s vocals started.

Nik began the verse. “Picture yourself in a boat on a river / With tangerine trees and marmalade skies / Somebody calls you, you answer quite slowly / A girl with kaleidoscope eyes”
Charlie took over for the next part, “Cellophane flowers of yellow and green / Towering over your head / Look for the girl with the sun in her eyes / And she's gone” He sang, over-emoting each line.

When the chorus came, all four brothers “sang” at the top of their lungs. “Lucy in the sky with diamonds / Lucy in the sky with diamonds / Lucy in the sky with diamonds”

Lucy swayed along with the brothers, preparing for the second verse, when the music changed, to what sounded like the starting notes of the French national anthem, confusing Lucy entirely, before the Cavill men started singing.

“Love, love, love / Love, love, love / Love, love, love”

Nik, Simon, and Charlie kept up the chorus of love, love love, as Piers began the first verse. “There's nothing you can do that can't be done / Nothing you can sing that can't be sung / Nothing you can say, but you can learn how to play the game / It's easy”

Piers jumped back onto the chorus, as Simon finished the verse his brother started. “Nothing you can make that can't be made / No one you can save that can't be saved / Nothing you can do, but you can learn how to be you in time / It's easy”

All four brothers finished their serenade strong by belting out the chorus loudly, and only slightly off key. “All you need is love, all you need is love / All you need is love, love, love is all you need”

When they’d finished their singing, and accepted their applause, Piers returned to the microphone. “Henry, Lucy, we love you both, be good to one another.” He said, kissing his fingers in their direction.

Lucy and Henry danced the night away with their friends and family, until the DJ announced five minutes to midnight. The servers brought around flutes of champagne for everyone to toast the new year.

As the crowd counted down, Lucy wrapped her left arm around Henry’s waist, locking eyes with him. When midnight struck, they kissed a beautiful, deep, soulful kiss; a promise of the rest of the night to come.

Lucy downed her champagne in one drink, “what do you say we get out of here?”

“I thought you’d never ask.” Henry grinned. They said their goodbyes, slipped out of the ballroom, and made their way to the bridal suite. When they arrived, they found a silver bucket with another bottle of champagne, a bowl of strawberries, and a pepperoni pizza. The pizza had a note attached from Sarah. “Lucy-loo, I knew you’d be hungry after the long night of partying, I know I was. Enjoy the pizza, you don’t have to try to fit into that wedding dress anymore!” Lucy laughed at her friend’s message, and picked up a slice of the hot greasy pie, suddenly feeling ravenous. Henry joined her for a slice.

After enjoying their pizza, they sat, facing each other on the bed. The vows they’d written for each other in their hands.

Lucy started, her hands shaking slightly with nerves. “Henry, I literally never thought I would find someone like you. You’ve brought so much joy to my life. You’ve shown me how to love, and what love truly means. You are one of the most generous, genuine, caring people I’ve ever know. I know that my life is better by having you in it. I am so excited to start our life together, and see where it takes us. I know that no matter what life may throw at us, I can overcome it, as long as you are by
my side.” She managed to keep her tears at bay, as she poured out her heart to him, but when she met his eyes, to find them glistening, her tears fell in happy, emotional rivers down her cheeks.

Henry leaned across the space separating them to kiss her tears away. He feared the vows he’d written couldn’t compare with hers. He took one deep breath, before beginning. “Lucy, Cupcake, Darling. I struggled with putting my words on paper, to express just how I feel about you, because I don’t think the words have been invented yet to describe just how happy you have made me. Happy seems like such a shallow word for the depth of my love for you. Through my own stupidity, I know what it is to live without you in my life. That life is colder than MN in January, and completely devoid of color. You’ve given me something to strive for. I am always working to be the man you think that I am. You’ve given me love, and a home, and a place where I feel like I belong. I know that life with me will not be easy, but as long as you are with me, I can promise you, it will be worth it.” He didn’t dare look up from his paper the entire time he read the vows he’d written, for fear he wouldn’t be able to finish around the emotions threatening to overcome him. He raised his eyes to hers, “Lucy, I love you so much, and I can’t believe that I get to spend the rest of my life calling you my wife.”

Lucy hadn’t stopped crying since reading her vows. She reached into the pocket of her dress to find her last tissue. She dabbed at her eyes, willing the tears to stop. When she’d dried her face, she launched herself at Henry, who caught her around the waist and fell back against the mountain of pillows at the head of the bed.

“I love you, Mr. Cavill.”

“I love you too, Mrs. Cavill.

Chapter End Notes

If you want to see what the bridesmaids dresses and the bouquets looked like, check out my Instagram. PatriciaBurtnessWrites

I originally had planned for this story to be 60 chapters, but I’m not quite done yet...
Lucy sat up in bed in her hotel room. She gave big groaning stretch, before reaching for her phone. Ignoring her notifications, she called her best friend.

“Hello?” Came the groggy voice from the other end.

“Sarah! I had the weirdest dream. I met a handsome actor in London, and we started dating, then we got married! Can you believe it? How crazy would that be?” Lucy rambled to her friend.

“Lucy, I’m laying here, incredibly hungover from your wedding reception last night to said handsome actor. Why are you calling me?” Sarah grumbled across the line.

“Because I thought this call would be a really good joke, and that you’d like it.” Lucy replied much too cheerfully for Sarah’s liking.

“Yes, it was very funny,” Sarah replied deadpan, “where is your husband? Why didn’t you tell him this funny joke?”

“I think he’s in the bathroom, or at least someone is, and the joke wouldn’t work telling him.”

“Well, why don’t you try, I’m going to go die now.” Sarah moaned into the phone.

“Ok,” Lucy responded, more chipper than anyone should be on New Year’s morning, “I’ll see you at 11 for brunch!”

“I’m planning on being dead by then, but on the off chance that I’m not, sure, see you there,” came Sarah’s monotone reply.

“I love you!” Lucy yelled into the phone, grinning.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Sarah said before disconnecting the call.

Lucy looked up to find Henry standing in the open bathroom door, wearing a fluffy, white, hotel robe, and a wide smile. “Not even married 24 hours and you’re already cheating on me,” he quipped, clutching his heart dramatically.

“Technically, I’m cheating on her with you. I’ve loved Sarah, way longer than I’ve loved you,” Lucy shrugged.

Henry chuckled as he ambled to the bed, dropping down to lay beside his wife. She shifted her position to lay her head on his chest. “Is that why we work so well together? We’re just an illicit affair,” he asked jokingly.

“Probably,” she pondered aloud, “the excitement of it all? That must be it,” she giggled.

“So, Mrs. Cavill, do you want to shower first? Or should I? We’re meant to be at brunch in an hour.” Henry said, kissing the top of her head.

“Well, Mr. Cavill, if we shower together, it would save time, and water…” she trailed off.
Standing up next to the bed, he replied, “that is so economical of you,” he held out his hand to help her out of the bed. He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her deeply before leading her to the bathroom.

The happy couple met everyone in the same ballroom that had hosted their reception, for a buffet brunch. Both his and her families were in attendance, as well as her bridesmaids and their families. Henry’s agent Dany and her husband were also there, as well as a few other assorted wedding guests that were staying at the hotel.

Lucy and Henry sat with Sarah, Paulo, Charlie, Heather, Dany, and her husband Dave. “Lucy, how are you so damn chipper this morning, you drank just as much as I did.” Sarah commented ripping off a piece of her croissant.

“I switched to sparkling cider about half way through the night,” Lucy replied, winking at her friend.

“Sneaky bitch,” Sarah responded jokingly.

“Smart bitch,” she pointed in Henry’s direction, “have you seen my husband? I was not going to be too drunk to handle that last night. Uh uh,” Lucy replied, causing the whole table to burst out laughing.

“It was a lovey ceremony, Lucy.” Dany said, after everyone had spent several minutes enjoying their food. “And such a fun reception. I had forgotten what it was like to just attend a party, and not do any networking. To just enjoy myself.”

“Well, we’re glad you had a good time. And thank you for coming. Henry and I really appreciate you being here, and for taking care of that, you know,” Lucy replied.

“It was our pleasure,” Dany replied smiling.

“Dany, could I speak to you for a moment?” Henry asked seriously, when he was done enjoying his food.

“Sure, I’m just going to grab a refill on my coffee, first,” she replied standing. Dany, followed Henry out of the ballroom, around the corner to a grouping of leather arm chairs. Henry took one, and Dany sat next to him.

“What’s on your mind, Cavill?” Dany asked.

“How could you let Lucy pay for that watch? If I had expressed an interest in it, they probably would have given it to me for free,” Henry asked, exasperated.

“They did, Henry,” Dany replied.

“But Lucy said she paid for it.”

“She was insistent upon paying for this present for you. I took her money, and I’ve put it into an account, and my plan is to invest that into an upcoming film project, which will give her a producer credit, which would then entitle her to a percentage of the profits of said film. If we do this the smart way, she could get quite a return for her investment,” Dany explained.

Henry just stared at his agent. “You need to tell her this. Because I certainly am not going to,” he insisted.

“I was planning on it. But I wanted to wait until after the wedding.”
“Now, is as good a time as any, I’m going to get her,” Henry replied, standing.

Henry returned to the table to find Lucy bouncing Sophia in her arms, while engaging on conversations with everyone else at the table. Henry knelt down next to her chair, “darling, if you don’t mind, Dany would like to talk to you.”

“Uh oh, being called to the principal’s office,” Lucy quipped while pushing herself away from the table.

“Darling, give the baby back to her parents before you leave the room,” Henry joked.

“Fine, if I have to,” Lucy mock pouted, before handing Sophia to Heather.

She made her way to the chair next to where Dany was sitting. “Whatcha’ need?” Lucy asked, plopping down into the soft leather, Henry took the seat next to hers.

“Well, Lucy, it’s about the watch you gave Henry for the wedding.” Dany began, and explained everything she had previously explained to Henry.

“What do you mean by a producer credit?” Lucy asked.

“When the credits roll at the end of a movie, your name would be listed as an associate producer, meaning you helped fund the movie, and as a producer, you would be entitled to a share of the profits.”

“So I didn’t pay for Henry’s watch?” Lucy asked, slowly starting to make sense of what the other women was explaining to her.

“Correct, and with your permission, I’d like to take that money that you gave me for the watch, and put it to work for you,” Dany explained.

Lucy turned to Henry, “are you ok with this?”

“Cupcake, I think this is a phenomenal idea. If you do this correctly, you could make enough to then invest more in future projects. You could end up making more than I do,” Henry said plainly.

“How much are we really talking about? I don’t know how much it costs to make a movie, but the paltry amount I gave you couldn’t make me that big of a return.” Lucy asked.

“Let’s use some simple numbers. If the movie profits 100 million dollars, and your share, which depends on a number of factors, is even 1%, that would be 1 million dollars, before taxes of course,” Dany explained.

“What? Are you kidding me?” Lucy exclaimed.

“I don’t kid about money,” Dany said straight faced.

“Would I get a choice in what project it goes toward?” Lucy asked, warming to the idea.

“Of course, though you are limited to the projects that my production company has in the works,” Dany assured her.

“That’s fine,” Lucy stuttered, her head spinning.

“Well, alright then,” Dany said patting Lucy’s hand, “I’m glad we had the chance to talk. We’ll be in contact in a few months about what you’d like to invest in. But before then, I need to ask, do you
have a specific designer you’d like us to contact about your dress for the premiere?”

“What? Dress? Premiere? What are you talking about?”

“The Batman v Superman premiere. I’m assuming you’ll be there? You’ll need something to wear. As the wife of one of the leads, you’ll need to be dressed accordingly. Do you have a favorite designer?” Dany asked.

Lucy stared at her like she had grown a second head. “No? What do you recommend?”

“We’ll put out feelers, and I’ll give you some choices with whoever gets back to us. Do you have any preferences? Color? Style?”

Lucy thought for a moment, “I don’t look good in pastels. I like jewel tones. And nothing too form fitting. I don’t want to look like a sausage.”

Dany typed all of Lucy’s comments into her phone, “well, my dear, I have your phone number and someone from my office will be in touch,” Dany said starting to rise, “But I must be going, Dave and I fly out late this evening. I can’t take much more of this subzero weather.”

“I understand,” Lucy said, embracing her. “Dany, really, thank you for everything, and thank you for coming.”

“I wouldn’t have missed this,” she said, turning back toward the ballroom.

Lucy sat back down in her chair. “My life with you keeps getting weirder and weirder,” she commented, turning toward Henry.

“How so?” he asked.

“Well, two years ago, the phrase “investing in a movie” meant buying the Blu-Ray edition instead of the DVD. And my favorite designer was Target,” she elaborated.

Henry gave a short chuckle, before standing, offering Lucy his hand and pulling her into his arms. “Well, Mrs. Cavill its just all things you’ll have to get used to,” he said, dropping a kiss on her lips.

She heaved an exaggerated sigh, “I guess,” she said with a smile.

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Saturday morning was hectic as all of Henry’s family prepared to leave. While they all packed, Lucy made everyone a breakfast of Belgian waffles, which was eaten very noisily as the boys all protested their departure. They wanted to stay and go sledding again, or ice skating on the lake, and play with Kal.

“Well, boys I suppose you’re welcome to stay, you can come to school with me.” Lucy offered. “We start school on Monday, when do your schools start again?”

“Not for another two weeks,” Olivia interjected.

“So you could come to school with me for two weeks, then I'll send you home to your parents. How does that sound?” Lucy asked.

“Aunt Lucy you’re no fun.” Alfie said from the opposite end of the table.

“I know. I hear that all the time from my students,” she responded.
When everyone had finished their breakfast, the vehicles had been packed, and all the trips to the bathroom had been completed, Lucy and Henry followed the family out to their waiting vehicles. Everyone hugged their goodbyes, and Lucy and Henry waved until the cars disappeared over the rise in the drive.

The pair returned to the house, shivering from the subzero temperatures outside. Henry rubbed his hands over Lucy’s upper arms. “So, Mrs. Cavill we’re alone. What should we do?” He asked suggestively.

Lucy grasped his face between her hands, “my darling, I love you,” she said planting a kiss on his lips. “But right now I need some time alone. I’m going to go watch a movie in the viewing room, and just be by myself for about two hours. I love you, but I am peopled out right now, and unfortunately you are people too. I just need a couple of hours to decompress.” She pressed another kiss to his lips and released his face.

“It’s ok. I understand,” he said, drawing her into his arms, holding her against his chest. “This has been a very overwhelming week. You do what you need to do. Shall we meet in the kitchen for lunch? Say noonish?”

“That sounds wonderful. Thank you for understanding,” she kissed him deeply, before making her way to the movie room. She spent a few minutes perusing her movie collection before selecting The Holiday. Lucy reclined her chair and enjoyed the chance to turn her brain off for a little while. As she watched Iris and Amanda spend New Year’s Eve with the new loves of their lives, she couldn’t help but smile at how different this New Year’s Day was from the last.

When her movie was finished, Lucy switched on the Bluetooth speaker in the kitchen, and set her favorite playlist on shuffle. She searched the cupboards, trying to find something to make for lunch. Having 19 people in the house for the past week had done a number on their food situation. Luckily she managed to find a box of macaroni and cheese. “I guess we’ll need to hit the grocery store this afternoon,” Lucy said to herself. She got to work filling a pot with water, singing along to a Robbie Williams song.

That was how Henry found her 20 minutes later; standing at the stove, stirring something in a pot, doing a modified salsa dance to Enrique Iglesias. It was a sight he had grown accustomed to seeing; Lucy dancing in the kitchen to her eclectic collection of music. It never failed to bring a smile to his face.

Lucy caught movement out of the corner of her eye, and found him watching her. “How many times are you going to watch me dance in the kitchen?” She scolded.

“Darling, I hope I never stop watching you dance in the kitchen.” He said, gathering her up in his arms, kissing her deeply.

“That’s a good line,” she responded, “would you grab a couple of bowls from the cupboard? Lunch is almost ready.”

Henry turned to get the bowls, “you know you didn’t have to make me lunch. I was thinking we could make something together.”

“I’m just doing my wifely duties; making my husband lunch. And I’m making macaroni and cheese from a box because that’s literally all we have. Seriously, all we have in the fridge is milk, and leftover wedding cake. We’ll have to go grocery shopping this afternoon,” she said spooning the neon orange food into the two bowls. Henry carried the bowls to the table, while Lucy poured them each a glass of water.
They tucked into their simple lunch. “After I’m done eating, I’m going to go strip the beds and start washing sheets and towels.” Lucy said.

“No need. I’ve already started those,” Henry said blowing on his fork before taking a bite.

“You didn’t have to do that. Are you gunning for husband of the year? It’s only January 1, slow down, you’ll wear yourself out,” Lucy joked.

“It’s our house. We’re both responsible for taking care of it. Why shouldn’t I wash up after my family was here?” He responded seriously.

“You know, you could give a class on how to be an amazing husband,” she said leaning toward him.

He leaned in too, “I’ve got great inspiration,” he said before pressing a kiss to her lips.

He picked up their empty bowls and brought them to the sink. “You know darling, you never answered my question about a honeymoon.”

“Because we can’t take a honeymoon. I have to go back to work on Monday, and the perfect time to take one, during our actual spring break this year, someone has a world premiere to attend. So the earliest we can take a honeymoon would be June.”

“Fair enough. So where would you like to go in June?” He persisted.

“I think Venice would be fun and romantic, but no, that’s too many people. I want to spend our honeymoon with my husband, not Henry Cavill, Actor,” she thought out loud. “I’ve always wanted to go to one of those beach resorts with the little bungalows over the water. You know? Just spend a week floating and sunning ourselves,” she said dreamily.

Taking her into his arms he said, “Cupcake that sounds amazing,” he kissed her deeply. “You know what else sounds amazing?” He boosted her up to sit on the countertop in front of him, “we have this big house all to ourselves again…” he trailed off nuzzling her neck.

“Hmmm, what did you have in mind?” Lucy asked innocently.

“Remember those wifely duties you mentioned earlier?” He said, kissing his way across her jaw, “I think we should explore more of those.”

With his mouth nibbling its way across her collarbone, and his hands massaging her lower back, Lucy was quickly losing her ability to form a coherent sentence. “That is a good thing to have. Why don’t we take this upstairs?”

“As you wish, Mrs. Cavill.” Henry responded, wrapping her legs around his waist.

Lucy noticed that the nameplate on her classroom had already been changed by the time she arrived on Monday morning. She snapped a quick picture, and sent it to Henry. “It’s official now.”

She spent the first blissful half hour before students arrived answering emails from break, and making copies for that day’s lessons. She was writing reminders on the board when one of her seniors entered the room.

“Buenos dias Hunter. Did you have a good break?”

“Did you get married over break?” The girl asked, ignoring her teacher’s greeting.
“I did. Thank you for asking.”

“Was Chris Evans at your wedding?” The girl asked, slightly more emotionally than she had intended.

“He was. He flew in Wednesday morning, and I believe he flew back to Boston on Friday.”

“You mean to tell me that Chris Evans was within 30 miles of me, and I knew nothing about it? How could you be so mean?” She asked with a level of drama only attainable by a teenage girl.

Lucy walked over to her desk, and pulled out a folder. “I was planning to give this to you for part of your graduation gift, but here. Maybe this will make you feel better,” she handed the girl a glossy 8x10 picture of Chris in his Captain America costume. In the lower right-hand corner was written, “Hunter, Good Luck at college in the fall. Make all your dreams come true. Love Chris Evans”

Lucy watched the emotions play over the girl’s face, from disbelief to excitement to elation. She jumped at Lucy, wrapping her teacher in a tight hug. “Oh, Ms. C. This is the best present anyone had ever given me!”

“Hunter, you need to let go. You’re choking me.” Lucy managed to eek out, and the girl quickly dropped her embrace. Catching her breath, she commented, “I’m glad you like it. Like I said, it was supposed to be included with your graduation present, but this is fine too I suppose.”

“Ms. Claussen, this is so far beyond anything I’ve ever expected. Thank you! Can I leave it with you for the day, so it doesn’t get wrinkled in my locker?”

“Of course you can, but it’s Mrs. Cavill now.” Lucy corrected her with a smile.

“OMG, of course. You’re married! Congratulations!” The girl enthused, giving Lucy another tight but quick hug.

“Thank you. Now was this all that you needed?”

“Oh! I need another copy of the list of the props we’re looking for for the play. I can’t find mine, and my aunt volunteered to look through her antique shop. She said she’d loan us anything we need if she has it.”

Lucy looked up from her computer screen, as she pressed the print button on the document. “That’s great! Try to get her the list as soon as possible, so we can rehearse with anything she might be able to get for us.”

“I will. Thank again Ms. C. Or should I say, Mrs. C. That’s so convenient that we barely have to change what we call you!”

“Yes, quite fortuitous,” Lucy laughed, shooing the girl out of her room.

January flew by, as it usually did, as Lucy was getting her drama group ready for their competition. This year she made the recording she sent to Tom. He was only too willing to help again, filming another video to give the group specific pointers on their performance.

On competition day, the group only managed a third place finish again. They were rightfully disappointed, but Lucy reminded them of how proud of them she was, and when she texted Tom the results, he insisted on FaceTiming with the group, to tell them how proud he was as well. Lucy thought at least one of her girls was going to faint at the table for their cast dinner.
The first weekend in February, Lucy found herself in a hotel suite in Minneapolis. Dany had arranged for a stylist to meet with her to try on an assortment of dresses to wear to the world premiere of Henry’s newest movie. He would be attending at least four different premieres but because of scheduling, Lucy was only going to be attending the premiere in New York.

Henry enjoyed himself, watching his wife parade in and out of the bedroom of the suite, each time wearing a different dress.

“This one makes me look like I’m going to prom,” she commented about the first dress she appeared in. The dress had a voluminous skirt that he thought made her look more like a cupcake than a prom attendee, though he wasn’t going to tell her that. The deep plum color complemented her complexion, but it was not the right dress. She returned to the bedroom.

“What do you think of this one?” She asked, when she arrived in front of him in her second dress.

The expression on her face told him that she didn’t like the dress, and he had to agree with her. The olive green color looked horrible with her winter pale complexion, and the cut made it look like she had just loosely draped herself in a bolt of fabric. “I don’t think that’s the right one for you darling,” he responded.

The third dress was white which draped flatteringly on her curves, while the bejeweled neckline and wide waistband, did wonders for her figure. She looked like a Grecian goddess, and he told her so. “I look like I’m going to a costume party,” she contradicted, getting a look of herself in the full length mirror. “This is useless. I’m not going to find a dress,” she hung her head, afraid to sit in the borrowed gown.

Henry crossed the room and caressed her bare shoulders. He raised her chin with his index finger, bringing her gaze to his. “Darling, I’ve never seen you like this, what’s wrong?”

“This is my first public appearance as your wife, and I don’t want to embarrass you,” she finally said, her gaze dropping to her feet.

He forced her eyes to meet his again, “hey, you could never embarrass me. You don’t have to dress a certain way to impress me, or anyone else. Wear a dress that you feel comfortable in, because the most important thing to me, is that you are standing there by my side. And if you would be more comfortable in your regular work trousers and a teacher sweater than wear that.”

“No, I want to wear a dress. I don’t get to dress up very often. I guess I’m just nervous to be presented to the world as your wife,” she confessed.

“I understand, but I am excited to introduce the world to my wife, and I want everyone to see how beautiful she is. So let’s find you a dress that you love,” he said, guiding her back to the bedroom to stare at the rack of dresses that Dany had procured for her. Henry leafed through the hangers while Claire, the stylist that had brought the dresses, helped Lucy out of the white Grecian dress.

His hand stopped on a black gown. The silhouette was quite simple, with wide straps and deeper scalloped V neckline. The skirt was full but not anywhere near ball gown volume. But what instantly made him think of Lucy, a self-described water baby, was the sparkle. The silver half-circles of sparkles intersected to form a pattern reminiscent of a mermaid’s tale. The half-circles started at the bottom of the V neckline and grew further and further apart the farther down the dress the spread. He took the hanger from the rack and held the dress up for her. “Cupcake, what about this one?”

Lucy gasped, “that’s gorgeous.”
Henry left the room while Claire helped Lucy into the dress, though he was fairly certain this would be the last dress she tried on today. When she came out of the bedroom, her beaming smile was all he needed to see. It was obvious to him that she loved the dress, and therefore, he loved the dress. It hugged her figure slightly in just the right places. He could see her confidence when she wore this dress. “Cupcake, I do believe that is your dress,” he announced crossing the room to look over her shoulder into the mirror, “you look stunning.”

“Bring on the premiere,” Lucy demanded.

Chapter End Notes

I’m sorry to say but Lucy and Henry’s story is wrapping up. I’ve only planned one more chapter, and an epilogue.

Thank you to everyone who What’s stuck with the story for all this time.

If you’d like to see the dresses that Lucy tried on in this chapter, check out my Instagram PatriciaBurtnessWrites
Henry had five precious days with Lucy after the dress fitting, before the time came for him to leave for the Batman V Superman press tour. After spending all morning in bed with Lucy, the time came for him to leave. Though she was trying valiantly to hold them back, Henry could see the tears in her eyes.

“Darling, it’s ok. I’ll call you every night, and I’ll see you in five short weeks in New York.”

“We’ve only been married five weeks, by the time I see you again, we’ll have been apart longer than we’ve been together since our wedding,” she said, a tear slipping from her eye.

Henry gathered her in his arms. “Darling, don’t cry. You know I’m not leaving because I want to, but because I have to. I love you, and I’ll miss you too. You’ll at least have Kal, I’m the one that’s going to be alone every night.”

“You better be,” Lucy laughed through her tears. Henry gave a short laugh as well.

Kal watched the goodbye with plaintive eyes. He could sense something was happening. He saw Henry’s suitcases, but hadn’t been harnessed to go with. He was confused. Henry knelt down to his level. He grabbed the dog behind the ears and rubbed. “Now, listen here Kal. I want you to watch out for our girl. Keep her safe for me,” he told the dog seriously. Kal nodded his head solemnly, looking from Henry to Lucy and back to Henry. Then he smiled his doggy smile, and gave Henry’s face one long slobbery lick. “Thank you bear,” Henry laughed, standing to turn back to Lucy, wiping his face with his hand.

He wiped the slobber onto his jeans, before cupping Lucy’s face in his hands and giving her one final deep goodbye kiss. “Goodbye my Darling. I love you.”

“Love you too,” Lucy replied with a sniff as she watched Henry walk to his truck.

“Well, Kal, what should we do now?” Lucy asked the dog as they walked back inside the house. “What’s that? You want to sit at my feet while I correct papers? That’s such a good idea,” she exclaimed, scratching his head. He turned to her with an expression that said, “I am not amused,” and he walked up the stairs to lay in his fluffy dog bed. “Fine, just abandon me, see if I care,” Lucy said to herself.

Three weeks later, Henry and Lucy were having their nightly phone call.

“Do you know, journalists are not the most original bunch ever? I was asked no less than nine times today about my “newest role” as husband. Seriously, they referred to our marriage as my newest role.”
“And what did you tell them?” Lucy asked.

“Only what we discussed. We got married on New Year’s Eve, we’re very happy, and planning to split our time between Minnesota and London,” Henry recited, ticking off the points on his fingers.

“Other than boredom from answering the same questions all day, How are you doing?” Lucy asked, concerned by the dark circles under his eyes.

“I’m fine, darling, a little tired, between the press and the workouts, my days are pretty full. I think a better question is how are you doing? I miss you so much Cupcake.”

“I miss you too, but I’m fine. Kal gave me some attitude for the first week or so, but he’s back to his normal self. I think he blamed me for you not taking him with on this press tour.”

“They’ve also asked me about him. Several of the reporters were quite disappointed to find he wasn’t with me,” Henry laughed.

“Where are you off to next?” Lucy asked, though his schedule had been synced to her phone.

“London. I’m anxious to get to sleep in a bed I recognize, even if you aren’t with me.”

“I miss you so bad. The bed is just too big without you hogging 80% of the space,” Lucy commented.

“Me?” Henry retorted. “The only reason I’m so close to you, is I’m trying to get the covers that you hoard on your side of the bed.”

“I like the weight,” she responded innocently. He didn’t reply, but she could hear his smile through the line. “How long until I get to see you again?” She asked, as she had everyday since he’d left.

“Too long darling,” he replied as he had every time she asked.

“I have an early morning tomorrow so I have to go. I love you, Darcy.” Lucy said.

“I love you more, Cupcake,” Henry replied, disconnecting the call. He sat back against the headboard of the bed in his hotel room in Mexico City. “Lucy would love it here,” he thought to himself. “She would probably drag me all over seeing this site and that. And I’d enjoy every second of it.” He smiled at the idea. Suddenly he had an idea. He did a quick google search to find just what he was looking for. He wouldn’t be able to take care of it anymore tonight, but tomorrow after his training session, and before his press commitments, he planned a trip he needed to take.

One evening, later that week, Lucy sat in her classroom correcting a stack of tests. She found herself staying later in the evening, since she had gotten approval from the school to bring Kal with her, in his capacity as a therapy dog. He had instantly charmed almost everyone at the school with his infectious grin and loving presence.

Her classroom phone rang. It being after school hours she answered with her less formal, “Hello?” as opposed to “Mrs. Cavill.” It was Gretchen, the office secretary. “A package just arrived for you. It’s in the front office if you want to come pick it up.”

“Thanks Gretchen. I’ll be right down,” Lucy replied, wracking her brain trying to think if she’d ordered anything lately. She entered the office and saw a cardboard box, about a foot and a half square, sitting on the floor, where the deliveries were usually kept. She saw her name on the address label, and looked for a return address. She saw Henry’s name along with the name of the hotel he’d been staying in in Mexico City.
She hefted the box into her arms, it was heavier than she had anticipated. Kal lifted his head from his front paw when she returned to her classroom. “Kal, daddy sent a care package,” she told the dog. She opened the box, and the first thing she saw was a note written in Henry’s confident scrawl.

Cupcake -
Being here in Mexico City reminds me of you. I keep thinking how much you would love being here, and all of the of different things you would drag me to. By the time you get this, I will no doubt be in London already, but my beautiful señora, enjoy these delights from Mexico. Full discretion, I had Dany translate for me so the shop owners would get exactly what I was thinking. I hope you enjoy everything, and I hope your students enjoy them also, since I know you’ll be sharing with them.
I love you more than words can say, and I’m counting the hours until I get to hold you in my arms again.
Love for always,
- Darcy

Under the note from Henry Lucy found that the box was full of Mexican candies, both traditional things like turron and not so traditional like various suckers coated with chili powder, and gummies shaped like sombreros.

She laughed to herself as she pulled bag after bag of sweet delights from the box. She sorted the goodies into three piles; a pile to share with her students (the fruit suckers and gummy candies), a pile to share with her colleagues (the turrones and other baked goods), and a pile to keep for herself (most of the chocolates). At the very bottom of the box, she even found a treat for Kal.

“Kal, daddy sent you something,” Lucy said, waving the treat in his direction. Kal jumped up from his laying down position, his tail wagging fiercely as his tongue lolled out the side of his mouth. She threw him the treat, which he caught neatly in is mouth, then proceeded to lay down and chew on it.

Lucy snapped several pictures, one of the pile of goodies, one of Kal enjoying his treat, and one of herself giving him an incredulous face. She sent him all three pictures along with a short message. “I got a huge box of goodies today. This is too much! But thank you. Kal loves his treat, and I’m sure the kids will love theirs as well. Love you!”

Finally the day before Spring break arrived. The day dragged like no other day in her history had. Lucy had dropped Kal with her parents for the weekend, and had her suitcase in her car. She had managed to talk one of her colleagues into taking her last hour class, so, combined with her prep period, she could cut out two hours early, and make her early evening flight without having to speed too much to get to the airport.

It was after 10:30 by the time Lucy got to the hotel near Central Park. The lobby was almost empty, except for a few people making their way into or out of the hotel bar. Lucy approached the reception desk.

“Good evening madam, how may I help you?” The smartly dressed man behind the desk asked, with just the slightest hint of a British accent.

“Lucy Cavill, checking in, My husband is already checked in, I just need a key.”

“Certainly madam, I just need to see an ID before I can accommodate you.” Lucy handed over her driver’s license and watched as the man typed on the computer. He placed her license and a key card on the desk in front of her. “Thank you for waiting Mrs. Cavill. Your room is going to be number 2101, take the left bank of elevators, insert your key card into the slot, and it will take you to your floor. Enjoy your stay.”
Lucy thanked the man, and made her way to the elevators. As the elevator ascended, Lucy could feel a calm settling over her the closer she got to Henry. The elevator slowly glided to a stop, as the doors whispered open Lucy took hold of the handle of her suitcase, preparing to step out. She double checked the room number and looked up to see which way she should turn, when she saw him. Henry, leaning against the wall opposite the elevator, waiting for her. She smiled as tears filled her eyes.

She stepped out of the elevator as he pushed off from the wall grinning at her. “Excuse me miss, do you need help finding your room?” He asked, offering her his arm.

“Why thank you, I do get hopelessly lost without help,” she said playing along, taking his proffered arm.

He led her to the room, and waited as she unlocked the door.

She put a hand to his chest as he tried to follow her in, “excuse me sir, I am a married woman, my husband could be here at any moment.”

Henry stepped toward her, slowly gliding his hand around her waist to the small of her back. “That’s ok, I can be quick,” he said, dropping his mouth to hers while backing her into the room.

“You better not be,” Lucy said, stripping off her coat, before falling on him again.

Their hands made quick work of divesting each other of their clothing, leaving a trail of clothes from the door to the bedroom, while their mouths dueled passionately, trying to make up for lost time.

Henry gently lowered them to the bed, slowing his kisses to a more leisurely pace. He pressed slow kisses down her neck, his lips mapping her lines and curves, while his hands explored their way further south. His fingers worked their way to her core, tangling in her curls, finding her hot and ready for him. His fingers played over her folds, while his mouth sought her breast. He sucked one nipple deep into his mouth, his tongue playing over the tip. Lucy groaned in response.

“Henry, please, I need you,” she begged, her system feeling overloaded with sensation.

“No, no, darling. I want to savor this,” he teased, kissing his way to her other breast.

She grabbed his head in her hands, bringing his face back up to hers, looking him in the eye. “You can go slow next time. I need you now,” she said, taking his mouth in a possessive kiss.

“Whatever you want, darling,” Henry replied, sliding his fingers from her core. Lucy whimpered at the sudden loss of sensation, only to release a long groan of satisfaction as he thrust into her in one long smooth stroke, joining them completely. Neither of them moved for a long moment, staring into each other’s eyes, relishing the feeling of being together after so long. Lucy gasped as he slowly retreated, only to thrust home again, her every nerve ending tingling in anticipation.

He continued his torturously slow pace, teasing them both, until he couldn’t control himself anymore. His hips took on a frantic pace, pushing them both to climax, the whole time, their eyes remained locked together. Lucy screamed his name as she came apart in his arms, and he followed her, his body stiffening with the power of his climax.

Henry touched his forehead to Lucy’s, both of them breathing heavily. Lucy took his face between her palms, and kissed him deep, but sweetly. “I’ve missed you.” Henry rolled to the side, bringing Lucy with him. She lay sprawled across his chest as he lay on his back with his arms around her.

“Welcome to New York,” he quipped, once his breathing had returned to normal.
Lucy burrowed her nose into his chest, inhaling his masculine scent. “Mmmm, you smell good,” she commented, then stiffened, her head popping up off his chest. “That’s right, I’m mad at you,” she said, propping herself up on her elbow to look down at him.

“Me? What did I do?” He asked, genuinely confused.

“You, sir, have been doing copious amounts of interviews wearing these damned button down shirts, and you leave the top three buttons undone. That is just plain mean, and unnecessarily sexy. Do you know what it’s like for me to watch all these interviews of my husband, looking like god’s gift to women, then have to go to bed alone? So like I said, I’m mad at you.”

“Oh, my darling, I’m so sorry,” he said dramatically.

“Well, you’ve got about six weeks of sexual frustration to help me work off, so you better get to it,” she commanded.

He smiled while rolling her back onto her back, “yes ma’am,” he said, slowly kissing his way down her body.

Saturday morning, after an intense round of lovemaking, Lucy and Henry were eating breakfast in bed. “So, darling, what are your plans for the morning?”

“Apparently Dany has me booked into a bunch of spa treatments here, before it’s time to get ready for the premiere. So really I should ask you, what your plans are,” she said ripping off a piece of croissant.

“I will be at the spa as well. Apparently I’m in desperate need of a moisturizing treatment, or some such thing. Later I have a thing to do, so Dany will take you to the premiere, and I will meet you there,” Henry explained, munching on a strawberry.

“Is this that charity thing?” She asked, and Henry nodded in answer.

Lucy and Henry, dressed very casually in sweatpants and T-shirts, made their way to the spa several floors below their room. They stepped off the elevator and followed the signage to the spa. A tall man with dark hair was several paces ahead of them, walking in the same direction.

Henry called out to the man, “Ben!” The man slowed his pace and turned at Henry’s voice. “Ben, I’d like to introduce you to my wife, Lucy. Lucy this is Ben.”

Lucy stood frozen, staring up at the incredibly tall man standing next to her husband. He extended his hand toward her, “Lucy, it’s so great to finally meet you.”

Lucy took the hand, and shook it weakly, “It’s nice to meet you, Ben...Affleck...” she greeted, and giggled nervously.

“Are you enjoying New York?” Ben asked, trying to put her at ease, as the three continued on their way to the spa.

“I got in late last night, I had to work yesterday,” Lucy explained.

“Well, I, for one, am glad you could come, because I don’t know if I could take anymore of this one moping around like a love sick puppy,” Ben laughed, slapping Henry on the shoulder.
“Hey, be nice,” Lucy said in her teacher voice, “we haven’t even been married for three months. We’re literally in the honeymoon stage,” Lucy laughed.

“Well, Lucy, it was lovely to meet you, and I will see you later at the premiere. Bye Henry, see you later,” Ben said, walking off with the spa attendant.

Lucy and Henry were separated to go to their individual treatments. Lucy’s day started in the steam room. She was shown to a changing room and told to disrobe, wrap herself in a towel, and someone would collect her from the steam room when it was time. When Lucy entered the hot, moist tiled room, there were already two women in there, chatting. Lucy sat on one of the benches they weren’t occupying and leaned her head against the tiles. The women continued their conversation. Lucy tried not to eavesdrop, but the room wasn’t very big, and she was positive she recognized one of the voices.

“Excuse me,” she said butting into the conversation, “sorry to interrupt, but you’re Amy Adams aren’t you?” Lucy asked the red-headed woman.

“I am,” she answered warily.

Lucy stuck out her hand toward the woman. “Lucy Cavill, you’re my husband’s girlfriend.”

Instantly the woman’s face changed from a mask of uncertainty, to a full smile. “Lucy it’s so great to meet you finally. Henry’s told us so much about you,” she said, taking Lucy’s hand. “Congratulations on the wedding, by the way.”

“Thank you. It still doesn’t quite seem real, but the name plate outside my door says Mrs. Cavill, so, I guess it’s true!” Lucy joked.

“When did you two get married?” The other woman asked, with a slight accent that Lucy couldn’t place.

“New Year’s Eve, it was a great time, and a great party. I’m sorry, I don’t know you,” Lucy said extending her hand to the stunning brunette.

Amy jumped in, “Oh, Lucy, this is Gal. She’s in the movie too. She plays Wonder Woman.”

A light of recognition turned on in Lucy’s brain as the woman took her hand. “It’s very nice to meet you Lucy.”

“Likewise, Gal.”

The three women chatted like old friends until they were collected one by one, by the spa staff. Lucy spent the rest of the morning being rubbed and smeared and exfoliated. When she was deemed done, she was directed back to her room, where she found the suite much changed from that morning.

When she and Henry had left, the living room area of the suite held two couches and a coffee table. Now a full makeup station, complete with lighted vanity, and been set-up, and what appeared to be a small hair salon. Dany was also there, looking gorgeous in a black jumpsuit with a wide gold belt.

Dany greeted Lucy with a quick hug, before directing her to the chair set-up in the middle of the room. The hair stylist consulted with her about what she would like to do. “I was thinking, like old Hollywood glam curls, like Blake Lively is fond of,” she said.

The stylist got to work as Dany outlined everything that would happen that afternoon. Her hair was still in rollers, when Henry entered wearing a charcoal suit, and looking dashing as ever. “Darling, I
have to leave now, but before I go, I wanted to give you this,” he said, producing a long flat rectangular jewelry box. “I love the dress you chose for tonight, but we just thought it could use some color,” he explained handing her the box.

She opened the box to find a bracelet in the velvet lined space. Blue teardrop opals were arranged around sapphires to create a grouping of flowers that gathered into a silver branch encircling her wrist. She raised her gaze to Henry, “Henry, this is too much, you shouldn’t have,” she protested.

He silenced her protests with a kiss, “I should have, and I did. I have to be going, I will see you on the red carpet. Dany, take care of my girl.”

“She can take care of herself, I’ll just make sure she looks fabulous. Now go, you don’t want to be late,” Dany shooed him out the door.

Over an hour later, Lucy was primped and painted and squeezed into the dress she chose. It was as beautiful as she remembered, and the silver nail polish she’d chosen at the salon earlier that week in Minnesota went perfectly.

She and Dany rode the elevator down to the parking garage where a limo was waiting to take them to the premiere. Once they were safely ensconced in the car, Dany reminded her, “now that you and Henry are married, the press will probably be more interested in you. Feel free to answer whatever questions you want, if you don’t want to answer the question, say that’s something you and Henry need to discuss. Make sure to always be smiling, even or especially when you’re not in the picture grouping. We don’t want rumors starting that there’s already trouble in your marriage.”

Lucy’s head was spinning trying to remember everything, but once she got to the waiting area and saw Henry, she just did what came naturally. Lucy stood nervously but proudly next to Henry for each photo session. When she wasn’t needed, Dany was there to talk to. She saw Henry gesture in her direction several times while talking to different media outlets, but he never waved her over to join him in the interview.

Finally the time came for them to sit down in the theater for the movie. When he appeared wearing his Clark Kent clothes, she leaned over and whispered, “you should wear glasses more often.”

“Just wait,” he whispered back, as Clark sat on the edge of the bathtub talking to Lois. Lucy gripped his thigh when Clark climbed into the tub.

“That was hot,” Lucy whispered, when the scene ended.

“That’s the short version, we filmed so much more than that,” he replied.

“There was more?” She asked, fanning herself.

As the movie came to a close, and they were exiting the theater, Lucy turned to Henry. “So, you’re just dead? Superman can’t die. Just give him some sunlight! How can they film a Justice League movie without Superman? I don’t understand.”

“I’m dead, but not dead,” he said before lowering his voice so only she could hear. “When I get home, I’ll let you read the script.”

“You better. You could have warned me that you were going to die. I really didn’t appreciate that!”

“I’m so sorry, darling, what can I do to make it up to you?” He asked suggestively.

“Well, that thing you did this morning, that would help,” she smiled at him.
“Consider it done, Cupcake,” he promised, pressing a kiss to her temple. “But until then, let’s party.”

They put in their time at the party. Lucy stuck with Henry for the most of the night. They received many congratulations on their marriage, and answered questions about the wedding all night. Lucy had a great conversation with Amy about life, and she gave Lucy some tips to remember about being married to an actor. Lucy found out later that someone had taken a picture of the two of them talking and posted it on one of the celebrity gossip sites, with the caption “Mrs. Cavill, and Mrs. Superman”.

Henry and Lucy said their goodbyes and took their leave of the party around midnight. Lucy laid her head on his shoulder as they rode the elevator up to their floor. They were both tired and more than a little tipsy. Once they were alone in their room, Henry’s hands began to roam, while his lips took nibbling bites of Lucy’s lips.

“You’re going to have to help me out of this dress,” Lucy said, “and what’s underneath it.”

Henry began to slowly lower the zipper of the dress, while kissing the back of her neck, “oh, I intend to.”

“No, I’m serious, I’m wearing a double layer of Spanx under this, I haven’t taken a full breath since you gave me the bracelet.”

“Well, then let’s get you out of them,” he insisted. She stepped out of the dress, and hung it up, before turning back to Henry in her decidedly unsexy compression underwear.

Henry walked toward her, he tried to work his fingers into the top of the band that stopped just under her breasts. His fingers wouldn’t fit. “Darling, how are you supposed to get out of that? It’s so tight,” he said, laughter in his voice.

“I think my best bet with this one is rolling,” she laughed, as she pressed her palms to the top of the band. It slowly started to roll over on itself. “You may want to step back, this could be a can biscuit dough situation,” she laughed holding her hand up toward him. Finally the support band rolled itself until it stopped at her thighs. She heaved a huge breath, pulling it off the rest of the way, before flopping on the bed on her back.

Henry himself had collapsed in a fit of giggles, from her expressions and comments. He managed to crawl over to the bed, and lever himself up next to Lucy. He propped himself up on his elbow and caressed her face with his hand. “My darling, life with you will never be boring,” he said, pressing a kiss to her lips.

Chapter End Notes

So, I lied, there is one more chapter after this one, then an epilogue. Enjoy!

Thank you all SO much for all of your time spent reading my far-fetched idea that I could write a book. Thank you all for your kind comments and for the Kudos. They really do make my day!

If you’d like to see the bracelet that Henry gave Lucy, check out my Instagram: PatriciaBurtnessWrites
Lucy and Henry sat cuddled together in the movie room of the Lodge on Henry’s last day before leaving for filming in London. There was a movie playing on the screen, though neither of them cared about watching it.

“Are you excited to be going back to London?” Lucy asked.

“It will be nice to be back home, but it won’t be the same without you there.”

“But you’ll be so busy with training then filming, you’ll barely have time to miss me. And you’ll have Kal to keep you company. I’ll be all alone here for nine weeks.”

“You’re welcome to keep Kal with you,” Henry offered.

“No, it will be easier for me to close up the house, and get it completely clean without the bear in residence.”

“But, just think, by the time you get to London I’ll be almost done with filming and we can finally go on our honeymoon,” he teased.

“Are you going to tell me where we’re going? Fiji? Bora Bora? The Maldives? The Seychelles? Tell me!”

“You’ll just have to wait until June, my darling, though I can assure you, you will love it,” he said pressing his lips sweetly to hers.

Lucy laid her head on his chest to watch the movie playing on the screen. Her mind whirring with thoughts unspoken. “Henry?” Lucy asked, not lifting her head.

“Hmmm,” he responded absentmindedly.

“I know we haven’t talked about the “B” word since last Thanksgiving,” she said, his full attention suddenly on her, “but I was wondering what you thought about maybe trying on our honeymoon…” she trailed off.

Henry sat up, and paused the movie, wanting to give this conversation his entire focus. “I think that sounds like a great idea, but are you sure?”

“Why? Don’t you want to have a baby yet?” Lucy asked, concerned.

“I’m all for having a baby tomorrow if it were possible, I just want to know what you’re thinking.”

“I’m thinking I want to have a baby with you, and that at my age it might not happen right away, so if we want a baby, we should start trying sooner rather than later.”

“Why don’t we start trying right now?” Henry smiled.

“Mainly because I’m still on the pill. And I really don’t want to be suffering from morning sickness on my honeymoon,” Lucy laughed.
"I can see your point," he smiled, "though we could practice trying…” he suggested, his eyebrows dancing mischievously.

"Practice does make perfect…” Lucy agreed.

April and May passed quickly for Lucy. She talked to Henry every night, and threw herself into her work in an effort to avoid missing him and Kal.

One day at the start of May, Lucy knocked on the door to the principal’s office.

“Good morning, Mrs. Cavill, what can I do for you today?”

Taking a seat in front of the desk, Lucy handed a piece of paper across the desk. “I’m here to submit my formal resignation, official as of the last day of school.”

He skimmed the paper and looked up at her. “I assumed this was coming. There’s no way we can persuade you to stay?”

“Sorry, but Henry and I want to start a family, and I want to be free to follow him on location, if I want to. Though we’re keeping the house here, so if we happen to land here for any length of time, I might put my name in to sub.”

“Well, we’d appreciate that. We’ll miss you Lucy. Though we still have almost a full month of class left, and a graduation. It’s kind of poetic that you’re leaving with your senior class.”

“I thought so too. It feels good to be going out on top, with such a great class.”

“They really are a great class,” he agreed. “Well, Lucy we hate to lose you, but I understand. We’ll have to plan something for the end of the year. How long are you sticking around this summer?”

“No time at all. I’ll meet Henry in London then we’re off to our honeymoon.”

“Oooooh, where are you going?”

“I don’t know! He won’t tell me!” Lucy exclaimed exasperated.

“That’s some husband to plan a surprise honeymoon.”

“He’s one of the good ones,” Lucy agreed.

“Well, I’ll let you get to it. I’m sure you’ve got a lot to do today. Thank you for letting us know early that you’ll be leaving. Have a great day.”

“Thanks Erik, you too.” Lucy said, shaking the principal’s hand.

Once Lucy confirmed that she wouldn’t be returning the next year, the students started trying to persuade her to stay.

“But, Mrs. C, if you leave, who is going to teach Spanish 2 next year?” One of her first year students asked.

“I don’t imagine they’ll have any trouble filling the position. I just ask that you give whoever they get
a chance, especially if that person is a first year teacher.”

“But we don’t want you to go,” another student protested.

“I’m sorry Amelia, but I’m leaving whether you want me to or not.”

“Well, I don’t like it.” The red haired girl replied.

“Guys, it’s not that I’m ecstatic about leaving you all, but my life is changing. I’ll be sure to come to games and events if I’m in the area.”

“You better.”

Before Lucy knew it, graduation had arrived. As a Senior class advisor, she had been instrumental in helping the students to plan their ceremony. She had helped more than one class elected speaker with their speech, and had filled out endless paperwork to order the supplies the students wanted.

Her homeroom students were getting themselves ready in her room. She circulated amongst them, straightening stoles, and pinning caps. Just before the group was to leave line up, she called for their attention.

“Ok guys, this is it. You did it. Congratulations. I’m so proud of all of you. It has been my pleasure to get to know you all over the last six years. Even though I’m leaving too, I don’t want you guys to be strangers. Please keep in touch, let me know about your successes, and feel free to ask me for help if you’ve had a failure. And if any of you find yourselves in London, look me up. I’ll buy you a pint.”

“Mrs. C!” Patricia exclaimed, scandalized.

“I’m not your teacher anymore, it’s fine. And in London you’d be legal, so even less of a deal. Now, line up, and remember, just like we did at practice.

Lucy followed the group to the school’s gymnasium, giving them their timings to process up to the stage. She took her place backstage to watch the administrators give their speeches, and the students speak confidently about their time at the school. She held back her tears as she watched her “kids” receive their diplomas and switch their tassels.

The time came for the students to make their exit out to the school’s front lawn, when, Daniel, the class president approached the podium. Lucy had no idea what was going on, this hadn’t happened at practice that morning.

“Thank you again parents, friends, family, and teachers. Before we go, there is someone else the class would like to thank. Mrs. Lucy Cavill has been one of our advisors since 7th grade. She has spent countless hours, over the last six years, facilitating fundraisers, and class trips, chaperoning dances, and in one memorable instance she spent an entire weekend letting us throw whipped cream pies at her face. She has always been willing to help us, even if it wasn’t her subject area. She has been tough on us, and we are better for it. Mrs. Cavill is leaving with us this year. We didn’t want her to leave without letting her know just how much she has meant to us,” he turned to motion Lucy to the podium. “Mrs. Cavill, if you’d come here please, the class has something for you.”

Lucy’s eyes were shining with tears as she approached the young man at the podium. She gave him a hug, and he motioned to the other side of the stage where two girls, both wearing Superman capes over their graduation gowns, were walking toward her. One girl carried a huge bouquet of tulips in
every color imaginable. The other carried a teddy bear wearing a school jersey and a graduation cap. Lucy laughed as the girls handed over their presents before embracing her in a group hug.

The next day, Lucy took her time getting ready for the day. It was her last day as a teacher at the school. The staff had a half day of in-service before they were allowed to leave for the summer. There was a going away party planned that night for Lucy at a local restaurant.

Lucy had spent much of the past week sorting through her school supplies; packing boxes to bring to a friend who also taught Spanish, donating items to other teachers in the building, and deciding what should be left for whoever came after her.

The going away party was bittersweet, Lucy loved the opportunity to spend time with these people she had grown so close to, but loathed the saying goodbye. Even though she knew that she would see them all again, it wouldn’t be the same.

Lucy spent her Saturday cleaning The Lodge, getting it ready to be closed up until at least November. She and Henry planned to spend much of the month at The Lodge, including Thanksgiving with Lucy’s family. She went out to dinner with her parents and her grandma Joanne. Both Marie and Joanne cried as they hugged Lucy goodbye.

“I’ll be back in November. It’s only five months away,” she reassured them.

“We’ve never gone that long without seeing each other before,” her mother protested.

“I’ll call all the time. You’ll get sick of me calling you,” Lucy joked.

“I love you my Lucy-Goosey,” Marie said, hugging her daughter tight.

Sunday morning John drove his daughter to Clint and Anna’s house where she would stay overnight, before Clint drove her to the airport the following day. It gave Lucy the opportunity to spend some time with her niece and nephew before she left.

Monday afternoon Lucy was finally boarding a plane to take her to London. She hadn’t seen Henry in over nine weeks, and she missed him fiercely. “Here I go,” she thought to herself, “starting a whole new chapter of my life.”

Lucy had a full week in London to fill while Henry was filming. She had a lunch with her sisters-in-law one day, relishing the chance to catch-up with the women she hadn’t seen since her wedding. She even flew to Amsterdam for a day to visit Sarah and Paolo, though Henry knew where she was going this time.

Finally Sunday morning arrived, and Lucy and Henry were getting ready to depart for their honeymoon. Henry still hadn’t told her where they were going. As they rode the train to Gatwick airport, Lucy asked again, “please will you tell me where we’re going?”

“No, darling, it’s going to be a surprise,” Henry replied, kissing her temple.

“Do you know what this is doing to me? I haven’t researched anything. I don’t know what the things to do are, or where are the best places to eat, or what are the best things to eat. I feel so unprepared,” she whined.

“Darling, I can assure you, there will be plenty of information about activities, should I decide to let you out of bed,” he murmured in her ear, causing her to blush.

They checked in, and Lucy took her ticket from Henry. “Dubai? We’re going to Dubai? I brought
clothes for a tropical beach relaxation trip, not a desert city trip.”

Henry laughed, enjoying needling his wife. He let her stew about it while they made their way through security. Once they were safely ensconced in the airline’s first class lounge, he finally put her out of her misery. “Darling, we are only connecting through Dubai,” he started, digging into his carry-on bag, “on our way to,” he held up the guide book he’d purchased for her, “the Seychelles.”

Lucy gasped as her hands flew to her mouth. “That’s where Will and Kate went!”

“It is.”

“And you got me a guidebook,” she said, taking it from his hand and kissing his cheek.

“I did, and I understand that you will very likely not be speaking to me on the flight, because your nose will be buried in said book,” he replied, reaching back into his carry-on bag.

“That would be a correct assumption. I only wish I had some,” she looked over at what he had pulled from his bag, “highlighters! A whole pack!” She jumped up, before settling herself on his lap, looping her arms around his neck. “I knew there was a reason I married you,” she pressed her mouth to his. “I love you Darcy. Thank you.”

“I love you too Cupcake.”

Lucy couldn’t believe her eyes as she wandered around the villa Henry had rented for their week in The Seychelles. It was almost bigger than The Lodge, in the middle of, what felt like, their own private rainforest. It wasn’t over the water, but the the private beach in front of the villa made up for that.

“Wait, it has a pool AND a private beach? That’s it. I’m moving here,” Lucy said, turning back to Henry.

“We also have a private butler just for us, to get or arrange anything we need,” he said, ambling toward his wife, drawing her close.

“You are too good to me,” Lucy said, dropping a kiss on his lips.

“You put up with a lot, being with me. I want to show you I appreciate all of your sacrifices,” he said, kissing her sweetly.

“Well, right now, I want a shower, and then I want to go for a swim. Did I tell you I bought three new suits for the trip?”

“You did not, but do you know the best part about having our own private pool? No suit required,” he said, wiggling his eyebrows.

“Mmmmm, that does sound nice,” Lucy agreed, pulling Henry toward the master bathroom.

Lucy and Henry didn't leave their villa for the first three days of the trip, cocooning themselves in a bubble all their own. They passed their days sunning themselves by their private pool, or on their private beach, making love at every available opportunity, and just enjoying being together again.

Once they did venture out from their private oasis, Lucy convinced Henry to take her diving with the whale sharks. He wouldn’t admit it to her, but he was terrified of the giant creatures, but after seeing the expression on Lucy’s face when she removed her mask, he would have gone diving with her a dozen more times.
The couple returned to London tanned, and happy, and relaxed. Ready to enjoy being married and being together. Lucy wasn’t positive, but she had a good feeling about their attempts at making a baby.

Her confirmation came at the end of July. It started with a feeling of nausea while she was caramelizing onions one evening. The following morning, while Henry was out for his morning run, she awoke with an instant need to run to the bathroom to vomit. She barely allowed herself to hope that she might be pregnant already. That afternoon while Henry was out with Kal, Lucy made her way to the pharmacy around the corner, and after staring at the tests for several long minutes bought three different brands, just to be sure. She hid the tests in the bathroom cupboard to take the next morning while Henry was out for his run.

Lucy could barely sleep that night, thinking about the tests waiting for her in the morning. As soon as Henry left, Lucy popped out of bed, a decision she immediately regretted, as she was kneeling over the toilet, ridding herself of last night’s dinner.

She opened all three boxes, taking out the six test sticks, lining them up on the counter. Once the tests had been completed, Lucy laid them all face down on the counter, and rather than pace herself silly in the bathroom, went to the kitchen to make herself a cup of tea.

Tea in hand, Lucy approached the bathroom counter cautiously. She turned the first stick over, two pink lines showed in the window. The second test showed the same. Lucy’s heart was racing as she flipped the third test. A plus sign stared back at her, then a second plus sign on the next test. Happy tears poured down her face as she slipped the fifth and sixth tests, which both simply read “pregnant”. All six tests confirmed what she had barely let herself hope. She was going to be a mom.

Lucy gathered up the test sticks and her cup of tea, and left Henry a note, then went to the roof to drink her tea and bask in her joy. That was how Henry found her 45 minutes later. Clutching her tea, and staring out over the London city skyline.

“Good morning darling, you’re up early,” Henry said, kissing his wife, before sitting on the end of her chaise sun chair. “I had something I had to do this morning,” she said cryptically, before pulling out one of the test sticks. It took him a second to comprehend what he was seeing. The two pink lines blurred as he realized what it meant.

“You’re pregnant?” He asked, tears beginning to stream down his cheeks. “You’re going to be a daddy,” she laughed, her tears starting again.

Henry’s words escaped him. He pulled Lucy to him and they held each other, crying their tears of joy. “I’m crushing you! I don’t want to hurt the baby!” Henry exclaimed, releasing his wife.

“Darcy, the baby isn’t even the size of a walnut yet, you’re fine,” Lucy laughed, resting her hands on her stomach.

Henry removed her hands and lowered his head to her stomach. “Hello in there. This is your papa. I can’t wait to meet you,” he said soothingly before pressing a kiss to her stomach.

“It’s really happening. We’re going to be parents,” he said in awe.

“We’re going to be a family,” Lucy corrected him.
If you’d like to see where Henry and Lucy spent their Honeymoon, check out my Instagram @PatriciaBunnessWrites
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

It seems fitting that this labor of love should be completed on Labor Day. Thank you to everyone who’s hung in there with me, whether you’ve been with me since the beginning, or are a new addition, your support has helped me immensely.

This is the end of this story. It’s not necessarily the end of Lucy and Henry’s story. There might be some one shot stories in the future. I’ll add them here, so if you want to get those, make sure you’re subscribed, and you’ll get a notification if/when I post.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

February 2017

Super baby!

Henry Cavill and his wife Lucy announced the birth of their son James August from their lake house in Minnesota. Cavill’s publicist reports that both mommy and baby are home and doing well, and that there have been no signs of flight from the infant yet. This is the first child for Cavill, who is set to begin filming the psychological thriller Nomis in Winnipeg later this month. Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Cavill.

Lucy laid her son in his crib, smoothing his unruly black curls away from his angelic face, before backing slowly out of the nursery. She took one last look around the room with it’s adorable Paddington Bear decor, a little touch of London in the woods, before closing the door.

Lucy slowly made her way down to The Lodge’s kitchen, for a soothing cup of tea as she waited for Henry to return with his mother. When they had looked at his shooting schedule, it had been decided that Lucy would have the baby in Minnesota, so he could be close while filming in Winnipeg. Marianne was coming to help Lucy in Henry’s absence, as well as her own mother who had stopped by at least every other day to bring food, or watch James while Lucy took a nap.

Though Jack, as Henry had taken to calling him after his initials J.A.C., was less than two weeks old, Kal had already appointed himself as the baby’s protector. He was never more than ten feet away from him. Even now, as James slept, Kal had stationed himself outside the nursery door.

Lucy was sitting at the kitchen table, writing out thank you notes for baby gifts when the front door opened revealing Henry and his mother. Lucy gingerly raised herself in time to receive Marianne’s hug.

“Lucy, my dear you look great, but where is my grandson?”

“He’s sleeping, but if he holds to his schedule, he should be awake for a feeding in about an hour,” Lucy laughed.

“Then I will take this chance to change out of my travel clothes, and freshen up. Henry if you would be a dear and carry my bag,” Marianne told her son.

Lucy sat back down to her thank you notes. Henry returned to the kitchen as sat down across from
“How is Jack?”

“He’s just as adorable as he was when you saw him this morning.”

“And how are you, my love?”

“I’m tired, but it’s to be expected.”

“Darling, I have something I want to discuss with you,’ Henry began cautiously.

“What is it?” She asked concerned.

“Do you remember that meeting I went to about a month ago in New York?” He asked, when she nodded he continued, “well, they offered me the part. It’s the new Mission Impossible.”

Lucy’s face lit up, “Henry, that’s amazing! Congratulations! I’m so proud of you.”

“The only problem is it starts filming in Paris in April…” he trailed off.

“So James and I will join you in Paris, or we’ll go to London, it’s only a few hours by train, less by plane. You’re not considering turning down the part are you? You can’t. It’s too big an opportunity. If you’re worried about me and James, don’t. I’ll have your mom, and my mom, and the sisters-in-law. This is a huge leap for your career, you have to take it.

“You’re really ok with me leaving? And the possibility of leaving Minnesota so soon after James in born?”

“We may not join you in Paris right away, but you won’t be away from us for very long. I promise.”

That night, as Jack slept in Lucy’s arms, while Lucy dozed curled into his side, and Kal laid at his feet, Henry smiled and pressed a kiss to the top of Jack’s head then Lucy’s. He whispered aloud to himself, “I’m holding everything I love in my arms right now, and it’s all because you got lost one day in London.”

Chapter End Notes

That’s it, there is no more.

What did you think? Are you happy how the story ended? What are you wondering about Lucy and Henry’s life after this point. Ask away!

Check out my Instagram for scenes from Jack’s nursery. @PatriciaBurtnessWrites

Thank you again loyal readers. I love you all!

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