Consequences

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Consequences

by mks57

Summary

Garcy Prompt: when team came back from another mission turned out that there's a three-years old child who's calling Lucy and Flynn as her parents and really confused by their shocked reaction. The story exploded... Enjoy.
“Just unbelievable.” Lucy said angrily as she so mad at Wyatt she was shaking to the point that she could barely get her seat belt on and when he tried to help her she smacked his hands away. “Don’t, you’ve done enough damage today.” she growled at him, Wyatt pulled away with his hands up in surrender.

“I said I was sorry.” Wyatt told her, not letting go even though Flynn and Rufus wished he would.

“Oh because ‘sorry’ is going to fix what you’ve done!? Do you even realise what you’ve done?” she asked him incredulously as she managed to snap in one of the four belts into the jack. But she was struggling to get the others in as her eyes were blurry with tears. She was tired of missions where History was changed dramatically. Today was one of her top three worst missions. She was a fried wreck, her hands and knees scraped from being pushed down out of the line of fire. A historical figure killed before her time, before she even got to leave her mark.

“It was an accident.” Wyatt said, his voice rising as if it would help his cause.

“You shot Claudette Colvin.” Lucy told him in a dark tone.

“There’s still that other one.” Wyatt argued, Lucy was flabbergasted at how after two years of this Wyatt still ran through history like a bull in a china shop. He had zero respect for her as he couldn’t even remember a small relevant piece of history.

“Oh my god!” Lucy felt like she was losing her mind. “Rosa Parks! Does everything I say go through one ear and out the other?” She asked him. Wyatt shook his head at her dramatics.

“It was still an accident, I was aiming for Emma and Claudette got in the way. These things they happen in the field.” Wyatt said calmly but to her ears it sounded so blasé. Lucy opened her mouth but before she could start Flynn spoke.

“Lucy, it can’t be undone.” He said in a placating and calm manner. He unbuckled his belt and reached across to hers. She didn’t smack his hand away as she was ready to cry and he was right. “Just because Claudette Colvin is dead, doesn’t mean Rosa Parks won’t still do what she has to. She may do it on her own not because she was inspired by Claudette’s actions. History sometimes works out in it’s own mysterious way.” Flynn said in a reassuring manner, he snapped the belt together before he finished.

“Yet I’ve spent so long trying to explain over and over, every single mission” she looked at Wyatt with daggers in her eyes. “How important it is to not destroy history! Now! You’ve set civil rights for African Americans back for god knows how long!” She shouted at Wyatt. In the small space it was loud enough to make everyone wince.

“Rittenhouse-“ Wyatt started but Lucy cut him off.

“Oh no, no” she told Wyatt. “You don’t get to justify or excuse yourself. I don’t want to talk to you.” She informed him, she pointed at him as he opened his mouth to argue. “No, don’t even open your mouth. Breathe through your nose.” She ordered.

“I’d do it.” Flynn advised Wyatt.

“I’m buckled in. Can we please we go home?” Lucy asked as she pulled on her skirt and tried to put her mind off the past events.
“Yep.” Rufus said as he closed the hatch, Lucy closed her eyes; she felt the tears run down her face. She didn’t care, she just wanted to go home and forget today ever happened. She gripped the edge of her chair as she hated this part of time travel. The turbulence and the sound of the chains running on the outside. The Lifeboat shook and, in a few seconds, it was over they were back.

Lucy opened her eyes and looked over at Flynn, he wore a pensive expression. He unbuckled his seat, Lucy undid her own and turned her chair around. The hatch opened, her jaw dropped as Jiya came over with the stairs. It wasn’t the act that had her shocked.

It was Jiya’s hair. It was cut to her collarbone and blonde. Her fashion was still the same with exception of the gun strapped to her thigh, it made Lucy wonder what other changes they were in for.

“Hey, how did it go?” Jiya asked with a smile.

“Ah, bad.. Claudette Colvin died.” Lucy said a little dazed as she was reeling. The blonde hair looked good but it was such a shock. She got out of her chair and walked down the stairs. “Your hair.” She said was now on firm grown.

“What about it? I tried to your beach waves my hair hates curling. Who's Claudette Colvin?” Jiya asked casually as she stepped back and waited for the others to come out.

“What’s with the Blond?” Wyatt asked, Jiya’s response was not kind. She drew her weapon and pointed it at Wyatt. He immediately raised his hands in surrender. “What the hell?” he demanded.

“What the hell is this?” Jiya demanded as she looked to Lucy to explain herself.

“What’s the hold up?” Flynn asked as he came out of the lifeboat. It was so old hat that home was safe that he hadn’t even noticed what was going on until he was at the bottom step. His eyes went wide at Jiya’s hair and the gun in Wyatt’s face. Though after their day, Flynn didn’t have much of a problem with that. “Ok.” He said slowly, he kept his hands in the open as he moved out from behind Wyatt as he didn’t want to be in Jiya’s firing line.

“Lucy, Flynn. What is going on? Why is he here? How is he here?” She demanded just as confused as they are.

“It’s Wyatt.” Lucy said.

“Yeah, Wyatt Logan the traitor, Taliban terrorist who is linked to the Washington bombings? Oh, yeah everyone knows this douche bag.” Jiya said as she glared at Wyatt.

“Hey, I’m not a terrorist.” Wyatt said as he kept his hands up.

“Mommy!” a little voice yelled with glee. Lucy saw a tiny little girl in denim overalls and red and white stripe sweater race at them from the kitchen area; holding an orange in her hands.

“Holly, stay back!” Jiya ordered but the girl didn’t listen as she raced straight into Lucy’s legs; nearly toppling her over. But she managed to stay upright as the little girl hugged her legs. The orange had hit the floor and rolled.

“Mommy! You’re home.” The little girl A.K.A. Holly said with glee, her pigtails bounced as she looked up at Lucy with big, beautiful hazel eyes and a grin with missing a couple of teeth. She had Lucy dark brown hair and it was almost like looking at her younger self. She had seen her baby pictures and her as kid, but the nose was just a little different as was her hairline.
“Oh no, I’m sorry, Holly. I’m not your mommy.” Lucy told Holly as gently as she could. She tried to pry her from her legs.

“Mommy.” She giggled and squirmed as if Lucy was tickling her. “You’re my mommy.” She announced loudly as she thought it was a game.

“No, I’m not.” Lucy assured her as Jiya was telling Wyatt to surrender his weapons slowly to Flynn.

“Yes, you are.” Holly told Lucy.

“No, I’m not.” Lucy said a little firmer, her heart beating erratically as her day was already tough and now she had this little girl attached to her leg calling her mother.

“Yes, you are!!” Holly said louder and more adamantly as she didn’t think it was funny anymore. She clearly thought if she shouted it louder, it would make it true.

“Help.” Lucy said looking to the others.

“Really? You don’t have a gun in your face.” Wyatt said, he passed his gun off to Flynn as Jiya seemed to trust Flynn more than him. Holly detached herself from Lucy, she picked up her orange and ran over to Flynn and latched onto his leg. She leaned back and held her orange up to him.

“Daddy! Mommy’s being mean.” Holly announced with pout. Lucy’s jaw dropped yet again as she looked at Flynn. He wore a bemused expression as this entire situation was bewildering. She realised in that moment where the little girl’s green eyes and nose came from.

“What is going on out here?” Rufus asked as he finished his post flight check. He stopped at the top of the stairs and looked down at the scene. “Jiya?” Rufus asked in disbelief.

“Oh my god! Rufus?” Jiya breathed in disbelief, tears filled her eyes. Wyatt decided stupidly to take advantage of her distraction and went for the gun. But it did not end well as Jiya had him on the floor with her knee in his back, gun to his head and his arm pulled at an unnatural angle. Wyatt groaned in pain, face in the concrete. “I swear to god, I will paint the floor with your brains if you try anything stupid. Capisce?” she asked him in a dark and promising tone.

“Got it.” Wyatt said in a pained voice.

“Do it again, Auntie Jiya!” Holly cheered as she bounced on her feet and giggled.

“What is going on here?!” Rufus demanded again.

“Daddy, naranča.” Holly said as she held up her orange to him. She stepped onto his shoe and grabbed onto his leg to try and reach up to him. Flynn looked down at her, his heart flipped a beat as he just knew this little girl was his. She looked so similar to Iris and yet so much like a tinier version Lucy it left him shaken. Old wounds re-opened as he thought of Iris, then this little girl like a mirage of ‘what could be', she was perfect and cute as a button. Her one Croatian word, just touched him as he hadn’t spoken or heard someone speak his native tongue in years. He swallowed and cleared his throat.

“One second.” He told her, Holly stepped down and back a step as she held the orange in her hand waiting patiently. He moved to the staircase and quickly dismantled Wyatt’s gun, placing the pieces down. He made certain the safety on his weapon was on. He would’ve removed it but he was concerned by Jiya carrying a weapon on her. He holstered his gun and moved to Holly.

The little girl that reminded him of Iris but at the same time looked like a small Lucy held her arms
up. It gave him incredibly mix of emotions as he lifted her up into his arms. Holly held the orange in her hands. She looked at him. “Can we eat the Naranča now?” she asked.

“Yeah, let’s go.” He said as he walked them into the living area. The place looked the same as they had left it except there were toys and books. Historical biographies for kids mostly. He went to the couch and set Holly down. She waited until he was down on the couch before she crawled into his lap and held out the orange. “So, do we always eat a Naranča when I come home?” he asked.

“Yep, always.” Holly replied as she leaned back against him and watched him peel the skin off the orange. Flynn couldn’t help but smile at how much she looked like her mother.

“Jiya, please let Wyatt go.” Lucy pleaded, Jiya threw her an incredulous look.

“Hell no, this dirtbag is going in the brig. Then we’ll talk as clearly something is wrong here especially when you’re bringing dead terrorists home.” She said with a girlish smile.

“Don’t do anything stupid,” Lucy told Wyatt as Jiya was strong arming him down the hallway.

“Really?” Wyatt asked her angrily. He growled in pain as Jiya twisted his arm to encourage him to keep walking.

“Jiya, listen to me. Claudette Colvin died before she brought could fight for civil rights of African Americans and challenge the law that led to segregation recognised as an unconstitutional. The case won and was one of the leading factors that helped abolish segregation in America.” Lucy told her.

“Are you saying you’re from an alternate timeline?” Jiya asked them, as she kept walking and pushing Wyatt forward.

“I – I don’t know.” Lucy said honestly.

“We haven’t figured that part out yet.” Rufus said honestly.

“But the point is, in our timeline; Wyatt is a highly decorated Delta Force operator. He’s been on our team since the beginning, two years ago. He’s not a terrorist. He’s the good guy.” Lucy explained to Jiya. Jiya laughed and shook her head.

“The team formed over three years ago. This guy, bombed the capital and killed 150 people; 9 years ago, He nearly killed the Obamas. So, excuse me if I would feel a little more comfortable with this guy behind bars.” Jiya said frankly.

“Hey, I’m not a terrorist.” Wyatt argued.

“Tell it to the wall.” Jiya said as she shoved him into the cell. She closed the door before Wyatt could get a chance. She locked the door and pocketed the keys. She turned to Lucy and Rufus. “This woman Claudette Colvin affected the future slash present. You’re from a different possibly original timeline?” Jiya asked.

“Yes.” Lucy said as she looked to Wyatt who was losing his mind as he paced the cell steaming quietly in anger.

“Is Trump President?” Rufus asked.

“No, Bernie Sanders is in. Why is that relevant?” Jiya asked him.
“It’s not. I was curious.” Rufus said.

“If you’re all from a different timeline then what is real?” Jiya asked them.

“This is real.” Lucy said as she knew the fact was they couldn’t go back and save Claudette Colvin. They were stuck with this new reality unless another solution came but Lucy was still reeling from everything.

“No, we’re going to fix it.” Wyatt told them.

“How? We can’t travel into our timeline or to where we’ve been twice.” Lucy reminded him, Wyatt’s face pinched in a dark manner.

“We did it to get Rufus.” He said.

“In an upgraded Lifeboat, I still haven’t figure out how to calculate the variables to make that happen.” Rufus told him, he looked Jiya who was grief stricken. “What?” he asked softly as he hated seeing her in pain.

“You died trying to travel into your own timeline. To prove it could be done. You came back in pieces.” Jiya said, it was written in her expression that it still haunted her. She couldn’t handle the thought. “I can’t stand here while you all discuss whether this present is valid or not.” She told them, she shook her head and walked away.

Rufus tried to follow her, but Wyatt reached through the bars and grabbed him by the shirt.

“You guys, we have to fix this.” He told them, Rufus pulled his hand off him and stood outside of his grasp.

“No, I gotta fix that.” Rufus said as he gestured in the direction Jiya had gone. “And after everything we’ve learnt while time travelling, not everything can fixed. Before we can even discuss that, we have to know all the facts.” Rufus added.

“He’s right.” Lucy told Wyatt. “Just sit tight, Rufus and I will figure this out.” She said, she pulled Rufus and they started walking away.

“So, what’s the plan?” he asked Lucy in a low voice when they were out of Wyatt’s hearing.

“I don’t know.” She said.

“You and Flynn have a kid.” Rufus said in a low voice.
Half an hour later, Rufus and Lucy had found the wardrobe room as the bunker was more functional than their own. They had found clothes. Had showers as the bathroom had shower stalls and then they changed, Rufus had found Jiya and the three of them now sat at a table in the kitchen, living area.

“So, Flynn and I are married and we have a child.” Lucy stated as she watched Flynn play dominos with their three year old daughter Holly. Lucy was still reeling as they learnt that Emma Whitmore stole the Mothership and killed her co-pilots.

Jiya had explained their history, Flynn’s ran much the same, his family was murdered by Rittenhouse. Her future-self had gave him the Journal but he had seen Agent Christopher’s name in the Journal and sort her out.

She strangely believed him about Rittenhouse when he described Lucy to her, she recalled Lucy saving her 1981, she didn’t believe in coincidences. She had found Lucy in their present in 2015 and felt it was unbelievable that she and Flynn had met the same women 30 years apart; yet she exist in their time because... time travel.

They went to Mason Industries, where they learnt about Time Travel and Emma Whitmore had taken the Mothership on an unauthorized trip. It led to the Lifeboat being brought out of storage and team sent to recover it. The whole saga of chasing Rittenhouse through time began. Lucy’s mother still erased Amy from existence. Lucy was still a Rittenhouse legacy.

 Somehow, they managed to stumble through history living the same ventures but people and sequence of events were out of sync yet still worked. They ended up in the bunker, the team was nearly the same. The story just different in so many ways and in some very much the same.

Lucy learnt that she and Flynn went undercover as an engaged couple to get the Rittenhouse key from Bonnie and Clyde. Flynn had kissed her to maintain their cover. After the mission, they went for drinks to unwind, apparently a regular occurrence for them. But this night, they had a one night stand, that rolled into a fling, 9 months later, Holly arrive; she was considered a very welcome accident, a year later they were married and the rest was history.

“Holly. You really don’t remember?” Jiya asked her as she reminded Lucy of her daughter’s name.

“I wish I did.” Lucy said, she truly did. She always wanted kids but she had wanted the whole lead up. Not for a child to pop into existence in the space of 18 hours. But she could handle it now, she had to.

“We never recruited Wyatt?” Rufus asked again.

“Why would we? He’s a criminal.” Jiya said making a face.

“He saved Agent Christopher in 1981.” Rufus pointed out.

“No, Jiya saved my life.” Agent Denise Christopher said as she walked in. She looked the same and seemed the same. She pulled up a chair and sat down.

“Right, I keep forgetting.” Rufus said with a frown, he like Lucy were still trying to amalgamate to the new present and the differences.
“When we left, Wyatt was part of our team and history. He’s been with us from the start. You recruited him yourself.” Lucy said to Denise.

“I’m telling you now, that’s impossible as he was executed in 2014 via lethal injection.” Denise told her.

“The question is what are you all thinking of doing?” Jiya asked them.

“What do you mean?” Lucy asked dragging her eyes away from Flynn and their daughter.

“History as you know it has changed. Are you going to change it back?” Jiya asked, Rufus and Lucy wore weary expressions as they didn’t have a real answer on that.

“I don’t believe we have a right to purposefully manipulate history. It’s also morally questionable and if we could go back, I don’t know how we’d ‘fix’ it or if we’d make it worse. I just- I’m too tired to give it thought.” Lucy said honestly, part of her didn’t want to change it as she was tired of chasing Rittenhouse and trying to right every wrong. She also learnt that they just couldn’t save everyone, they couldn’t preserve every moment in history perfectly.

“Rufus.” Jiya said looking to Rufus.

“Did you travel back to 1954?” He asked her.

“Yes, I got my powers. I warned you that travelling into your own timeline and meeting yourself wouldn’t work but you went ahead with it.” She told him, He pursed his lips as he wasn’t sure.

“What about 1885?” he asked Jiya, she shook her head.

“No.” she said, it was one of the few major divergences from their timeline but then they all knew without Jessica in the bunker the lifeboat never landed in Rittenhouse’s hands. Lucy looked at Rufus wondering what he was thinking, after a moment he shook his head.

“No, I’m not changing a thing.” He said, making the decision then and there. Lucy could see he was serious, part of her was relieved because Rufus was their pilot. If he wouldn’t do it, then it wasn’t happening. He looked to Lucy. “I’m sorry, I know this puts you and the others in a spot.” He said, he looked to Jiya and Denise. “That we all have to relearn about one another but the fight is still the same, I’m not convinced we can fix this part of history.” He said.

“We’ve learned that trying to ‘fix’ things at a later time never works out.” Denise said.

“Excuse me?” Lucy asked as it sounded like they had crossed that line before.

“We tried to get Amy back for you. It didn’t work, Emma thwarted us at every turn. I’m still very sorry we couldn’t bring her back.” Denise said sincerely, she already knew they didn’t have memory of it as she explained it. Lucy sucked in a breath as her emotions got the better of her.

“I’m sorry, I need a moment.” Lucy said, she rose from her seat and walked over to Flynn and Holly. She knew she was going to cry, the only way to stop that was to distract herself. She sat down on the floor opposite Flynn and Holly. “How are we doing over here?” she asked them with a fake smile.

“We are playing ‘Frozen’ dominos.” Flynn said as he held up a domino block with two Olaf faces on it. It was adorable.

“I’m winning.” Holly announced as she placed down a tile with glee.
“You’re cheating.” Flynn told Holly. Lucy blinked back her tears and looked down at the game. She could see that Holly had cheated more than once. As she placed the block in the middle of the game not connecting it to the ends.

“No, I’m not.” Holly replied in a matter of fact manner.

“Ok, well how about I do this.” Flynn said, he mimicked one of her moves. Holly snatched the block back up from the table. Lucy couldn’t help but smile.

“No, you’re playing wrong Daddy. You can’t do that.” Holly said as she handed it back to him, so he could try again.

“But you did it, why can’t I?” He asked in amusement.

“Because I told you that you can’t.” Holly said like she were the exhausted parent.

“Oh, well excuse me.” Flynn said, he placed the block down, cheating as Holly had. “How’s that?” he asked.

“No.” Holly said in exasperation.

“This way?” Flynn asked as he moved it again.

“Mommy.” Holly stated, her tone clear that she needed Lucy to step in.

“Garcia.” Lucy prompted, it was the first time she had called him by his first name. She had done so, because she thought her in this timeline would call him by his first name. She didn’t want Holly to feel something was off. He looked a little taken back but then smile.

“Ok, there.” Flynn said correcting his move.

“See, I’m winning.” Holly announced with grin. Lucy and Flynn chuckled and shook their heads.

“The game is not finished. But I am going to go have a shower.” Flynn announced.

“You should, you’re really smelly Daddy.” Holly informed him. Flynn chuckled as he pulled Holly into his lap and tickled her. Holly giggled joyously and Lucy couldn’t help but smile as it was such a happy sound. The sight before her was a side of Flynn she had never seen, it just made her so aware of him, the father he’d been for Iris. He looked so relaxed and soft, Lucy couldn’t help but find it very attractive.

“You’re hilarious.” Flynn said as he stopped tickling Holly and kissed her forehead. Holly beamed happily as she caught her breath. “Ok, after my shower. Nap time for you.” He told Holly.

“No, I don’t wanna.” Holly told him.

“I don’t want to shower but I have to.” He said, Lucy watched as his smile softened, he gently brushed his knuckles down the side of Holly’s face and then his thumb across her tiny nose. She realised in that moment that he was already attached to their little girl. To their family, she couldn’t even deny it, she was already attached and it less than an hour. “Ok, I’m going to get cleaned up.” Flynn said, he got to his feet and Lucy was going to tell him where their room was but he was already where Rufus and Jiya were asking for directions.

She turned her attention to Holly and smiled. “How about we read a story?” she asked her as she saw the books on the table. She realised they were her books, from her childhood. Felt the fond
memories of her own mother reading the books to her. It all made her feel a little sad.

“Can we finish the story about Einstein?” she asked.

“We sure can.” Lucy said, she got to her feet. She picked up the book and sat down in the couch. Holly climbed up onto the couch, crawled into her lap. Lucy shifted down and got comfortable even though this was so foreign to her. Yet, it was almost like a dream and a bittersweet memory rolled into one as she smelt the familiar scent of strawberry shampoo.

It transported her back to a time when Amy used to snuggle up with her as a young child. For a moment she felt herself overcome by her grief. She thought she had gotten past not saving Amy, but hearing that she had tried and still failed opened up old wounds.

“Mommy.” Holly prompted, Lucy blinked and looked to Holly, her tiny face frowned in concern.

“I’m sorry,” She said, she plastered on a smile. “Now, where we were last?” She asked as she hugged an arm around Holly and opened the book in front of them.

“He discovered the theory of relativity.” Holly replied, Lucy smiled as Holly stumbled over the word ‘Relativity’. She flicked through the pages until she found the place.

“Ok, so Einstein discovered the Theory of Relativity.” Lucy said as she started to read the book.

Flynn walked straight to his and Lucy’s room, it was just as he always imagined it would be if they became a couple. Double bed to the wall, books piled up pretty much everywhere and a tallboy for their clothes. The space was cozy and clutter, he moved the drawers, he saw the photos on top. The past three years; Lucy and him together as a couple, many of them with Holly at various ages.

Part of his heart ached for the little girl as she was so young and her parents were gone. Yet, still here as he and Lucy were alive. From the photos, it looked like he and Lucy were in love. Something, he’d felt for nearly a year. The previous year it was an infatuation with the journal version of her, but Lucy in the present. She was a whirlwind of her own. His infatuation grew into admiration and love, something he begrudgingly admits only to himself as he knows Lucy and Wyatt have unresolved issues.

He knew the last thing Lucy needed was another person in the mix to confuse her or complicate her world. But seeing Holly, the photos. He wished it were really true, that he had the memories.

“It’s real.” Denise said, Flynn turned to see her at the doorway. “You never planned to have Holly, it happened and you and Lucy… it just worked after a few months of working together; it was clear you two would be together.” She said.

“I never considered you to be a romantic.” Flynn told her.

“I think I owe you your history as I know how much it hurt for you to lose Iris and Lorena. How you wished you could have those extra moments with her.” Denise said, Flynn looked down as his grief rose its ugly head. “I’m not trying to upset you, I just want you know that I appreciate your advice when you told me go home and spend what time I had left with my family. It’s something one can’t ever get back,” she gave a sigh as she looked saddened for a moment, “But you have a second chance with Holly, I implore you to take it. You won’t regret it.” She promised him.
“Lucy and I aren’t together.” Flynn said.

“You know, Michelle and I met. I thought we'd hit it off and everything would be perfect because we were meant to be. But we fought like cats and dogs, but eventually somehow when I stopped trying to make it work. It just gelled together on its own.” Denise told him, it didn’t take a genius to read between the lines on that. She was telling him to just wait a little longer.

“You and Michelle are still together?” he asked.

“Going on 18 years. 2 kids and one foster dog that I can’t wait for someone to adopt.” She said in her acerbic manner, she huffed a laugh. Flynn smiled as he was glad Denise was the same but he could not understand why she was being do friendly when she usually kept a professional distance. “And we are pretty good friends, in case you’re wondering.” She said, with that she turned and left the doorway. Leaving him gobsmacked.

Flynn shook his head and turned back to the drawers and pulled it open. He smiled wryly as he found the drawer filled with turtlenecks, at least his fashion style hadn’t changed. He found the rest of his clothes and compiled an outfit.

15 minutes later, after a hot shower and change of clothes. Flynn went walking around the bunker. The layout was the same but every room had a purpose. There was even a designated wardrobe room for their period clothing. As he strolled thinking about Lucy, he came to what looked like the brig and inside was Wyatt.

“Flynn,” Wyatt said, surprisingly relieved to see him.

“Wow, they have a prison cell.” Flynn remarked as the small room had a bed, steel toilet and vanity sink. For once, he wasn’t the one inside and it was nice for a change. It made him curious as to how all of this happened. Part of him, was ok with it.

“Yeah, yak it up while you can because I’m getting out of here. We are fixing this.” Wyatt told him firmly. Flynn saw the determination in the man’s features. He knew when Wyatt got fixated on something, he usual didn’t let it go. But this time, Flynn didn’t agree with Wyatt’s mission.

“No, I won’t help you attempt to fix this one especially given the reason we ended up here was that you were hellbent on killing Emma instead of prioritizing Claudette Colvin's life.” Flynn said, Wyatt opened his mouth to argue but closed it as Flynn was right. Wyatt had fired at Rittenhouse agents but Emma was his target given she turned Jessica into a Rittenhouse Agent who abandoned him to protect their child than be with him. By some random fluke he hit Claudette Colvin. Accident to be sure, but he was still guilty for his actions as he could have aimed above their heads. “Now, you created this present, you will live with it, just like the rest of us.” Flynn said, Wyatt glowered at him.

“Oh because you got Lucy trapped to you because of some kid who called you ‘Daddy’. You know it's not real, you two aren’t supposed to get together let alone have a kid which means you have no right them now.” Wyatt said, Flynn normally might have considered throwing a punch in Wyatt’s face for such a low blow. But today, he gave him a closed lip smile.

“Maybe not, but I can choose to have them. Enjoy your stay in the brig.” Flynn said, he walked away with a bit of a pep in his step. Wyatt hissed at him to come back but Flynn ignored him.
Chapter 3

“Apparently Lucy’s future-self gave Flynn the Journal. But he took it to Denise when she was working at the NCTC. They confronted Mason, but Emma Whitmore had already stolen the Mothership. The lifeboat was pulled from storage. Lucy was brought in. Flynn, Lucy and I became a team. We were pretty successful at it too.”

“But you all ended up here.” Wyatt said.

“Rittenhouse blew up Mason Industries, the lifeboat was nearly lost. We went into hiding.” Rufus said.

“Lucy had a kid with Flynn. Now they decided they want to play house together here in the now.” Wyatt drawled darkly.

“It’s not that simple.” Rufus said defending Lucy and Flynn. He had no idea what they were going through but he knew it couldn’t be easy. It wasn’t for him, but the idea of a child was more complex to deal with. Wyatt scoffed a laugh.

“You’ve seen the way Flynn looks at her. Lucy’s vulnerable toss in a cute kid and she’s putty in his hands. He doesn’t want to change it, I can see him convincing her to not change it.” Wyatt said thoughtfully.

“It’s a complicated matter. Lucy is more than capable of making her own decisions about her life.” Rufus said, now annoyed at Wyatt as he was back to being wrapped up in his Lucy-Jessica dramas. It was not the time for it. Rufus was already tired of it as he did see the way Flynn looked at Lucy, but he always saw Flynn keeping and maintaining a professional distance.

“So you’re saying if Jiya toddled out a kid for you, you wouldn’t be swayed?” Wyatt drawled sarcastically, Rufus huffed a laugh and shook his head in disbelief. He knew Wyatt was pissed, if their roles were reversed Rufus would be pissed.

“First off, this is offensive on so many levels-“

“I lost my wife and child!” Wyatt shouted at him.

“Yeah, you did. I’m so sorry but it can’t be undone.” Rufus told him.

“I moved heaven and earth to save you. Now, you won’t do it for one of your own.” Wyatt told him.

“You were put to death by the state. Before you were a terrorist, you were a highly decorated soldier but you lost your head and killed your team in Syria. The government covered it up and you were medically discharged from the service with PTSD and a lot anger issues.” Rufus told him, as he ignored Wyatt’s comment as he now could see how Wyatt in an alternate reality could be a racist prick turn terrorist.

“I don’t want to know.” Wyatt told him.

“Jessica is alive.” Rufus told him, getting to the point.

“Seriously?” Wyatt asked, his anger evaporated.

“She divorced you and remarried, had three kids and for the past 10 years; lived what looks like a
happy life.” Rufus said, Wyatt pushed away from the bars, feeling light headed. He moved to the bed and sat down.

“How did this happen?” Wyatt asked.

“She cited irreconcilable differences on the divorce and later filed for an AVO against you. When it didn’t work, she moved several states away but she looks happy. She has a catering business with her husband that’s pretty successful.” Rufus told him.

“Just not with me.” Wyatt said. “I’m not that man.” he stressed, he despised that everyone left him ended up being happier.

“I never said that you were.” Rufus said, he sighed as it all felt like a mess. “Did you serve under or with African American soldiers during your career?” Rufus asked.

“I don’t know! I don’t pay attention to skin colour.” He exclaimed, he then sighed and gave a shrug. “Maybe?” he offered incredulously.

“Well because Claudette Colvin didn’t do her thing. Lucy said it wasn’t just her sitting in the wrong section of the bus. When she was arrested four other women were too, they made a class action and fought for segregation to be abolish. It didn’t happen, so when Rosa Parks and the other women did have their moments, it didn’t have the same effect. It took 6 more years for any real change to happen. So, I’m thinking there was a ripple effect.” Rufus said being generous when to him it was devastating. His life hadn’t changed too much, he’d been lucky but for those in the past and the trickle effect of change was devastating.

“Come on, it can’t be that bad.”

“No offence, but you have no idea what I go through on a daily basis. The way I’ve had to survive growing up and how hard I had to fight to get where I am? Because of the ignorance and prejudice of people like you who instead of doing something, pretend it doesn’t exist because it makes you uncomfortable.” Rufus told him.

“I’m not like that. I’ve always respected you.”

“Yeah, that’s great but think about the military. They still have a lot of issues and think about it with segregation ending later. Any African American soldiers would’ve refused promotions and any acknowledgements they were entitled to. They never worked with or trained the white soldiers they were supposed to know and influence in your timeline. Think about it, if your Grandfather hadn’t been in your life, how would that affect who you are?” Rufus asked.

“Right.” Wyatt said as he knew what Rufus was trying to say.

“Yeah, if you meet different people then you are influenced in a different way. Your life changes, it’s that simple. I know this sucks for you… but I can’t see how we can fix it. It’s a problem that require someone’s to go back and be a hero to see it through. Not just in for 18 hours and gone.” Rufus told him.

“But we should try.” Wyatt told him.

“Our job is preserve history as best we can and stop Rittenhouse. The moment we start manipulating history, we’re no better than Rittenhouse.” Rufus told him.

“But what about all the lives affected by this? How is it a manipulation if we’re making lives better.” Wyatt told him.
“Are you kidding me? We don’t have a right. We made a mistake, we’ve made them before and lived through the consequences.” Rufus told him.

“I’m a terrorist.” Wyatt reminded him.

“I’ll try to convince Agent Christopher but I don’t know what will happen…” Rufus shrugged. “We got Flynn out of prison.” He offered.

“Yeah, right cause it’s exactly the same situation.” Wyatt drawled sarcastically, Rufus snapped as he had hoped for a productive conversation but Wyatt was anything but.

“You know what? I’m so sick of your ‘Poor me’ attitude, we’ve busted our asses for you. I took you to 1983 to save Jessica. Jessica, the woman who’s supposed to walk on water and be the epitome of woman as we know it. She betrayed us and kidnapped Jiya along with our lifeboat. Then Jiya had to spend 3 years alone in 1880s grieving for me and trying to survive! While you sat on vital information for weeks playing house. You just let it all happen. Now, we’re back in a world that is not perfect by any means, but somehow everything has worked out and you want to screw it all up! When does it end?!” Rufus demanded.

“What about the hundreds of African American lives we can improve?” Wyatt said as he threw the obvious in his face but Rufus didn’t fall for it.

“Oh please, you don’t give a shit about the plight of African American Society. You only want to repair history because you’re jealous your wife divorced you and you decided instead of therapy to blow up 150 people.” Rufus said.

“I didn’t-”

“Spare me the explanation as we both know you only want to repair the damage so you’re not a terrorist and back to being the ‘hero’. Well, guess what? It’s not always about you and Jessica.” Rufus told him, he turned on his feet and walked away, he already regretted his words. But he didn’t want to take them back.

Lucy slowly came too, she found herself laying on the couch. She wore a wistful smile as she dreamt of strawberry milkshakes and Amy. It had been so long since she had it was bittersweet. Holly’s hair tickled her nose, her weight heavy on Lucy as she gave tiny little snores. She looked to her left and saw Flynn.

He was sitting in one of the arm chairs by the couch; he was reading something on a tablet computer. He must have felt her eyes on him, as he looked her way. His lips quirked in a faint smile.

“Hey,” he said softly.

“What are you reading?” she asked in a low voice, she smoothed a hand down Holly’s back. She couldn’t help but love how the little girl snuggled in closer to her and continued snoring.

“Our lives, I kept a journal.” He said, Lucy couldn’t hide her surprise.

“You?” she asked in amusement as a journal was her thing.

“I know, shocking.” He said in amusement.
“Any revelations?” she asked out of curiosity.

“Many.” Flynn said, as he looked saddened for a moment.

“Want to share?” She asked him.

“No now.” He said as he plastered on a smile and turned off the tablet computer before he focussed on her and Holly.

Rufus kept walking around the bunker as he felt incredibly stressed. Part of him wanted to walk back to Wyatt and give him a piece of his mind. But another part just shook and felt sick about it all. He didn’t hate or blame Wyatt but his sheer arrogance and lack of genuine care just left him shaken.

He walked past a partially open door and stopped as something caught his eye, he backed up and gently pushed the door wider. Jiya was sitting at a desk working on her computer, the room itself was covered wall to wall with photos, drawings and post it notes with string connecting it altogether like how a crazy person made conspiracy theories.

“It’s not that bad.” She said, she looked up and smiled at him.

“May I?” he asked, she nodded. He walked into the room and started taking it in. “What is it?” he asked.

“My crazy vision room. I draw everything I see in my visions, Lucy helps me put a possible time period to them and we figure out how best to avoid or alter them before they happen.” She explained.

“Does it work?”

“No, you’re – well you were pigheaded and confident to believe that my visions weren’t real. So, they shouldn’t be heeded.”

“I’m sorry.” He said apologising for his other self’s actions. Jiya reared back and blinked in surprise like she’d never heard him say the words before.

“No, it’s ok. Sometimes, things just happen the way they are supposed to. You just can’t change them no matter how hard you try.” Jiya said, it was clear she had accepted their reality for it was and even him even though he wasn’t the same man.

“Yeah, so you didn’t see me coming back?” he asked out of curiosity.

“No, I can’t see you anymore at least I lost the ability when you died- When he died.” She said, she frowned as she struggled to keep all the pronouns correctly.

“You can’t see me. I think we should be honest. We know we’re different from our alternate version. Well, you seem pretty much the same except the hair.” Rufus admitted, he couldn’t resist reaching out and playfully tugging on a strand. She did a cute shy and awkward look as she always did when he played with her hair.

“I wanted a change.” She said bashfully, the confident powerhouse showing some vulnerability.

“It’s good, I like it.” He said, she beamed under his assessment.

“You do?” She asked a little unsure of how to take him.
“Yeah.” He said, but then he never cared about her physical appearance. It was definitely a plus but he loved her so much that she could shave her hair and paint herself blue and he’d still think she was beautiful and love her.

“You are so different from who I knew.” She told him.

“I am?” he asked wondering if it was a good thing or not.

“Yeah, and I think we shouldn’t dance around each other.” She said as she stood up from her chair and moved in close. Rufus swallowed as he saw the intent in her eyes.

“Ok-“ Rufus barely got out another word as Jiya yanked on his hoodie and kissed him. He was shocked at first but he got into it quick. Rufus sucked in a sharp breath and pulled back, but Jiya held on and kissed him harder, deeper, sliding her tongue into his mouth. He broke away.

“Jiya—” He started a little shocked. But she shook her head.

“No, don’t tell me to stop.” she muttered and sealed their lips together once more. This time he responded, his hands sliding up over her back into her hair. She felt the pressure of his hands against her scalp and that was all she needed because it told her how much he wanted her. The gently pressure increased as he leaned down and brought her closer, trying to take over, but Jiya wouldn’t allow it.

She ran the show which just like her, yet there was this edge to it that made it more raw and dark. Rufus was turned on as she pulled out of his hold and nipped at his full lower lip.

Rufus jerked back and stared at her, chest rising and falling with rapid breaths.

Jiya smoothed her hands over his cropped hair and buried her face in his throat, relishing his clean masculine scent and the frantic beat of his pulse. Soap, dark spices and aroused male. The smells that haunted her dreams. She had missed him, missed this.

Broad hands travelled up her back, his arms holding her gently. So strong and warm. He nuzzled her temple. “Jiya, ah we should stop.” He said, he pulled back and gently pushed at her as he needed space to think.

She drew in another deep lungful of him and released it slowly as she leaned back. She wore a hazy smile as she was deeply affect by him as he was of her.

“Some things change while others don’t. Though you kiss better than before.” She said as she licked her lips, she could still taste the salt of his skin and their kiss.

“Thank you? Ah-“ Rufus tried to put a couple words together to form a sentence but it wasn’t working as she pressed herself up against him and looked at her like he was the hottest piece of ass she’d seen. A look he wasn’t entirely used to. “We should date.” He said.

“We should have sex first, like now.” She said.

“We barely know one another.” He said as he caught her hands in his and danced them away from his body.

“But I bet we would be amazing in bed.” She sighed, she looked him over. But she saw his awkward discomfort and took a step back. “Damn, this whole new you is a real turn on.” She told him.
“Ok.” He said feeling a little relieved and completely outside of his comfort zone.

“So, how do I get the new you into bed?” she asked teasingly.

“Why don’t we have dinner and talk. Then sleep on it, do I have my own room?” Rufus asked, she shook her head.

“No, we have a room. I am hoping you will sleep with me. Just sleep.” She said.

“Really?” he asked as he was unsure if she was capable of keeping to her word. She laughed.

“I’m practically throwing myself at you and you want to buy me dinner and talk. Sleep on things. I never thought I’d see the day.” She said with a smile.

“Yes, well it's here.” He said awkwardly, her smile turned salacious.

“You should go, before I change my mind and show you just how good I can make you feel.” She whispered hotly in his ear. She sucked on his lobe, Rufus groaned in pleasure as his eyeballs roll up into his head as damn, it felt good and dangerous.

“That’s Nanna, that’s Uncle Gabriel and Auntie Lyla and Grandpa.” Holly said as she and Lucy were looking over photos in Flynn’s tablet computer. Lucy looked to Flynn who seemed completely lost within himself. She felt for him, it seemed like he had an entirely different life and a happy one even though it was still tinged with the death of Lorena and Iris.

“That’s Iris, she was my half sister but she went to heaven with her Mommy. They are really pretty.” Holly said before she swiped the picture away. Lucy reached out and smoothed a hand down Flynn’s arm. He blinked and looked to her, she saw the pain and grief in his eyes. A life he had never lived, Family he had missed out on having.

“That’s Aunty Amy, she’s in heaven too.” Holly said, Lucy frowned as the photo was a scanned copy of her locket photos. "Lots of people go to Heaven, it must pretty crowded." Holly commented.

“Maybe we should watch a movie?” Lucy suggested as memory lane was too painful a subject at the moment.

“Coco!” Holly said with glee.

“Ok.” Lucy said as she went to the DVD collection and pulled it out. She turned it over and read the blurb and frowned as it sounded like the worst movie to watch. “How about Finding Nemo?” Lucy asked, she hadn’t seen it but it was at the top of the pile.

“But I want Coco.” Holly said with a pout.

“Holly, I think it might make me feel a little sad. Can we watch another movie?” Lucy asked her. Holly looked put out but then thought about it for a moment.

“Ok, but I want watch Tangled. I’ll be back.” Holly told her, she slid off the couch and ran off.

“Ok-” Lucy drawled, she and Flynn watched her go. “Should we follow her?” She asked him, Flynn gave a shrug.

“I don’t know, this is her home so I think it should be fine. But I can follow her, if you want.” Flynn offered, Lucy shook her head.
“No, it’s ok. We have to trust that she’s safe here.” Lucy said.

“Guys, we have to talk.” Rufus told them as he picked up a chair and brought to the back of lounge and sat down.

“Ok” Lucy said as she sat next to Flynn on the lounge and looked to Rufus, even Flynn turned and slung an arm on the back.

“Where’s the kid?” Rufus asked them.

“Off to get something from her room.” Flynn said, Rufus nodded before he spoke.

“Jiya is very different from my Jiya and I need advice.” He told them.

“Really from us?” Lucy asked him, she was not surprised.

“Who else? I mean I’d ask Wyatt but he’s not exactly helpful at the moment.” Rufus reminded them. It was a tough situation but even so there was so relief in him being in a cell than sitting in the kitchen area shooting daggers at them with his eyes or worse.

“He’s still angry about us not going back to correct his mistake.” Flynn stated to Lucy as she was the only one who hadn’t gone to see him alone yet. She was avoiding as she knew what he’d say and she didn’t want to hear it. She didn’t want him to manipulate her into feeling any worse than she already did.

“He will be stewing on that for a while. It took him over a year to even acknowledge your existence on the team.” Lucy said reminding how Wyatt treated Flynn as a team member. Flynn nodded while Rufus looked uncomfortable.

“Not helping.” Rufus told Flynn, as it meant they were all in the proverbial dog house until they found a happy medium but even if they got Wyatt out of cell… there was just too much bad blood at the moment.

“What’s the problem?” Lucy asked focussing on Rufus.

“Jiya is different.” He stated.

“We noticed.” Flynn quipped.

“No, see in this new timeline I was like Flynn minus the murder spree through history. No offence.” He added the last part quickly as Flynn smiled at the comparison.

“So which part of me are you inferring to?” Flynn asked wryly.

“Confident, very manly.” Rufus offered.

“You are manly.” Lucy assured Rufus.

“Like I can chop wood and fix a broken toilet?” Rufus asked.

“I can do that.” Flynn said smugly.

“See, like that.” Rufus said as he gestured at Flynn’s confidence and smug nature to say he could perform two random house tasks.

“But you can do that stuff.” Lucy told Rufus, she assumed he could given he helped build a time
“He’s trying to say his Alter ego was alpha male, he’s more beta.” Flynn said, there was no malice in his tone he was just observing Rufus for what he thought was true to his nature. Rufus nodded.

“Yes, I like being Beta male. Jiya doesn’t need or seem to want my filling. She just wants to ride the Rufus train to Pound-“

“Oh, we get it.” Lucy told him as she had to stop Rufus before the mental image of Rufus and Jiya having sex scorched it’s way into her memory.

“So, should I? I mean is right for me to do that? This is awkward.” He said, summing up this whole conversation and his dilemma in one go.

“We can’t change the past. If we could, we have no idea how it would affect the present. I highly doubt it would revert back to what we knew.” Lucy offered.

“You should do what feels right and what she consents to.” Flynn added.

“What if I don’t know what that is? The feels right as consent is a forgone conclusion at this stage. She’s very yes, and I’m just left with the moral and ethical dilemma of if I deserve her or not.” Rufus said to Flynn.

“She loves you, you love her. Just start there and let the rest work itself out. Sex isn’t the be all and end all of a relationship.” Flynn said sagely, Rufus nodded slowly as he stewed on Flynn’s words. Holly returned with a giant lizard looking toy. She threw it into Lucy’s lap and crawled onto the lounge in between Flynn and Lucy. Holly didn’t even ask permission as she climbed into Flynn’s lap and relaxed.

“I’m ready for the movie, Mommy.” Holly announced.

“Ok.” Lucy said, she turned on the TV and pressed play on the movie. She wondered idly if her other self would not feel like a puppet as Lucy did now.

“Hi.” Holly said to Rufus, she shifted in Flynn lap and he half laughed Holly nearly headbutted his chin to talk to Rufus.

“Hey, remember me?” Rufus asked Holly, she made a face as if unsure and shrugged.

“Hmm I’ll have to think about it and get back to you.” she told her tone was hopeful like a few hours would make a difference. Rufus snorted a laugh, Lucy and Flynn smothered smiles as it was the perfect response.

“Ok, I’m going make myself an early dinner and sack out. Who wants in?” Rufus asked.

“What are you cooking?” Lucy asked as it didn’t sound like a bad idea.

“Macaroni and cheese.” Rufus answered.

“Mommy, can I have Macaroni and cheese, please?” Holly asked nicely.

“Sure, if you don’t mind.” Lucy said looking to Rufus.

“No, all good. Enjoy the movie, though wasn’t Rapunzel blonde?” He asked, Flynn and Lucy looked to the screen where Rapunzel had long glorious strawberry blonde hair.
“No, she always got Red hair.” Holly informed him.

“Huh, bad memory.” Rufus said as he walked away. Lucy shook her head as she had no idea. Flynn gave a shrug. They settled in with Holly for the movie. Lucy snorted a laugh as the wanted sign said ‘Flynn Rider’. She looked over at Flynn, how Holly snuggled into his lap. It was like she saw everything differently, she thought not just of him but their child. Immersing in it, she just wasn’t sure how to stay unattached from it all.

She wondered if this was how it was supposed to be, after all their pain and grief could fade and they’d move forward together and create their own family. She just thought back to when she asked why he was really here, how he never answered that question. She now felt like that answer was smacking her right in the face, she had a choice to make. She looked from Holly to Flynn and their eyes locked. They shared a soft smile.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

I have come to the realisation/feel my child is very OOC for her age but I ask you let it slide for amusement sake and enjoy! Thank you for your readership!

“This is our room.” Lucy stated as she walked into their room. They had put Holly to bed which had been a little rife with emotions as Flynn had to make certain there were no monsters under the bed. He did so, as Lucy sat on the bed with Holly and watched. She saw how it affected him, she wondered if it reminded him of Lorena and Iris as he sometimes had a flicker of sadness in his features. But he always smiled and showed Holly love as he assured Holly that the lavender scent of the sheets repelled Monsters.

If that was heartbreaking enough, Holly had asked Lucy is she was mad at her. Lucy asked why, Holly commented that Lucy hadn't called her by her usual nickname. It was Lucy's turn to assure her that she wasn't mad. She was just tired, but the guilt ate at her a little that she was not really Holly's mother. But she couldn't tell Holly the truth as she was too young to understand. After they finally got Holly into bed, she got her two stories and drifted off to sleep; the couple went to their room.

Their room was just how she imagined it would be; cluttered with books and photos. The double bed was a surprise as she figured she was still sleeping on a single or two pushed together. She moved to the tallboy and picked up a framed photo of their family. They looked so happy. She wanted it, all of it. She just didn’t know how to make it happen. Well, maybe she had some ideas but right in this moment didn't have the courage to go for it. But the moral and ethical dilemma of if she had a right to it; reared it's ugly head.

“I’ll sleep on the floor.” Flynn assured her. She blinked and shook her head as she didn't want it that way. She wanted the picture perfect life in the photo she held.

“No.” She told him as she placed the photo back.

“No?” He asked surprised at her response. She was surprised herself as she sounded firm in her 'no'.

“Holly needs stability. What if she wakes up and needs us in the middle of the night and finds you on the floor? It’ll upset her and the floor is—is hard.” Lucy finished awkwardly, she didn’t want to admit it but she needed to not be alone in this. He was with her, she couldn’t see why they couldn’t be together. Yes, there was a lot that had to be addressed between them but sharing a bed shouldn’t be a big deal.

“I’ve slept in worse places.” Flynn assured her, making a big deal. Lucy blew out a breath as it stung a little that he considered sharing a bed with her worse than ‘other places’.

“Please, can’t we just share the bed?” She asked him, her voice soft and pleading as she didn’t want beg but she needed him to know she didn’t want to fight. Flynn reluctantly nodded.

“Ok. But I want to sleep closest to the door.” Flynn said as pulled off shoulder holster and placed it inside the bedside table.
“Do you think we’re in trouble?” She asked.

“No, it’s just a precaution. Jiya carries a weapon which I couldn’t find the time to ask about. So, I just want-” he paused, “It’ll help me sleep if I’m closest to the door.” Flynn said, he gave a tired sigh as it had been a long day. He wanted to share the bed with her, but she was with Wyatt or he assumed as much given Wyatt declared his love for Lucy a few months ago. Flynn knew Lucy loved Wyatt, it hurt because Flynn wanted Lucy, he loved her too. But he wanted her to be happy even if it meant being with that asshole who didn’t deserve to be with her.

“Ok, well I think there should be pyjamas in here some-“ Lucy opened the top drawer and she saw the box of condoms and lube. Her favourite brands to use, the size of condoms left her momentarily speechless before she cleared her throat. “-where in here. Oh, look tropical.” She mused as she pulled out a pair of cotton men’s pyjama pants with a print that had palm trees, monkeys and bananas.

“Well, probably from Jiya. According to her, we like to play the monkey climbs the tree for the banana a lot.” Flynn quipped, he couldn’t help but say the truth. Maybe he was being petty because he thought if only she could see they were good together, they’d have something but he knew better than to step into a person’s relationship like that. But he didn’t miss the way Lucy blushed as she couldn’t help her eyes wondering over him.

Lucy’s mind wondered what that would be like, she didn’t want to be cliché but Flynn was a large man. In a way, he made her feel small and delicate, yet other times he made her feel like she was strong and larger than life. But right now, she felt like the dumpy teenager that no one wanted to take to prom.

“Well, I don’t know what to say to that.” Lucy said as she threw the pants at him. She turned back to pull out something for herself to wear. She smiled as she pulled out a large grey t-shirt and a pair of sleep burgundy and cream plaid shorts. She didn’t know why but she had a feeling Flynn would keep her warm enough.

She didn’t give herself time to think about it as she changed in front of him. She kept her back turned because she assumed he was changing.

“We have a child. She wasn’t hatched or found in a cabbage patch.” Flynn mused, Lucy couldn’t help but smile as she turned around to see him standing with his back to her. But he was wearing the pyjama pants, barefoot and just his t-shirt on the top.

“I’ve finished changing.” She said, he turned. She moved to the bed and pulled back the covers before she climbed in. She laid down and watched as Flynn turned off the lights and crawled into bed beside her. An awkward tension infused the room as they lay on the bed together.

“So, this is nice.” Flynn deadpanned, Lucy couldn’t help but snort a laugh.

“It’s awkward.” Lucy told him, it felt awkward as they laid in the bed not touching one another. She wanted half joke about building a blanket wall between them.

“More awkward than 1936?” he asked in amusement.

“Getting there.” She quipped with a sigh.

“Well, we should get some sleep. Night.” Flynn said, she watched as he turned his back to her.

“Flynn?” She asked.
“Hmm?” he asked, but he didn’t turn. It was definitely more awkward then any interaction they had before. She wondered why. Why it was so hard for them to connect as of late. While they were mission everything gelled, when they got home; he would be distant.

“Night.” She said lamely. She pressed her hands to her face and wished she understood what was going on. How to fix whatever was wrong between them. She knew something had shifted the day they lost Rufus but she had learnt in the past couple of months it was something significant. She didn’t know how to bridge the gap.

But tonight, she turned on her side and looked at his back. She wanted to talk with him about their current present but as she watched his breathing slow, she felt herself lulled into a light and restless slumber.

“Hey, pulling an all-nighter?” Rufus asked as he pulled up a chair and sat next to Jiya at the control station. He could see she was trying to workout how they got the fourth seat in. “I guess you didn’t get the fourth seat in?” he asked.

“No, it’s rather ingenious how you managed it.” Jiya told him as she scrolled through the coding of the lifeboat and making notes in her tablet computer for later.

“It was a team effort.” Rufus told her, he

“What was I like in the other timeline?” Jiya asked, Rufus reached out and gently tugged on the strand of blonde hair. She smiled in bemusement at the gesture. He smiled as he brushed her hair behind her ear, he enjoyed seeing her without the haunted look she had come to carry in the other timeline. Maybe it was cheating to keep this timeline, but he just wanted to keep her safe and sane before the visions consumed her like they did with Stanley.

“You’re a little more aggressive with kicking ass and taking names. Blonder but everything else seems the same.” He assured her, he took her hand into his. “You know, I really want to make this work. I know I’m not the same guy and we should take things slow.” He told her.

“Ok.” Jiya said with a small smile. She knew it made sense but it was strange for him to suggest it.

“So, I’m going to sleep on the couch until we’ve had a few days to get to know one another. Then we’ll see what happens.” He told her.

“If that’s what you want.” Jiya said, though she sorely wanted to force the issue of him sleeping in their bed. She didn’t want to offend Rufus because he was this gentle cuddly version of his former self. She liked the softness of him, the awkwardness as it made her truly believe he was interested in her besides sex and her meeting her targets. She knew she loved the other Rufus, but there were times when she questioned his affection for her. But with the Rufus before her, it was like a dorky romance novel or movie. She was loving it, for when he looked at her; she could read him like a book.

“It’d make me more comfortable if I didn’t feel like I was taking advantage of you.” He said honestly, she grinned as she wondered what he would think of his old self. His former self would’ve balked and called himself a wimp.

“Ok.” Jiya said, Rufus smiled and it was almost shy as he ducked his head a bit. He gave her hands a gentle squeeze before he released them and turned to the computers.
“So, tell me what you would like to know about this lifeboat and if you want, you can ask me any questions you want.” He added.

“Really?” she asked surprised as old Rufus would always make her figure it out on her own. Not act like the wizard and open the curtain for her.

“Yep, just keep them PG rated for now.” He told her, she chuckled.

“No fun.” She teased as she shifted her chair close to his and pointed to the screen. “Here, this line of code and calculations; is this how you got the fourth chair to work?” she asked.

“Yeah, you wrote it with me.” He told her, he loved the way she smiled.

Hours later,

Flynn had been fast asleep when he heard the muffle cry. He woke up, his senses sharp as he half expected something bad to happen. He sat up and placed his hand on the handle of his gun, his heart pounded as the last of his drowsiness fled his mind. He heard the cry again and realised it was coming from Lucy. He turned to her and watched in concern and empathy as she was having a nightmare. She laid on side, her arms and legs curled up tight against her chest. She was drenched in sweat.

Immediately concern and dread filled him, he reached out and gently touched her forehead. She didn’t have a temperature but she was working up a sweat in her dream. By her facial expression and her whimpers; it was a nightmare.

“No.” Lucy murmured in a pained voice. She made a low groan of pain, Flynn moved onto the bed closer to her, he moved his hand to across her shoulders in soothing manner.

“Lucy, it’s ok. You’re safe.” He murmured softly, the sound she made was almost unbearable to hear. It was so quiet like she was trying to hide it and herself as her body curled up even tighter. He had seen men have nightmares, but usually they thrashed out. She was curling inward and hyperventilating. He couldn’t watch this, he knew he had to wake her. “Lucy, wake up.” He said as he gently shook her, it took a couple times before she jerked awake.

Lucy felt like she had blinked from one reality to the next. But still, darkness surrounded her and it took her a moment to realise she was not trapped. She scrambled to sit up, but as she struggled; Flynn was there. He helped her upright. She grabbed onto his t-shirt as her muscles screamed in protest. She gasped for air as tears ran down her face, she struggled to remember where she was and that she was safe. But as she felt Flynn’s arms around her, the warmth on his body and the scent of him. She felt herself slowly unwind. Her legs stretched out, she remembered she was having nightmare. But in the shaken state she was in. She was afraid this was the dream.

“You’re ok.” Flynn told her, she leaned on his heavily as her muscles ached too much to hold her up. Her breathing slowly calmed, he spoke nonsensical words to calm her down. It took a moment for her to realise he wasn’t speaking English but it didn’t matter as it helped. Just as the steady beat of his heart gave her a sense of calm.

The combination worked as it took only a few minutes for her to finally settled down. But sadly, the tears kept flowing as her nightmare haunted her. She kept reminding herself this was real, what she had dreamt was just a nightmare. It was behind her.
“Lucy?” Flynn said softly.

“I need a minute.” She said a little breathless, she didn’t want to give this up. It was unintentional that they ended up like this but she wanted to stay. She was in turmoil from her nightmare.

“Take you time.” He told her, she wanted laugh and cry as he had absolutely no idea what kind of hell she was in right now. He was the only piece of heaven she had at the moment.

Flynn adjusted his hold on Lucy and pulled her in a little more tightly. He felt her relax even further, he hoped it was helping. He rested his cheek on the top of her head. He wanted to ask her what she was dreaming about, but he didn’t. She was traumatised enough, when she was ready she’d tell him or most likely Wyatt. That thought just reminded him of how inappropriate this was. But he didn’t want to move or let her go until she was ready.

“But maybe, we could lay down? The headboard is digging into my back.” Flynn told her, Lucy nodded silently as she didn't trust herself to speak. She felt like a child needing to be held but she just needed something to hold on to remind her this was real. She reluctantly pulled away from him.

They shuffled down onto the bed, Lucy rested her head on his chest, over his heart.

She softly sighed as his arms wrapped around her. She closed her eyes, said nothing as she held onto him. The slow steady breathing and the beat of his heart lulled her to sleep.

The following morning,

Rufus had been sleeping pretty well on the couch in the living area when felt someone poking him in the arm. He woke up to find Holly’s face right in his. It was startling to say the least given her nose was practically touching his. Then there was the fact that she looked so much like Lucy but then there some features were pure Flynn, it was all wrapped up in an adorable package.

“Are you awake?” Holly asked in a loud whisper. He wondered if it was a trick question given the little girl repeatedly poked him until he was awake.

“No, I’m not.” He told her in a gruff sleepy voice as he pulled he head back as he didn't really like the invasion of his personal space by the three year old.

“Is it 7am?” she asked him.

“Sure.” Rufus said, he had no clue but if it meant he could go back to sleep, then he was all for it. Holly’s face lit up with a smile it reminded Rufus of Lucy in the most eerie and endearing manner.

“Yay!” she exclaimed in an excited whisper, but before Rufus could ask her why she wanted the time; Holly had raced off. He wondered for a moment if he was going to be in trouble later, but decided it was just easier to roll over to his other side and get some sleep.

Flynn slowly woke up, feeling fairly well rested and Lucy still in his arms. Part him knew it was wrong as he knew Lucy was with Wyatt. But he just wanted to relish the fantasy of this moment. He didn’t want to admit it but he missed sharing a bed, the scent, the warmth and weight of a beautiful woman he loved pressed at his side; in his arms. It felt good, he closed his eyes and allowed him to just sink into light slumber but the sound of their bedroom door opened kept him awake. He heard Holly’s feet run across the floor.
“It’s 7am, breakfast time!!” Holly hollered loudly happily as she raced into Lucy and Flynn’s room. She pushed some books over to the end of the bed. She used them to climb up onto the bed and crawl over to them. Lucy groaned as she rolled out Flynn’s arms. Flynn looked at his clock which read 5am.

“No, it’s too early.” Lucy said as she laid on her back and rubbed at her face. She had been sleeping so well until Holly woke them up. She groaned as Holly flopped herself across the two of them. Flynn snorted a laugh as pushed a tiny foot out of his face. Holly squirmed her way to Lucy and hugged her.

“Morning Mommy.” She said.

“Hey Monkey.” Lucy said, she smooth Holly’s hair behind her ears and then pressed a soft kiss to her forehead. It wasn’t natural action for her but Lucy felt it was right, Holly beamed at her fully awake as she turned and hugged Flynn.

“It’s not 7am.” Flynn told Holly before he hugged Holly tightly. Holly made a growling noise and grumbled Flynn the bear hug was too tight, but when he released her. Holly sat on his stomach with a happy grin. Lucy watched with joy as her brain slowly woke up.

“It doesn’t sound hungry. Sounds like it’s still sleeping, I know mine is.” He told Holly, he placed her back on the bed, he looked to Holly with a playful frown “Are you sure it’s hungry?” he asked her. Lucy smiled as Holly made a face. She stood on the bed as if it were her soap box.

“Yes, it says ‘gurgle gurgle' not zzzzzzz” Holly said before she cackled the most adorable smile as Flynn pulled her into his arms and tickled her.

“Ok, fine, I’ll feed your hungry tummy.” Flynn told Holly as he got out of bed. Holly stood up and walked to edge with her arms up ready to be picked up. “We’ll let Mommy sleep for a little bit longer.” He added with a wink to Lucy, she couldn’t help but blush at the moment being shared as Holly threw her a cute smile. Flynn picked Holly up and turned her upside down.

“I’m upside down.” Holly complained.

“Are you?” Flynn asked in an obtuse manner as he walked them out.

“Yes!” Holly exclaimed as she giggled happily, Lucy smiled and laughed as she heard the two carrying on outside in the hallway.

“Oh, ok. My apologies, is that better?” Flynn asked.

“Yes.” Holly told him, Lucy smiled as she could just see the two messing around out there. “You know you’re very trying.” Holly added in an exaggerated manner.

“Who taught that phrase.” Flynn demanded playfully.

“Auntie Denise says it all the time about you.” Holly informed him.

“Oh, does she now.” Flynn said, their voices disappeared and Lucy stretched out in bed. She pulled the blankets around her.
She gave a happy sigh as she didn’t like the time of wake-up call but the family moment had warmed her heart and made her smile. She knew in that moment, she knew what she wanted most but instead of being wary of it, questioning if she deserved it. She was going to accept it fully, do her best to make it her own. She had the beautiful child and she just needed to get the man.
Chapter 5

“Agent Christopher.” Wyatt said surprised and relieved to see her after the hellish night he’d had in his cell. Jiya had given him cold Macaroni and Cheese with a glass of water and bread. He was pretty sure she was tempted to let it drop the floor. She just glared at him like he was dog turd stuck to her shoe. The bed was a miserable affair, zero entertainment except for his brain which reminded him of all his failures.

He had failed in killing Flynn over two years ago, he couldn’t kill Emma no matter how much he tried. He couldn’t save Jessica. Now she was some other guy’s wife. Their unborn child erased from time because she hadn’t been on the mission. Wyatt assumed it was due to her pregnancy being so far progressed she wasn’t able to be an active operator. But it was gone, he couldn’t help but feel bitter that Flynn’s life turned out peachy; he had everything. He knew it was a matter of time before Lucy succumbed to the charm of her life here. She nearly fell for Noah until Wyatt swayed her back, he knew if Lucy gave up on Amy then his chances of saving Jessica were toast.

Right now, he needed Allies. Rufus was out, Jiya was not interested and same with Flynn. But Lucy, he could sway her to his side. She could then turn the others. Maybe if he sweet talked Denise now; she might work for him too and in helping change everything back. She looked the same, so it was a good start as Agent Christopher was one who followed rules and kept a fair mind.

“I’m sorry it took me so long to come by. It’s been quite exciting to have you all turn up.” Denise remarked as she opened her suitcase and pulled out a writing pad and pen.

“I’m not the Wyatt you know.” Wyatt said, he watched her place the pen and pad on the open food slot in the door. “I’m a highly decorated Delta Force operator. You trusted me completely, I never committed a terrorist act in my life.” He said as he skirted the topic of treason as it was definitely a grey area for him.

“So, I’m told. But I ask what value you have to this mission when I have the full backing of the US Government and my pick of any special forces operator.” She said she pulled out dossier file and placed it on top of the pad and pen.

“I know this mission and who Rittenhouse is. I’m an asset.” He told her, he felt like he was talking to a brick wall. He wondered what the hell happened to an open mind in this reality.

“We know who and what Rittenhouse is. I have Rufus, Lucy and Flynn to get me up to speed. So, I ask again. What use do you have?” She asked blandly.

“I don’t know, but I do know that I don’t deserve this. I didn’t kill those people.” Wyatt told her.

“How do I know that you won’t turn into that man again, if I let you out?” Denise asked him.

“I guess my word doesn’t mean much to you, does it?” He asked dryly as he couldn’t believe this. He was a decorated war hero and he was being criminalised for another man’s crimes.

“No, that is a file on you, the writing pad is for you to entertain yourself with the idea that you’re going to get your conviction voided and be free.” Denise told him with a faint smile of amusement.

“You’d lock me up and throw away the keys, wouldn’t you?” Wyatt asked as he leaned on the bars and looked at her. She stepped forward, fearless and confident as Jiya. Wyatt knew he could easily grab her arm and yank her in close and knock her unconscious. Find the keys and get out. The idea had merit given he didn’t think she was letting him out anytime soon.
“I lost a lot of good friends when you bombed the capital. So, I’ve no interest in helping you gain your freedom only to use it to hurt more people.” Denise said calmly but Wyatt saw the deep-seated rage burning in her. She moved back from the bars and squared her shoulders, she looked down her nose at him.

“You trust me with a pen?” he asked her.

“If you can escape then maybe you deserve to be free. But if you wanted to kill yourself there are many options available to you. So, by all means.” Denise told him coldly, Wyatt pursed his lips as he never expected Denise to be so harsh given she never showed Flynn this level of disgust and mistrust as she did with him now.

“I would like to speak with Lucy today.” Wyatt told her.

“I’ll see if her schedule is free, but don’t count on it.” Denise told him, he watched her walk away and he shook his head. All he had left was Lucy. If he couldn’t sway her; he was screwed.

“Oh, sorry.” Lucy said as she walked into the bathroom to find Jiya brushing her hair.

“No, it’s cool. The showers are free.” She said, Lucy nodded awkwardly as she had been lost in her own thoughts. She hadn’t seen a chair, a protocol that didn’t need to be used as the facilities were upgraded.

“I keep forgetting that this place is different. The shower stalls are new.” Lucy told her, Jiya nodded.

“Yeah, it was a group decision for efficiency sake.” Jiya told her.

“So, how are you? This has to be strange for you as it is for us.” Lucy said as she wondered what it would be like to be in Jiya’s shoes. She was worried about mistrust and suspicion from Jiya and even Denise. They all had different things to fight for, but Rufus was the one with the power. He was the pilot without him, they couldn’t change time.

“I’m ok, I kind of miss my versions of you all.” Jiya admitted with a rueful expression.

“I’m sorry.” Lucy said, Jiya gave a shrug.

“It’s ok, just because you’re all different doesn’t mean it’s bad and we’re still friends right?” Jiya asked, Lucy smiled and nodded.

“The best, you know we could talk about stuff. Get to know one another again.” Lucy offered as she knew they’d find a way to make it work as Lucy wanted this life. She wouldn’t mind having someone to talk to her who knew this reality.

“I’d like that.” Jiya said with a nod. “You probably want cold notes on Holly. There are random videos and photos.” She added. Lucy gave an awkward laugh, she felt a whole range of emotions when it came to Holly.

“I’m learning as I go but I would love to see everything you have as I really want to be her mother, make her happy.” Lucy told her sincerely, she needed Jiya to know that she was on her side. Jiya gave her a soft smile.

“Me too, I’ve seen the mother that you can be and Holly is a great kid.” Jiya told her.
“Yeah, she is.” Lucy agreed.

“I also wouldn’t mind some cold notes on Rufus and myself from your timeline.” Jiya said carefully as she put away her brush.

“What do you want to know?” Lucy asked, as she threw her towel over the stall door.

“What kind of man is he?” Jiya asked, Lucy blinked as questions went it was a strange one. She never thought Jiya would ask her especially with the conflicted expression she wore.

“He’s a good man. He’s a little awkward but it’s endearing. He’s very intelligence, funny and caring.” Lucy offered.

“Was I happy with him in your reality?” Jiya asked.

“Yes, but don’t get me wrong… you guys had problems but what couple doesn’t have issues? You both found a way to talk it out.” Lucy assured her. Jiya gave a closed lip smile as she looked somewhat relieved.

“Stop eating all the strawberries.” Flynn said gently chastising Holly as she gobbled her fifth strawberry. She seemed to have a black hole in her stomach as he had given her half an orange and a banana while trying to get pancakes on the flat grill plate of the stove.

“But they are yum.” Holly said as she slid down the chair she had been standing on to reach the bowl to move to his side.

“They are for the pancakes. It won’t be long now.” Flynn said as he looked down at her. His heart flipped a beat in sweet joy as he felt a kinship with her. She was so stubborn like her mother yet cheeky and a little too ingenuous like him.

“Are you doing cloud pancakes?” Holly asked as she stepped onto his foot and hugged his leg. She leaned back and swayed from side to side. He continued to whisk up the batter, the stove top had butter melting across it; signalling the perfect temperature for him to cook it.

“Hmm, I think it’s a round pancake day.” Flynn said as he didn’t think the strawberries would survive long enough for him to make ornate pancakes.

“Ok, can I have maple syrup?” she asked.

“I don’t know, can you?” He asked her in amusement, wondering how far grammar lessons had been taken with her.

“I think so” She offered, Flynn chuckled as she missed the whole point of the question. He half expected her to groan and correct herself by saying ‘may I?’ but then he was expecting a lot for someone so young. He moved to the stove with Holly attached to his leg. He started pouring out pancakes out on the hot plate.

“I smell pancakes.” Connor said as he walked into the kitchen. Flynn paused in his job and turned to look at the man. A frown on his face as Connor wore a bright orange suit with a rumpled blue shirt, a newspaper was folded under his arm.

“Uncle Connor!” Holly said with glee she released her hold on Flynn and raced to Connor. She
stopped short of hugging and bounced on her feet. It was almost like Connor had trained her not to hug him.

“Hello, how are you?” he asked as booped her on the nose with his index finger.

“I’m good. You?” Holly asked.

“I am fabulous, does everyone want to know why I am fabulous?” Connor asked the room in general.

“Ok.” Flynn offered with a shrug as he went back to the pancakes.

“Wasn’t this the suit you were wearing three days ago?” Jiya asked when she came into the kitchen. Connor smoothed a hand down his suit clearly giving away that Jiya was right. “Oh pancakes.” She said with a blissful expression.

“If you don’t mind, the table needs setting,” Flynn said to Jiya.

“On it.” She replied as she did as he suggested.

“Excuse me, I have news.” Connor said the room as Holly had already drifted back to Flynn’s leg.

“We’re listening.” Jiya assured him as she went to setting up the table.

“I am number 7 on San Francisco’s most eligible bachelor this year.” He said with a grin as he pulled the folded newspaper from under his arm and held it up. Jiya came back from the table and took the paper.

“This paper from three days ago…oh ew, please tell me, you didn’t go there with Angelica.” Jiya said as she just connected the dots on the man’s walk of glory into the kitchen.

“What’s a bachelor?” Holly asked, the word however came out rather scrambled as she missed some of the enunciations. She was swinging around Flynn’s leg as it was her new game. Flynn smiled down at her in amusement.

“A man who doesn’t have a partner they love. So, If I didn’t have Mommy, I would be a bachelor.” Flynn told her.

“But you and Mommy love each other lots.” Holly told him.

“Yes, we do which is why I’m her husband because we’re married to one another.” Flynn told her, the small lie that he wished was true. But he didn’t want to think about it as right now he just wanted Holly to be happy for as long as they could muster.

“Oh, I did and it was glorious. Angelica loves me.” Connor drawled in a mocking manner as even he knew that wasn’t true but was riling Jiya.

“She loves your wallet and notoriety.” Jiya corrected him.

“True but it wouldn’t kill you to leave the bunker and get laid. You’re wasting your best years down here.” Connor told Jiya.

“How do you get laid?” Holly asked Connor in an innocent manner.

“You lay down in bed and have beautiful dreams.” Connor told her.
“Oh, I do that already.” Holly told him with a grin.

“Aren’t you a lucky one?” Connor asked rhetorically while Flynn and Jiya shook their heads.

“Want to know what I dreamed last night?” she asked him.

“Maybe later, Uncle Connor needs some adult juice and breakfast.” Connor told her.

“Ok.” Holly said.

“Did you not read my text messages and emails?” Jiya asked Connor in a low voice as she came back from the set table to see if he was up to date on everything that was going on.

“You know I don’t read emoji.” Connor said as he pulled out his phone with a withering sigh. Flynn turned the pancakes and watched Connor’s expression turn from bored to curious to wtf?! He looked to Jiya with an incredulous expression. “Really, a poop emoji?” he asked Jiya.

“I didn’t text you a poop emoji.” Jiya said rushing him to look back at the message.

“Oh yeah, that’s Frankie. I love that kid…” Connor went silent for a few minutes, it seemed like he reached the text Jiya needed him to say. “Alternate reality?” he asked.

“Yes,” Jiya said, Connor looked to Flynn as if trying to decipher the difference between Flynn and his alternate-self. But found nothing out of place, he looked back to his phone.

“Rufus is alive? Is this a joke?” he exclaimed.

“What? I heard my name.” Rufus said as he sat up on the lounge with a sleepy expression as hearing his name had woken him. Connor’s jaw dropped like he’d seen a ghost and won the lottery all at the same time.

“Rufus! You’re alive!” Connor exclaimed as he walked over to couch. Rufus got up from the couch and scrubbed a hand over his face waking up as he knew the ‘you’re alive again’ game well.

“I am.” Rufus said, Connor pulled him into a hug. Something that Rufus never really got used to but did like as he didn’t have a father growing up. Connor was a father figure of sorts to him. Connor released him and clapped his hands onto Rufus’ arms.

“Oh my god, what happened to you?” Connor asked him incredulously.

“Nothing?” Rufus said uncomfortably as he looked to Jiya for answers.

“Do you have a health condition?” Connor asked. Rufus narrowed his eyes at Connor.

“Are you calling me fat?” Rufus asked incredulously. Connor’s eyes went wide as he shook his head but Rufus knew better.

“No, definitely not.” Connor assured him a little too quickly, ”Are we having pancakes or not?” Connor asked Flynn, changing the topic and releasing his hold on Rufus.

“Soon, just get your adult juice and calm down.” Flynn offered wryly.

“He was calling me fat.” Rufus said to Jiya in a low voice as she wore a sympathetic smile.

“Ignore him, you’re perfect.” Jiya assured Rufus.
Lucy stepped under the water and let it wash away the bad dream but every time she closed her eyes, she was back in the damn box. The shower stall didn’t help as her claustrophobia was all but resolved but one nightmare brought it back. She couldn’t shake the trauma Rittenhouse’s idea of conditioning their recruits. She remembered the tiny box they locked up in for days on end, the only escape being when they took her out of it to drown her in an ice bath.

They talked to her as if she was mentally ill, like she didn’t remember history correctly. She was making them torture her. Hours, turned into days and then time was lost altogether. They eroded away her resistance, her beliefs until she slowly started to believe what they told her. She just wanted to say what they told her to, to get better. They were right, because she did begin to feel better when she spoke their truth. The box became a place of comfort, the near drownings became an invigoration of life. It was so messed up.

She shivered in the shower and turned up the hot water tap. The water was near scolding hot but it reminded her that she wasn’t there. Rittenhouse was wrong, their whole culture was despicable and corrupted to the core. She couldn’t shake the nightmare of it, the horror of what she had become in those six weeks. For months it haunted her as she couldn’t tell anyone. She once tried to tell Flynn, but she couldn’t get the words out and even so, she felt he already knew. Maybe she wrote it in the journal, she wasn’t even allowed to see it. Her mother made her burn the ‘infernal’ journal, a test to see Lucy react. Just as the newspaper article had been another test, but that test she had failed. Still, Lucy felt a horrible sense of guilt at failing and displeasing her mother. The insanity of Rittenhouse Brainwashing was that it lingered and liked to pop up in the mind at the worst times.

Lucy ran her face under the water of the shower as the memory flashed through her mind. The news article that had woken her up, made her realise that she didn’t like the woman in the mirror before her. The woman who would do anything to make her mother proud, to make Rittenhouse her legacy because they made her strong. She was strong, her fear of drowning was gone. Her claustrophobia had been gone. She felt invincible until she read that article and she realised her whole life was gone. Wyatt, Rufus, Jiya and the others were dead. It was on her to stop Rittenhouse. She was not Rittenhouse and it had to stop before she did something she could never come back from.

Some days, she wondered if she deserved to come back. She chose the right side in the end but she did struggle to reconcile what happened in 1919. Her family tree and being a direct descendant of John Rittenhouse. It was a mess. In all of that, history changed. She had a beautiful little girl who needed her to be present. That thought made Lucy turn down the water to a gentler temperature. She quickly washed her hair and finished up the shower.

Half an hour later, Lucy walked into the kitchen living area. It smelt heavenly as Flynn was humming to himself as he flipped a pancake on the grill plate. She took in the sight of him being so domestic. It wasn’t rare, but she enjoyed it. He was a good cook, he didn’t get crabby about washing dishes and he looked good doing. He was still in his pyjamas and barefoot but had somehow found time to pull on a navy coloured turtleneck jumper.

“Hey, how was the hot water system? Jiya tells me we have a few upgrades.” Flynn said as he saw her watching him.

“It’s the best shower I’ve had in over a year.” Lucy said, she stepped forward. “Can I help with anything?” she asked.
“Take the first plate over to the table of little monsters?” he offered. Lucy smiled as she looked to the dining table where Holly, Jiya and Rufus. The trio waited patiently at the set table for breakfast. Lucy picked up the plate with a stack of pancakes, she brought it over to the table.

“Morning,” Lucy said, Connor smiled at her and all she could think was how orange his suit was. It was a startling colour for the hour.

“Lucy, I’ve been brought up to speed.” Connor said as he rose from his chair and held out his hand to her. Lucy moved to the table and shook his hand.

“Great.” She said wryly, she moved to where Holly knelt on a chair and kissed the top her head. Holly smiled at her, Lucy couldn’t but feel joy at the sight of it as it was a beautiful smile.

“We’ll all have to talk later when Holly is napping.” Connor told her.

“Why can’t I play?” Holly asked with pout.

“It’s work, you know how boring it is.” Connor told Holly with a pout of his own but it was playful.

“Hey, it’s Pancake Monday.” Rufus announced, changing topics as Flynn

“Uuh.” Lucy said, the pancakes were quickly dispersed between the four and Lucy had an empty plate in her hands. She waved it wryly at Flynn who gave a shrug.

“We don’t have a Pancake Monday.” Jiya told Rufus.

“We should.” Rufus said as Lucy went back to Flynn’s side and placed the plate back down. She watched him start to turn another six pancakes. He leaned in close, Lucy almost thought for a moment he was going to kiss her. Her overactive imagination of what their life could be overriding her sense of reality.

“Maybe you can help Holly so she doesn’t bury her pancake in sugar.” Flynn offered kindly in a low voice. Lucy blinked as she realised that as a parent she really needed to step up her game.

“Right, I can do that.” Lucy said awkwardly as she stepped back, she had no idea how a three year old ate. Did they use a knife and fork yet? Did Lucy have to cut it up for Holly? She could only think this would interesting.

“No more than a teaspoon.” Flynn advised her, Lucy nodded grateful for the advice as she went back to table.

She sat down next to Holly, she smoothed a hand over Holly’s soft hair. Holly turned to her with a smile.

“Want me to help?” she asked, Holly nodded. “Ok, fruit?” she asked, Holly nodded.

After a few minutes, Lucy managed to instruct Holly to roll up the pancake and eat it. But as she did, the maple syrup and fruit slid out of the end and onto the plate. Holly looked forlorn.

“It’s ok, why don’t we cut it up and make tiny pancake rolls.” Lucy offered. They tried that, there was some success but Lucy felt a cold sweat all over her as she really felt like a failure. The table was fast becoming a sticky mess around them.

“I’m terrible at this.” Lucy said with a chuckle. Holly didn’t seem to mind as she shoved a mini pancake roll in her mouth. Lucy silently prayed the little girl didn’t choke. It was harrowing given
she had no idea what to do if Holly did end up choking. Then if it wasn’t choking, it was the question of if she was eating too quickly, would she vomit and what was too much food.

“Relax, she’ll make some noise of distress if something is wrong.” Flynn said as he sat opposite her at the table with another large stack of pancake. Lucy looked bashful as she realised she had been staring a little too intensely at Holly. “Eat before the vultures descend.” He prompted her.

“I am not a vulture.” Connor complained.

“You’re a turkey vulture.” Jiya scoffed before she took a sip of her juice.

“Please, Manther at best.” Connor told her as he adjusted his suit jacket like peacock shaking its feather for a mate would do to get attention. Jiya’s nose wrinkled in amusement and disgust.

“How is it that you know what a ‘Manther’ is but refuse to read Emojis?” Jiya asked dryly.

“It’s a personal choice.” Connor drawled sarcastically.

“What’s a Manther?” Holly asked through a mouthful of pancake and fruit.

“Holly, don’t speak with your mouth full.” Flynn gently chastised. Holly wore a closed lip cheeky smile.

“Sorry.” Holly said apologetically but again through a mouthful but she did manage to cover her mouth.

“Please can discuss something a little more suitable for the tender ears?” Flynn asked the table as he was sure the tope was not meant for Holly’s ears.

“Well, I have many questions. But they can wait until after breakfast. I assume we’ll have to get you up to speed on everything.” Connor stated.

“Yes, that would be good.” Lucy said between bites of her own breakfast.

“They haven’t seen the command centre yet.” Jiya told Connor with a grin. Flynn, Rufus and Lucy wondered if it was a good thing but also wondering where the hell they could hide another room in the bunker without their knowledge.

“Isn’t this the command centre?” Rufus asked as it was in their reality. Jiya and Connor exchanged a look of amusement.

“No, I can’t wait for you to see it.” Connor said with glee.

Half an hour later, Rufus came to Wyatt’s cell with a bowl of cereal. He had considered pancakes but they were all gone and he didn’t feel right asking Flynn for more given he’d made breakfast for them all. He also didn’t want to mention Wyatt around Holly, he felt a weird protectiveness over the kid and he didn’t want her getting curious.

“Here to pick up what Agent Christopher asked for?” Wyatt asked as he heard Rufus coming and looked up from his bed.
“No, Agent Christopher was here?” Rufus asked as he placed the bowl of cereal and bottle of water through the slot. He noticed the pad of paper, pen and file on the floor by Wyatt’s bed.

“Yeah, she hates me. I don’t think she’s going to let me out.” Wyatt said darkly as he got off the bed and picked up the bowl and dug into it.

“Well, it’s hard for them.” Rufus said defending Jiya and Denise’s actions. If he didn’t know Wyatt, he’d probably not bother feeding him and let someone else do it.

“Where’s Lucy?” Wyatt asked between bites.

“Busy, she and Flynn are talking with Denise about their situation.” Rufus said. Wyatt gave a slow nod as he knew their problem.

“The kid, I figure Flynn would look after it. He’s hellbent on keeping everything as it is.” Wyatt commented dryly. Rufus held his tongue as he knew Wyatt was hurting but he sorely wanted to tell Wyatt that it was complicated. But more importantly ‘the kid’ was real and had a name.

“So am I.” Rufus told him.

“I don’t know why; this place is no better off than what we had before. You still have Jiya and everyone else. Bonus, it wasn’t upside down with Flynn being the good guy. Remember he’s the terrorist and murderer here. Not me.” Wyatt pointed out.

“Jiya struggled a lot trying to acclimate back to the 21st century.” Rufus told him, he wasn’t going to comment on the accusation of ‘terrorism’ and ‘murderer’ flung at Flynn. Sure, Rufus had his hang ups with Flynn given it was his fault he ended up with a second navel and 3 months of drinking prune juice instead of beer. The weird relationship Flynn had with Lucy during the period it felt like they were on opposite sides. He still reeled at the fact that he and the team were unknowingly working for Rittenhouse while Flynn was doing his best to take them down. It was a massive grey area of moral ambiguity that left Rufus unsettled most days.

Then there was the guilt he carried at playing part in Wyatt’s antics in 1983 where instead of being heroes, they were accessories to murder and grand theft auto of one lifeboat. Sure, it was an accident that guy died, but it didn’t stop Rufus from feeling guilty about it as he let Wyatt pull him into it. He also felt like no one on the team had the right to call the other murderer as they all had killed people during missions. It was not a badge of honour like Wyatt tried to wear it when he talked about taking out Nazi soldiers.

“So instead of helping Jiya, you just accept a tweak to reality. It’s a bit of a cop out.” Wyatt stated, bringing Rufus back to the present. It rankled Rufus that Wyatt thought Rufus made his decisions based on ease when it wasn’t true.

“I accept this tweak to reality because we’re not Rittenhouse. We don’t mess with time, we try our hardest to maintain it no matter how crappy it is.” Rufus said, it was a low blow but he felt like Wyatt deserved it for the petty behaviour he was showing.

“So, you’ll let me rot in prison for the rest of my life than help me?” Wyatt asked.

“I will help you but honestly, I remember Agent Christopher telling us not to tell anyone about time travel or the lifeboat. That it was treason, so don’t act like this isn’t fair and you didn’t do anything wrong. You brought Jessica to the bunker without permission or even asking us how we felt. You put our lives in danger.” Rufus told him.
“So, that’s a no.” Wyatt stated dryly. Rufus shook his head as Wyatt had zero remorse.

“That’s a ‘I don’t know if I can trust you when you’re acting like an ungrateful dick’. Enjoy your breakfast.” Rufus told him before he walked away.

“Hey, get Lucy to come see me.” Wyatt shouted at him.
“Let’s just face up to the elephant in the room.” Denise said as Rufus sat down at the table with the others. Holly was in front of the TV watching Sesame Street which was dubbed with Croatian. She was completely unaware of the world as she sang loudly with the TV, it was adorable and made Lucy’s heart melt with joy.

“Which is?” Rufus asked, as he pulled his chair in and sat up straight, it was weird given on side of the table sat Lucy, him and Flynn while the other sat Connor, Denise and Jiya. It was almost like a face off.

“What your plans? I know yesterday you seemed firm on not changing anything in the past, but that may have changed.” Denise said, there was something of an anxiousness in her demeanour that was slightly off putting.

“It hasn’t for me.” Flynn said firmly, there was no doubt in his mind. This reality was good enough for him, it was the best he felt he’d ever get. He might not have Lucy but he had another chance at being a father and he had his family. They just needed to destroy Rittenhouse and then he could finally move forward.

“I need more information, there’s Wyatt to consider too. We can’t keep him locked up.” Lucy pointed out, she looked for support but found Flynn looking at the table. Rufus looked uneasy as he tilted his head to the side as if questioning her point.

“Or we could.” Rufus said, Lucy and Flynn looked to him with surprise. Especially given Rufus was the last person they expected to be on board in keeping Wyatt locked. “He is resenting the fact he’s in a cell for his alternate’s crimes but I argue that until we decide what we do here. We consider the whole picture and I know Lucy, you said the present isn’t always perfect but it’s ours. We made the mistake in the past, we do it on the regular and we always accepted the consequences of those changes. This is no different.” Rufus added in a serious manner as he’d given it a lot of thought.

“But why does Wyatt need to stay locked up?” Lucy asked as she needed to ease her conscience more than anything else.

“He-“ Rufus stopped and looked to the other side of the table. “Can we just keep this at the table?” he asked, Denise nodded. He looked back to Lucy. “Wyatt is determined to change history, he’s adamant this is all wrong and we should change things back. I don't want to, I don't want to change history purposefully would make us no better than Rittenhouse. But he's resenting his stay in the cell while we try to figure this out. ” Rufus told her.

“He’s only been in there for a day.” Lucy said as Rufus made it sound like Wyatt was becoming unhinged. She had lasted longer in Rittenhouse and their idea of prison which had been far worse than the pleasure castle Wyatt was currently in.

“I’m just telling you how he is. I’d feel better if he remains in there until we have a better grasp on what’s going on. Also, if we can really trust him to be a team player.” Rufus said, he looked at Flynn for his reaction but Flynn was purposefully staying out of it. Lucy was just flabbergasted while Connor, Denise and Jiya looked like they were treading on eggshells.

“The only problem is, that cell is only for temporary stays. I would feel better if we could transfer him to a prison but he’s supposed to be dead. So, I’ll call for guards to be brought in to take over the duties of making sure he toes the line.” Denise said thoughtfully.
“We can look after him.” Lucy said, she knew she had been lapse in that respect. But she needed more time before she did as she knew he would point out hard truths. Ones, she didn’t want to face.

“No offence, but I prefer you three focus on the mission. Wyatt is an unnecessary distraction.” Denise told them.

“Speaking of, can we go to the command centre?” Connor asked excitedly.

“He just wants to unveil his latest toy.” Jiya said with a roll of her eyes.

“It’s impressive, if I do say so myself.” Connor said smugly.

Wyatt sat on the bed and looked at the wall outside his cell, it was 7 am and he was starving again. A small bowl of cereal was not enough. No were his meagre accommodations as he needed a shower and a proper meal. He needed that clock on the wall outside his cell to shut up as it ticked loudly. God, it was slowly driving him insane…tick…tock…tick…tock…

The tap at the sink dripped at a different pace. He tapped his foot impatiently as he wondered when Lucy would come. She had to come. Sure, she pretended to not love him and was in a snit over Jessica but it wasn’t his fault. None of it was, it was Rittenhouse and it was also partially Lucy’s fault as it was her family screwing with him. Her screwing with him and his emotions. If she had just kept her doe eyes and crush to herself then he could have made things work with Jessica. They could’ve left the bunker together and had their family.

But no, Lucy had to twist him up and make him feel things he hadn’t needed to. Rufus too, the man making him think he loved Lucy. Him wondering if the grass was truly greener on the other side. Jessica felt the grass was definitely greener on Rittenhouse side but when he got out of here. He was going fix things, when time was back to how it was supposed to. He’d save Jessica, get his kid and they’d get the hell away from Lucy and Rittenhouse.

Tick..Tock…Tick…Drip..Tock…Tick-Drip…Tock…Drip…the noise driving him up the wall as his skin crawled and he looked size of the room. The bars on one wall, it pissed him off that he was caged like an animal. He didn’t deserve to be here. He was a highly decorated soldier, he saved lives and killed the bad guys. This was where he ended up and Flynn the true terrorist was running free with a kid.

Wyatt blew out a long breath of annoyance as he was bitter about that little girl. She looked like mini Lucy and spoke probably Croatian. It twisted him up as he was supposed have a kid not Lucy, most definitely not Flynn.

Drip…Drop..Tick…Drip…Tock…Tick…Tock…Drip… he had to get out here and quick. He stood up and started to pace as he tried to formulate a plan. He knew Rufus was against him, but Lucy; she loved him and if he could use that, then he could get out of this cell and change things back to the way they were supposed to be. A light bulb lit up in his mind as he knew just how to get what he wanted.

He smiled to himself as he knew exactly what to do get it. He just needed time with Lucy and a newspaper.

Several minutes later,
They stood in a large room that never existed in the old bunker. It was wall to wall with large touch screen computers with one table in the centre that acted as a station.

“No, food or drink in here or Holly. Last time, she stole all of the memory cards as she thought they were treasure.” Connor told them in a droll manner of man who had little patience for a child's antics. Flynn couldn’t help but smile.

Rufus looked around the room with wide eyes as the technology outstripped what he’d ever seen in their reality. He would’ve looked to Jiya for her reaction but she had opted to look after Holly as she apparently had a bad habit of wondering the hallways. It had been decided they didn’t need Holly finding her way to Wyatt.

Lucy moved around looking at the screens. She reached out touched it, the screen went from sleeping to awake. The other screens woke up and a timeline appeared around the room.

“What is this?” Lucy asked them, she knew it was the 'command centre' but it seemed too small to be one and she couldn't understand how it was 'amazing' beyond the technology. She saw technology as a tool but had zero context for what she was being shown on the screens before her.

“Well, I haven’t got a name for it but it basically it’s a log of everything; every mission, every significant event that Rittenhouse has attempted to change or have changed over the years and the changes that have happened.” Connor said as touched the main console panel. The screens changed and information passed by at a nauseating manner. Lucy saw what he meant as familiar times and places bounced past her on the screens.

“How could you even track that?” Rufus asked in disbelief.

“Well, every trip we would carry a backup drive of the information on the lifeboat. Or we did.” Connor remarked.

“Yes, it's how we keep track of what has been changed. We also learnt that if we input a particular set of information; careful and meticulous calculations are made by the system. So, we're able to extrapolate the possible changes that would be made in the timeline. We can also predict with about a 70% of certainty the outcome of the mission and it's ripple effect on history to present.” Connor told them.

“Wow,” Rufus said, genuinely impressed.

“That’s not all, the reason we are nervous about wanting to change everything is here. Is this.” Connor pressed something on the console and the screens changed. It was a new timeline and what looked to be multiple timelines and a family tree. Lucy took it all in, her eyes went wide as she realised what it was.

“This is Rittenhouse.” She said in shock as she looked to Connor and Denise. Rufus was messing with the screens and many of the identities came up were marked with an ‘x’. When it was a tapped for certain individuals their files opened up with a list of crimes next to their photo and links to family trees and affiliations. It was beyond anything they had. It was overwhelming.

“Yes, we’ve been able to trace majority of Rittenhouse members through their family trees to present day. You and the team go back to stop Rittenhouse from making major alterations to history while we decimate Rittenhouse in the present. This is all that’s left” Denise said, she brought up half a dozen faces onto the screen right in front of her.
“That’s—” Lucy stopped herself from saying what she wanted as she didn’t want to jinx it. “We never had this information before.” She said, she felt a rush of relief but also anxiety and grief. Grief because she knew they could never save Amy, never fix—well anything in the past because it could swing everything back into Rittenhouse’s power. Right now, they were so close to ending it all.

“Rittenhouse is based off of legacy and family. It’s their greatest strength and weakness, it was harder to track the sleeper agents but we found a way.” Denise said.

“You have one or more agents on the inside to identify the sleepers.” Flynn stated as it was obvious there was no way that the time team could get this information all in the past. They needed someone inside Rittenhouse high up enough to not be question but confirm the identities of all the players. But Flynn couldn’t see any familiar faces on the board which made him wonder who it could be.

“Yes, they have been made aware that Emma and the Mothership are from an alternate timeline. Last we spoke, the mothership hadn’t arrived at the base. It isn’t in the past as we’d know which means it’s somewhere in the present.” Denise stated.

“You’ve never found a way to track it in the present?” Rufus asked, it seemed incredible that they’d have so much success in some areas while in others no progress at all.

“Not since it got the battery. It didn’t seem necessary to try and track it in the present as we have people on the inside. But now, well the mothership could be anywhere in the present.” Connor said, the same problem they had faced.

“Oh, well why not wrap it up? Arrest the last of these guys.” Rufus asked as he felt it was insane to keep the illusion they weren’t winning and just finish the battle already. He was more relieved than he had been in months. He felt that tiny knot of guilt of selling out Wyatt eased as he was right. This reality was better even with it’s drawbacks. There had to be some.

“The mothership is still out there. She might contact what is left of Rittenhouse. We need it to be standing for that contingency. We know who they are, so they can’t escape and our operatives work as a bounty hunter, it’s in his best interest not to let them run. Otherwise, they don’t make bank.” Denise said.

“Ok, and what happens when we get the mothership?” Rufus asked.

“Break it down, the lifeboat too. All of the information pertaining to the project will be destroyed.” Connor said with a shrug. It sounded so simple yet they all knew it wasn’t. It would take weeks if not months to break down the two time machines. It would also take a lot of government red tape to make certain no one found the information to build another for a long time.

“And us?” Lucy asked, as she was just reeling from what was before her.

“We all get our lives back, we can leave the bunker. I have several projects for Rufus and Jiya to move onto, as for you and Flynn. It’s truly down to you two. But let’s stay in the present with our current problem.” Denise said.

“Of course.” Lucy replied, she had so many questions but right now, she was overwhelmed.

“We need to figure out where Emma would go in the present and any possible jumps to the past to repair the ‘damage’.” Denise said, she used her fingers and did air quotations to emphasise that she didn’t believe the damage was real.

“I’ll dig into my books and if I have a computer…” Lucy drawled as she didn’t remember seeing it in her travels.
“I’ll get you one. You usually live in this room…well, the old you.” Connor told her, Lucy looked at the walls of screen and knew she couldn’t use it. Not yet.

“This… it’s amazing but overwhelming.” Lucy told Connor.

“Let me see if I can locate your tablet.” Connor said, the man left the room. Lucy didn’t know whether to follow him or not. But she was so desperate to talk to Flynn, he always had a way making things come into focus, of problems not being insurmountable.

“Lucy, I want to show this.” Denise said, Lucy moved to the console in the room.

“What is it?” Lucy asked as Denise opened a file up for her to see.

“We spent years trying to find a way to get Amy back. Rittenhouse went back at least 15 times to 1979 and 1990 to where your mother was. They’ve made it impossible and these are our records of the attempts we made. We thought if we could get your mother with Henry Wallace perhaps she would shun her Rittenhouse roots as you have and help us. I want you to know that we did everything in our power. That I’m so sorry for your loss.” Denise said sincerely. Lucy leaned over the table, she felt like the rug had been pulled out from under her. She just nodded as she was no longer surprised but to see the proof of their efforts before her. It just removed that last lingering hope.

Lucy looked up and saw Flynn watching her, his eyes softened and his expression conveyed empathy. Hot tears burned her eyes, she swallowed and blinked rapidly; trying to keep them at bay. Connor walked back into the room with her computer.

“Well, I found your tablet under a bunch of toys in the living room.” Connor said with a smile as he passed over a tablet computer that had a cover with many stickers on it of animals. Clearly, it was a shared computer.

“Oh, thank you.” Lucy said grateful for the distraction.

“I also took the liberty to unlock it, so you’ll have to input new password.” Connor told her, he frowned as he didn’t miss her crestfallen expression.

“I’ll get onto that soon, excuse me.” Lucy said, she left the room and headed straight for her and Flynn’s room.

By the time she got to their room, her eyes were blurry with tears. But she refused to cry it out as she had work to do. Right now, they were close to the end of Rittenhouse. With it gone, she could finally move forward.

She placed the tablet on her bed and started sifting through the books. Tears, ran down her face and she bitterly wiped her face on the sleeve of her sweater.

“Lucy.” he said softly.

“I’m fine, but honestly, where is the system in this room?” Lucy asked as she held up books on two very different subjects. “I can’t find any of the books I need.” She told him, she dropped onto her backside and just gave up.

Flynn sat on the floor beside her, his legs crossed as he leaned forward and watched her. She shook her head as she pressed the heels of her palms into her eyes. They sat there for a long moment in silence. He waited for her to speak and she tried not to sob her heart out. She managed to pull some semblance of calm from inside her, she looked at him.
“I knew I’d never get her back. I’ve known it for such a long time but I never got a choice and I
didn’t get one chance to save her. But this alternate-self of me, she not only tried but she did it
multiple times and has a child. She identified Rittenhouse throughout history. She knew how she was
going to take them down. She was so close. How can I even be remotely like her, how do I not mess
everything?” Lucy asked as she felt so woefully inadequate.

“Her life was not better or worse, just different. She had other advantages too, she gave me the
Journal and I took it to Denise instead of stealing the mothership. It’s a whole different set of
variables that came to play for our lives to turn out like this.” He said trying to reaffirm that they
weren’t less than the people they used to be.

“Somehow, her life-our life was just richer and more thought out. You saw that room. In our
timeline, we were barely scratching the surface. Oh my god!” she exclaimed in an envious whisper
as she just shook her head; for Lucy and Flynn the ones they replaced they had been closed to
getting their lives back. She rubbed at her forehead as she felt a headache coming on. He leaned
forward and tapped the side of her folded knee. She looked to him.

“Lucy, give yourself a break, it’s been a rough 24 hours. You don't need all the answers right now.”
Flynn said in a soft manner. She shook her head.

“No, I just need to find Emma. Then, I don't know but it will be over. Rittenhouse will be finished. I
need it be finished.” Lucy told him firmly.

“I know but it will take time. This is a marathon not a sprint.” Flynn told her, like she wasn’t already
aware but she felt like they were at the last few meters and she could see the finish line. He could see
her need to keep moving towards the finish line. “Ok, tell me what books you need and I’ll help you
find them.” He offered.

“Thank you.” Lucy said softly.

Rufus and Connor were in the command room as Rufus was going through history. This was really
Lucy’s department but he figured he might as well lighten the load. He is also completely enthralled
with the level of tech in the room. It was like something out of a TV show but better because it was
real.

“I’d like to apologise for earlier.” Connor told Rufus as he helped Rufus manage the finer points of
the operating system and how to use it. “I didn’t mean to be rude, I was shocked to see you alive.”

“Trust me, this is all weird for me too.” Rufus assured him as he wondered how extensive the
information in the database. He had to assume WiFi existed as there weren’t many cords and no way
was the room large enough to store so much data.

“It’s just you’re nothing like the Rufus I know. He was my wingman for all intents and purpose.”
Connor told him, Rufus looked up from the screen to Connor like he’d grown a second head.

“Really?” Rufus asked in disbelief as he was terrible at picking up women. He was pretty sure no
one would want him to be their wingman let alone Connor. Connor moved to the main console and
pulled up a search screen and typed in Rufus’ name. Rufus watched as he came up on the screens.
But it wasn’t really him, it was almost like the Denzel Washington version of him. “Wow, yeah that
guy is mostly gone.” Rufus told Connor as his former self was ripped with muscles and looked like
he had confidence in spades.
“It’s not a bad thing.” Connor told him, Rufus looked at him incredulously as he questioned what Jiya saw in him when his former self was a millionaire Rockstar engineer. “I’m told I could use some humbling.” Connor said.

“You could use a better suit.” Rufus said, Connor threw back his head and laughed.

“Oh, you savage. This is a beautiful crafted suit.” Connor drawled mockingly as he smoothed his hands down the lapels of his orange jacket.

“It’s an eye sore.” Rufus told him.

“Oh like you’d know what a good suit would look like Mr ‘I wear hoodies all the time’. I’m thinking you’d probably get married in one.” Connor teased.

“Am I engaged to Jiya?” Rufus asked as he really hoped it wasn’t the case. Not because he didn’t want to marry Jiya. He did, he really did but he didn't want this Jiya beholden to him based on his hotter version asking the question.

“No, not yet but you said ‘it was probably about time’. It led to quite the argument between you and the lovely Jiya before you died.” Connor offered with a shrug.

“Eyes off.” Rufus said as he didn’t like the way Connor schmoozed the words ‘lovely Jiya’ out of his mouth. Connor chuckled.

“Relax, she’s not old enough for me. I like a more seasoned woman.” Connor drawled slyly. Apparently, Connor was the same man but with more money than dress sense.

“The more I hear about myself, the more I feel I was a grade A douche bag.” Rufus muttered as he looked to the screens reading about himself.

“You were, but you were also a lot of fun.” Connor told him as he clapped a hand on Rufus’ back as if to reassure him. “I’m sure that you will be just as entertaining in your own manner.” Connor added in amusement.

“Great.” Rufus drawled in a dry manner.

Lucy poured over the books, Flynn plays with Holly, some kind of letters game as she has the alphabet made out of fabric. Lucy doesn’t know how they are doing it but it’s a mix of English and what she assumed to be Croatian. She wished she could concentrate but she can’t get enough of just watching them. There was soft joyful side to Flynn she never knew existed, she loved seeing him so happy.

“It’s not ideal, but you all won’t be down here forever.” Denise said, she sat down at the table. “I won’t ask how it’s going as you’ll tell me when you have something.” She added, she clearly had more confidence in Lucy than Lucy felt in that moment.

“I’m not as impressive as my former self.” Lucy told her, she didn’t want to disappoint anyone more than she already had. Right now, she was stumped. She couldn’t figure out where Rittenhouse would go in the original timeline until they left. So, she knew now that she’d never be able to predict Emma’s movements.

“I don’t know, you seem the same except your hair is longer. You also seem sadder in the eyes but
that’s my fault. I just felt you needed to know about Amy. To know we did our best.” Denise said.

“I never had a chance to do so, in my time. I missed out on so much.” Lucy said as she couldn’t help but look at Flynn and Holly. Holly was hugging Flynn as the two were laughing, it was a beautiful sight and she longed to be a part of it.

“There’s nothing that you can’t catch up on.” Denise assured her. Lucy looked to her with a frown. “I know you two aren’t together, but I see the way you look at one another and I think you should give it a try for Holly’s sake.” She said.

“I never thought I’d hear you say something like that to me.” Lucy said with a chuckle, but her expression turned to one of worry. “What if doesn’t work or goes bad?” she asked.

“I don’t think that will be a problem. I’m not saying you and Garcia are a perfect match but you are or were very happy together. I think you could be, the main strain on all of our lives is Rittenhouse with them gone. We can all get our lives back.” Denise said.

“No pressure.” Lucy said wryly, though she felt shocked at Denise using Flynn’s first name.

“Lucy, do I look stressed?” Denise asked her.

“No,” Lucy replied but she wasn’t sure if it was a good thing or not. But then Denise usually had a good poker face, so even if she was stressed; Lucy would never know it.

“I’m fine, either way, we’ll get the mothership. My only hope is that it’s in the present. I’m selfish in wanting things to remain as they are. We’ve all worked so hard, for so long. We need it to be over.” Denise admitted.

“Trust me, I feel the same way.” Lucy said, she hated to admit it but the idea they were so close to end was more than she could ever hope for. Even if she couldn’t understand how they had turned the tide on the war in their favour.

“Well, do you want me to tell Wyatt?” Denise asked.

“No, I need to figure this out first and then I’ll talk to him.” Lucy said as she gestured to the books before her.

“The command centre is faster.” Denise told her.

“This is my process.” Lucy said, Denise nodded in understanding.

“Ok, I’ll leave you to it. But you should also think about what you want long term.” Denise said, Lucy didn’t miss the hidden meaning by her words.
Half an hour later,

“Hey,” Lucy said as she walked back into the command centre. She smothered a laugh as Rufus smacked his head on the table as he clearly had been snooping around the guts of the machine.

“Hey, it’s still working.” He assured her as he smoothed a hand over his skull and wore a bashful expression.

“Uhuh, what were you doing?” she asked with bemused expression.

“Snooping. This level of tech is near unheard of. It’s amazing. What are you doing here?” he asked.

“I want to see how history changed from the point Claudette Colvin died until now. I need to understand how we got here.” Lucy said as she gestured for him to make it work. She honestly wasn’t sure how to use it and she also didn’t want to learn the changes on her own. But, she felt herself being distracted by Flynn and Holly too much to concentrate with her books. So, her system was out and it was time to use what they had access to.

“I thought we were past the whole ‘changing things’ idea.” Rufus said with a frown.

“We are, but understanding the present…you first need to understand the past.” Lucy told him, she hated how much of a prat she sounded like but it was true. They needed to understand this new timeline just to get by in it. She also wanted to know if there was a way to take down Rittenhouse quickly so she could move on with her life.

She felt without Rittenhouse looming over her, she could finally breathe again. She would have no serious threat hanging over her head and the lives of those she cared about. Her worst fear was history changing and losing everything here, not just the advantage against Rittenhouse but also Holly.

“You want me to stay?” Rufus asked her, she nodded needing the support. She couldn’t ask Flynn as he was with their daughter. She was so jealous of how easy it was for him but she was kick to kick herself into shape as she reminded herself that Flynn had lost his family. Having Holly was a gift, one Lucy didn’t want to take from him.

“Yes, I feel like I’m going to break something.” Lucy said as she really felt awkward around this level of technology, he gave her a wry smile.

“Ok.” Rufus said.

“Daddy.” Holly said in Croatian, they had been practising all morning and Holly wasn’t too bad. She garbled some words and when she wasn’t sure she reverted back to English. But for a three year old bi-lingual child, she was doing exceptionally well. He hadn’t realised how much he missed speaking in his native language until today. To converse in it again made him homesick and reminded him of his old life before Rittenhouse burned it all down.

“Mm?” Flynn asked as he leaned against the couch. He drank in the sight of Holly, taking note of all her features; imprinting her in his memory in case the worst happened again.
“Is Mommy ok? She looks really sad.” Holly stated as she played with the toys at their feet.

“She is ok. She just had a bad dream last night.” Flynn said as he couldn’t think of a better answer. He wasn’t going to tell her the truth.

“Did she dream about the writing home again?” Holly asked, Flynn tilted his head to the side in curiosity. He had to assume writing home was Rittenhouse.

“What do you know about the writing home?” Flynn asked, he hated that he was interrogating his own child but he wondered what they told Holly about Rittenhouse.

“Writing home makes people sick and they go to heaven. That’s what Mommy told me. Sometimes, they make her feel really sad as she misses everyone who went to heaven.” Holly said in a saddened tone as she danced the stuffed dinosaur across the floor to a Totoro doll. She made them kiss, before she smiled and the dinosaur danced away on another adventure around the floor.

“Well, I’m sure she will be happy soon. She just needs time to feel better. Maybe you can let her tuck you in for your afternoon nap all by herself. Give her a special hug.” He offered as a consolation prize as he didn’t want to make promises. But he’d make a note to try and help Lucy more with adjusting to their new reality. To help her be aware of how cognizant Holly was of their emotional states.

“I can do that. Can we have an orange?” she asked, changing the topic as she found the answer she needed.

“Sure.” Flynn replied with closed lip smile.

A few hours later,

“I have a headache.” Rufus said as he leaned on the main console in the room and turned off at least three of the six screens. He never thought he’d see the day where he’d turn off technology and opt to go outside.

“Same, how is that someone so important dies before they should and somehow the world just turns into something better than what it was.” Lucy asked, she felt like she could never have predicted this outcome and she had to admit she always feared the worse. Yes, the worst outcomes did happen but somehow it all balanced out through the years. Somehow, the good came out on top.

Better Healthcare system, equality for women, LGBT and people of colour. There were new laws and incentives for renewable energy and living more cleanly. They had stricter gun control, their education system had been overhauled completely. It was like a whole new America and it was a Democrat’s wet dream. Even so, it wasn’t entirely perfect as not everyone was happy but overall, they seemed to be trucking along better.

“It’s hardly perfect.” Rufus scoffed as there were still many issues that were still not addressed.

“I know, but you saw that file. This fight is nearly over, we’ve never been this close before. How could we possibly go back and change anything? It could turn the war back against us.” Lucy said, bringing them to the central issue at hand. The end of Rittenhouse.

“I know.” Rufus said in agreement but he didn’t look happy.
“But what? We just let Wyatt rot?” Lucy asked pointing out the realistic situation that they couldn’t save Wyatt. His alternate had been despicable. Her face lit up as an idea came to her. “But maybe if he agreed to plastic surgery and Agent Christopher gave him a new identity. Then he can just move on.” Lucy said, she knew it wouldn’t work but she hoped it would inspire a better plan.

“Yeah, maybe you should speak with Wyatt before you make plans for his release.” Rufus told her in a wary tone.

“I don’t want to see him.” Lucy said honestly, she blew out a breath as she knew it made her a terrible person. She felt like she had enough regrets and guilt to sink a ship.

“You should, he’s asking for you. It’s best to just get it out of the way.” Rufus told her, before Lucy could answer the door to the room opened and Holly appeared.

“It’s ručak time!” Holly announced.

“What now?” Rufus asked, Holly walked into the room and grabbed his hand.

“Lunch, you gotta eat as Auntie Jiya says so.” She told him as she pulled on his hand. Rufus stood where he was watching Holly with amusement as she struggled and grunted to try to get him move.

“Don’t be mean.” Lucy chastised Rufus in a low voice. He smiled unrepentantly and gave a shrug as he adjusted his hold on Holly’s hand and lifted her up off her feet. Holly giggled and he put her back down and let Holly walk her to the kitchen.

“So, you find all your answers?” Connor asked Lucy after lunch was finished. She really needed some sleep as she felt a headache from staring at the screens for so long. The pain was settling in behind her eyes like a dull straining ache. Rufus was in the open space of the living area playing some kids’ games with Holly and Jiya.

Only a few minutes ago, it was ‘Simon says’ but with Flynn and even Denise it had become a game of ‘Statues’. It was unreal to see so many adults play a child’s game. But it made sense they would all pitch in to give Holly as much of a childhood they could and play such games. It looked like fun, she tried to remember the last time she had fun that didn’t involve being sloshed. She thought of 1936, listening to Robert Johnson play.

“Yes, but honestly I don’t know where or when Emma would hit in the past to shift everything back.” Lucy said honestly, she and Connor sat at the table watching. She had been slow to finish and Connor said it was some kind of code that he couldn’t let a person eat alone at the table. Luckily, he had showered and changed out of his garish suit into a more sedate outfit of a navy blue shirt and grey slacks.

“I’d be surprised if you could given your other-self couldn’t.” Connor said frankly, hearing that made Lucy feel relieved.

“So, how are you?” Lucy asked him, she wondered how he and the others were handling their arrival as it couldn’t be easy for them. She knew Jiya was struggling, Denise seemed content. She felt that was due to Rufus declaring they wouldn’t change time.

“I’m fabulous, I learnt my other-self was broke and lost everything.” Connor said with a dismissive wave of his hand as he clearly didn’t like how that part of history had turned out for him.
“He did help save history.” Lucy told him with a smile. Connor gave a nod and a knowing look that was somewhat smug.

“Yes, and I still am the person who said ‘yeah’ on the Crossroad Blues track.” He said with a wink. Lucy chuckled as she remembered that mission fondly. “Still one of my fondest time travel memories. It will be sad to give it all up but it’s time we live for our future instead of living in the past.” He told her.

“I know what you mean.” Lucy said thoughtfully, her expression grew morose as it was time for her to talk with Wyatt. It was time to put whatever it was between them to rest.

“Are you ok?” Connor asked, Lucy nodded.

“Yeah, I’m going to go take lunch to Wyatt.” She said.

“I could take it.” Connor offered.

“No, I shouldn’t put off talking to him.” Lucy said.

“Ok.” Connor said with a slightly concerned expression but he didn’t fight her on it.

Wyatt heard the footsteps and Lucy’s voice as she spoke to his new guards. Apparently, Agent Christopher felt they were necessary and he heard talks of him getting a shower. Something he could really use, he rose from the bed and moved to the bars.

Lucy walked up to him holding a plate of what looked like a sandwich only Lucy could make. Her cooking skills were questionable at best. But he had survived worse.

“Lucy,” he said with his best sly smile, she was the lynch pin. If he could get her on his side, she’d argue everyone to death to get him out. He just needed to turn her inside out over this reality. He had done it in the past when it came to her entertaining the idea that she should be with Noah. He needed out of this cell, as he was the good guy. He realised with Rufus, the way to win him back was to behave better. Pull Lucy to his side, behave and Rufus would be swayed. He just hoped that he could find the right pull for Lucy.

He knew he couldn’t play the ‘I love you’ card, he had once and it hadn’t worked. She had distanced herself from him because Jessica had been alive and pregnant with his child. As much as he said it to keep her, it was also something he had needed to get off his chest. The last year had been a confusing emotional mess for him. He did care for her, he could see their future but part of him always belonged to Jessica and the dream he held close to his chest of their life. Torn between a dream and reality, the emotions all as a real as the two women he was caught between.

“I brought you lunch.” She said.

“Thanks.” He said with a smile as he took the plate from slot and picked up half stuffing it into his mouth. He ignored the uncomfortable mix of ketchup and mayo with pickles. It was food, he knew he could keep it down as he’d had MRE’s that were worse.

“The guards say from now on they’ll be bringing you food.” She told him, inwardly frowned as she didn’t look heartbroken about it. She looked relieved and that irked him.

“They probably want to make sure you’re not slipping me paper clips.” He said after he swallowed
another bite. She smiled in dry amusement.

“How are you? Rufus said you weren’t doing well.” Lucy said concern.

“It’s not ideal.” Wyatt told her, putting a troubled expression on his face as he knew she felt guilty. He decided to see how far it would play in his favour. “I could use a shower, something to read like a newspaper or whatever. Lucy, I’m so sorry for what has happened. I was rude and I wish we could change what happened. Just go back and fix it all.” He said sincerely.

“Well, I’ve found out how everything has changed, and I can see how it all happened but I don’t understand how we can repair it. So, what we have here will have to do.” Lucy told him, he couldn’t help but drop his jaw in shock. He closed it quickly and remembered to play the long con.

“Lucy, you know this reality isn’t right. Trust me, I’ve been where you are. It’s too perfect and you want to keep it all but it’s not yours. This life belongs to another Lucy, one who isn’t you.” Wyatt told her firmly.

“Maybe, but it can’t be changed.” She said looking off into the distance. She wore a pinched expression and he could see the crack in her wall.

“Lucy, it can be changed.” He said gently. He placed his sandwich to the side. “Trust me, I hate to have Jessica revert to what she was. But remember what you told us when we wanted to save Lincoln?” he asked, she looked to him with a serious look. He pushed. “The present isn’t perfect but it’s ours. Right now, right here is not our present.” He told her.

“We can’t change it.” Lucy told him in a matter of fact manner.

“Ok, we can’t change the past. So, then let’s change the present.” He said changing tactics, he gripped the bars with one hand and reached through and caught her hand in his. He loved how soft her skin was. “You’re not Flynn’s wife and you’re not that kid’s mother. You don’t have to be. With Jessica gone, completely. We have a real go here. You know Flynn only wants the kid, so it’ll be looked after. He’ll divorce you in a heartbeat, then you just have to get me out. We can finally be together, just as we were meant to be.” He said in a smooth and lulling tone as if he were talking about a beautiful fairy tale. The reality was, he’d get out of the cell and force Rufus to take him back so he can fix his mistake. Get everything back to what it was, so he would be hero instead of the terrorist.

Now that he knew Lucy knew how to change it, he’d need her too. They’d forgive him later, they always let him off the hook. But for now, he needed her to work on his release. But he’d work on a back up in case she doesn’t bend to his will. Hence the newspaper, he just hoped it was still there even in this new reality.

Lucy looked down at their hands. Her hand hung limply in his as she didn’t engage the hold. Part of her felt this greasy feeling in her stomach at being touched without her permission.

“What if I want my kid?” she asked him, not looking up because she knew what his expression would be. It would be the same one he wore when she said she wanted to try and find a way to make things work with Noah. He’d convinced her it had been a terrible idea. That Noah was a ‘poor bastard’ to be attached to her. She wasn’t that naïve woman anymore.

“Luce,” Wyatt said softly with such care and sincerity. “She’s biologically yours but that’s it. You don’t know her, you didn’t give birth to her. You don’t even know what to do with a kid.” He told her with a light-hearted chuckle. It bruised her ego that he had no idea how painful it was to be told one would be a crappy mother and shouldn’t have kids.
“I can learn and being a mother is more than genetics and giving birth.” Lucy said, she tried to pull her hand away and he grabbed her by the wrist. She frowned as she tested the hold and he gripped tight enough to keep her but not enough to bruise. It made her stomach curdle in a way she hadn’t felt since he accidentally smacked her in the face months ago.

“Ok, fine. We’ll take the kid and have a whole parcel of our own. But we can’t do that with me in here.” He said in a placating manner, there was an edge of desperation in his tone.

“Wyatt, we talked about this. I don’t want to be your consolation prize.” She said, Wyatt felt the need to tighten his hold but he didn’t. He held with a firm grip and gave her his best imploring face.

“Luce, you weren’t ever a consolation prize to me.” He reached through the bar and used his other hand to cradle her hand in his. “Please, I meant it when I said that day. I love you, Luce. I just want to be by your side.” He implored softly.

“I know it’s not ideal and I’m trying to figure out a solution but it’s only been a day.” Lucy argued, in a flustered manner as she really wanted him to let go of her hand. She tried to pull her hand out of his grasp in as gentle and casual manner but he held on.

“Easy for you when you’re on that side of the bars.” He told her with a hurt expression, he could see her mind ticking and the guilt eating at her. He felt vindicated as she should feel bad for him as he was the victim.

“Wyatt, this isn’t easy for any of us.” Lucy said, his eyes narrowed as he realised she was hiding something. But before he could ask what it was, Flynn cleared his throat.

“Lucy.” Flynn said grabbing her attention. Wyatt despised the man, he seemed to walk through life getting his way without having to pay penance for any of it. Right now, he was a threat to the small pull he had left with Lucy.

“Yes?” Lucy asked, she gently yanked to get her hand back. Thankfully, Wyatt released it.

“We need you out here.” Flynn said, he tapped to his wrist as if to say ‘look at the time’ and Lucy looked to a clock on the way and she knew it was time to put Holly down for her afternoon nap. Lucy had promised she would be there.

“I’ll be a second.” She said, Flynn nodded as he left. She turned to Wyatt, she didn’t miss the slight change in his expression from glib to troubled. It unsettled her. “I’m sorry, I’m doing my best to convince Agent Christopher that you’re not your alternate-self but it’s not easy.” Lucy said.

“Don’t leave just yet.” He pleaded.

“I’m sorry, I got to get back to work.” She lied, Wyatt nodded but looked sullen and it gave her greasy feeling in her stomach. She felt her nausea increase and her skin crawl, she blamed it on the headache nagging her.

“You’ll come back right?” Wyatt asked, Lucy gave a long pause as she didn’t want to make promises she didn’t want to keep. Not that she wanted to forget about him altogether but she just felt he wasn’t her top priority. It was harsh but it was the truth. He was one individual, she had to weigh that against taking Rittenhouse down. The choice was easy.

“When I have more time.” She told him, no promise given and she slightly off the hook as she walked away. When she past the guard station felt an uneasy tension left her.

“I’m sorry that I pulled you away.” Flynn said when Lucy joined him in the hallway that led to
Holly’s room. Lucy wondered how he could sound sincere when he didn’t even like Wyatt.

“No, it’s fine.” Lucy said dismissively. “So, is nap time the same as bedtime routine?” she asked Flynn. She rubbed at her hand that Wyatt had touched as it to wipe their meeting as she didn’t want to pass that weird energy to Holly.

“Easier as there shouldn’t be any monsters given they only come out at night.” Flynn said with a hint of amusement. “Are you ok?” he asked with concern as he could see she was off.

“Yeah, I just have a headache coming on.” She told him in a dismissive manner. No way would she tell him that her instinct to her that Wyatt was acting weirdly. That he left her feeling unsettled and creeped out.

“You don’t normally get headaches.” He said with a concerned frown.

“I do when I look at computer screens for too long.” She said with a tired smile. “It’s ok, after we put Holly to bed, I’ll lay down for a nap myself.” She told him.

They neared Holly’s room and Lucy knocked on the door. She just felt it was the right thing to do instead of walking in.

“May we come in?” Lucy asked Holly as she stuck her head in to see Holly piling her toys onto the bed.

“Yep.” Holly said as she climbed onto the bed.

“Are you sure you got enough toys in here?” Flynn asked in amusement as he stood in the door. Lucy looked to him waiting for him to take over. But he looked at her and tilted his head gesturing for her to go ahead.

“Uhuh,” Holly replied as she climbed into bed and waited to be tucked in. Lucy moved to the side of the bed. She barely sat on the edge of the bed when Holly launched herself at her.

Lucy wrapped her arms around Holly, she closed her eyes as she held her close. The scent of her strawberry shampoo, the feel of her tiny arms around her neck and the intrinsic trust between them; Lucy relished it all.

“I love you Mommy, be happy ok?” Holly told her, Lucy’s heart flipped as she really did love this little girl and she couldn’t tell if it was real or if she deserved it. She swallowed as she blinked back the tears.

“I love you too and I’ll do my very best.” Lucy said softly into her hair. Holly pulled back and they kissed, before Holly smiled and laid into her bed. Lucy clearer her throat and smiled.

“Ok, you want to be tucked in tight or lose today?” Lucy asked as she pulled the blankets over Holly.

“I want to be as tight as bug in a rug.” Holly said as she snatched one of her many toys and hugged it to her chest. Lucy chuckled.

“Ok, you tell me when you’re perfect.” Lucy said as she started to tuck the blanket and sheets in around her. Holly giggled and squirmed until Lucy was sure the bed was strangling her. Holly said she was good. “Ok Monkey Bug of mine, sweet dreams.” Lucy said softly, she pressed a soft kiss to Holly’s brow.
Holly nodded as she snuggled deep into her bedding and closed her eyes. Lucy rose from the bed and saw a look of yearning in Flynn’s expression. Just for a moment she wondered if he yearned the same as her. She was bleakly reminded that this wasn’t real. Wyatt made it sound like she would mess it up. A mixture of dread, anxiety and yearning curdled unpleasantly within her.

She moved to the door and she stepped out while Flynn said ‘sweet dreams’ Holly. A second later, he gently closed the door behind them. He looked to her.

“Lucy, is everything ok?” he asked, with sincere concern.

“Do you think-“ she shook her head. “No, I’m fine,” she lied but she wasn’t. She felt like crying and screaming all at the same time. As that morning she decided she wanted Flynn and Holly. Then Wyatt made it sound impossible. She didn’t know why she was so unsure of herself. “I’m going to lay down.” She said.

“Ok, if you need anything.” He started, she laid a hand on his arm and gave it a gentle squeeze as she smiled.

“I know, thank you.” She said, she released his arm and dropped her hand away.

“I know it’s not easy with Wyatt locked up.” He told her.

“It is, because I’m not with nor will I ever be with Wyatt. He said he loved me, but I don’t feel the same way. It’s been a point of contention with us.” She scratched her eyebrow and avoided looking at Flynn. She didn’t want to see his reaction, she just wanted him to know the truth. She rubbed at her forehead as her headache seemed to ease somewhat at her small confession. “He doesn’t seem to believe me, that’s his problem not our and I don’t want it to be a thing with us either. Cause all I care about is Holly and you.” She said finally summoning the courage to look up at him.

“Ok,” he said with a nod, it took a second for her last words to register. He looked at her in surprise. She sucked in her bottom lip as he had basically thrown herself into the deep end. An awkward moment passed between them as they never truly acknowledged what between them on an emotional level. It was always secret looks, unspoken words.

“So, I’m going to get some sleep and my head is killing me.” She told him, she figured they could talk about it later. When she felt calmer and the anxiety Wyatt had brought to the forefront had faded. Flynn nodded respecting her wish not to talk just yet. He stepped to the side, but as she passed him; he caught her hand with his. The same hand Wyatt had held, he gently brought it to his lips and pressed a soft kiss to her open palm. He pressed the hand to his face, she felt herself melt as she smoothed her hand against his cheek. Their eyes locked, she read so much in him. It was such a simply but powerful gesture, whatever tainted mark she had felt Wyatt leave on her; evaporated.

“We’ll talk later. I’ll be in the living room if you need me.” Flynn said softly as he pressed a second kiss to hand before he released it. Lucy gave a soft smile, as it felt weirdly natural as if they’d done this hundred or more times before even though it was the first true physical show of affection they had shared.

“Ok,” she said, she swallowed down her desire to ask him to come with her. She needed them to
take this slow for just time being as she knew how easy it was to get lost in the illusion of their life in this timeline. She wanted it to be real, she wanted also didn't want to rush it. “I'm going to go now.” She said, Flynn smiled as he nodded and waited for her to go to their room. She shook her head at him as she was finally letting him see the affect he had on her. She took a deep inhale feeling a little frazzled but in a good way as she walked away with a smile on her lips.
Chapter 8

Flynn watched as Lucy closed the door to their room. He gave a slow exhale as he ran a hand through his hair. A small smile on his lips as he was surprised and pleased by the moment that passed between them. It felt like the beginning of something, he didn't know what but he hoped it was good. He really wanted to walk into their bedroom and talk about it, kiss her properly as he had wanted to for months but he knew it wasn't the right time. So, instead he walked to the living room.

He picked up his personal tablet computer and took up in an arm chair and propped up his feet on the coffee table. He opened up his other-self’s journal, bracing himself for another entry. It wasn’t like it was a terrible read. It was just a gut punch to know there was this other life he had where he made better choices after losing Lorena and Iris. He still marvelled at how somethings were incredibly altered while some events stayed the same. He still had his break down 1780, Lucy stopped him from killing John Rittenhouse. He just never got a chance to go back the multiple times, instead they had taken the loss and hit a wall for a while until they found a new lead that lead to another and another until it brought them to Ethan Cahill.

Flynn couldn’t help but gloss over the hows and whys of their missions as he was more interested in Holly and Lucy. He wanted to know their lives, their memories. He knew he’d never get those three years but he could pretend he had them for Holly’s sake. He knew if he kept going over the details, eventually he would genuinely believe he lived it. At least it was a nice thought.

But for now, he needed to just know enough to make sure Holly never realised the difference. To be happy and feel loved. He may not have the memories but he loved her already. He felt blessed for this second chance. If he could at least share the memories she had with his other-self, then it would smooth the transition for them both.

As for Lucy, he had no idea what happened between her and Wyatt but he was concerned. He was also hopeful and cautious. She said she cared about him, it felt the start of something good and it made him hopeful. But he was cautious because he was very used to not getting what he wanted.

Flynn heard footsteps and looked up to Rufus walk in with his own tablet. He spotted Flynn and looked around as if to see if anyone else was around before he came over to the couch and sat down.

“Hey, so I need to talk.” Rufus said in a low voice, like they were two spies in a comical tv show having a secret meeting.

“Ok,” Flynn said in a wary manner as he closed the cover over his own tablet. The one weird difference of their new reality was the level of technology at their disposal. He rested it in his lap as he gave Rufus his full attention.

“I know we’re not friends, we don’t know one another very well and you nearly got me killed on numerous occasions and you killed Anthony, I nearly died when Al Capone shot me. I had to drink prune juice for six months. It's not a great drink.” Rufus remarked in a quick and nervous manner.

“Rufus, what do you want me to say? I’m sorry? Because I am, I’m deeply remorseful for Anthony’s death. He was my comrade, the first person other than Lucy to help me. Even with a time machine some things can’t be undone even if I wish I could.” He said sincerely even though he was sure his words were meaningless to Rufus. But Flynn was surprised as Rufus looked surprised.

“I didn’t know that.” Rufus said looking away lost in his own thoughts. It was clear the man didn’t think Flynn was capable of remorse or didn’t want to believe it.
Flynn didn’t take offence as he knew Rufus was still trying to understand the world in the context of what they did. He struggled with the moral and ethical complexities of good and bad. Sometimes it was easier to believe a bad person was bad no matter their actions. Good people, no matter how heinous their actions were still good people even when it wasn’t the case. Flynn knew with experience and age, Rufus would eventually learn differently and mellow out.

“Rufus, it’s ok if you need to hate me but we have to work together.” Flynn said in a pragmatic manner.

“I don’t hate you. I just never understood you and it scares me sometimes…” he said, Flynn quirked a questioning eyebrow. “Ok, a lot because you’re a really intimidating guy.” He amended, Flynn couldn’t help but give a wry smile.

“You’re safe, my job is to protect you.” Flynn reminded him.

“I know,” Rufus nodded, “But I’m sorry I called you a terrorist and other names behind your back and probably to your face. I can’t remember. It was not cool.” Rufus said with a grimace.

“I’ve been called worse. Anyway, what did you want to talk about?” Flynn asked wryly, he didn't want or need Rufus to apologise to him or even feel the need. For Flynn, it was just water under the bridge.

"I know we're not friends but I kind of need guy advice." Rufus said.

"Jiya getting handsy again?" Flynn asked.

“Not yet.” Rufus said in a low voice he turned around his tablet computer and showed him a picture of his other-self. “But that's another thing, I'm talking about this.” he pointed at the guy on the screen. "I’m not the guy that used to be here. He was this confident, buff millionaire tech wiz. He had Jiya and everything. I just- I’m not him. I don’t see why she would like me.” He told Flynn.

“He was also kind of an asshole that my other-self hated with a passion for the way he treated women and Holly. He didn’t kill your other-self, but apparently he felt the strong desire to sucker punch other Rufus from time to time.” Flynn offered, Rufus looked stunned.

“Really?” he asked, Flynn gave a shrug as he couldn’t imagine Rufus being an cocky asshole who'd mistreat women. But then different life events could change a person. To delve into it further wouldn’t help Rufus, not when Rufus needed to be bolstered up.

“Our Jiya loved you. I don’t see why this Jiya wouldn’t. She’s already half in love with you.” Flynn told him, driving straight to the point of telling him this. Rufus made a face like he didn’t believe Flynn, not entirely.

“She in love with the Rufus who died. He was like the hotter version of me. Women love assholes, guys like me? we’re too nice or boring. Before Jiya, women barely even noticed me. I’m usually that guy who makes the other guy look more attractive.” Rufus told him with a frown. He revealed a little too much of his own insecurities, he winced as he knew it was very ‘manly’ to talk like this. Usually, Wyatt looked at him and made a comment about getting him a tampon which was not helpful. Rufus hoped Flynn was different.

“I don’t know, I can’t speak for the female population. But I can tell you that this Jiya wants you. She wants this version of you and she smart cause you’re a better man than the one who died.” Flynn told him in a matter of fact manner as he’d seen the way Jiya was around Rufus. She clearly cared about him and she was not very good at hiding her sexual interest in Rufus.
“How would you know? Did she talk to you?” Rufus asked.

“I have eyes and she’s fully aware you’re not your other self. You know you’re getting caught up in all the wrong things. I think she genuinely is attracted to you as you kind, considerate and thoughtful man. It also helps you have zero subtext. What you see is exactly what you get.” Flynn said, Rufus made a face.

“No subtext? Are you saying I’m simple? Cause my IQ s higher than yours.” Rufus informed him, Flynn laughed and waved a hand as if to apologise.

“My mistake, I meant that you have no guile. It’s good, she attracted to your qualities not that other Rufus.” Flynn said.

“I have plenty of guile.” Rufus told him, looking mildly confused and offended.

“You don’t even know what it means.” Flynn argued in amusement.

“I do too.” Rufus said as he turned over his tablet computer and tried to surreptitiously google the word.

“You’re googling it.” Flynn said with a grin. Rufus shook his head, a small smile on his lips before he looked down. He looked back up from his screen.

“I am plenty cunning.” Rufus told him, Flynn laughed and held his hands in mock surrender.

“Ok, my mistake again. But I think Jiya wants you more than the other Rufus. So, stop overthinking it. Just be yourself and hopefully the rest will fall into place and if it doesn’t…then so be it.” Flynn said as it was that easy for Rufus. The man made a face as he didn’t really like Flynn’s advice.

“Is that what you’re doing with Lucy?” Rufus asked dryly.

“Lucy has enough on her plate, I am just supporting her as best I can. We have to do what is best for Holly. That doesn’t necessarily mean we will be romantically entangled.” Flynn said as casually as he could. Rufus gave a look as he was not falling for it.

“So, you’re just seeing what happens and hoping the rest will fall into place?” Rufus asked mockingly as he threw Flynn’s advice back at him. Flynn chuckle and nodded as he realised it was terrible advice.

“Fine, you need to do some work for it to fall into place. But as for Lucy, I’m more concerned with her being happy not her relationship status.” Flynn told him, it was true. Flynn just wanted to see her smile freely without the weight of Rittenhouse and her grief on her like a dark cloud.

“Uhuh.” Rufus drawled as he didn’t believe him. Flynn smiled and shook his head.

“Go away.” He told Rufus in a friendly manner, Rufus laughed and grinned broadly.

“You’re not fooling me.” Rufus told him as he got up from the couch.

“No?” Flynn asked in amusement.

“No and don’t be an asshole to her.” Rufus told him in a serious manner, Flynn nodded as he appreciated Rufus was being a good friend.

“I'll do my best.” Flynn said dryly. He watched Rufus leave and picked up his tablet computer and decided he needed a break from his personal journal. He saw the other document labelled ‘Journal’
in his folders and opened it out of curiosity.

What came up made his eyes widen in surprise. It was a scanned copy of Lucy’s Journal. At least this timeline’s version of it. It was very different. He flicked through the pages and frowned as the words were nearly identical but the handwriting had changed. It was Lucy’s but at the same time, it wasn't. He stopped as he reached a page that was written entirely in Croatian and his writing. This Journal was not the same, he wondered what it could mean.

Lucy lay in bed, restless with her headache. She had tried to doze off but Wyatt’s words haunted her. She hated how he could do that, just get inside her head and make her think the worst of herself. Make her question her abilities and if she was capable of being a parent. She wondered if he was right, could she really connect with Holly? Her mother had turned out to be a monster, would Holly one day think the same of her. She stole Holly’s mother, replaced her. Unintentional as it was, it was still the truth. She pushed the thoughts away as she knew it was Wyatt in her head. She had made the decision to fully commit to this timeline, she was going to do it. She cared about Flynn, she loved Holly which was too easy. She just wanted to grasp onto the happiness they represented. She wanted to purge Rittenhouse out of existence and take her life back.

She huffed a frustrated breath as she rolled over to the edge of the bed and picked up her tablet computer that she had left on the floor. She rolled onto her back and turned It on, she started sifting through the files until she found pictures.

She hesitated for a long moment about whether she should look given she felt like an emotional mess. But in a snap like decision, she opened the gallery. There was over a thousand pictures, she changed the sorting system and made it start from oldest to latest pictures and videos first.

First few pictures and videos were of ultrasound pictures and her with Flynn as a couple. Some looked like they were from other time period. It unnerved her that they’d bring technology from the future to the past but this was their history. They lived in the past, present and future, as she swiped through she heard the door open. She looked over to see Holly walk in. She clutched a stuffed Monkey toy to her chest.

“Hey, what are you doing up?” Lucy asked her, Holly walked up to the bedside and looked up at her and gave a shrug. A shrug that was all Flynn.

“I can’t sleep, can I stay with you?” Holly asked her.

“Sure, come here.” Lucy said, she placed her tablet to the side and moved to the edge of the bed. She grunted as she lifted Holly into the bed and laid back down. She moved to her side of the bed and watched in amusement as Holly buried herself under the blankets and snuggled into Flynn’s side of the bed.

“Daddy’s pillow smells.” Holly said with a giggle as she pulled her monkey to up, so its head was above the blankets.

“I’ve never noticed.” Lucy lied, she moved her face to Flynn’s pillow and inhaled. It smelt like delicious mix of soap, deodorant and something that was indefinably Flynn. It smelt amazing to her. “It’s not bad. Do you want to swap?” She asked, Holly shook her head.

“Are you still sad?” Holly asked her, Lucy decided it was better to be honest than cover up her emotions. Holly was too perceptive for her own good.

“A little but I’ll be ok. Sometimes, I just get a little down but I know I’m very lucky to have you and
Daddy. You both make me very happy.” Lucy told her as she brushed Holly’s hair behind her ear. She felt so much joy and warmth around her. It almost didn’t seem fair to have Holly, but she couldn’t let her go. Not ever.

“You know Oscar the Grouch says it’s important to embrace your feelings and it’s ok to be sad when you’re happy and happy when you’re sad. There’s a song, do you want me to sing it? I think I can sing it in English.” Holly told her, she looked revved up to sing but Lucy smiled and shook her head.

“No, it’s time to settle down and rest.” Lucy told her, even she knew Holly needed her nap. She might have only her vague memories of Amy at this age. But she knew kids were supposed to sleep for a reason. Holly pouted but accepted Lucy’s request.

“What are you doing?” Holly asked.

“Just looking at some photos.” Lucy said, she lifted up the tablet. Holly’s eyes lit up.

“Can I look too?” Holly asked.

“Sure.” Lucy said as she lifted the tablet up so they could both look at the screen. She felt Holly move and rest her cheek against her shoulder. Lucy couldn’t help but smile softly as she swiped slowly through the pictures. She really hoped they didn’t have an R-rated photos.

“I’m in your belly in that photo.” Holly told her, Lucy has been so focussed on Flynn’s and her happy faces that she hadn’t looked at her own figure. But then, she didn’t look pregnant.

“We look at these photos a lot, don’t we?” Lucy asked her in amusement as her other self must have told Holly stories. Her heart ached as she realised she could never give that to Holly.

“Uhuh, are we going to visit Nanna and Grandpa soon?” Holly asked her.

“I don’t know.” Lucy said in a non-committal manner.

“I think we should, it was so much fun. We got to play outside, I was allowed to go to park and Grandpa lets me play with Vuk and Mila. Can we get a dog?” Holly asked her.

“I don’t know.” Lucy said nervously as she really didn’t want to agree to anything she couldn’t promise.

“I know we’re not allowed to have a dog here, but one day we’ll live in a house that is on top of the ground, right?” Holly asked.

“I hope so.” Lucy said as she flicked to the next series of photos. She and Holly sank into a comfortable silence as they looked at the photos. Sometimes Holly would comment on her favourite photo and share a tiny story about it that her or Flynn’s other-self had told her. Lucy smiled and after a while, Holly drifted off to sleep. Lucy continued looking at her other life through photos.

Part of her wished she had all the memories. She wanted the memories as she looked happy, she tried to remember the last time she had been genuinely happy that wasn’t some by-product of utter relief at surviving death. This Lucy, she seemed happier even with everything not being great. She searched through the tablet curious of the other contents when she found two journals.

She opened the newest and felt like she hit a gold mine. It was a typed-up Journal of her other-self’s thoughts. She smiled in relief as finally she had more than Holly’s insights on her and Flynn’s life. She looked over to Holly who was blissfully asleep, she was glad she had the journal because no matter what it told her; she could give back a piece of Holly’s mother to her. Weirdly knowing that,
Jiya woke up with a start as the vision came to an end. She found herself on the floor. She had one arm up against the bed and the other splayed across the floor. Just like the vision, she looked at her right hand and watched as she flexed her fingers. The pain fading from her hand and settling behind her eyes as it always did. She dropped her left arm down and rolled up into a seated position. She pressed at her nose and cursed as she pulled her hand back to see the blood. She sometimes truly hated her powers. She had pretty good control of it but sometimes ‘the powers that be’ liked to hijack her and show her something.

Today’s vision was terrifying, her whole body ached and she tasted blood as she had bit her own tongue. She pushed off the floor, ignoring her body’s want to stay on the ground. She hated her powers, she wondered if she would ever have more than one good vision. But now was not the time to dwell as she needed to write and draw down everything she had seen while it was still fresh.

She grimaced as she stretched her arms above her head and moved to her toiletry bag. She pulled out a facial wipe and cleaned the blood and sweat from her face. She checked the mirror to make certain there was no trace of blood on her face. Once it was clean, she threw the wipe into the bin by the door and walked out. She didn’t bother making the bed. She’d be back in it after dinner, having visions usually gave her migraines and nightmares.

She ran a hand through her hair and went to the room dedicate to her visions. She pushed open the door and sat down at the desk. She picked up her mobile phone and turned on the recording app.

“Vision number 56,” Jiya recounted the time and date, “Stained glass window, possibly a church. Abandoned for some time. Large structure. My view point was from a person laying on the ground.” Jiya said as she pulled out her art book and pencils. She turned a new page and picked up a 2B pencil. “I saw the mothership, Emma was there. I think it was in the present year. She was holding a beer and the brand only just changed their label last month.” She added as she starting sketching the stained window she had seen.

A knock sounded at the door, Jiya paused the recording. She turned and saw Rufus standing in the doorway.

“Hey, come in.” She said as she kept drawing, she couldn’t stop until the images were on paper. It just helped her to clear it out of her mind.

“New vision?” he asked warily.

“Yeah,” She said as she didn’t pause in her work. She felt woozy and a little spaced out from the migraine sitting behind her eyes. Nausea rolled through her, she swallowed as she hoped she didn’t vomit. Other Rufus didn’t abide by illness or weakness.

“Are you ok?” He asked with concern, she looked up at him strangely. “What?” he asked with a small smile as pulled up a chair and sat next to her.

“Nothing, I usually get migraines.” She said, trying not to bite at him as he was being sympathetic and kind. She didn’t want to load her baggage on him.

“Is there anything I can do. Get you water, a cold flannel?” he offered, she gave a small smile as she kept drawing.
“Not yet, maybe later.” She said, she blinked back tears as it was really a kind offer.

“Ok, so is this a good time to ask a question?” he asked gently.

“Sure, as long as you don’t mind me drawing.” She said not looking up.

“Not at all.” Rufus said, they lapsed into a silence and she looked his way to see he was just watching her draw. There was something oddly soothing that he was at least trying to accept this side of her even though he was scared of it. How could anyone not be scared of someone who saw the future.

“So, what’s up?” Jiya asked, breaking the silence, it snapped Rufus out of his reverie.

“I was looking over the math of what my other-self was doing. You know to travel into our own timeline.” He started.

“Why? It will never work.” Jiya said, she tried not to get upset but she really couldn’t handle him dying again. Not over something as stupid as being able to time travel into one’s timeline. In her time of working this project, she had learned to despise time travel. Time or Fate was fickle and it liked to play checks and balances. Rittenhouse would alter something in the past, Fate would balance it out. Whether it was with more cruelty or a little salvation. It just wasn’t worth it. At least to Jiya, it wasn’t worth it. There was no such thing as a utopian society, no matter how much one fiddled with the past.

“Where did you get it from?” he asked.

“It was in the journal. At least the beginning of the equations.” Jiya told him, she hoped Rufus wouldn’t put her through this again.

“In Lucy’s Journal?” Rufus asked her.

“Yeah, there’s a scanned copy of it on the mainframe. Should be able to access it on your tablet. Page 132. I wrote it, I don’t know why it’s in my writing or how I even knew it or what it’s for.” She told him in an exhausted manner, Rufus frowned as Flynn and Lucy never said anything about calculations being in the Journal. Let alone Jiya writing it. He wondered if it was a difference in this timeline or it was in the original Journal. But he kept the question to himself as Jiya didn't know, now was not the time to press the subject.

“Well, I don’t think it was for travelling into our own timelines.” Rufus told her, that made Jiya look up in shock.

“No?” she asked.

“No, why would you think so?” he asked her.

“I didn’t. We argued about it a lot. You took over the project and-“

“We didn’t talk about it.” Rufus finished, she nodded. She still wondered months after Rufus’ death why she had been with him. All she could come up with was that she admired him deeply, when he wanted her. It was like a dream come true even though the reality wasn’t so pretty.

“Yeah.” She said.

“What did you think it was?” Rufus asked casually. Jiya sighed and pressed a thumb into the pressure point on her brow bone.
"I don’t know, it was months ago. I moved onto other things and left it alone.” Jiya said honestly, she knew it was a brush off but she hadn’t thought about it in months. She really didn’t want to start now.

“Mind looking at it with me tomorrow?” he asked.

“No, I don’t mind.” Jiya said reluctantly, she didn't want to go down that rabbit hole again.

“I promise I won’t bite.” Rufus told her, jokingly.

“That’s a shame.” Jiya replied with a smile, Rufus returned the smile with his own. There was something so incredibly earnest and down to earth.

“So, this vision is it anything interesting?” he asked, changing the topic.

“I don’t know but I feel like it’s going to happen soon.” Jiya said.

“Timestamped?” He asked, Jiya gave a half shrug and shook her head.

“Emma was holding a James Boags beer; the label is fairly new. The company rebranded a month ago. I know because I drink it.” Jiya told him.

“You drink beer?” Rufus asked surprised.

“Yes, do you?” Jiya asked.

“I do, I also like fruity cocktails.” He said, she smiled and chuckled. “They taste good. Especially banana daiquiris.” He informed her in a defensive manner.

“With umbrella and lime garnish?” She asked teasingly.

“It’s not a cocktail without the umbrella and lime.” He deadpanned, Jiya snorted a laugh before she closed her eyes and blew out a breath. Her migraine getting the better of her. She felt Rufus’ hand on her arm. “I’ll go get you some water, you got meds for the migraine?” he asked her gently.

“Yeah, but I’ll have them at dinner as it has to be with food or I’ll be sick.” She told him, she opened her eyes to see him nod.

“I’m sure there’s something in kitchen that suffice as enough food to take your meds.” Rufus said.

“They knock me out and I really need to get these drawings finished.” Jiya told him.

“You’ll feed them into a pattern recognition program?” he asked as he looked at the half-finished sketch.

“Yep.” She replied.

“I’ll get you some water at least.” Rufus told her.

“Thank you.” Jiya said, she watched him leave and turned back to her drawing. She took a deep inhale and slowly exhaled before she went back to her sketch.

An hour or so later,
Flynn heard the tiny footsteps of Holly as she raced into the lounge room with a monkey toy. He placed his tablet computer on the coffee table. Just in time too as Holly climbed up into his lap and hugged him. He smiled as he cuddled her close and pressed a kiss to the top of her head. His heart full but also aching as this reminded him of when Iris was little. But he let the memories play through, he never wanted to brush away the memories of Iris. He just hoped one day, the ache in his chest would lessen.

He felt Holly pull back and he smiled at her, she looked energetic and ready to take on the world. He was more than happy to fill up his afternoon with hanging out with her.

“Hi, Daddy.” Holly said with a smile.

“Hey, how did you sleep?” Flynn asked her.

“Good, Mommy is still asleep. I didn’t wake her.” Holly informed her.

“Good, she needs the sleep.” Flynn said, he still remembered Lucy’s nightmare from last night. She didn’t want to talk about it. He wasn’t going to push her, as she needed time. “Want a snack?” he asked Holly.

“Yes, please.” Holly replied as she pushed herself out of his lap and hugged the monkey toy to her chest. Flynn stood up and stretched his body out.

“You have good dreams.” He asked as they walked over to the kitchen area.

“Yes.” Holly replied, “I dreamed we lived on top of the ground and we have dogs.” She told him as they reached the fridge.

“Dogs?” Flynn asked as he opened the fridge and pulled out the milk carton.

“Yes, two of them and Mommy’s got a baby in her tummy. She was this big.” Holly said she made a rounding gesture to her own stomach. Flynn wore an amused expression as he couldn’t wait to see Lucy’s face when Holly shared this dream with her.

“This is some dream you had.” Flynn commented. He poured out two glasses of milk, returned the milk to fridge before he returned to the bench and picked up one of the many banana blueberry muffins that Denise had brought by midway through the afternoon. He placed it on a plate and cut into quarters.

“Uuh, when are you going to put the baby in Mommy’s tummy?” Holly asked, Flynn pursed his lips as he really didn’t know how to answer that question. He wasn’t going to laugh which was his first reaction. Instead he focussed on making their afternoon snack as he added some strawberries to the plate before he moved it with the glasses of milk to the table.

“Not for a long while.” Flynn offered as he wasn’t committing to anything. Holly looked disappointed and Flynn hoped it more about not being above ground than him impregnating Lucy.

“Oh, will we get the dogs soon?” Holly asked as she climbed into a chair at the table and ate a strawberry.

“Not until we’re above ground.” Flynn answered, Holly pursed her lips and made a thoughtful face.

“Can we look at puppies on the tablet?” She asked him with a hopeful expression.

“Sure, we can look but we won’t be getting any for a while.” Flynn warned her.
“It’s ok, I gotta find them first.” Holly told him in a matter of fact manner.

“Ok.” Flynn said in amusement.

Later that evening,

“Dinner is served.” Connor said as he and Rufus placed down the bowls of food for everyone.

“What is this?” Flynn asked politely as look at the bowl of mush before him. He was not a fussy eater but he liked to know what the mystery was before he consumed it.

“It’s Spaghetti Bolognaise. Yes, I overcooked the pasta but the garlic bread is perfect.” Connor told them. Flynn made an ‘ah’ face. Jiya looked pale and exhausted.

“It looks good.” Lucy lied as her spaghetti fell to pieces as she dragged her fork through it. Holly didn’t mind at all as she was already power housing her way through hers.

“Yum.” Holly said with a smile before she ate another spoonful, she clearly knew the drill as she hadn’t even touched her fork.

“One happy critic. Jiya, are you ok?” Connor asked as he sat down. Rufus sat down next to Jiya and started pulling the garlic bread apart before taking some for himself.

“Yes, I’m fine. Just a migraine.” Jiya said, she held up a couple of tablets. “I’m taking my meds.” She assured him before she popped them in her mouth and followed it with a forkful of mush.

“Good, good.” Connor said before he picked up his spoon. “So, everything of interest happen today?” Connor asked them, playing the role of ‘father’ to a T.

“I has a dream that we got two dogs and Mommy had a baby in her tummy.” Holly said with a smile.

“Lucy, something you want to tell us?” Connor asked in amusement.

“No, it was only a dream.” Lucy told him, a light blush on her cheeks as Holly knew how to make a ruckus.

“Not yet, but Daddy will put a baby in her belly.” Holly said firmly as if it was a given. Rufus coughed to cover a laugh as Flynn and Lucy wore the exact expression of ‘yep, our kid just spoke about our sex life in public without any shame’. Jiya smothered a laugh while Connor pursed his lips and pretended to give it some thought.

“Holly, that’s not polite to discuss at the dinner table.” Flynn said in a soft chastising manner.

“Oh, well I saw the dogs we’re going to get. They looked like them but not the same.” Holly said continuing on but gratefully changing topic. Flynn and Lucy exchanged a look as they had barely spoken about a relationship, their kid was already wanting a sibling.

“The breed of dog.” Flynn said, helping to explain what Holly was saying.

“How exciting.” Connor drawled in amusement.

“What breeds?” Jiya asked Holly.
“French bulldog and a beagle.” Flynn answered for Holly as she had a mouthful of spaghetti which no one wanted to see. Holly swallowed her food and nodded.

“A black beagle with white fur too and French bulldog is brown all over.” Holly clarified as the details were very important.

“Why do you ask?” Flynn asked Jiya who wore an odd expression.

“Nothing. Just curious.” Jiya said casually, but no one was convinced by her façade. But they let it go for the sake of the meal.

“Chow time.” Tom said, at least that’s what Wyatt called him as the guards he had were assholes with no name tags. So, Wyatt named them. Tom placed a bowl of mush with a spoon through the food slot in the door with a bottle of water.

“What is this?” Wyatt asked as he picked up the bowl and spoon. He made a face of disgust as he dragged his spoon through it.

“Food made by Connor Mason. Man can make billions but can’t cook to save his life. Enjoy.” Tom said, he started to walk away but Wyatt called out.

“Wait, can I have the newspaper?” Wyatt asked politely.

“What?” Tom asked blandly.

“Cause I’m bored.” Wyatt said in a ‘Duh’ tone.

“Shocker, but no, I’m not done with it yet.” Tom drawled sarcastically, he gave a nonchalant shrug.

“How about tomorrow?” Wyatt asked.

“How about you eat your food and be happy with what you got.” Tom told him.

“I’d be happier with a newspaper than this.” Wyatt told him, how he wished the man was gay as he would sweet talk the man into giving him what he needed. But nope, the guy was annoyingly heterosexual.

“I’d be happy with $16 million dollars and Jane Seymour on my arm. Looks like we’ll both have to live with the disappointment of not getting what we want.” Tom said, he gave a mock salute and walked away. Wyatt blew out a breath of annoyance as he needed a newspaper.
“Jiya was acting strange over dinner.” Lucy said as she returned from the bathroom. Flynn was already in his pyjama pants and a t-shirt as he sat up in bed; reading a book with the lamp by his bedside table on. The lighting in the bunker was still terrible as always.

“She wasn’t the only one. Did Holly’s dream get to you?” Flynn asked as he closed his book. He placed on top of pile books just under the bed. He watched her as she tossed her dirty laundry into the hamper they had and placed her toiletry bag on top of the dresser.

“No.” Lucy said with a sigh, she rubbed at her forehead and eyes. She didn’t know why but she was just bone deep exhausted. “It was just a long day and Wyatt…he said some things and I let it get under my skin.” She admitted.

“He wants his freedom. But I agree with Rufus, he should stay where he is.” Flynn told her.

“I agree.” Lucy said with a sigh as she awkwardly climbed over him to get to her side of the bed. They may have had a moment in the hallway. But there was still so much in the air that she wasn’t sure how to act. She was so afraid of screwing everything up.

“It’s none of my business what you and Wyatt discuss, but if you want to talk about it. You can. You can tell me anything.” He assured her, she got under the blankets and rested her head on her pillow.

“I know.” She said, she really appreciated their friendship as it had been a grounding force in her life after her time in Rittenhouse. “It’s just that he’s trying to get me to help him get out.” She frowned as her wording sounded off to her ears.

“Lights out?” he asked.

“Yes.” She replied, Flynn turned off the lights and everything went dark. They lapsed into a companionable silence.

“Being in a cell isn’t easy.” Flynn commiserated as he took a deep inhale and exhaled. Lucy felt the bed shift and could just make out Flynn’s body shape as he turned to face her.

“I am sorry, I didn’t know it was a trap when we met up that day.” She blurted, they had discussed it before but she felt the need to reiterate in the moment. She had helped imprison him. She knew what it was like to be trapped in a tiny room. To be a prison.

“Lucy, there was always going to be a time that I’d end up in prison. I was angry back then, but I’m past it now.” Flynn told her, she believed him.

“It’s still not easy, to be trapped.” Lucy said with a tired sigh.

“Speaking of Rittenhouse.” Flynn said gently prying, she nodded. She never told anyone what happened. Yes, she revealed that she was a descendant of John Rittenhouse. But she never talked about what her mother and the Rittenhouse acolytes did or how she broke. They’d never understand.

“I want it to be over. I just want to take out Rittenhouse here and now, keep what we have here. To just grow into this life and leave all the bad in the past.” She said in a hushed voice, her emotions getting the better of her for a moment. The nightmare of the night before was still fresh and she felt the fragility of the present they lived in. How vicious Emma was about taking everything of Lucy’s away from her.
“I feel the same.” Flynn murmured softly. Lucy smiled in relief at hearing him verbally confirm it. “Have you read the journal from our timeline?” Flynn asked her.

“Yes.” She said, her smile faltered as she didn't want to talk about it. Worse, she lying as she never read it all. She always wondered about the Lucy in the Journal. Was she becoming more like her every day or the opposite? She knew when her future-self visited, they were opposites of the spectrum. Lucy could not imagine being her, it felt unnatural to who she believed herself to be and the person she wanted to become.

“I mean more than the pages I tore out.” He said, she shook her head and remembered they were in the dark and couldn’t see her.

“No.” she said, she wanted to but her mother had made her burn it as proof of her allegiance. “I wanted to but I burned it.” She admitted, she half wished the lights were on so she could see what he was thinking but at the same time preferred the mystery. She felt a kernel of anxiety come back, she had felt safe in the dark. However, she decided she had to be honest with him. “It was part of my initiation to Rittenhouse.” She said, confessing to him in the dark was easier. She hadn’t shared this information with him.

“That was not in the Journal.” He mused quietly, she felt her anxiety ease somewhat as she knew the Journal had been a lifeline to Flynn. She feared maybe he would see it as a betrayal but luckily, he didn’t.

“Please don’t tell the others, I- I can’t handle them knowing the real truth. You know how they are.” She said, he did know.

“It’s not my place to tell them.” Flynn said assuring her, that her secrets were safe with him. He understood Rufus and Wyatt were very black and white about certain matters. They never really understood the nuances. Something he found amusing given Wyatt was basically the same as him. A career soldier, but unlike Flynn; Wyatt never learnt subterfuge or what it was like to go undercover; to have to shed one’s skin and morality to get a job done. Delta force were heroes, they were told they were killing 'bad' people and were sent in to do tough work. They always came out the hero no matter what they did.

Flynn’s career was more varied and never felt like hero. He never expected or wanted to be worshiped as one. He did what was asked of him, he protected people and sometimes it meant being left with an oily feeling on one’s spirit. It was the sense that the job was imperfect, that it was paradoxical that people believed you needed to be violent to bring about peace.

“But I think they’d give you the benefit of the doubt if you told them.” He said softly, as he could just make out her figure in the dark. She had just pulled her knees up to make herself seem smaller. It reminded him of last night, when she had her nightmare.

“No, they wouldn’t.” Lucy told him with an aggravated sigh as she pushed up in bed and leaned against the wall. She ran her hands through her hair. “I tried to tell Wyatt and he talked over me and told me how to feel and rewrote over the truth. Rufus was so wrapped up in Jiya and her visions. No, I just can’t.” She told him, she felt anxiety get the better of her as she remembered how she felt sex was preferable to Wyatt’s rationale to maintain her as ‘perfect’ and ‘unsullied’ by Rittenhouse.

“I’m not saying you have to tell them now. But if it came up, I believe Rufus would understand.” Flynn said as he sat up in bed and looked her way. Tears filled Lucy eyes as she threaded her fingers through her hair. She pulled on it as it seemed to calm the loss of control she felt.

“How can they ever understand it when I don’t get it myself. My mother dragged me to kicking and
screaming into Rittenhouse. I fought so hard, it’s so stupid cause I don’t even know how to win a
fight. How is it I can outsmart you and not my mother?” Lucy asked him, Flynn moved closer to her
and gently pulled her hands out of her hair. He held them in his as he moved in close to grab her eye
line.

“Rittenhouse has two hundred years of experience pulling in it’s members and indoctrinating them to
the cause. I only have a couple decades as a career soldier, I’m sorry I’m a disappointment.” He
deadpanned. Lucy gave a watery laugh, he released one of her hands and brushed the hair from her
face and tilted her face up to his. He wore a serious expression. “Lucy, I don’t know what they did to
you in there but-“

“You tell me to let it go, I might strangle you.” Lucy snapped.

“I was going to say ‘accept’ that it happened. You can’t change it, but you can learn from it.” Flynn
told her in a matter of fact manner.

“I was Rittenhouse.” Lucy told him in a hushed voice, she searched his face for the horror, the hatred
and disappointment. But she saw nothing but acceptance and understanding. It perplexed her as he
had the most reason to hate her.

“I suspected as much given the Journal.” Flynn said as he moved his free hand to her upper arm in a
silent gesture of comfort and support.

“I was the enemy, why are you so accepting of this?” she asked him as she pushed his hold off her as
she needed the space. Flynn didn’t it fight it as he respected her need. He just relaxed his hands into
his lap.

“You were working inadvertently for Rittenhouse when you were chasing me and we first met. They
revealed their true colours and pulled you into the fold. But you broke their hold on you otherwise
you wouldn’t be here.” Flynn said, as if it were simple.

“They crammed me into a tiny box. They kept me in for weeks. My mother would espouse the
virtues of Rittenhouse while I was losing my mind. Then they pull me out and try to drown me in an
ice bath. They broke me with my worst fears and turned me into one of them.” She told him,
annoyed at the anxiety she felt at sharing but needing him it know it wasn't simple for her.

She wanted to give him all the gory details but at the same time she just wasn't ready to acknowledge
the trauma she had experienced. She had been claustrophobic and healthy fear of drowning,
Rittenhouse and their indoctrination had put both to the test. How could she explain that sometimes
she could close her eyes and still hear her mother's voice telling her to stop torturing herself.

“It’s how some cults condition a member, they break the member down with their worst fears and
then build them back up into what they want. It’s a terrifying how effective it is as a tool to control a
person.” Flynn told her in a soft manner, like he understood her completely. While at the same time
left enough room for her to feel like she wasn’t an open book to him.

“It worked. You know, the crazy part. They convinced me that I was doing it to myself. That I was
in control of it all. When it was all over, my mother was so proud of me. I’ve spent nearly all my life
waiting for her to be proud of me. Truly proud of me. Finally, she was proud and there I was so
broken, that I wanted to do whatever they told to keep her proud of me. To accept me. I burned the
journal to prove I was with them. I knew it was wrong but at the time if felt like the most natural
thing to do. It felt right and now, I just regret it. I regret it all.” Lucy said feeling so alien inside her
own body. The confusion of who she wanted to be, who she thought she was and the woman she
became in those six weeks became a muddled mix.
She appreciated that he didn’t say anything. That he didn’t try to give her a pep talk as she just needed to get it off her chest.

“I let them twist me into a person I didn’t recognise. I killed an innocent man that I didn’t have to. But I did to appease my mother and prove my worth. Pulling the trigger on that man, knowing I was responsible for his death. He did nothing to deserve it. He was just a good man trying to help his friend.” Lucy pushed her knees down and shifted so she was sitting next to Flynn. Their arms touched and the contact was enough for her.

“Wyatt told me that I had to do it like it made it ok. But it’s not ok, it weighs on me that part of me was proud that I proved myself to my mother and to Rittenhouse. It’s so sick.” She told him, bleak honesty of the time. She braced herself for the same speech Wyatt gave her. How she wasn’t a bad person, that her actions were excusable.

“My CO used to say that there are monsters in this world. And the only way to beat them was to get down on their level and fight fire with fire. Sometimes it works, but in all honesty; you end up becoming just like the monsters you’re fighting.” He said in a knowing manner, she knew he understood because he’d been driven to such lengths himself. She had pulled him back from the ledge, she just felt like she teetered on the edge. It wasn’t really until the others laid off asking her about Rittenhouse and she became friends with Flynn that she felt pulled back.

“Like us and Rittenhouse.” Lucy said despondently as she still struggled to see whether they were really making a positive effect or making things worse especially when they were on mission. Flynn gave a nod.

“The lines get blurry, you become disillusioned. It happens.” Flynn told her.

“I just never understood it but I was one of them. I knew who they were from the beginning. Yet, they still turned me. I never thought I’d be so easy but I was. I became so blind to it all.” She admitted but she felt it was a lie. She felt weak, Wyatt got under skin with ease and made her question herself. Her mother did the exact same thing.

“Lucy, they tortured and brainwashed you.” He touched her hand which stopped her from rebuking his statement. “Let me finish, I’m not placating or saying you were justified. I’m just saying that you need to keep in mind that you would’ve broken no matter what.” he told her.

“How is that comforting?” She asked.

“It was inevitable, but you lasted a long time before they broke you. Be proud of that and remember you broke out of their control. You’re no longer Rittenhouse and you aren’t now just as I’m not the terrorist I was labelled. You have learned from the experience, and yes, you will have to carry the guilt of your actions. But they don’t have to define you as evil or wrong and it doesn’t have to be how others see you.” Flynn said.

Lucy wished she could rationalise it so neatly but she understood what he was saying but she preferred his way of seeing it. The acknowledgment that she had been wrong and it was ok to feel guilt.

She moved her hand into his and interlaced their fingers as it was moments like this that were why she deeply appreciated their friendship. He looked past her mask and saw her. He truly saw her warts and all; he didn’t just to justify her actions or try to make her feel pretty and place her on a pedestal. He didn’t expect her to perfect and innocent. He valued her in a way no other had before, he gave her the gift of allowing her to be herself.
Yes, he once believed her to be the woman in the Journal. He had let that version of her go and got to know her. He was probably the only person she knew who did know her and nearly all of her secrets. She just revealed her darkest to him and he hadn’t walked away. He was still in bed beside her, she leaned her head on his shoulder, not caring if he felt the tears dampen his shirt.

“It doesn’t always work that way.” Lucy said, she knew Rufus and Wyatt still called Flynn a terrorist behind his back. She even looked up the word in the dictionary just to correct them. It wasn’t that she was defending Flynn’s actions but she was just tired of them using it to distance themselves. To prove they weren’t bad as him, to Lucy it was splitting hairs. “It doesn’t stop the nightmares.” She added.

“No, but the nightmares will hopefully fade over time. You do need to cut yourself some slack and take a breather. This isn’t all on you.” He told her.

“But it is my fault, my family and my Journal started all of this. I burned my journal.” Lucy said.

“In our timeline, yes. In this one, it’s not. There’s a scanned copy of it, everyone has it.” Flynn said.

“I didn’t even think about it.” She said as she couldn’t believe it still existed in this timeline. But then her other-self never endured being indoctrinated to Rittenhouse. It also explained why there were two Journals on her tablet. The only question was why would she share it so openly, “Have you looked at it?” she asked him.

“Yes, there something wrong with it.” Flynn said.

“What do you mean?” Lucy asked.

“There are some journal entries not written by you but your handwriting has changed. I wrote to myself in the Journal as did a third author.” He said, Lucy frowned as the idea that she shared her journal didn’t seem right.

“My tablet is just under the bed. Can you grab it for me?” She asked him, Flynn released her hand before he leaned over the bed. He reached under the bed and felt around until he found her tablet. He picked it up.

“Here.” He said, she took it from him and turned it on. The light of the screen momentarily blinding them. “Oh.” Flynn said in disgust that even Lucy felt at the offensive level brightness the screen spewed at them.

“Sorry,” she apologised, opened the other Journal file and waited for it to load. “Our future has changed, so the Journal would change too. But, oh my god…” Lucy drawled in disbelief. He was right, it was a scanned document of her Journal and her writing was different. It looked jagged and childish but she recognised it as her own.

She flicked through the pages and saw page she assumed was Flynn’s. It wasn’t in English which meant he wanted to either keep it a secret or prove to his past self the journal was real. She found the third author and knew immediately it was Jiya’s handwriting. It didn’t make sense to her, why would Flynn and Jiya write the Journal. Why was her writing off?

“But why would you and Jiya have to write it with me?” Lucy asked, it seemed to defeat the purpose of a journal when more than one person wrote in it.

“I don’t know, but right now it’s not important nor does it say anything about us changing timelines. It doesn’t acknowledge what happened.” Flynn said.
“If only it would give us all the answers.” Lucy mused as she closed the flap dropped it in her lap. The room was dark once more.

“If only, we’ll figure it out.” Flynn said wryly as it was how they always operated. Completely in the dark trying to figure it out.

“How are you?” she asked softly, she had been so wrapped up in her own problems that she’d let Flynn’s take a back seat. It wasn’t fair as they were in this together.

“I’m good, really good.” He said, she wore a sardonic smile as he was not one to ever complain.

“Garcia,” she said, using his first name, it still felt weird but she wanted him to know she was being serious. “It can’t be easy. None of this can be easy for you. You’ve got this whole other life here, you have family that know you, me and Holly.” She said, pointing out the obvious.

“I know.” Flynn said.

“You know, if we can takedown Rittenhouse without changing the past. This is it. Are you going to be ok with that?” she asked in a careful manner. She knew he didn’t want anything to change but there was a difference between wanting something and the reality of possessing it.

“Yes.” Flynn replied without any doubt or hesitation.

“You have a half-brother.” Lucy said.

“I know and honestly, I don’t know what to think or feel about it. I lost everything when I asked what Rittenhouse was. Now, I have nearly all of it back and I’m afraid it will be taken from me again. But at the same time, I feel spoiled because I get to step into the shoes of a man who made better choices than me.” He told her, she could relate to that in a big way.

“I know exactly how you feel. I read my Journal, my personal journal from this timeline. She just seemed to have a knack of making everything come together. She’s me but somehow better, she was never truly broken by Rittenhouse or other people.” She said eluding to Wyatt and her mother.

“They still had their moments.” Flynn said.

“I know, I just worry about Holly, what if she knows I’m not her mother. I don’t know how to be a Mom and you are just so good with her.” Lucy told him.

“I’ve got experience. Trust me, when Iris was born; I had no clue what I was doing. You just learn as you go and do the best you can. Most importantly, just love her.” Flynn said, Lucy huffed a laugh.

“Loving Holly is the easy part.” She told him, she handed Flynn her tablet computer and he placed it back on the ground under the bed.

“She’s great though she has her moments.” Flynn quipped, Lucy chuckled as he was right about that. They both shuffled back into bed and laid down facing one another. She wished she had to confidence to move three more inches and curl into his side. She wanted to rest her head on his chest and listen to the steady beat of his heart. To be held in his arms.

“The dream about me being pregnant and us having two dogs?” she asked with a laugh. She pulled the blankets over her again. She made herself as comfortable as she could.

“Yeah, that’s one of them.” Flynn said in amusement.
“How are we going to do this? I mean us and parenting.” She asked him, she watched him sink back down into the bed and settle his head on his pillow as he faced her.

“We take it slowly, I think we owe it to ourselves not to rush things.” He said, he reached out under the blankets and touched her hand. She smiled softly as she moved her hand in his and interlaced their fingers. She knew it was corny to be a grown woman holding hands with a man in bed when they could be doing so much more. But she liked this for now as there was just so much going on.

Lucy was relieved to hear him say they wouldn’t rush things. She trusted Flynn completely but she still felt she needed time to process her grief that still lingered. She needed to find the balance in her life and looking after Holly.

But most of all she remembered how she rushed it with Wyatt. She didn’t want this relationship to implode. She also didn’t want him to feel as if he were a crutch or her hero coming to her rescue. She wondered if he recognised that or if he too needed time to adjust. She knew he was valid in needing time as he’d been through a lot and her confession was more than anyone could handle.

“I’d like that, I just feel so overwhelmed and I really want to be a good mother to Holly. I want us to be a family.” Lucy told him in a low voice, she revealed a lot of herself tonight that she didn’t see the point in keeping anything else to herself.

“With two dogs and another child?” Flynn asked in amusement.

“Yes, but not until after Rittenhouse is gone.” She said, stirring him up. She wished she could see his expression now. She knew he was teasing her but it was fun to just be teased and be amused.

“I think that is wise. I also would like to take you on an actual first date before we think about another child.” He told her, Lucy chuckled.

“First date, there’s a novel concept.” Lucy drawled in a flirtatious manner. A smile played across her lips as she loved the normalcy of a date. Then she wondered what Flynn would be like on a date and what they would even do. Most of their time was spent in groups and the only time they were alone was like right now, in the dark.

“I know, maybe, if you’re lucky. I’ll put out after dinner and some wine.” Flynn drawled mockingly, Lucy laughed they lapsed into a companionable silence. Lucy moved closer to him, daring herself to be more forward with him. She knew he wouldn’t reject her, she loved the safety of that. Flynn released her hand and pulled her in close. She smiled as she rested her head on his chest just as she wanted to.

“Do you think Holly has Jiya’s gift of seeing the future?” Flynn asked her as he wrapped his arms around her, held her close.

“No, I think she has wishful thinking. She asked me if we could get a dog before she fell asleep in here.” Lucy told him, she chuckled as their kid was smart but she didn’t think Holly had Jiya’s gift. They would’ve been told if she did. Neither had seen her have a seizure like what Jiya had.

“That’s a relief.” Flynn said with a sigh.

“Afraid of that future with two dogs?” she asked teasingly.

“No, but I am afraid that if she had Jiya’s visions she’d also have visions of bad occurrences. I wouldn’t want her to be haunted like Jiya.” Flynn said, Lucy’s smile fell slightly as she hadn’t even thought of that but now she had. She could see the concern.
“Same.” Lucy said softly.

“Though two dogs are a lot of work.” Flynn mused, Lucy smiled.

“Hey, still up?” Rufus said surprised as Jiya came into the living area. He couldn’t sleep as he was overthinking his life. So, he’d turn on the TV to block it out.

“Yeah, migraine won’t go. What are you watching?” She asked as she leaned heavily on the back of the couch.

“Syfy channel, Wynonna Earp marathon.” Rufus said as the TV was running ads at the moment.

“I love this show.” Jiya said as she sat down next to him, she didn’t leave any personal space as she sank down into couch with a sigh and leaned her head against his arm.

“I have to ask how are things with my family? Have you met them?” he asked her, Jiya looked at him and he wished he’d stayed quiet as she looked miserably ill and exhausted. He lifted up his arm and Jiya shifted closer to him, he rested his arm around her. She gave a content sigh as she always did in the other timeline.

“Not yet, you look after your Mom and brother Kevin but after what happened, it was easier to let them believe you died in the explosion. Rittenhouse has left them alone ever since. But don’t worry, Denise has a security team on them just in case.” Jiya assured him.

“What about your family?” he asked, she blew out a slow breath.

“Father died of Brain cancer and my mother is in Lebanon. My mother and I don’t talk too often, so she hasn’t missed me yet.” Jiya said with a shrug, she saw his strange look. “What?” she asked.

“No, it’s just strange how some things change and others stay the same.” He remarked, a stray thought passed through his mind about the present and their future.

“What’s wrong?” She asked as she saw his frown.

“We were never this far ahead of Rittenhouse. I just worry Emma from our timeline could ruin our chances of finishing this. I just want to go home and see my family, be with you above ground.” Rufus told her, letting her in and sharing his thoughts with her beyond their work.

“You want to know a secret?” Jiya asked as she sat up a little straighter and pushed away from him. So their faces were level with one another.

“What?” He asked as she looked happy and he wanted to know what would give her such levity in dark times.

“I’ve seen the end.” She told him in a low voice.

“End?” Rufus asked a little scared of what it meant.

“We win, I don’t know how but I saw a vision of us at Golden Gate Bridge park having a barbecue.
Holly playing in the sun with Denise’s daughter Olivia and a puppy. All of us alive and smiling as we cheers to our success. It’s such a beautiful day.” Jiya told him with a serene smile. Rufus didn’t know whether to be elated it was Jiya’s first happy vision or be afraid that it could change.

“I didn’t see that in your vision room.” Rufus blurted, that room was filled with dark themes and he was sure he’d remember puppies and happiness.

“Visions can change, I figure the less people I tell the more likely it will happen. You’re the first I’ve told.” She said with a small smile as she smoothed her hands up the front of his t-shirt. She locked eyes with him. “We’ll get there, and it’s not long. Holly looks nearly the age she should for it to happen in the next year or so.” She told him, she left out some minor details because they kept shifting but the overall message of the vision remained the same. It would all come to pass, they’d all survive.

“A dog? Did it look like one of the dogs Holly described?” Rufus asked.

“Yes.” Jiya said with a chuckle as Rufus looked like he wasn’t sure what to think. “Don’t worry, she doesn’t have super powers. I think she described her favourite dogs and she gets one of them.” Jiya clarified.

“Are you sure? Her dream was like really detailed.” Rufus said sceptical, though what Jiya was saying was logical.

“Yes, she is a very healthy kid. No seizures or other prophetic dreams yet. But she is very perceptive. Don’t cheat at Go Fish with her. She doesn’t like it when others cheat.” Jiya warned him.

“Why are you telling me this? About the vision.” he clarified, Jiya gave a shrug.

“I figured you’d appreciate knowing what I’ve seen given it’s not your death or anything dark. We looked really happy. I mean this version of you with me.” She told him, as she applied it to the future of them.

“You knew we were coming.” He stated as it wasn’t a question, she gave a half shrug. He really wanted to hold her, as hearing her vision relieved some of the tension in him. It was a first as her visions left him twisted in knots. But he wondered why she had been surprised to see them if she had already expected them.

“Not all of it. I just had whispers of visions. Rufus, I’ve seen bits and pieces of my future. Sometimes they change and sometimes they stay the same. The only constant was that you’re with me. When you died, I lost you not just physically but our future. The visions of us were gone. I thought it was all over, then you came back. It’s all back now. I can see our future. I respect you want to take it slow, but can you just meet me halfway?” she asked him.

“I thought I was.” Rufus said, she shook her head.

“Sleep in our bed, I promise I won’t seduce you.” She said, Rufus shot her a look. “Ok, I will try to not come on strong like before. I just want to sleep next to you and in your arms. Just consider it, as our bed is more comfortable than this couch.” She told him, she didn’t let him respond as she pressed a soft kiss to his lips. She sat back into side of the couch and rested her head on his shoulder.

Rufus lifted his arm up again and Jiya took the opening as she moved her head to his chest and snuggled against him. They turned their attention back to the TV as Wynonna Earp was back on.

But Rufus’s mind drifted as he remembered how he told Wyatt that they had to accept their lot in this timeline. Not that Rufus was complaining as he felt like he had come out on top, something that was
a rare experience for him. Maybe his reluctance to jump in fully with Jiya was the fear of everything changing but she was right.

Every trip he took, something changed and yet the one constant when he came back was Jiya and their love. She didn’t change, this Jiya for all intents and purposes was just blonder and more confident version. She took what she wanted and wasn’t shy about it.

Maybe, it was time that he took Flynn’s advice. Instead of focussing on things he couldn’t fix or didn’t need to. That he just be himself, work a little more towards keeping Jiya happy and hope for the best.
Chapter 10

A couple of days later,

Jiya looked at the computer screen watching as the pattern recognition program work through every stained glass windows recorded in the San Francisco area to see if it matched her drawing.

“No match on the window yet?” Rufus asked as he walked in with coffee for them.

“No.” Jiya said with a sigh before she thanked him as she took the coffee. She took a deep inhale enjoying the rich aroma. She was getting antsy as she had more visions. One had been a repeat of the first one. She had tried to relax and revisit the vision for more details but nothing new appeared to her. It was all blurred from pain or some kind of injury she couldn’t pin point as the visuals were not clear. The second one was still a confusing jumble in her brain. She just remembered being panicked and trapped somewhere pitch black. She knew as the day went on her mind would sort it out.

The vision she had about the end had also changed, the puppy was now a happy chocolate brown French bulldog. She didn’t tell Rufus as it didn’t seem important to big picture. If anything it just meant something between Lucy and Flynn had shifted and they were probably going to give into their child’s whimsical wants.

“I was thinking about the calculations in the Journal.” He said.

“And?” Jiya asked carefully, she a knot of anxiety every time that he wanted to talk about it. But she kept it to herself and let him talk it out.

“I stopped thinking about what we in this reality would use it for. Cause we’d be trying to discover new ground in time travel tech to best Rittenhouse, right?” he asked her.

“Sure.” She said in a somewhat non committal manner as she didn’t want to encourage him but also wanted to stay in the loop. It was a delicate balance of the situation.

“But right now, we want to find the Mothership in the present.” Rufus said as he continued his train of thought.

“Yes, we know it’s not at Rittenhouse headquarters but it could be anywhere.” Jiya said with a shrug. None of this was new to her.

“Our lifeboat is linked to the Mothership and we know in a 50 mile radius where the Mothership could be. What if it’s a patch, to use the link to connect to the Mothership remotely?” he asked.

“Why would it create a patch?” Jiya asked not understanding where he was going with this.

“Well, I remember writing a protocol in the Mothership’s CPU. To activate the Mothership and pilot it by remote to the present. Problem is that you can’t connect through time i.e. the present to the past and vice versa. The only way to remotely pilot the ship is when they exist in the same time period. It’s why when the ship is in transit, it’s temporarily in the past, present and the space in between. So, if we go by that reasoning, what if it could work in the present, right now?” Rufus speculated, Jiya thought it over for a long moment.

“You’re saying theoretically the patch would allow us to steal the Mothership and bring it back to a location of our choosing.” Jiya said slowly as she never thought about it. Now it was in her mind, she couldn’t but churn over the information and wonder why she hadn’t thought of it.
“We know the Mothership is here in the present very close to us. We could hack the Mothership through the link that allows us to know it’s location.” Rufus said thinking over the idea. He could see Jiya was running on the same line of thought but still not completely connecting the dots. “There was a mission where I wrote a very similar code that you used to help pilot the lifeboat by remote. I wrote three quarters, but you wrote the last quarter and made it happen.” He said.

“I never-” she started as she never piloted the lifeboat by remote or knew about the coding he was talking about.

“I know, it was in my reality, it happened. I didn’t see the code myself but if I had to create a patch like you did. I would say it’s pretty close to the one in the journal. It’s just missing pieces of code.” He told her. Jiya looked thoughtful as she tried to think of how to make what he was saying a reality.

“We could look through the lifeboat’s CPUs code. It should have a log of that instance in its records including the code.” Jiya said, Rufus nodded, “Well, what are you waiting for?” she asked him, he smiled as he got up from his chair.

“You know, you’re cute when you’re bossy.” Rufus told her.

“No, it’s ‘Volim te’.” Holly said as she corrected Lucy.

“I said that.” Lucy said with a smile, she looked to Flynn for support but he pressed his lips together smothering a smile. It was not a good sign. He sat opposite them at the table. They had just finished breakfast when Lucy was being given an impromptu lesson in Croatian.

“No, you didn’t.” Flynn told her in a gentle manner as he didn’t want to deter her.

“Didn’t I?” Lucy asked in disbelief, she had been trying for last 15 minutes. But in her defence, she hadn’t been sleeping well as she was still plagued by nightmares. She was blaming the shift in timelines and the stress of being close to the end of Rittenhouse.

There were so many things to blame. But she was grateful for Flynn as he had been her rock through it all. He supported her, he helped her work through the nightmares by just talking about them. It seemed voicing them, helped her put into perspective and Flynn’s arms as he held her, soothed her.

Though he was fast becoming a sexually frustrating situation as he wanted to take things slow. He didn’t feel right seducing her when she was in mental and emotional turmoil. She felt like telling him to give in. But he was right, she didn’t want their relationship to be where they just used one another as means to an orgasm. They needed to be adults about as they had a child who needed stability not her parents being sex crazed teenagers caught up in a tumultuous affair.

“It was close but I know you’ll get there.” Flynn assured her with a small amused smile. Lucy frowned as she was pretty sure she had said perfectly.

“What am I even saying?” Lucy asked out of curiosity. Holly made a face as it was something Lucy was supposed to already know.

“I love you.” Flynn said, he was so casual about it as if it were nothing but at the same time gave it so much meaning and sincerity. She knew he loved her, but to hear the words from him just made her melt as it felt right. But it also made her panic a little as sometimes it felt a little too good to be true. It was almost like she was waiting for the other shoe to drop.
"I guess I’ll just have to keep practising until I say it perfectly." Lucy said as she smoothed a hand over Holly’s hair. Pretending it wasn’t a big deal, when it was.

"You can watch Sesame Street with me. It helps me… heaps.” Holly said, her face pinched into a frown like she was struggling to find the right words.

“A lot. It helps a lot.” Flynn offered as he gently corrected Holly’s grammar. Holly made a gesture that was iconic to Flynn as with wide eyes and a shrug that said ‘That's what I said, why you arguing semantics'.

“Well, I am free to watch Sesame Street today.” Lucy said casually, Holly’s head snapped her way with a hopeful and excited expression.

“You don’t have to work?” Holly asked.

“I do, but I can spend a little more time you and Daddy today.” Lucy said, Holly smiled brilliantly.

“Yay! Can we paint pictures today?” Holly asked her.

“We sure can.” Lucy said with a smile, Holly cheered. Lucy looked from Holly to Flynn and enjoyed the smiles from the two. For the first time since arriving, she felt like she was right where she was supposed to be. It felt good to not feel lost.

Wyatt flicked through the newspaper. The guards had finally relented from his constant pestering for newspaper and a pen yesterday. He pretended it was for crosswords and sudokus but really, he was looking for something else. He paused at the adverts for escort and adult massage services. He scanned the page and his finger stopped at the advert that was not like the others. He smiled as a small wave of relief washed through him again.

In the other timeline, he’d chased Emma down a back alley on a mission one time. She’d turned on him, gun in hand. His gun was empty, he was sure she’d kill him. Instead she propositioned him. Told him he could join her side; he told her to just pull the trigger as he’d never join Rittenhouse.

She had laughed, and told him about the advert. That it would run every day until he changed his mind. For a month afterwards, he’d seen the advert every day. He was never tempted beyond trying to get Jessica and his child back. But he had made a point to memorise the number, he couldn't help but want to keep his options open.

Right now, he was double checking the number was still the same. It was. It fell neatly into the exit strategy he had formulated. Basically, he had to get out his cell and kidnap Lucy. She knew how and when to change things, he’d need that intel to bargain his way into Rittenhouse or at least Emma’s good graces.

He knew the team would be screwed without Lucy. They couldn’t stop him and Emma without Lucy. He couldn't help but wonder if Rittenhouse’s idea for the future was so bad. This future right now, it was not picture perfect especially for him here in his tiny cell. If anything, Rittenhouse wouldn't want to make life harder for a guy like him. With Jessica, they could be protected and maybe he could have a third chance to save her. Really save her as he could get them out of this mess.

Worst case scenario, the damage to his marriage was irreparable and his child wiped from history. If Jessica was gone too. At least his reputation restored, he would be a hero again. He could move
forward. He just had to pick a day, he could do it today but he felt the need to wait. Just on the off chance that Lucy and Rufus came through. He didn't even know why he still hoped to be released, but he figured out of everything he did for them. They owed him, just as he owed them a little bit of patience.

He turned to crossword page and folded the paper up. Keeping the ruse that he was waiting the situation out. But the reality is that Lucy and Rufus were on borrowed time.

“Who is that?” Lucy asked as she pointed to the stick figures that Holly had been dressing with paint for the past ten minutes. Flynn had drawn the stick figures and the man was not an artist. All the stick figures had odd shaped heads and uneven limbs. But Holly was adamant ‘Daddy’ drew the picture and she painted it.

“Daddy.” Holly said as she had painted a three centimetre tall quiff of brown hair on the stick figure’s head.

“I love his hair.” Lucy said as Holly added lambchop like sideburns. Holly smiled happily at the praise and her own work.

“This is you and me and our dogs.” Holly said as she pointed to the other two stick figures and a couple blobs of paint that were the ‘dogs’.

“We don’t have dogs.” Lucy said, grateful her stick figure didn’t have a baby bump but then it wasn’t like it was accurate rendering. Lucy’s stick figure had hair to the ground.

“Not yet, but we will.” Holly told her, she looked at Lucy’s painting. “What’s yours?” she asked.

“It’s abstract.” Lucy told her.

“What’s that mean?” Holly asked, she made a face like she didn’t believe what Lucy was doing was considered art. But then it wasn’t as Lucy just randomly swirled paint on the page. She didn’t care about her end product as she was just enjoying her time with Holly.

“It means that I just enjoyed putting paint onto paper without an image in mind.” Lucy told her.

“Oh.” Holly replied, she looked at Lucy’s canvas for a while longer. “It looks pretty.” She surmised.

“Thank you.” Lucy said, the two shared a smile before they continued painting.

“We can’t keep Wyatt here long term.” Denise said to Flynn as they were in her office with the door closed. Flynn hadn’t wanted the meeting but Denise wanted to speak with him alone. He wasn’t going to turn her down and he had questions. Questions that he couldn’t ask in front of Lucy or Holly.

“I agree, but it’s one thing to keep him in a cell here. It’s another to send him to prison, especially with getting the others to agree to it.” Flynn said diplomatically as he was happy for Wyatt to rot but the others had a conscience. Flynn knew Lucy and Rufus would want Wyatt freed given he technically didn’t commit the crimes he was accused of in this timeline.
“They don’t get a choice.” Denise told him.

“What about setting him up with a new ID, minor cosmetic surgery and whisk off to a place somewhere far, far away?” Flynn asked, for Lucy’s sake not his own. Denise gave him a droll look as she read him like a book and knew his question was not sincere.

“You know what happens to soldiers who get bored. They become dangerous and he has nothing to keep in line. There’s nothing to drive him back to civilian life from what I’ve heard.” Denise said, Flynn nodded as she was not wrong in her assumptions.

“He might appreciate the offer.” Flynn offered.

“Would you trust him?” She asked, Flynn wished he could say he did. He trusted Wyatt when their goals were aligned, but he always kept guard up no matter what. Denise took his silence as an answer. “I’ll take your silence as a ‘no.’” she said, a knowing sardonic smile spread across her lips as Wyatt’s situation was impossible. He had zero worth to the team, no valuable intel about Rittenhouse.

Wyatt’s skills were easily come by as he was one of many special forces trained operators. He wasn’t special to be considered worth saving, Flynn didn’t miss the surrealism of how in the other timeline he was valued as worthless. The only reason he’d been kept live and in a prison in San Francisco was his knowledge of Rittenhouse and its players.

“Wyatt and I have a contentious relationship. So, I am not the best person to make decisions in regards to his life.” Flynn said diplomatically. Denise nodded as she took what he was saying under advisement.

"Ok, you said you had questions.” Denise said changing the topic.

“I’d like to talk about the writing in Lucy’s Journal.” Flynn said not arguing about the change of topic. He didn’t feel there was anything left to discuss in regards to Wyatt. There was no argument that Flynn could make to convince Denise not to transfer Wyatt to a prison.

“What about it?” Denise asked.

“It’s different, there’s more content for starters and more authors. Did something happen to your Lucy? Was her writing like this when you met or she have an accident of some sort and injure her hand?” Flynn asked Denise, she looked surprised at his questions.

“No, I was hoping that maybe you’d be able to shed some light on that.” Denise said somewhat put off that he was surprised by the handwriting in the journal. Flynn shook his head.

“No, Lucy’s hands had never been injured and her hand writing is very different from the journal. We spoke about it at length but my Lucy couldn’t make sense of the difference. I thought it might be an affectation of this timeline.” Flynn said, he had hoped it as the Journal was a conundrum. He could see from Denise’s expression that she too was worried.

“That is not comforting.” Denise said as she mulled over it. Flynn couldn't help but agree as it wasn’t a good sign for the future.

“I had another vision this morning. It was before you got up.” Jiya said as she sat in one of the passenger seats of the lifeboat with her laptop in her lap. She needed Rufus’ thoughts, not that he was
a great sounding board like Lucy once had been. But he was trying and there was something
comforting in the fact that he listened.

“Was it bad?” Rufus asked as he was watching code fly by on the HUD of the lifeboat systems. He
didn’t remember seeing her have a vision but he wasn’t watching her constantly. He was doing his
best to be more supportive of her visions even though it did freak him out.

“Depends on if you’re claustrophobic or not.” Jiya said sardonically as all she saw was darkness, felt
the enclosed space and the hot suffocating air. She knew it was the boot of a car, but it didn’t make
sense to how it linked with her vision of Emma and the abandoned church. “I think my visions are
about Lucy.” Jiya speculated, Rufus paused what he was doing and turned in his chair to face her.

“Why?” he asked, there was no accusation or suspicion in his tone. Just curiosity of an academic
mind. Jiya looked up as she took a steady inhale and exhale. She looked to Rufus, she hoped she
wasn’t making a mistake in telling him.

“I don’t know, it’s a gut feeling.” She shook her head as she thought better of it. “Forget it.” She said
dismissively.

“No, I don’t think you should dismiss it. Maybe if you lean into it, your visions might reveal more.”
Rufus offered, Jiya bit her bottom lip unsure of if that was true. She felt it would create a bias.

“I tried, but I didn’t get anything definitive. I just feel it that it’s her, the visions have a strange hue
that I’ve attributed to Lucy before. Do you think I should tell her?” Jiya asked him.

“Maybe ask Flynn and Lucy about details in your first vision. They knew Emma better than I did
when she changed her tune to being Rittenhouse. But I’d not mention that you think the visions
might be about Lucy. At least wait until you have something more solid from your vision than a gut
feeling and colours.” Rufus said casually, leaving the decision entirely in her hands.

“Yeah, probably best.” Jiya said, appreciating his advice.

Later that evening, they all sat down for dinner together. Once the meal was over, everyone went
about their usual evening routines. As soon as Holly was tucked away in her bed, the group returned
to the living area. They had discussed Wyatt and his impending transfer to a prison. Rufus and Lucy
had fought over trying to give Wyatt a second chance. But even they were swayed to the point that
while Rittenhouse and time travel was real, they couldn’t trust Wyatt.

Prison was a temporary fix, to safe-keep Wyatt until it was all over. Denise promised that she’d have
Wyatt’s situation addressed properly and put forward that he be given a fresh start. It seemed like she
was placating them, but it was enough. It was enough as Denise was always true to her word.
Slowly, everyone drifted off to their own devices until Lucy and Flynn were alone at the dining
table; finishing the last of the wine.

Lucy laughed with Flynn as he shared an old story from his past. It was rare for him to open up but it
did happen. He told her stories of his old Army days, but in particular his youthful drunken
escapades.

“We’re running down the street like crazy people. Niko hugging this bar stool to his chest. Looking
wildly around thinking the police would be there.” Flynn said half laughing and telling the story as
he acted out the facial expressions and hugging his chest like he was Niko. Lucy broke down into
another fit of giggles as he was so animated and his expressions hysterical.
“You all got away?” Lucy asked after the laughter passed and she caught her breath. She picked up her glass of wine and took a small sip.

“Of course, Niko still has or had that bar stool for many years. The man was a drunken kleptomaniac. Majority of his glassware is stolen.” Flynn said with a chuckle as he sipped from his own glass. A soft reminiscing smile on his lips. “He was a great friend.” He added.

“Sounds like it, besides the stealing stuff.” Lucy said with a chuckle. Flynn nodded as he laughed.

“It’s only when he’s drinking.” Flynn assured her. They both chuckled, Flynn sighed as he looked at the clock on the wall. “We should really go to bed.” He said.

“Mmm, Holly will be up in 5 hours.” Lucy said as he was right. “This was really nice.” She told him, as the others had gone to be pretty early, it had been just them for the past few hours talking. Nothing deeply serious or saddening which was good. She just wanted to keep the enjoyment and normalcy of her day going.

“I agree, we should do it more often.” Flynn mused as he offered to take her glass. She nodded and watched him go into the kitchen area.

Given his back was turned, she allowed herself to enjoy the delicious view. His broad shoulders and the muscles stretching the fabric of his turtleneck jumper, the way his cargo pants hugged his trim hips and hard backside. She could appreciate the time and effort he put in to staying in shape as she knew he had a fairly strict exercise regimen that he liked to perform nightly before his shower and going to bed. Tonight, was apparently a rest day, as he’d already showered and like her just needed to brush his teeth before calling it a night.

He placed the wine glasses into the dishwasher and turned on the machine, letting it do the hard work. Her mind drifted to wondering what kissing him would be like, eventually the sex. She wanted it be good. No, she wanted it to be off the charts. She wanted to wake up the next morning with no doubt that she had at least one orgasm and rocked Flynn’s world.

He turned and faced her with a smile, she felt herself blush as she was glad he couldn’t read her mind. As right of that moment, all she could think was the two of them; slick with sweat, her fingers digging into his muscles, her back arched in pleasure as he-

“What?” she asked, as she realised Flynn had spoken to her. She’d been caught up in her own little wine induced sex fantasy. Her body hummed in a low level state of arousal that she was sure with one caress or kiss would do her in.

“I asked if you were ready to go to bed.” He said in a sly manner.

“Yes.” She said, she sounded a little breathless and her stomach flipped as Flynn walked over to her. He held out his hand to her. His smoky green gaze held hers, as he gently pulled her to her feel to stand in front of him. Gentleman as ever, he didn’t make any untoward moves. Not because he didn’t want her, she knew he did but he was giving them time. But she was curious and a little impatient.

Thanks to wine, she had a bit of buzz and confidence as she pushed up onto her tip toes and leaned toward him. Flynn balanced her with their hands, he lowered his head down to meet her. She placed her lips softly against his in a very tentative kiss. Testing the waters, so to speak.

“I suppose I’ll have to wait until I pay for dinner before you kiss me back.” She teased lightly.

“I said I wouldn’t have sex with you until after a proper date. Kissing is entirely another matter,” he said, his voice husky and low. “I’ve dreamt about this for a while now.” He said in Croatian, Lucy
didn’t understand a word but loved hearing it. He released her hands and he speared his fingers through her hair.

She felt him sigh as his lips met hers. His mouth was warm and sweet, and he kissed her so softly. He touched her lips gently with his tongue, waiting until she granted him access before he deepened the kiss. And even then, as she opened herself to him, he kissed her breathtakingly tenderly.

It was the sweetest kiss that was like a progression of what she had started when she kissed him first. He pulled back to look into her eyes, searching for something. She wasn’t entirely sure, but she did know her heart was pounding. It only sped up as he smiled, one of his gorgeous smiles, as if he’d just found gold at the end of a rainbow. And this time she reached for him. She wrapped her arms up around his neck and pressed herself against him. She speared her fingers up into the incredible softness of his hair as she kissed him again.

This time it was pure fire and passion. This time he touched her with more than just his lips, pulling her even harder against his chest, running his hands along her back, through her hair, down her arms as he met her tongue in a kiss of wild, bone-melting intensity.

"Mommy, Daddy?" Holly said, reality washed in that they were in a communal area and they had a child. A child who was not tucked away in her bed; sleeping. But she stood to the far of the room in her pyjamas, hugging her stuffed toy to her chest.

Lucy and Flynn pulled away from one another in a slow and somewhat awkward manner. It was awkward for Lucy, she wasn’t entirely sure what to do when your child found you making out with her father. Flynn was breathing as hard as she was and surprisingly, he looked thoroughly shaken by their kiss. Lucy felt somewhat relieved to know she wasn’t the only affected party from the kiss. Holly was completely oblivious to everything as she rubbed at her eyes looking upset and exhausted.

“What’s wrong, Monkey?” Flynn asked Holly as they moved to their daughter. He crouched down to her level and smoothed the hair out of her face. Lucy watched as he gently booped Holly on the nose in a loving gesture.

“I had a bad dream.” Holly told them, she looked up at them with a sad and pleading face. “Can I sleep in yours bed?” She asked them, she moved into Flynn’s arms and held onto his turtleneck. Ready to be picked up and carried like she knew the answer already.

Flynn looked up at Lucy, she gave a nod as she was too weak to say ‘no’. She knew she should say ‘no’ but Holly looked so distraught and Flynn was letting her take the lead. She had to admit she hated being put on the spot but she liked that he split the parenting with her and gave her a chance to be a parent instead of taking over.

“Just tonight.” Lucy said, as it sounded like what a parent would say. Holly nodded solemnly as she held her arms out for Flynn. He obliged her as he picked her up into his arms. Holly hugged his neck, she nearly lost her toy in the process but Lucy saved it from hitting the ground and carried it for her.

“Want to tell me what this nightmare was about?” Flynn asked Holly, as they walked to Flynn and Lucy’s room. Holly shook her head. “Maybe tomorrow, ok?” he asked her, as he rubbed Holly's back in a soothing manner. Much the same way he did for Lucy.

He threw Lucy a soft smile, a look that was a mix of ‘good job’ and ‘get used to this’. She couldn’t help but smile back as she knew he probably had other plans for their evening. She knew she did, but she didn’t mind the interruption. But they both knew they had time for themselves later, right now Holly needed them. Lucy was definitely sure that she was going to regret saying ‘yes’ to Holly
as she knew it was setting a precedence but she’d worry about that later.
Jiya snapped awake with a loud gasp, Rufus jumped awake with her. She clutched at her chest and gasped for air. Remnants of her nightmare and vision rolled into one holding onto her.

“What? What’s happening?” he asked bleary eyed, wondering if an alarm had gone off.

“Nothing, just a bad dream.” Jiya assured him as she wiped the sweat from her brow with her hands before she flopped back onto the bed. She kept drawing harsh breaths, her body ached from the remnants of the vision. Rufus followed suit and gave a yawn and he pulled her close out of an unconscious habit. She sought relief in his embrace and sighed as the nightmare faded from her mind. Rufus rubbed her back in a soothing manner.

“Another vision?” he asked, Jiya snuggled as close as she could to him. She didn’t care that she was slick with sweat and probably stank to high heaven. But she needed this, to be comforted as she blinked back the tears.

“I think so, I just hate it when they blend with my dreams.” She said, she rubbed her face against his chest, like it would wipe out all of her problems.

“You need to draw it or something?” he asked, still half asleep that he couldn’t find his words.

“No, it’s the same vision.” Jiya said as she didn’t want to let go of him. “Stuck in a small space. It feels like a coffin or maybe the trunk of a car. It’s just overwhelming. I felt like I was suffocating.” She sighed, before she took a deep inhale and slow exhale to calm her nerves.

“Tell me what I can do to help.” He murmured, she felt his lips brush the crown of her hair.

“Just hold me.” She said, she knew it made her sound pathetic and needy but she didn’t care. She gripped onto him a little tighter. She closed her eyes and was glad when Rufus did as she asked, his arms tightened around her. Reassuring her, this was real and not a dream or a vision but reality. The distinction was important as sometimes, it was the only thing that kept her mentally grounded.

Flynn muffled a groan as he woke to the tiny foot Holly kick into his stomach. He opened his eyes and found their daughter sleeping sideways in the bed and twitching in her sleep. Sometime during the night Holly had shifted in her sleep.

It reminded him why he and Lorena were adamant about Iris sleeping in her bed. But he counted his blessing as Holly could’ve easily kicked him in the nuts. That was not the wake up call he wanted.

He looked across at Lucy and saw her pinched expression. He knew she was having a nightmare, he wished he knew how to help her get past them. They talked about it, but it never seemed to help much. He had to believe time would help, maybe finally putting Rittenhouse to rest. There was so much of their lives where they needed closure.

Right now, he needed to make sure Lucy didn’t wake up Holly with her nightmares. So, he carefully lifted Holly up and over to Lucy’s left side. Holly was luckily deep asleep as she complied. Flynn shifted closer to Lucy and gently pushed her up onto her side. Even deep in her sleep, she took the hint and rolled onto her left side.

Flynn pulled close and spooned her from behind. His hand smoothed her hair away from his face before he caressed her arm down to her hand. Lucy gave a sigh and the tension seemed to fade from
Lucy woke up the next morning feeling hot, sticky and overcrowded in her bed. She was wedged between two very hot blooded people. She peeled open an eye to find Holly’s face only inches from her own. Her tiny body curled at her front, and Flynn’s curled up at her back. She felt Flynn’s long fingers intertwined with hers. She couldn’t help but smile softly, it wasn’t a terrible way to wake up. But she knew she couldn’t do it every day.

She turned her face, wondering if she could peer over Flynn to the time. The movement was just enough to wake Flynn as he took a deep inhale and shifted. His fingers momentarily tightened before he let go, Lucy frowned as she didn’t want him to let go. But he was awake, the moment was gone for now. He lifted up and away to look at the clock.

“What’s the time?” she asked him softly, so as not to wake Holly.

“7am.” He murmured as he relaxed back onto the bed and turned onto his side again. She smiled as his hand smoothed over her waist and gently pulled her close. She felt him press a soft kiss to her shoulder before he rested his chin on it. They both looked at Holly who was still sleeping soundly, they became lost in their thoughts for a moment. “I should get breakfast started.” He said.

“No, stay. Holly will wake soon enough.” Lucy whispered to him. She didn’t want him to go.

“She’s awake right now.” Flynn told her in amusement, Lucy looked to see Holly was indeed awake and looking at them smiling.

“Hi, Mommy.” She whispered cheekily.

“You were faking.” Lucy accused her in a light and teasing manner.

“No, I was sleeping. But I need to go potty.” Holly announced, any conversation would have to wait. She sat up and before she could crawl over them. Flynn lifted Holly out of the bed and onto the floor. Lucy and Flynn watched as Holly skipped away at her own leisure. The couple chuckled quietly before they availed them to having their bed back and spreading out.

“How does someone so small take up so much space?” Lucy asked, Flynn smiled as he stretched out beside her.

“I don’t know but we can’t make a habit of this.” Flynn said.

“I know but high point of the night. I didn’t have a nightmare and besides waking up a little crowded. I slept pretty good.” Lucy admitted spinning a positive of the night.

“Good.” Flynn said with a soft smile. They lean in and are about to kiss when Flynn pulled back at the last minute. Lucy felt half a second of disappointment until she saw Jiya standing in their room.

“Sorry, I forgot to knock.” she said with an awkward smile before she looked down at her tablet computer.

“What can we do for Jiya?” Lucy asked.

“I’m cooking porridge. You want in?” Jiya asked them. Flynn looked at Lucy and gave a shrug.
“Sure.” Lucy said as they didn't really care what they ate.

“Ok, be ready in 15 minutes.” Jiya said.

“We’ll be there in due course.” Flynn assured her. Jiya gave nod and left the room as she did, she closed the door on her way out. Lucy couldn't help but laugh, but it died away when Flynn turned to her. She saw the desire in his eyes as he reached out a hand. He threaded it under her hair and around the back of her neck. He leaned down and lowered his mouth to hers.

Lucy readily sank into the kiss as she wanted this, she craved it. She pressed her lips to his, drinking him in, the warm, salty taste of him. As one kiss turned into two, he parted his lips, let his tongue push through, and she instinctively met it with her own. The kiss was so hot and powerful it devoured them. She moaned in pleasure as she slipped her arms around him.

She held him close as she yielded to his lips, his tongue. His cotton pyjama pants, so loose and soft, left nothing to the imagination and he was instantly hard against her. She moved against him, rubbed against him, inviting him. With his other hand on her backside, he held her there.

A tiny knock sounded at the door, Flynn broke the kiss, they both groaned in frustration. "Daddy! Mommy! I left Dino inside. Can I come in," there was a long pause "Please?" Holly called out, they both laughed only because they would cry. Well, Lucy was sure she would cry if she didn't laugh.

"At least she didn't run in." Lucy said, Flynn pressed his forehead against hers. He reluctantly released her from their embrace. Lucy rolled away, she bit her bottom lip as racy thoughts of what could've been ran through her mind.

"Mommy? Daddy? Are you sleeping?" Holly asked through the door. Lucy ran a hand through her hair and crawled over Flynn.

"Coming." Lucy said loud enough for Holly to hear her.

"You would've come and will multiple times at a later date." Flynn promised, Lucy couldn't help but blush at the promise. She also couldn't wait for him to fulfill it.

"Promises, promises." She quipped, she blew out breath to calm herself. For a woman who didn't come in five seconds, she certainly felt pretty amazing and satisfied. "And are you going to be ok there?" She asked awkwardly gesturing to his erection. She really didn't know how parents managed a sex life with kids. But it obviously happened given kids got siblings. Flynn had no shame as he grinned at her. But he did sit up in bed and rearrange the blankets as Lucy picked up the toy.

"I'll be fine." Flynn said, she opened the door and Holly smiled up at her.

"Can we paint today?" Holly asked her as she took the toy and came back into the room; making herself at home.

"Sure. Now, how about you get dressed for breakfast?" Lucy asked her, she wondered why Flynn was so amused as he looked ready to burst out laughing. But he remained quiet.

"Will you help me?" Holly asked her.

"Sure." Lucy said with a smile, she held out her hand. Holly grabbed it, she and Lucy looked at Flynn. "See you at breakfast?" Lucy asked him.

"Yeah, after I have a shower." Flynn said, Lucy snorted a laugh as she was sure that shower would be very cold. She took their daughter to her room to get her ready for the day.
A couple hours later, after a lovely bunker family breakfast. The group dispersed to work and in Flynn’s case childcare as he was looking after Holly while Lucy worked. But they all knew she was speaking with Wyatt, Denise had subtly made them aware that prison transport was coming in after dark to take Wyatt away. Lucy and Rufus both looked riddled with guilt over the fact while Flynn showed no interest. Jiya had to admit she found more comfort in Flynn’s disinterest than she did in Rufus’ reaction.

She knew the situation was messed up, but Wyatt hadn’t helped his cause when his wrote down his report on the events that changed history. It didn’t help that he hadn’t been a professional and used profanity about the injustice of his position. Jiya was sure she would feel just as sour if she had been in his place. But she would’ve at least tried to beg and show deference to Agent Christopher before going into ‘raging asshole’ mode.

But in a few hours, it would be unimportant as Wyatt would be gone. Right now, Jiya was focussed on deciphering her visions while trying to find the string of code with Rufus for their master plan of remotely hijacking the Mothership.

“Why can’t it find this glass window?” Jiya asked in frustration as her computer was still chewing through the database. She and Rufus were in the command centre working.

“Maybe the database doesn’t have a match? Or maybe you need to narrow it down.” Rufus offered, she made a face as she appreciated what he was saying but he didn’t get it. The computer system before them usually made her queries easy and quick to answer. The problem was her visions were too ambiguous.

“It’s already narrowed down to a 50 mile area. It already has 30 matches and it will kick out more. Why couldn’t my visions be more accurate?” Jiya complained. She just wanted answers. For once, she wanted a clear cut vision that she could figure out before it happened.

“I don’t know, maybe whatever is about to come to pass needs to happen.” Rufus offered, Jiya frowned. They both shared a look of discomfort at the idea.

“Why give me visions if they aren’t going to help me?” Jiya asked, she despised the conversations of fate vs free will where her visions were considered.

“I don’t know. I wish I did, but I don’t.” Rufus said honestly, Jiya gave a nod as she appreciated the lack of sci-fi references and sophistry that most people tried to use to explain her powers.

“Have you found the code?” Jiya asked, changing the topic.

“No luck yet. Seems like the logs were scrambled a little when they used the lifeboat to cross over time to save me. I had no idea this would happen.” Rufus said, a little annoyed as he wanted a victory. He knew this would solve all their problems.

“Are you going to see Wyatt?” Jiya asked carefully.

“No.” Rufus said.

“You should, it will probably be the last time you see him for a while.” Jiya said, reminding him that Denise had laid down the plans to move Wyatt to a prison. Rufus hated how relieved he felt at knowing it would happen. To know he wouldn’t be held accountable for Wyatt and his actions any more. He was sure it made him a crappy friend but it didn't change how he felt.

“There’s nothing to say.” Rufus said, he looked down at his screen and kept scrolling through the
code before him. “This, stopping Rittenhouse and getting the Mothership is more important.” He added, it was how he felt. He couldn't fix Wyatt's situation but he could find the code. He could get the Mothership back.

“Lucy.” Wyatt said in surprise as she stood outside his cell.

“Hey.” Lucy said wary as she kept her distance from the bars. She didn’t want him to touch her. But she felt she had to see him. It had been days since they last spoke. She needed to see his face one last time before he was taken away. She needed to know where his head was at.

“So, what’s going on?” Wyatt asked casually as he rose from the bed and discarded the paper he was reading. He moved to the bars of the cell and leaned on them. He looked her over as if undressing her with his eyes. Lucy fought the urge to wrap her arms around her body.

“I came to see how you are.” Lucy lied as she couldn’t find the confidence to tell him the truth.

“I’m still in here. So, I’m not doing ok. What the hell is going on?” Wyatt asked, his demeanour and tone were calm but there was just something hostile layered underneath the surface.

“We’ve been busy with Rittenhouse.” Lucy lied as she didn’t think Wyatt would appreciate her being wrapped in the charm of her daughter and Flynn. Yes, she tried to help locate Emma but she couldn’t figure out Emma’s next move. She just didn’t know Emma well enough to even guess. The only comfort was that she hadn’t jumped to the past. Denise assured her that while Emma had made contact with Rittenhouse. The Mothership and Emma were absent from the base. Lucy wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or not.

“You could’ve used me.” Wyatt said, he looked like a caged animal riled at being kept in such tight quarters. She didn't blame him as she knew how that felt. But there was just a cutting edge to his tone that ruffled her feathers the wrong way.

“Flynn was more than enough.” Lucy replied casually, she wished she hadn’t said as much as Wyatt instantly turned hostile. His gaze turned icy and dark, his posture seemed menacing even though she was safe from his reach. She still felt unsettled.

“Yeah I bet he was.” He said, his voice dripping with sarcasm. “I can’t believe you time travelled without me.” He said in annoyance, Lucy gave a nod even though it was a lie. They hadn’t gone anywhere and Rittenhouse was quiet. She just wanted to protect her family, her right to be with her daughter.

“We have our mission. It hasn’t changed.” Lucy said, wishing she hadn’t come but sentimentality made her. They were friends, they had been a team before it all fell apart. “Taking down Rittenhouse is our priority. Always has been.” She added.

“Where does that leave me?” he asked her.

“In here for the time being. Once Rittenhouse is gone, we can use the victory to get you out.” She told him, hoping he swallowed the bald face lie. She did plan to try and fight for his release but she knew it was about assuaging her guilt than about him being free. She also highly doubted Wyatt would ever be released.

“If that's true, then why do I feel like you’re never going to get me out of here.” He said, his tone accusing her of a truth that she couldn’t bring herself to tell him.

“We’re trying, Wyatt. We really are but it’s not easy.” Lucy said, it was a lie as she had talked with
Denise and she could tell it was a waste of time. If Denise couldn’t be convinced then no one would be. Denise had asked her if Wyatt was ‘worth’ the trouble. Lucy found herself hesitating to say ‘Yes’ because deep down she knew he wasn’t. Like everyone on the team, Wyatt had committed crimes and at some point, they all had to face judgement and be punished.

She felt like losing her sister, her mother and the memories of Holly’s early life was punishment enough. Flynn had lost a whole future of memories with his own family and Holly’s early years. Iris and Lorena were still gone. Rufus? He had committed the least amount of sins but had lost his life for the mission. Yes, they brought him back. It didn’t mean he was unscathed by the experience.

Wyatt? He’d lost Jessica and their unborn child. But Jessica was alive in this timeline. She was innocent and not tied to Rittenhouse. She had a life and family. She was in essence saved. But it didn’t seem enough for Wyatt. Lucy knew how he could become obsessed over things, how he had a deep-seated need for things to be his way. Rufus was right, Wyatt would want to change everything back and he would not be talked out of it.

“Try harder or I’ll tell Agent Christopher all about Flynn. Imagine how she’ll feel about having two terrorists in one bunker.” Wyatt told her, Lucy frowned as she didn't see the threat in his words.

“She already knows about Flynn.” She told him, it was true. They had disclosed their timeline fully to find out where the deviations had occurred. Strangely, Denise had been more forgiving of Flynn’s actions. While Lucy found it hypocritical that she’d forgive Flynn but be suspicious of Wyatt. Lucy was relieved. She needed Flynn, not just for Holly but for her own sanity.

Wyatt didn’t look happy at his only card being stolen from him before he could play it. He pursed his lips and Lucy was sure he looked defeated. It felt too easy.

“Fine. So, what? you’re here to assuage your guilt? You want me to forgive you?” Wyatt asked her.

“No, I just said I’d come back and I have. Now, I have to go.” Lucy said, she couldn’t tell him it was the last time they’d see one another.

“That’s it? Your last goodbye or will you come back?” Wyatt asked snidely but Lucy didn’t reply as she walked away. She let him have the victory of having the last word.

Wyatt watched her go and felt a sense of finality. He hated it. There was no way he was letting her get away with this. She couldn't just walk away from him when he was talking to her. She didn’t get to say goodbye first.

“Your friend looked upset. She not happy about your transfer?” Harry asked as he pushed a bowl of porridge through the food slot, along with a newspaper. He wasn’t an asshole like Tom. The goody two shoes like to treat others how he’d want them to treat him.

“Transfer?” Wyatt asked, as that was news to him.

“Yeah, you’re being moved. So, enjoy the meals while they last as this place will seem like a dream.” Harry said, he gave Wyatt a mock salute before he went to his post. Wyatt quietly fumed as he couldn’t believe he was being sent to prison. Lucy said nothing. She just lied to his face. It made him fume with anger. But he held tightly coiled within, as he knew shouting and raging would only get him unwanted attention.

Right now, he needed to act unaffected as he was going to escape. Whatever sentimental feelings he had for Lucy were gone. He was going get out of this cell and make her pay for everything wrong against him. He took the breakfast, knowing it was cold and tasteless. He didn’t care because in a
few hours he’d be free.

Flynn looked up from his game with Holly to see Lucy walk back into the living area. She looked like the stuffing had been pulled from her. He hadn’t wanted her to see Wyatt. The man had a way of upsetting her. But Flynn respected that she felt the need to see him, it wasn’t that she loved Wyatt. It was obligation.

Flynn just wanted her to be happy. She like he, had endured too much pain, carried more grief than any person should have to bear. They needed to let go of that pain.

“Hey, what’s going on here?” Lucy asked as she joined them on the floor. Flynn reached out and placed his hand on top of hers and gave it a gentle squeeze. A quiet gesture of comfort and support. She gave him a wan smile, he knew she’d be ok.

“We’re playing alphabet.” Holly said in Croatian.

“English, Mommy hasn’t been keeping up with Croatian.” Flynn said gently to Holly. Holly made an expression like her patience was being severely tested. It was adorable on a person so young.

“No, it’s ok. You can translate. Holly needs to practise.” Lucy said to Flynn, not minding if she was cut out of the conversation as she just needed a little time to get her head into what they were doing.

“We’re playing Alphabet game. I pick a letter, Holly tells me a word starting with the letter and uses it in a sentence.” Flynn explained to Lucy.

“Go on.” Lucy prompted them. She pasted on a closed lip smile and watched as Flynn and Holly played their game.

Sometime after lunch,

“I have something that needs to be addressed.” Jiya said as a meeting had been called while Holly had her afternoon nap. It was easier to talk when Holly was asleep. But even so, they all felt Jiya's impatience as they sat around the table.

“Ok.” Lucy said, she wondered why Jiya was looking at her directly.

“I’ve been having visions. These are my drawings, I was wondering if any of it is familiar to either of you?” She asked, she opened up a notebook and smoothed out several pages of hand drawn pictures.

Flynn and Lucy leaned forward, they carefully looked through the artwork. Most were of a stained glass window with a bird flying presumable to heaven and another that vaguely resembled Mary as she held her heart in her hands. The rest were obscure and hard to make out as it looked like rubble.

“No,” Lucy said, she shook her head. None of it seemed recognisable to her. “I mean, I get the imagery but does it remind me of place? No.” Lucy clarified.

“Flynn?” Jiya asked in a hopeful manner as he hadn't looked up from the drawing as of yet.

“The window sketches is vaguely familiar but I can’t place where I’ve seen it.” He said as he pointed to the drawing of the stained glass window of Mary and the bird. “But it’s fairly common artistry for churches.” he said.
“I know the search finished and it was over 36 results in the 50 mile area to be exact.” Jiya said frustrated.

“I’m sorry.” Flynn said as he knew the imagery was not unique to help narrow down the search.

“What are the visions of besides the church?” Lucy asked her. Jiya made an expression of discomfort.

“Pain, suffocating darkness, this church. I’m seeing the vision from the point of view of someone. They are on the ground.” Jiya said, her descriptions were as fractious and incoherent as her visions. “I think that someone is going to be you, Lucy.” She said.

“Me? How can you be sure?” Lucy asked her, feeling unsettled that Jiya would have a vision of her. She suddenly knew how Rufus felt. She didn’t like it as Jiya never had visions of happy events. This one was not cheery at all.

“I don’t know. It’s just a feeling. Emma is there but she isn’t alone. There’s someone we haven’t accounted for. But they are just a shadow. I can’t make out their face.” Jiya told her, she wore a pained expression as she wished she had more.

“You think it’s someone on the base?” Flynn asked Denise. She shook her head.

“No, I trust everyone implicitly. We carry weapons in case of emergencies. Luckily, we haven’t needed to use them yet. I’m hoping it stays that way. I think it might a Rittenhouse agent that is just stepping out of line with the others. But we can’t know for sure.” Denise said.

“What are we going to do about these visions?” Lucy asked them, unsure of how to proceed.

“We need to find Emma. Lucy, rest assured you’re safe here.” Denise told her, Lucy wasn't comforted as she remembered how her mother surprised her. She looked to Flynn who wore a concerned expression. She saw something come to his mind, he turned and looked at Denise and Jiya.

“She could be hiding in an abandoned church. I used to do it when I was on the run, she would know the locations as she was my pilot for a time before she betrayal me.” Flynn offered. He hadn't believed Emma would return to old haunts but then many people returned to places of familiarity. Emma was lost in this new present. It annoyed him a little that he hadn't thought of it before now.

“Do you think you could remember the locations?” Jiya asked him.

“Yes.” He said.

"Ok, Flynn work with Jiya.” Denise said, she looked to Lucy. "Don't worry, I'll tighten up security. No one will come in without us knowing." Denise told her. Lucy nodded, hoping that Jiya's vision didn't come to pass.

Wyatt paced the bathroom, he couldn’t believe he’d made it this far. No, he could. He was special forces, he was the best of the best in the military world but he was surprised how easy it was. Maybe it was a little too easy. He looked at himself in the blood splattered mirror and steadied his breathing. He gripped the basin hard, his knuckles turning white as he stared into his eyes. He needed to control his breathing and centre himself as he needed to calm down before he screwed this up. After a couple deep breaths, he felt his adrenaline taper and a sense of peace wash over him.

“You just have to find Lucy and get off the base. Get to Emma and change history for the better.
Easy.” Wyatt told himself, he pushed off the basin and looked down at the dead bodies of the guards. Harry and Tom were dead, Wyatt knew he should feel bad. At least for Harry, but then he realised that once he changed history. This moment would be erased, thus he was innocent. His hands were proverbially clean of their murders. With that calming thought, he reached down and took their weapons and fished around their pockets. Stealing their IDs and what little cash they had on them.

He just dropped the empty wallet on Tom’s body when he heard laughter. The walls were still thin in some parts of the bunker as he heard Lucy's voice. The same little giggle and a squeal of delight. He scowled as he knew it was the little runt of kid giggling. It rankled him, she wasn't supposed to be playing house with a terrorist and a bastard child. She was supposed to be getting him out of his predicament. So much for loyalty, he stuck by her side through thick and thin. She betrayed him. Soon, she’d learn the price of that betrayal and she’d repay her debt to him. He just needed to plan his next more more meticulously.
Chapter 12

Please be advised chapters from henceforth will have some violence (not sexual) and
dark themes. I've moved the rating to 'Mature' due to the dark turn of my muse and
because I wanted to use the word 'fuck'.

“Lucky this paint is washable as it’s all over you.” Lucy said to Holly with a chuckle. They were
both covered in paint from spending the rest of the afternoon painting. Even after her experience
yesterday, she was still surprised at the mess it was. But it had been fun. Holly giggled as she ran into
the bathroom leaving hand prints on the door. Lucy made a mental note to wash the door later when
Holly was finally clean.

She walked into the bathroom and nearly tripped over Holly who had stopped in her tracks. Then it
hit her something was wrong. Very wrong, she froze in fear and tried to pull Holly behind her but
Wyatt yanked her away. His guards laid on the floor dead, blood pooled on the floor as they had
been sliced and stabbed. Lucy wanted to scream but she was speechless at the horror.

Holly cried out in pain as she slid in the blood on the floor before Wyatt pulled her to her feet and
turned to Lucy. His eyes were cold with rage and determination. He held Holly up by her wrist, her
tiny feet treading the floor as she tried to get traction just to push up so her legs were taking her
weight. But it wasn't working.

“Let go of me!” Holly shouted at him, she tried to kick him but missed and swung listlessly in his
hold. “Mommy!” She cried, her voice filled with pain, it tore through Lucy as if it were her in
physical pain.

“Wyatt, please just let go.” Lucy pleaded to Wyatt. She was about to take a step to him when he
brandished a gun. She held her hands up in surrender. She drew in a shaky breath as she couldn't
believe this was happening.

“It's good to see that I finally have your attention.” he drawled sarcastically as he waved the gun in
Holly’s direction. Lucy's heart clenched painfully as she was scared out of her mind for Holly’s
safety.

"You do, but please don’t hurt her.” Lucy begged as calmly as she could. She had to be calm for
Holly’s sake. She just hoped the walls were still as thin as they were in the old bunker. She hoped
someone could hear Holly cry out. Lucy blinked back her tears, she wondered how she was
supposed to deal with this.

“Don’t hurt her?” He asked her, incredulously. “What kind of monster do you think I am?” Wyatt
asked her, he looked at her in disgust as if she were judging poorly when she had no right. Lucy
swallowed and took a moment to gather her thoughts. It was so hard to keep a clear mind when she
just wanted to grab Holly and run.

“No, I don’t think you’re a monster. I- " she paused "Just please, that this is between you and me.”
She said as carefully as this was a delicate situation, “It doesn't involve her, so just let her go and we
can figure out how to fix all of this.” She told him, she raised her hands up again emphasising that
“You know, I was thinking about this…” Wyatt drawled as he lifted Holly up and looked more closely at her. He eyed her like one would a tiny buy before they snuffed the life out of it. “She's not even yours. She didn't exist before which means she's not real, so if I shot her right now. Is it really murder? Cause when we repair time, she will have never existed. Technically, I never killed her or the other men. Right?” Wyatt asked as he considered the conundrum. He seemed to find an answer as he pointed the gun more firmly at Holly who was squirming and grunting. The stress of being held up by her arm and the pain of Wyatt's grip showed in her tiny red face.

“No!” Lucy shouted, she wanted rush him, but Wyatt cocked the gun and looked at her. There was a challenging look in his eye as if he was daring her to tackle him to the ground. “Please don't kill her. Just don't do this, right now you can walk away but you kill her and there's no coming back. So, please, I'm begging you, just tell me what you want.” She said She was at a loss as she didn’t know what to do. She stood her ground, just feeling tortured and restless.

“Your help. That's all I've wanted.” Wyatt said plainly like it was obvious.

“You have it. As soon as you let her go. Please, just let her go. She’s too young to be involved in this. Please, Wyatt.” Lucy pleaded. Wyatt took a long moment as he thought it over. Without any hesitation he threw Holly behind him like he was discarded trash. Lucy screamed as her little girl hit the floor with a sickening thud and cried out in pain. Her baby girl curled up into a ball and sobbed, she called for Lucy. But as Lucy tried to rush to her side, Wyatt grabbed her by the hair and pulled her away. Lucy cried out in pain as she felt some of her hair tear from the roots.

“Oh no, you don’t. Kid lives, but it's time for us to go.” Wyatt said, he pulled her close and wrapped an arm around her neck. She tried to struggle and called for help but as soon as he pressed the gun to her the side of her chest. She stopped fighting it. “Better.” Wyatt whispered hotly against her ear. Lucy’s skin crawled. “Let’s walk. Slowly.” He told her, Lucy complied.

They made just outside the bathroom where Denise, Flynn and Jiya stood with their guns raised and ready. Wyatt dug the tip of the gun into her ribs, she winced. He tightened his hold on her neck; using her as a human shield.

“Wyatt, don’t do this. You’re out numbered, just surrender. I'll still help you.” Lucy implored.

“No. You see, none of them will shoot me because they don’t want to hurt you, Lucy. So, they’re going to let us go.” Wyatt said plainly, his hot breath lanced the back of her neck and ear as he hid truly behind her. He pulled them backwards down the hallway to one of the three exits out of the building. She knew as he had used this particular one to escape out of the bunker to see Jessica.

“Garcia, Holly is hurt. Go to her.” Lucy begged him, she knew he wouldn’t shoot through her to get Wyatt. She didn’t want Holly left alone in the bathroom with her injuries. Someone needed to be there for their daughter.

“What’s the plan?” Denise asked Wyatt, Flynn lowered his gun as he gave Lucy a nod. He barely took his eyes off her as he moved back behind the women and stepped sideways to the bathroom door.

“Lucy, no matter what, I will find you.” Flynn promised, she jerked her head in a shaky nod. He holstered his gun, he pressed his hand to the bathroom door and stopped when Wyatt spoke.

“How sweet.” Wyatt drawled in mockery. Flynn looked his way, with a cold fury in his eyes.
“You’re a dead man walking, Logan.” Flynn told in a tone so cold and filled with promise; it scared and comforted Lucy at the same time. He shared one more look to Lucy, she saw the fear and love in his eyes. He gave her one last look as if to say ‘everything would be ok’. He then pushed the door to the bathroom open and stalked inside.

“Then there were two.” Wyatt said as he kept edging himself and Lucy back. He glared at the women, he knew he could kill them. But then he remembered the variables were shifted. Jiya could be an excellent marksman. She certainly bested him before.

“What do you want? The lifeboat?” Denise asked him bluntly.

“No, I want out of this shithole.” Wyatt told her.

“Ok, what else? A car? New identity? Money?” Denise asked, as she lowered her gun to the floor and held one hand out in surrender. “I mean it, give me your list to how we get Lucy back.” Denise told him.

“Let us out of here. I want no one stopping us. When I get what I need from Lucy, then it will be over. You do you, and I’ll do me. I promise I’ll even let Lucy live. I don’t want to hurt her or anyone else unless I have to. So, don’t force my hand.” Wyatt said calmly even though he was seething. But he needed to maintain his control.

“Ok, we’ll stay out of your way. Lucy, comply to his demands.” Denise said as she reached for her mobile phone. She dialled a number and on speaker phone told whoever was above ground to let Lucy and Wyatt go.

“What?!” Lucy said in disbelief as they were conceding to Wyatt’s demands.

“Lucy, no one else needs to get hurt. So, let’s give Wyatt his freedom.” Denise said calmly, she motioned for Jiya to lower her weapon. She looked at Denise like she had lost her mind. But she lowered her weapon, but it looked like it took some effort of self-control. “Wyatt, give me your word that we’ll have Lucy back in alive and unharmed. If you aren’t the man I know, then your word as a soldier should mean something.” Denise said.

“You have it.” He said, Denise gave Lucy one last look.

“We’ll get you back, you have my word on that.” Denise promised her, Lucy’s eyes went wide in fear and surprise as Jiya and Denise backed up completely.

“Show me where it hurts.” Flynn told Holly as he perched on the bench in one of the shower stalls with Holly in his arms.

When he came in she had been laying on the floor curled up in a ball and sobbing a storm. He had gently lifted her into his arms and took her into the stall. He held her, whispering a mix of Croatian and English nothings of comfort to calm her. It took a few minutes for the tears to subside and for Holly lean back. She looked at him with hollow eyes, it broke his heart as she was too young to be touched by violence.

Holly held up her left arm, even under the paint; he could see the injury. Her forearm was already starting to swell and had ugly bruising in the shape of a hand print. Wyatt's hand print.

“It hurts a lot. He held me up in the air and he wouldn’t let me go. And then he dropped me hard. He was really mean.” Holly hiccupped out between breaths. Flynn nodded as he tried to smooth her hair out of her face. His gut twisted with cold rage and pain. Wyatt was dead to him. There was no
coming back from this. The asshole could’ve trusted them to do right by him but no, he couldn’t wait more than a fortnight before going on a murder spree.

“Ok, anywhere else?” he asked, he watched as Holly pointed to her left wrist, to her shoulder and then down her side. He nodded. “Alright, we’ll get you cleaned up and then a doctor will look at your ouchies. Ok?” he asked, as he promised Lucy he’d look after Holly. He had to trust Jiya and Denise had his back out there.

Holly sniffed and nodded at the plan before she frowned. “What about Mommy?” she asked him.

“I’ll get Mommy back.” He promised her.

“What about the bad man?” Holly asked, her eyes wide as she was scared. He wished Wyatt hadn’t visited such horrors on Holly.

“I’m going to give him a very long time out for his bad behaviour. You’ll never see him again.” Flynn promised her.

“Good.” Holly told him, he knew he should be getting her cleaned up but he felt she needed just a little more comfort. “Daddy?” she asked.

“Yes.” Flynn asked.

“Am I real? The bad man said I wasn’t Mommy’s and I wasn’t real.” Holly said, she looked so confused and upset. Flynn’s heart broke as he never thought he would ever have to answer such a question. But there was no doubt what the answer was. He gently cupped her tiny face with his hand and looked eyes with her.

“You listen to me. You are real and you are my and Mommy’s daughter. You don’t ever believe anything that bad man told you.” he told her, Holly nodded even as tears rolled down her face.

“Good, your Mommy and I love you very much.” Flynn said before he pressed a kiss to her forehead and to her cheek before he cradled her close and rocked her.

“Have you lost your mind?!” Jiya asked Denise as Wyatt and Lucy disappeared out of the escape hatch. She wanted to follow but Denise stopped her. “He’s going to kill her.” She told her.

“No, he wants to change everything. He doesn’t trust Rufus which means he’s going after Emma and the mothership. What he doesn’t know is that we can track him.” Denise said as she had her mobile phone out again. She flicked through her contacts list, she tapped the number she wanted and put it to her ear.

“Shit. Yes, the command centre.” Jiya said as smacked her hand against her forehead, that it wasn’t a lost cause. She just needed to use her time wisely to get ahead of Wyatt.

“Go and tap into server farms. We ask for forgiveness later- “ Denise started to tell Jiya. But she paused as the person on the other end picked up. “Clean sweep.” She said, she hung up the phone and looked to Jiya again. “I want you to track them in real time. Go. I’ll check in with Flynn and Holly.” She told her, Jiya nodded and ran off. Denise texted a few people before she stepped into the bathroom.

She sucked in a breath at the mess of blood and the two dead men. She shook her head as she had underestimated Wyatt. But she wasn’t going to let the man live after today. He earned himself another death sentence. She was happy to be judge and jury. She moved towards the sound of Flynn and Holly’s voices.
“Flynn,” she called.

“Stall three.” He called out. Denise walked to the stall and looked in to see Flynn helping Holly shower off paint and presumably some blood. It was hard to not to think there wasn’t some blood on the little girl given the mess. “Holly needs a doctor, I think her wrist is broken.” Flynn said to Denise in a low voice.

“I’ll get the medic in.” Denise said texting an associate who had helped them out a time or two. “We’re finishing this today, I’ve activated ‘Clean sweep’. As we speak what is left of Rittenhouse is being brought in. Once they are all in custody, our agents will gather a strike team to get Lucy back.” She informed him.

“They should be getting Lucy now.” Flynn told her in a calm voice. They shouldn’t be having this conversation right now especially in front of Holly. But he was barely holding onto his calm façade.

“We need Wyatt to lead us to the Mothership first.” Denise said plainly.

“Can we discuss this later?” Flynn asked, he didn’t want Holly to hear anything more that wasn’t necessary.

“I got ouchies.” Holly told Denise as she held her left arm close to her chest.

“We’ll get a doctor to look at those, we’re very proud of how brave and strong you’ve been.” Flynn said as he reached in and gently ruffled her hair, getting the last of the paint to wash out. He was relieved it was paint on her hair and the only blood had been on her shoes and legs. He was going to have to get changed into dry clothes himself but one problem at a time. His wet clothes were a low priority. He just needed Holly to be well cared for while he brought Lucy home safe.

“Trust me Flynn, I know this will work out.” Denise said softly before she grabbed a couple of towels and handed them to Flynn as he helped a now clean Holly out of the shower.

He didn’t respond to Denise as he turned off the shower and wrapped Holly up in the towels before he lifted her up into his arms.

“Holly, I want you close your eyes and tuck your head right into my neck. I don’t want you to open your eyes until I say so, Ok?” Flynn asked. Holly nodded as she leaned heavily against him. He held her with one arm and covered her head gently with his other hand. He didn’t need her to remember the dead bodies in the room with any more detail than she had.

He stepped out of the stall and walked them out of the bathroom. Denise followed as she opened and closed the door. All of them were careful of the blood as the last thing they wanted was to leave a trail of it to Holly’s room.

“Daddy,” Holly said, Flynn moved his hand from the back of her head, and shifted her into a more comfortable position on his hip.

“Yes?” he asked her.

“What about the others? They have ouchies too. Are they going to be ok?” Holly asked out of mix of curiosity and concern.

“We have people coming who will take them to the hospital where they will be looked after.” Denise assured her, there was comfort in the lies. Flynn and Denise hoped given her young age, it would eventually be forgotten.
Jiya raced down the hallway and into the command centre as fast as she could. She didn’t even bother to be kind with the door as she swung it open and rushed in.

“Hey, we found the code-“ Connor started to complain about the door slamming against the wall, but she cut him off.

“Move, I need the console.” Jiya told Connor as she pushed Connor to the side and starting taking over the console.

“What’s going on?” Rufus asked in concern as he could see Jiya was wound up.

“Wyatt escaped his cell and has taken Lucy hostage.” Jiya explained as she went to work on the task Denise had given her.

“What? How did we not hear anything?” Rufus demanded as he hadn’t heard any sound of trouble from outside. The bunker walls were usually thin. So thin, it was embarrassingly uncomfortable for all.

“The room is sound proofed due to the noise the system makes.” Connor informed him.

“What noise?” Rufus asked, he inwardly chastised himself for being latched on a subject that was completely unimportant.

“Garcia said there was a noise and he couldn't sleep because of it. Thus, we sound proofed, he was happier which in turn makes us happy.” Connor explained with a nonchalant shrug.

“Ok, but now Wyatt has Lucy.” Rufus stated, he couldn’t believe he was saying out loud. He couldn’t believe that Wyatt would take Lucy hostage.

“Yes, he killed his guards and hurt Holly. We didn’t want him killing Lucy so we let them go. Denise made the call and Rittenhouse is being taken down as we speak. Hopefully, Wyatt will lead us to the mothership and Emma.” Jiya said as she was typing rapidly and the screen around them changed to running code.

“How?” Rufus asked.

“We have a mining software and on the rare occasion; we’re not allowed to link into NSA’s data server farms in Utah. But today we are so that way we can-“ Jiya started to explain but Rufus cut her off.

“Tap into every cell phone, social media site, satellites, traffic cams, that sort of thing and use it to track down Wyatt, Lucy and Emma.” Rufus said finishing her sentence. She nodded as she didn’t stop what she was doing. “But how does Wyatt know to find Emma?” he asked.

“We don’t know, we’re just assuming that’s where he’s going.” Jiya snapped, she took a deep breath and exhaled as she gave Rufus an apologetic look, “Now, we were already running facial rec for Emma with no luck using a smaller server farm. But this will go faster than before.” Jiya stated or at least she hoped.

“Want help?” Rufus asked her, he knew he was useless in the field in these situations but give him a computer; he was capable of nearly anything. He wanted to help get Lucy back in any way he could.

“No,” Jiya said, as she pulled up a second touch screen keyboard for him. “If you have that code. You need to finish that patch, as we need to get it working now. If Wyatt isn’t going to Emma, then we’ll need a back up to override the Mothership’s system and yank them back if they try to jump.”
She told him.

“Ok, on it.” Rufus said.
Chapter 13

Lucy ran downhill through the thick brush. She didn't care as the sharp edges of branches and god knew what else scratched and stuck into her skin and clothing as she passed through. She needed to escape. She knew Denise said to comply but once they made it top side, she had panicked. She crazily thought she saw her escape and took off running. She knew Wyatt was on her tail as she heard him breaking through the brush after her. She looked back to see how far behind he was but in doing so, she tripped over own feet.

She cried out in surprise as she tumbled, then rolled down the hill and smacked into a tree hard. She groaned as she pushed herself up to keep running when Wyatt crash tackled her to the ground. She screamed for help and fought against his hold. But it was no use as he climbed onto her, forcing his weight against hers until she could barely breath. He pulled her arms back and held her tight. Lucy felt herself suffocate, stars and specks clouded her vision before Wyatt rose above her and rolled her onto her back. She coughed and sputtered for air, before she could even fight; he caught her by the wrists and forced them to the ground by her head. He sat on her pelvis as he used his body weight to pin her down.

“Wyatt, think about what you’re doing? You promised not to hurt me.” Lucy told him, her voice breathless. The man glowered her with icy disregard. It scared her out of her mind as he was usually more reasonable than this. The man before her was half crazed as he decided to rationalise this present could be ‘repaired’ and whatever damage he did, it didn’t count. But part of him wasn’t entirely convinced.

She winced as anger flared in his expression. His grip tightened on her wrists in a punishing manner. She was already covered in scratches and bruises, her clothes were a mess, she had tears streaking down her dirty face. “Please, don’t do this.” She pleaded, scared of what he was thinking. Scared of what he would do before the others reached her. His eyes narrowed in disgust.

“You ran.” He told her.

"You're scaring me! You hurt my daughter and killed two men. What did you expect me do?" Lucy demanded hotly. Wyatt smiled, that scared her even more.

"I expect you to help me. Not betray me but I guess we're both wrong about each other.” Wyatt said as he lifted off her and roughly pulled her to her feet. Lucy scowled repulsed by his commentary on her person.

“‘The time machine is the other direction, so how exactly are you going to fix everything?” Lucy asked as she rubbed at her wrists. She nearly stumbled as Wyatt shoved roughly at her to keep her moving but in the opposite way of the bunker.

“We're going to Emma, she’s gonna be just as motivated to fix this mess as I am. Cause, you know, I had time to think. You know what I thought? The only reason Rufus and you wouldn’t want to change things is if Rittenhouse was in bad shape too.” Wyatt told her. Lucy remained quiet as she long since decided not to share anything with him. He laughed taking her silence as confirmation. “I knew it, you’d let me rot so you can get off the hook with Rittenhouse. Take it down once and for all. Go back to your life like nothing happened.” He scoffed in disgust.

“We were working out a deal for you.” Lucy lied, she gave a dry cough and winced at the taste of blood and dirt in her mouth. Her body aching from the exertion of running and bruises Wyatt had given her.
“Yeah?” he asked mock disbelief.

“Yes, you’d need plastic surgery and a new identity but you’d be free.” Lucy said as she had no idea how it worked but if it got her out of this psychotic break of Wyatt's. She was all for it.

“You’re lying.” Wyatt told her in disdain.

“I’m not, we didn’t forget you. It’s that Rittenhouse took precedence. It’s our mission. Always has been.” Lucy reminded him. Wyatt grabbed her by the arm and swung her around to face him. She saw the seething rage in his eyes and felt it in his grip.

“Lucy, I’m a terrorist in this timeline. There’s no coming back for that. I also killed two guys. So, the mythical deal you’re pretending exists, is off. And even if it were real, I’d never take it as it's shit. It also begs the question of why do I have to give up everything?” he demanded as he shook her, every time he needed to emphasise a point.

“We’re all giving up something.” Lucy argued, Wyatt scoffed a laugh as he shoved her forward again.

“You get to play house with Flynn and that brat. Rufus has a hot newer version of Jiya. Yeah, I see the huge sacrifices being made. It’s real tough for you guys.” He drawled sarcastically. “But hey, don’t feel bad about betraying me because when we go back it will wipe out all of these events. Just like when Rittenhouse saved Jessica and in full power. Saving Jessica gave me a clean slate, I can do it again with yours and Emma’s help.” Wyatt told her.

“How are you even going to find Emma?” She asked him, changing direction of the conversation ever so slightly. Hoping to stall him, as she didn’t know what else to do. Maybe she’d get useful information.

“I’ll find her and by the time the others find us… It’ll be too late.” He promised her with a smile. Lucy nibbled her bottom lip wondering how she could stall him. But now, she realised why Denise wanted her to go. They could track them to Emma, then it would truly be over. While that realisation hit her, Wyatt grabbed her roughly by the arm and pulled her with him.

15 minutes later,

“Let’s see, we’ll put this splint on and ice it down.” Dr Jill Lawson said with a smile. She was a tall brunette, with ice blue eyes and pale skin. Her hair was perfectly quaffed into a 40s hairstyle. She was dressed in a 50’s tea navy blue dress with a floral print and boat neckline, she had a ¾ cardigan on which did nothing for the chill of the bunker. But she didn’t show any discomfort. In fact, she looked comfortable. The woman had a very cheerful disposition for a concierge doctor, she only made a comment about being glad for work to escape from a dreary tea party before she went to work. She looked Holly over and assessed her injuries before she placed a makeshift splint on Holly’s arm and placed ice bags on it.

“Cold.” Holly complained in a soft voice. Jill pouted along with her and nodded as she and Flynn tucked the blankets around Holly. Jill propped Holly's arm on a pillow making sure she was comfortable.

“I know, but it’s not bad. When the ice makes your arm get back to its normal size, then we’ll get you to a hospital, put on a cast on it. Then you can put stickers and draw really cool stuff on it. Ok?” She asked her with a smile. Holly’s pout dissolved into a reluctant closed lip smile. She nodded.

“Ok.” Holly said, she looked to Flynn who sat on the couch next to her. They moved her to the
lounge room so Holly could be distracted with TV. He gave Holly a reassuring smile, as he was glad that she was being such a strong kid.

“Keep your arm on the pillow, and enjoy the movie. This one is a favourite of mine. But I gotta talk to your Daddy, after that I’m totally joining you on this couch.” Jill told her in an excited manner. Holly face lit up as she ate up the attention and excitement. Jill stood up and moved off to the side, she non-verbally motioned for Flynn to follow her.

Flynn pressed a kiss to the top of Holly’s head. “I’ll be back in a second.” He said. Holly nodded before her attention went to the movie. Flynn rose from the couch and joined Denise and Jill.

“So?” Flynn asked Jill.

“Few bumps and bruises. Maybe a broken arm, we won’t know until we get an x-ray. I’ve seen a kid with a spiral break manage to wriggle all their fingers. Some kids just have amazingly high pain tolerance. Holly is one of them.” Jill said with a nonchalant shrug.

“We want to wait until the situation has passed. As you know we’re on lockdown.” Denise told her. Jill nodded.

“How long?” She asked out of curiosity.

“Between an hour to twelve.” Denise offered. Jill took a moment and Flynn could see the dollar signs in her eyes. Jill didn’t even bother looking at her watch or even her mobile which made him wonder what kind of Doctor she was to be so flexible.

“I don’t see any problem in keeping her under observation here. But if her arm keeps swelling, she’ll need to go to the ER. It’s non-negotiable.” Jill said to Denise, who nodded. She then looked to Flynn. “She’s a tough kid. I’ve yet to see her really troubled by anything.” She told him with an impressed tone.

“Thank you.” Flynn said, Jill nodded before she practically flounced over to the couch and engaged Holly with questions about the movie as she picked up one of the other blankets. She pulled it over herself as if mimicking Holly so the two were peas in a pod.

“She’s getting paid $265 per hour, she doesn’t care how long she babysits for. We’ve had her in before, she delivered Holly and has provided medical care us since the beginning. She’s trustworthy and the government covers the costs it as part of your employee benefits.” Denise told him.

“Not that I care about the bill, but I am grateful.” Flynn said as it made sense why the woman would drop whatever she had been doing to come out to the bunker. Holly seemed to know and like her. “I need to be in on finding Lucy and I need you to back me up.” He said to Denise, he knew he couldn’t just sit with Holly and wait for Lucy to be rescued. He needed to get her back.

“The mission is to recover Lucy and dismantle the mothership. I think we should consider kill orders for Wyatt and Emma. I’m not interested in repeating this situation again. I want this over with as cleanly as possible.” Denise told him firmly.

“That we can agree on.” Flynn said, Denise left him and he watched Holly and Jill for a moment before he walked over to them.

“Hey,” Flynn said as he knelt on the floor behind the couch. He leaned his arms on the back of the couch and looked to Holly. “Think you’ll be ok with Dr Jill?” He asked her.

“Uhuh.” Holly said. “Are you going to get Mommy back?” she asked him.
“Going do my very best.” He said, he gently booped her nose with his thumb before he smoothed her hair behind her ear. “I want you to rest and tell Dr Jill if you feel worse. I’ll be back in half an hour to check on you.” He told her, Holly nodded.

Lucy woke up in pitch black. Her face throbbed painfully and her heart hammered as she pressed her hands out to find herself in a cramped space. Sound sifted through her panic and she felt the vibrations of an engine. She knew from a jolt and the swing of the space that she was in the trunk of a car.

She tried breathing exercises to calm herself some more as she went through her mind trying to remember how she ended up here. It didn’t take long for her to remember as it came back to her. They found a road, she remembered being tempted to run again but Wyatt had predicted as much given he pulled her back. The last thing she remembered was his fist coming at her and then nothing.

She assumed that he must have carjacked someone and dumped her in the trunk. ‘Asshole’ was the word that came to mind as her eye and cheek hurt. She reached up in the dark and winced as she felt swollen the left side of her face was. She wondered how long they had been on the road but released asking such questions was stupid. She needed to escape, Screw Denise’s plan of compliance as she refused to stick around and be Wyatt’s punching bag.

She felt around trying to find the trunk door release. But no luck, it had to be an old car. She groaned in annoyance, the only comfort was that her claustrophobia was gone. But she was still panicking because this was not how she wanted to die. She didn’t want Jiya’s vision to come true. She needed to think of what to do.

Then as the car hit a pothole and she bounced hard; she remembered an episode of Hawaii 5-0. She felt around the front of the trunk until she found the panel for the tail lights on what she assumed was the right side of the car. It took some effort and two broken nails and bent back thumb nail but she managed to pull the casing off. She ripped what she felt was the electrical wiring and pushed at the light.

She grunted with the exertion as she managed to get the light pop out. Blinding light filled the small space and she squinted just enough to see the backlight hit the road and bounce away.

After her eyes adjusted to the light, she moved closer to the hole. She could tell they were on a freeway, she just hoped there was traffic at whatever time of day as she stuck her hand out the hole. She closed her eyes, her heart pounding in her chest as she hoped to hell she didn’t lose her hand doing this. She shifted closer and moved more of her arm out the hole and waved it up and down. She prayed someone saw her hand.

Sometime later,

Flynn watched the flurry of images on the computer screens wondering how Jiya and Rufus could stand it. But mostly, he didn’t care as long as they got back Lucy. His heart pounded in his throat as he anxiously waited for them to find something he could work with.

Sadly, until then all he could do was stand the back of the room and watch as Rufus, Jiya and Connor trawled through the information in front them. They helped the system refine its search by disregarding any data that wasn’t remotely relevant. Last time, he checked Holly was sleeping on the couch while Jill flicked through TV channels. She was being cared for, which helped him focus on the task at hand but it didn’t stop the restlessness he felt.
“I think I got something.” Jiya said excitedly as she had been monitoring social media and emergency services.

“What?” Denise asked before Flynn could.

“911 call came in, of a hand sticking out the back of an old silver mercury sedan. Bringing it up now.” Jiya said as she pulled it up to a screen to the far left of the room.

“They are streaming it on instagram.” Rufus told her, the Instagram story appeared on the screen of dash of SUV, through the windscreen they could make out the car in front with practically a whole arm sticking out of where the tail light and blinker should’ve been.

“Gotta love the internet and people’s need for fame.” Connor commented as they sourced the location. “The model of the car is too old to have a boot release and the standard tracking system in new cars.” He added.

“How do we know this is Wyatt’s car?” Flynn asked, as he didn’t want time wasted on a kidnapping that might not be Lucy. If it wasn’t then the local law enforcement could handle it.

“There.” Jiya said as she brought up an image caught at a toll pass. In the driver’s seat was Wyatt. He looked so calm and collected for a man who stuffed Lucy in his trunk. Flynn felt his hands flex into tight fists as he was going to kill Wyatt when they caught up to him.

“Damn. Lucy is in the trunk.” Rufus stated in a defeated manner. He had hoped maybe this was a nightmare he could wake from. That maybe it was a ruse but it was reality, it was the truth. Wyatt had lost his mind and kidnapped Lucy. Rufus didn’t know why but he felt guilty about it, like he’d played a hand in it all. But he pushed his thoughts away as now was not a time for wallowing. Lucy needed him to get Flynn to her.

“I’m calling the police telling them to back off. Jiya.” Denise said, hearing her name was enough to know what to do next. Denise pulled out her mobile phone and started making a phone call.

“On it.” Jiya said as she started typing away, “Scrubbing social media and sending an alert to 911 to tell the driver to back off.” Jiya said as she performed her tasks.

“What direction are they going?” Flynn asked looking to Rufus, as they had a map on the screen trying to locate where the car was and direction.

“Looks like Oakland yards. It was a thriving industrial area until the stock market crash in 08’. What?” Connor asked Flynn as he saw the expression of recognition in Flynn’s face.

“I used to use an abandoned building,” Flynn rattled off the address for Rufus. “But it wasn’t a church it was a large workshop. I didn’t think the time shift would change location’s original purpose too. If there’s surveillance then we can confirm it’s the place.” He said, he shook his head in disbelief. It was ingenious to hide in a place they’d never look.

“Please, the whole city is under surveillance the only exceptions are the national parks.” Connor informed him.

“Please, these days you can’t go more than five steps without being photographed.” A familiar voice said, Flynn and Rufus looked to the source. There stood Karl, dressed in a beautifully tailored suit with his hands in his pockets and an unlit cigarette tucked behind his ear.

“I’m calling the police telling them to back off. Jiya.” Denise said as she finished her phone call. She shook hands with him.
“Karl?!” Rufus said in surprise as Flynn felt as the last time he had seen the man, he’d been Flynn’s second command before abandoning him. It was unreal as he seemed the same and yet there were superficial the differences. His look was sharper, his hair more tousled and he wore a well-groomed beard. He wore a beautifully tailored suit and expensive shoes. Everything screamed money and his swagger was of a man who had made it to the top.

“Boss man, good to see you again.” Karl said holding out his hand to Flynn. Flynn shook it, as he was a little unsettled but also pleased to see him. “I know you’re different but I figure our timelines didn’t shift too drastically.” He assumed.

“One hopes not.” Flynn said as he released his hand. He looked to Denise, “He’s the mole.” Flynn stated as all the pieces fell into place. Karl stuck his hands back in his pockets, he wore an air of a man who’d won the lottery and was living his best life.

“I prefer double agent or bounty hunter extraordinaire.” Karl drawled in a smug manner. It was pure Karl, which comforted Flynn immeasurably.

“He has been integral to taking down Rittenhouse, thanks to you recruiting him.” Denise said to Flynn. She didn’t seem to thrilled at saying so, but Flynn knew it was Karl’s attitude that usually rankled people like Denise. The smug arrogance and general indifference to morality. But those were the perfect qualities for a spy to possess especially to be in Rittenhouse.

“Though he’s not cheap.” Connor remarked drily.

“I know my worth and I keep my promises, don’t I?” Karl asked Connor, he looked to Flynn. “I get $30k per convicted Rittenhouse member. I owe it to you, Boss.” He said to Flynn in a chuffed manner. Flynn had a feeling Karl was set for life.

“You’d sell out your own grandmother for a buck.” Jiya drawled sarcastically as she kept her eyes to the screen.

“If she was hellbent on ruining my chances at controlling my own destiny. You better believe I’d trade her wrinkled ass in.” Karl said with a wink at Jiya. She rolled her eyes as she kept working.

“So, who’s my next target, Money Penny?” he asked her with a grin.

“Emma Whitmore and Wyatt Logan.” Flynn said ignoring the sass on the man.

“Wyatt Logan?” Karl asked with a frown as he wasn’t completely up to date on what was happening.

“Time travel problems.” Flynn said, he then explained the situation to Karl. The man’s expression turned grim and serious as he knew it was time to stop joking.

“Well, I always wanted to bag a bona fide terrorist.” He said, though his comment was all snark there was a cold edge to his tone that said he’d gain some pleasure from killing Wyatt.

“That’s my friend.” Rufus said out of reflex more than anything else.

“Right now, he’s the man who killed two innocent men and attacked my daughter. Not to mention has Lucy hostage in the trunk of his car. Are you certain he is still your friend?” Flynn snapped, “Sorry.” He apologised as he held his hands up surrender as he quickly reigned it in as he knew he overstepped. But he was desperate to save Lucy not set up Wyatt’s defence.

“No, I’m not. I just want Lucy back.” Rufus said in a low voice, he pulled up CCTV of the warehouse area and was fast forwarding through it all. It wasn’t easy as he felt old allegiances to
Wyatt and he wanted to believe Wyatt deserved a chance to redeem himself but deep down...he knew he would be relieved if this was all over as quickly as possible, no matter the outcome. Then he saw it. “Got her!” he said, he put it up on one of the large screens for the others. It was footage of Emma coming out a large building, the stained-glass windows that were reminiscent of Jiya’s visions.

“I’ll get the team together to meet us a block away. I want a tablet with blueprints. We’re already an hour behind them.” Denise said.

“I’ll say goodbye to Holly.” Flynn said to her, as he wasn’t going to leave his little girl without assuring her one more time that he’d get Lucy back.

“Meet in 10 minutes by the main door. There’s TAC gear in the wardrobe.” Denise told him, Flynn nodded as he left the room. He went to the living area where Holly and Jill were laughing at the movie. He relaxed his tense posture as he walked over to the couch.

“Hey,” He said as he leaned on the back of the couch. Holly turned and looked at him. “I’m going to go get Mommy now.” He told her, Holly who seemed too used to him leaving nodded.

“You going to get the bad man too?” She asked him.

“Uhuh, like I said before; he’s going to have a very long time out for his behaviour.” Flynn promised her. She nodded in approval. “I love you.” He told her, he gently cupped her head and pressed a soft kiss to the crown of her hair.

After what felt like hours of driving, Wyatt pulled the car to hard stop and Lucy smacked into the front of the trunk with a pained ‘Oomph’. A wave of nausea and dizziness washed through her, but before she had time to push through it. The trunk opened. Wyatt hauled her out of the trunk as if she weighed nothing. Lucy winced as her eyes adjusted to the light and the first thing she saw were the stained-glass windows. The same windows Jiya had drawn. He carried her over to a up ended pew and dropped her unceremoniously on the ground.

Lucy groaned in pain as he pulled her left hand up and cuffed it to the arm rest of the end of the pew that had an intricately carved hole in the side made for wedding decorations. Her head was spinning, her vision blurred with tears. She looked up at Wyatt with disgust and hatred.

“Colour me impressed. I didn’t think you had it in you.” Emma drawled in an impressed manner to Wyatt as she took a pull of her beer and walked up to take a closer look at Lucy. Inspecting her state with unveiled appreciation.

“Should you really be drinking?” Wyatt asked Emma in annoyance, she quirked an eyebrow at him.

“Please, I could be drunk off my ass and still fly the mothership. Can you say the same?” she asked in a cool tone, she didn't appreciate being judged by Wyatt.

“Wyatt, Emma will betray you the second she gets what she wants.” Lucy told him, she couldn’t believe what an idiot he was being.

“Or maybe I need a good soldier in my ranks? Cause as you know, I didn’t kill your family to lose, Lucy. Nor did I want to end up in this pathetic timeline. Half a dozen people that I don’t even know,
who care more about evading prison than restoring any real power to Rittenhouse.” Emma remarked in disdain.

“Emma and I have mutual goals. You answers.” Wyatt said to Lucy as he pulled a big shopping bag from the backseat of car. She wondered when he had stopped. It must have been when she was unconscious as he was cleaned up and wearing different clothes. She worried about how much time she had lost, she wondered if this was a bad sign for her being rescued.

“You told Denise that you wouldn’t hurt me.” Lucy reminded Wyatt.

“No, I said I'd keep you alive. There's a difference.” Wyatt said plainly as he walked back over to her.

“So what? You’re going to torture me?” Lucy asked, she saw the guilt in his expression as he confirmed her assumption. He dropped the bag by her feet and pulled out rope, she struggled against him but he won out as he was battered and bruised like her or stuck at an awkward angle. Her left shoulder was already complaining at the posture she was in. Wyatt tied her feet together and wrapped rope and wiring around her lower legs and ankles. She hissed in pain as it was tight and cutting into her skin.

“Lucy, I want my life back. This here isn’t it. This isn’t our timeline, we have to fix it. Now, you’re going to tell us what we need to do to fix this.” Wyatt told her as he pulled the car battery and placed it on the floor like an unspoken threat.

“I know you don’t have the guts to torture me. You couldn't kill my mother because you were afraid I wouldn't forgive you. That tells me, that you can't do this.” Lucy told him, she was tired, sore and angry. She wanted to know where Flynn and the others were. They had to have seen her waving her hand out of the trunk. Someone had to have seen it, right? She squashed her doubt because she knew Flynn would always fond her. He would, he just needed her to hold out long enough.

Wyatt nodded his head in defeat as he crawled up to her. She tried to sit up but the way he tied her legs didn’t help her.

“You’re right, normally I wouldn’t but I know if I change history and you’re still here in the present then you’ll forget this happened. Do you understand that I can do whatever I want to you and it doesn’t matter? I don’t have to apologise for something you don’t remember me doing. I don’t have to even feel guilty about it cause repairing history means it never happened.” He told her, he reached out to touch her but she slapped his hand away. He smiled sardonically at her resistance.

“You know, if it's going to be hard for you, I can get the information from Lucy.” Emma offered, she looked eager to finish her beer and get to work. But Wyatt shook his head.

“No.” Wyatt told Emma, there was something incredibly territorial about his tone and posture. Lucy knew it was too late to pretend she cared for Wyatt. She had no other option that to see what he would do and hope she survived it.

“Men.” Emma scoffed as she pulled up a chair and sat down. It was clear she had enough patience to see what Wyatt would do. Or perhaps she would finish her beer first before she intervened. Wyatt turned back to Lucy.

“Lucy,” Wyatt said softly. He tried to take her hand but they fought as she refused to let him touch her. But with her left hand restrained, it didn’t take long to take her right hand in his. She balled her hand into a tight fist. He pursed his lips. “You said you could fix this. Now, tell me how.” He told her.
“You can’t fix this.” Lucy told him firmly, finding the backbone he thought no longer existed. Wyatt gave her a patronising look of disappointment.

"I can and I will. It will be better this time." He promised her.

"No, it won’t." Lucy told him.

“Lucy, that this isn’t our reality. History changed and everything is messed up. You’d never hook up with Flynn, not in a million years. You wouldn’t have a kid with him. He’s a criminal, he’s killed people for god’s sake. But here you got a cute kid and he’s sucker you in with it. It’s really sad how much you crave to be loved, but you know that you’ll never be enough for them. But you can make things right.” Wyatt told her, his words cut deep even as she knew he was manipulating her. It hurt and it pissed her off as she was not so stupid to be fooled by this trick.

“Go screw yourself. I am enough and I’m not helping you change a thing.” Lucy told him, he mulled over her words for a long moment before he nodded slowly.

“Ok, we’re going for the hard way.” He told her. She frowned as she didn’t understand. Not until he pried her thumb away from her fist. “Now, I know the Journal was nowhere to be found when you were taken. That means you’ll have to write it again. I saw those pages, your handwriting was beautiful even if your words were harsh.” He pushed her thumb back to the point she felt her tendons over stretched and her joint begin to ache. Lucy sucked in short breaths as she couldn’t help the visceral fear she felt at what he was threatening. “So, here’s what’s going to happen. I’m going to dislocate every joint in your hand until you tell me what I need to know.” He told her firmly.

“Go ahead.” Lucy said with false bravado. She was terrified of the pain more than anything else.

“I haven’t finished.” He said, in a patronizing manner. “When you don’t comply as you promised Denise and all your joints are out. I’ll start shattering them. So, think about it, Lucy. Think hard because if you don’t let me fix the past, then you won’t be able write the journal. That means no Flynn, no kid and Rittenhouse wins.” He told her.

Lucy closed her eyes, taking a moment. She had seen her journal. Just knowing it existed, she felt a strange sense of comfort and acceptance wash through her as this was it. This was how her ability write was compromised.

She wanted to laugh at his idiocy because he truly thought destroying her ability to write would stop her from making a journal if she needed to. She also wanted to laugh because the real tragedy was that she didn't know how to fix his mistake. She didn't have any answers for him even if she wanted to avoid this. The Journal was already written, it's history set. She realised this was what fate had decided. A sign that confirmed her beliefs that some things were meant to happen no matter what. For all the pain she knew she would endure, she felt calm and sure of herself.

“Good to know” She told him, she was surprised that her voice didn’t quaver. She knew Flynn would save her, she would have him and Holly in her life. She didn't have to anything but pretend to hold out on the information she didn't possess. More importantly, not let Wyatt know the truth.

She took in a fortifying breath as Wyatt pushed on her thumb, she grimaced as the pain grew but then Wyatt stopped. He seemed frozen as a conflicted expression crossed his features. She could tell he didn't want want to do this, maybe it was a moment of sanity or guilt. But he looked as her; pleading her.

“Come on, Luce. You don’t want me to do this. You control this, whatever I do is your fault. Please don’t make me do this.” He implored her in a low voice. Lucy's insides shriveled up as she
remembered her mother saying the exact same thing to her. She refused to be guilted, to feel like she was in control of her punishment when he was the asshole hurting her.

“No, everything that will and has happened is your fault. You chose this, so just own it for once.” She told him as she was already mentally preparing herself. Wyatt scowled as her response was not what he wanted.

“Fine.” Wyatt bit out, his expression turned from annoyance to determination. This time, he didn’t hesitate. Lucy screamed in agony as Wyatt didn’t just dislocate her thumb, he broke it.
“We’re 20 minutes out,” Denise said, Flynn wished he was driving as he was sure he could cut at least 10 minutes off their time but then he would also probably crash the van. At least there was a plan, and they would get Lucy back. They’d get the mothership, and it would be over. Rittenhouse would be gone and finally Flynn could let it all go.

He could let Lorena and Iris rest in peace, their deaths finally avenged as justice was served. He could let the anger go and move forward. He would do just that with Lucy and Holly. He’d take the gift that fate had bestowed on him and not waste it.

“Boss man,” Karl said popping his head between Denise and Flynn’s as they sat in the front. He was in the back with six other men and women all geared up ready to deploy.

“What?” Flynn asked, a little annoyed with the title as Karl used to call him by his last name.

“I’m thinking outback steakhouse for celebratory drinks then steak and ribs. I’ll buy.” Karl offered, already planning their success. Flynn felt it was a little premature as they had no idea what they were walking into. He just silently prayed Lucy was alive when they did.

“You’re such a classy man.” Baumgardner quipped from the back.

“Shut up, Butt-Gardner. You’re getting a happy meal from McDonald’s.” Karl told him.

“As long as I get my carrot sticks and fries, I’ll be happy. Also, it’s Baumgardner or you can call me Dave.” Baumgardner told him with a chuckle as Karl flipped him the bird and rolled his eyes. Flynn snorted a laugh as he was comforted that Karl was still asshole as it mean not too much of their history had changed.

“Let’s just get this mission finished before we discuss any celebrations.” Flynn told Karl.

“Ok, but what’s the plan again?” he asked, Flynn gave him a droll look as the man knew the plan. They all did as they had gone over it twice which more than sufficient for everyone to know their part. Karl smiled cheekily as he sat back in his chair, given he got the reaction he wanted.

Covered vomit and slick with sweat, tears streaked down her face. Lucy trembled as her body was past it’s limits and weak. Lucy looked at her right hand. Her joints were all pulled out and bones broken. All she felt was deadened feeling like she’d lost all communication with her hand and had no ability to move it. But there was still pain, incredibly pain that it took her breath away. It was a mixture of throbbing as it was heavily swollen and hot pins and needles. Every time her body moved, even breathing; it sent pain up and down her arm in flashes of hot and cold. It was hard to tolerate as it superseded the pain of her broken ribs and bruised face. She breathed in a shaky breath and started to mumble under breath unable to stop herself.

She knew what she was doing. It was a technique she learned from therapy sessions after her near drowning. Normally, she'd think it quietly to herself but she was in so much pain she verbalised it out loud. Anything to block out the pain as she rambled all her favourite historical dates over in a comforting manner. Stars and speckles her vision in waves, she swallowed the wave of nausea that rolled through her. She would never forgive Wyatt this. Never. Anger flared in her as every vile memory of their relationship came to mind of how he wronged her, manipulated and belittled her.
How she’d forgiven him for being hurt or frustrated. It all boiled and bubbled within her.

“What’s that date again?” Wyatt asked, he leaned in close. He crouched down, careful of the vomit and gently cradled her head as he leaned in close to hear her. Blood rushed through her ears as she seethed at his gentle touch after the last few hours of mayhem and pain. His cruelty spoke to a dark part of her soul as she found an anger and determination she had only experienced once. Unlike the tearful indecisiveness she suffered with Emma, Lucy felt a dark and twisted sense of control as she had the power right now.

“I’m sorry,” she whimpered pitifully, hot tears streaked down her face. Wyatt’s face fell as he looked relieved. He was suckered into her act.

“It’s ok. Just tell me what I need to know and I'll give you something for the pain.” He said in a comforting manner. He lifted her upper body off the floor, he smoothed the hair that had stuck to her face back. As if they had some kind of breakthrough, he leaned in close to her face so he could hear her. He was so greedy in wanting to know how to fix his mistake. Without hesitation she headbutted him. He immediately dropped her and clutched his head as he crooned in pain as he fell back. Lucy’s head spun. Her expression grew dark as she looked at him like he were small and insignificant. He was.

“I’m sorry, that no one ever loved you enough as a child. I’m sorry that you have no idea how to love someone.” She spat at him in a scathing tone. She glared at him, taking sick pleasure in the pain that flitted through his expression. “And if I’d known you were going to turn into a psychotic asshole. I would’ve left you behind at the Ala-omph” Lucy coughed and groaned in pain as Wyatt sucker punched her in the stomach. She couldn’t stop herself, as she dry-retched from the pain.

As tears collected in her eyes, she couldn’t help but laugh. It was weak given her pain but she finally felt some pleasure out all the misery as Wyatt had no idea that he wasn’t going to win. He looked angry, hurt and confused. She kept talking because she wanted to rip him of any delusions he might still possess that she cared for him. She wanted to ram it straight home how little she cared for him. She hated him, hated everything he represented in her life.

“I was relieved when you ran back to Jessica. I even pushed you two back together because I didn’t want you. I wanted Flynn, you and 1941 it was nothing but a cheap thrill. I didn’t even come, you were so bad, I knew Jessica was faking with all her loud screaming.” Lucy said with a breathless laugh as she knew she bruised his fragile ego.

Wyatt spat blood on the floor, tears in his eyes as he shook with anger and pain. He flexed his hands and looked like he was barely in control. Lucy knew that with Wyatt, it wasn’t about Jessica or her. It was always about him. He didn’t care about her except as a possession he wanted to possess and show others. Emma chuckled in the background as she was just enjoying the show. Lucy didn’t care as she happily let Emma know she picked the weakest of their team and confirm he was not worthy of Rittenhouse.

“You want me to be truly honest? I despise you. My mother died, I lost my sister and Rufus. You have the nerve to tell me you love me. You’re despicable; abusing my trust at my lowest point. Tearing me down like Rittenhouse but they didn’t break me. Neither will you. So, go ahead and do your worst. I’m more stubborn than you know and I’m not telling you anything.” She promised him darkly.

“Lucy, this is just the beginning. You think this hurts now, it will get worse.” He promised her, his eyes dark, he slid his hands up her sides; her shirt dragged up. Her skin crawled as his fingers skimmed her bruised skin. He pulled her up off the floor. He held her up like a Prince did in the movies when his Princess was hurt. He cradled her head with such care and tenderness. Her body
screamed in agony and disgust. He continued to speak.

“You will break. You will tell me what I have to fix to repair the timeline. Then I’m going to go back and fix us, when I have you back in my bed. I’ll remember this and I’ll smile because you will love me and not know any better. You’ll think of me as a hero I am and worship me just as you did before.” He said with a sadistic smile. Lucy snorted a laugh and shook her head as he was completely delusional. She squared him with dark determination.

“No, Garcia is going to kill you before that happens. Unlike you, he doesn’t need to rewrite history to get laid. You sick fuck.” Lucy said before she spat at him. She was surprised it was in her nature, but it felt liberating to act so. Wyatt dropped her back onto the ground with no care and wiped the mixture of blood, bile and spit from his face.

“The only sick person here is you.” Wyatt told her, he glared at her. Annoyed that she hadn’t conceded to him which meant he had to up the ante.

“Alpha team in position, we got thermal confirmation. Two tangos standing to the north east interior of the building and one hostage on the floor. Still warm, no definitive movement.” A voice whispered over the comms. Flynn and Karl moved to their designated entry point with a third man to cover them. The other teams were covering the other exits waiting for the order to breech.

“Copy that, breech on three.” Flynn replied softly over comms. He counted down from three.

“Gotta say Princess, you’re not looking good at all. But I am impressed, you survived RH and now you're holding up better than Wyatt. It's just a shame you keep picking the wrong side.” Emma said gingerly pressed the tip of her booted foot into Lucy’s swollen mess of a pinky finger. Lucy sucked in a breath as pain lanced through her, tears silently ran down her face.

“Don’t touch her.” Wyatt ordered Emma, he was taking a break from torturing Lucy. He didn’t have the stones to connect the car battery to Lucy and electrocute her. But it was only a matter of time before frustration or Emma would push him forward. Emma rose her chin in defiance at him, letting him know she wouldn’t kowtow to him or any man.

“I do as I please, and if you can’t get Lucy to give us what we need... then maybe I should take over.” Emma stated.

“I-“ Wyatt stopped, Lucy frowned as she heard the sound of doors crashing.

She watched as Wyatt drew his gun, Emma dropped her beer as she reached for her own gun. The beer bottle shattered on the ground, Lucy closed her eyes in reflex as glass and beer sprayed at her. She heard the sound of gunfire. The sound of two bodies falling to the ground. Silence filled the room for a moment, Lucy held her breath almost afraid to know what was happening.

But she heard the sounds of heavy footsteps and voices shouting ‘Clear’ and mumbled conversations. She pushed through her fear and opened her eyes. The first thing she saw Karl dressed in Black BDU’s, a Kevlar vest holding a rifle. It looked like he’d kicked at her body but Lucy heard the sound of metal skitter across the floor. She knew he had kicked her weapon away. He knelt down and felt for a pulse.
“Emma is KIA.” He called out. He looked to Lucy and winked. Lucy wondered if he was for real or a pain induced hallucination. He dragged Emma’s body away from hers. Lucy looked for Wyatt wondering if he had gotten away to see his body on the ground. Baumgardner crouched beside the man, his expression grim and disappointed.

“Logan, KIA.” Baumgardner called, Lucy was relieved and satisfied at hearing Wyatt was dead.

“Get the paramedics in here. Open up the warehouse doors and move that car so we can get the ambulance in.” Flynn ordered, he rushed to her side. “Lucy.” He breathed in relief.

“Garcia.” She said, fresh tears streamed down her face in relief at seeing him. She tried to lift herself up but she had reached her limit. Her body wouldn’t comply. She choked out a sob as she broke down and let out the pain she was feeling.

"Lucy, I got you.” He said as he knelt down by her left side and gently cradled her head with one hand as he brushed her hair out of her face. He wanted to pick her up but he’d seen her hand and was too afraid to hurt her. He smoothed his knuckles across her face, catching her tears. His other hand gently righted her clothing to give her some modesty. If Wyatt wasn’t already dead, Flynn would’ve snapped and made the man pay in the most slow and painful manner for what he did to Lucy.

He looked at her, she was a mess of injuries. She was pale and sweaty, covered in her own vomit. Her right hand and wrist, his stomach rolled at the sight as her joints were all dislocated and most likely broken as her fingers laid in unnatural angles. Her face was bruised and swollen, he knew from her breathing she had broken ribs. He leaned over her and gently held her face. He pressed his forehead to hers, he needed her to calm down.

“It’s over, everything will get better.” he promised her, Lucy’s sobs subsided into tearful hiccups as she calmed down. Flynn wondered where the medics were.

“You’re in my vomit.” She said, she closed her eyes because all the things she could’ve said. She had to be factual as she just felt seedy and chewed up. When she opened her eyes, he chuckled.

“I’ve been in worse.” He said as he gently pressed a kiss to her forehead. She closed her eyes relishing the comfort of an innocent gesture. He leaned back and pulled out a lock pick set from his vest. He went to work on the handcuffs. Karl joined him and started freeing Lucy’s legs.

“Holly?” Lucy asked Flynn, his expression softened. She found relief in the expression.

“She’s ok. Just some bumps and bruises. Maybe a broken arm. Don’t worry, as it will heal just as you will. You’ll be ok.” Flynn promised her. He made quick work of the cuffs, he caught her left hand in his and gently lowered it to her chest. She hissed in pain as blood returned to the limb. “I’m so sorry, we took so long. Your hand.” He breathed, his expression pained as he empathised with her pain. She gave a pained nod as she was feeling every bruise, cut and broken bone in her body.

“I know but it was worth it.” She said weakly as she felt herself slipping out of consciousness. The last thing she heard the sound of vehicles and saw the flash of ambulance lights bounce off the room.

“Why haven’t we heard anything? Why aren’t they wearing headcams and other equipment?” Rufus asked Jiya as they were sitting in the command centre that was darkened. He didn’t like the lack of footage. What were they trying to hide?
“Give it time, we’ll know as soon as it’s over. Denise will call as she knows that we need to get Holly to the hospital.” Jiya said.

“Your vision came true just like all the others.” Rufus said, scared for her and how this could be the rest of their lives. Living from one vision to the next. He was with her one hundred percent, as he made the decision and he was sticking to it. But it didn’t stop him from being worried for her. The toll of seeing these things.

“Which means from now on, it should be visions of joy and normal life.” Jiya said, her phone rang; they both jumped at the noise. She picked it up as quickly as she could. “Hello?” she said, she sucked in a breath and nodded as she listened to the person on the other end. “Ok, I’ll let the others know.” She said, she gave a sigh a relief and smiled as she hung up.

“What is it?” Connor asked, as he had been standing quietly in the corner; waiting nervously with them.

“It’s over. All Rittenhouse has been rounded up and arrested or dead. We have the mothership.” She said with a relieved smile. She was worried for Lucy but she couldn’t believe they had won.

“What about Wyatt?” Rufus asked, Jiya’s smile fell into a neutral expression as she didn’t want to put Rufus off by her nonchalance at Wyatt’s death.

“He’s dead as is Emma.” She told him, Rufus gave a nod as he didn’t know what to say or how to feel. He should be relieved but part of him was reeling from the shock that Wyatt was dead. Even when he had turned into a murderer, he had been Rufus’ friend.

“What about Lucy?” Rufus asked, he kicked himself for not asking about her first. He had no excuse except that he knew Flynn would do his best to save Lucy. The man was pretty good on keeping his promises.

“She’s alive and being taken to a local hospital. I’m going to let Dr Lawson know that we can go. Connor do you mind-“ Jiya started but he cut her off.

“Rufus and I will handle everything from here. You go with Jill and get Holly to the hospital.” Connor told her.

“I’ll keep you all posted.” Jiya told them, before she rushed out of the room.

“Now what?” Rufus asked Connor as he felt a little dazed. Wyatt was dead and Lucy was in the hospital. He didn’t even ask about Flynn but he had assume the man was alive and well as Jiya would’ve said otherwise.

“We go get the mothership and get started on dismantling the lifeboat. Once all of this mess is cleaned up. We move onto bigger and better things.” Connor told him as if it were truly that simple.

“You’re going to be ok. I’m right here.” Flynn assured Lucy, he gently rested a hand on her ankle; wishing he could hold her hand but the paramedics were working on assessing her injuries and doing their best to keep her comfortable as they drove to the nearest emergency room. Lucy had come too when they picked her off the ground and onto the gurney. The paramedics had given her something for the pain and an oxygen mask. She just looked at Flynn with a dazed expression like she didn’t know how to feel. The only time she broke eye contact was when the paramedics demanded her attention.
He knew her hand was going to be a nightmare to fix. It was also the reason why her writing was so mangled in the journal. His heart broke for her, for the pain she suffered and would endure to recover. He felt guilty for not protecting her, for letting down his guard. He wanted to believe he would’ve seen this coming but he didn’t. He was just blindsided by it all.

Knowing right now, that he could never have conceived this. He pushed his guilt away, Lucy and Holly needed him to be strong. For the first time, it truly sunk in that it was over. Rittenhouse was gone, he was free and he had his family with him. Now, he needed to take care of them, to love them and never take them for granted again.

“Are we going to see Mommy and Daddy now?” Holly asked sleepily as Jiya clipped her into a car seat. She placed a stuffed toy under the little girl’s injured arm to support it. Jill got herself situated in the driver’s seat.

“You’ll get your arm cast and then we’ll see what they are up to.” Jill told Holly.

“Mommy got hurt real bad, didn’t she?” Holly asked them, she looked upset and fragile. It made Jiya's heart ache as she wished she had better news. But she didn't know much of anything. She plastered on a reassuring smile as she double checked that Holly was strapped in.

“Yeah, but she’s going to be ok. Just as you will be.” Jiya assured her, she smoothed her hand over the back of Holly’s hair and gave her a reassuring smile. “Why don’t you close your eyes and get some sleep.” Jiya suggested, Holly nodded sluggishly.

An hour later,

“Hey, I bought you some clothes and toiletries so you can shower and change.” Karl told him, he held out a couple of shopping bags. He was dressed in dark blue jeans and a cream long sleeve Henley top. The sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His hair looked wet as he had managed to squeeze in a shower and wrap up the mess Flynn had escaped.

“Thanks, but-“ He stopped as he looked down at his BDUs and Kevlar. He had handed his weapons over to Agent Christopher before getting in the ambulance. So, all he had was what was on his back and they reeked of blood, sweat and vomit. He knew he needed to change. “Thank you.” He said with a sigh.

It felt like an eternity since he stepped into the hospital. Lucy was stable but her injuries were extensive. Broken ribs, fractured cheekbone and nose. Her right hand was a mess, her fingers had been dislocated, some completely broken and snapped tendons. It had been decided to get Lucy into surgery and repair the damage immediately.

Flynn supported Lucy’s choices, she was hopped up on pain meds but he felt she was clear about what she wanted. Once they took her away, all Flynn could think was how much pain Lucy had endured and how the current timeline had come almost full circle. He hated it how it came to pass, that Lucy was now in surgery because of them all being blindsided.

“They said they’ll be putting Lucy into a private room. Number 304, they also said you can use the shower. They were quite adamant about it and I don’t blame them.” Karl said as his face was pinched in disgust.
“They just told you all of this?” Flynn asked him wryly as they headed towards the room in question.

“I have an ID for NCTC, it helps and you’re scaring everyone in your getup. Come on, I got a biohazard bag for your dirty laundry.” Karl said as he held up a bright yellow garbage bag that had all the markings for a biohazard waste disposal on the side.

“Is Holly here yet?” Flynn asked him, he didn’t have a mobile phone or even an ID. It was why he waited in the surgical level’s waiting room for updates on Lucy. He had asked if Holly had been checked in but there hadn’t been any information.

“About 5 minutes out. Enough time to clean up and get to the ER.” Karl assured him, Flynn nodded glad he wasn’t too far out of the loop.

“Thank you.” Flynn said.

"You're welcome but I’d appreciate it more if you showered." Karl told him.

“How do we want to do this?” Denise asked Connor and Rufus as they arrived in the abandoned church. They stood before the mothership. Rufus was doing his best to keep his eyes on the time machine. But his eyes still wandered to the blood and other bio-matter he preferred not to identify around the place.

Wyatt and Emma’s bodies had been removed to a local crematory where they were being disposed of quickly. No funerals, presumably no paperwork. It was brutal and seemed wrong how quickly they had been erased. Rufus didn’t argue as this was his reality. He had to live buy it’s laws and if he were honest, he knew they’d carry the experiences of the past two years with them forever.

“I’m thinking we take a quick jaunt to the past and then land it in the bunker. With the battery, we don’t need to linger any more than a few seconds in the past.” Connor said.

“Ok.” Denise said as she didn’t see any issue with the plan. It did save a lot of time and logistics to get it to a more secure location to dismantle it.

“Any word on Lucy and Flynn?” Rufus asked Denise.

“Lucy is stable, Wyatt brutalised her. She’s in surgery right now. Flynn is with Holly at the hospital. I should get him his phone and some money.” Denise commented, she seemed remarkably calm about it all. “How long will it take to dismantle the time machines?” she asked.

“Days to weeks. But we’ll need to keep the mothership operational.” Connor reminded her. Denise nodded while Rufus frowned.

“Why?” Rufus asked.

“Lucy to give Flynn the Journal in 2014. To complete the loop, though how we’ll be able to travel into our own timeline is still a mystery.” Connor commented. Rufus nodded as he had forgotten that little part of history. The loop had to continue to keep continuity of the timeline.

“I think I know of a way but I’d need time to figure it out.” Rufus said honestly as he’d have to try and remember what he’d seen the day Lucy and the others saved him. But he knew he and Jiya would figure it out.
“Thankfully, we have time and Lucy is in no shape to make that jump at the moment. Let’s just focus on getting the mothership to a secure location and worry about the rest later.” Denise said.

“Like declaring ourselves alive again.” Rufus said, he hated being selfish but he never thought this day would come.

“I’ll look into getting you declared alive again. If you want to call your family, you can but remember that this all still classified.” Denise reminded him.

“What do we say for our cover?” Rufus asked, she frowned and looked thoughtful as they all realised with exception of Connor and herself that Rufus and the others needed cover stories for why he disappeared for three years.

“Let’s just get through the next few days and go from there.” Denise told him, Rufus nodded as he didn’t know what to say. But Connor clasped his shoulder in a gesture of comfort.

“Don’t worry, we’ll figure it out.” Connor assured him.

After a quick hot shower and changing into a burgundy linen shirt and jeans. He reunited with Holly in the ER. Flynn felt somewhat better. Karl had disappeared with Flynn’s dirty clothes and no word on when he’d be back. If ever. Not that it bothered Flynn, but he felt uncomfortable and outside of his element. He didn’t have a phone or even a wallet. Just a bag of toiletry items and the clothes on his back.

But it didn’t stop him, as he learned Lucy was still in surgery. Now, he was sitting on a bed in the ER with Holly in his lap. She was being incredibly fussy but in her defence her arm was broken and she’d never been in the ER. So, it was all new and scary for her. She clutched her stuff toy in her good arm. She shifted restlessly in his arms until she found a comfortable position.

Dr Jill Lawson who had changed into hospital scrubs with a visitor pass tacked onto the neck line. She finished the final layer of Holly’s cast. Holly had chosen a yellow tape for the outside as she wanted a happy colour to cheer up Lucy.

“The cast just needs another 15 minutes to set. So, just rest it on a pillow and not touch or grab it too hard. It needs to keep its shape. So, just be calm and relax. If you need pain meds, just call for a Nurse.” Jill said as she was already cleaning up the tray table of supplies.

“Can we see Mommy now?” Holly asked him, it wasn’t the first time she asked.

“Not yet.” Flynn said as he pressed a kiss to her temple to soothe her as he hugged her closer. He adjusted the pillow under her arm to support it.

“But I wanna see her now.” Holly said with pout. She looked as exhausted as he felt as she looked around the place with seedy eyes. She needed to sleep as much he did, but he didn’t see it happening for a while for him. For Holly, he figured some food and she would conk out in time.

“Why don’t I go and see how they are doing upstairs. You two just wait here. Get some rest.” Jill suggested.

“That would be great. Thank you, Doctor.” He said.

“No problem.” Jill said, she turned to the nurse and signed the tablet computer passed to her. She
turned to them. “I’ll be back in a few. Get comfortable.” She told them, she drew the curtain around their bed closed.

“You’re being very brave. Does your arm hurt?” Flynn asked Holly, she shook her head.

“No, but I’m hungry.” Holly said.

“That’s a good sign.” Flynn said trying to be positive even though he was inwardly torn as he wanted to be upstairs waiting for news but he also wanted to be with Holly. Their daughter took precedence as she needed Flynn, Lucy was in the capable hands of a surgical team.

“Someone say they are hungry.” Karl asked, he opened the curtain with flair. Jiya was standing next to him with a glower on her face. The two clearly didn’t get along.

“How did you find us?” Flynn asked Karl, he knew Jiya had left to make a phone call.

“People talk when they see a man over 6ft 2 running around and I saw Jill.” Karl said, he wore a secretive smile that told Flynn that Karl probably knew Jill in the biblical sense. The man seemed to know many people and who to ask questions.

“The only good thing about Karl being here is the food.” Jiya said as she took the bag of food from Karl and put on the end of the bed. “Why are you here?” she asked as she pulled out sandwiches, bottled water and a couple of bananas and apples.

“Because I care.” Karl said, Jiya laughed while Karl smiled. Flynn and Holly watched with bemused expressions.

“I think you lost all your little Rittenhouse friends and now you realise you’re all alone. So, now you need us.” Jiya told him in a teasing manner being a complete troll.

“Need is a strong word, I’m just ignoring my paperwork and picking up beautiful women.” Karl told Jiya in a smug manner.

“You must be very strong to pick up girls.” Holly said wanting to be included.

“I am the strongest.” Karl deadpanned, Holly looked at his lean frame with an expression of disbelief. Jiya snorted a laugh enjoying the honesty of a child.

“Holly, this is Daddy’s friend Karl. Karl, this is Holly. Try not to teach her bad manners.” Flynn said introducing them.

“I know Uncle Karl.” Holly told him, Karl and Jiya wore confused expressions. “He’s going to give us a dog.” Holly said to Flynn, a cheeky grin on her face as it was clear she was lying to get herself a dog.

“No, he’s not.” Flynn assured her. He gave Karl a pointed look as if to say ‘Don’t’. Karl grinned evilly.

“Hey, you’re not my Dad. You don’t control what I do. If I want to get a dog, I will.” Karl said in a mocking manner.

“You can have a dog but you’re not giving that dog to us.” Flynn told him with a frown. Holly giggled as Karl made a face of man trying to think his way around the rules.

“I guess we’ll see, won’t we.” Karl said being an asshole as he stirred Flynn up. Flynn shook his
head at him. Karl picked up one of the wrapped sandwich. “Sandwich.” He said holding out to Holly.

“Thank you.” Holly said, Flynn thanked him for the sandwich as he took it for Holly. He unwrapped the paper for Holly. He pulled out half of the mixed vegetable sandwich and held it out for Holly. She took a bite and started chewing. Flynn took a bite of the same half, he and Holly watched as Karl and Jiya joked and snidely snapped at one another.
Chapter 15

“Give me a break.” Jiya told Karl in an exasperated manner.

“What? I’m telling you how it is.” Karl said before he took a bit of the apple core in his hand. “That Star Trek series was shit for a reason. Now cancelled because they were funding it. They are gone, so it’s over.” Karl said in amusement as he had been telling Jiya all the TV shows she was losing because Rittenhouse controlled the media.

“Language.” Flynn said even though Holly was fast asleep on the bed. He sat on the bed next to her as it had taken a while for her to settle enough to detach herself from his person. He also didn’t need Holly to learn swear words from osmosis from being in Karl’s presence.

“They didn’t control Star Trek Franchise.” Jiya argued, ‘They’ being Rittenhouse as it was not wise to be saying the name out loud. They had moved to 304, Jill had found out that Lucy was doing well but the surgery to her hand was lengthy. The surgeon wanted to repair as much of the damage as possible the first time round.

Flynn’s stomach curdled at the idea of multiple surgeries but if it was a necessary evil, then so be it. As Flynn knew Lucy thrived on writing and having some semblance of control over her person. Who didn’t have that same want in life.

“They did. Check the internet. It’s all over.” Karl told her.

“What? No.” Jiya said incredulously as she pulled out her mobile. She did a quick search. “No.” she said in disbelief and pain as Karl was telling the truth. She made a face as she was not happy by knowing one of her favourite shows was cancelled.

“Yeah.” Karl said feeling vindicated, he pressed the button on the lazy boy style seat he was in. He smiled as the back of the chair leaned back and the legs came up.

“Well, that just ruined my day. The show ended on a cliff-hanger.” Jiya grumbled, she rose from her chair and stretched. “I’m going to head back home. You want anything when I come back?” she asked Flynn.

“No problem, I’ll be back around the afternoon.” Jiya said.

“Take care, thanks for everything.” Flynn told her, she gave a nod before she left. Karl watched her leave and Flynn turned his attention to the young man. “So, how long are you sticking around?” Flynn asked him, Karl gave a shrug.

“Haven’t got much going on.” He replied.

“I appreciate you hanging around but you don’t have to be here.” Flynn assured him.

“You were there for me when I needed you. I’m doing the same. Don’t make such a big deal out of it.” Karl told him, making a face as the conversation made him uncomfortable.

“But what about Baumgardner? You can’t leave him waiting in the car for his happy meal forever.” Flynn quipped, injecting levity into the conversation to ease up on the emotional note it had taken.
“I cracked a window, he’s good looking enough that someone would stop and help the moron out.” Karl replied, the two chuckled.

“This feels so unreal.” Rufus said to Connor as the mothership and Lifeboat sat side by side in the landing bay area of the bunker.

“I think it’s great.” Jiya said, both men turned and looked surprised to see her. "We can finally leave the bunker and get an apartment, have a life and see sunlight in the present.” Jiya said as she held up bag with Chinese takeaway in it. “It’s probably cold from the drive but well worth it.” She added.

“Thank you.” Rufus said, he linked an arm around her waist and kissed her before taking the bag from her. He was starving. He released her and opened the bag taking a deep inhale. “How’s Lucy?” he asked.

“Still in surgery but don’t worry, the hospital has top of the line equipment and surgeons. Her hand will be fine.” Jiya assured him as she went to kitchen and grabbed a couple of beers.

“Well, I’m going to go home.” Connor told them.

“What about this?” Rufus asked gesturing to the time machines.

“It can wait until morning and there’s nothing more we can do for the Flynns. My phone will be on if you need me.” Connor told them, Rufus watched as the man gave a wave and left them. Rufus turned back to Jiya flabbergasted.

“I thought we’d be working into the night.” He said.

“We will be, not Connor.” Jiya corrected him, she handed him a beer. Rufus took a sip before he placed it on the table. He and Jiya sat down at the table. He pulled out the take away boxes not caring that it was barely lukewarm. “It’ll be ok.” She assured him.

“Oh yeah, for the first time in over two years I’m no longer in danger and free. But Wyatt lost his mind and hurt Lucy who is still in surgery. Oh yeah, Wyatt is dead.” Rufus said sarcastically because if he didn’t make a joke out of it, he’d cry.

“I’m sorry for your loss.” Jiya said.

“You’re not sorry.” Rufus said, he winced as he sounded petulant and callous. Jiya wore a tight smile.

“I’m sorry that you’re in pain over it. He was your friend before all of this happened.” Jiya offered, Rufus ducked his head and sighed.

“I appreciate that, but truthfully he was kind of a fuck up. It was always a mess with him.” Rufus told her honestly, as every once in a while he’d be hit with the hard truth of his past with Wyatt. They wanted to be good people but even so, they had committed a lot of bad at the same time. Rufus needed to stop protecting Wyatt and pretending he was pure and innocent.

“You don’t have to explain it. Not today.” She said as she could see he was struggling with it. “Let’s just eat and have a beer. It’s been a long day.” She added.

“Yeah, it has been.” Rufus said, Jiya’s phone beeped; he watched as she pulled it out of her pocket.
She wore a soft smile.

“Lucy’s out of surgery and is going to be ok.” Jiya said with a smile, Rufus let out a breath he hadn’t known he’d been holding. Relief washed through him as maybe everything would be ok at least for the time being.

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Hours later,

Lucy slowly came too, she heard soft singing, she opened her eyes and found herself in a pristine and modern room. She knew it was a hospital by the smell. Years of caring for her mother during her cancer imprinted that smell on her brain. She blinked slowly and tried to take in the state of her body. She felt dull aches and pains all over but also a slight buzz as whatever pain meds she was on were working hard. She had cold air blasting through her nasal cannula, making her nose uncomfortably dry and making her want to sneeze but not at the same time.

She looked for the source of the singing and saw Flynn with Holly in his arms. He idly walked around the room at a languorous pace. It took her brain a second to realise he was singing, he wasn’t too bad either. A little rusty in some of the lines but his voice was rather soothing as he sang. She tried to figure out the song but it didn’t sound familiar and after a couple minutes she realised he wasn’t even singing in English.

Holly sniffled and Flynn rubbed her back in a soothing manner. Lucy just watched them as she loved them, it wasn’t a huge revelation she expected it to be. There was no huge epiphany, it just existed and knowing how she felt, it calmed her immeasurably. She knew when she looked at them that she’d walk through fire for them. She had probably lost her ability to write and she didn’t care. She just wanted to hold Holly and Flynn, she wanted to make a home with them and get on with their lives. To put this chapter of their lives behind them.

Flynn turned on his feet and stopped singing as he saw she was awake. She smiled softly and winced as it pained her to do as much. Flynn moved to her left side and picked up the call button. She wanted to tell him not to hit it. But it was too late, it was probably for the best as small pangs of pain filtered through.

One thing she knew about pain, it was better to take the meds before the pain was too great. The coping mechanisms learnt from caring for her mother when she was sick. Making sure she didn’t suffer more than she had to. Flynn pulled up a chair and sat down by her beside. Holly lifted her head from his shoulder, her face was blotchy as she looked like she had been crying.

“Mommy.” Holly said, she looked exhausted and she pouted like the world was being entirely unfair to her. She held onto Flynn but looked like she wanted to reach out to Lucy. Lucy knew exactly how that felt.

“Hey Monkey.” Lucy said softly, her voice hoarse. She knew it was from screaming and vomiting. She just hoped that she had been cleaned up as she didn’t want Holly more traumatized than she probably was.

“Daddy wanted me to go home.” Holly said, she shot Flynn an accusatory glare, her bottom lip sticking out in a pout.

“You need to sleep in your own bed. It will happen today, as you can see; Mommy is ok.” Flynn said in a matter of fact manner.

“Mommy got lots of ouchies.” Holly pointed out.
“I’ll be ok but Daddy is right. You need to get some sleep in your own bed.” Lucy said, she didn’t Holly running herself ragged because of her. The door to the room opened and Lucy watched an Asian woman in her late forties came into room. She wore hospital scrubs and a lab coat.

“Mrs Flynn, I’m Dr Watanabe. I am your surgeon. How are you feeling?” Dr Watanabe asked as she moved to Lucy’s right side. She lifted the back of the bed up so Lucy upper body was elevated slightly.

“Ok. A little out of it.” Lucy admitted, the woman looked over her vitals and looked down at Lucy’s right hand. Lucy down at it, seeing the damage for the first time. It was in a makeshift splint, lightly covered in a lightweight wide bandage to obscure the view. Lucy didn’t dare try to move her fingers. She was afraid to as it felt swollen. It was confirmed when the doctor unwrapped the bandages to take a peek. Her hand looked twice it’s normal size, it was red and blue. She had small stitches where the doctor had gone in and reattached the flexor tendons.

“It’s the anaesthesia wearing off. The surgery went well. Right now, we just want to you to rest and recover before we talk about what’s next. You also won’t be able to move your fingers very well for a while as your tendons heal. I’d prefer you wait until they’ve had time to heal. Any pain?” she asked Lucy.

“Not much.” Lucy answered, feeling remarkably calm given she was write handed and she had resigned herself to the fate of the journal she had written. But it was scary to actually live through the reality. She felt Flynn’s hand gently rest on her shoulder, in a comforting gesture.

“Good, now your BP is a little low which is a common side effect from the anaesthesia. We’ll keep an eye on that and if you need stronger more pain meds call for a nurse.” Dr Watanabe told her as she loosely wrapped Lucy’s hand up and then picked up Lucy’s chart at the end of the bed. She didn’t look concerned at all as she wrote some notes into it.

“Ok.” Lucy said feeling a little exhausted from the whiplash of the visit as it was already over.

“I’ll let you catch up and I’ll be back later.” Dr Watanabe said before she left room. Lucy gave a slow exhale, it was easier to breathe now she was elevated up. She looked to Holly and Flynn.

“Can I hug Mommy now?” Holly whispered to Flynn. He looked to Lucy who nodded. She needed a hug, any kind of physical comfort to solidify this was real and not some vague dream.

“Yes, but be very gentle. Ok?” he whispered to Holly. Lucy watched as Holly nodded, Flynn kept his held onto Holly’s waist, ready to lift her up in case Lucy needed.

Holly’s tiny arms wrapped around Lucy’s neck as she hugged Lucy. Lucy closed her eyes, she couldn’t stop the tears that trailed down her face. She hugged an arm around her daughter.

“You smell yucky, Mommy.” Holly whispered, Lucy choked out a laugh as she let her go. Flynn helped Holly sit back onto bed. “Did I hurt you?” Holly asked concerned as Lucy wiped the tears from her face.

“No, I’m just so happy that I have you two here.” Lucy said, it was the truth as she hadn’t known what to expect. Everything right now felt like a mystery to her.

“We were really worried. You slept forever and Daddy said he wouldn’t kiss you awake like a Prince does cause it’s not a nice thing to do. But all the Princes kiss the Princesses when they sleep and they wake up.” Holly said making a face as she didn’t quite understand that Disney romances didn’t translate to reality just yet.
“Don’t worry, we’ll have another lengthy conversation about how it’s not ok to kiss someone while they are unconscious when you’re older.” Flynn said, Lucy smiled in amusement as Flynn picked Holly into his arms. Holly giggled when he tickled her. He sat on the edge of the bed with Holly in his lap. The picture-perfect family, her family.

“Well, you should kiss Mommy’s ouchies now and that way she’ll feel heaps better.” Holly told Flynn. She rested her arms on top of his and leaned back against him. Lucy couldn’t help but feel joy at the sight of them. Sure, Holly was injured but she seemed unaffected for most part.

“We’ll see, I think Mommy needs more sleep than she does kisses.” Flynn said in amusement as he held Holly close and rocked her. Lucy couldn’t help but enjoy the light blush on his cheeks. It was nice to know she wasn’t only a little mortified at their child dictating their actions.

“What did I miss?” Lucy asked, helping to change the topic.

“Uncle Karl is getting me Bepo.” Holly announced happily.

“Bepo?” Lucy asked, she didn’t miss Flynn’s expression of exasperation and tired amusement. Apparently, Karl was back but on their side as the memories of her rescue filtered through her mind. She remembered him and Dave being there. She told herself to remember to ask Flynn about it.

“He’s going to be our dog when Uncle Karl gets him.” Holly informed her, Lucy looked to Flynn for confirmation of if this was true.

“No, he’s not.” Flynn told Holly, he shook his head as Holly pouted.

“Is too.” Holly argued.

“No.” Flynn told her with a chuckle.

“We’ll see.” Holly said before she looked to Lucy and held up her broken arm. “I got a yellow cast. We talked to Uncle Connor and he said he’d give $50 bucks to calm down. Auntie Jiya and Uncle Rufus are coming today. I gotta go.” Holly informed her. Flynn let Holly slide out of his lap and raced over to ensuite that Lucy hadn’t known existed until that moment.

“Remember to not get your cast wet.” Flynn told Holly as he closed the door to give Holly some privacy. He and Lucy share bemused expression.

“Is it really over?” Lucy asked teasingly to hopefully brighten the mood. It worked as Flynn smiled warmly.

“Exactly, and Rufus has to figure out how to make it possible for you to cross into your own timeline

“Rittenhouse is gone. It’s over except for one last jump to go.” Flynn said.

“The Journal.” Lucy stated as she still had to write the Journal and take it back to 2014. She couldn’t help but look down at her messed up hand.

“Yes, but it won’t happen for a while.” Flynn said, she half expected to see disappointment but he looked relieved. She wasn’t sure if it was that was a good thing or not.

“Because I’m not old enough?” Lucy asked teasingly to hopefully brighten the mood. It worked as Flynn smiled warmly.

“Exactly, and Rufus has to figure out how to make it possible for you to cross into your own timeline
again.” He explained.

“We have to write the journal.” Lucy added, the idea that she would endure months of rehab to write that hideous scrawl was heartbreaking. Yes, she accepted her hand being damaged but it didn’t stop it from hurting on many level not just the physical.

“It’s already written. They have the original Journal. Their original.” Flynn told her, Lucy looked at him surprised as it never occurred to her that they could just reuse the same Journal. She always assumed she would write it, as it was ‘meant’ to happen.

“You don’t think it should be tweaked with?” She asked him. He gave a shrug as he hadn’t given it much thought. She couldn’t help but wonder in that moment if all of this could be avoided but then she realised if it was, it could change everything again. It made her brain hurt.

“Let’s worry about that later, right now, all that matters is you recovering and us getting out of the bunker.” Flynn told her as he held onto the door.

“Daddy, I can’t wash my hand.” Holly said from inside the bathroom.

“Coming.” Flynn said, he opened the door and went in to help Holly. Lucy couldn’t help but smile as Flynn reminded Holly to at least flush the toilet. A knock sounded at the door way and Lucy turned her head to see Karl. She had to remind herself that in this reality he was entirely on their side than existing in a grey area like he had previously. He was their friend, or it seemed so as he brought breakfast.

“Breakfast time.” He announced as he held up a bag filled with takeaway containers.

“Uncle Karl!” Holly said excitedly, she raced out of the bathroom to him.

“You wash that hand?” Karl asked her, she grinned up at him.

“Yep.” Holly said as she wiped her wet hand on his pant leg just to prove she was telling the truth.

“Holly, you’re better than a condom.” Karl informed her, his face slightly pinched in disgust and amusement.

“What’s a condom?” Holly asked him innocently. Lucy and Flynn prayed to a higher power that Karl had some propriety to remember Holly was young and prone to repeat things.

“It’s a tool only adults get to use.” Karl told her as he pulled up a tray table on wheels and placed the bag of take away on the table.

“Why only adults?” Holly asked.

“Cause size does matter and you gotta grow up big and strong to wield it.” Karl told her, Lucy and Flynn closed their eyes at the sexual innuendo in the man’s explanation. The only saving grace was that Holly didn’t understand as she looked confused trying to understand.

“What do they use it for?” Holly asked Karl.

“Many things, but let’s eat and look at puppy pictures instead.” Karl told her.

“Ok.” Holly said.

“Hope you all like hipster porridge cause it’s what we’re eating.” Karl told them as he pulled out the plastic bowl containers.
“Hey, are you ready to go?” Jiya asked as she stuck her head inside the lifeboat to try and get Rufus out of it. He’d been hiding in the machine all morning.

“Nearly, I just want to get this download going.” Rufus said as he hooked up a tablet computer to the lifeboat’s main system. He looked like he was struggling, but she knew he was just being slow on purpose.

“Here, let me.” She said as she climbed in and pushed in on what he was doing.

“I can do it.” He told her, but Jiya swatted him away.

“I can do it faster. I know you’re putting off visiting Lucy.” She said.

“What am I supposed to say to her?” Rufus asked as he sat back into one of the passenger seats in the lifeboat. Jiya worked on getting the download of the lifeboat’s database.

“Here are some flowers, Lucy. I hope you feel better. It’s not that hard.” Jiya assured him, she placed the tablet computer on the console letting it get to work. She turned in her chair and faced him. “So, what’s the deal?” she asked him.

“Wyatt was our friend and he went completely off the rails. He told me he loved Lucy and he was terrible to her in the past. I let it slide, I sat on the fence because I figured they’d work it out. You know, it was between them and that I could be both of their friends. Yesterday, he…I just don’t know how to reconcile that. I don’t know how to feel given my past inactions. I should’ve pulled Wyatt up more.” Rufus said, he’d been wallowing in guilt on and off since yesterday.

“The past you had with your Wyatt, it can’t be changed. All you can do is learn from it. Lucy needs us to support her and help in anyway we can. She’s not blaming you or any of us for what happened.” Jiya assured him.

“I just feel like a shitty friend.” Rufus said.

“You’re not, you just gotta throw that outta your head and focus on the here and now. So, can we go? Cause I think we should eat lunch before we get there. I know a great Indian restaurant that’s on the way.” Jiya told him.
Chapter 16

A few hours later,

“The swelling has definitely gone down which is a great sign. I think we’ll keep you for the night, put this hand into a fitted brace and then you can go home.” Dr Watanabe said as she carefully wrapped Lucy’s hand up again.

“Great.” Lucy said, it was just the two of them as Flynn, Holly and Karl had gone out for lunch. Lucy told them to as Holly was getting restless being cooped up without her usual entertainment. She wished she was with them as her lunch had been a pretty boring and lonely affair. But she had the bonus of a proper shower which was nice even though she had been assisted through it. It was so mortifying to be helped but at the same time a relief as she had needed to wash as much of her time with Wyatt off her. Now, she was just being told things she already knew. She was injured but she would be ok, as it would heal in time.

“Any questions?” Dr Watanabe asked her.

“I’m not sure what to ask at the moment.” Lucy said honestly. She knew everything would happen in stages but what questions she should ask, she didn’t know. She just knew her mind was vague was from the pain meds and her pain was like a constant white noise humming in the background. Her emotional state was a mess that she didn’t want to sink into.

“Most people ask if they’ll be able to write, or use their hand again. Will the damage heal or is it permanent? How much rehab will be involved? etc. etc.” Dr Watanabe said helping her try to find a direction. Lucy watched as the woman picked up the chart on the end of the bed and wrote notes onto it.

“Sure those.” Lucy said wryly before she wore a weak smile. Dr Watanabe looked up.

“Is everything ok?” Dr Watanabe asked in concern.

“Yeah, I just…it’s hard to get my head together with the meds and everything that happened.” Lucy said as she rubbed at her face with her left hand.

“Well, we can lower the dosage but I’d prefer we wait as nerve pain is pretty brutal. But it's your decision. Apart from the rehab, I do recommend most patients who suffer trauma to speak with a psychiatrist. It doesn’t hurt to just check in with the noodle as healing your hand is just one component of your recovery. The rest is just rehab and looking after yourself not just physically but emotionally too. You have a very dedicated support system.” Dr Watanabe told her with a sincere smile, before she continued to scribble on the chart.

“Yeah, I do. Will the nerve damage heal?” Lucy asked, it was something she remember as Dr Watanabe had described the pain of harsh pins and needles sensation in half her right hand as such. Lucy felt it when the pain meds faded.

“Mostly, we won’t know the true extent until we’re at the 6 week mark which is when we’ll assess the situation and decide what the next move is. Whether you need more surgery or straight into rehab. Right now, just take the meds and follow Doctor’s orders. Playing it tough won’t do yourself any favours in the long run. If you want, I can recommend some good psychiatrists and write a referral for you. Just let me know.” Dr Watanabe told her.

“Thank you.” Lucy said, she was sure the doctor was repeating herself but she appreciated the
answer. She heard the laughter and happy squeal of a little girl. She knew it was Holly as her daughter was being held up in the air over Karl’s head. Flynn followed them, shaking head.

“Argh, Flying Flynn incoming.” Karl announced as he came into the room with Holly.

“Karl, put Holly down before she becomes sick.” Flynn said in a tone that was much like a father would scold his children.

“I’ll leave you all to it.” Dr Watanabe said with a smile. She placed the chart on the end of the bed and left the room.

“How was lunch?” Lucy asked them as Karl placed Holly on the end of the bed.

“Challenging with two children.” Flynn said dryly, Lucy couldn’t help but chuckle as the poor man look exhausted. Karl and Holly were basically two balls of uncontrollable energy. He moved to Lucy’s side and gently cupped the side of her face. He leaned down and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead. He straightened and sat down in the chair by her bed.

“Hey. I used my fork.” Karl said as his iphone rang. He pulled it out of his back pocket and looked at the screen. “Ok, that’s my tone out. I have to get back to work. I’ll see you all some other time.” He told them.

“Thanks for everything.” Flynn said, though he was relieved to have a break from the man.

“Yeah, no problem Dad.” Karl deadpanned.

“Don’t call me Dad. You’re not my son.” Flynn told him, Lucy smiled at Flynn's beleaguered look and Karl's hurt expression.

“My heart is broken.” Karl quipped he placed a hand to his chest like it hurt and looked pained. Flynn rolled his eyes which made Karl laugh. “Later.” He said and with a wave he was out the door.

“Bye Uncle Karl!” Holly shouted as she waved goodbye to her new friend.

“We brought you a couple of chocolate croissants.” Flynn said to Lucy as it was just the three of them. He held a paper bag to her and Lucy smiled as she recognised the name of the very popular bakery stamped on the bag.

“Thank you. How was the Cheesecake Factory?” she asked as she took the bag from him and smelt the bag. She enjoyed the aroma of baked bread, chocolate and paper. It had been so long since she had had freshly baked chocolate croissant.

“Yummy.” Holly said as she crawled up the bed to lay down at Lucy’s left hand side. Lucy tried to place the bag to the side as she wasn't ready eat it yet. She winced as she couldn’t quite reach.

“The same as I remember.” Flynn said as he took the bag of croissants and placed it on the bedside table for her. She smiled as she wrapped her left arm around Holly and looked to Flynn who pulled up a chair.

“Dad and I shared Oreo cheesecake, it was yummy.” Holly told Lucy.

“What did Uncle Karl have?” Lucy asked making conversation, enjoying what normalcy she could.

“He had salted caramel. It was yummy too but he wouldn’t share it all with me.” Holly said, a knock
sounded at the door. They all turned to see Jiya and Rufus at the doorway. The couple smiled as they came bearing flowers.

“Hey,” Lucy said with a welcoming smile. She was glad to see them together.

“Hey, we brought flowers.” Rufus said as he and Jiya came into the room. Lucy couldn't help but notice Rufus' reaction to her appearance as he winced and looked a little sick when he saw her right hand. Lucy tried not to let it get to her as she couldn't change what happened. She could only move forward and heal.

“They are beautiful, thank you.” Lucy said, Rufus looked a little lost as to where to place them but Jiya took the vase of flowers from him and set them on shelf in the room probably designated for flowers. Either way, they were out of the way but in view.

“So, how are you?” Rufus asked awkwardly as they both knew she wouldn’t speak the truth. It was obvious from the bruises and cuts that she was far from well.

“I’m going to be fine.” Lucy assured him.

“I’m sorry about what happened. Wyatt-“ Rufus started.

“So, what’s been happening with you guys?” Lucy asked cutting Rufus off. She didn’t want to talk about Wyatt. She didn’t to think about him or hear his name as it made her blood boil and make her want to cry at the same time.

“Just breaking down the project. Nothing major.” Rufus said casually, he looked awkward as if he didn’t know what to do or say. Lucy knew how he felt as there was so much being left unsaid between them. Lucy preferred to leave a lot of it unsaid.

“We brought a car seat, so if you want us to take Holly back home. We can.” Jiya said to Flynn.

“That would be good.” Flynn said, Lucy had been so lost in their bubble that she almost feared Flynn would go too. She knew it was selfish but she didn’t want to be alone with her thoughts tonight.

“But I wanna stay with Mommy and Daddy.” Holly whined, Lucy rubbed Holly's back in a soothing manner.

“Holly, you need to get a proper sleep in your bed.” Flynn told her firmly as he would not discuss it any further than they had.

“But the bad man.” Holly said, Lucy’s stomach rolled in a nauseous manner at the mention of Wyatt.

“He’s gone. So, there’s nothing to worry about.” Flynn said, Lucy found comfort. She knew she should grieve the man Wyatt had been, the friend he once was. But it didn’t supersede the fresh and horrifying memories he imbued in her. She immediately felt like she would be sick as memories passed through her mind like a gruesome replay. She blew out a soft breath and tried to calm her breathing and not vomit.

“If you want, we can have a sleepover in my room.” Jiya told Holly, bargaining with the girl for some cooperation.

“But-“ Holly started to argue but Flynn cut off.

“No, you’re going. Jiya and Rufus will look after you. Mommy and I will be back tomorrow. If
we’re not.” Flynn said, he looked at Lucy with concern as she looked like she was fighting the urge to vomit.

“I will bring you back to visit them.” Jiya promised Holly. Holly looked conflicted as she looked between Flynn and Lucy.

“Ok, but we don’t gotta leave right now, do we?” Holly asked, Lucy looked down at Holly’s beautiful eyes begging her to let her stay.

“No, we’re visiting for a bit.” Jiya said as she pulled up a chair. Holly relaxed down on the bed next to Lucy. “So, anyone thought about what we’ll do now?” Jiya asked going for the hard question and changing the topic to something that was hopefully positive.

“Besides sleep?” Lucy asked wryly.

“Yeah.” Jiya said in amusement. Lucy looked to Flynn for answers. She absently rubbed Holly’s arm in a soothing manner.

“We’ll have to talk about it. I’m hoping to live above ground.” Flynn offered as he hadn’t thought past making sure his family was ok. He knew the rest could be sorted out later.

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about that last trip as he didn’t want to lose Lucy.

“That’s what I thought too.” Rufus said as he shared the same concern.

Rufus and Jiya stayed for a while and chatted on superficial topics before Holly started to fall asleep. Lucy felt herself starting to drift, the couple decided it was time to leave. They woke Holly up and the little girl whinged and cried not wanting to go. But Jiya being more practised at handling Holly got her to go with Rufus and her. Once the three were gone, Lucy and Flynn shared a tired look.

“You should sleep.” Flynn told her.

“You should too. You know that you could’ve gone with them.” Lucy said softly, Flynn wore a closed lip smile and shook his head.

“Sorry, but you’re stuck with me.” He informed her teasingly, but to her it was a relief.

“I think that might be the other way round.” Lucy quipped, Flynn’s smile broadened. He was so handsome when he smiled. She felt knots she didn’t know she had, unravel and her body relax.

“Hey, you ok?” He asked her softly, she felt like a bubble of safety and warmth surround them; taking them into a world of their own. He took her left hand in his. She watched as he pressed a gentle kiss to the back of her hand. She loved the small gestures as they spoke volumes to her.

“No, but I will be.” She told him, he wore an empathetic smile as he caressed the side of her face with his other hand in a comforting gesture.

“Sleep, we can talk later or do whatever you want later.” He told her, she nodded, relieved he was here and hadn’t left her. She closed her eyes and allowed herself to drift off to sleep.

Three hours later,

“Ok, how’s that?” Jiya asked Holly as she finished drawing an intricate floral design on ¼ of Holly’s cast. They sat in the living area on the couch surrounded by many toys. A kid's movie playing on TV on a loop as background noise while they talked and played.

“Pretty.” Holly said as she watched Jiya draw with intense interest. They talked about many random subjects while Jiya drew on her cast.

“Good.” Jiya said as she capped the lid on the black marker. “You ok?” she asked Holly.

“I miss Mommy and Daddy. I’m scared the bad man will come back, what if he’s in the bathroom again?” Holly asked in a low voice.

“We’ve already been in there and there were no bad men. So, trust me when I say that bad man is truly gone. He was punished for all the bad stuff he did. He’s never going be seen again.” Jiya assured her quietly as she didn’t want to upset Rufus. The man was sitting at a table away from them pouring over something related to the lifeboat.

“Ok.” Holly replied unsure. Jiya gave a small smile as she understood Holly’s fear completely but she hoped it wasn’t going to become a huge thing. But if it did, they’d work through it as Jiya kept joking; they all needed some degree of psychological help. Right now, Jiya felt Holly just needed to have routine back and to be shown the bunker was safe again.
“So, how about we braid your hair and watch a different movie?” Jiya asked her, changing the topic.

“Ok.” Holly said with a small smile.

Lucy slowly came too from a dreamless state and smiled softly as Flynn sat at the left side of her bedside. His head rested on the bed as he was fast asleep. His hand intertwined in hers. She gently extracted her hand and couldn’t resist smoothing her hand through his hair. He didn’t stir at all, she enjoyed the soft texture of hair not thinking beyond the superficiality of the moment. She took in the room and saw the clock on the wall. It was just past 8pm, her stomach rumbled in hunger explaining why she was awake besides the pain that was also filtering in.

She reluctantly picked up the med button and pressed it, not bothering to be strong as she didn’t want to fight the pain. She wanted to numb it as she knew had plenty of time to face it later. The click of the button woke Flynn as he took a deep inhale and lifted his head up, he blew out a yawn.

“Evening.” He murmured in a sexy, sleep roughened voice. He scrubbed a hand down his face.

“Hey.” Lucy said with a smile, usually when they slept together, he was last to sleep and the first to rise. So, it was nice to see how he looked in morning without his usual prep. Though, she felt bad that she was part of the cause of his exhaustion. He was pretty adorable with his dopey expression and hair sticking at odd angles.

“I should go find food.” He said with another yawn.

“We should eat those croissants.” Lucy told him.

“You sure?” he asked.

“Yes.” Lucy said, Flynn gave a shrug as he wasn’t going argue as croissants had to be more enjoyable than hospital food. He picked up the bag from the bedside table and opened it. He held it out to her. “Thank you.” Lucy said as she picked out a croissant, she already missed her right hand as she liked to eat with both hands. To pull apart her croissant and eat it bit by bit but she didn’t have the luxury.

“How are you?” he asked.

“Still out of it. I think I’ll feel this way for a while.” She confessed, she didn’t know if it was the drugs or what happened that left her so unsettled when she thought about how she was. She frankly didn’t want to think about it.

“You’ll feel that way for a while.” He said empathetically. Lucy nodded as she knew he was right. They both had so much emotional baggage to unpack, before there was no time and now it felt like they had an abundance of it.

“So, when we will have our first date?” she asked, changing the topic to something happier as she needed to not fall into her pain and darkness. Flynn recognised as much as his lips quirked into a faint smile.

“When you’re feeling better. There’s no rush, I’m not going anywhere.” Flynn assured her.

“How about when my face is healed.” Lucy said before she took a bite of her croissant. Even a day old, it tasted amazing.
“Ok, any other plans you want to make?” he asked her.

“No, but I would like to know what we’ll be doing in the next six months to a year. As a family with Holly.” Lucy clarified as she felt that dating and their relationship would develop on it's own. However, Holly and their everyday lives; she needed to know they had something in the works or at least discussed it just for her peace of mind.

“We can talk about it later.” Flynn said as he didn’t want her to feel pressured into making decisions after such a traumatic experience.

“I want to talk about it now. I know we do a lot of things off the cuff but this is our lives. We need to know long term what we’re doing and you should know that I like lists and plans. We have that luxury now.” She said as she felt the anxiety build her as she hated floundering around when plans needed to be made. Flynn seemed to sense her need as he wore a thoughtful expression.

“Ok, Karl told me that I earned a 5% commission off his work. So, I’d say we’re probably financially comfortable. If we can afford it, I would like to take a year off, to unwind from everything.” Flynn said honestly.

“When does Holly have to be enrolled for school?” she asked.

“Depends, do we want to go public or private?” Flynn asked before he ate another bite of his croissant.

“I don’t know.” Lucy said, she hadn’t even thought about that much detail and she wondered if it was important. Part of her worried that maybe she shouldn’t have opened the can of worms.

“It’s ok, Holly is turning 4 this year. So, we have another year or two depending on if the rules for enrollment are still the same. So, we got time to figure it out and put her on a waiting list for private school if we have to.” Flynn said casually as he wasn’t overly concerned.

“We need to know where we will be living. I’m pretty sure I’d have my mother’s home. I remember schools being nice and in walking distance.” Lucy said choosing the easiest and fastest solution at hand. Flynn made a face.

“Are you sure you want to live there, especially after everything that happened? We don’t necessarily have to stay in San Francisco.” Flynn said as carefully as he could. He wasn’t against it, but the house had a history with Lucy, good and terrifying. He wasn’t sure how Lucy would be affected by living there and he wanted to protect her from the more traumatic memories.

“I know, it’s just an option. I grew up in that house and I had a lot of great memories there.” She said, it was also easy as it was there. They could move into it almost immediately if they needed to.

“Ok, I’ll ask Denise. The least we can do is check it out and no decisions need to be made right away.” He reminded her, he didn’t want her to feel pressured by him or their circumstances that weirdly felt in limbo than ever before.

“Yeah, I know but speaking of decisions... what about your family?” she asked him.

“I don’t know.” He said honestly.

“We should see them, Holly wants to meet them and they should know about Holly.” Lucy pointed out, she knew she was overstepping but she felt it was important that it be addressed. She wanted Flynn to be able to reconnect with his family.
“And you.” He added as he wasn’t his family knew he was remarried with Holly now. “But let’s not worry about everything at once. We still have the bunker and we can move more freely now.” He said.

“Yeah, we can.” She said in a hushed tone, tears welled in her eyes as she couldn’t believe Rittenhouse was a closed chapter. She felt grief swirl around inside her, threatening to consume her as she felt the true gravity of her losses. She thought of everything was set, she only had one trip to make and it was it. This future and life was theirs, which was the true joy but she couldn’t summon the happiness yet.

“It’s ok to grieve.” Flynn said softly, he placed his half eaten croissant into the bag. He reached out to her and gently cupped the side of her face. She leaned into his touch, not caring that the tears fell or that she was blububering over her breakfast. “You lost your mother and sister, you’ve endured a lot pain and anguish over the past couple of years. It’s all bound to come up now we finally have some proper downtime.” He told her in a soothing manner.

“Yeah.” Lucy said as she couldn’t help but agree. She felt herself sinking into her grief.

“Hey,” Flynn said, she looked up at him.

“Mmm?” she murmured.

“Maybe after you’ve had a couple weeks of rest and are feeling physically better. We should take a holiday. You, Holly and I. We just travel for a bit and unwind. Do something fun and normal, start making some happy memories above ground.” He suggested, Lucy smiled in amusement, hoping to liven her up. She would have plenty of time to grieve and he’d help her through it but he first needed her to know there was a light at the end of the tunnel.
Chapter 17

“Shit.” Rufus cursed.

“Potty word!” Holly shouted in a happy but scandalised manner as she climbed into the lifeboat. Rufus winced at the sound of her high pitch voice in the small space. He’d slept restlessly on the couch while Jiya and Holly slept in their room. He couldn’t help but remember the state of Lucy and the craziness of the past 24 hours. All of it compounding in his mind as he questioned everything little action, everything he said. It was just a bad habit he thought he’d outgrown but it was back in full force.

“Hey, you’re not supposed to be in here.” Rufus told Holly as calmly as he could.

“Why not?” Holly asked as she looked curiously around taking in all the blinking lights and buttons. Rufus was already worried as she wore an expression much like a kid on Christmas morning. Last thing he needed was her touching things.

“It’s dangerous and don’t touch anything.” He said, then an idea hit him as he quickly lifted her up into one of the passenger seats and strapped her in.

“Hey!” Holly said in annoyance as she clearly understood the concept of a harness. Rufus smiled at his ingenuity.

“Where’s Jiya?” he asked her, he watched in amusement as Holly much like her mother; struggled with the harness.

“Jiya is on the phone talking to Daddy. Mommy’s coming home today.” Holly said, she grunted as she couldn’t get the harness undone not with one arm in a cast. She sighed and looked around but Rufus could see her tiny mind at work.

“Great.” Rufus said relieved Lucy and Flynn would be home. That Lucy was well enough to leave the hospital as she hadn’t looked very well when he visited. His stomach knotted in memory of her injuries and knowing Wyatt did that to her. He was still in disbelief as he remembered how far Wyatt went in trying to save Lucy. To turn on her, it was beyond him to understand how or why.

“Yep, do you think we’ll be down here forever?” Holly asked him.

“I hope not.” Rufus said as he went back to work.

“Good cause I want dogs and I liked being up on the ground. There was so much stuff that isn’t underground like birds and cheesecake factories. Uncle Karl said he’d find Bepo for me.” Holly told him.

“Uhuh.” Rufus said as he went back to what he was doing letting Holly ramble until he heard ‘Jiya’ and ‘married’. “What?” he asked her.

“I asked when are you going to marry Auntie Jiya.” Holly told him, she looked down at the buckle of the harness trying to understand it so she could figure out how to undo it with one hand.

“I…. don’t know. Why?” Rufus asked as he went back to work as he needed to busy his hands.

“Don’t you love her?” Holly asked him.
“Yes, I love her.” Rufus replied, but the question left him a little rattled. He remembered how Wyatt loved Lucy and then turned on her. Rufus had trusted him, but Jiya? He wondered if he did love her or the one he left behind. It was unsettling that he still saw them as two people than one. He’d been so firm that it didn't matter but if Wyatt had a split personality, what if Jiya did too.

“Then why don’t you know if you’re going to marry her? Princes always marry the princesses cause they love each other.” Holly told him in a matter of fact manner.

“Maybe I’m not a Prince. Maybe I’m just a normal guy.” Rufus told her.

“Well, normal people get married too.” Holly pointed out. Rufus closed his eyes for a moment as he reminded himself that he was talking to a child. Then he wondered if maybe Jiya set this up.

“Why are you asking me about this?” Rufus asked feeling paranoid.

“Cause I wanted to know if you are going to live with me, Mommy and Daddy?” Holly asked him, Rufus snorted a laugh.

“No.” he promised her.

“Why not?” Holly asked innocently.

“Cause I have a house above ground and I –“ Rufus stopped as Jiya stuck her head into the lifeboat.

“Hey, I turn my back for half a second and you disappear.” Jiya told Holly with a smile as she booped Holly on the nose.

“I came to see Uncle Rufus. He doesn’t know much and I can’t get the belt off.” Holly said with a pout as she tucked on the harness. Jiya gave Rufus a pointed look as she was not impressed with his ‘childcare’ abilities. He smiled weakly as he wasn’t sure how to handle kids beyond 5 minute interactions. He had felt pretty smart at strapping her in a chair.

“Hey, I know a lot.” Rufus complained, Jiya smiled as Holly gave him a look. It reminded him of Lucy when she called him on his shit, but in miniature form.

“Mmhmm.” Holly said in perfect mimicry of Lucy, Jiya clicked the harness open and helped Holly out of the chair.

“Why don’t we leave poor Rufus to his work?” Jiya said with a chuckle as she found it amusing.

“I only asked him if he was going to marry you but he doesn't know even that.” Holly told her in a droll manner like it was a bad thing.

“Well, I guess we'll have to wait and see if he figures out the answer.” Jiya said in amusement.

“Now, come along, we got some cookies to bake and pictures to draw for Mommy.” She told Holly as they left the lifeboat but Rufus could still hear them.

"Uncle Karl would know." Holly told Jiya.

"Uncle Karl doesn't know much either." Jiya informed Holly before giving a chuckle.

“You ok?” Denise asked Lucy, she sat in the front seat while Flynn was awkwardly cramped in the back seat of the car that Denise was driving.
“Yeah, I just feel a little out of it.” Lucy said, it wasn’t a lie but it wasn’t entirely the truth. Dr Watanabe had found no reason to keep Lucy in hospital, they put her broken hand into a removeable brace and sling. She was given a prescription for pain meds and given a fact sheet on how to take care of her hand. She had appointments for check ups with Watanabe to see her progress before she would be referred to physiotherapy. Lucy also had a referral to a psychologist, she wasn’t sure if she would use it. But she had it.

Lucy pulled the shade down and looked in the mirror. She couldn’t help but admire the horror, how did Holly not get frightened by her face being swollen and bruised. She had burst blood vessels in her eyes. Somewhere under this mess of pain was Lucy. She looked behind her in the mirror and saw Flynn was sleeping the car ride away. She put the shade up.

“Everything will come good again. Your injuries will heal in time.” Denise said.

“I know, I just keep get beaten down. I’m just struggling to get back up.” Lucy said, the tears streaking down her face. She felt so stupid for being upset but she had little control over her emotions.

“Well, we’ll pick you up and carry you until you can manage on your two feet.” Denise assured her. Lucy felt a lump rise in her throat as she felt so undeserving on Denise’s sentiments. But she loved them, she needed to remember she wasn’t alone. She swallowed and took a deep inhale before blowing out a shaky breath. She looked out the passenger window.

“Everything seems so normal.” Lucy said changing the topic as she didn’t want to break down and sob in the car. “You think it was just a normal Tuesday.” She commented. People on the streets went about their day. It all looked the same, there was nothing she could pick out that made it more unique than the timeline they left.

“It is for all of them. They are lucky, they never will know what Rittenhouse had in store for them. While we’re not going to given any public recognition, the government is appreciative of yours and the team’s hard work.” Denise said to her.

“So, we’re just free to go where we please from now on?” Lucy asked her.

“Yes, I know there is one more mission but from what Connor told me, it won’t be happening for years.” Denise said as she drove the car leisurely through the traffic.

“And you expect me to stay stateside?” Lucy asked, she couldn’t help herself as she expected the other shoe to drop.

“Lucy, we’re not going to hold you to San Francisco. You and your family are free to live wherever you want. When the time comes, we’ll bring you back. Voluntarily, of course.” Denise added.

“Sorry for the questions. I’ve just had my life turned upside down from this and I never expected it to be over so swiftly.” Lucy told her.

“It’s ok, Rufus has been asking the same questions. I’m happy to help you in any way I can.” Denise told her, Lucy nodded.

“I’ll probably take that offer” Lucy said wryly.
“MOMMY!!” Holly shouted in delight as she greeted Lucy, Flynn and Denise at the elevator. Lucy winced as Holly hugged her legs that ached and shot pain up her back. The aches and pains were from laying prone on the floor at an odd angle, the running through the bush and rollercoaster ride in the trunk of car. But she sucked the pain up as Holly didn’t know, she just wanted to shower Lucy with love.

“Hey.” Lucy said with a smile, she smoothed her right hand over the girl’s hair. Her left hand and arm were in a brace and sling. Nausea rolled through Lucy as pain ate at her and being in the bunker hit her in a way she never expected. She felt herself becoming fractious, her heart pounding in sickly manner; she knew the feeling so well as she was on the verge of panicking.

“You look really sick. Are you ok?” Holly asked her as she stepped back and looked up at her in concern.

“I’m ok, just a little tired.” Lucy lied.

“I drawed you lots of get well pictures. But they can wait, you should go to bed and have Daddy read you a story.” Holly told her with concern as she took in Lucy’s shaken appearance.

“No, I’d love to see your pictures.” Lucy told her, she needed the distraction.

“Really?” Holly asked excitedly.

“Yep, so why don’t you grab them and come to our room as I will lay down in bed.” Lucy told her as she made the decision of where to go.

“Ok!” Holly exclaimed happily as she dashed off to grab her pictures.

“You alright?” Flynn asked her, as he sensed her inner turmoil. She wore a dazed but somewhat panicked look on her face.

“Yeah, I just need to lay down.” Lucy said, Flynn offered his arm. She wrapped her good arm around it and leaned on him for support. She looked to Denise. “Thank you for everything.” She told her.

“Anything you need, let me know.” Denise told her as her phone rang. She pulled it out of her pocket and left to answer it.

“Bed?” Flynn asked her, Lucy nodded. They slowly started walking, memories flitted through her mind; suffocating her as she remembered the foolish woman who thought herself in love with Wyatt. The stupendous amount of time and emotions she had given him to the pain and fear he reaped from her. Her hand ached and she swallowed down the bile as she remembered the sound and the feel of her joints being twisted out of shape. The sound of Holly’s body hitting the floor. So many screams and noises.

“Just breathe.” Flynn told her in a soothing manner, she tried but she could only get in shallow breaths.

“It’s stupid, I get over my phobias only to gain more.” Lucy complained as she tried to pull in deeper breaths and keep moving forward. But it felt almost impossible.

“It’ll pass in time.” Flynn assured her as he let her take her time.

“Maybe we should leave.” She said, she pulled him back, the idea of running as far from this bunker sounded like paradise. Flynn’s eyes went wide in surprise, he quickly wrapped an arm around her
waist as she nearly tumbled.

“Talk to me.” He said as he kept a steadying hand on her lower back.

“Too many memories here.” She told him in a pained and hushed voice, she sucked in a breath and she shook her head. “I’m going to be sick.” She told him, she pushed away from him and ran for the bathroom. She crashed through the door. She rushed for the nearest stall and dropped to her knees.

She closed her eyes and vomited her breakfast into the toilet and then some. Tears streamed down her face, she felt horrible. It took a couple good dry heaves until she was sure she could get control of her gag reflex. Reality and her senses slowly righted itself, she realised that Flynn was holding her hair back and rubbed her back in a soothing manner.

“Sorry.” She told him as she sank onto her backside. "I'm so sorry." she said again.

“It’s ok. You’re ok.” He said, he flushed the toilet for her, and sat down beside her.

“No, I’m not.” She cried into her hands. Flynn gently pulled her into his arms and held her. Lucy sobbed as it felt like her world had caved in and there was just pain from her memories. She leaned heavily into his arms, let it all pour out of her. Flynn used the damp cloth to cool her down, she didn’t know how he got it. But it felt like heaven on her heated skin.

“You will be ok.” Flynn said in a soothing manner. “It’s ok to cry and let it out. It's better than bottling it up.” He told her, he continued to use the damp cloth to cool her reddened face.

After a few moments, Lucy slowly calmed down, and drew in shaky breaths as her body trembled. She felt herself become more grounded in the present. She closed her eyes and soaked up Flynn’s strength, his comfort. He placed the cloth down and gently stroked his fingers through her hair to smoothing it over her back in a soothing manner. Lucy just didn’t want to move as it felt so good but they had to as Holly was waiting for them.

“I’m here if you ever want to talk about it.” Flynn told her in a low voice. A promise he’d given her so many times, she only accepted a few times.

“I’m not ready.” She said in a hushed tone as just thinking about it was too much. Just being in the bunker was too much and she hadn’t expected to feel this way.

“It’s ok.” He told her, he leaned in closer, “Let’s get you to bed as Holly is waiting for you. She has drawings to show you. It will hopefully help a little, I know seeing her smile makes me feel better as much as your smile does.” He offered softly.

“I’m all out of them at the moment and I need a tooth brush.” She said with a sigh as she reluctantly sat up. Flynn pulled an unopened Dora Explorer tooth brush from his shirt pocket.

“I got a new one out of the supply closet.” He told her, he pulled it out it’s wrapping and pocketed the trash before he helped her up.

“Thank you.” Lucy said as she took the tooth brush from him. It did bring a small closed lip smile as it flashed pink lights. She moved to the sink and ignored her blotchy face as she quickly brushed her teeth.

Flynn helped her out with the taps, it sank in just how she was going to be incredibly dependant on him. He didn’t seem to mind which helped her ego. She needed to swallow her ego as she was lucky and she would recover. If her right hand didn’t. Lucy would adapt, and until then she’d accept the help.
But she was conscious that she needed to appreciate Flynn. She needed to make certain he didn’t feel taken for granted. That she wasn’t using him because she wasn’t. She rinsed out her mouth and toothbrush before she looked in the mirror. She saw the violence of Wyatt’s actions, the bruises and cuts. She wavered on her feet but Flynn was there for her as he cupped her left elbow and steadied her.

“As soon as I’m able and we know how much money we have. I want to leave here, the three of us.” Lucy told him, she turned around to him. Firm in her decision, she knew it wasn’t fair to dictate terms.

“We’ll talk about it later,” he told her, Lucy nodded as she took his arm. He escorted her out of the bathroom. Lucy just couldn’t walk anywhere without being haunted by the man Wyatt had been, the man he became and his unconscionable acts.

They turned down the hallway to their room, she saw Holly standing patiently at the door. She smiled when she saw them.

“I got my pictures and Auntie Jiya gave me sticky stuff to put it on the wall.” Holly said as she held up her drawings and blu tack.

“Oh, let’s get Mommy into bed.” Flynn told her, they walked into the bedroom. Lucy felt the edginess fade from her as this room was a sanctuary for her. “Remember the rule.” Flynn added as he spoke to Holly.

“What rule?” Lucy asked.

“Don’t climb on Mommy.” Holly replied as she held her arms up to Flynn demanding a lift.

“Use the end of the bed to get on and off.” Flynn reminded Holly as he obliged her. “Up we go.” He said as he picked her up.

“Thank you.” Holly replied when he deposited her on the bed. Holly placed her pictures and blu tack to the side before she helped pull back the cover. With Flynn’s help, Lucy shakily got into bed and laid down on his side of a bed. Flynn pulled the covers over her, before he picked up a small bin with a plastic bag in it and placed it by the head of bed.

“Just in case.” He told Lucy, she hoped she didn’t have to use it. “I’ll be back with some water.” He added.

“Snacks, please.” Holly said before she gave a smile.

“And snacks.” Flynn said in amusement before he left the room. Lucy turned her attention to Holly. Her body relaxing into the bed and enjoy the scent of Flynn as it all wrapped around her senses, comforting her.

“Let’s see these pictures.” Lucy said, Holly handed her the small pile of five drawings. “These are very pretty.” Lucy said as she admired Holly’s drawings. She like any child her age wasn’t much of an artist but she could see Holly tried her best.

“That’s us and our dogs. That’s Bepo and that’s Lucky.” Holly said as she identified all the objects in the drawing Lucy was holding.

“They’ve both been given names now.” Lucy said as she felt Holly’s dreams of having dogs was becoming rather elaborate.

“Yep, they have to have names. Otherwise they won’t know who they are.” Holly told her.
“Well, at least it’s consistent.” Lucy said in amusement, as she noticed her figurine on the page was pregnant again. The dogs looked very similar to the ones in the other pictures.

“Lucky is the beagle and Bepo is the French bulldog. Did I tell you Uncle Karl was getting us Bepo?” Holly asked her.

“Yes, you did. When do you think it will happen?” Lucy asked her.

“My birthday?” Holly asked, as if Lucy had the answer.

“I don’t know about that.” Lucy commented, before Holly could complain she continued speaking. "What do you want to do for your birthday this year?” Lucy asked her, she did know Holly’s birthday was in September which was coming up soon. She just hoped Karl conferred with them before showing up with a dog for Holly. But Lucy put it to the back of her mind as it was the least of their concerns for now.

“I don’t know.” Holly said with a shrug. It was clear she was used to not having her way in this regard as she was keeping her desires close to the vest.

“I think you do. Now, if you could have anything what would it be?” Lucy asked her. Holly bit her bottom lip and looked at Lucy a little unsure of herself. Lucy just gave her an imploring look, it seemed to work as Holly spoke.

“I want to go to the zoo and the beach. I want to spend lots of time with you and Daddy. I want Bepo.” Holly told her.

“We can’t have a dog in the bunker.” Lucy reminded her, she knew that they could make a day at the beach and the zoo happen. But the dog was a more serious matter that needed more consideration.

“But Daddy said he wanted to live above ground which means we’ll be moving right?” Holly asked her.

“Yes.” Lucy replied.

“Then let’s do it, like tomorrow. That way we can have everything.” Holly said with a smile that Lucy smiled.

“It’s not that simple.” Lucy said even though she wished it was. “Now, let’s get these beautiful pictures on the wall.” She said as she changed the topic.
Chapter 18

Happy New Year!! Don't worry, the story is still ongoing I just wanted to post an extra chapter in celebration of 2018 being over!! Enjoy!!

Flynn stared into space, he was halfway through making toast and cutting up fruit when it finally hit him. It was over, Rittenhouse was gone. He didn’t really know how to feel about it.

The last day or so had been mayhem between chasing Wyatt down and rescuing Lucy. Being with Lucy and helping her through her trauma. It was just the tip of the ice berg for her, them. He had to remind himself that was really it.

He was a father again, married to a woman he loved. His daughter, Holly and part of him was afraid it would all be ripped away from him. Part of him was afraid it would crumble before him, both scenarios were bad. He needed to make sure neither happened as he lost one family. He didn’t want to lose another.

“Your toast is done.” Rufus said, Flynn snapped out his distracted state.

“Thank you.” He said as he grabbed the toast from the toaster and placed it on the plate.

“So, I wanted to apologise.” Rufus said as he stood awkwardly on the other side of the bench as Flynn continued cutting up fruit.

“Are you always going to be apologising for something?” Flynn asked Rufus, he couldn’t help but feel a little impatient with the man as he was tired of hearing ‘I’m sorry’ from him.

“I hope not.” Rufus said.

“So, what are you apologising for now?” Flynn asked, though he really didn’t want to know. He didn’t need anything more on his plate.

“Defending Wyatt.” Rufus said, Flynn paused in his chopping as he didn’t really want to hear this. But he continued chopping after a second because Rufus needed to get this off his chest.

“It’s natural for you to do so.” Flynn said, letting the man off the hook.

“No, I was in disbelief that he would do that to Lucy. He loved her, I know that doesn't mean he wasn't incapable of hurting her but seeing her like that in the hospital. Her hand…I still can’t believe he did that.” Rufus said.

“He was desperate to salvage his reputation.” Flynn said as it was the flippant reason behind what Wyatt did. He only cared about saving face, he was happy to destroy whoever got in the way as they were all disposable in his world.

“It’s not a good reason.” Rufus told him, Flynn felt a pang of annoyance as he wasn’t interested in
defending Wyatt.

“No, it’s not but then I don’t care. The man broke my daughter’s arm and made her believe she wasn’t real. Then he tortured Lucy all because of his vanity. I understand you’re grieving the man you thought he was, but all I see and will remember is the man he became.” Flynn told him, he didn’t want to talk about it. He cut the toast into soldiers. He should butter them but with Lucy’s upset stomach, it was better to keep it plain.

“I hear you.” Rufus said with a nod, but Flynn wasn’t really convinced.

“Rufus, you need to let Wyatt go. You have a life here, Rittenhouse is gone and you’re free. We all are. You keep spiralling on this one thing it will consume you. You can’t change it and you shouldn’t. If Wyatt was this unstable in this scenario then he was just a powder keg waiting to go off before now. Do you really want to go back to us being on the losing side again?” Flynn asked him, he knew it was hypocritical given the same could be said of him. But the difference was Flynn never went into the fight because of vanity, he didn’t need nor want to be hero. The only thing he had cared about was taking down Rittenhouse, his vanity be damned.

“No, I didn’t want to change things. I want my life back as much as anyone. I just don’t know what to think or feel given everything that happened.” Rufus told him.

“You don’t need to think or feel anything about it. Wyatt’s conduct was not our fault, and we shouldn’t give him any further consideration. What you should be thinking about is what you’ll do next and what you want out of your life.” Flynn told him.

“I haven’t given it a lot of thought.” Rufus lied, but he’d given it a lot of thought. In the other timeline, he’d been geared up to propose to Jiya but now he wasn’t so sure. He didn’t know her as well as he used to. He couldn’t ignore that even if he was sleeping with her.

“You should.” Flynn told him, he picked up the plate and placed the bowl of fruit into one hand. He picked up the glass of water with the other. “As you know, life is fragile and it shouldn’t be squandered.” He added.

“There!” Holly announced excitedly as she pushed her drawing on the wall making certain it stayed in place with the blu tack. Lucy smiled as Holly sat back onto the bed and they looked at the artwork Holly placed on the wall in a haphazard manner.

“Well, those are some beautiful drawings.” Flynn said with genuine approval as he came back with a glass of water, a plate of toast and a bowl of cut up fruit. He placed the water on the bedside table and the toast and bowl of fruit on the bed. Lucy smiled as the toast was cut in soldiers and plain.

“I drew them all.” Holly told him proudly, she wrapped the toast around a slice of banana from the bowl before she indelicately shoved it in her mouth. She started picking the blueberries out of the bowl while she chewed on the food in her mouth.

“Exceptional work.” Flynn said as he parked himself on the bed where Lucy’s legs had crooked around him. He rested his hand on her thigh in a gesture of comfort. Lucy hated she was injured but really did love being here with Holly and him. To be alive.

“Apparently the dogs have names. Lucky and Bepo.” Lucy said as she swallowed the lump in her throat. She picked chopped piece of pineapple and ate it.
“They do huh?” Flynn asked, he looked to Lucy with concern “Meds?” he offered, Lucy nodded, not that she did but it was time and maybe she could find control over her emotional state.

“And Bepo might be arriving on Holly’s birthday.” Lucy informed Flynn in a playful and light manner. Flynn frowned as he rose from the bed and picked up the bag with the meds in it; off the floor.

“I don’t know about that but maybe we’ll be go to the zoo as that was on your wish list.” Flynn offered as a compromise to Holly. He returned to sit on the bed. Lucy took the pills from him.

“Yeah?!” Holly asked with a hopeful expression at just hearing for the second time consideration for the Zoo.

“Depending on how both you and Mommy feel, of course. Luckily, your birthday isn’t until September which is still a month away.” Flynn told her, he handed Lucy the glass of water. She downed her meds with some toast and water.

“I know, but we can help Uncle Karl look for Bepo right?” Holly asked in excitement.

“Maybe but what if Bepo’s a Christmas gift?” Flynn asked her.

“Uncle Karl is going to come for Christmas?!” Holly asked, jumping about three steps ahead of the conversation. Lucy and Flynn inwardly tensed at the idea of Karl sitting at their table for Christmas. If only because of the trouble he could bring to the table.

“I don’t know, I’m just saying that Bepo might not be a birthday gift. He might even be a house warming gift which could be well after Christmas.” Flynn told Holly, she frowned not liking his argument.

“So, are we moving?” Holly asked Flynn before she ate more blueberries and toast.

“Yes.” Lucy said before Flynn could say otherwise. She picked up some more of the chopped fruit and ate it.

“But we haven’t decided on where yet.” Flynn added, they shared a look as they knew it would be discussed. Lucy knew what she wanted.

She wanted to leave the bunker but knowing her visceral reaction to being in here. She could only imagine what being in her childhood home would be like. She knew she didn’t want to be haunted in her own home. Part of her wondered if she was overthinking it and reacting purely on emotion. But she couldn’t be rational about it, she just hoped Flynn found some sanity in her madness.

“We were also thinking about a holiday.” Flynn said casually to Holly.

“Will everyone else be coming?” Holly asked, perking up at the idea.

“No, it would be just the three of us.” Lucy said, she wondered how Holly would feel about it as it would most likely be the first time, they had a true holiday. It would also be the first time Holly would be above ground for more than a few hours.

“Where would we go?” Holly asked them as she fidgeted and looked a little unsettled by them leaving what was essentially her home and comfort zone.

“We don’t know yet.” Lucy said.
“We’re open to suggestions. It’s a family trip, so you get a say too.” Flynn told Holly, he saw the nervous energy in her but also the fatigue. “but right now, you two look like you could use some sleep.” Flynn told them.

“I’m not tired.” Holly said, fighting her nap time as always.

“How about you just lay down with Mommy and keep her company.” Flynn told her, Holly looked at Lucy. She wore a tired smile as she was emotionally and physically exhausted.

“Ok.” Holly said, she slid underneath the blankets on Lucy’s side of the bed.

“Good, no talking.” He told them both in a teasing manner. He leaned over Lucy and pretended tuck in Holly before he kissed her on the forehead. Then he did the same for Lucy before he left the room. He turned off the light and natural lighting filtered through the skylights. It was light enough for Lucy to see Holly but dark enough to sleep.

“Mommy?” Holly whispered.

“Mmm?” Lucy asked as she could easily fall asleep wrapped in the comfort of Flynn’s scent as it came from his pillow and side of the bed.

“Do you hurt a lot?” Holly asked her, Lucy shook her head.

“No, the Doctor gave me medicine that made my pain go away. I just can’t use my right hand for a while. So, Daddy will help us both until we’re better.” Lucy lied as it all hurt but she reminded herself that she was lucky. Once her meds kicked in more fully, she wouldn't feel a thing which she was looking forward to.

“Daddy is good like that.” Holly assured her.

“Yes, he is.” Lucy agreed, she sigh as she felt her pain start to fade. "I love you.” Lucy told Holly sincerely.

“I love you too.” Holly whispered back, she gave a smile before she squirmed finding a more comfortable position. “Will we really be going to the zoo?” she asked her.

“Yes.” Lucy said.

“Cause you said that last year but Writing home made you heaps busy and you forgot.” Holly told her, Lucy’s heart squeezed in guilt even though it wasn’t her fault. Her alter had. Lucy needed to make up for it.

“I'm so sorry for that.” Lucy told her.

"It's ok." Holly said with a shrug.

"It's not, this year we will go to the Zoo.” Lucy assured her, Holly smiled.

“Good, cause I have a whole bunch of animals I want to see.” Holly informed her.

“What animals do you want to see?” Lucy asked, she smiled softly as she watched Holly’s tiny face become animated as she listed off the animals and her reasons why. She memorised her child’s features and chuckled as Holly wanted to dispel the notion that some animals weren’t as grumpy as TV wanted her to believe while also wanting to just wanting to pet the cute ones to see if they were as soft as they looked.
“So, have you thought of what you’re going to say to your Mom and brother?” Jiya asked Rufus as they were disabling the Mothership’s flight systems before they stripped it down.

There had been arguments over which ship to keep intact as the mothership was higher quality materials and programming but it was decided the Lifeboat remain intact. While it was inferior, it had survived travelling into the team’s timeline without too much trouble. The materials from the mothership were easier to repurpose.

“No. I don’t know what I can say and what will be enough?” Rufus asked her, his mother would be angry and upset. Three years with no contact, making her grieve for him. He needed more of a plan than just rock up and knock on the door.

“They probably won’t care as long as you’re alive. If you want, I can come with you.” Jiya offered.

“No, I think I should go alone.” Rufus said, Jiya tried not to be hurt as he was pushing her away. She felt it as it was palpable that he wanted distance between them. The more she tried to hold onto him, the more he wanted to slow down and pull away.

“Is everything ok?” She asked him.

“Yeah, it’s just that we’re taking things slow and I’m not ready to take you home.” He said, Jiya swallowed her pain and nodded.

“I get that.” She lied, she’d given her heart and soul to Rufus and she lost him. She finally got him back and she thought he was different and yet she still felt reduced in his eyes. She even understood it, they didn’t really know one another. Their relationship was truly back to page one. But it stung, she had invested three years of her life to being with him, she still didn't feel worthy of his time.

“You look disappointed.” Rufus observed.

“I just figured given we’re in a relationship for so long… but then I guess like you keep saying. We don’t know one another. So, it’s ok, we're taking it slow.” She told him, trying to alleviate his guilt as she didn’t want him to feel obligated to her.

“We do need to do is talk.” Rufus told her.

“Famous last words before someone gets dumped.” Jiya quipped.

“I’m not dumping you. It’s just that given what happened with Wyatt, I wonder how well I can trust myself-“

“And me because I’m not your Jiya. You think that I’m going to like him? Have a side of me that you didn't sign up for?” Jiya asked a little annoyed at being lumped in with a man who crippled Lucy and hurt Holly for his own ego.

“No, I just think that I don’t know you and I don’t want to rush things. I think we should slow it right down.” Rufus clarified but it didn’t assuage her hurt feelings. If anything, it made her angry as she was tired of being considerate and patient of his feelings. She just felt like a fool as she could see herself never measuring up to the Jiya he knew.

“You know, continental drift moves faster than this relationship.” Jiya told him in annoyance as she moved to the door.
“Where are you going?” He asked her.

“To work on the lifeboat.” Jiya told him sharply. She went to leave but stopped and turned to face him. "Just so you know, I'm not going to wait forever, I don't like being played." she informed him.

"I'm not playing you." Rufus told her earnestly.

"Then why is it so hard for you to believe I'm worth it? Cause all I'm hearing from you is that you don't know me, I could be like that asshole Wyatt and so I'm not good enough to take home to meet your mother. Instead of dating me, you want to slow us down to the point that we're not doing anything. Then tell me how you're not playing me?" She asked him, her anger simmering as she couldn't believe his nerve as he looked genuinely taken aback by her. "So, just figure out what you want and let me know, but I refuse to be your yo-yo again." she told him, she left the mothership.

"Yo-yo?" he whispered confused trying to understand what she meant by it.

Flynn stood under shower, soaking up the heat and the massage of the water as it pelted his skin. He closed his eyes and ducked his head under the water and rinsed out the conditioner. He raked his fingers through his hair, tears streaked down his face that were covered by the shower as he thought of Lorena and Iris. He finally allowed the grief roll over him in waves, the pain had been maturing and changing with every year. But it never ceased to exist.

Part of him took peace that it was over for them, they could finally rest. But he could no longer ignore they were in the past, he needed to say goodbye. He needed to tell them it was over, to visit their graves and close that chapter of his life before he moved on fully. He owed it to them, just as he did to Holly and Lucy to be present.

But a part of him still grieved for them, he always would. When he lost them, he had hoped with time travel he could save them but it wasn’t to be. He had wanted them to live but fate had other plans. He gave a long suffering sigh as he just didn’t expect he’d feel the end of Rittenhouse to be so anticlimactic. Even so, he wouldn’t change it as he wanted it to be over.

He felt his revenge on them was paid, maybe not in the way he’d dreamt for years. But this way would do. It would have to be enough as he needed to let it go. He took a shaky inhale and blew out a harsh breath as he knew what his next steps in life would be.

Lucy stirred awake from her sleep to see Flynn packing clothes away into the dresser. She looked over at Holly to find her completely buried under the blankets on her side of the bed. Lucy gently lifted the blankets to see Holly was fast sleep and breathing. She smiled as she lowered the blankets back down and looked to Flynn.

“Hey.” Lucy said in a hushed voice, Flynn turned and she didn’t miss the flicker of grief and fatigue in his expression. Even in her drug induced haze she knew it wasn’t about her or Holly. She knew because she too grieved for Amy and her family, Rittenhouse being gone. It opened old wounds.

She had read their attempts to save Amy. Every time they thought Amy was saved, she was still missing in the present, her alter figured that Amy was in a constant loop forever existing and then erased in 2016 though they could never figure out why or how to fix it. But Flynn never had a chance to save his family, they were just gone and he also had to accept he couldn’t even attempt to save them. He always hoped they’d come back to life as a byproduct of his missions in the past. She understood that need he had held onto for so long. Her heart ached for him.
“Hey, how are you?” he asked softly as he knelt by her bedside. They were both speaking quietly so as to not disturb Holly. Lucy reached out with her left hand and brushed her knuckles across his cheek before cupping his face in a gesture of comfort.

“I love you.” She told him, it felt good to say it out loud. It was so freeing and more joyful than she expected that she smiled. She wished she wasn't injured as she would've slid out of bed into his arms and kissed him. But even just leaning more on her side hurt, so she made do with her limitations because in time she could physically show him how she felt. For now, she let her words speak for her.

“The drugs are pretty heavy.” Flynn mused, though did enjoy hearing the words he didn’t take them seriously. Lucy smiled as she caressed his face with her thumb and shook her head.

“No, it’s me talking. I really do love you, I nearly died and all I could think about was you and Holly. How you’d come for me. I just had to hold on. You both gave me strength when I thought I didn’t have any. I know you love me too.” She told him, she remembered that day in 1888 so clearly. The way he looked at her when she asked why he was there.

“You’re very bossy, telling me what we’re going to do and now how to feel.” He quipped but he did hear her, he saw she was sincere but it was all a little too much to take in.

“Tell me it’s not true. Tell me you don’t love me.” She ordered him in a blunt manner because she knew the answer and didn’t see the point in hiding it. Or even waiting for it when they could take what they wanted know.

“I can’t.” Flynn said honestly, she smiled as she didn’t need him to say it out loud as he said ‘I love you’ in all the ways that matter; his touch, the way he looked at her. The things he did to take care of her, the support and friendship he gave her. His actions always spoke louder than his words.

“I want us to get out of this bunker to live our lives. I want to see Holly running in a park on a sunny day. I want to make you happy. I’d do anything to see you smile every day.” She told him.

“That isn’t an issue for me not when I have you and Holly.” Flynn said with a closed lip smile.

“You know what I mean. We deserve to be happy as we can.” She told him, she wanted to put all their pain behind them and get to the part where they were happy.

“I can’t argue with that.” He said they shared a look of longing and a sense of contentment wash over them as they felt an understanding between them. Flynn cupped her hand and turned his face into her palm and pressed a soft kiss into it.
“Hey, look whose up and walking around.” Jiya said with a smile as Lucy and Flynn slowly walked into the living area. Lucy felt a little dazed from being upright but grateful for the assist as she was sure she couldn’t have made it without Flynn at her side.

“Just barely getting around.” Lucy said wryly as she slowly sat down at the dining table with Flynn’s assistance.

“Where’s Holly?” Jiya asked as she stood in the kitchen area chopping up vegetables. There was already a large pot on the stove bubbling away. The delicious aroma of chicken stock and vegetables filled the air.

“Still asleep. I just needed to walk. Doctor’s orders.” Lucy told her, thought she hardly felt the ten steps from her and Flynn’s room to the living area counted. But she had walked a lot for an injured person, so she wasn’t too upset.

“It is important to keep moving and I’m making a chicken soup for dinner.” Jiya informed them.

"It smells delicious." Lucy said, Jiya gave a faint smile at the compliment.

“Need help?” Flynn offered to Jiya.

“Nah, I got it handled.” Jiya said, “It’s really good to see you out of the hospital so quick.” She said to Lucy as Flynn got himself a cup of coffee and Lucy a glass of water. How Lucy wished for coffee, but even she knew her stomach wasn’t ready for that delight. She needed to stay hydrated.

“Thank you, where’s Rufus?” Lucy asked out of curiosity and because she didn't want to talk about herself or her injuries.

“He went out, didn’t say where.” Jiya told her with a shrug. Lucy frowned.

“Everything ok?” Flynn asked as he could see Jiya wasn’t happy. He knew Rufus was going through some inner turmoil over what happened with Wyatt. But he didn’t think the man would waste his chance with Jiya because of it.

“Yeah, he’s just back peddling on me. I can’t seem to crack him. I know he wants to be with me but he just won’t commit? Or he’s trying to decide if I'm worth it.” Jiya said as she continued chopping celery and placing it into the pot.

“It’s been a rough couple of days.” Lucy said being careful as she could, she understood Jiya’s frustration.

“No, he doesn’t trust himself, he thinks I’ll be like Wyatt where he doesn’t really know who I am. I guess he’s right but it’s just hard, because I grieved him or another him. I get him back and we slip into some of our old patterns but at the same time they are different. He wants to take everything slowly, now he wants to go so slow that we’re doing nothing. You know, I just can’t win. He’s either an asshole who is stealing my work and claiming it’s his. Then playing mind games with making me feel like the bad guy or He’s treating me like he loves me by placing me on a pedestal so high that he doesn't want to do anything but admire me. I didn’t sign up for either.” Jiya said frustratingly.

“Give him time.” Lucy offered, the advice was hollow at best because she didn’t know what to say.
Flynn didn’t seem to be imparting any advice.

“I’m impatient and I like to know where I stand.” Jiya said wryly.

“He loves you.” Lucy told her.

“I think he loves the other me, he’s finally understanding there is a clear distinction now.” Jiya said looking despondent, Lucy didn't really know what to say.

“I’m sorry, Jiya. I wish I could offer some advice but I don’t know what to say.” Flynn said, finally speaking up. “But know that whatever happens, we’re here for you.” He assured her, Lucy watched as Jiya gave a small closed lip smile and shrugged.

“It’s ok, maybe it’s just the pressure of being down here. We can finally leave which is good, maybe I should just get back out there. See the world and I don’t know. Get over myself. It’s not life and death.” Jiya said as she tried to find something to hold onto through the mess.

“We’ve been thinking the same. Going back into the world and getting Holly above ground.” Lucy said, Jiya brightened up at her saying as much.

“Holly will love that. She sees so much of the world through that TV and internet. To see it in real life would be special. You know you can do it whenever you want, given your side of things is over for the moment.” Jiya said as she picked up the chopping board that was loaded with vegetables and dumped the vegetables into the pot.

“We just have to look into our options.” Flynn said casually.

“Holly wants to see the world, but mostly she desperately wants to meet your family.” Jiya said looking at Flynn. “She looks at those photos and she wants to know where she belongs in the world out there. They are connected to you.” She added.

“It will happen, we just have to decide on when.” Flynn said looking to Lucy. He also didn’t want to admit out loud that he wasn’t so sure of how it would all go. Or even what to say to his parents, let alone a half brother he never met.

“Maybe wait until I don’t look like this.” Lucy offered gesturing to her injured face. “I don’t want my first impression to be terrifying and hard to explain.” She told him. He smiled wryly.

“I figure we have many things we need to do like get passports and proper residence to use on the application.” Flynn said casually, Lucy couldn’t help but sigh as she was so muddled she didn’t even think of the finer details that needed to be arranged. “I should call them or see them first. I don’t know.” He said unsure of what the best move was.

“They’re going to be here next week for their annual trip to Yosemite. Not like I stalk them or anything. I just remember the other you mentioning that they liked to travel and they are always coming over here in the Autumn to go camping and hiking. I could look into it for you.” Jiya offered in a careful manner as she didn’t want to cross any lines.

“I’ll think about it but thank you for the offer.” Flynn said even though thinking about his parents made him anxious. He was touched that Jiya kept tabs on his family for him.

“No problem.” Jiya replied as she didn’t push it.

Later that evening, Lucy watched as Flynn gracefully climbed over her and into her side of the bed.
It wasn’t that she needed to be close to bin, but because he was afraid of knocking her injured hand and arm if it was between them. She appreciated the consideration he gave to her care.

But she hadn’t missed that he had a lot on his mind. She watched as he settled in for the night under the blankets. He seemed incredibly intent on not jostling her. If she could lay on her side, she sprawl herself over him and tangle their legs up. But she couldn't but she smiled as one day she would.

“Holly get to sleep ok?” She asked making conversation as she knew the answer. She could hear their voices from across the hallway with both doors open.

“Yes, she didn’t like going to her own bed but I stayed with her until she fell asleep. Hopefully, she’ll sleep through the night but we’ll see.” Flynn said before he gave a soft yawn.

“You know, we could head to where your parents are travelling. Yosemite is beautiful in the autumn. Holly and I, we can go do our own thing, you can reunite with your parents. Talk to them, and if it feels right for Holly and I to meet them, if not; then next time. Or you can go by yourself, take a few days. Denise, Jiya and Rufus can help me with Holly. I’m sure if things got dire, I could ask Karl.” Lucy drawled teasingly, Flynn snorted a laugh as he could only imagine the mayhem Karl and Holly could create together.

“It’s a good idea, not Karl but seeing my parents. I just don’t know what to say to them.” Flynn told her.

“I don’t think it really matters. I think you just need to see each other.” Lucy said softly, she wished she was so physically broken as she wanted to hold him. To touch him but the angles felt very awkward for her brain to make sense of.

“It could go badly, I don’t want to ruin their holiday.” Flynn pointed out, he knew he was being ridiculous but he couldn’t help it as it was his coping technique. It was easier to keep people at a distance especially his family.

“Or you could be giving them something they’ve wished for, for years.” Lucy told him, trying to give him hope. She might be a new parent but she had wanted children, to have that wish come true; it was amazing. She could only imagine Flynn’s parents would feel just as overwhelmed and happy to see him.

“Even so, it’s next week. You said you’d prefer to wait until you’re healed.” Flynn pointed out, Lucy made a face.

“Honestly, my face is not as important as you seeing your parents. If you want Holly and I to meet them then we’ll just have to come up with a story and use make up to cover a lot of the damage.” Lucy told him in a matter of fact manner, she was not letting him use her vanity to weasel out of it. She knew he was afraid, she knew a part of him still struggled with the man he’d become after losing Lorena and Iris. But he had worked through it and become a stronger and better man.

“I don’t want to lie to them.” Flynn told her softly. Lucy empathised as she knew how it felt when she lied to her mother.

“I’m sorry but we have to, as all of this is classified. Why don’t we just say I was carjacked with Holly in the car. It crashed. So, if Holly says anything strange. Then we can cover. It’s the only white lies to protect them. You know you’re still their son, the hows and whys of the past years won’t matter to them.” Lucy told him, she could feel he had fallen into the same confusion that Rufus and even she had fallen into. The question of if they could trust it, if they deserved it. They did. This was their life, they needed to own it and enjoy it.
“Not exactly.” Flynn replied wryly, she knew he was spiralling like Rufus. Maybe she was lucky as she only had Holly who could wake up and realise she was not her mother. But Rufus and Flynn; they had people with longer memories that could tell the difference between them and their alternate selves.

“Flynn, you saved Gabriel and you created this family. Just because you don’t have the memories of those years with them. It doesn’t make you any less deserving or less their son or brother.” Lucy sighed, she wished he could see his value was much higher than he believed. “You know you’re allowed to be happy, to have your family in its entirety.” She told him firmly, she watched as he mulled over her words.

She knew he had to believe he had worked hard enough to make up for his past mistakes. That he earned this freedom given to him because she did, he’d paid back his debt more so than anyone else on the team. She awkwardly reached out with her left hand and slid it into his right hand that he had rested on his stomach. She gave it a squeeze of comfort to let him know she was here for him.

“I also want to visit Lorena and Iris’ graves. I want to do it soon.” Flynn said, not arguing about whether he deserved or didn’t deserve his family. He just didn’t feel entitled to them, but he also wasn’t going to waste the gift given to him of being able to be with them. With her and Holly.

“Ok.” Lucy said without hesitation as she wasn’t surprised. In fact, she felt it was a good time as any. She wanted him to find as much closure in his life that he could.

“By myself.” Flynn clarified, he was afraid of her reaction. But knowing he needed to go alone, at least this time. He half expected her to left go of his hand. Just because she was trying to get them to start a new life and him going to see his former family’s grave was opening a door to the past.

But surprisingly for him, she held onto his hand. She stroked her thumb back and forth in a soothing manner. He looked at her, he could see she was completely fine with him going alone.

“I understand completely. Do what you need to do, ok? Just know that Holly and I are here for you. Whatever you need.” She told him, Flynn nodded; he lifted her hand and pressed a soft kiss to the back of it.

“We should get some sleep.” He said.

“You know, you can kiss me ‘goodnight’.” She told him in amused manner.

“With your split lip and bruised face?” he asked her.

“Gently kiss me ‘goodnight’.” She amended, Flynn snorted a laugh. “I’m on enough pain killers that I won’t feel the pain and I’d really like one.” She added, she playfully pulled on his hand.

“I can see where Holly gets her bossiness.” Flynn quipped before he obliged her, with a soft closed lip kiss. It was sweet and comforting, he pulled away, he pressed a kiss to her cheek and rested back onto his side to the bed.

A couple days later,

“Ok, here’s your phone. Your travel Itinerary, key cards to get cash though with your phone you can just wave and pay. As long as it’s under $200, you’re sweet. Anything higher than that, you have to use a pin. You know the pin, right?” Jiya asked him as she laid out on the table, his wallet and IDs, a mobile phone, keys and other items Jiya felt he required to ‘blend’ in.
“Yeh, I can remember my child’s birthday.” Flynn said dryly, though he felt for a pin it was too obvious. But he could change it later. Holly giggled as she sat at the table watching Jiya lecture Flynn on how to travel in their new reality. In fairness, there were changes from the other timeline they had existed. So, it made sense to make him aware of it so he didn’t stick out like a sore thumb but Jiya speaking to him as he was her child leaving home for the first time was amusing.

“All our numbers are in the phone and I’ve uploaded pictures of everyone just in case you forget our faces. Are you sure you only want a day?” Jiya asked him, with a frown.

“It’ll be enough for my needs. You don’t mind helping with Holly?” Flynn asked Jiya, he knew his and Lucy alter used Jiya as a babysitter but he wanted to make certain Jiya felt she had a choice. She wasn’t being taken for granted.

“Not at all.” Jiya said with a smile as she ruffled Holly’s hair. Lucy was still in bed, too drained to get up but she assured him she was fine as she just needed a little more sleep. Given it was 5am, he wasn’t going to argue as he wanted her to rest and recover as smoothly as possible.

“I want to go with you Daddy and fly in a big plane.” Holly told Flynn, he smiled softly as he pocketed all the items on her table into the pockets of his suit pants and jacket. He would take a car closer into town where there was free parking and then hop in a taxi and be on his way.

“One day, Monkey. Just not today. I have some things I need to do on my own and I need you to look after Mommy for me. Make sure she gets plenty of water, she eats and sleeps.” Flynn said, giving Holly purpose so she wouldn’t feel left out.

“I guess, I can do that.” Holly said reluctantly but it was good enough for Flynn.

“Good, now come here.” He said, he lifted her up into his arms. “I love you very much.” He told her in Croatian.

“I love you too, Daddy.” She replied with a happy smile before she hugged him. Flynn could help but get misty eyed as he did love Holly so dearly. It was such a joy to have her. She hugged him tight, it tugged on his heart as she did. It made him wonder if she thought this was a mission where he wouldn’t come back from.

“I’ll say goodbye to Lucy on my way out.” Flynn said, he tried to put Holly down but she held onto him. So, he gave up and shifted her onto his hip. “You know it’s only a day.” He told Holly.

“I know.” Holly said, her grip however tightened.

“Ok.” Flynn said giving up on letting her go. He looked to Jiya who wore an amused smile.

“I’ll have breakfast ready in 10 minutes.” Jiya told Holly. She looked to Flynn. “Safe Journey.” She told him.

“Thank you.” Flynn said as he walked to his room with Holly. “You ok?” he asked Holly.

“Will you really only be gone for a day?” She asked him.

“Yes, quick trip.” Flynn promised her.

“It’s not Writing Home is it?” Holly asked.

“No and I will be back later tonight. Now, down you go.” He said, luckily Holly obliged him as he placed her back onto her feet. He quietly opened the door and stepped into the room. Lucy must
have heard them as she looked over at him and Holly with bleary eyes.

“Hey, is it time?” Lucy asked, Flynn nodded.

“You sure you’re ok with me going?” he asked one more time, she gave a sleepy smile.

“It’s 12 hours, I'm sure Holly and I will be ok. Go, we’ll be here when you get back.” Lucy assured him. Flynn leaned in and kissed her softly with closed lips. Keeping it PG for their audience.

“Ok, see you later tonight.” He told her, as he lifted up but hovered over her still. Looking for signs that he should stay but she never wavered in her resolve in letting him find this closure.

“Be safe.” She told him as she playfully tugged on his open suit jacket.

“I will.” He promised her.

“I love you.” She told him, sincerely. She loved saying the words out loud and clearly so he understood sober or drugged, she still felt the same for him.

“Love you too.” He replied, before he kissed her a second time. He pushed up from the bed with a closed lip smile. Lucy noticed the sadness, she wasn’t sure if it was for what he was about to go do or leaving them. Maybe it was a mix.

She watched him leave with Holly trailing behind him. She knew she’d have to get up and corral Holly before she tried to follow Flynn out.

Rufus parked out the front of his old home, it seemed he still bought his mother the same house to live in when Mason gave him a sign on bonus. The place looked a little run down, but the lawns were in good shape.

Part of him wanted to get of the car and race up to the door and knock. But a bigger part was scared. What if he didn’t have the same relationship as he did in the old timeline. He knew his other self was a douchebag, he wondered if that translated to home life too.

He really hoped not as he just needed one aspect of his life to be intact. His relationship with Jiya was icy, he felt like there was a wall between him and Lucy. Flynn was ok, but he seemed to think life was filled with easy solutions and that Rufus had to pick one. It wasn’t necessarily true as Rufus could see the worst case scenario of the them all. The fear and indecision of what to do stalled him.

He watched as the front door opened, Rufus quickly slid down in his seat and peered out the bottom window. He watched his mother walk out of the house in her hospital scrubs as she walked to her car. Within moments, she got into her car and took off to work. Rufus felt like a coward for not getting out of the car. It was not the greatest feeling in the world to be scared of his own life.
Chapter 20

After a quick flight and hiring a rental car, Flynn looked out at the cemetery.

It was completely identical to the last time he visited. Maybe the names had changed on some tombstones. But he would never be sure, he frankly only cared about one.

He walked through the maze of graves, glad to see even in the late summer the grounds were well kept and immaculate. His parent, no matter the timeline always chose the best the cemetery. It sat on a hill that overlooked the city below, like guardians watching over the living denizens.

He slowed as he found them, he took a steadying breath but it didn’t help as tears stung his eyes and his heart pounded painfully in his chest. A familiar ache of raw emptiness clawed painfully at his insides as he saw their names carved into the stone. He knelt down by the tombstone; not caring for about getting his suit dirty. He cleared a couple of stray leaves and smoothed his hand over the marble.

“I'm sorry that it took me so long to be here. I brought you both something.” He said, he felt stupid for speaking to a rock but he couldn’t stop himself as part of him believed that maybe they could hear him. He sorely hoped there was an afterlife where they were happy. That they weren’t too disappointed in him and how he had acted in the past. He laid the flowers he bought on at the foot of the stone.

“Your favourite flowers, wild lavender and Kale flowers. Purple, of course.” He said with a small quirk of his lips as he remembered all the times he'd given flowers to Lorena over the years. Her smile as she received them, the kiss she'd give him before she went to find a vase.

“For you, Iris. Chocolate to share, not that you can eat it. But it’s the thought that counts.” He said as his eyes blurred, he felt stupid for needing to do this but he still came with gifts. He placed the bar down on the ground next to the flowers. He thought about his family, Lorena smile and Iris’ laugh. The guilt and grief etched ever more deeply, memories of their past. Of the night they were murdered.

“I’m so sorry, I failed you both. I wish I could save you but no matter how hard I tried. I failed. I’m so sorry, you didn’t deserve any of this.” He told them, tears streamed down his face as he pressed his hand to the tombstone. He looked at his wedding band, how it had been a reminder of what he’d lost. A motivator to take Rittenhouse down. No matter what it's purpose had been the last few years, it needed to be laid to rest with his family. He needed just a small physical piece of himself left with his family in the graveyard.

“But I can’t change things. It's like you said Lorena; some things are outside of our control.” he took a brief pause as he didn't know what to say. "I have another daughter who needs me now. I found love again, it doesn’t seem fair. But I hope you’ll understand. Just know that even though I’m moving forward, I’ll carry our memories with me.” He told them, not caring about the tears that fell down his face.

He slipped his wedding band off his finger. He heaved a pained breath, he pressed a kiss to the ring. He carefully dug into the dirt at the base of the tombstone and lifted out the dirt. He laid the ring to rest in the small hole.

“You’ll both always be in my heart. Always.” He said, he smoothed the dirt and grass over his ring. He pressed his hand over the site. The tears fell into the ground, He had held them inside him for
years. He covered his face with a hand and wept jagged sobs that he’d never allowed himself to truly do before now.

He let himself feel the gravity of all his emotions cave in, the years stoically burying his pain and despair deep inside him. It all came to the surface. Then he felt a hand on his shoulder. He felt his emotions snap back in a fragile state as he lifted his face out of his hand and looked to the owner of the hand. Shock didn’t even begin to cover what he felt as he looked up at his mother.

She stood over him with the same shocked expression as she couldn’t quite believe her eyes. She was older, much older than he remembered. But not as frail, there seemed to be a strength and vitality he’d never seen in her before. No, he had but it had been in 1969.

“Garcia?” she asked in disbelief as she’d seen a ghost. She dropped her purse on the ground and fell to her knees as she cupped his face with her hands and grabbed at his suit as if questioning if he was really here.

“Mama.” Flynn said, his face crumpled as he looked away ashamed. This was not how he wanted her to see him. She didn’t seem to care as she wrapped her arms around him and held him as if he were a child. Flynn floundered as he wanted to hold her, but was too afraid and in too much pain to cope. “I’m so sorry.” He whispered through his tears as he apologised not just to her but what felt like the whole world and it still didn’t seem enough.

“Oh my son, it’s ok. It’s going to be ok.” She promised him, slowly he returned her embrace. He felt her love and the comfort only a mother could give. They stayed like that for a long moment before Maria released him, she pulled back and cupped his face forcing him to look at her. She locked eyes with him. “I don’t care where you’ve been or what you’ve done. I forgive you.” She told him as tears streaked down her face. She spoke with such strong conviction. “You hear me? I forgive you.” She repeated in a firm manner. Flynn nodded shakily as the words hit home.

“I’m still sorry.” He told her. Maria gave him a soft closed lip smile as she brushed his tears from his face.

“I know, now tell me you’re back.” She told him, He nodded as he couldn’t speak as another sob choked in his throat. “Did you get the people who took Lorena and Iris from you?” she asked.

“Yes,” Flynn told her, fresh tears forming his eyes as he ducked his head. He didn’t expect to feel so much pain and relief mixed together.

“Do you need money or lawyers?” Maria asked him. Flynn shook his head.

“No, I was working for the NSA, it was all… I’m not in trouble but I’m so sorry I never called.” He told her, he felt like a terrible son as he waited for her anger.

“We got your cards. But when you didn’t send a birthday card for Gabriel… I was worried I’d lost you too. But you’re here, alive.” Maria told him, she peppered his face in kisses and pulled back with a watery smile. “You look so handsome though your hair needs a little more product or to be grown longer.” She said as she smoothed down an invisible cowlick and Flynn chuckled as he knew she was just trying to lighten the mood so she could stop crying.

“Draga, I’m-“ Garcia turned to see his father stop in his tracks. He looked shocked to see him. He looked just as Flynn remembered, but older too, in fairness he hadn’t seen them in over 5 years. “Son?” Asher asked looking perplexed.

“Yes.” Flynn said, he rose to his feet and helped Maria to hers. He then smoothed his hands down
his suit as he walked over to his father. They both stared at one another rather awkwardly as Asher Flynn was not the most emotionally demonstrative man.

If anything, Asher Flynn was an island separated from others and his own emotions. Only his mother and very few instances had Asher connected in an emotional manner with. It wasn’t his fault, his family hadn’t been loving in the traditional sense. They all loved one another but rarely hugged or kissed. But they did care for one another in actions and unquestionable loyalty.

“I’m sorry, I made you and Mama worried.” Flynn said to him, he looked to Asher surprised to see the tears clouding in the older man’s eyes. Much to Flynn’s surprised, Asher embraced him; hard.

“You were never far from our thoughts, and you were always in our prayers. I want you to know I prayed that you’d come back to us; every day. God finally answered my prayers.” Asher told him in a low whispered as he held his son tightly like he might disappear. “I love you.” Asher added gruffly, he pulled back from the hug abruptly and clapped one of his large hands on Flynn’s arm. His other hand holding onto a vase with flowers. He gave his son a watery but strong smile as his cleared his throat.

“I love you too.” Flynn said, whatever emotions Asher had been feeling evaporated behind a mask as Asher gave a nod. “Thank you for looking after Lorena and Iris.” He added as looked to his parents.

“They were our family too. Of course, we’d look after them.” Maria said softly as she meant no offence. It was reassuring that someone had gone through the traditions of their family when a death happened. Flynn hated how he missed it all, more stolen moments he’d never get back.

“So, are you back?” Asher asked him.

“Yes, I’m free.” Flynn said, the words never so true or felt as they did right now. “The people who murdered Lorena and Iris have been brought to justice.” He added, he felt a weight lift off him as he said it out loud.

“Good, I hope they paid dearly.” Maria said in a blood thirsty manner as Flynn was reminded of when he spoke to her in 1969. It seemed her sentiments on going to the ends of the Earth to make her ‘enemies’ pay still held true.

“In their own way.” Flynn said before he changed the topic. "When I came here, I didn’t expect to see you both here. I planned to see you.-"

“We come every year to make sure Lorena and Iris' resting place is well taken care of. Then we travel for a couple of months before going home for winter. We have been since...well since they passed.” Maria said as she took the flowers Asher had and moved to the tombstone. Flynn wasn't surprised at all, if anything it felt good to know in his absence; his parents had been here.

He watched as Maria placed it on the ground right over where he buried his ring. She picked up Flynn’s flowers and pulled off the wrapping and distributed the flowers into vase before adjusting the bar of chocolate to sit perfectly at the base. It was the small details that made all the difference. Flynn wished that he had thought of a vase. But he didn’t need to with his mother to fix it. But next time, he’d remember. Hopefully that visit would be more peaceful than the tumultuous experience this one had been.

“I’m just so glad that you’re alive and here. We almost didn’t come today.” Maria told him as she hugged Flynn again. She couldn’t help herself as he was her son but also the reminder of a ghost from her past.
A secret she held onto, of a man who pushed her to go for her dreams, a man who’d lost his wife and daughter and thought he’d lost himself. Who had thought she was his mother and he’d saved Gabriel to make her happy. To give her back the child she lost. She never forgot his words about how sad he had looked when told her of how he wanted to spare her the pain of losing her child.

She remembered him so well and she saw much of that man from 1969 in Asher and so much in Flynn even though it was impossible for either of them to be the man. But she didn’t care, what was possible and what wasn’t as she sometimes dreamt of that man, it was like a reminder to find the joy and happiness in her life. An Angel of her subconscious to guide her to live and love as fully as she could and to look after herself.

Not that she’d tell Flynn or her husband about the extent of it. But she was so happy to have Flynn back. She didn’t care about the how or whys, she was just glad her baby boy was alive and well. They would have him back in their lives as more than just a signed card.

“I’m glad we did.” Asher grunted as he clapped a hand on Flynn's shoulder. Maria smiled softly as she felt an incredible joy in having Flynn back in their lives. She was not letting him slip away again.

“Let’s take a moment with Lorena and Iris and then, we’re going back to our holiday rental. You can tell us everything.” Maria told Flynn.

“I like this place.” Holly said as she tapped the tablet computer screen that sat between herself and Lucy. A picture that was a map of Croatia.

“We have to stay in the US, just until we get our passports.” Lucy told Holly for the second time since starting this adventure before lunch. Holly kept finding Croatia from the search history and taking them back to it than focusing on their holiday searches in the US. “I know you want to see Nanna and Grandpa. But it will take time.” Lucy informed her in a gentle manner.

“I’ve only seen pictures of them. Daddy says they will love me. Do you think that’s true?” Holly asked.

“Yes, as you're smart, funny and very lovable.” Lucy assured her, Holly smiled as she finally complied to Lucy’s want. Holly tapped the screen with her fingers and pulled up a picture of forest that was a State Park in Alaska.

“There, I learnt from TV that to see the stars you gotta go far far away from the city and look up. It’s the closest you can get to heaven. We should go and say ‘Hi’ to Auntie Amy, Lorena and Iris. Auntie Jiya says people in heaven can hear even a whisper. So, we probably won't have to shout to loud.” Holly told her in a thoughtful manner before giving a shrug like it was not a big deal before she looked at the screen trying to see which picture had the prettiest stars.

“That’s a really lovely idea.” Lucy said as she tried to not let her emotions get the better of her. Holly's words made her want to cry but before she got too misty eyed a black ball of fluff zoomed into the living room. Lucy nearly jumped out of her skin until she saw it was a black Labrador puppy. The small puppy ran around smelling and exploring it’s surrounds. It saw them and barked as it raced over to the couch to greet them.

“Puppy!” Holly squealed in delight as she slid off the couch to greet the happy puppy.

“Be careful.” Lucy cautioned Holly, she wasn’t sure her heart could take it if Holly hurt herself.
“It’s ok, the puppy is tamed can’t speak for your kid though.” Karl said as he casually strolled in.

“Karl?” Lucy asked in surprise, she sat up straighter on the couch. She hadn’t expected him to show up, let alone have a dog but then he didn’t seem to be on official business as he wore jeans and denim shirt; looking casual chic.

He made her feel shabby as she only brushed her teeth and remained in her pyjamas. Not that she would’ve put in the effort if she’d known he’d show up. It was just that she didn’t know him very well and liked some armour about herself. She also knew he’d mock her mercilessly, but luckily she had Holly who was enough to save Lucy from having to get off the couch.

“UNCLE KARL!” Holly exclaimed excitedly, she got to her feet and raced to him. Karl looked half startled but managed to pick her up before she crashed into him. Lucy pressed her lips together in a smothered smile as Karl held Holly like she was a live explosive.

“Holly.” Karl said in amusement.

“Hug me, please.” Holly demanded in a sweet manner. Karl held her closer and Holly latched onto him like a baby monkey. Karl patted Holly on the back, she lifted her head and leaned back to look at his face. “Hi.” She told him with a grin.

“Hi,” he replied, they stared at one another for a long moment. Lucy wasn’t even entirely sure what was going on and if she should say something.

“You can put me down now.” Holly informed him.

“Ok, glad we did this.” Karl quipped as he lowered her back onto the floor. Holly went back to playing with the puppy.

“What are you doing here?” Jiya asked as she came into the living area to see him. She didn’t look happy about it.

“Paperwork, generally being annoying. Hi, Jiya.” Karl said, he added the last part just to ruffle her feathers as she had skipped the polite greetings.


“They didn't stop me up top anyway, Bacon’s toilet trained.” Karl assured Jiya.

“Bacon?” She asked him wryly. Bacon who was playing tug of war with Holly over his lead turned his attention to Jiya. He raced over to her with Holly behind him and Jiya crouched down to pet the puppy.

“I don’t name them, I just foster them…now.” Karl said with a shrug as if it were a minor inconvenience to his day but he would survive it. When really it was a rather big deal, Lucy really felt like she didn't get him as he acted like he was foot loose and fancy free. But he kept doing things like being with Flynn and Holly when Lucy was in the hospital to fostering dogs that spoke of a need to put down roots and connect with people.

“You foster dogs.” Jiya said in disbelief.

“I have five dog farms, I figured it was time to understand the hairy little things. Given you can’t sell a product that you don’t know.” Karl said with a shrug as if it was purely business but the puppy contradicted that image given he looked happy and healthy.
“You own dog farms? Those overcrowded, filthy puppy factories?” Jiya asked angrily, her cheeks burning as she looked ready to explode.

“Whoa, take it down a notch. My farms are huge and staffed the right people to train dogs to be serviceable for the military, police work and people with disabilities etc. It’s all puffy and sickeningly cute PR moments being rich is a drag when you have to be socially conscious of the impact you make on the world.” Karl rolled his eyes. “We also house abandoned dogs and stupid dogs like Bacon who fail the training. Then try to re-home them after they’ve been trained to be good family pets.” Karl explained with a shrug.

“Puppies aren’t stupid, they are always learning.” Holly corrected him before she went back to her tug of war with Bacon and giggled. The two having fun before Bacon dropped the lead and went to Holly for more rub downs. She was a natural with the puppy, it made Lucy grateful that Holly was afraid of animals.

“Only this morning; he ran into the same door, twice. But he does at least shit and whiz outside so I’ll give him that.” Karl conceded.

“Mommy, Uncle Karl said a potty word!” Holly said looking scandalised, Karl pulled out a money pin and peeled off a one hundred dollar bill. He held it out to Holly in a frank manner.

“Here, think of it as an investment as Uncle Karl is going to use a lot of potty words.” He said, Holly looked incredibly confused at the gesture. Her cute face scrunched up into a frown.

“You’re supposed to stop saying potty words so you don’t have to pay.” Holly said, educating him on the purpose of a cuss jar as if Karl was the moron. Karl snorted a laugh as he still held out the money.

“I like using potty words.” Karl told her in a matter of fact manner.

“It’s your money.” Holly told him as she took the money, she shook her head as she still thought him as the moron in the deal. She went over to Lucy and gave it to her for safe keeping. Then returned to the floor to play Bacon who couldn’t sit still to save his life. Within seconds, Holly was giggling and Bacon was play growling and barking happily.

“How are you?” Karl asked Lucy as he sat down on the other end of the couch; making himself at home. Jiya folded her arms across her chest not entirely happy with his presence.

“I’m good, thank you and you?” Lucy asked him.

“Can’t complain. Where’s Flynn?” Karl asked her as he looked around the room, he seemed almost bored and restless under the beguiling façade of serenity.

“He’s out for the day.” Lucy said.

“Rufus?” he asked.

“He’s seeing his family, I guess.” Jiya offered as she hadn’t really spoken to Rufus since their tiff. He had slept on the couch and she purposefully avoided him as she didn’t want to get attached to him when he could very well leave her again.

“Guess? Is everything ok?” Karl asked Jiya.

“My everything is none of your business.” Jiya informed him, Karl chuckled.
“Here I thought we were friends.” Karl quipped not ruffled at all by Jiya’s dark mood. But Lucy could see Holly was picking up on the tension. Holly and the puppy had quietened down and were watching the conversation.

“Work colleagues, you’re really a pain in my bottom.” Jiya said in a tart manner.

“Nice avoidance of the potty words.” Karl said cheekily.

“Are you really here for paperwork?” Jiya asked him.

“Yes, would you like to see the text I got from Agent Christopher?” Karl asked as he brought out his phone to prove he was supposed to be there.

“Yes, because you drove a long way for paperwork.” Jiya said as she snatched the phone from his hand and started scrolling.

“Is everything alright with the bad people going to prison?” Lucy asked Karl. After a few moments, Jiya begrudging handed the phone back to him.

“Yes, it’s over.” Karl assured her. “It’s just that a lot of my information and reports are stored in the servers here, so I can only be debriefed here.” He explained, he threw Jiya a look as if to say it was her fault.

“I was supposed to make a backdoor and didn’t.” Jiya said with a sigh. “I’ll be in the landing bay.” She mumbled before she walked away.

“It’s not a big deal,” Karl told her as she walked away. He looked to Lucy and gave a nonchalant shrug. “I don’t mind the drive and Bacon needs to be socialised in different environments. Makes him a better companion.” Karl said as if he was proud of his puppy parent skills.

“We’re not keeping him.” Lucy told Karl, she pointed at the puppy.

“You say that now, but wait until he runs into a wall and does something cute like sneeze.” Karl deadpanned, Lucy looked at Bacon. The puppy looked at her with big puppy dog eyes and tilted his head in a cute manner, his tail wagging. Lucy could almost feel herself being drawn into the pitch but then she remembered she was in physical state to look after herself and Holly. She shook her head.

"No, not happening." Lucy told him, Karl chuckled.

“But only cause he’s not one of our dogs. He's your dog, Uncle Karl.” Holly told Karl, she looked down at Bacon and rubbed his belly. “But you are so cute!” Holly told Bacon which earned her a puppy kiss or three.
Chapter 21

“I know that you probably can’t tell us exactly what happened but if there anything you can share?” Maria asked as she sat down opposite Flynn at the dining table. Asher was in the kitchen cooking lunch, the familiar smells of home and old times as his father was a chef by trade. He knew his family life was unorthodox at the time as his parents switched gender roles. His mother would work in the study while his father took care of the house and controlled the kitchen. Their house always smelt delicious as his father was always cooking and creating some new recipe.

It was no different now, as they had returned to his parent’s holiday rental. Soon as they did, Asher was in the kitchen, Flynn had washed the dirt off his hands. Flynn had looked at his empty ring finger; he expected it to hurt. But there was a soft wave of acceptance as his marriage with Lorena was truly over. It had been for years, but there was closure in burying the ring as he had been him burying the pain of the past and giving a piece of himself back to Lorena and Iris.

He knew they would want him to be happy again, as he’d have wished the same for them if their positions had been reversed. But for the first time since their death he found a small semblance peace. Rittenhouse was gone, so was his family. But as crazy it was, he felt they were resting more peacefully. He knew a part of him would always grieve their loss but it wasn’t an all consuming storm raging within. It was a muted ache, a reminder of what he lost and to cherish the time he now had to be happy in their honour and for himself.

“I was looking into financials of a company and came across a discrepancy. I looked into it, not realising the danger. Lorena and Iris died because of me.” Flynn explained. He watched as Maria and Asher froze and processed what he said.

“You can't believe that.” Maria told him.

"It's true, I should've been more careful." Flynn explained, as he recounted the events of how it was late at night. Lorena thought she heard Iris coughing, so she went to check on her. How heard the shots that killed Lorena and Iris. He swallowed as a lump formed in his throat. Hot tears burned his eyes, telling the story never got easier but he managed not to tear up. "They were meant to kill me too, but I managed to escape. I got in touch with my contacts in the NSA who could help me. I wish I could've told you but I was afraid of something happening to you all. I couldn’t bear it if I lost you all too.” Flynn explained to his parents, he watched as they processed what he had told them.

He couldn't help but take the time to really see them. As they surprised him, he thought he would feel like he was an outsider, someone they wouldn’t understand. But it wasn’t so.

His mother was changed, she was vibrant and more joyful than he remembered. If anything, she reminded him of a more weathered and wiser Maria that he met in the past. There wasn’t a deep sadness lurking behind her eyes as she smiled. She was genuinely happy.

His father? He looked exactly the same and acted the same. Flynn could only assume with time he might be able to discern the differences. But for now, he felt at ease with parents. While realistically, Flynn understood they had very different memories of their lives. They were still able to be a family.

“I disagree with it being your fault. You were doing your job, those terrible people had no right to take our family away because of it. But I understand you were doing you thought best at the time.” Maria said with a soft motherly smile. She gave a self conscious laugh as she brushed the tears from her eyes. "I feel like I've cried a thousand tears today."
“I wish I could tell you everything that happened after that. I really do but it’s all to protect you. I really just want you to know that missed you all and how sorry I am for what I put you through.” Flynn told his parents.

“We know, we forgave ages ago and now it’s in the past.” Maria told him.

“It is, there’s something else I need to tell you both.” Flynn told them carefully, he knew he should really not tell them about Lucy and Holly. It was too much to lump into their first meeting but he wanted everything out in the open. He didn’t want any secrets if he could help it.

“I don’t entirely like how grave that sounds.” Asher commented dryly. He placed a pot of piping hot stew on the table on the table next to a plate with freshly baked bread rolls. He sat beside Maria, he sat his chair in a languid manner that belied the the true nature of the meticulous and thoughtful mind that was always at work.

“It’s not bad. It will just-“ Flynn started, but struggled as he didn’t know how to say it without it sounding harsh.

“Spit it out.” Asher told him as he rest an arm around the back of Maria’s chair. He cupped her shoulder with his hand in a supportive gesture.

“I’ve remarried and I have another child, a daughter.” Flynn told them, he watched as a whole range of emotions flickered across their faces from shock, disappointment, to uncertainty and then joy.

“You have another baby?” Maria said still a little stunned, he didn’t blame her for being so given he’d been sobbing over Lorena and Iris in the cemetery only an hour ago.

“Yes, her name is Holly. Though she's not a baby as she’ll be four next month. I’m sorry, I didn’t tell you sooner. Once again, I had to keep everyone safe and isolating us as we finished our work was what I felt was the best choice for us. At least at the time.” Flynn said, the excuses sounded weak even to his ears. But he hoped it was enough to smooth over some of the hurt feelings he expected them to feel. His stomach churned as he expected anger or disappointment. But instead they seemed too overjoyed to be upset.

“Do you have photos?” Asher asked, Flynn blinked in surprise as he hadn’t expected his father to ask.

“Ah, yes. I do.” Flynn said as he reached into his jacket pocket as he’d hung it on the back of his chair. He pulled out his phone and flicked through the photos until there was a family photo of his and Lucy’s alters with Holly. While consciously he understood he and that Flynn had at one point been different but now it was just him. This was his history, his present and future. He could finally claim it and enjoy it.

He passed the phone to his mother, he watched as the couple pulled out their glasses and leaned in close to get a better look. He felt a sense of pride as his parents smiled. He was immensely grateful that Jiya had gone to the effort to put photos on his phone.

“Oh, look at you three.” Maria said proudly, her eyes glittering with joy. Asher looked down with a smile on his face. His features softened in a manner Flynn only saw on very special occasions in his past. He had a feeling in this timeline, Asher was most likely more emotional demonstrative than Flynn assumed.

“That’s Lucy, she’s my wife. Holly takes after her quite a lot.” Flynn said with a smile. It felt strange saying ‘wife’ in regards to Lucy and it not being a cover. As right here and now, it was the truth.
“They are beautiful. Holly looks like a cheeky one.” Maria said in a teasing manner.

“She is. I’ve told her all about you both and the family. I’ve been teaching her Croatian and she keeps asking me when we’ll see you.” Flynn told them, feeling joy at being able to voice these wants as he wanted them to meet Holly. He wanted to give Holly the family and life above ground she had missed out on because of their circumstances.

“We can’t wait to meet her and Lucy. Tell us about them.” Maria said though it was practically an order. Flynn smiled.

“Lucy, she’s incredibly intelligent, strong and kind woman. She worked with me to catch the people after me. Holly; she is like a ray of sunshine. She's incredibly smart and funny for her age.” Flynn smiled at his memories of them, he missed being around them. He told his parents about Lucy’s passions for history and learning. Holly’s latest shenanigans and her personality. “Lucy has all the videos of Holly’s firsts. So, I’ll get a copy of them for you. It wasn’t easy to move on, I know it looks it was.” Flynn started, he wanted to explain that being with Holly and Lucy didn’t ‘cure’ him or ‘wipe’ away his marriage with Lorena or Iris. They were a blessing to him. Maria reached out and grasped his hand.

“We know, we do. You don't need to apologise for being happy. As we're so relieved that you’re alive and we get to have a grandbaby and new daughter in the family too. It's more than we could ever hope for and we want to celebrate the good things.” Maria told him, her eyes misty with happy tears.

“Ok.” Flynn said, he nodded in agreement.

“Look, I know what’s like to lose a spouse and nearly lose both of my children. I know the grief never entirely leaves the heart but we have a great capacity to love. We're allowed to be happy as it's what those who have passed would want.” Maria told him softly as she wore an expression of empathy.

“I agree with your mother. We don’t need explanations as all we wanted and needed was our son back.” Asher said adding his two cents into the mix. “Anyway, can’t facetime with them.” He added casually.

“Facetime.” Maria corrected Asher, she shook her head in amusement as she was always correcting him. The man knew the latest gadgets and engineering for kitchens and running a restaurant but social media he outsourced to ‘younger’ people or Maria.

“I didn’t think to get that set up. They are in San Francisco at the moment, I was going to fly back this afternoon. To be honest, I was going to track you down when you were visiting Yosemite.” Flynn told them, he wanted them to know he had planned to reconnect with them.

“Well, assuming you have time off. Pack up the family and join us. We’re using one of your father’s friends’ cabin. It sleeps 15 or we can come to San Francisco.” Maria said excitedly, her mind racing twenty steps ahead as it always did when she decided she wanted something. She wanted to meet Lucy and Holly.

“We’re still residing in an NSA safe house. The people who came after Lucy and I, they found our other safe house and invaded it. Holly’s arm was broken. Lucy was taken hostage and injured badly. They wanted information, I don’t want to go into any details.” He lied, as he knew it wasn’t Wyatt but he just wanted to keep his lies as simple and close to the truth as possible.

“Will she be ok?” Maria asked concerned.
“Yes, she’s just- it might be shocking to see her. They crippled her right hand. The doctor gives a 60% chance of full recovery. We’ve both in the works of retiring and getting out of the safe house. To get Holly acclimated to the real world. She’s been sheltered for all of her life.” Flynn told them, it felt good to share with them, to share his burdens and concerns as he felt like the team and he lived in a bubble. A bubble that didn’t easily transfer to the real world. He felt that they would all go through a shock, adjusting to the real world.

“Looks like you were living underground.” Asher commented as he dished up lunch for them.

“Yes, it is.” Flynn said, he shouldn’t tell them so much but he just didn’t have the energy to lie about every little detail.

“You know, if you want your father and I; we can fly back with you. Find a nice rental home and help you all out until you’re back on your feet. It would be good for Holly to be above ground even if it's just for a few hours. You and Lucy can rest and relax a bit.” Maria offered.

“Oh no, I don’t want you changing your plans for us. Lucy is ambulatory. Holly will have her arm out of her cast in 6 weeks. We should be ok.” Flynn assured them.

“We don’t mind, as I said we can meet the girls and help out with Holly and Lucy. It’s really a win-win.” Maria told him, she said it in a way that made him worried he might be ‘accidentally’ followed back to the bunker.

“I’ll keep it in mind. But for now, we’re good and I’ll talk to Lucy about Yosemite but I think it should be ok. We were thinking about travelling when she had more time to recover.” Flynn said.

“You know we could fly to San Francisco and drive from there to Yosemite. It’s not that far at all, we can extend our trip as long as we want.” Maria told him, Asher rested a hand on her arm in a calming gesture.

“Maria, calm down. We’ll meet them, when we meet them. Now, let's eat.” Asher told them before Maria could argue.

“Please.” Flynn said as he was starved.

“Do you think Daddy is having fun where he is?” Holly asked Lucy, she sat on the couch with Bacon in her lap. The puppy was half asleep, his tiny tail wagging as Holly rubbed his back and side. Lucy had to admit that Holly was really a natural with the puppy. She hadn’t needed much guidance on how to act with the dog and she seemed so happy having the puppy to play with. It made Lucy wonder how lonely Holly's life was in the bunker. But she tried not to let it get her down as Holly's future was bright and she had plenty of time to catch up now.

“I don’t know, I hope so.” Lucy said carefully, she highly doubted visiting his family’s grave would be a joyous occasion but it was hard to explain that to Holly.

“I like Bacon, he’s funny.” Holly told her in a low, happy whisper.

“We can’t keep him.” Lucy told her with an exhausted smile. She really hoped Karl didn’t ‘forget’ the puppy on his way out.

“I know.” Holly said looking a little sad at having to let Bacon go.
“He’s Uncle Karl’s dog.” Lucy reminded her.

“But not his forever dog and isn’t having a dog fun?” Holly asked her.

“They are but dogs are also a lot of work. You gotta do more than just play with them and pet them. You gotta clean up after them, train them to listen to you and do what you say. Exercise them and do everything to help them maintain their health.” Lucy listed out for her, Holly nodded like she knew it all already.

“But they are fun and so soft.” Holly told her, which made Lucy question if Holly listened to what she said.

“I think it’s time you and I had an afternoon nap.” Lucy told her, she needed the nap and knew it had to be time for Holly too.

“I don’t want to leave Bacon.” Holly told her with a pout.

“How about we just sleep on the couch with the TV on. That way, we and Bacon don’t need to move.” Lucy offered as she was too tired to wrangle Holly into bed and keep Bacon out of it.

“Ok.” Holly said with smile.

“You want a blanket?” Lucy asked her.

“Yes, please.” Holly replied, Lucy rose to her feet in a rocky manner. She grabbed the throw blanket off the back of the couch and haphazardly draped it over Holly before straightening it out, careful of Bacon. She wished she could lean over just another ten degrees as she would’ve kissed Holly. But her body was too sore to let her. She pressed a kiss to her fingers and then pressed the fingers gently to Holly’s forehead.

“Sweet afternoon dreams.” Lucy told her.

Rufus returned to bunker after a long day in the real world. So much had changed and yet it all seemed familiar. He had left his home, never going in or saying a word to his family before just aimlessly wandering around city for hours trying to get his bearings and figure out what he wanted.

It hadn’t really helped as he returned more unsettled and out of sync than ever before. He walked into the living room and saw Holly conked out on the couch with puppy curled at her side.

He looked and saw Lucy in the kitchen awkwardly pouring herself a cup of tea.

“Hey, let me do that.” Rufus said in a low voice afraid Lucy might burn herself.

“I got it.” Lucy said, she did splash some hot water on the bench but she got majority of the water she needed into the cup. “How are you?” she asked him.

“I don’t know. I tried to see my family. It didn’t happen.” Rufus said with a shrug as he sat down at the dining table. He felt Lucy needed to make the cup of tea on her own and if she needed help, he would take over.

“They weren’t home?” Lucy asked as she steeped her tea bag in the water and brought the cup over to the table. It was no easy feat as she was right hand dominant for everything. But she needed to start adapting especially as it would take months for her recover her right hand, if at all.

“No, they were. I just couldn’t go in. What was going to tell them?” Rufus asked her. "Oh hey, I'm
your missing presumed dead son, but I’m from timeline very different to this one, where I wasn’t a rich super douche.” he drawled mockingly.

“I don’t think the time travel matters.” Lucy told him, honestly.

“Probably not.” Rufus mumbled uneasily.

“Your family loves and misses you, Rufus. They are not going to care that your memories are slightly different. They will be happy that you’re back.” Lucy told him, part of her was envious as she wanted to shake him and tell him to be grateful for what he had but she didn’t. He needed to see he was blessed on his own, not by using her history against him.

“Like Jiya was.” Rufus said.

“Rufus, she loves you and you both are aware of the changes in history. You know that you’re different people. It’s not perfect but if you work it out, she’s one person you never have to be on guard with. You can be yourself with her.” Lucy said, being brutally honest.

“Yeah, but maybe we’re too different.” He said.

“You haven’t even given her a chance, you wanted to stay here before the rest of us decided. You must have felt a connection to her and still do. You just need to be open to the possibilities.” She told him.

“Maybe,” Rufus said not thoroughly convinced.

“Not maybe, you need to date her. To get to know her.” Lucy told him.

“I’m not good at dating.” Rufus said.

“No one is. But you two have never had enough romance in your lives.” Lucy pointed out, she knew it was just her observations of his relationship with Jiya.

“Hey, we had plenty-“ Rufus started to defend himself when Lucy cut him off.

“In this dank, rusty” Lucy lowered her voice “shithole of a bunker.” She then rose her voice back to normal. “You need to woo her with food and wine. Nice restaurants and going places that are above ground. Where the whole purpose is about you two, not some added on meal of convenience to some chore.” Lucy told him in a matter of fact manner.


“He is and we are going to have dates in the future.” Lucy said smugly as she was going to win this argument. Not because Rufus was a bad boyfriend because he wasn’t. But because she and Flynn recognised that the bunker wasn’t the ideal place for romance, not when they could live above ground.

“Really?” Rufus asked in surprise.

“Yes, married people still have date nights.” Lucy deadpanned.

“So, you’re going full into this.” Rufus said, he looked worried for her. It rankled her a little for him to not be just a little bit supportive of her.

“Yes, I know it’s not conventional but we have a life we both want. Flynn and I love one another, we have for a while and never acted on it because of Rittenhouse. I pushed him away because of
what Wyatt did to me, I didn't want to be trapped in the same situation with Flynn having to decide between me and his family if they came back alive.” Lucy told him, not hiding the truth as she had been afraid of repeat of history. If Lorena and Iris had come back, she would step aside as she had with Wyatt and Jessica. "Flynn and I, we're decided to be friends and focus on the mission. But here we are, it's over and we can be together. We have Holly." Lucy said.

“So, you’re googling recipes to play Betty Crocker already?” Rufus asked jokingly as he looked at her tablet computer on the table.

“No, that’s research. Flynn’s father. I read up on his mother who as we know is a brilliant engineer. It lead to me looking into his father; Asher Flynn.” Lucy said.

“So, he wasn’t hatched.” Rufus drawled as he picked up her tablet to take a closer look. “Wow, the apple did not fall far from that tree.” Rufus added as he looked at Asher Flynn's website.

“Yeah, Flynn looks just like him.” Lucy said.

“At least you’ll know what Flynn will look like in 30 years time.” Rufus said as he scrolled through the site.

“I wasn't worried about that. Asher is a chef, published some cookbooks and owned a couple of restaurants.” Lucy said, she was married into a family who were very successful in their own right.

“So, you’re never cooking for him.” Rufus stated in amusement.

“Exactly.” Lucy said with a smile, the two chuckled as they both knew she was a terrible cook.

“At least we know where Flynn got his cooking skills.” Rufus said with a shrug.

“Rufus, you should see your family and take Jiya outside for a date.” Lucy said bringing the conversation back to Rufus and his dilemmas.

“What if it’s like Wyatt-” Rufus started but Lucy cut him off.

“Wyatt had PTSD, serious issues with anger and control. Not to mention, he also had a serious drinking problem for years, I know I can’t talk as I’ve had problems too and I’ve struggled with a drinking problems in the past few months. But Wyatt never took responsibility for his problems, he never wanted help because he didn’t think he had the problem. It was all of us and the world making his life hard.” Lucy said, not mincing her words as she refused to put Wyatt on a pedestal.

Rufus blinked and reared back slightly as even he knew what she was saying to be true. But they lived in such a culture that it was easier to blame the circumstances than the person. Wyatt was one of the rare people who decided to play a victim for years instead of attempting to move past their trauma.

“Rufus blink and reared back slightly as even he knew what she was saying to be true. But they lived in such a culture that it was easier to blame the circumstances than the person. Wyatt was one of the rare people who decided to play a victim for years instead of attempting to move past their trauma.

“To compare Jiya to Wyatt is a disservice to her. She’s not like Wyatt, she might have her own demons but it’s nothing compared to Wyatt.” Lucy told him.

“We don’t know.” Rufus argued, Lucy gave an exasperated groan.

“That’s why you date her and remember that she’s not a soldier. She’s a brilliant…Computer engineering person.” Lucy told him, she had been going strong until she realised that she didn't actually know what Jiya did or her job title.

“You don’t know what Jiya and I do, do you?” Rufus asked her in amusement.
“I know it’s deeply intelligent and important work that keeps me alive while travelling through time.” Lucy said, she gave a smile.

“No clue.” Rufus stated.

“It’s very impressive but yeah, I have no idea.” Lucy confessed, they both laughed before Lucy sobered. "But it doesn't matter, the point is you go out and get to know her. Don't bring Wyatt up as he's not even part of the equation, you're just using him as an excuse to hide. We finally get to have a life, it's time to live it." Lucy said being blunt, Rufus nodded as he looked thoughtful as he mulled over what she had said.
Hours later, Flynn returned to the bunker. He was dead on his feet, it had been a long and emotional day. Saying ‘goodbye’ hadn’t been easy especially for his mother as she had already texted him twice. Flynn had a feeling they would go through a rough transition of her smothering him with attention and him trying to keep enough boundaries so she didn’t realise that he didn’t have the same memories.

The doors to the elevator opened, Flynn was grateful to know he was so close to holding Holly in his arms and seeing Lucy. But before him was Karl with a lead in hand that was attached to a very excited puppy.

“Karl.” Flynn said in amusement.

“Flynn.” Karl said as they changed places. Flynn stepped out while Karl and the puppy stepped into the elevator. Karl kept his body in the door keeping it open, but the puppy was too excited by Flynn’s presence to stay in the elevator as it stepped in and out.

“What are you doing here?” Flynn asked out of curiosity.

“Work.” Karl said with a shrug.

“You have a dog.” Flynn commented.

“Temporarily. You should’ve seen your family’s faces. They loved Bacon.” Karl drawled in a mocking manner as he picked the indecisive puppy up into his arms. Flynn smiled as the puppy licked Karl’s face and then looked Flynn with big puppy dog eyes.

“Nice try, we’re looking for Lucky and Bepo.” Flynn told Karl who just grinned not even sorry for trying. Bacon snuggled in into Karl’s arms, like he proving he was cute dog worthy of an Instagram account.

“Where you been?” Karl asked him as he changed the topic.

“Family time.” Flynn replied, not suppling any further information than Karl had.

“Oh yeah, your folks are stateside.” Karl remarked casually.

“How do you know that?” Flynn asked out of curiosity.

“Made it my business to know while in Rittenhouse. Just in case.” Karl shrugged. “How did it go?” he asked as he absentmindedly played with Bacon’s ear. The puppy was already drifting off to sleep.

“Better than expected.” Flynn offered, as he didn’t want to go into details with Karl just yet. It was still strange to have such a familial type of relationship with the man.

“Good, and let me know if you need help with anything. I know people.” Karl told him.

“I have a feeling there’s not much that you don’t know.” Flynn quipped.

“I’ll see you when I have Bepo.” Karl told him with a smile.

“Not until after Christmas.” Flynn advised him. Karl’s smile broadened as the man was a shit stirrer who never missed a chance to have fun.
“I don’t find the dogs. They find me.” Karl told him, Flynn would’ve replied by the elevator doors closed essentially ending the conversation.

Flynn shook his head and chuckled as he headed to the kitchen where he smelt pizza. His stomach gurgled as he was starving, so starving he’d eat the frozen garbage that Jiya and Rufus liked to consume.

He heard the laughter and chatter, he smiled as he’d come home just at the right time. He turned the corner and saw them all at the dining table. Lucy was slouched fairly low in her chair while Holly knelt in her chair looking at the pizza Jiya had just placed on the table.

“Looks like I came home at the right time.” Flynn said, he smiled as Holly’s face lit up at seeing him.

“Daddy!” She shouted excitedly. She slid off her chair and ran for him. He picked her up in his arms kissed her on the cheek and hugged her close as he had missed her today. Just as he had missed Lucy. He never imagined himself being so thoroughly attached to them but he was and he didn’t mind a bit.

“Have a good day?” he asked Holly, she nodded emphatically.

“The best, Uncle Karl let me play with his puppy; Bacon! The cuss jar got a hundred bucks cause Uncle Karl going to say lots of Potty words. I told him to stop but he didn’t listen.” Holly rolled her eyes, Flynn smothered a smile as he knew what a challenge Karl could be. “Then Mommy and I watched movies and now we’re having Pizza cause we can eat it with our fingers.” Holly informed him.

“Sounds like a fun day.” Flynn said as he walked them over to the table. He placed Holly into her chair and pressed a soft kiss to Lucy’s forehead. They shared a look and he could see she was searching him for answers to his day. He gave a faint reassuring smile as he’d tell her later. But for now, he could see she needed meds, food and sleep.

“There’s vegetables on the pizza.” Jiya assured Flynn as he sat down at the table.

“Underneath the cheese and BBQ sauce?” Flynn asked wryly, he only said it to rile Jiya up and she knew as much as she poked out her tongue at him.

“Yes. Bon appetit, everyone!” Jiya said.

After dinner, Flynn helped Holly and Lucy have their showers and Holly changed into her pyjamas. There was a small amount of amusement as Lucy was adamant about putting her clothes on while Holly wanted to be babied a little more than usual.

He carried Holly to her room and gently laid her down into her bed. Lucy stood by the door smiling as she watched them. He tucked Holly in and read her, her three stories before he and Lucy kissed the sleeping daughter ‘goodnight’. They headed to their own room.

“So, I know Holly asked earlier but how are you? Really?” she asked as she knew he hadn’t been entirely truthful at dinner. She had figured he’d come back moody and grief stricken but he seemed to be freed. It felt like a knot inside him had unravelled.
“It was what I needed.” He said honestly, he pulled hung up his suit and got his clothing and toiletries together to take a shower. “I also saw my parents.” He added.

“They were there?” Lucy asked in surprise.

“Yeah, I was surprised as well. It was not how I expected and yet it was good. We had talked, had lunch and I don’t know, they forgave me for disappearing. They want to be in our lives. The hard part was just being Lorena and Iris’ graves again especially since so much time has passed. Yet, it felt like no time passed at all. Afterwards, I felt rather stupid for being caught up in my grief for so long.” He said with a grimace.

“I don’t know, I think it’s normal. The pain dissipates but then it comes back to you, it feels as fresh and raw as it did when you lost them. Sometimes you just have to allow yourself those moments.” Lucy said, thoughtfully as she knew it to be true for her. Sometimes she’d be happy and then it would creep in. Just the little things like the smell of Holly’s strawberry shampoo reminding her of Amy. The history books of the mother Lucy had loved and felt loved by. The life and family that Rittenhouse had stolen from her.

“You ok?” Flynn asked her, he turned on his side to look at her profile. There was something about her demeanour that concerned him.

“Yes, I’m happy for you and for Holly. I’m glad you found your family again.” Lucy told him sincerely, but she was saddened that her side of the family was riddled with pain and darkness. If or when Holly asked more questions, Lucy would have to lie about her mother and sister.

“They are your family too. I know it’s not the same but they will love you like a daughter; if you want.” Flynn said, he didn’t want to force Lucy into a relationship with his parents if she wasn’t ready.

“How much did you tell them about us and Holly?” Lucy asked.

“I told them how Lorena and Iris died. I kept information about Rittenhouse and what we did to the bare minimum. That we worked together, and with your help the bad guys paid for their crimes. I told them that our safe house was invaded; you were taken hostage and injured badly, Holly’s arm was broken.” He explained he saw Lucy’s expression of slight chock and concern. “My mother wants to meet you both soon and it was easier to tell them a story that was as close to the truth as possible.” He added, he reached out and languidly caressed her left arm; needing the connection of human touch.

“You told them a lot. Is Denise ok with this?” Lucy asked more worried about him getting into trouble with the law.

“I’m used to toeing the line. I didn’t reveal any information that is classified. But you can correct my parents on saying you’re a consultant. I did tell them that you are a historian. That you helped dig into the history of the organisation. I don’t know. I couldn’t lie to them.” Flynn told her, Lucy reached out and cupped his face her good hand.

“It’s ok, I get it. I told my mother everything, I didn’t even care about the NDA I signed. I was just so happy I could finally save Amy and I wanted to tell her. But, we know how that ended and it’s not worth getting into. Not when we can talk about our future and meeting your parents. Well, Holly and I meeting them. She is going to be over the moon.” Lucy said as she didn’t want to bring down the joy that Flynn felt. Frankly, she was looking forward to meeting them and seeing Holly with Flynn’s parents.
“I was thinking something very low key. The world out there, it’s incredibly frenetic. Holly needs to be eased into it. Going to Cheesecake Factory with her, I could see she was excited but at the same time; it was a lot to take in. She had moments when she was fractious. I think meeting my parents needs to be in a place where Holly isn’t thrown by all the chaos.” Flynn told her.

“I agree and even I’d like that. You know Holly will love meeting your parents. Today, I tried to get her to decide on where we should holiday and she kept picking Croatia. I told her we have to stay in the US. She did this cheeky imitation of innocence like she didn’t realise that Croatia was its own country, far away.” Lucy said, they both chuckled at they knew how Holly could be.

“She’s nearly four, give her a break.” Flynn teased.

“But she knows. She’s just persistent in what she wants. I don’t think knowing what she’ll want for Christmas or her birthday will be hard as she’ll just tell us, multiple times.” Lucy said in good humour.

“She gets her persistence from you.” Flynn informed her in a cheeky manner as his phone rang. He begrudgingly got out of bed and grabbed it. “Maybe a little from me too. My Mother.” He told her, Lucy smiled as he answered the phone. “Hello.” He said.

Lucy watched as Flynn scrubbed a hand down his face. She knew it was out of pure exhaustion not because he didn’t want to speak to his mother. She could hear Maria on the other line, the woman’s voice sounded so warm and soothing.

“I hope it’s not too late.” Maria said.

“It’s not that late. Is everything ok?” He asked her.

“Yes, your father and I were talking and we’re going to fly into San Francisco in two days’ time. Spend a couple of week.”

“You don’t have to.” Flynn assured Maria.

“Let me finish,” Maria said in a huffy manner, Lucy smiled in amusement as Flynn ducked his head like a scolded child. It wasn’t like Maria could see him, but she still had an effect on him.

“Sorry.” Flynn said.

“Thank you, now, we’re going to pop in and say ‘hi’ to some of your father’s friends. If you and the family want to join us one day, then you can. But we’d like to meet Lucy and Holly, have you all over for lunch. Something nice and simple.” Maria said, Lucy could tell that firm tone of a mother who was telling her child how it was going to be.

“Ok, Mama, give me one second.” Flynn said he covered his phone and looked to Lucy. “How would you feel about it?” he asked as he knew she was eavesdropping.

“Fine with me.” Lucy said, Flynn gave a nod as he returned to the call.

“Mama, we’d love to meet up.” Flynn said but even he knew there was no option to not show up.

“Good, we’ll meet three days from now. You know how your father is like, he’ll want to fuss and bother around in the markets. I’ll text you the details, say ‘hi’ to Lucy and Holly for me. Give them both hugs and kisses.” Maria told him, Flynn smiled as he knew his parents probably rented a huge house in San Francisco after he left.
“I will, love you, Mama.” Flynn said.

“We love you too, sweet dreams.” Maria told him, she hung up the phone after they said their goodbyes. Flynn gave a sigh and shook his head. A small smile on his lips.

“That sounds like you’re going to be called everyday for the rest of your life.” Lucy told him in a teasing manner though she was envious. She wondered how her mother would’ve been like. Probably just as impatient and pushy if not worse.

Lucy felt riddled with mixed feelings as she remembered her mother, the one who had not been Rittenhouse. Then the woman she revealed herself to be, the woman who was more than happy to torture Lucy as a means to convert her to Rittenhouse. Lucy couldn’t reconcile which woman she knew as Carol to be her mother.

“Possibly.” Flynn said in amusement, he brought Lucy out of her reverie as he turned off his phone and placed it on the bedside table. Lucy hoped he didn’t see her inner turmoil as she just felt like it was her issues to deal with. She didn’t want to dampen Flynn’s joy. She watched him, feeling so lucky to have him as he climbed over her and back into bed.

“Holly will be ecstatic but what was the part about your father?” Lucy asked as he settle into bed beside her.

“He’s a chef and loves to cook with the freshest ingredients he can get his hands on. Sometimes, he can be a little intense about it.” Flynn explained with a sigh.

“Just so you know, I’m never cooking for him.” Lucy told him.

“I know.” Flynn said with a laugh.

“Hey, be nice.” Lucy said as she knew he was laughing at her expense.

“You burnt water and then there was the time you cooked the pot to the stove.” Flynn reminded her.

“It’s easily done.” Lucy grumbled, Flynn chuckled and shook his head.

“Not really.” He argued before he gave a yawn. “Don’t worry, my parents already love you.” He assured her. Lucy wanted to ask him a million questions but decided he needed the rest.

“You don’t know that.” Lucy told him wryly.

“You kept me alive and brought me back from the brink many times. My parents love you because you saved me and gave me another chance at life and having family.” He told her.

“The other Lucy gave you Holly.” Lucy corrected him.

“You might not have given birth to Holly, but you did give me everything else. We are a family because of you.” He told her, Lucy couldn’t help but be touched by his words. She wanted to argue that he would want to be a family because of Holly. But didn’t as it was rare for her to take a compliment at face value.

“Thank you.” She told him before she covered her mouth to yawn.

“Shall we call it a night?” he asked her.

“Yes, Goodnight.” She said, much to Lucy’s surprise; Flynn shifted in close and he gently cupped the side of her face. He leaned in and kissed her ‘Goodnight’ in a soft and languid manner. Her heart
lifted and good it felt. She sank her hand into his hair, enjoying the pleasure as she returned the kiss.

After a few blissful seconds, it was over and Flynn pulled back. He pressed another quick kiss to her lips before he pulled back and rested on his own pillow.

“I hope that kiss wasn’t from your Mother.” Lucy joked, Flynn laughed.

“No, that was all me. You can get your hugs and kisses from my Mother tomorrow with Holly.” Flynn said, they shared sleepy smiles as it was good to be together at the end of a very long day. Lucy reached out and took his hand in hers. “Goodnight.” He murmured, he interlaced their fingers and closed his eyes. For the first time in years, he slept peacefully.
A three days later,

“Do I look pretty enough?” Holly asked Flynn as she wore a cream summer sleeveless romper with a lightweight yellow cardigan and sandals. Her dark brown hair was in milkmaid braid. Her third hairstyle for that morning, Flynn was surprised he still knew how to braid hair. The last time, it had been with Iris. The memories of those times brought a soft smile that was of joy with a dash of sadness.

He quietly acknowledged memories quietly and left the play and fade through his mind. But kept his focus in the present as best as he could as he wasn't going to let it swallow him up. He was just glad that his skills as a father were not as rusty as he thought when it came to wrangling a little girl. He had to admit he enjoyed bonding with Holly. She fussed and fiddled with many outfits and hairstyles as he'd seen Lucy do on missions. Not that he wasn't just as particular in that regard but at least he didn’t hide it like Lucy with her claims of being ‘low maintenance’.

“You look very pretty.” Flynn said to Holly as helped straighten her cardigan for her.

“But I gotta look really, really pretty for Nanna and Grandpa. Or should I call them Baka and Djed..or does Grandpa want to be Dida or Deda?” Holly asked him. Flynn grabbed her gently by the arms and looked her head on.

“I think Nanna and Grandpa will say you call them whatever you like. I also think you are ready to go.” Flynn told her in a reassuring manner.

“Ok.” Holly said, but he could see she was still anxious. He didn’t blame her as they all were anxious about today. He wanted it to go well, not just for him but for Holly and Lucy too. Maybe Lucy the most as he knew she had lost so much over the past few years. Unlike him and Rufus, her family was gone.

Sure, she had him and Holly, but Flynn knew it wasn’t the same. He was sure when Lucy pictured her life, she pictured Carol and Amy in it for a long time. But Amy’s erasure and Carol’s demise not to mention murky history as Rittenhouse had irrevocably changed Lucy's entire life. He could only imagine her anguish, but he understood her grief.

When Lorena and Iris died, Flynn felt his whole future die with them. All the lost time, the things he’d never get with them like growing old and cranky with Lorena. Watching Iris grow up, walking her down the aisle of her wedding. Grandchildren, holidays and so many things he thought were lost. Yes, they were lost for Lorena and Iris. But Flynn was gifted with a second chance of living a life he wanted, this time with Lucy and Holly. He recognised he was lucky.

“Do you think Mommy is ready?” Holly asked Flynn.

“Yes, she is.” Lucy said as she appeared at the doorway, she as beautiful in a sleeveless burgundy shirt maxi dress with cream polka dots. Her injured arm in a black sling. Her hair was curled in soft waves, her make up simple and natural; all thanks to Jiya’s assistance. Her healing black eye and other bruises and cuts were minimised by make up. He assured her that his parents knew about her injuries, she didn’t need to cover it up but she told him she felt better with her 'face' on. He let it go.

“You look pretty, Mommy.” Holly told her in awe.

“I agree.” Flynn said with a smile.
“Thank you. Shall we go?” Lucy asked them.

“Yes,” Flynn said as he rose to his feet and picked up Holly’s small backpack. He looked to Holly, his face lit up in an excited manner. “Race you to the elevator!” Flynn told her, Holly's face lit up at the competition.

“I’m gonna win!” Holly replied excitedly, he and Lucy smiled as Holly ran out of the room to beat them. Lucy went to follow Holly but Flynn caught her by her left hand. She stopped and turned to him.

“Before we catch up with her. There is one thing missing from your outfit.” Flynn said to her. Lucy frowned as she felt they were ready go. Holly looked adorable, Flynn looked ever handsome in his black button-down shirt and jeans.

“What’s that?” Lucy asked, Flynn reached into his jean pocket and pulled out two platinum wedding bands. “Wow, yes, I forgot about that.” She said, as she was not lying when she said she forgot about it. She swallowed her nervousness because as sad as it was; she never actually made it to ‘meeting the parents’ stage of the relationship. Now, she was meeting the parents and on top of that married. She was not ready to entirely unpack all of that just yet.

“You ok?” he asked her, Lucy nodded as she looked at the rings. It was then she noticed his usual white gold wedding ring was gone. Part of her panicked as her immediate thought it was lost and she couldn’t understand why he was so relaxed and happy.

“Where’s your ring? Did you lose it?” she asked him.

“No, I took it off voluntarily.” Flynn said as it would reassure her but now, she was wondering what it meant, where did he leave his other ring and had he been ready to take it off. Or did he only do it for her and this day?

“You took off your ring.” She repeated dumbly.

“I did three days ago.” Flynn said casually as if it was nothing. He smiled in amusement as he thought she had noticed and not asked.

“What?” She asked in disbelief, as she tried to figure out how she’d missed it. But then she didn’t really take note of it as it was always there. A reminder of why he was fighting Rittenhouse, of a family he loved and lost.

“It felt right to do so and I always planned to take it off. I’m just surprised you didn’t notice sooner.” He said in amusement.

“I was so used to you wearing your ring that I didn't notice. And I’ve been caught up in a drug haze, our family stuff and other things.” Lucy said as she looked down not because she was floundering for something to cover her inattentiveness.

“Other things being my crotch or is my fly open?” Flynn asked in amusement as he didn’t miss the fact that Lucy looked at his crotch. Ok, she did look there but the man looked good in his clothes. It annoyed her that he’d seen her naked multiple times and she had yet to see more than his navel. She looked back up his face and saw his knowing grin. She blushed, now was not the time to get into her wayward thoughts.

“No, and -“ she floundered as she had no witty comeback. "Just put the ring on my finger.” She told him a little flustered, as she held out her left hand. Flynn chuckled as he took her hand in his and slid her ring onto her finger. It was a perfect fit, then he slid his own ring on.
“How does it feel?” he asked as Lucy flexed her fingers. It felt strange as it was comfortable but a part of her was wistful that they weren’t even close to being married in their relationship. When they would be, well it wasn’t like they could have a wedding. Maybe there was a blessing in that as they would save money, and she wouldn’t be upset about her sister and her mother not being there. The mother Lucy fantasised Carol to be. Her grief was good at putting the rose coloured glasses on just as much it was in reminding her of the harsh truths.

“Different but good. You?” she asked him, she watched as he didn’t have to test it out. In fact, he seemed weirdly content and normal where she expected him to be a little upset or uncomfortable. It was a big deal.

“Perfect fit. You know, I think of this ring as a symbol that I belong to you and Holly and of our lives together.” He told her, Lucy blinked back unexpected tears as she felt incredibly touched by his words. So simple yet beautiful.

“I really like that. Have I told you that I love you?” Lucy asked with a soft smile as she closed the space between them.

“Yes, many times.” Flynn replied in amusement as he rested his hands on her hips.

“Well, its true. I love you.” She said as she fiddled with his shirt collar. She looked up and met his gaze, her heart skipped a beat and her body warmed. He might not have said he loved her except in front of their daughter but she felt in other ways. Like how he looked at her now and the touch of his hands as he cupped her face and kissed her tenderly. He pulled back and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead, before he embraced her. Lucy felt his warmth and strength ease the tension from her body.

“Why are you both so slow?” Holly asked them as she came back into her room with an impatient huff. The couple couldn’t help but smother a chuckle.

“Because we’re older, you forget something?” Lucy asked her as she stepped out of Flynn’s arms and watched Holly look through her pile of toys on the bed.

“I forgot Miles.” Holly said as she pulled out a stuffed Monkey and hugged it to her chest like armour. “We can go now.” She told them before she raced out of the room.

“You have your purse?” Flynn asked her.

“Yes, just outside the door. It’s so strange having a purse with my real identity and modern conveniences like a credit card, mints, pain killers and my very own mobile phone.” Lucy told him as they stepped out of the room but before she could reach for the purse; Flynn picked up and slung it over his shoulder. “I can carry my purse.” She told him.

“I know, just let me do it to car.” He said.

“Ok.” Lucy conceded.

Rufus sat at the table in a swanky restaurant in San Francisco. He dressed in grey suit with a white button-down shirt. He left off the tie but looking around at the other patrons, he wondered if he should run out and buy one. He didn’t want to be a fool, but he was sure he’d be one by the end of meal; if Jiya showed up.

He wondered not for the first time, if this was the right thing to do. But he realised in the last few
days that everything was a tangled mess. He just wanted to unravel it all and start fresh. Their work was going well, but his relationship with Jiya was uncomfortable and awkward.

He didn’t want to see his family until he had an apartment and knew what was going on with his relationship with Jiya. Once they were semi-settled, he could think about how to reach out to his family. He already had found a couple of small houses and even a cabin to look at. They were close-ish to the bunker which meant he could leave the bunker. It gave him an address that his mother and brother were able to visit him at.

Right now, was technically about to be on his ‘first’ real date with Jiya. He had made a point of them meeting at the restaurant to give them a clean break from their lives at the bunker. He felt pretty stupid about it until Jiya walked into the restaurant. She looked gorgeous with her hair loose, wearing a spaghetti strap dress with a floral print. He smiled as he rose from his chair.

“You look beautiful.” He said as he went around the table to help her into her seat. His mother always told him to be a gentleman. Hold out the chair, open the doors etc. They didn’t hug or even kiss which made it all very awkward first date. Something that should’ve upset Rufus but strangely relieved him.

“Thank you.” Jiya said as she sat down, Rufus returned to his seat. He looked around the restaurant and then back at Rufus. “So, this is fancy.” She said.

“Well, it’s a date. It should be special.” Rufus told her.

“They only serve 13 course Dégustation menu of tiny food.” She informed him dryly.

“It should be fun.” He lied, he was hoping she’d be wowed while he tried not to freak out that he was paying a lot of money for tiny food. It would be a memorable meal one they could repeat on their anniversary. Well, maybe not the same restaurant but at least somewhere special.

“Not that I’m complaining. It’s just not a place I’d imagine you’d like given you seem more like a burger and beer type of man.” Jiya told him.

“I am but I’m trying something new here. I was—” Rufus paused and looked to the waiter who arrived. They quickly gave their drink orders and were informed the first course would be out soon. “So, I was thinking we should clean slate us.” He told Jiya.

“We did that already.” Jiya reminded him.

“Not really, what I’m saying is we should treat this lunch as our first official date. Act like it’s a blind date and put aside everything we know about our alternate selves.” Rufus said.

“Like they are our exes?” Jiya offered in amusement as it was incredibly convoluted that she was happy to try it out. Anything had to be better than what they had been enduring.

“Yes, I know it’s a huge step back but realistically we have lived very different lives. I think it might be good to let go of that baggage and start new.” Rufus explained.

“You can let go?” Jiya asked him sceptically, he smiled as she was right, he had problems letting go of things.

“I can try, if you’re willing.” He said, Jiya nodded and looked away with a thoughtful expression for a moment. Then she turned back to him, she held her hand out across the table.

“Hi, I’m Jiya Marri.” She said introducing herself, she felt stupid playacting but one of them had to
start. She had to silently agree with what he said about them starting fresh as if they were two different people. Rufus smiled as he took her hand in his and shook it.

“Hi Jiya, I’m Rufus Carlin. Can you believe our friends set us up like this?” he asked her incredulously, Jiya snorted a laugh as she took her hand back. Apparently, Rufus was going fully into this fantasy or attempt at a fresh start.

“I’m sure they mean well. But are you sure you want to eat here?” Jiya asked him again.

“Definitely, I’m ready to commit to a 13 course meal with you.” Rufus told her.

“Pretty serious for a first date.” Jiya said as she pulled her napkin off the table and laid across her lap. The waiter returned with their drinks and first course arrived.

“I’m a serious kind of guy.” Rufus half joked before he thanked the servers. Jiya watched his reaction as he looked down at the plate. “Wow, that is really tiny. Why do they even bother to put knifes on table?” he asked as he leaned in close to see what he was eating.

“I told you.” Jiya quipped.

“It’s ok, if it’s terrible we can get dessert somewhere else as I saw that their dessert here is souffle. Souffle is one of the most overrated desserts on the planet.” Rufus told her as he picked up his napkin and laid in his lap and picked up the appropriate fork to eat his meal. If the one bite size amount of food could even be considered a meal.

“Right?! It’s just frothy half cooked eggs. It’s like Red Velvet cupcakes, huge let down.” Jiya deadpanned.

"Exactly." Rufus said before he chuckled awkwardly and picked up his knife and fork wondering how he would eat it like a posh person would.

Flynn pulled the car to a stop out the front of the two-story Victorian home his parents rented. He didn’t miss the fact it was probably huge enough to house them all and with a park conveniently across the road. His mother was not subtle at all. He pulled the parking brake on and looked to Lucy and Holly.

“Lovely home.” Lucy said in amusement as she was well aware of Flynn’s parents’ agenda. She actually thought it was nice but she knew it made Flynn nervous. She reached out and gave his arm a comforting squeeze. She looked over at Holly, “How you doing back there, Monkey?” Lucy asked her, Holly didn’t say anything as she looked nervously at the house and clutched her stuffed monkey tight to her chest.

“Holly,” she prompted, Lucy undid her seat belt and turned in her car seat and gave Holly her full attention. Holly looked stressed and tired from the long drive. “You know I’m incredibly nervous today too. But I know that they already love us, they just want to meet us and play for a bit.” Lucy told her, hoping Holly found comfort in knowing there was some structure for the day.

“I know it will be a fun lunch.” Flynn said with an easy smile as he joined the conversation.

“You do?” Holly asked him.

“Grandpa will have been cooking the most delicious food all morning and Nanna probably been
waiting at the front window for us to arrive. I’m starving. So, let’s go.” Flynn told them. He didn’t wait for an answer as he got out the car. He helped Lucy out first before he retrieved Holly from the backseat.

But when he tried to put her down on the ground but Holly stayed attached to him. He had to wonder why she was so nervous. He cuddled her close and rubbed her back in a soothing manner. Lucy gave him a sympathetic smile as they had to make some consideration as it was a big deal for all of them, Holly the most.

“I think Holly is a little nervous as it’s also the first time in a house that is above the ground. It’s very big.” Lucy said, she adjusted her purse on her good shoulder. Flynn understood the underlying context as Lucy was trying to impart on him that Holly was struggling with sensory overload. To some extent, so was Lucy. It reminded him that Holly had seen Karl and many of the others in the bunker; the place Holly felt safe. While this was all new territory and family for her. Family that she had idolized for a long time.

“And white.” Holly mumbled as she snuggled close to him for comfort.

“It’s ok, I understand. We’ll take it slow.” Flynn said as he rubbed her back in a soothing manner before he grabbed the backpack. But this moment reminded him of the importance of acclimating Holly into the outside world. He and Lucy walked up the steps, they were barely on the front porch when the door opened.

Maria stood before them in jeans and a burgundy and white stripe boat neck top with ¾ sleeves. Lucy looked at her and just thought ‘Jane Fonda’ as Maria was slim, fit and really didn’t look old enough to have a 43 yr old son.

“Hello everyone! Come in from the cold.” She said cheerfully as she waved them into the house.

“Mama,” Flynn said in greeting as they walked into the house. The front door opened up into a large living room with stairs to the left which Lucy assumed led up the bedroom. There was a door across the other side of the room which had to lead to the kitchen as Lucy was salivating at the delicious aromas that seemed to emanate from that direction.

“Hello Mrs Flynn. I’m Lucy.” Lucy said introducing herself before Flynn could. Her nerves getting the better of her. Maria smiled warmly.

“Call me Maria, Lucy, it is such a pleasure to meet you. I’m going to hug you very gently if that is ok?” Maria asked with a hopeful smile.

“Ah yes, sure.” Lucy said a little surprised as Maria gently wrapped her arms around Lucy in a gentle embrace. It pulled on her heart strings in unexpected manner as Maria was welcoming her into the fold. There was nothing but warmth and acceptance as Maria pulled away and gently cupped her face for a moment. She smiled softly then stepped back to introduce her husband.

“This is my husband and Garcia’s father; Asher.” Maria said, Lucy was nearly bowled over again but this time for very different reason. Asher Flynn came towards them in a casual manner. But it was hard not to be a little overwhelmed given he was taller than Flynn and equally striking with the same lean physique. His photos did not do him any justice as he was even more handsome in person.

He had the most brilliant grass green shade of eyes. His salt and pepper hair was longer than Flynn and brushed back. But one could see the apple didn’t fall very far from the tree with the Flynn men as Lucy could see exactly how Flynn would look in 30 years’ time. It looked good as Asher like Maria looked incredibly trim and in great health for his age.
“Pleasure to meet you,” He said, he held out his left hand. Lucy gave her own hand. It was an awkward handshake given it was not their dominant hands. But there was a smooth confidence and strength that Asher exuded that seemed to negate the weak handshake.

“You too.” Lucy said as he gently released her hand. He stepped back to Maria’s side and attempted to not look intimidating; something that was hard to do given he was a large man.

“And this is Holly.” Flynn introducing their unusually quiet daughter. But Lucy could understand, the couple in pictures had come to life before Holly. If anything, Lucy was sure that Holly hadn’t really banked on them seeing Maria and Asher. Her short life was so sheltered in the bunker, she didn’t know how to handle all the changes and wishes coming true.

“She’s a little overwhelmed at the moment.” Lucy explained, she should have sugar coated it but she felt it was more important for Holly to be able to identify what she was feeling. Maria and Asher seemed to understand as they didn’t even encroach on Flynn’s personal space to greet him like they had Lucy.

“She’s your Nanna and Grandpa.” Flynn told Holly. She tucked her toy close to her face as if hiding behind it. But her eyes peeked over the top of the toy’s head.

“Hi.” Holly said shyly as she didn’t know whether to believe it was happening or afraid she might blink and the dream would be over.

“Hi, we’re so happy to meet you and your mother.” Maria said warmly, she didn’t push Holly to come out of her shell as she stepped away in a casual manner and smiled. “Why don’t we all sit down?” she asked as she gestured to the living room.

“Lunch will be ready soon. So, can I get anyone something to drink?” Asher asked them as Maria and he gestured to the large plush couch and arm chairs.

“Water would be lovely.” Lucy said as she sat down on the couch. She placed her purse to the side just as Flynn placed Holly’s backpack next to it on the floor.

“Let me help.” Flynn said as somehow managed to get Holly to let him go. But Holly moved to Lucy’s knee for security as she looked at Maria and Asher in quiet wonder. Lucy didn’t blame her as Maria and Asher were a gorgeous looking couple.

“Holly, would you like something to drink?” Flynn prompted gently.

“We have tropical fruit juice, water and milk.” Maria told Holly.

“Juice please.” Holly replied softly.

“Ok.” Flynn said, but before he left with Asher; he went to Maria. She rose from the couch and the two embraced. It warmed Lucy’s heart to see it as she could see how happy his parents were to see him. There was no artifice, Maria gave her son a quick peck on the lips and let him go to return to the couch next to Lucy. Flynn and Asher gave each other a manly hug with back thumping included before they left for the kitchen. Once the door swung close, it was just Lucy, Holly and Maria. She could hear Asher and Flynn in the kitchen speaking jovially in Croatian.

“Hey Holly, why don’t you get the pictures you drew.” Lucy suggested to Holly, breaking the ice and involving Holly at the same time. Holly looked reticent but Lucy urged her with a gentle nudge.

“Can you hold Miles?” Holly asked Lucy.
“Sure.” Lucy replied, she took the stuffed monkey from Holly who went to her bag. A few seconds later she came back to Lucy’s left knee and looked at Maria.

“These are for you and Grandpa. I’m sorry they are not very good.” Holly told her as she held out the rolled up paper.

“What are you talking about? I think they are very pretty.” Lucy said as she didn’t want Holly to be down on herself. Lucy had spent a lot of her life apologising for never being ‘good enough’. She didn’t want that for Holly.

“I didn’t know Grandpa was bigger than Daddy.” Holly said with a sad pout. Maria smothered a smile as she took the rubber band off the paper and unrolled them. Lucy swallowed a chuckle as she knew Holly was being serious.

“It’s ok, Grandpa is only 3 inches taller than Daddy. You know how much that is?” Maria asked her, Holly shook her head. Maria held up her hand and spaced her thumb and index finger. “This much, which means in drawings it’s nothing.” Maria told her, it seemed buoy Holly as she hugged Lucy’s leg and rested her head on Lucy’s thigh. Maria looked down at the drawings with a beautifully soft smile.

“What? Holly asked her with a frown.

“Do you like it?” Holly asked her as Maria flipped through the pages.

“These are the most beautiful drawings I’ve ever been gifted.” Maria said sincerely, Holly smiled shyly. Lucy relaxed, she’d been worried that Holly would not come out of shell on this visit. But Maria seemed to know exactly what to say and how to say it. Lucy had to remind herself that Maria had years of experience. “You know, I have some questions though.” Maria said in a serious manner to Holly.

“What?” Holly asked her with a frown.

“Do you mind sitting next to me on the lounge? It would make it easier.” Maria said, Holly looked at her and the couch calculating whether she should do it or not. In a snap decision, Holly released Lucy’s leg and climbed up onto the couch between them. Maria held the drawings open. “Who are these two?” she asked pointing to the two blobs that Lucy now identified as dogs.

“That’s Bepo and Lucky. Uncle Karl is going to find Bepo cause he helps dogs find new homes and help people.” Holly told her.

“Karl?” Maria asked out of curiosity but there was a spark of recognition. The door to the kitchen opened and the men came back with drinks. “Asher, come look at the pictures Holly made us.” She said.

Asher moved to the arm of the couch and looked down at the pictures. He wore a smile of a man admiring beautiful artwork not the scribbles of a child. But Lucy reminded herself that Holly was their granddaughter so of course they’d love whatever she created.

Lucy knew it was horrible to do, but she wondered if her mother would’ve been the same. Painful as it was, Lucy felt the answer was ‘no’. Her mother was always exacting, always critiquing her and it would’ve probably extended to Holly too. But Amy? she probably would've framed the drawings. She swallowed the disappointment of never seeing Amy with Holly and never knowing if Carol would've been different with Holly. She stuffed her grief and the dark thoughts into a box and brought her attention back to the Flynns.

“This is great work, though who are all these people?” Asher asked Holly as they were onto the
second page of drawings which was of the 'bunker' family.

“That’s Auntie Jiya, Uncle Karl with his dog Bacon. That’s Uncle Connor, Uncle Rufus and Auntie Denise and Michelle. On the first page that’s you, Nanna, me, Mommy and Daddy. That’s our two dogs Bepo and Lucky. We don’t have them yet but we will. Uncle Karl will get us Bepo and when Daddy puts a Baby in Mommy’s tummy then we’ll get Lucky.” Holly explained, all the adults stopped a moment to digest the information handed to them. Lucy and Flynn shared a ‘oh shit, how do field this one’ while Maria and Asher looked shocked, then mildly amused.

“Are you looking forward to a sibling?” Maria asked Holly.

“Yep, I want to have a baby brother and sister. Mommy and Daddy said they want to have a big family but we had to wait until we were above ground.” Holly said with a smile. Lucy and Flynn looked a little flummoxed but Flynn managed to recover to try and dig them out of the hole Holly had just created.

“I don’t remember that conversation.” Flynn said as he most definitely didn’t read it in his alternate self’s journal. He had a feeling he and Lucy were entering the next phase of Holly’s desires. Though secretly, he always wanted a family with three kids.

It just never came to be as Lorena had complications with her pregnancy and Iris had been a preemie baby. It had been a tough and traumatic experience for them both. But for Lorena especially, and he could still remember her crying over Iris’ baby clothes during the 5th week of Iris’ stay in the NICU. How she said she couldn’t go through it all again, he took it to mean no more children. He was ok in giving her that as they had Iris, he felt blessed having Lorena and Iris alive that he didn’t want to push his luck. He never felt unfulfilled by giving up the dream of more children but right now, Holly was opening a door that he wasn’t entirely sure where he and Lucy stood on.

He looked to Lucy and wondered what she thought. She didn’t look shell shocked or openly adverse to the idea now she was past Holly throwing her through a loop. But it was hard to tell given their current situation was open to honesty.

“I guess we’ll see.” Holly drawled, everyone chuckled as Holly made sound like a foregone conclusion.

“You know, Uncle Karl looks very familiar to me. Is he; Karl Strobeck?” Maria asked Flynn.

“Yes.” Flynn said surprised his mother knew Karl.

“You know Uncle Karl?” Holly asked Maria in a mix of surprise and hope.

“Yes, we met him a few years ago, your father brought him home for Christmas as he was such a polite boy.” Maria said with a smile. Lucy nearly choked on her water hearing that as she couldn’t imagine Karl being polite as being snide was second nature to the man.

“Can Uncle Karl come for Christmas this year?” Holly asked.

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s too soon to be planning Christmas.” Maria said with a smile. “But he’s always welcome in our home as he saved Garcia’s life.” She added as explanation, a buzzer chimed from behind the closed door of the kitchen.

“That’s lunch. Let’s go everyone.” Asher told them.

“Holly, you hold onto your pictures. I’ll grab our drinks.” Maria said, Lucy picked up her glass of water and followed Maria with Holly as they walked through the swing door to the kitchen slash
dining area. To the left was the kitchen and directly ahead of them was a dining table that could fit 6 people. It was all set with plates and cutlery. It wasn’t anything fancy, just functional and straightforward which was a relief to Lucy. “Sit where you like.” Maria told them as she placed her drink down.

Holly tugged on Lucy’s shirt directing them to the two place settings on the far side of the table. Lucy placed her water at one of the setting as Holly climbed into the chair next to it, which was to the right hand of the head of the table.

She rose onto her knees and watches as Asher and Flynn as they moved around the kitchen. Lucy wondered if Holly wanted to follow them. She was a little duckling when it came to Flynn. He seemed very much a duckling to Asher. Lucy could tell that Flynn learned to cook from Asher just by following the older man’s ways.

“It’s beautiful to watch.” Maria said as she placed Holly’s juice at her place setting. “Asher has been cooking all morning, he’s made some of Garcia’s favourites; Mushroom Risotto, Soparnik and Sarmas. But if it’s not to your liking or Holly’s, we can make sandwiches.” Maria assured her.

“Given how good it smells in here? I think we’re going to enjoy it. Right, Holly?” Lucy asked Holly, her daughter nodded.

"Holly, may I have the drawings please?" Maria asked her.

"Here." Holly said.

"Thank you." Maria said she took the drawings and went to the fridge. She tacked them up with magnets, Holly looked so proud as having her artwork on the fridge was a big deal. Asher came over to the dining table with a large bread board. Holly and Lucy watched as he placed it on the table.

“Soparnik, one of your father’s favourite snacks.” Asher told Holly as she leaned on the table to take a closer look at the large flat savoury pie. It smelt delicious as the aroma of garlic, parsley and fresh pastry filled the air as he sliced it into rough diamond shapes. “He’d eat it every day if I cooked it for him.” Asher said with a grin.

“Smells yummy.” Holly said, she sat back in her chair as Flynn placed bowls of risotto in front of Maria, Lucy and Holly. Flynn placed Sarmas onto the table as Asher placed down drinks for himself and Flynn down. Maria adjusted her chair closer to the table.

“I agree, it all looks delicious.” Lucy said as Asher sat down next to his wife, leaving Flynn to sit at the head of the table.

“Good, let’s eat.” Asher told them, they shared the food in the middle.

“Here we go, it’s ok to use your fingers.” Flynn said to Holly as he had placed a slice of the Soparnik and a Sarma on his side plate. He cut them into smaller pieces before he gestured to Holly to try it. She looked at the food carefully before she picked up a small bite size of the Soparnik.

Lucy awkwardly picked up her spoon with her left hand. She was grateful for risotto as the rice dish held together. She ate her first spoonful and was in heaven as the risotto was deliciously creamy and the flavours so perfectly balanced. The ultimate comfort food, she realised that this meal was all made with love and family in mind.

“This is really delicious.” Lucy said earnestly after she swallowed the bite. She looked to Holly nodded in agreement as she shoved what had been Flynn’s half of the Sarma in her mouth.
“Holly, please remember to chew.” Flynn advised Holly, she chewed slowly as she headed her father's advice while the others at the table laughed in mild concern and amusement.
“So, we amazingly have a lot in common.” Jiya remarked in amusement before she took a sip of her wine. They were around course four or five, she had lost count. Not that she cared about the food when she was enjoying the company more.

“Yeah, though I still don’t get how you like both Star Wars and Star Trek. It’s fence sitting.” Rufus told her mockingly.

“No, it’s not. I like both for very different reasons. Have you seen Orville?” Jiya asked him, changing the direction of the conversation as she was not going to fall into an argument over entertainment. Not when they were back at the stage of beginning to negotiate their relationship. The fight for control over Netflix would come soon enough.

“No, never heard of it.” Rufus said.

“Well you’re going to watch it.” She told him.

“I am?” Rufus asked sceptically.

“Yes, if you want a second date.” Jiya said with a saccharine smile.

“It’s on my list.” Rufus promised her.

“How is your tiny steak?” Jiya asked, Rufus looked down at the half eaten steak on his plate. He could’ve easily ate it in one bite but decided for amusement sake to use his knife and fork.

“Delicious.” He lied. For the amount of money that he’d paid for this meal, he was surprised by how underwhelmed he was by it. But there was value in just being here, as he and Jiya were outside of the bunker and talking about something other than their work.

“You’re still committed as there’s another 7 courses left?” Jiya asked in amusement.

“Yes, though I might need a burger after this.” He told her, Jiya chuckled. He smiled broadly before he finished his tiny steak.

“So, Lucy, Garcia told us that you’re a Historian?” Maria asked casually as Lucy returned the table. She had excused herself three quarters of the way through lunch to take her pain pills in the bathroom. She wasn’t trying to hide it, but she didn’t want to bring more attention to her injuries than she needed to.

“I am, I was also a Professor at Stanford before everything happened.” Lucy said, she didn't know why she said it, but she did. She ate some of her lunch to stop herself from saying more. She was the only one at the table who was still on her first serving. Everyone else were on their second servings or more in Asher’s case.

“That’s very impressive.” Asher remarked, Lucy gave a self-deprecating shrug.

“It was mostly nepotism as my Mother built the department and was the world renowned Historian in the family. It was her legacy and they gave to me after she retired.” Lucy confessed, it was a
reminder of the path Carol had carved for her not just in the world but preparing her for Rittenhouse. It also smarted that she hadn't received tenure because she wouldn't conform to their demands that she be a clone of her mother.

“That’s not true. Lucy is being modest but she is incredibly intelligent and well published author and Historian in her own right. Stanford was lucky to have her.” Flynn told his parents, he looked at Lucy hoping she understood that her mother might have moulded her life but Lucy’s tenacity and brilliance came from within. It was something that Carol could never control.

“Do you think you’ll go back?” Maria asked her before she finished the last of her second serving. Lucy shook her head.

“No, to be honest I always wanted to teach at smaller colleges where I’d get more flexibility with my time and what I want to teach. Stanford is a great college, but it’s a fast-paced lifestyle and very result driven atmosphere. And I’ve lived most of my life in California that I’d like to branch out a bit but we’ll see.” Lucy said with a shrug as she had no major plans for her career yet. If anything, she was just trying to keep up with Holly, Flynn and dealing with her grief and the trauma of Rittenhouse and Wyatt.

“You know, there are some lovely university campuses in Croatia. University of Zagreb has a lovely international studies department.” Maria offered in a light and encouraging manner, before she picked up another slice of soparnik. Apparently, she was not finished with lunch.

“Mama.” Flynn sighed as he knew Maria’s game. She had spent a good part of lunch informing them how ‘lovely’ and ‘worthwhile’ Croatia was not just for living but also using as a base to travel to the rest of Europe from.

“What? I’m just saying.” Maria said innocently behind her hand as her mouth was full. Lucy smiled as Flynn looked exhausted by Maria’s agenda. Asher; while he didn’t say a lot, he supported Maria but he was mostly observing the dynamic or so Lucy like to assume.

“We’re going to travel heaps.” Holly announced before she gently pushed her empty bowl from her. Her tiny stomach was poking out from all the food she had consumed that Lucy was sure in 10 minutes Holly would either explode or fall asleep. Lucy prayed for the latter.

“We’ll see.” Flynn said not wanting Holly to make any promises they couldn’t keep.

“Well, you’re all welcome to join us in Yosemite next week. Right, Asher?” Maria asker her husband.

“Yes, of course.” Asher said with a closed lip smile before he picked up the last Sarma and ate it. Lucy smothered a smile as she ate the last of her lunch.

“Can we go too?” Holly asked Lucy and Flynn with a hopeful expression.

“Yes.” Lucy replied, she was sure Flynn had a few words to say about it. But Lucy’s need for Holly to bond with Asher and Maria won out. She wanted Holly to soak up all the time she had with her grandparents as it was important. She looked to Flynn, he wore a soft smile; his eyes unreadable as it was a mix of relief and being trapped.

“Well, it’s settled. The only question is do we all drive together or separately?” Maria asked.

“Separately.” Flynn said quickly, he cleared his throat as he realised it might have been taken the wrong way. “Lucy has a doctor’s appointment and we need to sort out a few things on our end. It’s just easier if we meet you there.” He added quickly so his parents weren’t offended.
“Ok, I’ll text you the address.” Maria told Flynn, she smiled brilliantly and gently pushed at Asher’s arm to get his attention. “Oh, this is so exciting! We can go hiking, have a bonfire and eat s’mores, look at the stars and all kinds of fun adventures.” She said excitedly, Holly lit up with the same excitement.

“We can have sleepovers?” Holly asked.

“We sure can. You know, you could all sleep over tonight. This house has plenty of rooms, we have spare toothbrushes. Holly, I got you the cutest toothbrush it lights up and everything.” Maria told them in a sing-song voice. Flynn fought to not roll his eyes as he’d been waiting for this invitation since stepping inside the house. Holly's face lit up in excitement.


“Ah,” Lucy drawled uncomfortably as she and Flynn looked at three very hopeful expressions. Then they shared a look that was the equivalent of one being backed into a corner. She didn’t want to say ‘yes’ if Flynn was uncomfortable.

“Ok, one night.” Flynn said saving Lucy but they both felt the gravity of the decision as it was one thing to pretend they were their alternate-selves for a meal. It was another to keep the façade up long term without any real prep. Sure, they were friends on the verge of something more but there was still so much about each other that they didn’t know. Things that would show they weren’t a married couple. It only pushed home that they had to pull their game up. At least for the next few weeks around Flynn’s parents.

“Yay!” Holly cheered. Maria and Asher smiled incredibly pleased with the turn of events.

“I think we should celebrate with some dessert.” Maria announced happily as she won this round.

“Why don’t we save dessert for after dinner…given we’re staying overnight.” Flynn suggested, Maria pouted.

“Ok, we’ll digest lunch and those who need a nap can take one. Then we’ll have some fruit for afternoon tea.” Maria said already planning out their stay. She looked to Holly. “You want to come upstairs with me and find a comfy bed to sleep in?” she asked her.

“Ok, but I don’t need a nap.” Holly informed her, she slid out of her chair and grabbed Miles from her seat before she went around to Maria. She took Maria’s hand and the older woman led her upstairs.

“I think I might follow them.” Lucy said, she knew she could use a lay down. She was exhausted from sitting up for so long, her body was aching. She knew the pain meds would kick in, but the idea of laying down sounded like a good one.

“You want some help?” Flynn asked her, he was about to get up but she waved him down.

“No, I’m ok.” She assured him, she rose from her chair and walked past his. He lifted his hand up and she tangled it with her own. She leaned down and said “Can you wake me at 3?” she asked.

“Sure.” He replied, they shared a quick kiss and Lucy squeezed his hand before she released it. She looked to Asher, “Thank you for lunch, it was delicious.” She said.

“You’re welcome, rest well.” He replied.
“So, what do you think?” Rufus asked Jiya as they were both looking at the dessert. The last course of their long meal. It had been a pretty great ‘first’ date and surprisingly Rufus learnt more about Jiya than he thought he would.

Maybe it was the relax nature of not letting the ghosts of their former selves creep in or something else. But he felt more secure and safe in Jiya’s presence during the meal than he had the last few weeks. It felt like she finally saw him, he truly saw her instead of comparing her to ‘his’ Jiya.

“It’s souffle.” Jiya remarked as she looked down at her souffle with lack of enthusiasm.

“Want to skip it and find an ice cream parlour?” He asked her, he pulled out his phone for the first time and googled for a place. “There’s two hipster ice cream parlours about two blocks from here.” He offered, before he slid his phone back into his jacket pocket.

“Let’s go.” Jiya said with a smile.

“Thank you.” Asher said to Flynn as Flynn cleared away lunch. Asher was already checking on Dinner as it was in the slow cooker percolating away. Flynn felt like he’d fallen into a trap, he had only meant for him, Holly and Lucy to stay for lunch. He knew the less time they spent together the less likely his folks would see the differences in him and ‘their’ son.

But he and Lucy were sucker in, Flynn knew why he was sucker in. He could never say ‘no’ to his parents but Lucy? He knew it had to do with Carol or Amy. He hadn’t asked Lucy outright as he felt it was a sore topic. One best to be left undisturbed while under his parent’s ‘rented’ roof.

“So, what do think?” Flynn asked him casually.

“It needs more time at a slightly higher temp.” Asher said as he placed the lid back onto the slow cooker and fiddled with the appliance.


“You never asked for my approval before.” He stated.

“I know,” Flynn lied. “But, I’m asking now.” He said, Asher gave a shrug as he didn’t give it any real consideration at all. But that was Asher, he took things at face value with people.

“I like them, Lucy seems like a good woman. Maybe too smart for you.” Asher said teasingly, “Holly is a rascal, you’ll need to get on top of her imagination though. Otherwise she’ll be disappointed when she doesn’t have the two dogs and siblings.” He added in amusement.

“Tell me about it.” Flynn said with a chuckle. They didn’t have a house but Holly had their family all planned out.

“But you know, I would not be averse to having more grandchildren.” Asher deadpanned as he cleaned the bench tops, which was redundant given they were already clean. But some habits were hard to break.

“Mama tell you to push that agenda?” Flynn asked, he knew he would never hear the end of it. He was never forgiving whoever told Holly that he was the responsible for the lack of siblings. Like he
was failing his duties by not ‘putting’ a baby in Lucy. He scrubbed a hand down his face as he never remembered Iris being so pushy.

“I couldn’t resist. You should have seen yours and Lucy’s face when Holly talked about having more children.” Asher said with a grin before his expression grew serious. “Have you called Gabriel?” he asked him, changing the topic.

“Not yet.” Flynn said, which was a truth and another phone call he wasn’t ready for yet. What did one say to a brother they had no memory of except when you saved them in 1969? a question Flynn hadn’t found an answer for. Asher gave a tired sigh as it was not the answer he wanted to hear.

“I know you two had your problems growing up and as adults. That you got along at family events as best you could for your mother. But I think it’s time you two mend fences, you only get one life and one brother.” Asher told him.

“It’s not easy.” Flynn said tentatively.

“I know, but you need to take the first step. Forgive him, your mother asked him to opt out of military service when it came up. Just as she asked you wait until the war the war was over. Gabriel didn’t serve because it’s not who he is, he’s not a fighter and that is ok. You, you have my strong sense of patriotism and need to stand and defend what is right. Maybe, I filled your head with too much nonsense at the time but I never thought it would drive such a wedge between you two.” Asher told him.

“Tata, it’s not your fault. I wanted to serve my country, all my friends were signing up and it sounded like an adventure. It sounds stupid now given the reality of what it was.” Flynn admitted, but he remembered how he felt about the war of independence. It had felt so incredibly important at the time. He felt that call to serve, to be a part of something momentous.

“I know, it’s why they get you while you’re young and still have fire in your belly and stupid enough to think you’re invincible.” Asher said with a chuckle, then the gravity of the situation sank back in. “Just try to reconnect with Gabriel for your Mama and I.” Asher said softly.

“I’ll try.” Flynn promised.

“Belgian Waffle and Ice cream.” Rufus said looking surprised as Jiya ordered herself a Belgian waffle with a scoop of strawberry and a scoop of bubble gum ice cream, sprinkles and cream and fresh berries. He was actually surprised she had the space for it after the food as he was joking about the burger. He figured a scoop of ice cream would be enough. But not for Jiya, and he was more than happy for their date continue. He needed the time to decide if he should kiss her at the end of the date or hold off.

“Don’t judge me.” Jiya told him. Rufus held his hands up in surrender.

“I’m making sure it’s what you want as I don’t want you judging me when I’ll have Belgian waffle too but with mint choc chip ice cream and dark chocolate ice cream. Hot chocolate fudge sauce. Just no cream or the cherry or any fruit.” Rufus said as he handed his menu to the waiter.

“Not a problem, anything to drink?” the waiter asked.

“Coffee, thanks.” Rufus replied, Jiya ordered a vanilla milkshake. The waiter repeated their order back to them. Once they confirmed it was correct; the waiter disappeared.
“I like this place.” Jiya said with a happy sigh as they landed in a hipster diner. It was rocking a 1950s vibe with the booths and décor even the staff dressed to the era. The menu however was all ice cream and desserts more relevant to 2018. It was definitely more relaxed than the last place.

“Me too, though the milkshake will be the deciding factor.” He told her.

“How?” she asked.

“If it looks like it’s from the 1950s, then awesome. If it looks like diabetes in a mason jar...then I might lose some respect for them.” Rufus joked.

“That’s insane.” Jiya told him.

“Have you had a 1950s milkshake?” he asked her in a low voice.

“Yes, I have. One time.” Jiya admitted as they both knew they were talking about past missions. Rufus was surprised at her answer and knew he’d ask another time. But right now, he had a point to make.

“And it was...” he drawled waiting for her review.

“Pretty amazing.” Jiya conceded.

“Exactly, you want your milkshake to compliment your meal. Not make you so sick you can’t eat your meal.” Rufus told her.

“Good point.” Jiya said as she relaxed into her side of the booth. The waiter returned and poured Rufus his cup of coffee before they returned with Jiya’s Milkshake. She smiled as she thanked the waiter.

There before her on the table was an old school milkshake of milk, ice cream and flavouring churned into a delightful drink.

“Well, would you look at that. An OG Milkshake.” She said happily before she took a sip. Rufus smiled as he stirred sugar and creamer into his coffee.

Lucy rinsed the conditioner from her hair and sighed happily as the hot water was bliss. She heard the door of shower open behind her. She turned, a smile played across her lips as Flynn stood there drinking in the sight of her in all her naked glory like she was a goddess. She loved how his eyes darkened with desire and the expression yearning he wore. She loved him. She reached a small, inviting hand in his direction and he stepped in with her.

“Hi.” she said against his lips as he pulled her flush against him. She missed this, him holding her. The feel of his hot skin against hers. It felt like months even though it was more like hours. She was never going to get enough of him.

“Miss me?” he murmured. She smiled as he knew the answer to that question.

“Always.” She replied, he covered her mouth with his. His hands were all over her as they ran up and down her smooth, soft back, over her backside, caressing her breasts. They dug into her wet hair, down her neck and over her shoulders, down her arms to entwine his fingers with hers.

She felt him tremble as he wanted her badly and she felt the same. She gently freed her hands from
his and ran them over his chest, around to his back. She got her fill of his hard muscles on his backside, and finally over his flat belly and down to his thick, hard erection.

“Lucy.” He breathed before capturing her lips anew. She sank into the deep and all-consuming kiss with him. His fingers glided over her bare skin, his touch sensual, growing increasingly intimate as he stroked between her legs, he found her slick and more than ready for him. It didn’t take much either for either of them to get turned on as the mutual need they shared had become the best part of her life.

He lifted her up. Her arms went around his neck, she tenaciously wrapped her legs around his waist. Staring into her eyes, he thrust slowly, firmly into her, hard and hot and thick, filling her completely. He turned with her in his arms and braced a shoulder against the shower wall. Then he began to move her upon him, lifting her up and down. Her sighs became quickened breaths as she rode a tide of hot pleasure. Each stroke, each exquisite slide into her body, brushed against her clit.

Her legs tightened around him as she felt her orgasm building, she knew it wouldn’t take much longer. She moaned in ecstasy as she clung onto his broad shoulders and neck. It was all overwhelming, she didn’t want it to end as she caught Flynn’s mouth with hers, their tongues hot and desperate as they devoured each other. Every deep stroke brought her closer to the edge of release.

“Lucy” Flynn said softly, Lucy opened her eyes and blinked a couple of times. She felt a little disorientated and breathless. She blushed as blew out a breath and realised it was a dream.

Then it hit her, she had a sex of Flynn. Sure, it was not her first one as she’d had a few in the past involving Flynn. But it was her first sex dream where she’d been woken up by him leaning over. She felt his hand on her left shoulder, mental images of what that hand had been doing in her dream flashed through her mind.

“Hey.” She said, she was keenly aware that she was still aroused and covered in a light sheen of sweat on her skin. She needed a cold shower or an orgasm to take off the edge of the dream. Both scenarios were near impossible to do alone; all because of her dominant hand was a mess. She couldn't exactly ask Flynn for a 'hand' but then an errant thought made her question 'why' she couldn't.

“How are you feeling?” he asked her as he perched himself on the side of the bed. Lucy licked her lips unsure of how to answer that question. She knew she was not going to tell him the truth.

"Pretty good, why?” She asked.

"You look a little flushed and are out of breath." He said, he gently touched his knuckles to her forehead and under her chin to feel her temperature. Lucy closed her eyes trying to calm her raging hormones. She always thought being injured and on pain killers would dull her sex drive. But she was learning otherwise.

"I'm fine." She assured him as she pushed herself to sit up. Her head swooned slightly as she moved too quickly.

"You sure? because when I walked in. You looked like maybe you were having a nightmare. I heard my name." He said carefully.

"It was a normal dream, did Holly have her nap?” Lucy asked him, she held onto right arm. Flynn stood up; helping her out of bed. She didn't miss how his eyes roamed her face looking answers. She didn't want him stressing over her thinking he was in her nightmares. "I dreamt we were running the Golden Gate Park. You said we should race and you ran ahead like a cheat." She told him.
"How terrible of me." He mused, she narrowed her eyes at him wondering if he knew it was a sex dream. But she didn’t have the guts to ask or admit that her first dream in weeks had been about having sex with him.

"I would've caught you and I love running, I've actually missed it." She said which was true.

"Maybe when you're better, you can take it up again. As for Holly, yes, she had a nap. She’s awake and wanting to go to the park. I said I’d come get you so you don’t miss this ‘first’. The park is an amazing place for a kid, the way her face will light up. It will be beautiful and fun afternoon." he said as he helped her into her dress. She watched as he slowly and meticulously did the buttons of her dress up.

"Are you ok with us staying?" she asked him in a low voice. Changing the conversation in the hopes of cooling her libido. It was not easy when he was standing so close and looking incredibly handsome. She took a deep inhale enjoying the scent of him, it took a lot to not throw herself at him. But what held her back was that Holly wanted to go to park. Lucy was not going let her down especially given sex could always wait. Holly's first time in a park could not.

"Yes, I think if my mother had her way. We'd move to Croatia and live on the same street as them." he mused.

"You know, I'm envious of you." She told him.

"Why?" he asked a little confused.

"My side of the family was broken and in many ways erased to the point it's unrecognisable. Yet your family, they are alive and vital. They love you so openly and warmly, they accept you as you are. Your parents can open Holly’s world in a way my side of the family can’t. When I imagined having a family, I saw my sister and mother I grew with; in it. Stupid, I know as my mother was dying of cancer in 2016. She only had three months left when all of this started, but I figured Amy would at least be here. She’s not, she’s missing out on it all because we- I couldn’t save her.” Lucy said in a soft, pained voice, tears burned her eyes as her grief threatened to overwhelm her as she couldn't control her own history or time.

Flynn gazed into her eyes before he cradled her head in his hands. He gently pressed his forehead to hers. Lucy closed her eyes and soaked in the comfort of his gesture.

“I’m so sorry, I wish I could give you your sister back.” He said with empathy, they both knew that they couldn’t save their lost loved ones.

“I know, it is, what it is.” Lucy said with a shrug that belied what she felt but they both knew the truth. She was grief, Flynn knew as much but he just didn’t know what to do to help her. He wasn’t exactly the poster child for healthy grieving. He smoothed his hands up her back and pulled her into his arms.

“If this is too hard for you, or too much too soon, we can go home.” He told as he looked down at her. Lucy shook her head as she sank her left hand into his hair and massaged his neck with her fingers. For some reason it soothed her to see him relax, to touch him and be held by him. The tears that threatened to fall, receded and disappeared.

“No, I want to us stay. I want us to take our little girl to the park. I want to give her everything she’s missed out in the early years of her life. I want her to know her Grandparents and extended family. I don’t want to hold her back from anything.” Lucy told him truthfully. Flynn accepted her decision.
“Ok then, let’s go.” Flynn said.
"Don’t tell me you’re giving up.” Jiya teased before she ate some of her waffle and washed it down with some of her milkshake. She had a couple bites left of hers while Rufus was halfway through his own dessert.

“It’s a lot. I’m impressed with you powerhousing through yours.” Rufus said in awe as he was a pretty big eater, but Jiya was putting him to shame.

“It’s been forever since I’ve had stuff like this. Denise and Connor refused to get me everything I want to eat. Gotta be healthy or as Connor says ‘gotta keep this a size 6’. I didn’t have the heart to tell him my ass is bigger than an 6 no matter what I eat or do.” Jiya remarked in amusement.

“I think you look amazing.” Rufus said honestly, he didn’t care what number was written on the tag of her dress as she was gorgeous.

“So, what are your plans for the rest of the day?” She asked, though it was already afternoon for them.

“I’m talking to a real estate agent at 4:30pm.” Rufus said, he knew by the clock on the wall he had another hour.

“Ah, so there is an end.” Jiya said as she knew it was nearing the end. She was a little disappointed it would end especially so soon, as she wanted to see how far and long the date would carry on.

“Yeah, sorry.” Rufus said.

“Don’t be, it’s just the first date. What properties are you looking at?” She asked changing topics, she didn’t want him to apologising for having a life and goals.

“A couple of houses and a cabin in the woods. They are all within driving distance of our work.” Rufus told her, Jiya paused mid sip of her milkshake and swallowed.

“You’re moving out.” She stated, she couldn’t help but be deflated by what was a normal stage of their lives. But she knew he was moving without her. She couldn’t exactly let go of the baggage that she’d spent two and half years with the man, now they were starting ‘fresh’ which meant a lot of relationship stages had been thrown out the window. Realistically, she understood he wasn’t ‘her’ Rufus but emotionally was another thing. It hurt.

“Yeah, I mean we have to eventually get back out there.” Rufus said awkwardly.

“True.” Jiya said trying to be cool about it. But she hadn't given it any thought as she just figured she’d stay in the bunker and finish their task of deconstructing the Mothership. She felt like a dunce for not thinking further ahead.

“I figure sooner than later, it’s just to rent until the project is done and then I’ll find another place after that. The couch is comfortable but I’d like my own space.” Rufus said.

“So, we’re doing a proper clean slate.” Jiya stated, just because she needed clarity. She figured that their clean slate would have some leeway.

“Yeah, I want to live on my own. See my family and kind of find my way.” Rufus told her.
“Cool. Yeah, I totally get it.” Jiya lied, she plastered on a smile though she was upset but she had to be supportive. “I think it’s great.” She added.

Lucy watched from a distance as Flynn and Asher terrorized Holly on the playground at the park. Her little girl laughed and squealed in delight as the men chased her around the play set. They helped her climb the equipment and pushed her on the swings.

Flynn even went down the slide with Holly which was behind hilarious as Lucy’s fear was that he’d get stuck. Instead he slid out and got stuck at the end as his legs stopped him from falling out. He had to do some feat of gymnastics to get himself out, at least he tried to until Asher picked up his feet and unceremoniously dragged him out. Flynn, Asher and Holly were all laughing and enjoying themselves. It was heartwarming to witness so much joy.

“I’m not sure who is having more fun.” Maria said as she sat next to Lucy on a picnic blanket.

“Asher for sure.” Lucy deadpanned as he and Holly had ganged up on Flynn. The three laughing.

“You and Garcia have done well with Holly.” Maria told her.

“Thank you, but she’s a pretty easy going child.” Lucy said truthfully.

“Garcia told me that you lost your mother and sister to the same people who took away Lorena and Iris.” Maria said, Lucy looked at her with a pained expression.

“Yea- Yes.” Lucy said roughly as her grief got the better of her for a moment. Maria gave her an empathetic smile.

"I'm sorry for your loss.” Maria said sincerely.

"Thank you." Lucy said as it was all she could say.

“My mother passed from Ovarian cancer three months after Gabe was born. My first husband and I raced to have Gabe so my mother could hold her grandbaby before she passed. When she died, I was beside myself and for most of Gabe’s first year I held onto him tight. I wouldn’t let my mother in law help me because I felt it wasn’t fair that mother died before she could enjoy being a Grandparent. My mother was dead, so why should my mother in law get special privilege just because she was alive. Grief made me a terribly selfish person at times, I won’t lie.” Maria said, she winced as she looked off into the distance, but Lucy could see the tears welling in the older woman’s eyes. Proof even after so many years, she still grieved for her mother. It somehow made Lucy feel ok that she was still not over her own grief.

“I’m telling you this not because I think you’re doing the same. I don’t, you're doing much better than I would have. I just want you to know; I get it, I understand that there will be times when you’ll wish your mother and family were here. That Asher and I do appreciate you letting us be in your lives. We’re here for you as much as we are for Holly and Garcia.” Maria told her with a soft smile as she grasped Lucy’s left hand and gave it a comforting squeeze. Lucy blinked back tears as she felt touched by Maria’s words.

"There was never a question of ‘if’ this would happen but ‘when’. I’m so glad we’re here. We couldn’t before, because of the dangerous situation we were in but we’re free now.” Lucy told her.

“It must feel good to feel safe again.” Maria surmised.
“It does, I never realised how much I took for granted until it was all nearly taken away from me.” Lucy admitted, they exchanged a smile until they heard a tumble and Holly cry. Lucy and Maria looked over to see Flynn crouch down, he helped Holly up and dusted her off. They couldn’t hear what was said but within a few seconds the two waved at them for a second before they went back to playing. Asher headed over to them, the older man looking a little puffed out from all the running around.

“Is everything ok?” Lucy asked him.

“Holly’s fine. She just tripped and shocked herself. I’m going to head home to get started on Dinner.” He told them.

“Where’s my kiss?” Maria asked as Asher looked ready to walk off. He gave an exaggerated sigh before he knelt down. The two share a couple brief kisses before he rose to his feet and walk back to the house. Lucy smiled as it was heart-warming to see a couple still in love after so many years together. “Flynn men age superbly.” Maria informed her.

“I’m a little jealous.” Lucy admitted.

“Me too.” Maria commiserated.

“You look fabulous.” Lucy told her.

“Expensive creams, exercise and a little bit of plastic surgery. I don’t want to sell you too much false hope.” Maria said with a smile.

“Really? I can’t tell.” Lucy said as she had figured Maria’s good looks came down to genetics.

“Good, I know it’s terrible but I got into engineering when I was in my late twenties. Gosh, I was so vain as back then and men would comment all the time about my appearance. How I should slow down to look after myself and my family. Or I should be at home being a ‘Mother’ to my children. How could I keep my husband when I’m looking so ‘haggard’. People are horribly rude at times.” Maria rolled her eyes, Lucy could empathise as she’d suffer through same sexism in her job at Stanford. Maria continued talking.

“So, when I started getting the ‘grandmother’ comments I thought ‘what the hell?’ I should get back some of that time I lost because my parents wouldn’t pay for college. It was worth it as I got an extra 10 years of full time work. I’m semi-retired now, but I choose my own projects and do guest lectures. I think it was money well spent.” Maria said with a shrug as she was actually incredibly pragmatic about it.

“Garcia told me that you worked full time while taking night time classes.” Lucy said conversationally, she remembered reading it on the internet. Google and Wikipedia to the rescue or in Lucy’s case to help her stalk her in-laws.

“Yes, it was not easy and I nearly threw in the towel so many times. My instructor was impossibly hard on me, my boss was not supportive. My parent? They wanted me to remarry and focus on being a mother and wife. It was a whole other time and expectations for a woman. Now you have to have it all, while back then it was about getting married, having children and looking after your family. To have a career as a woman was still rather a joke then.” Maria said with a roll of her eyes.

“But you stuck with it.” Lucy pointed out.

“I did, I’m glad that I did as Fate has a way of guiding to exactly where we need to be. To help us become the people we’re meant to be.” Maria said with a closed lip smile.
Lucy never expected Maria to prescribe to the notion of ‘fate’. It reminded her of how Flynn had told her that she wasn’t meant to be a teacher, how he’d shown up and changed the course of her life. She had to agree that fate did have a weird sense of humour. But it had placed her and Flynn together, they’d become a strong unit together. He’d made her stronger, he’d lifted her up just as others and the world dropped her. He was always there for her.

She wondered exactly what happened between Flynn and Maria. How much of her life had been affected by their encounter. But before she could ask, Holly and Flynn raced over to them.

“Mommy!” Holly shouted happily, she and Flynn stopped at the edge of the blanket.

“Hey, you ok?” Lucy asked as Holly was close enough. She could see that Holly had some tiny scuff marks on her knees from falling over but she wasn’t bleeding.

“Yes, I fell over but I’m ok.” Holly informed her happily. Lucy was amazed at her resilience and glad Flynn had handled it as Lucy was pretty sure coddling Holly was not the right move.

“I’m beat.” Flynn announced as he sat down. Holly moved to him and plonked herself in his lap. Flynn chuckled as Holly headbutted him in the chin by accident.

“What do you think of the park?” Maria asked Holly.

“I love it! I like the swings the best. Daddy got stuck in the slide.” Holly told them before cackling evilly at her father’s embarrassment.

Jiya looked around the empty bunker, she knew Flynn and Lucy weren’t coming home. Rufus wasn’t coming back. It was already 9pm, he texted to say he was staying in the city. Their date had ended awkwardly, she tried to kiss him but he ended it before it could deepen into a passionate kiss. It left her feeling like she’d done something wrong. She guess that she messed it up because here she was, alone in the bunker. She ungracefully fallen into a spiral of too much booze and depression of how she was the only one in the bunker with no plans or life. She had lost her life and all her friends when fighting Rittenhouse had consumed her. She could try to reconnect with them but what she supposed to tell them about the last few years? Nothing, because it was classified.

Her mother was more than happy with the silence between them. It was easier because her mother felt Jiya had abandoned her when she stayed in the US. Having Rufus as a boyfriend? Well, her mother was not open minded and very traditional. She wanted her daughter to move to Lebanon and marry a nice white Lebanese boy.

She downed a shot of whiskey and chased it with some beer before she blew out a breath. She leaned on the kitchen counter with her beer in her hands. She idly tried to decide if she was hungry for dinner or not. Frankly, she liked loose and relaxed feelings the booze was giving her. It made her feel pleasantly numb, every shot of whiskey and swig of beer helped silence the nagging voice in her head.

But she wanted to be buzzed, so she placed the whiskey back on the shelf. As she did, she heard movement, she frowned and pulled a knife out of the knife block. Her body tense and on alert, her heart pounding as she couldn’t think of who it could be. She turned to the source and frowned as a Pomeranian dog on a leash strutted in with Karl and Bacon attached to the other end.

“Are you fucking kidding me?!” She asked him incredulously. She hoped she didn't slur badly, she didn't need him mocking her. Karl frowned as he looked at her, she didn't want to identify his expression in case it made her mad. Bacon who was in Karl's arms barked happily and squirmed in
his arm. The Pomeranian looked around nervously and moved closer to Karl's leg for comfort.

“Geez, I thought the war was over.” Karl said dryly, Jiya placed the knife back into the knife block and relaxed but only a little. She couldn’t help it as she didn’t like unannounced visitors especially while she was having a pity party. Especially when the party crashers were Karl, Bacon and a nervous Pomeranian.

“What are you doing here?” She asked him before she picked up her beer and drank some. Karl placed Bacon on the floor, the puppy scurried happily to Jiya. She begrudgingly knelt down and petted the exuberant puppy. An unwanted smile tugging on her lips as Bacon was just too cute to stay in a bad mood.

“I was bored.” Karl said as he moved to fridge and got himself a beer. He placed it on the bench.

“What’s with the new dog? You becoming a dog man in your old age?” Jiya asked mockingly as she rubbed Bacon's belly. The puppy was enjoying the attention. *At least someone was easy to please,* Jiya thought begrudgingly.

“I’m 36, there’s nothing old about that. Sweet pea here is a temporary boarder.” Karl told her as he got the Pomeranian known as Sweet Pea and Bacon a couple bowls of water and unhooked the dogs leashes. He petted both of the dogs and told them to play nice before straightened up. He picked up his beer and twisted off the top.

“Sweet Pea.” Jiya said with a frown as the names were becoming more ludicrous with each dog. Karl gave a shrug as he didn't seem to care. “Well, you have wasted your time driving out as no one is here. Flynn, Holly and Lucy are off with his parents. Rufus is in the city.” Jiya told him.

“You’re here.” Karl pointed out.

“You know what I meant.” Jiya said.

“So, Rufus doing hookers and cocaine?” Karl asked mockingly before he took a pull of his beer.

“No.” Jiya said in annoyance, she didn’t think Rufus was like then but then what did she know.

“Connor and Denise?” he asked as he looked like he was expecting someone else to appear.

“Denise is probably at home. Connor is mostly likely snorting cocaine off of hookers.” Jiya drawled mockingly, Karl nodded as he walked to the couch. “Seriously, what are you doing here?” she asked as he sat down with a sigh, making himself even more at home. She could kick him out, but she hated being in the bunker alone and he was here. If anything, he’d stop her original plan to get shit faced. If she was honest, she didn’t know him and frankly didn’t entirely trust him yet because of how deeply entrenched he’d been with Rittenhouse.

“Cause you’re right. I’m lonely and I have no friends except you guys.” Karl replied half mockingly. Jiya held her beer and sat on the other end of the couch.

“So, you drove from wherever rock you live under to hang out with Flynn and got stuck with me?” She teased, Karl smiled and chuckled.

"It's a penthouse apartment in the CBD. You're the one who is living underground." Karl reminded her.

"True.” Jiya said as she took a sip of her beer.
"And I was just looking friends, didn't really mind who was in. You look like you could use a friend too." Karl said casually, but his words hit way too close to home.

"I'm not good company." Jiya told him as she took another sip of her beer. She relaxed into the cushions but kept her knees up. Karl kicked off his shoes and turned on the couch so they facing one another. He stretched out his long legs and crossed his ankles. He seemed less threatening.

"I can see that, you want me to make you something to eat. Talk about it?" he asked her, she blinked as she was half expecting a snarky comment or one liner to come out of his mouth but no, he was sincere.

"I'm not hungry, I had a big lunch." Jiya said.

"Ok, if you change your mind just say so. I make a mean grilled cheese." He told her.

"Rufus and I are dating." Jiya blurted, she couldn't help it as there something about the way he said it. It could be misconstrued as a flirtation.

"I know, I wasn't hitting on you." Karl informed her, not offended or put off by her words.

"Of course, sorry. I've been underground too long." Jiya joked poorly.

"If it helps, I’m not in any better shape. I just spent over four years undercover getting into Rittenhouse and maintaining that lifestyle. My friends were my enemies, all alone. It wasn’t a barrel of laughs. The pay was good compensation but it doesn't really solve all my problems. But whatever, I'd still do it all over again.” Karl said with a shrug, but there was something about him that screamed he was exhausted and empty. Jiya could empathise with that as she felt it now the fight was over.

"Why did you do it? besides the obscene amount of money." Jiya asked.

"I'd have done it for free. I owed Flynn. I always help my friends and I always honour my debts." Karl said, Sweet Pea trotted over to the couch. The dog looked up at them. Bacon was still sniffing out the room. Sweet Pea was on a mission as he looked like he was waiting to be picked up.

"Is Sweet Pea a debt?" Jiya asked teasingly, she didn't know what to say as she clearly didn't know the man before her. She realised she was going to have to let go of her misconceptions of him.

“No, he’s just a temporary boarder, his owner is in the hospital getting a hip replacement.” Karl said, Sweet Pea yapped and jumped up, his front paws catching on the couch.

“He, not a her?” Jiya asked as Karl reached down and scooped up the dog.

“His owner is a kind old lady who lives in my building. She slipped in the foyer and broke her hip. She was beside herself about the dog than she was about her hip. So I said I’d look after the pup for her.” Karl said, Sweet Pea curled up in his lap and watched Jiya.

“He’s full grown.” Jiya told him.

“But he’s tiny enough to be a puppy. The fluffy little shit.” Karl said with a smile as he lovingly stroked his fingers through the dog’s fur. Sweet Pea licked Karl's hand in appreciation of his rub down.

“Are you really going to find Bepo and Lucky?” Jiya asked him, she could see Karl had a natural affinity for dogs. Just another thing to add to the things Jiya never thought Karl would be. She figured he'd treat child and animal with cool indifference. While he definitely had some
awkwardness in relating Holly, he tried. But he had no problem with dogs.

“I have found Bepo.” Karl told her smugly.

“What?!” Jiya asked incredulously. Karl nodded as he pulled out his phone and tossed across the couch. Jiya fumbled in catching it, but it landed on the cushion so no harm was done.

“Just yesterday, 5 brown fuzzballs of a french bulldog mix or so the experts argued at my farm. They don’t know what the other breed is. They will run tests for it? I don’t know but it’s Bepo and his siblings.” He said. It didn’t take Jiya long to find the pictures and a video. Her heart melted as it was of a tiny puppy who looked nearly newborn. The video showed every tiny squirming ball of fluff and the sound of their tiny noises.

"How could you know that?” Jiya asked him.

“Chocolate brown, French bulldog. He and four of his siblings were born maybe two weeks ago, they were abandoned in a box by the gate. I’d say he’s not purebred, so whoever owns the bitch didn’t want to mess with all the paperwork.” Karl explained with a shrug like it was no skin off his nose. But Jiya frowned as she felt for the puppies.

“That’s terrible.” Jiya told him, she snooped through his gallery to find pictures of Bepo and a couple other dogs, Holly and Flynn at the Cheesecake factory. They were really great photos too as they were candid shots. It seemed like Karl really didn’t have much of a personal life or friends. Contacts list only backed up the truth that Karl like her; was alone with no friends at the moment.

“It’s the world we live in.” Karl said with a shrug. “You could adopt one of the puppies, yourself.” he drawled like a true salesman trying to offload a car. Jiya snorted a laugh and shook her head.

“Oh no, look where I live.” She said as she gestured to her surroundings.

“Holly survived down here alright.” Karl stated.

“Kids and puppies are not even in the same category.” Jiya argued, she wondered where Bacon was. Last thing she needed was the puppy peeing on the Lifeboat. She looked around but it only took a second to find him underneath the coffee table snoozing.

“I’d argue they are about the same except one dies when they turn 18 and the other leaves for college or whatever.” He said, he laughed as pulled his legs away before Jiya could kick him. Jiya shook her head at him before she looked at the photos again. Karl brought his legs back to the couch. “Anyway, you won’t be down here forever.” He added casually.

“I don’t know, I don’t even know what I’m doing after this or where I’ll go.” She said with a sigh, the dark thoughts of before creeping in. It felt good to admit it out loud, she didn’t feel like she was burdening Karl with her problems. Maybe it was that he was just as lost as her but not displaced like Rufus, Flynn and Lucy.

“Won’t you move in with Rufus?” Karl asked, Jiya shook her head.

“It’s complicated, we’ve clean slated back to our first date. Letting go of the baggage and treating our other-selves like exes. By starting over, I can’t move in with him. I also don’t want to be dependent on him, if it doesn’t work out.” She explained, the harsh reality of her situation. It reminded her of how if her Rufus had returned, they would probably be engaged and there would be no question marks. She’d move in with him. At least, she assumed as much, even if their relationship wasn’t perfect, they had loved one another.
“That’s…I don’t know what that is.” Karl admitted looking confused.

“Welcome to my world. Part of me is happy about it, cause how many times do ever get a second chance. But another part of me is just so tired. I’ve been trapped down here for three years. I have all these goals for myself and it seems like they are entirely out of my reach.” Jiya said with a sigh.

“Why can’t you do what you want?” Karl asked even more confused.

“Because I have Rufus, I can’t just up and leave to explore the world or work overseas.” Jiya told him, Karl made a face at her like she had lost a hundred IQ points for her last statement.

“Yes, you can. You just quit here, pack your bags and go. You and Rufus aren’t in a proper relationship and you’re young. You don’t need to stay here for his stupid ass. No one is worth sacrificing your happiness or goals for.” He told her.

“It’s not like that.” Jiya said, though it was a little bit like that.

“You had one date with the guy and now ready to chuck it all in. You look miserable about it but also news flash, there are plenty of other dicks out there. If he can’t go with you or wait a few weeks for you to do your thing, then find another dick.” Karl stated, Jiya was glad she was nursing her beer as she would have choked on his last statement.

“Like you can talk, Mr Lonely and has dogs.” She argued, she didn’t like him being so blunt with her.

“I know, same boat but I live out there and right now, I just prefer the company of people who know the truth about my past. I can talk to you all about Rittenhouse, I don’t need to be guarded. For me, if I meet someone; I have to lie about 4 years of my life.” He frowned. “Though I’d have to lie about more than that because my life has not been pretty and most of it is classified. But the point is that my life is riddled with lies and secrets. It’s hardly great foundation for a friendship or relationship.” He pointed out to her before he took a swig of his beer.

“I didn’t think of that.” Jiya said as she felt sorry for him.

“We all got problems. But we got off track, you need to decide what you want from your life. You’re hot, if Rufus knows what’s good for him. He’ll go with you. Unless you wanted to run around and see the world by yourself. Then he’d probably wait.” He said with a shrug.

“Probably, but unlike you and Rufus, I’m not rich, so my options are a little more limited. I need the money, so, quitting and leaving is not an option for me.” Jiya said as she gestured to the landing bay.

“You can move in with me.” Karl offered, Jiya looked at him. He made a face. “I own a few rental properties, you can rent an apartment from me via my agent. Stop assuming I’m flirting with you; it’s embarrassing.” He quipped before he took a pull of his beer. Sweet Pea nudged Karl’s idle hand with his nose. Karl started stroking the dog’s back again.

“I’ll try to contain myself.” Jiya deadpanned. Karl grinned before he became serious.

“But seriously, I’d give you mates rates and you’re welcome to foster dogs. If you want I can help you plan your travels. I’ve travelled quite a bit in my time and I have friends all over Europe that you couch surf. The offer is there.” Karl said with a smile.

“I will think about.” Jiya said, she wasn’t lying as she had to admit his offer sounded pretty good. It would ease some of the pressure from her shoulders. The idea of a proper holiday and getting travel on her own to re-centre herself and find perspective on her life didn’t sound too bad.
"Want a Grilled Cheese?" he offered.

"Sure." She said.
“Knock, knock.” Maria said as she appeared at the open bedroom door. Flynn had gone downstairs to get her pain medication and a snack as she’d forgotten to take it at dinner.

“Hi,” Lucy said, she had been about to get up with Maria waved her down.

“I didn’t want to interrupt anything but I wanted give you this.” Maria said as placed a packet of makeup wipes and a small travel tub of Drunk Elephant moisturiser on the bed for Lucy. “I know how it feels to travel without all my lotions and potions.” She offered with a shrug.

“Thank you, I appreciate it.” Lucy said, she felt apprehensive taking her makeup off in front of Maria. It meant the façade covering her injuries would be removed. She wasn't ready for that tonight, in the morning she had no excuse. But for now, she wanted the illusion for just a little longer.

“Mama.” Flynn said in greeting as he came into the room with what smelt like some chocolate raisin toast and a glass of water. he placed the toast on the bed in front of Lucy and the water on the beside table.

“I was just dropping off some toiletries. There are tooth brushes and tooth paste in the bathroom, a long with towels.” Maria told them.

“Ok, thank you.” Lucy said to her, Maria smiled and nodded.

“You’re welcome, sleep well.” Maria said, the last part to both of them.

“See you the morning.” Flynn replied, Maria gave a nod and left the room. Flynn closed the door and pulled out Lucy’s prescription bottle from his pocket. He took two tablets out and placed them on the plate.

“Thank you.” Lucy said, she picked up one of the two slices of chocolate swirl raisin toast and took a bite. She chewed it enough to down her tablets with some water. Flynn picked up the other slice and perched himself on the end of the bed. “Did your Dad make this too?” Lucy asked as she picked up the toast from the plate again.

“No, it’s store bought.” Flynn said.

“It’s good.” Lucy remarked as she continued to eat.

“I’ll put it on the shopping list.” He said with a smile before he ate a bite of his toast.

“So, today went well.” Lucy said changing the topic. In her opinion, she felt they had a great day, Lucy couldn’t remember the last time she’d been above ground and enjoyed herself. Normally, they were above ground for missions and while there was some enjoyment; the stress of Rittenhouse and danger loomed.

Lucy loved Flynn’s parents as Flynn had not lied. They had opened their hearts and arms; welcoming Holly and her into the fold. She hadn’t expected it to be so easy. Yes, there were moments that Lucy felt her grief but it was outweighed by the joy of seeing Holly with Maria and Asher. But Holly was completely in love with her grandparents. That was the most important part that Lucy held onto. She reminded herself that Amy wouldn’t want her to dwell on what couldn’t be. Amy had always wanted Lucy to be happy, to carve the path she wanted for herself.
Lucy held onto those wishes, even when it pained her at times. She couldn’t save Amy, but she could honour her last wishes. Today had been a great day filled with laughter, love and delicious food. Lucy had felt at home with the Flynns. It felt good to get out of the bunker, to see Holly play in the sunshine.

Holly enjoyed herself thoroughly. So much so, they barely finished dessert before Holly nearly fell asleep into her chocolate mousse. Flynn helped Holly say a quick goodnight before he took her upstairs and put her into one of the bedrooms with her stuffed monkey. The adults had stayed up for another hour before calling it quits. It had been a long and emotional day for everyone.

“I think so, too.” Flynn said in agreement.

“It bodes well for going to Yosemite.” Lucy added, she had to admit she was looking forward to it. Not just the extra time with Flynn's parents and Holly. But to be above ground, it felt easier to breathe away from the bunker.

“We will need to discuss some things about that when we get to the bunker.” Flynn said before he took the last bite from his toast.

“Such as?” Lucy asked a little worried.

“The little details about us. Really getting to know one another’s lives and interests outside everything we’ve been through.” He said with a thoughtful expression.

“I think you know me pretty well by now.” Lucy said, a subtle jibe to the fact he’d had her Journal.

“Not enough to pass as your partner of nearly four years. We both know that you’re not the same woman who wrote the Journal. You might never become her either.” Flynn informed her Lucy gave a nod as she couldn’t argue with him on that point. She didn’t want to as she never felt like the person who wrote the Journal was her, or that she’d ever become that woman.

“Well, I only know what was in your personnel file before the shift in our history. But you're right, we don't really know each other very well. I know you like to read and what you've told me in the past but that's it.” She said wryly before she ate some more of her toast. She had to admit, he was right. She knew he liked to read but she didn't know what he liked to read or if he had hobbies outside of what was available to do in the bunker.

“My life here is mostly the same history, except my relationship with my brother. He exists and our relationship is estranged.” He said looking a little confused.

“Amy and I were hardly copacetic when we were growing up. Well, we had a good relationship but it had its ups and downs. Before all this started, we were having a fight about how I didn’t get tenure at Stanford. She wanted me to follow my dreams instead of fighting for my mother’s.” Lucy
admitted, her mind drifting back to the memories of that night.

“Amy is right. Your mother’s legacy isn’t her history department or her wants for you. You’re her legacy, living your life on your terms and doing what makes you happiest is the most basic wish of any parent.” Flynn told her softly.

“I’m sorry, we were talking about you and your brother. I made it about me.” Lucy said, she didn’t want to delve into her own life when Flynn was struggling with his present and very alive family.

“It’s ok, I don’t mind.” He assured her, she loved him for not minding. But she didn’t want to swallow up their lives with her tragedies. Not when Flynn needed her, she could actually help him.

“Are you going to talk to Gabriel?” Lucy asked him, she brought the conversation back to him and the situation with his brother.

“I have to, I told my father I would. I just don’t know where to begin.” Flynn confessed.

“Start with ‘hi’ followed by ‘I’m sorry’ at some point.” Lucy offered, she took a sip of water and placed the glass back on the side table.

“Cheeky.” Flynn remarked and he was not wrong as Lucy smiled.

“It’ll be ok, no matter what.” Lucy assured him.

“Yeah, we’ll have to see.” Flynn said not feeling as positive as Lucy was. “But today was a great day and you had your first sleep without a nightmare. Maybe tonight you’ll be just as lucky.” Flynn added, directing to conversation back her.

“You could give me something to dream about.” Lucy said teasingly.

“Other than running.” Flynn mused.

“You were shirtless and wearing these tight shorts.” Lucy lied, Flynn laughed. It was one of favourite sounds and she loved how relaxed he looked when he did so.

“When I run, I wear loose layers of clothing.” He informed her. Lucy gave a shrug not disappointed as she highly doubted that he would.

“Dreams aren’t supposed to be accurate. I’m sure I was missing a lot of fine details due to a lack of knowledge.” She said in an amused manner, a blush crept up her cheeks.

“Such as?” Flynn asked casually, but his eyes glittered in salacious amusement. He moved the plate out of the way as he shifted closer to her.

“I’ve never seen you naked.” She told him, Flynn’s smile broadened.

“I see.” He mused as he relaxed onto the bed and propped his head up on one elbow.

“I see.” He mused as he relaxed onto the bed and propped his head up on one elbow.

“Never, not once. We’re married for four years. I would fail the most basic of married couple questions.” Lucy said.

“Which is?” Flynn asked out of curiosity.

“Do I know any identifiable moles and/or birth marks. Tattoos.” She drawled.

“Are you expecting to identify my body at some point?” he asked sarcastically.
“We don’t know and if you lost your head for some inexplicable reason. I wouldn’t be able to say it’s you because you haven’t let me see you naked.” Lucy said, she gestured a hand at his body. Flynn couldn’t help but laugh as Lucy looked so serious. “This is very serious, we’re married and I don’t know anything about this. You have seen completely naked in the shower nearly all the time.” She deadpanned as Flynn kept laughing.

She kept a straight face on as she waited for Flynn to regain his composure. But her blush was betraying her. She wished there was some normality to their courtship where she was 100% healthy and able to just strip and jump him. But everything was jumbled and she was down one arm.

“Mmm, well I’ve been wearing clothes to respect your boundaries and propriety.” Flynn said before chuckling again as he couldn’t quite get over Lucy making an issue of his nudity or lack there of.

“Because of the third rule?” Lucy asked him.

“No, I just don’t know how you felt about nudity in general and you shower with Holly. When Lorena and I were raising Iris, Lorena preferred I stay fully clothed when it came to bathing Iris.” Flynn explained, they both sobered at the mention of his past family.

“I guess there is a lot more that we need to discuss. Not just us but Holly too.” Lucy said thoughtfully as she never even considered Holly being part of the conversation. Or talking about nudity in a non-sexual manner.

“Lorena was traditional in a lot of ways. I just assumed that you might feel the same way because of your own upbringing. It seemed very traditional and structured.” Flynn offered.

“I never thought about it.” She said plainly which was true. “I’m happy with whatever makes you comfortable when it comes to Holly.” Lucy said, Flynn gave a nod but she knew he wouldn’t change whatever Lorena had instilled in him and their marriage. She knew better than to fight this one. There were more important battles to pick.

“Ok.” Flynn said.

“But talk to me about this stuff. I don’t know what I’m doing with Holly or the questions I should be asking. It helps me, if you talk about it.” Lucy reminded him.

“I will.” Flynn assured her.

“Good, as for nudity around me? I’m all for it.” Lucy told him a little too eagerly, Flynn snorted a laugh and smiled.

“Ok.” He replied with a nod.

“Well, now that is settled, I’m going to take off my make up, then brush my teeth and go to bed.” Lucy said, as she felt happy with some of their conversation but was also too exhausted to delve into a deeper conversation.

“Ok, I’m going to have a shower. If you want, you can join me and just in case you’re wondering, I shower fully naked.” He told her in a low voice. He gave her a quick kiss and got off the bed, he threw her a sly smile as he rose from the bed.

“Hey, can you put up my hair for me please?” she asked him.

“Sure.” Flynn said, he pulled a plain brown hair tie from the pocket of his jeans. Lucy smiled as she knew he had thought ahead. She rose from the bed and watched his face as he pulled her hair up into
a messy top bun.

“Thank you.” She said when he finished. Flynn gave a nod and left the room. Lucy looked to the mirror, her makeup had stayed on pretty well for the day. She popped lid and awkwardly pulled out a couple of tissue wipes. She closed the lid. She picked up one of the tissues and rubbed off what felt like the first layer of make up and dirt from the day.

As she did, her bruises, scrapes and cuts show up. She felt her spirits drag down as saw the state of her face. She swallowed the lump in her throat and blinked back her tears. She was tired of feeling damaged and traumatised, she was tired of thinking about what Wyatt, Rittenhouse and her mother did. She picked up the second wipe and scrubbed at her face and wiped off the last of her eye makeup. Her mind made up, she picked up the used tissues. She tucked them into her sling. She went across the hallway to the bathroom. She knocked on the door, she was not walking in blind.

“Yes?” Flynn called out.

“It’s just me.” Lucy said as she opened the door and slipped inside. It was a medium sized bathroom with a lion claw tub that had a shower curtain and shower head to the right. To the left was the vanity with a sink and mirror; next to it was the toilet. She made certain the door was locked as she didn’t want them to be interrupted.

She took a fortifying breath and turned to find Flynn completely naked. His body was turned away as his hand was inside the shower fiddling with the taps to get the right temperature. Lucy drank in the sight of him, as her imagination had definitely been lacking a lot of details.

She mentally took stock of it all. How he was lean with sinewy muscles that were honed for practical purposes than vanity. There were a few scars that carried the stories of his life as a soldier. She recognised the scar he’d gotten from when Emma show him. It was still relatively fresh in comparison to his other scars. No tattoos, no birthmarks on him not even on his nicely toned backside.

“I got the toothbrushes out. Whatever one you don’t use, I’ll take.” Flynn said casually, he gestured to the sink but didn’t pay her any attention as he was focussed on the water temp of the shower. Lucy wanted scream ‘turn around’ but held her tongue as she was not a horny teenager. She definitely horny as moisture pooled between her legs and she felt herself turned on just perving on him.

“I’m here to join you for a shower.” She said deciding to be bold. She might be a little broken but she was not going to deny herself. She undid the buttons on her dress, she hoped her left hand didn’t show how much she was shaking. It was one thing to jump in bed with someone when you were full bodied. It was another when injured. “I’m still going to need some assistance.” She told him, she took off her sling and disposed of the used make up wipes.

Flynn turned around and her mouth went dry, he didn’t have a six pack but his chest was beautifully defined with dusting dark brown hair. *Fuck, me...* Lucy thought as she followed the happy trail of chest right down to his cock. She couldn’t not look, she gently bit her bottom lip in appreciation. He was decently proportional everywhere. His cock was beautiful and even at half mast, it was impressive. She wanted taste it, she wanted to feel it in her mouth and in her body. Her earlier sex dream was developing more intricately delicious layers.

“Enjoying the view?” he asked in amusement.

“You should be naked more often.” Lucy said a little dazed as she had been lost in her own little world of sexual fantasies. Flynn smiled as he slowly helped her out of her dress. He was never in a
rush and with his help she was down to her bra and knickers. But unlike her past showers with him, there was a crackle of anticipation and temptation. She looked at him waiting for him to make a move. She could see he was getting more and more turned on. She could feel the heat pouring off him as he looked at her with eyes darkened with desire.

Lucy could no longer resist as she pressed up onto her toes and used her left hand to pull him down. She kissed him in a deep and devouring kiss. She felt Flynn’s sharp intake and slid her tongue inside his mouth, kicking it up a notch. She moaned as Flynn’s tongue tangled with her own. She could feel herself become lost in the sensations of their kiss. Of being skin to skin with him, she smoothed her hand over his body.

“Stop.” He said as he pulled back from the kiss, Lucy tried initiate the kiss; lost in the haze of her desire and the pleasure. But Flynn gently held her back. He pressed his forehead to hers.

“Your third date rule?” She asked him, she felt his erection pressed between them. She knew he was into it but couldn’t help but wonder what held him back.

“Yes and you also have broken ribs-“ Flynn started but Lucy cut him off with a kiss. It seemed to work as she felt him sink into her kiss. She pulled back from the kiss, just enough to speak but still close that she could easily kiss him into submission.

“I’m really ok and I really want you. Don’t you want this?” She asked as she reached between them and grasped his erection, she gave it a leisurely pump. She enjoyed the groan it elicited from Flynn. “It feels like you do.” She whispered salaciously as she pressed soft kiss to his lips before pulling her face back to see his expression.

“I’m do, but I don’t want hurt you and would prefer we wait.” Flynn said trying vainly to maintain control but losing.

“I’m too impatient to wait, I want to make you feel good. Let me make you feel good.” She said, she continued to pleasure him. She watched as his eyes closed in pleasure and a shudder of pleasure rocked through his body. He was deliciously responsive and he wasn’t saying ‘no’. She took her chance to be bold, she stroked him again and carefully sank to her knees. Somehow, she managed to do it without falling into him.

She would’ve liked to take the time to tease and admire the view but she doesn’t want to waste time. Instead she grasped his erection firmer in her hand as she took the entire tip into her mouth. She began to suck him strongly. She looked up and felt her pride swell as Flynn’s eyes flew open in surprise. He cursed in Croatian and looked like he was going to argue that she shouldn’t be doing anything. But as she took him into her mouth slowly inch by inch, his face went lax from the pleasure as he gave himself over to her.

It was what she loved about giving head, the power and control of pleasure. To see a man undone on her terms and she just loved the giddy feeling. The way Flynn looked now was incredibly hot. The taste and feel of him on her tongue made her hotter and wetter. It made her miss her right hand as she liked to get off while giving head. But right now, it was all for Flynn, she wanted him to see her as a sexual being and more importantly make him feel good. As he always put everyone's needs and pleasure before his own.

Flynn’s hands tangled in her hair, she inwardly smiled as she could feel his fingers shaking against her scalp as he was losing control and struggling to be gentle. To not thrust into her mouth as she knew he wanted to instinctively do. Instinct was a hard thing to control and hold back. His breath came faster as Lucy quickened the tempo, moving her mouth up and down, tightening the suction with each upstroke.
Flynn cursed softly and Lucy couldn’t help but softly laugh. It vibrated against Flynn's cock. Lucy relaxed her jaw and deep throated Flynn. She loved the feel of him in her mouth deeper as she continued to suck him. She moaned as she could taste the salty taste of semen on the back of her tongue as Flynn’s pleasure mounted. She moved her left hand found Flynn’s tight balls and squeezed it hard.

Flynn breathed her name with a beautiful reverence. His hands tightened in her hair, he started making desperate noises. She continued to suck him but alternated her left hand between pumping him and stroking his balls.

“Lucy, stop” he said breathlessly, he could barely keep his eyes open as he was overwhelmed by her. “I’m going to come.” He told her, Lucy didn’t stop even when first jets of semen spurted in the back of her throat. Flynn gave a low cry and shuddered as he climaxed, it fucking hot to witness. A tidal wave of lust, combined with a hefty dose of female satisfaction, coursed through her blood. She took all he had and waited another moment or two until he’d finished, then pulled away from him with a last, gentle suck to end it. She licked her lips and smiled up at Flynn, he looked so completely sated and at the same time lost.

He pulled back and looked at her. He tried to say something but he was still short circuited from the orgasm she had wrung from him. Even now, he could still feel the sensations of her mouth on him, the mental imagery was better than he’d ever imagined. She smiled like a smug Cheshire cat. She stroked her hand down the side of his face.

“You enjoy it?” She asked innocently. Flynn bit his bottom lip and nodded as he looked spent.

“You nearly killed me. I should return the favour right now.” He told her, he turned her in his arms and slid his warm into her knickers. Lucy looked at him in the mirror as he teased her clit with his fingers. “You’re very wet, is this from the dream of my running shorts or sucking me off?” he asked in low voice, his hot breath tickled her neck.

Lucy swallowed back a moan as he took her earlobe into his mouth and sucked on it. Her heart thudded against her rib cage, she wondered how it would feel having Flynn suck other parts of her body. Her nipples instantly hardened.

“You going to answer me?” he asked, he stroked her deftly, massaged her clit, and then pushed a finger inside her, until the dull ache of desire filled her veins and her thighs trembled. He kissed and nuzzled the side of her neck, Lucy gasped as he moved his fingers in a decadent manner.

“I think you know which. I love oral sex, so get used to you as I’m going to bring you to your knees a lot in the future.” Lucy said cockily, she blew out a breath as her orgasm built up in her, she needed more.

“I look forward to it, that goes both ways. Maybe-“ Flynn stopped as a knock sounded at the door. Lucy stifled a groan as he stopped circling her clit and she was so close. “Occupied.” He said loudly, Lucy hoped whoever it was would go downstairs.

“I need to go potty!” A familiar and young voice shouted.

“Could she be any louder?” Lucy asked incredulously as she didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.
“Must be urgent.” Flynn said to her as Holly banged on the door. He slid his hand from Lucy’s knickers. “One moment.” He called out. He wrapped towel around his lower body and passed a towel to Lucy. She awkwardly covered up as he walked to the door. He gave her a look. She nodded, he unlocked the door and barely opened it before Holly raced in. No pleasantries, just straight to business.

Lucy hugged her arm to her chest and cleared her throat and looked at the wall as their daughter was on the toilet in seconds doing her business. She was shaking, as she was trying not laugh out loud as Holly hummed ‘It’s Potty Time’ song from Sesame street. The bizarreness of the moment was too much.

“Ok, I’m done.” Holly announced.

“Hey, flush and wash your hand.” Flynn told Holly, she gave Flynn an aggrieved look but did as she was told. “Thank you.” Flynn said as he dried her hand for her.

“Can I have another story?” Holly asked them as she looked between Lucy and Flynn for a response.

“You already had your stories.” Flynn reminded her.

“No, I only got two stories and I’m awake now.” Holly said, which very obvious to them all. Flynn looked at Lucy who was no help. She really didn’t know whether to put her foot down or give in to Holly. Even Flynn was struggling but he could tell their interlude in the bathroom was over.

“Ok, well go back to bed, give Mommy and I about ten minutes to shower. Ok?” He asked Holly.

“Ok.” Holly said as she left the bathroom completely unaware of what she had interrupted. Flynn closed the door and smiled at Lucy. She couldn’t help but laugh, he joined her in laughing as there was no way they could keep a straight face. But every time he tried to kiss Lucy or vice versa she couldn’t stop laughing anew.

“I’m sorry. I can’t. Rain check?” she asked as she couldn’t get back to where they were interrupted if she could try.

“You sure?” he asked her as he held her close. She nodded as she now had the ‘It’s Potty time’ song in her head and their daughter was waiting for them. She could not get back to where they had almost been which was a shame.

“I had my fun, I need a moment and a cold shower to process all of that.” Lucy said before she laughed again. Flynn nodded as even he laughed. She dropped the towel and awkwardly dropped her knickers. Flynn helped her out of her bra. They were back to clinical and platonic.

“Come on. I’ll wash your back.” He told her softly, he pressed a kiss to the back of her neck. Lucy smiled as it was definitely different than their previous showers.

“I guess we’re lucky she wasn’t sick or decided to do a number two.” Lucy said counting their blessings where she could.

“That would definitely spoil the mood.” Flynn quipped, he helped her into the shower. “Is it frigid cold?” he asked her.

“No, it’s good.” Lucy said as she luxuriated under the warm water.

“They must have a gas heater here.” Flynn remarked as he dropped his own towel and stepped into
the shower with her.

“Hi.” Lucy whispered to him.

“Hey,” he replied, he leaned down and covered his lips with hers in a gentle and simmering kiss of promise. A promise of later, they broke apart and Lucy smiled as Flynn picked up the soap.
Chapter 27

Rufus woke up in the hotel room, he could get used to being ridiculously wealthy. He was at a four-star hotel on a whim. He’d ordered room service and spent the evening deciding on a property to buy. He picked the cabin in the woods. It was closer to the bunker and it had all the modern amenities like wi-fi, running water and electricity. He could rent it out after he was finished with it and use it as a holiday home. He wasn’t sure he a person who holidayed in the woods. But he’d find out and frankly there was something thrilling about having disposable money. To make large financial decisions on a whim without thinking for months if it was the right thing to do. He could just do it.

He did, because he called the realtor to make an offer and the relaxed with a light dinner and beer. He watched some movies, not that he could focus on the movies when he thought of Jiya. He’d been going so well on their date. Then he fucked up the ending, it was supposed to be a first date. Somehow past bleed into present. Then he fucked up the ending, it was supposed to be a first date. Somehow past bleed into present. Then he fucked up the ending, it was supposed to be a first date. To part ways more casually and instead it turned heated and he pulled back because it was too much, too fast. Then everything collapsed into an awkward mess as he told Jiya they were just starting out. They didn’t need to rush things. Then he’d said goodbye and walked away like a moron.

He had hated that as much he talked about separating their past. Imagining their other selves to be exes, it just boiled down to Jiya was not his Jiya. He honestly hated that it was ever present in his mind. But he looked at her blonde short hair, listened to her talk about her life. It was all so similar but different enough it rankled him. It rankled him as it didn’t seem ‘right’, at least that’s how his brain tried to rationalise it.

While he had no plans of changing history, he just found it hard to acclimate as he had nothing to tether him. Not like how Lucy and Flynn had each other. But he tried not to think they were more blessed than him. He knew they all had their problems, but Flynn and Lucy had each other. He had to navigate his life on his own as everyone he knew was a variation of themselves that he didn’t recognise. The question with Jiya was, could he sustain a relationship with her given how different she was from the woman he knew and loved.

He gave a sigh as no answers would come, he picked up the phone by his bed and ordered breakfast. He decided after it, he’d google about his family. Decide roughly when he’d see them. Then go shopping and buy clothes that he liked as he was not going to keep all of his former self’s clothes. Get a haircut, he knew it was meaningless superficial things to do but he needed to do it. He needed to feel like he was in his own clothes and more himself than stepping into the shoes a dead man.

Flynn and Lucy stirred awake at nearly the same moment as their internal clocks told them Holly was overdue to coming into their room. Flynn turned on his side and watched as Lucy opened her eyes. Her expression was sluggish as she was still half asleep.

“Morning.” Lucy said with a soft smile, Lucy's smile was one of the best parts of his mornings. To wake up like this, she reached out and stroked his jaw with her left hand. She closed her eyes and gave a sleepy sigh. He turned his face and pressed a kiss into her palm. “I think Holly might not remember which door is ours.” She remarked.

“I should check on her.” Flynn said, he didn’t want Holly dissolving into tears because she couldn’t find them. But just as he pushed up, they heard Maria outside their door. Her words were muffled
through the door, so they couldn’t hear what was being said but she sounded cheery.

Lucy and Flynn shared a look waiting for the knock but as they knew Maria was talking to Holly. They heard Holly’s high tones. But a few seconds later, footsteps could be heard fading away from the door.

Flynn relaxed into the bed on his side, his mother had Holly in her care which meant he could sleep a little longer with Lucy. He gave a relaxed sigh and closed his eyes, as his body was still in that stage where he could easily doze for another half an hour if he wanted.

“That solves that mystery.” Lucy whispered. Flynn nodded as he opened his eyes and drank in the sight of her laying on the pillow next to his. Her hair a slightly frizzy mess from sleep and last night, he could still remember the soft texture of it in his fingers. Memories of how she’d gone down on him, woke another part of him up.

“That does, how are you feeling?” he asked her, without her makeup; Lucy looked a little ghoulish as they had started to turn yellow and green in places. He knew in another week majority of the bruises would be gone. Her looks weren’t a major concern as her being in less pain was.

“A little confused as I remember telling Holly a story and then I woke up here.” Lucy said before she gave a soft yawn.

“Mhmm, I carried you to bed.” He told her.

“I miss out on all the good stuff.” Lucy said playfully, she crooked her finger at him to come closer. Flynn obliged as he shifted in close and Lucy gave him a slow and lingering kiss ‘good morning’. She broke the kiss and brushed her knuckles down his cheek in a loving gesture. Flynn wore a closed lip smile.

“Not everything. Are you in any pain?” He asked as she slowly caressed his jaw, neck and collarbone in a lazy pattern.

“From my exertions last night?” she asked coyly.

“Yes.” He replied, he had to admit he liked this side of her. It was incredibly hot when a woman knew what she wanted and went for it. He had to admit, he missed being intimate with someone. He had missed being touched, the feel of skin to skin, the scent of a woman's skin. The flirtations and smiles, how good it just felt to be wanted and make someone happy. All of it.

“I’m really good, I enjoyed myself even if the evening was interrupted by our little gremlin.” She said with a grin.

“The Potty song would kill anyone’s libido.” Flynn commiserated, Sesame Street had a lot to answer for. Or maybe he did, as he let Holly watch the show every day.

“It’s probably why the bathroom is not the best place for sex.” Lucy speculated, she knew she didn’t want to repeat of the interruption they had last night.

“Not always.” Flynn replied, but he wasn’t smiling. He looked at her with concern, she caught him by the chin with her left hand and locked eyes with him.

“I’m fine. You don’t have to worry about my injuries.” She assured him, “If anything, I want you to forget them.” She told him in a low voice, she smiled salaciously as she trailed her hand lower down his chest.
“Do you want me to make you forget them and Wyatt too?” he asked, she frowned, her hand stopped as Wyatt was definitely more of a libido killer than Potty song.

“Why would you bring him up?” She asked, she dropped her hand away as she felt any attempt at seduction right now would fail. Flynn gave her a long, knowing look before he spoke.

“Because he’s the one who hurt you and he was also the last man you were with romantically. You can’t wipe that away whatever that makes you feel by having sex with me.” Flynn told her, part of her was hurt that he would think she’d use him like that. But if she was honest, she a small part of her wanted him to see past her damage. The damage Wyatt had inflicted on her. She felt she had to prove she was fine through sex and adapting back to a normal life as quickly as possible.

“I’m not trying to do that. I’m not using you, I’m not and wouldn’t ever want you to feel that way. I’m just trying to enjoy my life with you. Sex happens to be a part of our relationship or at least I hope so.” She said as she rolled onto her side, her ribs protested the position but she ignored it as she wanted to be face on with him.

“It is, I just don’t want you to think my penis will cure you. It’s not magical.” He said seriously but Lucy couldn’t help but laugh. Flynn smiled as even he could see the humour. “I’m being serious.” He told her.

“I know and I don’t expect you to fix me or my problems.” Lucy said more seriously, but she was still amused by the mental imagery of what a magical penis would look like. She knew Flynn’s penis wasn’t going to fix her problems but it was going to make her feel good. Flynn reached out and brushed his knuckles against her cheek before he gently grasped the back of her neck.

“Good, I don’t need to fix you. I just don’t want you to bury what happened and pretend it didn’t happen. You don’t have hide what you’re going through from me. You can talk to me about anything. I want to support you as you heal and recuperate.” He told her earnestly.

“Ok. But it has to go both ways.” Lucy said, Flynn nodded. Lucy found comfort in his words as he wasn’t trying to pry her open or keep her quiet. It was one of the many reasons she loved him. “And I still want sex, a lot of it with you even if your penis is not magical. But you have to agree, it is pretty amazing.” She told him, Flynn chuckled, the mood lightened between them.

“Thank you.” He said as he pulled her on top of him. Lucy smiled as she felt his morning erection. She ground down him, Flynn let out a low groan that made Lucy shiver with desire. “Don’t get excited, we’re not having sex.” He informed her, he caught her left hand with his right and interlaced their fingers. Just before she could even try anything, he gently but firmly grabbed her hip with his free hand and held her still.

“Too late, I’m excited.” Lucy said, they chuckled as they felt the truth from the heat generated between them and their racing hearts. But Lucy did as Flynn wanted and laid down on his chest. She moved her right arm to his flank. It felt good to lay down in a new position and be able to listen to his heart. She wore a smug smile on her lips as she loved how she had this effect on him.

“Too bad, you’ll just need to relax.” He said as he released her hand and moved it her other hip; securing her tightly against him. He didn’t trust her to not torture him. But he did feel comforted in being able to hold her close.

“What about that rain check you owe me, hmm?” She asked him cheekily, she pressed a kiss to his chest. She took a deep inhale, enjoying the scent of his skin.

“There’s not enough time for that.” He drawled teasingly, his hands smoothed over her backside.
She felt her slip shift upwards and his long fingers slide underneath her knickers. She lifted her head up and looked at him with a quirk of her eyebrow.

“I thought we were relaxing.” Lucy told him.

“We have a few minutes before we should head down to breakfast.” Flynn teased.

Jiya woke up and groaned as her eyes felt dry and sore like someone was trying to lever them out of her skull with spoons. She felt a weight on her stomach and looked down to find Bacon on her. His ears perked up when he saw she was awake.

“No.” she told him, he didn’t listen as he crawled up her chest and peppered her face with puppy kisses. “Bad, no.” She told him, she did not appreciate being covered in puppy slobber.

“Bacon, hier.” Karl called in a stern manner. Bacon didn’t even question the order as he jumped off Jiya onto the floor and dashed off in the direction of Karl.

Jiya sat up and looked to the man in her kitchen, dogs dancing around his feet. It was almost instagram worthy except the fact it was a dingy bunker and not a normal kitchen. He was cooking what smelt like porridge, and already had the table set up with fruit, glasses of juice. Jiya smelt the coffee and wondered how the hell he was still single and how he did it all without waking her.

Karl gave Bacon and Sweet Pea; a piece of sliced strawberry each before he rubbed the dogs’ backs. Jiya heard him telling Bacon was a good puppy. He straightened up and smiled at Jiya.

“How did you sleep?” Karl asked her as he continued pottering around the kitchen.

“Alright.” Jiya said, though she wasn’t entirely sure. She just knew her head hurt and she was too tired to assess the rest of herself.

“Hungover?” He asked her with a grin.

“Yes.” She said as she knew that much.

“Water and aspirin on the coffee table. You have three minutes until breakfast. Enough time to get to the bathroom but not much else.” Karl told her as he stirred the contents of a pot on the stove.

“Thanks.” Jiya said as she stood up from the couch and stretched her arms above her head. She had to admit, besides the raging hangover. She slept pretty well, but she did need a bathroom.

“Don’t let Bacon follow you unless you want an audience.” Karl said, Jiya frowned and stopped walking, she turned to see Bacon shadowing her.

“Stay.” She ordered Bacon, the puppy hesitated and Jiya repeated the order. The puppy sat on his bum in a haphazard manner. Jiya walked backwards as she moved away from the puppy. Karl laughed from the kitchen, Jiya flipped him the middle finger.

Lucy chuckled at Flynn's cheekiness as she followed Flynn down the stairs into the kitchen. The delicious smell of waffles, eggs and bacon filled the air. She couldn’t remember the last time she had waffles, but it had been too long. She stepped off the last step and smiled at the domesticity before her.
Holly was seated next to Maria at the table, Asher was in the kitchen cooking up a storm. The table was already laden with fresh fruit, water, fruit juice and what smelt like coffee. Lucy loved it all as this was what life was supposed to be. Above ground, in a warm and welcoming home.

“Morning.” Flynn said as he greeted his mother and Holly good morning.

“Morning.” Lucy said as she kissed the top of Holly’s head. Her daughter smiled up at her, she must have enjoyed her time with Asher and Maria as she hadn’t latched onto Flynn or her for comfort. It was actually a relief to know Holly was growing attached to her grandparents. It meant to Lucy that Holly wasn’t afraid of her world becoming bigger. Sure, Holly hesitated and took time to adjust but it was good to see Holly take a chance.

“How did you two sleep?” Maria asked them.

"Very well." Flynn replied with a warm smile.

“It’s the best sleep I’ve had in quite a while.” Lucy said as she sat down at the table. It was true, she had dreamless and deep sleep. Add in the quick orgasm and making out with Flynn before coming down for breakfast. She had to admit, this was a great start for her day. Though, she could have used her pain meds a little earlier and done without talking about Wyatt. But she was still happy as so much progress and normality had returned to her life.

“Good, Holly was telling us all about her dreams last night.” Maria said with a smile.

“Oh really?” Lucy asked, she mentally prepared herself for the worst. Would there be another sibling or more dogs? Lucy hoped not. She’d like to get through one day without learning Holly wanted more than two dogs and whatever number of siblings she was up to now.

“Yes, she dreamt about going to the zoo and all the animals she would see.” Maria said to Lucy before she looked to Holly. “It sounds very exciting.” Maria told Holly.

“It will be, if we get there.” Holly said, she looked at Flynn and Lucy clearly waiting for them to tell her it wasn’t happening.

“We will, this year.” Lucy promised her.

“We’re planning a visit to the Zoo for her birthday in a few weeks’ time.” Flynn explained to his parents. He poured himself and Lucy cups of coffee before he sat down next to Lucy.

“You can come too.” Holly invited Maria and Asher. The older couple’s faces lit up, as it meant more time with them. But Lucy had wished Holly had asked her or Flynn if it was ok. Not that they didn’t want Maria and Asher there. They didn’t like being blindsided.

“We wouldn’t miss it for the world. But which Zoo are you going to?” Maria asked, Lucy was surprised as she wondered how fluid Maria and Asher’s travels were.

“We haven’t discussed that yet. I figured we’d go to the zoo closest to wherever we are at the time.” Lucy said casually, she didn’t think it really mattered as long as there were animals for Holly to see.

“But I want Auntie Jiya and Uncle Karl to come.” Holly told Lucy.

“San Francisco has a zoo.” Flynn said to Lucy as he felt if he and Lucy nailed down the details, it would stop Holly from preparing herself for disappointment. He looked to Holly, “But doesn’t mean that Auntie Jiya and Uncle Karl will be able to make it. But we can invite them.” He said, Holly didn’t seem to listen to him as her face lit up at the plans for a Zoo visit being made.
“Oh, let me get my tablet computer. We’ll book it all now.” Maria said with a bright smile.

“No, let’s eat breakfast first. Booking things will come later.” Asher told his wife as he placed the warm food onto the table.

“So, where did you sleep?” Jiya asked as she piled the porridge into her bowl and added spices, fruit to it. Even though her hangover was raging, she knew it was better to eat and hydrate before lazing for the day. She tried to remember last night but it was all a bit of a blur.

“On the couch with my feet on the coffee table. Don’t worry, your virtue is intact.” Karl assured her in amusement. He made his own bowl of porridge.

“One less thing to worry about. Thank you.” She said as he passed her the maple syrup. She knew they hadn’t had sex or kissed as she knew she would remember that. Karl was not a forgettable man and she would have beard burn which she didn’t.

“You’re welcome.” He said, unsure of what he was being thanked for.

“How long have you been up?” she asked him.

“Couple of hours, I took the dogs out for their morning constitutional and breakfast. I keep spare kibble in the car. Had a smoke while they ate and then had my morning constitutional.” He drawled in amusement as Jiya made a face.

“Uh, I’m eating here.” She told him between mouthfuls of her breakfast. But Karl wasn’t put off by her disgust as he continued on describing his day.

“Healthy bowels means a healthy body.” Karl told her, Jiya shook her head at him, he continued “Then I snooped around, read some of Flynn’s Journal and got hungry.” he finished with a shrug.

“You read Flynn’s Journal?!?” Jiya asked incredulously before she picked up her orange juice.

“No, I caught up with the morning news and my emails on my phone.” He said with a laugh.

“You’re an asshole.” Jiya said as he got her hook, line and sinker.

“You’re an easy mark.” Karl informed her.

“You could have just left.” She told him, she couldn’t remember the last time someone had made breakfast just for her. Most of the time it was her cooking or tagging in on a family meal prepared by Flynn. Karl gave a shrug like it was nothing, but the gesture meant a lot to her.

“Yeah, but that would’ve just been rude.” He said casually.

A few hours later, Flynn pulled the car into the makeshift parking lot outside the bunker and frowned as Karl stood by a car having a smoke.

“Uncle Karl!” Holly announced happily. She had woken up just in time to see him.

“Wonder what he’s doing here.” Lucy said as Flynn engaged the handbrake and turned off the engine.

Karl blew out a puff of smoke in a slow and luxuriating manner as he gave the three a closed lip smile. He waved at Holly, before he took another long drag of his cigarette.
“I don’t know, but he better not be dropping off anything.” Flynn said, Lucy knew he was referring to a dog. She couldn’t help but smile as her husband got out of the car.

“Flynn and family.” Karl said before he exhaled smoke with a sigh of satisfaction. Flynn could remember what that was like as he used to be a smoker. It was just a cultural thing, but he quit before he was twenty five as he felt it was impacting his fitness levels which was not great for his job.

“Karl, what’s going on?” Flynn asked him as they shook hands in greeting.

“Nothing much, just checking in with everyone.” Karl said, he dropped the cigarette and snubbed it out under his boot.

“Rufus and Jiya in?” Flynn asked as he helped Lucy out of the car, then Holly who ran for Karl and crashed into the man’s legs.

“Only Jiya, she’s got a bit of headache from last night’s bender.” Karl said Lucy and Flynn frowned as it wasn't like Jiya to go on benders. Karl looked down at Holly.

“Hi!” Holly shouted gleefully up at him, she held her arms up to him.

“Hey.” Karl said as he lifted Holly into his arms. She hugged him tight for a moment before she pulled back and made a face.

“You stink.” She told him bluntly.

“I know, Jiya wouldn’t let me shower.” Karl said, Holly frowned while Lucy and Flynn looked at the man with questionable expressions.

“Why not?” Holly asked.

“She likes me smelly.” Karl answered in a matter of fact manner.

“I don’t think she does. I don’t. You should stop smoking and shower more, then maybe Auntie Jiya will love you heaps more.” Holly told him, Lucy smothered a laugh as Flynn smiled.

“Really?” Karl asked Holly incredulously.


“Inside, he has a friend whose name is Sweet Pea.” Karl said, Holly’s face lit up before she realised ‘Sweet Pea’ was not one of her dogs.

“No Bepo or Lucky?” She asked him.

“Not yet.” Karl told her.

“Ok.” Holly said, Karl tried to put her down on the ground so she could run inside but Holly kept her grip on his neck. Karl took the hint.

“Ok.” He said as he adjusted her on his hip. “So, how was Djed and Baba?” he asked as he walked to the entrance of the bunker. Lucy and Flynn followed behind them.

“Nanna and Grandpa.” Holly corrected him.

“Well, how were they?” Karl prompted.
“They are amazing. Nanna knows lots and draws really pretty pictures. She drew a satellite on my cast.” Holly said, she showed her cast to him. Practically shoving it in his face to show him the detailed drawing on her cast.

“Wow, that’s cool.” Karl said impressed.

“Yes, Grandpa cooked us lots of yummy food. We’re all going to Yosemite and then the San Francisco Zoo. You can come if you want.” Holly told him.

“Thank you for the invitation but I’ll probably be working. So, I can’t come to Zoo.” Karl told her.

“Oh.” Holly said disappointed.

“But, I’ll be there for cake afterwards.” Karl told her, Holly gave a small smile. “If you want, one day you can come and visit one of my farms and see all the dogs. Get to play with them and teach them tricks.” Karl told her, it did the trick as her face lit up with excitement.

“Really?” She asked excitedly.

“Yes, as long as Mommy and Daddy don’t mind.” Karl told Holly, he looked back to Lucy and Flynn.

“Not at all, but no dogs are coming home with us.” Lucy told Karl and Holly.

Later that day,

Rufus pulled to a stop outside of his house, he got out of the car and locked the door. He straightened his new clothing, he felt more himself. Actually, since the first time getting back to the reality, he felt in control.

He had a cabin in the woods, he’d paid extra cash to get the keys and rent it while the deeds were being transferred into his name. He had his own clothes and a new haircut and shave had helped. It was amazing how the superficial things helped him.

He could have easily waited a while longer to do this but he decided there was no point. He could sit on and dwell on what to say or he could just knock on the door. He could see his family.

He took a deep breath and exhaled, nervous as he had no idea how this was going to go. His other self didn’t keep a journal and the internet wasn’t forthcoming on his family and their relationship. He knocked on the door, ready for the answers.
“So how did your date go with Rufus?” Lucy asked Jiya, Flynn had disappeared on a phone call with his mother. Karl had left with his dogs to go to one of his animal centres. Holly was down for her afternoon nap.

Lucy had to admit that she was tired, it hadn’t been a particularly long day. But between her first orgasm in months, the emotional departure from Maria and Asher’s place to coming back to the bunker. Getting Holly into the shower and changed, it felt like a long day even though it was late afternoon. While Lucy was not excited to be in the bunker. She was glad to be in her comfy pyjamas on the couch with Jiya and cups of tea.

“I thought it was great and then at the end it fell flat on its face.” Jiya said, she made a face which left Lucy confused.

“What happened?” Lucy asked.

“I kissed him and he wasn’t into it.” Jiya said with a shrug like it was nothing. But Lucy was not a fool, she knew it was a huge deal. The fact that Rufus hadn’t returned to the bunker was even worse.

“Really?” Lucy asked surprised as she didn’t think Rufus and Jiya would have a problem reconnecting. But even in her tired and drug addled brain, she realised that Jiya and Rufus were in the situation she had experienced with Noah. They had two different memories and lives. They were different people; in essence strangers with incredibly unusual baggage.

“He wants to clean slate our entire history and relationship. I guess I kissed him like we were in a more serious relationship.” Jiya said with another shrug.

“That sounds confusing.” Lucy said, she felt for Jiya. The young woman had been stuck in the bunker as their support staff since it all began. They all took her for granted, Lucy knew it wasn’t right. Her only excuse was that she’d been so wrapped up her dramas with her family and Wyatt; she just couldn’t find a way out to reach Jiya.

But she couldn’t hide behind excuses anymore. Holly saw Jiya as family and Lucy wasn’t going to help foster and maintain that relationship. If Lucy was honest, she wanted to keep Jiya as a friend and treat her better than she had in the past.

“It is, he didn’t come home yesterday and he’s moving out of the bunker.” Jiya added.

“Wow.” Lucy said completely thrown by Rufus’ behaviour. Even more surprised that in the space of an afternoon Rufus had moved out of the bunker. She wasn’t sure if she should call him and make sure he was ok and wait for him to come back to the bunker for a visit. He was clearly sending the message he wanted space.

“Well, the moving out was planned long before we kissed. But you know, I’m sure I helped push him in that direction.” Jiya said with a sigh as she was taking responsibility for it. Lucy shook her head in disbelief.

“I don’t believe that.” Lucy told her, she could see Jiya was upset about it and punishing herself for it. Just like every woman, they always assumed the problem was them when it wasn't always the case.

“When I lost my Rufus and I had to accept he was gone. Then he comes back, but he’s not my
Rufus. My Rufus, he knew what he wanted and he went for it. I knew exactly where I stood with him. This Rufus is just hot and cold. Our date went well except for the kiss. I now just feel all over the place as I think I’ve been in a relationship with this man for years. But I haven’t, you know?” Jiya asked her with a confused frown as she still struggled to rationalise what she knew and how she felt.

“Yeah, I do. It happened with Noah except he was a complete stranger to me. But I think you know what’s missing and it’s on both sides. It makes it that much harder.” Lucy commiserated. Jiya looked down at her cup of tea in her lap and nodded.

“Yeah, it sucks. And then Karl came over and he’s telling me that I shouldn’t care. That I’m overthinking it and should do whatever I want with my life. If Rufus and I are meant to be, then it’ll happen and if not, then be cool about it and move on.” Jiya said paraphrasing Karl’s advice.

“It’s not a bad idea.” Lucy said thoughtfully before she took a tentative sip of her tea and found it too hot to drink. So she held it to her chest for comfort as the warmth seeped into her hands and clothing.

“You think I should give up on Rufus?” Jiya asked, Lucy for a moment was wondering if Jiya was asking permission instead of advice.

“No, I don’t think so unless you want to. I just think you should figure out what you want outside all of this and Rufus. Because at the end of the day, you have to do what is best for you. Rufus, he has to fit into your world as much as you have to in his. Yes, there will be times when you have to compromise but you shouldn’t put your life and desires on hold for him or any man.” Lucy told her, trying to be honest as she could as she didn’t want to get in between the couple.

“That’s what Karl said too.” Jiya said thoughtfully.

“Karl is not wrong.” Lucy said, she was surprised she was agreeing with Karl. It was still strange given they had been on opposite sides of the same fight. She knew she had to stop thinking of him as a bad guy because she knew better. He and Flynn had not been the villains, they had been the real heroes.

“So, you wouldn’t put your life on hold for Flynn?” Jiya asked her. Lucy wore a closed lip smile and shook her head.

“No, but then I don’t see my life on hold with him. I see it like the beginning of a new chapter in my life. Where we go and what we do from here? I don’t know but I do know Flynn would support me in my endeavours and vice versa.” Lucy said confidently.

“You guys are sickeningly perfect.” Jiya grumbled before she took a sip of her tea. Lucy smiled wryly.

“We’re not perfect. We have our own problems too. Flynn and I; we were a lot of things but a together romantically was not one of them. So our relationship doesn't have the same baggage yours and Rufus' has. We also share the same history, we remember the same things which I think helps a lot. I'm not saying what you and Rufus have between you is insurmountable. I just saying that don't compare Flynn and I to your situation as it's not the same. You guys have a very unique situation.” Lucy said, she didn't want Jiya thinking if Flynn and Lucy worked that she should stay in a relationship in some vague hope it might work out.

“I guess that's true.” Jiya conceded.

“So, what else did Karl say?” Lucy asked innocently.
“He’s just lonely, and wants to be friends. I know I can use some more friends myself.” Jiya said with a half shrug.

“It has to be hard losing those versions of us, we’re not the same people you knew. But my offer stands, I want us to be friends.” Lucy told her, Jiya smiled with closed lips.

“I wouldn’t be telling you all this if we weren’t friends.” Jiya told her.

"Good to know." Lucy said.

"So, how was meeting the parents?” Jiya asked, changing the topic.

“It went really well, Flynn’s parents are amazing. Holly loves them and vice versa. I love them. We’re going to meet them at Yosemite after I’ve had my check up for my hand.” Lucy said with a smile. She was excited to get out of the bunker as frankly she didn’t miss it. If anything, being back dragged her into mental place she didn’t want to be. Lucy mental shook it away and focussed on Jiya and her future plans.

“That’s great.” Jiya said, she meant it but part of her was sad that the bunker life and family she had here was breaking apart.

“Yeah, I think it is. Maria is such a warm and loving person. Asher is a little more reserved but he cares about bringing the family together and keeping everyone close. I feel the same way which is why, I’m hoping you’ll come to Holly’s first birthday above ground.” Lucy told her with a smile, she gently nudged Jiya’s leg with her foot.

“Where are we going?” Jiya asked, happy to know she was included as family. It was one thing to be ‘Auntie Jiya’ in the bunker but she had never known if it would still be the same after. After Rufus’ departure, Jiya had started to prepare herself for everyone else to drift from her too. If she was truly honest, she expected the group to stick together and leave her behind. It was depressing to believe that she might be abandoned by her family again. One she had chosen for herself.

“The Zoo, but when Holly asks…please pretend to be surprised as she wanted to invite you herself.” Lucy told her.

“I will do my very best.” Jiya said with smile. Lucy gave a smile of relief and nodded.

“Good, cause it would not be a party without Holly’s favourite Aunt. You’ll get meet Asher and Maria. They know all about you from Holly, so be prepared for some amazing food and weird day of adventure.” Lucy told her.

“I could use a weird adventure above ground.” Jiya said honestly, she had fun with Rufus but the end of the date had soured their time together. She couldn’t see a day out with the Flynn family ending on a disheartening note.

“I think you’ve earned holiday.” Lucy told her honestly.

“I will, I think I will. I just need to finish all of that first.” Jiya said as she gestured at the landing bay.

“Can’t you just disable it and let Rufus and Connor take care of it for a week?” Lucy asked, Jiya laughed and shook her head.

“No, it doesn’t work like that as I’m the employee and they are my bosses.” Jiya told her.

“Oh, I thought you and Rufus were kind of on the same level.” Lucy said with a frown.
“Not here, Mason and Rufus run Mason Industries together. 50/50 partnership, I’ve only been working for them for 6 years and all my work is property of MI. I am very low on the corporate structure of the company.” Jiya told her.

“Wow, I didn’t know.” Lucy said surprised, she assumed Jiya was earning a comfortable salary that taking a week off would be nothing for her. But she was clearly wrong, though she didn't know Jiya's life situation was.

“Yeah, so, I can’t exactly jet set off for a week.” Jiya said wryly.

“Getting out of the bunker even for a day, helped me a lot. I highly recommend it and if you want, I have my mother’s property here in San Francisco. You could use it for the weekends at least.” Lucy offered.

“No, I can’t.” Jiya told her, as it was too much to ask for free accommodation.

“Yes, you can and you will. I know we’ve all been down here not exactly being paid a lot for what we’re doing. So, take the house for a weekend or two.” Lucy saw Jiya’s apprehension. “Look, you’d be doing me a favour as I’m not ready to go to my house myself. But I do want to know what shape it’s in. It’s win-win. You get some time and space above ground and I’ll know what state the house is in without having to see it.” Lucy told her.

“One weekend.” Jiya said as she didn’t want to fight Lucy and she knew how Lucy could be when she wanted something to happen. It much like a dog with a bone. She couldn’t see the harm in a two night stay outside of the bunker free of charge.

“Thank you, I’ll let Denise know and get the keys to you.” Lucy said, her phone beeped, she frowned as she pulled it out of her purse and found another message from Karl. He’d sent one earlier for Holly as Holly asked him to. That lead to a whole chain of texts about Bacon and dogs that it was easier to just call Karl and give the phone to Holly.

Lucy opened it to find a video of puppies with a message ‘Bepo is in the bunch. Won’t be ready for adoption for another 6 weeks’. “Karl is going to drive me insane with these puppy texts.” Lucy told Jiya.

“He found Bepo or so he told me.” Jiya said as she peeked at the phone screen with a smile.

“I guess this is explains why he wants Holly to go out and see the dog place he owns. Six weeks, I guess that gives us time to prepare.” Lucy mused as she put her phone away.

“The puppies are cute.” Jiya argued.

“But Flynn and I will cleaning up after the little furball.” Lucy countered with a wry smile.

“It’ll be good practice for when you have your second dog.” Jiya said with a chuckle as Lucy wore stressed expression as she looked rather daunted by it all.

“Don’t remind me. Holly also wants siblings now.” Lucy said, Jiya laughed as she knew how Holly liked to ask for things. It came across like a terrible con job which was why Jiya loved her.

“She’s good. It’s the drawings right?” Jiya asked her, Lucy nodded.

“Yes, she was talking to Asher and Maria about her drawings and just said so casually when Daddy puts a baby in Mommy’s tummy. I’ll have a brother or sister. I nearly died of shock but luckily Maria and Asher thought it was funny.” Lucy quipped, the two laughed.
Rufus pressed the doorbell again, and nervously waited for a response he knew his mother was home as her car was in the driveway. He stuck his hands in his pockets just as the door opened.

“Mom.” He said as he looked at his mother; Janice Carlin. She looked older than he remembered, she wore her hospital scrubs, sneakers and cardigan.

“Rufus.” She said in shock, Rufus didn’t wait for more of a response as he hugged her. He ducked his head down as he’d waited nearly two years for this moment. Hot tears bit the back of his eyes, but he blinked them back as his mother embraced him back. He held onto her for the longest time, he had needed this. He pulled back and smiled, but it was met with a confused frown. “What are you doing here?” she asked him.

“Can’t a son see his mother?” he asked awkwardly.

“Of course, come in.” Janice said, she wore a smile that didn’t quite reach her eyes as she waved him in. “It’s just I haven’t seen you in years. Is everything ok?” she asked him.

“Yeah, I just missed you and Kevin.” Rufus told her honestly, as Janice closed the door behind them.

“You have a funny way of showing it.” Kevin said as he came down the stairs dressed in running gear.

“Hey Little Bro.” Rufus said with a smile, Kevin glowered at him like Rufus was shit on his shoes.

“Really? You haven’t picked up the phone in three years and you want to play happy families now?” Kevin asked him incredulously.

“Kevin.” Janice cautioned.

“I’m going for a run.” Kevin announced, he didn’t wait for a response as he placed his earbuds in and left the house in a rush. Rufus watched the door close and turned to his mother. She wore a placating look that left Rufus unsettled.

“You have to forgive him. He idolised you and well, you know the rest.” Janice said as she gestured to the kitchen-dining area of the house. “Do you want something to drink?” she asked him.

“All your projects are top secret. But you know the phone works or email and even texts. I can text now.” His mother told him, Rufus smiled as she hadn’t changed all that much.

“I am sorry, I’ll try to be better; if you let me.” Rufus said, Janice smiled at him. “What?” he asked.

“There’s the man I raised.” She told him.

“I was an ass.” He told her, she snorted a laugh.

“Yes, you were and language.” She gently scolded him. Rufus wore a closed lip smile as he ducked his head and nodded, he would have to remember to curb his swearing
That evening; Flynn, Lucy, Holly and Jiya sat down for their evening meal together. They had learnt that taco was not a one hand friendly meal. It left Lucy and Holly eating out of bowls as the mess they made trying to keep their tacos in one piece failed miserably.

“You gotta come, I’ll get Uncle Karl to come.” Holly said to Jiya as if she were a little girl on a very important mission.

“I said I was coming.” Jiya assured her with an amused smile before she took a sip of her beer.

“Will you make me a cake?” Holly asked her before she haphazardly scooped up some meat and vegetables with a piece of broken shell.

“Won’t your Grandpa want to make you a cake?” Jiya asked her, she didn't think her cake would be anything special given it came out of a box with instructions on the side. She was pretty sure that Flynn’s father would most likely want to make the cake given it was the first birthday they shared with Holly. It was a special event.

“I don’t know.” Holly replied before she shoved the food in her mouth and chewed like a little monster.

“I’m sure if you asked Grandpa nicely, he’d make you cupcakes and let you lick the beaters.” Flynn said, Holly’s face lit up as she clearly knew the delight of eating raw cake batter.

“Really? Jiya will only let me have a teaspoon.” Holly grouched, Lucy smothered a laugh as she made it sound like a hardship. Flynn and Jiya kept serious expression on their faces.

“Jiya is looking after you. But Grandpa will spoil you a little more because it's what he and Nanna do from time to time.” Flynn told her in a conspiratorial manner.

“Oooh ok.” Holly said, she didn’t completely understand how the family dynamics worked yet. But she was a quick learner, so Flynn wasn't too worried.

“So, how many people are coming to this party?” Jiya asked changing the topic.

“You, me, Mommy, Daddy, Nanna, Grandpa and Uncle Karl. Auntie Denise doesn't think she'll be able to come cause she’s always working. Uncle Connor says the only Birthday party he’ll come to is my 21st. That's ages away.” Holly said with a roll of her eyes.

“Uncle Connor will be jealous of all the fun he’s missing.” Jiya told her.

“I know, it's the Zoo!” Holly said excitedly.

“What about Uncle Rufus?” Lucy asked her, Holly made a face and shook her.

“No, he might be nice now but he was mean to me like a lot. Like always shouting at me and telling me to stay away from stuff or making fun of me. He got me stuck in a chair and I don't want him ruining the zoo.” Holly said adamantly.

"He strapped her into the lifeboat seat to stop her from touching things." Jiya explained as Lucy and Flynn were sure what Holly meant.

"Still mean." Holly told them with a dark look.

“Ok, it’s your party. It will just be the seven of us.” Lucy said, she didn’t want Holly to get upset. She shared a concerned look with Flynn. She felt like this was the first sign since Wyatt’s assault that
they’d seen of Holly actually pulling away from a person.

“This is so good.” Rufus told his Mom as he tucked into her signature dinner of maple roast pork with apples, beans and mashed potatoes.

“So, what have you been doing these past three years?” Kevin asked in a surly manner as he ate his dinner. He had not been happy with Rufus still being home. “You haven’t been in the news or nothing.” he added.

“It’s classified.” Rufus said awkwardly between mouthfuls of his dinner.

“Really? You disappear for three years with nothing to say but it’s classified.” Kevin drawled.

“It doesn’t matter, he’s home and he’s alive. Let’s just count our blessings.” Janice told Kevin.

“No, it does. Just because he gave us money and helped us out of Chicago doesn’t make him a great brother. It’s that he didn’t want his poor relations to be found in the gutter while he’s rich. It’s a PR nightmare. But rising us above the filth makes him a hero.” Kevin drawled darkly.

“Kevin.” Janice chastised.

“What? We’re his charity, Mom.” Kevin told her, he looked to Rufus. “So, why are you? Photo op? There going to be an interview before you launch another app or piece of tech for the world to consume?” Kevin asked him with disdain.

“No, I really missed you both and I just wanted to see you both.” Rufus said honestly, he realised he was in the middle of minefield with Kevin. For some reason he felt he’d be paying for his other self’s assholery for a while. It also made him wonder how much damage he was going to have to repair in general when it came to the people he loved.

“Right,” Kevin huffed a laugh. “Everything with you is a con. So, might as well tell us why you’re really here.” Kevin told him, he lifted his chin in defiance as he really didn’t believe Rufus was telling the truth. It only made Rufus realise that his other self was more of an asshole than he once thought. But it hurt as he’d hoped for one safe haven in the storm of his life.

“I’m here because I want to see you and Mom. There’s no con.” Rufus promised him.
Lucy kissed Holly’s brow, she had finished the story and found her daughter fast asleep. With Flynn’s help, she carefully extracted herself from the bed and placed the book she had been reading on the bookcase. She met Flynn at the door and gave Holly one last look before they left the room. She watched as Flynn quietly closed the door and turned to her.

They walked across to their room, once the door was closed; Lucy closed the space between her and Flynn.

“Hey,” She said softly as she gently tugged in his shirt. Flynn leaned down and gave her a quick but passionate kiss that made her smile.

“I figured you’d be reading her stories until dawn.” Flynn mused as Lucy stepped away and kicked off her shoes. Flynn pulled off his shirt and tossed it into the laundry basket.

“She was definitely restless. I think sleeping above ground and in an unfamiliar home rattled her. But your parents were great with her.” Lucy said, she took a moment to admire his chest. He did not miss her checking him out. She was half tempted to hold up her left hand showing the ring that gave her licence to admire. But she didn't.

“Yeah, they have had practise and it helped they knew she lived underground.” Flynn said, Lucy nodded as she tried to undo her bra under her t-shirt and failing.

“Did Karl text you about Bepo?” Lucy asked.

“The video? Yes.” Flynn said as he took off his pants and folded them up and placed them onto a nearby chair. “The puppies certainly fit the description for Bepo.” He conceded as he moved to her; to her help her out of her sling and unhooked her bra through her t-shirt with one hand like it was nothing. It was infuriating that she had to use both hands normally.

“We going to put this off or let Holly have a dog?” she asked him as she pulled her bra out from under her t-shirt. She wasn’t shy about her nudity, she just slept better with at least a t-shirt on. The rest was negotiable to her.

“I don’t know, how do you feel about it?” Flynn asked as he pulled back the covers on the bed. Lucy kicked off her pyjama pants and before she could pick them up; Flynn grabbed them and added them to pile of their clothes in the chair.

“I’ll admit the puppies are so cute.” Lucy said as she climbed into bed. “But I’m one hand down, I know nothing about dogs other than they are cute and happy looking animals.” She added as she laid down. She adjusted her right arm into a more comfortable position.

“You’re not alone in this. I’m here and we’ll figure it out together. Luckily, we’re only adopting one and it would be in six weeks which by that time; you will hopefully be out of the sling and in less pain as your injuries will mostly be healed.” Flynn assured her, Lucy nodded as she liked the sound of that. “But there’s no harm in going to the farm and letting Holly play with some dogs for free.” He added as he climbed onto his side of the bed.

“I agree and I also think it wouldn’t hurt to let Holly see the puppies and see if she believes Bepo is in there.” Lucy said carefully as she looked to Flynn.

“Like a test?” Flynn mused.
“Is it too mean?” Lucy asked unsure as she felt it might be worth a try.

“Not if we don’t tell her.” Flynn said.

“It’s just that she seems so sure of what she wants, almost like they are visions.” Lucy said.

“I don’t think she has visions. I’ve never seen her show any of the signs that Jiya does when she has visions. I doubt if Holly did have powers she could have mastered them at such a young age.” Flynn argued as he turned off the lamp by the bed. They were drowned in darkness.

“I know we keep saying that but my other-self time travelled while pregnant and it’s eerie how she’s got such a perfect image in her mind about the dogs. Now, there’s these puppies and she’s talking about a baby sibling.” Lucy pointed out.

“Karl is finding the dogs based on Holly’s descriptions. If it were a vision, then it would happen more randomly.” Flynn countered as he settled into the bed and got into a more comfortable position.

“Random like a stranger dumping a litter of puppies that look like Bepo?” Lucy asked, she didn’t need her eyes to adjust the dark as she sensed his smile.

“Are you worried about having baby?” he asked softly, it was a leap to jump from puppies to babies but Holly's drawings included a pregnant Lucy. So, it wasn't a huge leap.

“No.” she said without hesitation as it didn’t worry her. She did want children, just not at the moment. “But if it’s going to happen, I’d really like to have a home ready.” Lucy said, she looked to him; wishing she could see his face. “How do you feel about more kids?” she asked him, more seriously.

“I’m open to it.” He said he turned on his side and caressed her upper arm. He couldn’t entirely see her, so he wanted to know exactly where she was.

“That’s rather vague.” Lucy commented wryly.

“Pregnancy isn’t a simple thing. It can be complex, painful and scary.” He told her, his choice of words sent red flags up for her.

“You’re really selling it.” Lucy quipped, Flynn chuckled before he leaned over and pressed a gentle kiss on her shoulder.

“Lorena and I had troubles conceiving. Then the pregnancy with Iris was a difficult one. We have no idea how it will be with you and I.” He told her, he had to admit it left him a little concerned especially with her hand and the nerve pain the doctor warned about. He was also worried about going through the same situation with Lorena again but with Lucy.

“I’ll be clumsy, we can bank on that. The rest? We just have to wait and see, but my mother never had any problems with Amy or I when she was pregnant. So, that’s got to be a good sign, right?” Lucy asked him, she had no clue about pregnancy except what was taught in sex ed class and shown on TV. She didn’t have any female friends who were parents to even ask about it.

“Maybe,” he said, he wasn’t ready to open up entirely about his past experiences yet. “I agree, we need to be above ground and have a home that’s ours.” He reminded her.

“So, 7 bedrooms and at least two bathrooms.” Lucy suggested.

“How many kids do you want?” Flynn asked.
“Well, you, me, Holly, Baby and one guestroom and two decent sized studies.” She told him as that's how she saw the logistics of the house in about two seconds' worth of thought. "Oh and two bathrooms or at least two toilets." She added.

“We don’t need two studies.” Flynn argued as they didn’t need to live in a mansion to be happy. He also knew for a fact he didn’t need one.

“I’m not sharing my study with you.” Lucy told him firmly, he couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Really? So in sickness and health but a definite 'no' on sharing of the study.” Flynn joked.

“I need my space.” Lucy told him, he realised she was being serious as a non-negotiable for her. Not that he would deny her in having one.

“I don’t need a study.” He told her.

“Ok, 6 bedrooms and at least two bathrooms. You taking mental notes?” She asked him, he smiled and chuckled.

“Yes, two bathrooms so Holly and our second child have their own toilet and don’t interrupt us.” He stated.

“Exactly. Holly’s room should be warm cream colours. That way all her toys and bedding from here look more vibrant and it will save us repainting when she’s a teen.” Lucy said, Flynn smiled as she had given this a lot of thought. It told him that she had been fantasising about this for a while.

“I guess you have a colour in mind for your study that I’m not allowed in?” he asked in amusement. Lucy smiled in the dark as she didn't have a colour mind. She just knew she wanted a large desk, comfy chairs and books.

“You’re allowed in it but you can’t use it as a study unless you’re doing our taxes or me.” She said.

“I’m doing the taxes now?” he asked with a chuckle.

“Yes, because they give me a headache and you look like a man who knows a tax loophole or two.” Lucy told him, Flynn laughed as she had overestimated him. He was a stickler for rules when it came to tax as he had suffered an audit once before. He never wanted it to happen again.

“Ok.” He said not correcting her at all. “We’ll also need a decent sized yard for the dogs.” He said adding to their picture of what their future home could look like.

“What happens if we have twins?” she asked him, playing the extreme scenario out.

“You’ll lose your study as we need the guest bedroom for my parents.” He deadpanned.

“We’ll need a 7 bedroom home.” Lucy told him, he laughed and pressed his face into her arm and groaned in an exasperated manner. He lifted his face up and looked at her, his vision adjusted enough in the dark that he could make out her face. She smiled up at him that it was hard to tell if she was being serious or playing him.

“Look, I doubt we’ll have twins as it doesn’t run in my family and I don’t remember it running in yours.” He pointed out.

“It doesn’t but you never know, all that time travel confusing the body and your sperm could be super fertile.” She looked to him, “Don’t even laugh as you can’t prove me wrong.” She informed
“If it helps my body doesn’t feel confused or super powered.” He offered, he tried to not to laugh as it was absurd.

“Well, my period has been completely out of whack ever since all this started 3 years ago.” She informed him in a matter of fact manner.

“Maybe you should talk to a doctor about it. If you’re worried about it, in general.” He suggested.

“No, it’s just stress, poor diet and over 30 different time zones. I’ll become regular at some point again.” Lucy said, she turned her face and tried to read him. “This stuff doesn’t bother you, right? I know some guys like to pretend menstruation doesn’t exist or it’s like monster ruining their sex life.” she said hesitantly.

“Lucy, it’s fine. It’s just a natural process of the female body. I can handle talking about it, I prefer to know what I need to prepare.” Flynn told her.

“So you can run and hide from me?” Lucy asked.

“No, that would be ridiculous. I’d prefer we always have what you like to use during that time on hand. You also haven’t had your period yet.” he pointed out.

“I know, I had it before we ended up here. So, maybe in another week or so… I never know. It’s not clockwork.” She realised she was not going to be able to use tampons as she always used her right hand. She was not letting Flynn do that for her. Yet another activity she was going to have to adapt to. “I’ll need to stock up.” She said more to herself than Flynn.

“Have you thought of regulating it with birth control?” he asked her

“I’d prefer not to, if that’s ok. I don’t want to mess too much with my body at the moment. I know condoms aren’t 100% effective and birth control will-“ she started but Flynn cut her off.

“Your body, your choice. Condoms are fine with me. I’m more concerned for your comfort and general health. You don’t need to go on the pill for me.” He assured her. Lucy let out a breath she didn’t realise she had been holding in.

"Ok," Lucy said, “Do you think Holly is ok in general?” she asked him, changing topics as Flynn might be ok with talking about her period. But she needed to broach the subject in small doses. But she appreciated that it wasn’t a big deal for him.

“Yes, why?” Flynn asked.

“Just the not inviting Rufus thing. They get along. I’ve seen them get along and be happy together.” Lucy said as she just felt completely confused by Holly’s withdrawing from Rufus.

“I think she’s picking up on the issues between Jiya and Rufus. Holly has picked Jiya’s side as she has a close relationship with Jiya than she does with Rufus.” Flynn said thoughtfully.

“Do we have to pick a side?” Lucy asked him wryly as she planned on being neutral.

“No, we’re adults but for the sake of Holly’s party, we should let her have who she wants there.” Flynn said, he felt it was important that Holly feel as if she was prioritized. Not that Holly said anything but he could tell that she felt like she wasn’t as important as their work.
Taking down Rittenhouse was important, it had meant sacrifices all so they could have the life they were about to begin. Holly needed to understand life was going to be different. She would be a higher priority than before.

“Rufus might get upset.” Lucy pointed out.

“About getting out of 4 year old’s party? I’m sure Rufus will get over his disappointment.” Flynn said in amusement.

“Ok, yeah, it’s silly.” Lucy conceded as Flynn chuckled.

“He might get upset when he knows Karl is hanging around Jiya and going to a party he’s not invited to.” Flynn pointed out.

“Karl and Jiya are friends.” Lucy said.

“I know, but we are friends and look where we are now. Married with a child.” Flynn said with a smile.

“Our situation is a little different.” She reminded him as she understated the situation entirely.

“Just a little.” He agreed before he leaned down and kissed her a soft and slow manner.

“We have condoms and a door that locks, here.” Lucy whispered against his lips between kisses.

“Very thin walls.” He told her, Lucy gave an exasperated sigh. “Soon, I promise. But tonight, let’s just sleep.” He added, before he kissed her again, this time deeply intoxicating. She moaned as she sank into the pleasure and skill of his lips and tongue.

A few days later,

“Uncle Karl can speak Arabic too. He speaks lots of languages.” Holly said casually as she ate her breakfast but Jiya was not fooled. Holly was playing matchmaker but Jiya didn’t know why. Flynn and Lucy had left early to see Lucy’s specialist and get some shopping for their trip to Yosemite. Jiya had offered to babysit as she figured it would go a lot faster if they didn't have Holly underfoot.

“He’s a very talented person.” Jiya said truthfully, but she was not going to duped by a 4 yr old into a relationship she didn’t want. She just wanted a friend, as they were harder to find and keep than boyfriends.

“You’re very talented person.” Holly told her in a matter of fact manner.

“Thank you, but what’s going on here?” Jiya asked, calling Holly on her game.

“What do you mean?” Holly asked before she drank some of her milk.

“Just you been talking a lot about Uncle Karl this morning. Seems like you have an agenda.” Jiya told her, she looked at Holly with an exaggerated expression of suspicion. So, Holly could see she was not fooling Jiya.

“What’s an agenda?” Holly asked innocently as she didn’t know what the word meant.

“It means a plan that you get something you want when it works. Now tell me what you want.” Jiya
said before she ate some of her porridge.

“I want you and Uncle Karl to be friends.” Holly told her with a shrug.

“We are friends.” Jiya said.

“Best friends.” Holly clarified with a closed lip smile.

“Why?” Jiya asked her.

“Cause then we can be a big happy family where everyone gets along.” Holly told her, Jiya placed her spoon back into her bowl and gave Holly a serious look.

“That’s a very nice sentiment but even big happy families have times where they fight.” Jiya told her, Holly opened her mouth to argue but closed it. Jiya looked over her shoulder to see Rufus.

“Hey,” he said to them as he passed the table and grabbed a cup of coffee.

“Morning.” Jiya replied, he looked handsome. His hair better groomed and his clothes were far more casual than she’d seen him wear before. It suited him.

“Where is everyone?” he asked as he sat down at their table. Clearly trying, though Jiya had no idea what it meant in the long run.

“Lucy is at a Doctor’s appointment with Flynn. Denise left half an hour ago for her office. Connor is probably at the main offices for MI.” Jiya told him, Rufus nodded before he looked to Holly.

“Hey kid.” Rufus said to her.

“Hi.” Holly said shyly before she focussed her meal like it her sole purpose in life. Rufus looked to Jiya, she gave him a shrug as she had no idea what the problem was. Though it was a lie as she knew part of the reason. After a couple minutes of awkward silences, Rufus gave up.

“Ok, so, I’m going to get to work.” He said, he rose from the table with his coffee.

“You don’t want breakfast?” Jiya asked him.

“I’ve already had breakfast.” Rufus said, he left the table and walked off the direction of the landing bay.

“Is Uncle Karl calling me today?” Holly asked Jiya, back to her former self now Rufus was away from them.

“He is, in one hour.” Jiya said information Holly already knew.

“Good, I got important business to discuss with him.” Holly said in a matter of fact manner.

“That sounds serious.” Jiya remarked in amusement.

“That’s what Uncle Connor says when he makes phone calls.” Holly said with a smile.

“Cheeky Monkey.” Jiya said with a chuckle.

“The incision sites have healed up beautifully. Could you flex your middle finger, please?” Dr Watanabe asked her. Lucy looked at her hand, she waited for her middle finger to move or the others
“I can’t.” Lucy said as her hand barely twitched even though her mind was screaming at the hand to move; to do something. But nothing happened.

“It’s ok, you still have a lot of healing to do. I figured it being your only unbroken finger you might have some motility.” She saw Lucy’s worried expression. “Don’t be concerned, you had severe structural damage to the mechanic system in your hand. Just keep using the removable cast. We’ll take an x-ray in 4 weeks’ time and talk about the next stage of your recovery then.” Dr Watanabe told her as she wrapped Lucy’s arm back into the removable cast.

“Is there anything I can do to help it heal faster?” Lucy asked her, she put her arm back into the sling for comfort. She was not feeling enthusiastic about her recovery. Her bruises were nearly all gone and her pain levels for most of her body had decreased except her hand and wrist.

“No, sadly the body works on its own time table. Just take the pain meds and don’t play with your fingers too much until the 12 weeks are up. I don’t want you to accidentally tear newly repaired tendons.” Dr Watanabe said with a wry smile.

“They can tear again?” Lucy asked, she couldn’t help but feel a little freaked out by the thought of injuring herself so easily.

“Yes, they can which is why you’ll err on the side of caution. Not use your hand until the cast comes off for good.” She cautioned her.

“Ok.” Lucy said with a sigh of relief.

“How are you sleeping?” Dr Watanabe asked her as she wrote something in her tablet computer. Lucy wished she could just lean over and read it but Dr Watanabe was quick. She placed her arm over the screen and gave Lucy her full attention.

“Pretty good, I won’t lie, I’ve been having nightmares but I’ve been coping well or at least I feel I am. But the hand and wrist are the worst. I get that nerve pain you warned me about.” Lucy told her.

“It’s to be expected, hopefully it will lessen in time. Have you seen a psychologist yet?” Dr Watanabe asked out of curiosity.

“No, I haven’t. I just want to feel physically better before I unpack everything that happened. My job wasn’t exactly safe, I knew that going in but it’s over now. So, I have the time to decompress. We’re going on holidays for a fortnight, so I have no excuse to not take it easy. To be honest, I think I just need to be around my family.” Lucy explained with a closed lip smile.

“Nothing wrong with that. Rehab won’t start until your fractures have fully healed. So, relax and enjoy your holidays. If you have any questions or pain issues, call me.” Dr Watanabe told her.
“So, um what’s up with Karl and Holly?” Rufus asked as Holly had been running and literally rolling around the living room with Jiya’s phone in an animated fashion as she face-timed Karl. Whatever the two were talking about, it was apparently amusing as Holly laughed a lot.

“They are friends. Well, he’s been adopted by Holly as her new Uncle. Why?” Jiya asked.

“Just weird, he was the bad guy in our reality. He’s calling your phone and chatting with Flynn and Lucy’s kid.” Rufus said with a frown as he didn’t like this development. He also had to wonder why Karl had Jiya’s number.

“Well, Karl and I are friends now. We have each other’s numbers. He was undercover with Rittenhouse, so not a bad guy after all. How’s the cabin?” Jiya asked him, changing the topic.

“Good, quiet.” Rufus said, he didn’t mind it. He did like waking up to fresh air than the recycled and filtered air of the bunker. There was something just a little musty about the bunker. No matter how long it was lived in, some smells just lingered.

“Must be nice.” Jiya said casually, she tried not to snap but she just felt her hackles rise as she felt him judging everyone. It was bad enough to be under constant scrutiny, it was worse to know you’d come up short every time.

“Yeah, it is, and I also saw my family.” He added, Jiya looked up from her computer with a surprised expression.

“How did that go?” she asked him.

“Not well. I’m kind of an asshole in this time.” He stated, she wore a wry smile as she didn’t disagree.

“Yeah, you are.” She agreed before she looked back at her computer.

“Actually, I was looking over my past and I was a complete asshole to you. I don’t know why you ever really dated me at all.” He said honestly.

“Same reason that your Jiya dated you.” Jiya told him with a shrug.

“Well, I fixed it.” Rufus said, she frowned.

“Fixed what?” she asked in confusion.

“All the stuff I stole from you. The patents on coding that is entirely your work. You’ll start getting the profits from them.” He told her.

“They are the property of Mason Industries. I knew that when I wrote them.” Jiya said in a frank manner as taking the patents felt wrong even though it was her work. If anything she felt like he was paying her off, it made her feel grubby than honoured.

“They weren’t. The patents were in my name not Mason Industries. I’ve transferred the ownership of them back to you. You created them, you should own them and benefit from your hard work.” Rufus said firmly, it had felt good to give her back what was rightfully hers. Even if she didn't look happy to receive them.
“Are you dumping me?” She asked him.

“No, I mean—” he gave a sigh and nodded as she was right. He was handing her what was the equivalent of her ‘stuff’ that was in his possession. “Yes, I guess I am. I was wrong clean slate is impossible for us.” He told her.

“You suggested it.” Jiya said, swallowing her hurt feelings.

“I know, I was wrong. I can get over you not being exactly how I knew you or her to be. I also can’t get past who I was here. I don’t know why you put up with me when he was a dick to you. Not to mention, I have my family relationships to repair first before I can do us. It’s not fair to put our lives on hold for one another.” He told her truthfully.

“So, you feel like I’m the victim here and should be compensated so you can move on without a guilty conscious?” she asked incredulously.

“No, those Patents should be yours and they are now. It’s not compensation, it’s returning stolen property.” He told her firmly. “As for breaking up, we aren’t technically together. It was one date. Let’s be real, my life is a mess and I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t want to drag you with me.” He told her.

“Do you think I know what I’m doing? Cause I don’t.” she told him.

“Which makes us a terrible idea. It’s all just a whirlpool of baggage and emotions, that I don’t have time to unpack with you.” He said honestly. All Jiya heard was that she wasn’t worth his time and energy. It hurt more than any burn from past Rufus could’ve given her.

“Maybe I should quit and make it all less awkward for us both and just consider the patents as my severance pay.” She said quietly, she felt like the biggest idiot and was internalising everything to be her fault even though she knew the truth.

“Jiya, don’t quit over me. You know there's a non-compete clause in your contract.” He told her.

“Right, so just work and nothing else. Got it.” She said bitterly as she stared at her computer screen hard as she refused to cry in front of him.

“No-“ Rufus started but she shook her head and he closed his mouth.

“No, don’t try and be the nice guy. Denise wouldn’t let me go… so, just…you know what? Just go, I can work faster when you’re not around.” She told him frankly.

“Ok, I’ll come back later.” Rufus said, Jiya threw up her hands and shook her head because she had no control over anything.

“Well, you’re the boss. You can do whatever you want.” Jiya said sarcastically. Rufus pursed his lips and nodded as he rose from the desk. He walked away, Jiya stared at her computer, she wiped at her eyes before the tears fell.

“We should’ve brought Holly, she probably needs some new clothes and shoes too.” Lucy said as she and Flynn were in Nordstrom picking up some warmer clothes for themselves. They had stopped by a few shops picking up just some basic clothing and bags as they didn’t have any. Their clothing in the bunker was really down to Pyjamas and a few clothing items not enough to get through a week without Flynn’s parents worrying about their hygiene and financial state.
“She’s fine in the clothing department. I’ve already packed her bags. While you and I have nothing.” Flynn said as he flicked through the racks not inspired at all by women’s jackets in front of him. Lucy was definitely pickier than him as he’d spent about 10 minutes in the Mens’ section and was done. While they were still in the women's department sifting through every rack.

“We do have a terrible habit of leaving clothing behind in strange places.” Lucy said in a low voice. She playfully bumped her good shoulder into his. They smiled at one another. “We need snacks for the road.” She added.

“Good idea, we should also stop at the pharmacy and grab some of the essentials. Your prescription refill.” he said as he pulled out a navy puffer jacket for Lucy. She shook her head. He placed it back on the rack.

“Like Magnums.” She told him in a low voice.

“Bit cold for Ice Cream.” He mused.

“What?” she asked in confusion.

“Magnum Ice creams.” He answered in an obtuse manner, he chuckled as she playfully punched him in the arm.

“Not what I’m leaning towards here.” She told him teasingly as she turned her attention to the rack of clothing to where he stood and flicked through.

“I know, but we have a box at home.” He reminded her.

“We need more.” She told him in a low voice.

“You’re very eager.” Flynn said, as they had nearly a full box in the bunker. He was pretty sure it would take them a while to get through it first.

“I would think you’re just as eager or at least I hope you are.” Lucy said lightly as she could as she wished she could be as collected as Flynn appeared to be.

“I am, but I’m also a very patient man.” He reminded her, he pulled out a long rust coloured trench coat that almost looked identical to the one she wore in 1972.

“No, you’re a tease.” She said, “And yes to the jacket, but next size up as I like to layer.” She told him, Flynn nodded as he found the right size and slung the jacket over his arm.

“Just need a couple warmer jumpers for you and then we’re off to the pharmacy where we need toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner. Some ibuprofen, barf bags and dramamine for Holly.” He said, he looked to Lucy half expecting a disgusted expression. No one was a fan of vomit. But instead she was smiling. "You ok?" he asked her.

“Look at us, doing normal stuff like normal people.” She mused. He couldn't help but return her smile as she was right. While they had been playing catch ups on each other, they had been doing normal life activities. It was really nice to not worry about Rittenhouse, to live again.

“Want to get stay out for lunch?” he asked, he knew going back to bunker would break the current spell on them.

“You think Jiya will mind?” Lucy asked.
“Only one way to find out.” Flynn said as he pulled out his mobile phone to make the call.

“Auntie Jiya.” Holly said, Jiya cleared her throat and swallowed her hurt feelings as she turned to the little girl with a fake smile.

“Yeah, Monkey.” Jiya replied.

“Why do you look really sad? Is it cause I’m going away with Mommy and Daddy? You can come with us.” Holly offered with a smile as she hugged the railing of the stairs to the platform.

“That’s a lovely offer but I have to work. Did you finish talking with Uncle Karl?” Jiya asked, Holly nodded as she pulled the phone out of the front pocket of her overalls and held it out to her. Jiya smiled as she took it, checked for messages before tucking it away in her jacket.

“Yep, he showed me all the puppies and dogs at his farm.” Holly said with a grin.

“Wow, I bet that was fun.” Jiya said with enthusiasm, she loved Holly’s smile as it could light up the darkest of moods.

“Uuhh, I can’t wait to see it!” she said excitedly before her expression grew sad. “Did Uncle Rufus make you sad?” Holly asked her.

“Yeah, a little.” Jiya admitted with a nod.

“I don’t like him, he’s mean like the bad man.” Holly grumbled.

“No, he’s not. Come here.” Jiya said, she lifted Holly into her lap and held her close. “Uncle Rufus just doesn’t want to be my boyfriend anymore. It was his choice and we have to respect it, ok?” She asked Holly, the little girl nodded.

“Uncle Karl can be your boyfriend.” Holly offered, Jiya couldn’t help but laugh.

“No, it’s ok.” She assured Holly.


“I don’t need a boyfriend. Karl is a very good friend to me, I need him to my friend not my boyfriend.” Jiya told her.

“Oh, ok.” Holly said, Jiya smiled as she loved how Holly didn’t know about the world to ask more questions. She just accepted things as they were.

“Now, how about we see what we have for lunch.” Jiya offered as her phone rang. She pulled it out of her pocket and saw Flynn was calling. She had a pretty good feeling he and Lucy were not going to be home for lunch.

“Ok.” Holly said with a smile.

A couple hours later,

“You’re allergic to Kiwi fruit?” Lucy asked in disbelief as Flynn drove them back to the bunker.

“Yes, you sound surprised.” Flynn said.
“I am as that is weird.” She informed him. He smiled as they had shared a lot of personal information over the day. Lucy had many weird and wonderful quirks not too mention some questionable taste in music. Yet, his food allergy was what was deemed the ‘weirdest’.

“It’s not weird, it’s normal.” He argued in good humour.

“But I’ve seen you eat it.” Lucy told him.

“No, you haven’t.” He said, as he avoided Kiwi fruit when and wherever he could.

“Still weird, I’ve never heard of anyone being allergic to Kiwi fruit.” Lucy informed him.

“Until now, Holly is allergic to it too as well.” He told her.

“How do you know?” She asked, she didn’t know that. She felt like groaning as it was just another failing as a parent. She was just lucky she knew now instead of nearly killing Holly with a Golden Kiwi Fruit for a snack.

“My Flynn wrote a Journal.” Flynn said as he turned onto the dirt road that lead up to the makeshift carpark outside the bunker.

“My Lucy forgot that tidbit.” Lucy grumbled.

“Or she kept it all in her head, your other-selves were never reliable for writing every single detail necessary to complete a mission.” Flynn said, while his other-self was prolific in keeping details about everything. There was no way it could’ve been compiled into one book like future Lucy did. It seemed like his other-self was afraid of losing his memories from a time-shift and wanted to document it all.

“Thanks.” Lucy replied in a dry manner.

“It’s accurate.” Flynn told her, before he wore a closed lip smile.

“I couldn’t do all the work for you.” She argued in good humour.

“It could’ve helped a little.” He pointed out, Lucy had to agree. While she hated the mystery of the Journal, she also hated how rather vague it was. It was like the world’s worst history book. The fact Flynn was able to piece some kind of plan from it, was a miracle.

“I can’t even imagine writing the journal. Let alone what I wrote.” Lucy said, she knew she’d struggle with not writing it more succinctly and offering more information. That and referencing it, she couldn’t let that go as she felt it made her journal incredibly unreliable.

“You don’t have to as it’s already written.” Flynn reminded her.

“But history is different even with this timeline’s journal.” Lucy pointed out.

“History was always imperfect.” Flynn argued, she appreciated his sentiments but it wasn’t comforting.

“I never saved Amy, she is gone. That means my history, my memories of her won’t happen. I won’t feel obliged to help you or the others.” Lucy reminded him.

“You haven’t read your Journal from this time, have you?” he asked.

“No.” Lucy said, she could barely stomach her Journal. She couldn’t look at the terrible handwriting
of this timeline’s Journal and its information. She knew she’d want to re-jig it and that could spell disaster.

“You mention her, you put her photo in the Journal and you wrote to yourself. To try to save her.” Flynn told her as he pulled the car into the parking lot. He pulled the handbrake on and turned off the engine.

“But I failed.” Lucy reminded him, Flynn undid his seat belt and turned to face her in his seat.

“No, you tried to save her. But there’s a knot in time, Jiya said it. Amy exists for 25 years because of you but at the same time she is erased because of Rittenhouse. Jiya believes we’re in a loop of some kind. That every loop, things happen just a little more differently than the last. So, maybe this time we didn’t save her. But maybe next time we will.” Flynn offered, she appreciated what he was saying but she had come to terms with the fact that there were some things she couldn’t fix. Saving Amy was so far out of her wheelhouse that trying over and over to save her was just too much heartache in it.

“Maybe, but if it changes then we lose all of this. I will lose all of this, just like Wyatt lost his life in this last jump.” Lucy pointed out.

“If I don’t get the Journal, then none of this happens at all.” Flynn reminded her.

“What if five years from now, we have three kids and a beautiful life. I mess up the meeting in São Paulo and come back to an empty home. You and the kids are gone, Amy is gone.” Lucy argued as it was a very real fear for her. It was this kind of pressure that she didn’t want to think about. Flynn reached across the console between them and cupped her face with his hand.

“The jump has to happen, you have to have faith in yourself. What happened with Wyatt, it was a large ripple effect from a change he created. All you have to do is tell me to have hope, that Rittenhouse will be destroyed. That the Journal will help me.” He told her in a sincere manner, she could tell that he believed what he was saying.

“You make it sound so easy.” Lucy told him. His lips quirked in a faint smile.

“It’s not but you’ve talked me off the ledge a couple of times. You know how to reach me at my darkest. São Paulo was a very dark time for me. There is no doubt in my mind, you’ll be able to reach me and when you come back, we will be here.” He promised her.

“You shouldn’t make promises you can’t keep.” Lucy warned softly.

“You don’t need to worry about this.” He told her in a soft and reassuring manner. His thumb gently stroked her cheek.

“Because of fate?” she asked him.

“Maybe.” He mused, she rolled her eyes. She was a big subscriber to fate but never felt it had anything to do with love. “Don’t roll your eyes at me. We ended up married with a beautiful daughter.” He reminded her.

“Because Claudette Colvin died.” She reminded him.

“No, because the Journal is different and it sent me down a different path. But it still led to us meeting and working together. To us, being here; together even with the shift. We’re still here, together.” He told her.
“Where we fell in love and had Holly.” She offered him wryly.

“Pretty sure that was the other way around.” He said cheekily.

“True.” She said before she smiled.

“I know it's not easy to let it go but you should. You can't prepare for that trip but you can make a lot of happy memories between now and then.” He said as brushed his knuckles against her cheek and dropped his hand down to take hers. He gave it a comforting squeeze.

“Yeah.” She said softly as she knew the only reason to go back was to make sure that Rittenhouse remained dead and gone. Everything else was secondary and Lucy needed to remember that.

“You never know, you might come back to half a dozen kids and 10 dogs. The ripple effects can go either way.” He said, Lucy couldn’t help but snort a laugh.

“I don’t think I could handle that.” She told him.

“I think you could. But I believe everything will be ok, no matter what.” he said confidently.

“Ok.” She said, she took a fortifying breath as she felt it was enough that he believed in her. It would be enough until she started to believe in herself again.

“Three kids?” He asked changing the topic.

“You never know we might end up with twins.” She told him mockingly, Flynn laughed.

“We haven’t even had sex yet and you’re still worrying about my super sperm.” He teased her, Lucy dropped her head and sighed.

“I’m never living that down, am I?” she asked him, she lifted her head up and saw his amused smile.

“If it helps, you don’t get pregnant from sharing a toilet seat or swallowing my come.” He informed her, Lucy playfully punched him in the arm as he chuckled. She made a face as she was not used to him being so crass.

“Thanks, but I remember sex ed classes.” Lucy told him, she undid her seat belt and leaned in close waiting for a kiss.

“Looks like someone let Holly out of the bunker.” Flynn said, Lucy looked in the direction of the bunker and saw their daughter running over to them. She turned back to Flynn; they shared a couple of brief kisses before Flynn got out of the car. He picked up Holly as she hurtled herself into his arms. Jiya followed Holly but didn’t throw herself at Flynn.

“Hi Daddy! Did you get apple chips?” Holly asked excitedly.

“We sure did.” He told her.

“Yes!” Holly cheered.

“Thank you.” Lucy said as Jiya beat Flynn to opening the door for her. Grateful for the assistance given the door was too heavy to open with all her injuries.

“How did it go with the doctor?” Jiya asked Lucy.

“All good, healing up well and she doesn’t want to see me for a month unless I accidentally injured
myself.” Lucy said.

“But we’re avoiding that.” Flynn said, Lucy nodded as she was ready to be fully recovered or as close as she could get.

“How’s everything going here?” Lucy asked Jiya.

“Good. Holly and Karl discussed some very serious business today.” Jiya said with an amused smile while Holly nodded seriously.

“You did?” Flynn asked Holly.

“Uhuh, he showed me his farm with his phone. It’s so pretty and there are like a billion dogs there!” Holly informed them.

“A billion, must be a really big farm.” Lucy said dryly.

“It’s huge.” Holly told her.

“Well, we will be seeing it after we come back from Yosemite.” Flynn reminded Holly, so there was no doubt that it wouldn’t happen.

“That’s what he said too. I think Auntie Jiya should come with us. She can play with Uncle Karl’s dogs too.” Holly told them.

“It’s up to Auntie Jiya.” Lucy said as everyone looked to her.

“I’ll most likely be there as I should have this wrapped up in two weeks.” Jiya said, she hoped to have the project wrapped up and the lifeboat under a tarp by then.

“You can adopt a dog too!” Holly said excitedly.

“We’re not adopting a dog yet.” Lucy reminded Holly.

“But if Bepo or Lucky is there, then we have to bring them home.” Holly told her.

“We haven’t got a home above ground yet.” Flynn said, Holly made a face as she remembered the deal.

“We could get a home or borrow one like Nanna and Grandpa do.” Holly suggested.

“Let’s talk about that another time. Right now, we need to unpack the car and have an afternoon snack.” Flynn said, setting the schedule. He kissed Holly’s temple and placed her on the ground.

"I can hold the apple chips." Holly told him, Flynn laughed.

"Not happening.” he told her, Holly pouted by still followed him to the trunk to help.
“Hey, you’re still up.” Rufus observed as Lucy walked into the kitchen; sometime after midnight.

“Yeah, can’t seem to sleep.” Lucy said, she had to admit she was nervous leaving about leaving the bunker as it truly solidified the fact it was over. But also, the new fear for the future, when she had to go back to Sao Paulo to start it all over again. The fear of fouling it up that it would alter her future.

“Cause Flynn snores loudly?” Rufus asked as he poured an unhealthy amount of sugar into his coffee. Lucy gave a closed lip smile as he was half right.

“Something like that. What are you doing here so late?” Lucy asked him.

“Getting in some work. Jiya prefers we not work together.” Rufus said, he looked down like a child guilty of eating all the cookies.

“Hmm, I couldn’t help but notice things are tense between you and Jiya over dinner.” Lucy said as she got herself a glass of water.

“That’s an understatement.” Rufus said wryly.

“Yeah, want to talk about it?” Lucy asked before she took a sip of her water. Rufus shook his head.

“I feel like it would make things worse as she’s pretty much winning you in our break up but not break up.” He said with a frown as he didn’t know exactly what to call it.

“Flynn and I are not taking sides.” Lucy told him. Rufus levelled her with an incredulous look.

“I’m not invited to your kid’s birthday party, now am I?” He asked as he knew it was coming up and Lucy nor Flynn had mentioned it to him. But then he’d been so wrapped up in his own world he had no clue what they were up to.

“Because Holly doesn’t want you there. It’s her party, we want her to enjoy her day.” Lucy explained.

“So, Holly hates me too.” Rufus stated, it bugged him that the kid didn’t like him.

“She doesn’t hate you. She probably thinks that you’re confusing as you went from being an asshole to a nice man. You’re also upsetting her favourite person; Jiya.” Lucy informed him, Rufus ducked his head as he knew Lucy was right. Jiya and Holly had a strong connection from all the time they spent together while the team raced around through history.

“Good point.” Rufus conceded, “But I’m trying to do what’s best for Jiya and I.” He said defensively.

“By pushing Jiya out of your life?” Lucy asked incredulously.

“My life is a mess where everyone hates me because I’m an asshole or a con man who’s stolen from them or used them for my own gain. Connor thinks it’s completely fine to be like that.” Rufus told her.

“Well, Connor wants to be filthy rich and revered like a god. So, he doesn’t care how he gets to that stage, only that he gets there.” Lucy reminded him, she knew it was harsh but it was accurate for all Connor’s heart and deep sense of need to care for them. The Connor they knew from their timeline.
was not the same as the one that now existed. This Connor never lost his fame or fortune, so he never had to question who he was or what he was striving for.

“That is accurate.” Rufus conceded.

“You don’t want to be like that. Frankly, I don’t even know what you want.” Lucy said earnestly.

“I want my old life back where I was a grunt who made his own hours and built things that helped people. I don’t need to be rich, just comfortable.” Rufus said.

“Grunts don’t make their own hours or buy houses on a whim.” Lucy pointed out.

“You know what I mean.” Rufus said.

“So, you want to dial back to a semi-normal life.” Lucy stated.

“Yeah, I want Jiya but it’s a mess.” Rufus sighed.

“You keep saying that. But what you forget is that you don’t walk away from a mess. You roll your sleeves up and untangle it, try make it work.” Lucy told him.

“Your analogy got a little-” Rufus started and Lucy rolled her eyes at him.

‘Yeah, I know but you get my point. If you really want Jiya then work for it.” Lucy told him, it was some advice she needed to take herself.

“I get that but don’t know if I love her or can given the history or lack of shared history.” Rufus said in a low voice.

“That’s why you date one another to find out.” Lucy told him.

“She’s very forward.” Rufus said making excuses. Lucy gave him a droll look.

“Oh my, that must be so terrible to have a beautiful woman sexually attracted to you.” Lucy deadpanned.

“Don’t be rude, you’re a mother now.” Rufus said as he didn’t like Lucy patronising him.

“So? I'm stating facts and you’re all ‘poor me’ instead of seeing the bright side.” Lucy said.

“How is there a bright side?” Rufus asked.

“You’re alive, healthy and so is your family. Your love life has great potential. A beautiful and amazing woman who you have a lot in common with, is attracted to you. You have enough money to do whatever you want.” Lucy told him.

“Money is not helping.” Rufus argued.

“That’s because you’re not using it the right way. You’re not supposed to use to put up walls and ‘fix’ things. Especially 'things' that most likely didn’t need to be ‘fixed’.“ She countered.

“Then what should it be used for?” Rufus asked.

“Use it for fun and life. Building new memories. You didn’t need to 'fix' things with Jiya by giving her the patents or levelling her wealth to yours. You could have just discussed that you saw a lot of your money came from her hard work. That you want to give her the patents and money as a bonus
for sacrificing her life out there for us. Let's be real, she definitely didn’t sign onto Mason industries for this.” Lucy told him as she gestured to the bunker.

“Yeah, I could have done that way.” Rufus conceded.

“Don’t try and compensate being an asshole to others buy throwing money at the injured party. It’s what a rich asshole does when they don’t want to do the hard yards.” Lucy told him in a matter of fact manner.

“Ok.” Rufus agreed.

“You want to fix things with Jiya, fix them by meeting up with her like a normal person would. Date one another like you said and instead of freezing up when things get intimate, just go for it.” Lucy advised him.

“This getting awkward.” Rufus told her, he thought of Lucy like a sister and he did not talk about sex with family. She smiled and gave a shrug.

“Life is short, you shouldn’t hide from it. If it doesn’t work out, then at least you tried and were open for it to happen.” Lucy told him.

“Yeah.” Rufus agreed quietly.

“I’m going to try and get some sleep. I have a big day tomorrow.” Lucy said.

“Running away for a holiday with Flynn’s family.” Rufus said, as he remembered it being mentioned over dinner.

“Technically mine too.” Lucy pointed out.

“Everything is ok?” Rufus asked, he didn’t know why but old habits were hard to break. While Flynn was their friend, he had been their enemy. The fact Wyatt had turned on them, it left him cautious and more understanding of why Holly saw him differently.

“Yeah, it is.” Lucy said with a smile, she bid him a goodnight and left him to his work.

The next day,

Lucy woke up when the car hit a bump. She swallowed a yawn and looked outside the window of the passenger side to find them surrounded by nature. It was a beautiful day, she had slept for half of the road trip. She rubbed at her face and turned her attention to Flynn and Holly.

“Good sleep?” Flynn asked her with a smile.

“Not too bad.” Lucy said as she adjusted herself in the passenger seat. She sat more upright and looked around at the surroundings.

“Are we there yet?” Holly asked, the question was also in Lucy’s mind.

“Just around the bend.” Flynn offered, just saying the words brought up memories of him asking the same question to his parents. Iris doing the same, but she usually had carsickness and sounded miserable. Holly however was good on the winding roads and bonus; no vomit. So, he considered it a successful trip even if Holly consumed more dried apple than he would like.

“Good, I need to go potty!” Holly announced impatiently. Luckily to his word, they turned the
corner and right before them down the short drive was a large home.

“Ok, we’re nearly there.” Flynn announced.

“Hurry.” Holly huffed.

“I am.” Flynn assured her even though he hadn’t sped up. He drove to the front and pulled to a stop. He got out of the car. He opened the back and undid Holly’s car seat. He pulled her out of the car and as soon as her feet were on the ground; she was running.

Asher and Maria wore bemused smiles as Holly raced to them. Maria took Holly’s hand and quickly took her inside; tending to the emergency of a tiny bladder.

“How was the drive?” Asher asked as he came down to greet them.

“Good, a lot of stops for Holly though.” Flynn mused as he helped Lucy out of the car. He and his father shared a brief embrace before Asher and Lucy embraced.

“You look well.” Asher told Lucy after he pulled back and gave her a quick once over. Lucy hadn’t bothered with make up, so Asher had a good view of what was left of her bruises. Though majority had disappeared.

“Thank you, how are you?” Lucy asked him.

“I’m well.” Asher said warmly.

“Good, and thank you for inviting us. This place looks amazing.” Lucy gushed as she looked at the house, it looked like a large single story, ranch style home with a large grass yard around it; obviously to give it a better chance of survival from bush fires.

“It’s very comfortable and peaceful.” Asher agreed. “Why don’t you go in ahead, make yourself at home. I’ll help Garcia with the bags.” He told her, Lucy nodded as she couldn’t see the point in arguing. She left the men to deal with the luggage and stepped into the house.

It’s interior was splendid and warm with beautiful hardwood floors and cream walls. The furnishing were all plush, made from wood with navy fabric coverings with Aztec patterned pillows and rust coloured throw blankets. The front of the house was a open plan living space with the kitchen area to the right with a dining table and living room to the left with large sofas and decent size fireplace.

The bedrooms and bathrooms were to the back of the house as Lucy watched Holly emerge from the main hallway with Maria at her side.

“Mommy snored like the whole way here.” Holly told Maria.

“Did not.” Lucy said defensively though she probably did. She knew she drooled on herself, she wished she was one of those people who didn’t move when they slept. They woke up, beautifully refreshed with their hair not looking like they were in a tornado. But it was sadly not in Lucy’s wheelhouse.

“Lucy, how are you?” Maria asked.

“I’m good, and you?” Lucy asked.

“Happy everyone is here.” Maria said with a smile before they embraced. They pulled apart and Maria gave her a once over. “Now, what did the doctor say?” she asked.
“Everything is looking good but bones need more time to mend.” Lucy said as she didn’t mind sharing.

“That’s to be expected but don’t worry, there’s lots to do here or you can choose to do as little as possible.” Maria said with a smile.

“I’m fine with either. The men are bringing in the luggage.” Lucy said.

“Let’s sit down in the living room and relax.” Maria told her, Lucy only just noticed that there were refreshments and what looked like a light lunch of sandwiches and fruit.

“Can I help Daddy and Grandpa?” Holly asked them.

“You sure can.” Maria said, Holly smiled before she raced out the door. “To be that young and energetic.” She mused.

“She ate a lot of dried fruit on the ride here.” Lucy said with a smile before she sat down on the one of the lounges with a sigh. It felt good to stretch out and be on the lounge in a place above ground where the mid-morning sunlight played through the windows. It was also good to know they could settle in the house for a fortnight and not worry about racing back to the bunker.

“She’ll crash soon.” Maria assured her.

“So, what have you and Asher been up to?” Lucy asked her.

“Not much, just been here; relaxing and taking in the scenery. The hiking trails around here are stunning and we found a place where we can hire horses.” Maria suggested.

“I can’t ride a horse at the moment.” Lucy said.

“Oh, of course. I’m sorry.” Maria told her.

“No, it’s ok. Doesn’t mean that it needs to be crossed off the list. I’m sure Holly would be thrilled about it. I’m happy to watch from the sidelines until you all wander off to some track.” Lucy said diplomatically as she could. She didn’t want to be the Debbie Downer who killed the holiday.

“We’ll discuss it with Garcia.” Maria offered with a smile.

“Yes, about that... Garcia and I were wondering if maybe you and Asher would like some quality time alone with Holly. Besides family stuff with us altogether, of course.” Lucy said.

“We would love that.” Maria said.

“Great.” Lucy said before she smiled, she and Flynn were not tired of Holly. But they wanted Holly to have some quality alone time with Flynn's parents.

“Jiya,” Connor called out.

“Yes,” Jiya replied as she came out the shell of the Mothership. Majority of the ship had been gutted and taken back to Mason Industries to be repurposed. Jiya was now looking at the exterior wondering if it could be used to coat the exterior of the Lifeboat. A long shot but at least it was worth exploring the idea for a couple of hours.

“Come out of there. We need a group meeting.” Connor told her.
“We do?” She asked.

“Yes,” Connor told her. Jiya gave a nod and followed him into the living area. Rufus was already seated at the dining table. Connor sat at the head of the table as Jiya sat down opposite Rufus. “It’s come to my attention that there’s been some patent transfers and sour faces. What is going on?” Connor asked them.

“You tell him.” Jiya told Rufus, she was annoyed that Rufus couldn’t have just told Connor and let her get on with her day. She knew her anger was a little out of proportion but it was the stage she was at.

“We’re not seeing one another romantically.” Rufus told Connor.

“Ok.” Connor said plainly, he didn’t see an issue with it.

“Jiya wants out of the company.” Rufus added, that surprised Connor.

“You act as if I have shares when I don’t. I offered to quit to make things more comfortable for you.” Jiya clarified as she could see both men ganging up on her for even suggesting she make a clean break from Mason Industries and this whole debacle of Time travel.

“What will you do?” Connor asked her in a calm manner, but she knew he was plotting on ways of retaining her or making it impossible for her to leave both actions meant the same result. Just that one was more polite than the other.

“Have a holiday and I don’t know yet.” Jiya said honestly, she didn’t really want to leave Mason Industries but she knew she needed time off.

“Well, those patents will give you a comfortable income for the rest of your life. But you will get bored waiting for the non-compete period to pass and I would prefer to keep you than have you become the competition. So, what will take?” Connor asked her.

“I’m not making demands. I just want time off to get my head straight.” Jiya told him.

“I can give you a 20% raise and a few more perks.” Connor offered.

“It’s very generous, but I don’t want to go anywhere. It was just an offer.” Jiya told the men, she felt incredibly frustrated by them.

“You said you’d quit.” Rufus argued.

“An offer to quit. But honestly, my focus has been on dismantling the mothership and the issue of are we in a closed loop or a causal loop. Does Lucy really have to travel into her own timeline. Something that is far more important than my employment status.” Jiya argued, she didn’t mind how petty she felt in making Rufus feel small for not thinking about his own friends.

“I thought it was a closed loop.” Connor argued.

“If it was, we would’ve been able to predict when and where the team would go for each mission based on historical documents and facial recognition but that never happened. Also, Rufus and the others coming from a completely different timeline wouldn’t fit. And anyway, I looked up the surveillance footage of Sao Paulo to find Flynn.” Jiya told them, proud of herself for being several steps ahead of the men.

“And?” Connor asked.
“I found Flynn but I also noticed that Rufus and Karl are with Lucy.” Jiya told them.

“Karl?” Rufus asked with a frown.

“Yes, which means we have to bring him into the loop on this.” Jiya said, “Pun not intended.” She added.

“Ok, but when do they go?” Connor said.

“Christmas Eve, 2015. Lucy’s hair is short and her right hand seems to be healed as she’s not wearing a brace in the CCTV. Karl’s hair is also different, I’d say it’s at least a year away from now maybe more…but less than 5 years as Flynn said in his notes that Lucy had aged but not too noticeably.” Jiya offered.

“What about me?” Rufus asked.

“You looked exactly the same.” Jiya said with a shrug and it was true. Connor looked thoughtful as he said nothing.

“Even so, this doesn’t exactly help us with the issue of them travelling into their own timeline where they all exist.” Rufus stated.

“We’ll need to write around the safety protocols. The rest I haven’t gotten to yet. It’s just a shame we can’t make portable device that could create a temporary pocket of time around an individual. Protect them from existing in a time that they already exist.” Jiya said wistfully.

“Why can’t we?” Connor asked her.

“Because we have barely scratched the surface on how time travel works. The kind of tech I’m talking about has only existed in Star Trek.” Jiya said wryly.

“Well, maybe we can make it happen. We built a time machine after all.” Connor argued.

“What will power it on? The hopes and dreams of little girls and boys everywhere?” Jiya deadpanned.

“No need to be snide.” Connor said in good humour.

“It’s science fiction and impossible for our level of technological development.” Jiya told Connor.

“What about frequency harmonics like in Fringe?” Rufus speculated.

“You think if you’re able to find a way for your body to sing a different tune then you could occupy the same time and space as your younger self?” Jiya asked him incredulously as his idea was just as terrible as her fantasy idea ripped from Star Trek.

“Yes, but I wouldn’t say sing. Look, we have time to look into the fringe sciences to find an answer. If not, we just go and try not to stay too long to go completely insane. But I’d prefer we find some way to combat the side effects as I don’t want to go insane.” Rufus argued.

“Right.” Jiya said as she agreed. She wanted to protect him, Lucy and Karl. It was just hard to find an answer to the situation when she was exhausted. Not just physically but emotionally too.

“We might even be able to cure your visions.” Rufus pointed out, her eyes snapped up to his.

“I’m not broken.” She told him firmly, anger boiled within her at the mere insinuation that she
required a ‘cure’. Rufus held his hands up in mock surrender.

“I didn’t say you were, but the visions have side effects that aren’t healthy. If we could get rid of them, then you could live without the pain of the migraines and seeing horrible things like our deaths.” Rufus argued.

“I haven’t had a bad vision since we’ve stopped Rittenhouse and time travelling. Honestly, I don’t want to be a guinea pig in your attempts to fix me or my life. It’s fine as it is, I am fine and in better shape than you are.” Jiya told him hotly.

“Ok, harsh.” Rufus told her, he felt insulted by her commentary of his body.

“But accurate, our goal now is to make sure the lifeboat will allow us to go to 2015 and come back as safe as possible. It will take time, which we have. So, I need a break.” She said, she looked at Connor as she needed him to approve it. She was just over being trapped inside the bunker working all the time. She needed a break from Rufus and his desire to 'fix' things.

“Ok, how much time?” Connor asked her, he must have seen the cracks she felt within herself.

“At least 6 weeks of paid annual leave.” Jiya told him, Rufus scoffed.

“That’s a long time.” Rufus told her.

“I’ve been working for three years straight without a holiday or any real down time. Not once did I take a sick day or complain. I’m burning out.” Jiya told them, she hated how desperate she sounded as she needed them to see she needed the time off. But not to seem broken like Rufus seemed to believe she was because of her powers.

“Then six weeks off, you’ll have. When do you want to take it?” Connor asked her.

“Next week.” Jiya told him.

“Done, whatever is leftover with the business here will be handed over to Rufus.” Connor told her.

“Thank you.” Jiya said, she felt her body sag in relief from the knowledge that she would have time off. "Now, is there anything else?" She asked them.

"No, I think we're good," Connor said with a smile. He looked to Rufus who didn't look entirely happy but he had the good grace to nod in agreement.
“It’s beautiful here.” Lucy said with a happy sigh as she, Flynn, Maria and Asher sat around a fire pit in the backyard. Holly sat in Asher’s lap being cuddled close as they all reclined and looked up at the night sky.

Asher had been speaking Croatian softly to Holly. The little girl smiling as she snuggled close with her monkey toy and listened intently to the older man as he told stories about the star constellations. All of which Maria told her were completely made up and nonsensical. Flynn even quietly translated one for her, Maria was right as it made zero sense.

So, they had their own conversation talking about the week ahead. Throwing around ideas of what they’d like to do. It felt good to be outside in the fresh air and peaceful surrounds. The whole day had been strangely luxurious since their arrival.

They had a light lunch. Holly had crashed just as predicted but when she woke, she was a pocket rocket of energy. They went for a wander around the property and found a couple hiking trails they would explore during the week.

Then they returned for dinner and dessert before coming out to the firepit that Flynn set up. Lucy couldn’t remember the last time she had just sat with not a care in the world. Yes, she had her fears for the future but they didn’t press on her like trying to take down Rittenhouse had. She was actually able to acknowledge the fear was there and push it out of her mind.

“We love coming here every year. Just at the end of Summer is the perfect time. Not too hot or cold.” Maria said with a smile.

“I read that Croatia gets snow in the winter. Are there any good places to ski?” Lucy asked making conversation.

“Not really, the elevation is pretty low so it mostly artificial snow.” Maria answered.

“It’s not that bad.” Asher said defensively.

“But you have to admit skiing in Japan was more of an adventure.” Maria argued.

“True, but it’s cheaper to stay in Europe.” Asher told her.

“It was rather extravagant.” Maria confessed. “But money is meant to be spent and enjoyed from time to time.” she said more to Asher than she did to Lucy and Flynn. But Lucy knew it was wise words to live by.

“Too true.” Flynn agreed.

“We were kind of hoping maybe you three would come to Croatia for Christmas this year.” Maria said softly, luckily Asher had started talking to Holly again. So, they were outside of their conversation. Flynn looked to Lucy as they had discussed it. She nodded at him, giving him the ‘ok’ to share.

“We would like that very much but we want to keep it a surprise for Holly.” Flynn told Maria.

“Mom’s the word.” Maria said, she made the gesture of sipping her mouth closed before she smiled.
“So, where are you going to go on your six weeks off?” Rufus asked Jiya.

“Don’t know.” Jiya lied, she had a few ideas but didn’t really want to talk about it with him. Her phone pinged as she received what was the fifth text in the last half an hour.

“Getting a lot of messages.” Rufus remarked as casually as he could.

“Yep, not reading them until my break.” Jiya told him, she hadn’t been happy about the patents. She had texted Karl about it. She didn’t know why she texted him, but he seemed to point out that she could now afford a holiday. That led to a whole text chain about where she should travel. She had to admit it was fun, Karl was well travelled and full of suggestions.

“Maybe you should.” Rufus told her as her phone pinged again.

“So you can look over my shoulder? Pass.” Jiya told him as she continued with her work.

“It’s distracting.” He told her, he wanted to be cool. He was in no way trying to 'rekindle' their romantic relationship but their working one had to be salvaged. Lucy was right, he needed to clean up the mess and make things work between him and Jiya. Just because he didn't want her to hate him and he didn't want their relationship whatever it’s nature to be fraught.

“Ok, I’ll take a ten minute break.” Jiya said, she rose from her chair and moved away from the computers. She pulled out her phone and smiled as Karl had texted three more destinations. She replied telling him to stop as she didn’t appreciate her pants vibrating so much. She sent the message and mentally kicked herself for the innuendo. She knew in less than a second she’d have a dirty text but instead her phone buzzed.

‘Name a destination and I’ll stop.’ Karl texted, then a second later, ‘One destination.’ He added.

She quickly typed in ‘Japan, now stop texting me. I have to work, phone will be on silent.’ and sent the message. She couldn’t help but smile as she put her phone on silent and tucked it back into her coat pocket before she went to grab herself a cup of coffee.

A couple days later,

Lucy smiled sleepily as Flynn held her left hand. She felt his lips brush her knuckles. Warmth seeped into her bones, she loved this man and how he made her feel. She felt another hand reach from her right. Fingers toying with hers. She brushed them away as she was still injured, but the hand became insistent. Cold dread washed through her as she turned to see Wyatt, he yanked hard on her right hand. She pulled her fingers into a tight fist to protect them. But Wyatt was stronger and he had both hands. He pulled a finger out of her fist. Just as he was about to dislocate her finger, Lucy’s eyes snapped open.

She floundered as it took her a moment to remember she had fallen asleep on the couch. She cried out in pain as she accidentally flexed her hand and arm in reflex from her nightmare. She pulled her arm close and closed her eyes as pain radiated through her arm and fingers.

“Lucy, are you ok?” Asher asked as he came over to her from the kitchen.

“Yeah, I’m ok.” She said, she opened her eyes and mustered a smile. He didn’t look convinced.

“Do you need ice, heat or pain meds?” he asked her, she shook her head. Asher sat down on the coffee table and looked at her with concern.
“I just need a moment.” Lucy said, she blew out a slow breath. “Where is everyone?” she asked, she realised it was just the two of them.

“They went for a walk before lunch.” He told her, Lucy nodded as she was relieved Holly didn’t see her wake up in a fright like she had.

“You didn’t want to go?” Lucy asked him.

“I didn’t feel like it. I was reading and getting dinner ready when I heard you wake up. Is the pain easing?” Asher asked. Lucy nodded though it wasn’t fast enough for her. “Good, come you can help me in the kitchen.” he told her.

“I’m not good in the kitchen.” Lucy said with Asher's help; she got off the lounge and put her arm into a sling.

“It’s ok. All you need to do is stir the sauce. It only takes one hand and it doesn’t hurt to be distracted while the pain subsides.” He said, Lucy couldn’t argue with that as she could use the distraction. She took the spoon he offered her, gestured to the medium sized pot on the stove.

“What is it?” Lucy asked.

“Sweet and sour sauce, I prefer to cook it separately then add it to the dish later.” He told her as he adjusted the heat on the stove. “When it starts to thicken, let me know.” He told her as he went back to the bench where he was cutting up some vegetables for the meal.

“Holly is very excited about cooking with you tomorrow.” Lucy said changing the topic before Asher could talk to her about her injuries or ask about why she woke up in a state. Asher smiled and nodded.

“You’re still ok with me using artificial colours and flavourings?” he asked, Holly had been adamant that she wanted Banana, Chocolate and Strawberry marble cake with chocolate frosting.

“Yes. Should I not be?” Lucy asked.

“No, I did it for Garcia and Gabriel for their cakes. But I know nowadays artificial anything is considered 'bad'.” Asher said wryly.

“Look, I know there are healthier options but Holly eats her fruits and vegetables. At some point, she’ll have friends and parties to go to. I just don’t want to have to hover over her and control what goes in her mouth. You know?” Lucy asked him, she had given it a lot of thought and at the end of the day she knew Asher would use the best ingredients. She also felt given it wasn't something Holly ate everyday, it could hardly be an issue.

“I do. Maria used to get anxiety whenever her parents asked about her parenting choices. I didn’t care, as I firmly believe there is no such thing as the perfect parent or the perfect method to raise a child. You just do your best to keep them clean, fed and sheltered. Also make sure they are well mannered and educated for the future. The rest is up to--” he made a flick of his hand in a nebulous gesture, “Fate, environment or whatever you prescribe to.” He offered before he continued chopping vegetables.

“I never gave it a lot thought until I had Holly, but I worry about being a good parent. My mother was like this superhero figure. She had her amazing career, two kids and the husband. She just had it all together, all the time. I’m the opposite.” Lucy said with a nervous chuckle.

“You don’t seem like that.” Asher said.
“That’s because Garcia has been holding it altogether for us.” Lucy said, she stirred the bubbling sauce on the stove. She knew she should put up a better front but she was too tired to. She also felt if they were going to be family, then she couldn’t lie to them about everything. There were enough secrets as it were.

Asher stopped what he was doing and looked to Lucy with a serious expression.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself. You saved my son, I don’t know how you were able to reach him and be able to get the people who killed our loved ones. You can call it team effort but my son has very little patience for fools. I know looking at you, that you’re not a fool.” He told her.

“Thank you.” She said.

“Keep stirring.” He told her, Lucy nodded as she picked up the speed as she had slowed to listen to him. “After Lorena and Iris were murdered, we tried for months to find Garcia. It wasn’t until we got the cards telling us to stop searching that we just waited for him to return. Has he ever talked about what happened?” He asked, Lucy swallowed nervously as she wasn’t sure she should tell him.

“He has but I think it’s something you need to talk to Garcia about.” Lucy said, Asher nodded in understanding. “But I can tell you this, he was in a very dark place for a long time. He’ll tell you that I saved him but it’s not true. He saved himself, I just gave him a lifeline when he needed it. He did all the work himself.” She told him.

“I doubt that’s entirely true. But I guess you can’t say much on the matter.” Asher said reluctantly.

“I wish I could but like I said, you should talk to Garcia.” She said, it was a cop out but she did feel it was important for Flynn to tell Asher what happened and how he survived it.

“I know you lost your mother and sister, but what about the rest of your family?” Asher asked.

“My biological father is in prison, life sentence. The father I grew up with passed away from lung cancer when I was 13. I don’t have a great family to add to the mix.” Lucy said wryly, she was envious at how lucky Flynn was in that regard.

“It doesn’t matter, though it’s a shame you’ve lost your loved ones.” Asher said sincerely, Lucy appreciated the acknowledgement as usually her family was like a dirty secret. No one liked to remember that Lucy was Rittenhouse by blood and her family being so deeply entrenched.

“But I’ve found a new family.” Lucy said with a small smile. “So, did you always know that you wanted to be a chef?” Lucy asked, changing the topic.

“Yes, I grew up poor and back in my day.” He drawled in a wry manner. “We were raised to be pragmatic, not to dream. You chose a trade and you learnt it well, you worked in that one profession for the rest of your life. Dreams were for people with money.” He explained.

“It makes sense.” Lucy said as she guessed he was born around the end of Second World War. He’d mostly like grown up during the tail-end of the great depression between the two world wars. Living in a Nazi Puppet State that was then swallowed up in the Republic of Yugoslavia. Croatia had some turbulent years of striving for it's independence.

“I chose to be a cook. My friend’s uncle worked in a kitchen at a factory. I started as a dishwasher and worked my way up. Saved as much money as I could, when I had enough saved, I travelled Europe. Got work where I could, I watched and learned from the best.” He told Lucy with a fond smile on his face.
“You didn’t go to culinary school?” Lucy asked.

“Eventually, but by then I only went to polish what I learnt through my work. It was a mere formality for my resume but also to network and showcase my talent.” He said with a shrug.

“So, how did you meet Maria?” Lucy asked him.

“We’re back.” Maria called out as she kicked off her shoes on the front veranda and came into the house. Flynn and Holly a few seconds behind her.

“Hey.” Asher said with a smile as she came over to him and circled her arms around his waist.

“Mmm, sweet and sour. My favourite.” She said before she and Asher shared a quick kiss.

“Mommy, guess what?” Holly asked as she raced into the house excitedly.

“What?” Lucy asked.

“I pooped in the woods like a bear!” Holly exclaimed happily.

“Wow.” Lucy drawled with as much enthusiasm as she could. She shot Flynn a look and he gave a tired shrug of ‘it happened’. Holly didn’t seem to notice as she smiled and bounced on her feet.

“Yeah, we dug a hole and then I pooped and then we buried it.” Holly informed her, Lucy faked smiled as she felt she entered a weird zone of too much information but couldn’t find a polite way to say it.

“Now, we’re going to wash our hands.” Flynn told Holly, saving Lucy from commenting on the matter.

“Bears don’t have to wash their hands.” Holly complained.

“We’re not bears. We’re human, so let’s go.” Flynn told her, he smiled and shook his head when Holly gave an exasperated sigh and raced to the bathroom with Flynn behind her.

“I’m glad I missed that milestone.” Lucy said after Holly and Flynn were out of earshot.

“It was very exciting.” Maria deadpanned.

“I can imagine the sense of urgency.” Asher remarked drily. Lucy and Maria couldn’t help but laugh at the nicely timed joke.

“So, what have you been talking about?” Maria asked them.

“I was about to tell Lucy how we met.” Asher said to Maria with a wink.

“It’s a fun story.” Maria said as she grabbed a glass of water.

“She likes to mock me,” Asher told Lucy.

“Lucy, why don’t you guess.” Maria told Lucy.

“Farmer’s market?” Lucy offered.

“No.” Maria said with a secretive smile.

“I don’t know.” Lucy said as she was sure she could guess another twenty times and still not get it
"Just tell her." Asher said.

“I was at the park with Gabriel. Asher who was an avid smoker was on afternoon run. Sweatbands and cigarette in the mouth puffing as he ran.” Maria said as she mimicked a dramatic smoker running in slow motion for a second.

“It was the 70s and I was multitasking.” Asher said in a mockingly defensive manner.

“It was disgusting.” Maria told him.

“Worth giving up for you.” Asher said before the two shared a quick kiss. Asher continued on with the story. “So, it was a beautiful day and there I was running along, having a smoke and enjoying the great outdoors.” He told Lucy, she smiled as the imagery was just amazing.

“When I accidentally kicked a soccer ball into his man parts.” Maria said with a mocking ‘oops’ expression.

“What?” Lucy asked in surprise.

“Yeah, I was helping Gabe practice and I overestimated my skills.” Maria said with a chuckle.

“Hmm, I went down hard. Nearly choked on my cigarette too.” Asher said as he still remembered the day very clearly.

“I ran over to make sure he was alive.” Maria said.

"She came to get her ball. I knew she'd pretend that I wasn't lying there in pain. So, I made myself known." Asher told Lucy.

"Not true, I was getting the ball after I know your sideburns weren't on fire from the cigarette." Maria said defensively. Lucy couldn't help but chuckle as the imagery in her mind was gold.

“Anyway, I finally come to and there she appeared like an angel standing over me, sun behind her creating a halo effect.” Asher told her.

“I asked if he was ok, and apologised profusely. Offered to get him to a hospital or get an ice bag. But he said he was fine.” Maria said with a shrug as if it were really nothing.

“I had a beautiful woman gushing over me.” Asher said with a boyish smile.

“I was not gushing.” Maria corrected him.

“One awkward conversation led me demanding an ice cream as compensation for my pain and the mud patch across my shorts in a terrible position.” Asher drawled, Lucy couldn’t help but laugh.

“So, we got ice cream.” Maria said with a fond smile.

“Then I got a phone number and walked funny for a week after. Maria was not easy to win over. We started as friends and it grew from there.” Asher said with a smile.

“As first meetings go, that is unique.” Lucy said with a smile. Holly bounced back into the room with energy.

"What's unique?" Flynn asked as he followed in behind Holly, he went to Lucy's side and kissed her
cheek. Lucy smiled at the gesture.

"How I met your Father." Maria said before she leaned down to Holly. “Holly, do you know how Mommy and Daddy met?” Maria asked Holly.

“Yep, Daddy was in a restaurant alone when Mommy wanted eat there but there was no room except at Daddy’s table. She asked if she could eat with him. He said ‘Yes’ cause Mommy was really pretty and he liked her smile. He said he knew he loved her before they even had dessert.” Holly told her with a grin.

“That’s a very beautiful story.” Maria said with a smile, Lucy and Flynn inwardly breathed a sigh of relief. Lucy wondered what the story was based on as it was based on some truth. She looked to Flynn, he seemed to recognise the story. It made her wonder if it was based on Sao Paulo.

"It’s my favourite story.” Holly told Maria with a smile.
“Did you have to be rude to Rufus?” Jiya asked Karl as the man drove them through downtown San Francisco. It was a beautiful day to be outside, it reminded Jiya how yet another summer was lost to being underground. But it was ok as she finally had some sense of freedom again.

“Yeah, he implied I was a Nazi.” Karl told her, snapping Jiya back to her reality.

“His reality you were a bad guy. In this reality you were a part of Rittenhouse.” Jiya explained, not that it excused Rufus’ poor behaviour and trying to pick a fight with Karl.

“No, I was undercover and a good guy. I’m always the good guy.” Karl argued. Jiya couldn’t help but smile wryly at the comment.

“You just do morally ambiguous things from time to time.” Jiya offered in amusement.

“Exactly, like every other good guy.” Karl said with a smile. Jiya knew better than to touch that one and so she changed the topic.

“So, this apartment. You’re not holding it for me, are you?” Jiya asked him.

“No, it’s a holiday rental at the moment. So, if you want it. Then it can be yours to rent or buy, up to you.” Karl told her with a shrug before he made a righthand turn.

“Thanks for this.” Jiya said sincerely.

“No problem, if anything this arrangement is mutually beneficial.” Karl said casually.

“No, I mean everything. The travel info, the nagging me to come out and look at this apartment. I needed the push.” Jiya admitted, she knew she could easily work with no breaks but she needed this. Just to be outside the bunker and away from Rufus. Their relationship was tense, to say the least. His silence as he worked with her was unbearable as she felt the weight of everything between them being left unsaid. She just didn’t have the confidence or energy to talk to him either.

“I know finishing up the project is important but so is getting away from the bunker and taking time for yourself.” Karl offered.

“You do that with Rittenhouse?” Jiya asked, he offered a half shrug which she took as a ‘yes’.

“Well, my job had a lot of perks and freedom unlike yours.” Karl told her as he pulled into parking space out the front of an old 5 storey apartment building. It looked to be in excellent condition. “Here we are.” He said, he gestured to the building.

“I was expecting something a little flashier.” Jiya told him.

“The building has charm. It was built in 1910, and has 28 apartments and in a middle class area. Don’t worry, it’s more than what meets the eye.” Karl told her before they got out of the car.

“Good morning, Mr Strohbeck.” A tall Latino man in his late 40s with thinning grey hair said with a smile as he pulled his mail out of the wall of letter boxes. He was dressed much like a super did but unlike Jiya’s previous super; his uniform was clean and utility belt organised than a mess of random tools.

“Morning, any trouble with pups?” Karl asked the man, he turned and Jiya read his name tag.
“No, no complaints.” Gomez replied cheerfully.

“Good.” Karl said, he pocketed his mail and gestured to Jiya to come closer. “Gomez, this is Miss Jiya Marri. She’s might be a prospective tenant. Gomez here is the Super and he also dog-sits for me from time to time.” Karl said making the introductions.

“Hi, pleased to meet you.” Jiya said as they shook hands.

“It’s nice to meet you too. You know, you won’t find a better place than here. Mr Strohbeck is a very good landlord and he keeps his word.” Gomez told her, he then leaned in closer to her. “I’m sure you could negotiate a very low price. He’s terrible at negotiating.” Gomez added in a low voice.

“I can hear you.” Karl told him, Gomez gave a sheepish smile.

“I told her only good things about you.” Gomez told him in good humour, Karl shook his head at the man.

“I’m going to show her apartment 23. I can’t remember if it’s rented out.” Karl said changing the topic while Jiya looked rather amused by Gomez.

“It’s not, you want the keys?” Gomez asked him.

“Please.” Karl said, Gomez pulled a key off the large ring of keys that he had on his belt and handed it to him. “Thank you.” Karl said as he took them with a smile. “I’ll drop it in your letterbox if we don’t see you on the way out.” He added.

“Not a problem.” Gomez assured them before he went back to his day. Karl gestured for Jiya to follow him.

“How was your walk besides Holly’s little adventure?” Lucy asked as she didn’t need to hear a repeat of the poop story. The family was seated at the dining table enjoying their lunch of sandwiches and fruit.

“It wasn’t little, Mommy.” Holly informed her in a smug manner before she giggled. Lucy gave her a closed lip smile and smoothed a hand over Holly’s hair as she said nothing. While the others tried not to laugh as they didn’t want to encourage Holly to go into further detail.

“The walk was beautiful, if you’re feeling up to it; you and Garcia should take an afternoon stroll.” Maria suggested with a smile.

“But I thought we were making cupcakes.” Holly said in confusion.

“We are,” Asher assured Holly. “But Mommy and Daddy don’t have to be there for that.” Asher said, Maria nodded in agreement.

“It also means more cake for the three of us.” Maria said with a conspiratorial wink.

“Oh, ok.” Holly said with a smile before she ate a bite of her sandwich.

“I wouldn’t mind a stroll.” Lucy said looking to Flynn, she had spent the last few days just resting and keeping close to the house. Purely because her body needed the sleep but she liked the idea of just the two of them getting away for some 'alone' time.

“Sure.” Flynn said.
“Good, it’s settled.” Maria said with a smile.

“Here we are. The elevator will be down for another month but it’s because I’m having it overhauled. So, it will be brand new and up to code.” Karl said as unlocked the front door to apartment 23.

“2nd floor is hardly a hike.” Jiya told him, he pushed the door open and gestured for her to step inside. Jiya hadn’t been sure what to expect but what was before her was stunning. The apartment was light and spacious as it had the feel of a display apartment.

The furniture was tasteful and practical with a few cozy touches. The kitchen had what looked like near brand-new appliances. The walls were painted in a light cream with varnished hard wood floors. While it had the modern amenities it still retained the history of the building with beautiful plaster mouldings on the ceilings and window frames.

“What do you think?” Karl asked as he watched her move around the space.

“It’s beautiful. I can barely hear the traffic outside.” Jiya said as her old place before the bunker had been a shithole in comparison to the glamour she stood in. In fact, this apartment was how she imagined herself ending up living. Though it was lacking a few toys like an x-box and a larger TV etc. But she loved it as she could see the potential of living here.

“Triple glazed windows. It’s more energy efficient and good at blocking out the noise. It’s one bedroom, 1 bath, pretty spacious living. Parking can be a nightmare at times but it's a safe neighbourhood.” Karl said with a shrug.

“You want to rent it to me?” Jiya asked him as she remembered the amount he said she would pay in rent per week. She knew he could easily have a tenant pay twice as much.

“Why not?” he asked blandly like it wasn’t a big deal but to Jiya it was. She knew how hard it was to get an apartment, especially one set up like this. “If you have your own furniture, then you can bring it in. But otherwise, if you agree to rent it. You’ll have a home to come to after your holidays.” He said, he was right. She could see herself doing just that.

“You live in this building too?” Jiya asked.

“4th floor. I had one of those penthouses in the middle of the city. It was fun but I like this area better. The people around here are good salt of the Earth people. Easier commute to my other businesses as they are outside of the CBD.” Karl said casually, Jiya didn't quite believe that but she let it slide.

“Gomez looked pretty happy to have you for a boss. You must have paid him well.” Jiya said casually.

“Yes and no, the area is gentrifying as we speak. Gomez lived an hour away with kids and grandparents to support. So, I let him rent the two bottom units at the same amount he was paying at his old place. I have an income with good tenants, Gomez has no commute and his family live in the building. Better catchment area for his kids. He’s earning well above a living wage with a bonus at Christmas.” Karl explained, as he was trying to explain he was a good guy. It showed Rufus did get under his skin.

“Why would you do that?” Jiya asked, she never thought Karl would be a slumlord but she didn’t think he’d be so generous either.
“Happy employees are effective and efficient workers. To give benefits like I have for Gomez, it helps with staff retention and maintaining quality work standards.” He gave a dismissive wave of his hand. “Rittenhouse had a few studies on it. They actually study a lot of history and cultures before they performed pilot studies on how to build a perfect society that not only efficient but content.” Karl said pragmatically.

“That’s not how I saw Rittenhouse.” Jiya admitted begrudgingly.

“I know and look, I don’t agree with many of the things Rittenhouse did or believed in. But some of their goals were admirable. They were big on homogenising society but they weren’t looking to subjugate the people based on the colour of their skin or culture. History has shown that subjugation has always leads to conflict and huge delays in progress of science and society as a whole. But that’s beside the point. Rittenhouse were more about equal access to education and health services with the idea that the distribution of work based on intelligence, skills and efficiency. I could go on but I don’t want to bore you when the reality is, that this does work but only on small scale.” Karl explained.

“Like this building and your businesses. I have to assume you’re doing it there too.” Jiya stated, he nodded as he didn't see any problem applying information he had learnt in Rittenhouse to his businesses.

“Yes, and most people think I’m altruistic about how I run my business and think I will end up broke eventually. But I won’t as I play honestly and I live as I want which isn't as extravagant as my Rittenhouse cover.” Karl explained.

“Your Rittenhouse self was very flashy.” Jiya said, Karl grinned.

“He was and he was also very expensive to maintain.” He said, Jiya snorted a laugh as she didn’t believe it for a second. “Now, why don’t we go down the road. There’s a great hole in the wall Japanese Restaurant that you have to try. Then you can decide if you want the place.” He told her.

“This was a lovely idea.” Lucy said as she pulled off her cardigan and arm sling. Her neck appreciating the release before she laid on the blanket next to Flynn. They had left Holly in Maria and Asher care before they wandered off for a stroll. They walked for about half an hour before they stopped by a creek. Flynn who’d brought a backpack; pulled out a blanket and laid it down for them. Flynn used his switchblade to cut an apple up to share. He’d come prepared with fruit and bottles of water. Lucy took a piece of apple from him and ate it as she looked up at the tree branches and blue skies.

“I agree.” Flynn said with a content smile as he took in the scenery.

“Don’t worry, I don’t need to be a bear like Holly.” Lucy said, Flynn snorted a laugh and she chuckled.

“Good to know.” He said before he ate a piece of apple off his knife. They lapsed into a long moment of silence. Just enjoying the serenity of nature and the beautiful end of summer weather. They finished the apple and Flynn laid down on the blanket next to her.

It wasn’t like they’d been deprived of the outdoors. But they usually had a mission where they were running to and from one place. They very rarely had time to stop and take a deep breath of fresh air. To stop and relax to the sounds of the creek trickle past, of birds and the soft rustling of leaves in the trees. It felt energizing and relaxing at the same time.
“I like it out here. It’s peaceful.” Lucy said breaking the silence. Flynn turned on his side and propped his head up on his elbow and looked down at her.

“We could live somewhere in the countryside, get a couple of horses.” He offered.

“Be a long commute for work.” Lucy mused, but she did like the fantasy of it even if it felt unrealistic.

“Maybe, maybe not. Didn’t you once get an offer for Oberlin College?” he asked.

“I did once, not sure I could again. I turned it down because my mother wouldn’t let me do it. It wasn’t Stanford.” Lucy said with a roll of her eyes. So much of her life was controlled by her mother’s wishes for her. So much of Lucy’s life choices had been controlled and shaped by her mother that sometimes Lucy wondered if being a History Professor was what she wanted. Or was it just the little girl in her craving her mother’s approval.

“Well, you can choose now where you want to work. I’ll find something to do when Holly gets to schooling age.” Flynn said with a shrug.

“You’d be a stay at home Dad for me?” Lucy asked him, she had to admit she had no idea what Flynn would do. But she appreciated that he never assumed they would have traditional gender roles.

“Yes and you can stay at home with us too. You can do whatever you want, I’ll support your choices as long as it’s legal.” He assured her, Lucy couldn’t help but snort a laugh and shake her head at him.

“Same for you. What are you going to do?” she asked him, she felt entirely pigeon holed by her education and credentials. She wasn’t ready to consider overhauling her career choices. Flynn looked thoughtful.

“I don’t know.” He said honestly. “I know I don’t want to fall back into my old career. I lost Lorena and Iris because my work with the NSA.” He said, his expression saddened as he thought of them and how if he had just ignored what he’d found- he shook his head as he refused to play the ‘what if’ game. He heaved a deep breath and focused on Lucy, he reminded himself he had a second chance for happiness. “I won’t bring danger like that back into my life again.” He told her.

“Luckily, we have money which gives us time to figure this stuff out.” Lucy offered, he gave a nod as she was right.

“We do.” Flynn said, it was comforting to know they had time.

“I think we should not worry about work or where we’ll live for another week or so. Just enjoy our lives and each other.” Lucy told him, she gave him a saucy smile that Flynn knew well as her ‘kiss me’ smile. He loved that smile, he gave her a brief kiss, but before he pulled away; she drew him into a slow, long and delicious kiss.

Flynn’s lips opened slightly, and with the back of his hand, his knuckles, he brushed against her breast and felt her sigh against his open mouth. He groaned and pulled her harder against his mouth, kissing her deeply, feeling her tongue enter even as her hand pulled hard on the fabric of his shirt.

“We should stop.” He whispered against her mouth but Lucy shook her head.

“No,” she whimpered as she wanted more, she pushed him onto his back and rolled on top. It was not the most graceful roll of her life but Flynn was there to support her before she injured herself. She straddled him and brushed her hand through her hair as she looked down at him. Both of them
breathless and hot with need.

“We’re outside and you’re still healing.” He reminded her, his usual excuse for putting the breaks on when things got a little hot. His hands lightly squeezed her thighs under her dress in a ‘ok, we’re done’ gesture.

“I think I proved that I’m more than ready and able on many occasions.” She said smugly, she leaned down until they were nose to nose. “I’m also not wearing anything under this dress.” She whispered, she watched as Flynn’s pupils dilated and his breath quickened. His hands twitched and she knew he was tempted to find out for himself if she was telling the truth. But instead he shook his head.

“No, we have no protection.” Flynn told her, she could see it was taking a lot of effort for him to turn her down.

“Condom in my pocket.” Lucy said, she didn’t plan on them having sex outdoors but she decided to at least make it a viable option given they were alone. She also felt a bit of a thrill at having her own little secret. Though it wasn’t much of a secret now. “Got anymore excuses?” She asked him innocently as she pulled out the condom as proof.

“No, I don’t.” He admitted, he moved, his hands to her face, holding her against him, covering her mouth with an almost desperate heat. Her lips opened for him, and he swept the inside of her mouth with his tongue, and she not only allowed this but welcomed it.

He wrapped his arms around her, rolled them back to him being on top. Lucy felt a zing of victory mix with a deep-seated yearning as she felt herself come alive. Their kiss turned hot and frantic as they pulled at one another’s clothing. Lucy’s dress was opened in record time while she fumbled with his shirt. Her injured hand slowing her down. But Flynn didn’t mind as he pulled back from the kiss. His hair was a mess, his shirt wrinkled from her poor attempt to remove it. He undid a couple of buttons and pulled it over his head.

“You weren’t lying about being naked.” He murmured in appreciation as he drank in the sight of her laid bare before him. With a groan, he lowered his head. Lucy gasped and arched her back, welcoming the scalding heat of his mouth as he worshipped her tenderly, honestly.

Her fingers sifted through his mussed locks while Flynn drew her nipples into peaks. He blew a moist stream of air over them before he kissed his way down her abdomen. He teased her belly button with a swirl of his tongue and cupped her breasts as he looked up at her.

She couldn’t believe this was happening. She was not an exhibitionist but this was one of her many private fantasies becoming real. It was even more powerful than she’d imagined.

She couldn’t help but indulge as she lifted her leg over his shoulder. She watched as he went in, leading with his tongue, delving into her sex, worshiping her with his mouth. It the hottest fucking experience of her life, pun intended.

She grabbed his hair and arched against him, moaning in such beautiful pleasure she whispered his first name over and over. Flynn didn’t let up even as the pleasure rocketed through her, winding tight until it snapped free in a glorious burst of heat and sensation.

As her orgasm petered out, Flynn slowly kissed and caressed his way back up her body to her lips. She kissed him in a possessive manner, “I want to be on top.” She whispered against his lips as she felt like he was going to do some martyr act of making her come and then beg out of sex.

Flynn didn’t object, in fact he rolled onto his back with Lucy in his arms. An awkward moment of
them getting his pants down and his cock sheathed; he sat up unable to just lay back. He pulled her into his lap. Her dress swirled around them. Lucy held onto his shoulders as Flynn guided his cock into body slowly filling her inch by slow, delicious inch.

Lucy let out a low moan when he was fully seated in her. He felt huge inside her. The sudden fullness, the friction against her inner walls was incredible that she nearly orgasmed again. She dropped her face into Flynn’s neck, she appreciated that he gave her a moment to adjust instead of pounding her. But she knew it came at a cost as she felt the tension in his body.

“You feel amazing. Am I hurting you?” He breathed in concern as he moved his hands to her ass beneath the dress. He groaned as Lucy’s inner muscles flexed around him, it was too much to bear but almost amazing at the same time.

“No and don’t even think of stopping.” She gasped before she kissed him and started to move. She rode him fast and furious, her knees knocking against his powerful thighs. Flynn gave a desperate groan as he dug his fingers into her ass cheeks, moving his hips with hurried thrusts, drilling upwards as she pushed herself onto his cock.

He muttered something in Croatian that Lucy didn’t need to know as she was sure it was ‘Fuck me’ but knowing she reverted him back to his native tongue sent a thrill soaring up her spine.

She’d never had sex like this before. So raw and completely uninhibited. She gripped his bare shoulders, holding on for dear life as she gave into her instincts, fucking him faster, harder. The first ripples of orgasm fluttered around in her stomach, gathering in strength, and then Flynn dipped his head to suckle on one hard nipple, and her climax ripped through her. Pleasure exploded in her body, vibrating in her clit, throbbing in her breasts.

She cried out, pushing her nipple deeper into Flynn’s mouth as she came, riding out the orgasm as he sucked hard on her nipple and groaned against her skin. He didn’t take long to reach his climax either. Within seconds, she felt him stiffen, harden inside her and spill in what seemed like a million short bursts. It went on longer than she was prepared for, long enough that she started to get turned on all over again while he throbbed inside of her. Lucy stroked his back and pressed her lips to his neck, licking his damp, salty skin as he shuddered.

After a few heartbeats, he gave a husky groan as the last of his orgasm drained out of him. They clung to each other as their bodies cooled, not ready to let go. They exchanged soft kisses and smiled at one another, unable to find the words to encapsulate the rush of emotions they shared.

“This is amazing.” Jiya moaned behind her hand as she ate some grilled honey miso eggplant. She had missed Japanese food, it had been years and the before her was hitting all the right notes in her.

“You act like you’ve never had Japanese food before.” Karl drawled in amusement before he took a sip of his miso soup. The table between them laden with many dishes that they had been sharing for the past ten minutes.

“Not like this.” Jiya told him, she had to admit she loved the restaurant. It looked shoddy from the outside as it was down a side alley with no real visible signing. But once inside it looked like any 4-star Japanese restaurant with the décor to match. It was comfortable and the menu prices incredibly reasonable.

“You’ll love Japan even more.” Karl told her.
“I booked my tickets last night and got the JR pass as you suggested. I’m looking forward to it, getting out in the world on my own for a while.” Jiya said with a happy sigh. She loved knowing she could leave the bunker and get away from the past three years. Even if it was just a short break.

“That’s great. So, what do you think about the apartment?” Karl asked her before he ate some yakisoba.

“I’ll take it, but in three weeks’ time.” Jiya told him, making the decision on the spot. She couldn’t not accept the offer. The rent was reasonable and the apartment amazing. She liked the idea of having a home that wasn’t the bunker.

“Fully furnished?” He asked.

“Please.” Jiya said with a smile as she really great for saying ‘yes’ to the apartment. She could already imagine herself living in the space. Just to have natural light and a bathroom she didn’t need a tetanus shot to use.

“I’ll get a lease contract to you by the end of the week.” Karl said with a smile.

“Thank you, for all of this.” Jiya told him sincerely.

“That’s what friends are for, to help one another out and support one another. So, have you gotten Holly a present for her birthday?” he asked changing the topic as he found her immense gratitude at small offerings a little overwhelming.

“Not yet, but now that Holly is allowed above the ground. I was thinking maybe taking her to museum or somewhere fun. I’d have to run it by Flynn and Lucy as it’d just Holly and I. You?” Jiya asked as she took more of the honey miso eggplant for herself.

“I’m having her come out to the farm. Letting her see the puppies and play with the other dogs.” Karl said with a shrug before he ate some more noodles.

“Holly told me about that. She’s going to love it.” Jiya said with a smile, she remembered how happy Holly looked. She spared a look at Rufus and saw him looking down at the table as he ate. Jiya had no idea what he was thinking but she hoped he didn’t try to pick another fight.

“I want to see if she can find Bepo in that litter.” Karl said from behind his hand as he had a full mouth.

“Have you named one of them Bepo?” Jiya asked Karl, she had to admit she was curious as to how that particular experiment would end and how Karl was going to handle it.

“No, it’s Holly’s job to find him not mine.” Karl said in amusement before he ate some salmon sashimi.

“But you're helping her find him by supplying dogs for her to peruse.” Jiya drawled mockingly.

“We all have our part to play.” Karl deadpanned, Jiya snorted a laugh and shook her head at him. “Speaking of parts, are you going to let me have any part of the Nasu Dengaku?” Karl asked as she had consumed at least three quarters of it.

“Nope.” She informed him with a smart ass smile.
Rufus had to admit he was jealous of Jiya and her freedom as she had left early that morning to run around with Karl. It didn't seem fair that he was basically estranged from his entire life.

Sure, he found his own space and built some parts of life back to what he wanted. But it wasn't the same as coming home. He wondered how he seemed to miss the fact that with every jump his 'home' changed. It was only the last jump that made his home noticeably different.

But here he was remembering his past adventures and remembering moments when conversations he had in the bunker with Jiya and Connor were forgotten. Not like 'I had a busy day and forgot we had this conversation’ but a ‘we literally never had that conversation because history shifted’.

For all the faults of his new reality, he accepted it was now his. But he couldn’t help but remember what Lucy said on their second mission when she argued about not changing the past. The present wasn’t perfect but it was theirs. He missed the original timeline, he missed how simple his life had felt.

“How’s it going?” Jiya asked when she appeared in the shell of the mothership.

“Good, I got through a lot of work. We can dismantle the shell tomorrow and get to work with upgrading the Lifeboat’s systems.” Rufus said, she wore a beautiful smile; one he hadn’t put there. It reminded him that Karl was becoming a permanent fixture in his life. He was jealous of the man too as Karl seemed to have zero baggage and no problem sliding into Jiya’s life. It made Rufus felt that same pit in his stomach when the hot guy would snag the girl of his dreams. This time, it hurt a little more as he had loved Jiya. Maybe, but not this Jiya… his brain corrected him.

“Great.” Jiya said happily as she tied her bottle blonde hair back.

“How was your day?” he asked her.

“It was good.” Jiya replied as she climbed into what was left of the Mothership.

“Care to expound?” Rufus asked her, he was morbidly curious of what was going on between her and Karl. He knew Jiya would say they are friends but Rufus didn't believe Karl was just going to settle for being friends. If anything, Karl hanging around Jiya and the others felt like an invasion.

“I got an apartment and then Karl took me shopping for a backpacks and some other travel gear. He’s a real font for travelling on a shoestring budget.” Jiya told him in a casual manner like it wasn’t a big deal.

“Really?” Rufus asked incredulously, he wondered why he never thought to do the same with her.
He just completely backed off and left her to do her own thing. In fairness, everytime he tried to help it; it ended badly. He was just tired of his simple gestures being met with annoyance and judged based on his other-self's behaviour. It was why he stopped trying to make nice with Jiya as she was always looking for the strings.

“Yes, it was interesting. You should give Karl a chance, he’s a fun guy to hang out with and he's close with the Flynns. So, you’re going to be in the same social circle.” Jiya told him in a frank manner.

“The guy tried to kill me a few times.” Rufus grumbled, he knew it wasn't fair but he didn't like the guy. Karl got on his nerves with questionable morals and pragmatism.

“By your own admission, Flynn tried to kill you too. You two are friends now.” Jiya pointed out.

“Lucy and I are friends. Flynn and I are in a ‘cordial acquaintances’ thing burgeoning onto maybe being friends. It's hard to explain. It's just that I prefer my friends not have a history of literally trying to kill me.” Rufus explained.

“Well, that's stupid.” Jiya told him.

"It's not." he rebutted.

"It is in this line of work. Anyway, don't want to have friends who understand what you've been through and share all of this?" Jiya asked him.

“I don’t know.” He said honestly, he wasn’t even sure he could be friends with Jiya. He didn’t know how he would stay friends with Lucy and Flynn given their lives would drift. He frankly had nothing in common with them except for the shared experience of time travel. He also wasn't sure he wanted to keep reliving all the good times either as it meant remembering the bad times.

"You don't know?" Jiya asked incredulously and it hit Rufus that his thoughts came across loud and clear.

"I get what you're saying, but I want to move on from this. Just like how you want to go out and see the world.” Rufus said.

"Those are two very different things." Jiya told him, she turned away from him and they lapsed into an awkward silence as Rufus didn't know what to say.

“What?” Flynn asked Lucy smiled at him like she had a secret joke. They were nearing the house after returning from their afternoon interlude. He had to admit he felt pretty amazing, he forgotten how amazing sex and intimacy with another person was. He still had his memories but being with Lucy enlivened parts of himself he'd thought laid dormant forever.

“Can’t believe I made love to a man who has a Dora Explorer sticker on his backpack.” She said in a matter of fact manner. Flynn laughed as she smiled vibrantly, she looked beautiful with her messy hair and light blush.

A blush that was not of embarrassment or regret as he knew from the look she gave him that she’d sleep with him all over again. He wanted her again, his heart skipped a beat in joy as they had the rest of their lives to find secret moments of passion like the one they found today.
“How’s your arm?” he asked her, he hadn’t missed her rubbing the back of her neck and her shoulder.

“It’s fine.” She said, he gave her a look and she caved. “Ok, it twinges a little but it was worth it.” She said with a grin as she purposefully and playfully bumped him into. She wrapped her arm around his and leaned her head on his arm for a moment.

“Yeah?” Flynn asked teasingly as he stopped walking and turned to her.

“Yeah.” Lucy said before he kissed her. “So what were you saying back there in Croatian?” she asked as she pulled back and they continued to head towards the backdoor of the house.

“I spoke Croatian?” Flynn asked in an obtuse manner. He knew he did and he wasn’t about to translate for her. Not with his parents and their daughter in possible hearing range.

“Yeah, while we were- you know.” She said with grin.

“Oh yeah.” He casually admitted to. He liked the blush that darkened on her cheeks. His mind drifting back the fresh memories of them making love and knowledge that the blush extended to her whole body when she was turned on.

“So?” She asked, wanting to know what he had said.

“Guess you’ll have to learn Croatian to find out.” He said with a smart ass grin.

“It seems like I’m going to have to start with all the dirty words.” Lucy sighed, Flynn laughed. They continued towards the house and Lucy kept trying to pry answers out of him with no luck.

They came through the back door and found Asher and Maria in the kitchen. It smelt amazing as freshly baked cupcakes sat on the counter.

“Hello, how was the walk?” Maria asked them as she was setting up afternoon tea on the table. Asher passed her two more cups to her before he went back to washing up.

“It’s was beautiful. Thank you for looking after Holly.” Lucy said, she looked at the bench that was covered in at least two dozen iced cupcakes.

“No thanks needed, it was our pleasure.” Asher said as he was wiping up some bowls and packing them away into the cupboards behind him.

“How was Holly?” Flynn asked them. He offered to help Asher but his father waved him out of the kitchen. So, he and Lucy sat down at the kitchen table while Maria pottered around.

“She was fine though your father gave her too much batter.” Maria said.

“Is she unwell?” Lucy asked in concern.

“No, she was just a little restless going down for a nap but perseverance paid off.” Maria said, Lucy half expected Asher to high five Maria. But they didn’t.

“Well the cupcakes look amazing.” Lucy told them, Maria placed a small plate with four cupcakes on the table.

“Have one.” Maria offered, Lucy was a little reticent as she knew it was going to be some awful mishmash of flavours.
“We won’t tell Holly.” Asher added, Lucy picked up one of the cupcakes and took a bite.

“Oh, this is so good.” Lucy said in appreciation, before she took another bite. The flavours of the Chocolate, Banana and Strawberry were delicately balanced that it was a delight. It was actually like eating ice cream flavours in cake form. The chocolate frosting was the perfect decadent touch.

“Told you so.” Asher told Lucy. Flynn decided to try cupcake himself. Frankly, he was a little ravenous for food from all the exercise of the day.

“What am I tasting?” Flynn asked as he was a little confused by what he was eating. He just assumed it was a plain Chocolate cupcake.

“Chocolate, Banana and Strawberry with a Chocolate frosting.” Asher said, he finished up in the kitchen and sat down at the table with Maria.

“Well, I did not think it would work. I was wrong.” Lucy said before she finished her cupcake. She was so tempted to suck the crumbs off the cupcake paper cup but restrained herself.

“Here.” Flynn said as he passed her his half-eaten cupcake.

“You don’t like it?” Lucy asked him, he gave a shrug.

“No, it’s good but you’ll enjoy it more.” Flynn said as he wasn’t going to say anything bad about his father’s cooking.

“Your loss.” Lucy told him, before she ate the remainder of his cupcake before he changed his mind.

“Asher and I were thinking the day after tomorrow. We could take Holly out. Just the three of us and let you two have some more alone time.” Maria said in a casual but calculating manner.

“Work on baby number two.” Asher said, Lucy nearly choked on her cupcake.

“Lucy, are you ok?” Flynn asked, Lucy nodded as her eyes watered and she sputtered a little.

“Yeah, just went down the wrong pipe.” She said before she took a sip of the water that Maria got for her. “I’m good.” She assured them, Asher and Maria looked more amused than concerned.

“You’ll have to excuse Asher. I meant that you and Garcia could have some free time to yourselves. We remember what it was like to have to find time for ourselves when the boys were young. No pressure to have more children.” Maria said as she sent her husband a censuring look. Asher gave a shrug.

“But having them with a closer age gap is better.” Asher mused.

“That’s debatable.” Maria told him.

“Holly wants a sibling, it’s usually not easy to convince a child to want a sibling given it means sharing everything. You remember Gabriel’s reaction?” Asher asked Maria, she rolled her eyes.

“Gabriel liked being an only child. But he came around when he realised he got a new friend in Garcia.” Maria said to Lucy and Flynn with a reassuring smile. 

“After Garcia who was barely an hour old got him an awesome Micronaut.” Asher reminded her.

“It worked.” Maria told him.
“What’s a Micronaut?” Lucy asked them.

“It’s like a Transformer.” Asher explained, Lucy made an ‘A-ha’ expression. “Maria is right, you get a present for Holly and say it’s from the baby. She’ll be more accepting.” He added.

“Well, we haven’t discussed having more children yet.” Lucy said carefully as she didn’t want to get their hopes up.

“That’s not entirely true, we know we want more kids. But the ‘when’ part is the issue.” Flynn corrected, Lucy nodded as he was right.

“We need a house first in a place we want to live.” Lucy added.

“But we also want to travel for a bit with Holly. Let her see the world that she’s been deprived of.” Flynn said, Lucy nodded in agreement as it was a sore spot for both of them. They wanted Holly to fit into the outside world and have friends; not be the weird ‘bunker’ kid at the playground.

“Nothing wrong with that.” Maria said.

“Except I want more grandbabies.” Asher deadpanned, Maria elbowed him as it was clearly she who had those desires that Asher decided to advocate for.

“Don’t listen to him. He’s just joshing you.” Maria grumbled as she poured the tea.

Later that evening in the bunker, Denise and Jiya sat at the dining table sharing a bottle of Semillon Sauvignon Blanc. Though majority of it ended in Jiya’s glass and not Denise’s. They had shared dinner and talked about Michelle and the kids.

“How is it going here?” Denise asked as she didn’t like Jiya being left on her own in the bunker. She wasn’t going to let Jiya dodge talking about herself and her situation with Rufus all night.

“Good, we’re going to start upgrading the Lifeboat and talking about the final mission. How to make it happen without the team losing their minds.” Jiya said before she took a sip of her wine. She pursed her lips and spaced out for a moment as she couldn’t seem to focus on much. She thanked the wine for the warm fuzzy relaxed feelings she felt in every cell of her body.

“How are you?” Denise asked her. “With all the changes and Rufus?” she prompted.

“Fine, it’s sad of course but what can I do?” She asked with a shrug before she took a sip of her wine. She didn’t know what to do anymore. She wasn’t with Rufus, they were not friends and they tried to be civil. But they just found so many subjects to disagree on. It was just exhausting living in the shoes of a Jiya that didn’t exist.

“I honestly don’t know.” Denise said, it was comforting to Jiya that the older woman didn’t have an answer. It meant that Jiya could let herself off the hook as she felt herself starting to not care for Rufus as he wasn’t her Rufus which was good. But he was also not perfect, nor the ‘right’ Rufus for her. He proved it when he inferred he wanted move on from all them and the program completely.

“Exactly, which is why I keep moving forward. One foot in front of the other.” Jiya said as she told Denise about Karl helping her out, the apartment and her holiday plans. “It’s funny how suffocating it can be down here.” She mused.
“You won’t be down here forever.” Denise assured her.

“No, which is nice as sometimes it feels as if there are too many memories here.” Jiya said a little despondently, she could remember so many happy memories but there was also twice the amount of painful and stressful memories. She saw the concerned expression on Denise's face. “Anyway, you should go home and be with Michelle. I’ll be fine down here.” Jiya said as she knew why Denise was hanging around and while Jiya appreciated it. She knew it was rare for Denise to have an early night. If anyone should be with their loved one; it was Denise.

“I don’t want down here alone.” Denise told her.

“I’ll be fine. Rufus will be back in the morning to continue our work. Seriously, I’ll be ok.” Jiya assured her, Denise looked at her a long moment before she gave a slight nod.

“Ok.” Denise accepted, “But if you need me, call.” She added, she rose from her seat and picked up her suit jacket.

“I will, but as I said. I’m fine.” Jiya said, she and Denise said their goodnights. Jiya watched as Denise walked away. She heard the elevator door open and close. When Jiya knew she was alone, she downed her glass of wine and picked up the ¼ full bottle and rose from the table.

She walked to her crazy visions’ room, she had already started packing up her room and she had put packing boxes in the room to take down her work. It was strange to dismantle what was such a huge part of her life for nearly four years.

She stepped into the room and flicked on the light, she saw all of her history before her. Things that they had changed and others that remained the same, and some that never happened. She planned to pack it all up and left Denise take it away. It would probably be buried in some warehouse classified for 94 years or incinerated and Jiya was ok with that as she needed a clean break. Or as clean as she could from this chapter of her life.

She took a long sip of her wine before she placed the bottle on the desk. She rolled up the sleeves of her jumper and got to work. She carefully dismantled her wall of crazy and tucked it away in the box. She turned to the wall and stared at an old drawing of a figure standing in an alleyway.

With the force of Mack truck a vision hit her in a messy array of moments. She saw the lifeboat appear in a cloud of dust, the door opened and Karl stepped out. He paused at the open door way and lit a cigarette. He hopped down and turned to help Lucy, the two stepped back as Rufus joined them. Rufus wore an annoyed expression.

“You can’t live 5 minutes without inhaling that shit?” He asked Karl in a harsh tone.

“If I’m going to lose my mind, I’m going to smoke.” Karl told him in a plain manner. He pulled the cigarette out of his mouth with it perched between his index and middle finger. “Now, everyone follow me as we’re in a shitty part of town for tourists. I’d prefer we not get caught up in the local politics.” He drawled in a sarcastic manner.

The vision shifted, Jiya found herself sitting in a bar next to Flynn, he looked deep in his grief as he poured himself a drink. He hadn’t shaved and he looked like he hadn’t slept in weeks. Her heart broke to see him in such a state.

The vision shifted, Rufus having dinner with a beautiful woman. Jiya saw her reflection in the window. Then the vision jumped to Lucy cradling a baby close her chest. Tears streamed down Lucy’s face as she looked to Flynn. Jiya felt their grief as if it were her own.
“I can’t lose us, our family.” Lucy whispered to Flynn as he pressed his forehead to hers.

“You won’t, we’ll be right here.” He assured her in a soft voice and even in the heartache and the despair, Jiya saw the calendar on the wall. It was one year away. Then everything went black as Jiya slipped into unconsciousness.

“Your father is teaming up with Holly about this baby business, is not cute.” Lucy told Flynn as she sat on the bed with an exhausted sigh. It had been a good day, exceptional afternoon with Flynn but the evening had dragged a little.

“He likes to put on the pressure to see what we’ll do. It’s a chef thing.” Flynn offered as he really didn’t know why his parents were pushing for more grandchildren. They never did so with Lorena and Iris. But he had a feeling his parents wanted to hold another baby because they missed out with Holly.

“No, it’s not. It’s a Flynn thing, you’re all stirrers.” Lucy told him as she pulled off her sling.

“Not true.” Flynn said a little defensively, Lucy shot him a look.

“Three generations of stirrers from Asher, to you, to our kid.” She told him, she rubbed her upper trapezius muscle.

“Still hurting?” he asked her in concern.

“When doesn’t it hurt?” she asked in a frank manner. Flynn gave her an empathetic smile as he knew she was in a lot of pain but even so, her meds were supposed to help. “I tweaked it this morning, I had a nightmare this morning during my nap. I jerked my arm and hand into my body. It’s just been a little more sore than usual.” She explained.

“If you want, I can give you a massage.” He offered, “No strings attached.” He added as he sat down on the bed beside her.

“Sure, though I don't mind some strings.” Lucy said with a sly smile, grateful as she turned to her side. Flynn gently rested his hands on her shoulder and started to slowly massage her neck to shoulder. Lucy sighed in pleasure as he applied just the right amount of pressure. “Oh, that feels good.” She said.

“Let me know when it hurts.” He said as he carefully massaged the knots in her upper right trapezius muscle.

“I will. So, today, we’re going to keep doing that right?” she asked him, she threw another sly smile over her shoulder.

“Yes, though I’d prefer inside where we can close a door and we can take our time.” He told her in a low voice as he continued to smooth his hands over her sore muscles. He could feel the tension seeping out her body as she relaxed back into his hands.

“I’d like that too.” Lucy said, she wore a sleepy smile.

“Maybe go slower, gentler until you’re out of the sling and your bones are mended.” Flynn added in a low and enticing manner, Lucy liked the way he spoke, her body warming under his touch.
“But that’s weeks away.” Lucy grumbled, she wanted him again now. Her mind racing at all the possibilities as she became more aroused.

“We could have no sex at all.” He stated, like a bucket of cold water on her overheated fantasies.

“Oh, that’s mean.” Lucy told him.

“I don’t want to hurt you.” Flynn said in a serious manner, Lucy turned to face him and cupped the side of his face.

“I know. I love you for it even if it’s a little annoying.” She informed him.

“Seriously?” he asked with a chuckle.

“Yes, I don’t want you to hold back with me in anything.” She said in a serious manner as she wanted him to hear what she was saying. Flynn placed his hand over hers before he turned his face to her palm and pressed a soft kiss into her palm.

“We have a whole lifetime ahead of us. So, just relax as we don’t need to rush anything.” He assured her before he drew her in for a long and slow kiss.

Jiya slowly came to and groaned as she felt like the world had swallowed her up and spat her back up in a mangled mess. She opened her eyes and wish she hadn’t as the fluorescent lighting glared down at her. Her brain and emotions scrambled with new visions as she hadn’t just been slammed with new visions, she had dreamed a few more. Luckily her dream visions were old ones on repeat but it help the migraine.

She pressed her hands into her face and gave a sigh. She pulled her phone out of her pocket and looked at the time. She silently cursed that it was past 2 am. She needed to get off the floor. She knew she should sit down and go through her process but the migraine that made her skull throb stopped her. She couldn’t just curl up on the floor as Rufus might find her. After her vision of him moving on, she just didn’t want his sympathy.

She just wanted her own life to go back to some sense of normalcy. She groaned in pain as she pushed herself upright. Nausea rolled in her stomach and her vision clouded as she forced herself to her feet. She wavered dangerously on her feet and decided it was probably best to sit down.

She blew out a breath and pulled up a chair and sat down for a moment. She took a swig of wine to just wet her mouth and throat before she stood up from the table. She haphazardly made her way to her bedroom. She didn’t bother to turn on the lights as she closed the door and felt her way in the dark to her bed.

She laid down with an exhausted sigh, the images from her visions playing over and over in her mind’s eye. The emotions of frustration, joy and despair rolling around inside. Emotions that weren’t hers but of the people in the visions. The only emotion she felt was resignation to the finality of what was to come.
A week later,

“You scared the living daylights out of me.” Janice said as she found Rufus on the front porch changing the light bulb.

“Sorry, Mom. I just noticed it blinking when I left last week and I figured I'd change it before it died.” He said with a smile as he continued in his work. He pulled out the old bulb and switched it with new one.

“That's nice of you, though I'm surprised you're doing it. I figured you would pay someone to do it.” Janice told him, she stood in the front door frame watching him with folded arms. Rufus brushed off the comment as he was glad that he made the effort. He always felt the smallest gestures had the greatest value.

“I had some free time.” He said with a shrug. He placed the shade back over the light and came down the ladder with the burnt-out light globe.

“At 6:30 in the morning?” she asked, Rufus gave a sheepish smile. “You want some coffee?” Janice asked as she took the light globe from him. She gave him one of her 'you're lucky, I gave birth to you and love you' smiles before she walked into the house.

“Yes, please.” He said as he propped the ladder to the side; so, it was out of the way. He followed his mother into the house. He made sure to close the door behind him. He could already smell the fresh pot.

“You know you can always call before you fix things. Set up a time, so I know who's banging around outside.” Janice told him in a light manner.

“I am sorry. I’ll definitely call next time and if you need anything let me know.” Rufus told her, she gave him an odd smile as if she didn’t know what to make of him.

“You really have changed, haven’t you?” Janice asked as she poured two cups of coffee and placed one on the kitchen table.

“I- yeah.” Rufus said as he dumped a heap of sugar into his cup. “You know, I could get you one of those espresso machines.” He offered.

“I like my coffee how it is. Those pod coffees are so wasteful.” She told him, before Rufus could negotiate her into a new coffee machine she changed the subject. “So, what’s new with you?” she asked.

“Nothing much, just work.” Rufus told her with a shrug as they sat down at the kitchen table.

“Not seeing some lovely young woman or man?” Janice asked in a light manner as if she didn’t want to be rude.

“No, I had one date with a woman.” Rufus said, he wondered how much he should disclose to his mother and figured it was best to stick close to the truth as possible.

“Well one is better than none. Are you going to see her again?” Janice asked.
“No, I’m not her type and she also has this real mean streak of independence.” Rufus said with a sigh, he missed his Jiya. The relationship they had. It really surprised him that they hadn’t been able to pick up where they left off. He knew it was mostly him, his reservations and him not being able to let go of the woman he knew for the one before him.

“Nothing wrong with an independent woman.” Janice said.

“Of course not, but she just wants a different lifestyle to me. I want to be serious and settle down. She wants to have fun, travel and have adventures.” Rufus said, it was partly true.

“You know that you can have fun, travel and be serious and settle down. Especially given you have the money for it.” Janice told him.

“She’s 8 years younger than me.” Rufus said.

“Is she a bimbo?” Janice asked dryly.

“No, she’s not. She’s smarter than me but we both have some massive baggage between us. We even struggle to be friends.” Rufus admitted.

“I thought it was one date as in the first date. How can there be baggage?” Janice asked confused.

“We work together, I know, I shouldn’t date my subordinates.” He said as he could see Janice was not impressed with him. “She’s just so brilliant and funny. I really liked her, but yeah- it was a mess.” He said awkwardly, Janice gave him a kind smile.

“I’m so sorry, but if you can’t be friends then you should just let her go. There are other women out there.” Janice said as diplomatically as she could.

“But I really like her.” Rufus said, Janice gave a half shrug.

“It doesn’t matter, your future partner is going to be your best friend and constant companion. If you can’t be friends, then how are you going to get through the tough times and enjoy the good times?” Janice asked him.

“I don’t know.” Rufus said, he was growing tired of not knowing anymore.

Lucy and Flynn laid in bed together, catching their breath. Their bodies covered in a light sheen of sweat as they cooled down from an early morning of making love.

“Is it me, or are we getting better at this?” Lucy asked him, a smile played on her lips as she felt amazing. Sure, a few twinges of pain were fading her glow but she was happy.

“Practise does makes perfect.” Flynn said mockingly, he brought her left hand up to his lips. He pressed a soft kiss to the back of her hand before resting it on his chest.

“Shut up.” Lucy said with a chuckle, she loved this man. She looked at the smile on his lips, the shared joke.

“Make me.” Flynn teased.

“Too tired.” Lucy complained happily, there were some flaws in their relationship like how Flynn kept his emotions close to the vest and how quickly their relationship was progressing under the
façade of their marriage. But while it felt like a whirlwind, it felt right and strong. She was so comfortable that she was laying in bed naked in daylight not even caring about how her hair looked or what her boobs were doing or the other little self-conscious issues that normally plagued her. If it were any other man, she’d have covered herself up with the bed sheets.

“You can sleep as we should have an hour until Holly wakes up.” Flynn offered.

“Should being the operative word.” Lucy said as a familiar knock sounded on the door. She reflexively pulled the sheets over her as they push watched door. Wondering if maybe the person behind it would move on. But no such luck.

“Mommy, Daddy?” Holly asked through the door. The handle of the door jiggled but didn’t open. “I can't open the door.” she announced.

“Give us a moment, Monkey.” Lucy said as she and Flynn scrambled out of bed and into their pyjamas. Lucy didn’t even bother with her hair as she moved to the door. Flynn haphazardly pulled the blankets and sheets onto the bed before he gave Lucy the thumbs up. She unlocked the door and smiled at Holly. “Hey Monkey, what you doing up so early?” she asked.

“I’m hungry, is it seven o’clock?” Holly asked her.

“No, it’s only six am.” Flynn said as he sat down on the bed. Lucy picked up her silk kimono jacket and pulled it on, she didn't bother with the sling as she couldn't exactly remember where it was in the mess of her clothes from last night.

“Oh, ok, so why was the door locked?” Holly asked as she came into the room and climbed onto the bed. She clutched her stuff monkey to her chest and eyed them both in curiosity.

“Ah-“ Lucy started but Holly didn’t give her a chance to lie before the next question.

“Why are you both so sweaty?” Holly asked them.

“We were exercising.” Flynn answered smoothly, he smiled at Lucy trying to remain calm under the pressure of their child’s curiosity.

“Can I have breakfast now?” Holly asked them.

“Yes, I can make you cereal.” Lucy offered, Holly didn’t look impressed with the idea.

“But I thought Daddy could make pancakes.” Holly said with a hopeful smile.

“It’s not 7am, if you want pancakes then you’ll have to wait.” Flynn told Holly, she scrunched her face up not sure how to digest the information.

“Can’t we have them now?” Holly asked.

“No, but Mommy can make you a little bit of cereal to tide you over until breakfast. I need to have a shower.” Flynn told her.

“Ok.” Holly said in disappointment, she flopped herself off the bed.

“I’ll be out in a minute.” Lucy said as Holly had started dragging herself out the room in a slow and pouty manner. Lucy knew now this was a tactic of Holly’s as she waited for Lucy or Flynn to change their minds. But she and Flynn held strong, they knew his parents were spoiling Holly enough for the moment.
“Ok.” Holly sighed, she left the room. Lucy turned to Flynn, she wore a wry smile as he chagrined at their daughter’s dramatics.

“I know.” He said with a chuckle, he moved to her and cupped her face with both hands. “And she most likely won’t grow out of it.” He whispered before he kissed her.

“I have to go.” She said before he kissed her again in a slow and drugging manner. She hummed as she pulled away from him, a smile on her lips. “Don’t use all the hot water.” She told him.

“I’ll do my best.” Flynn said.

Jiya slowed to a stop outside the bunker, just as Karl pulled up in his car into the makeshift parking lot.

“Morning.” Karl said as he hopped out of the car.

“Hey.” Jiya said with a smile, she shook out her legs as she’d just finished a long run. She smiled as he opened the back door of the car and dogs scrambled out. “Hey boys!” She said cheerfully as she greeted Bacon and Sweet Pea. She looked up to Karl, he lit a cigarette. He was dressed in an expensive suit and carried a canvas bag at his side. “You’re early.” She said, she really wanted to say smoking would kill him but she figured he knew that already.

“Yeah, Denise said the meeting is at 7am. So, here I am. I brought fresh pastries.” He said as he lifted the bag up to signify it contained the pastries. Jiya’s smile broadened as she was a sucker for a breakfast she didn’t have to make.

“Good man.” She enthused.

“How was the run?” He asked with an amused smile.

“Not too bad. May I have a pastry?” Jiya asked, Karl nodded as he passed her the bag. He blew smoke over his shoulder away from her. She pulled out a blueberry Danish and took a bite from it. “Mmm, so good.” She said.

“You get a call from Holly yesterday?” Karl asked.

“Yep, Holly, Lucy and Flynn are having fun. They should be back in the next few days barring any emergencies.” Jiya said before she ate another bite. She didn’t want to admit it by she missed Holly, Lucy and Flynn. She couldn’t wait for them to come back as they were this comforting constant in her life. No matter what happened, Flynn and Lucy were solid like a rock, Holly a constant spark of joy and wonder. When they weren’t in the bunker, the place felt empty and cold to her.

“I’m they’ll be fine. Not sure about me, do you know what this meeting is about?” Karl asked.

"Last mission, but it's best to wait until we all sit down and talk about it." Jiya told him, she didn't want to say anything more until she had to. She just hoped that his reluctance in her visions was just him being an asshole to Rufus. As she needed him to go to 2015, she knew deep in her bones that this mission was going to happen and that it needed to be perfect. Perfect meant having all the right players in the right time and space.

"That sounds rather cryptic." Karl quipped.

"What's with the suit?" she asked.
"Going from here to a meeting with my accountant. I like to dress the part, bring the dogs to terrorise his expensive suits and furniture." Karl said in amusement. Jiya chuckled and shook her head at his cheekiness.

“There we go.” Lucy said as she placed the small bowl of cereal to Holly before she went back to the kitchen area. She cleaned up the chopping board and poured herself a cup of coffee.

“Thank you.” Holly said with a smile, she picked up a spoon and started eating.

“You’re welcome.” Lucy said, she returned to the table and sat down. “So, you excited about today?” she asked, she propped her head up on her elbow and watched Holly eat.

“I always wanted to meet a horse.” Holly said, Lucy couldn't help but smile as Holly made it sound like meeting a horse was the same as meeting a person.

“They are beautiful creatures. I know Daddy is very excited as he loves horses.” Lucy told her.

“Daddy says he and you go riding heaps for your work.” Holly said between bites of her cereal.

“We did. It was some of my favourite times as it was more fun than work. When your cast is off, I’m sure he’d like to teach you how to ride a horse.” Lucy told her, she remember her and Flynn horse-riding in the past.

She had learnt the basics of horse-riding as a child. Her mother felt it was important for her to learn but when it started to chew into Lucy's school hours. It was cut from Lucy's schedule. Lucy had been grateful, she didn't mind horse riding but it was exhausting because like everything in her life; it had to be done with perfection or not at all.

But riding as an adult was different, it had taken some time to get her skills back. But with Flynn, it felt easy as it was a spectacle for him unlike with Rufus and Wyatt who waited to see her stuff it up and laugh at her. Flynn didn't expect perfection, he just wanted at the time to finish the mission and to do so as safely as possible. She had to admit in retrospect, it was strangely relaxing even when there was a ticking clock.

“Does that mean I will get a horse today?” Holly asked with excitement.

“No, you won’t as these horses already living in their forever home.” Lucy told her, Holly frowned.

“Ok, but maybe later when we have a house above the ground?” Holly asked hopeful manner.

“Oh, I don’t know. Our house might not be big enough for a horse.” Lucy said with a wry smile, she turned in her chair to see Asher and Maria come out of their room. The couple looked well rested with already quaffed hair and proper clothes on. Unlike Lucy who was sporting her sex hair and pyjamas with her kimono on top.

“Morning.” Maria said warmly as she and Asher greeted them.

“Good Morning.” Lucy said,

“Already eating breakfast?” Asher asked as he spied the contents of Holly’s bowl.

“Just a little cereal as Holly is hoping for pancakes.” Lucy said, she hoped she wasn’t encroaching the man’s territory as Asher was always feeding them all. She mentally shook her head as she reminded herself that she was Holly’s Mom. If she wanted to feed her child, she could without
repercussions. But sometimes, it was hard not to feel like second fiddle to Flynn and his parents.

“Hmm, one small pancake with some scrambled eggs and bacon. But only if you eat all your fruit.” Asher negotiated with Holly.

“Ok.” Holly said reluctantly. Asher said something in Croatian that made Holly smile and giggle. He ruffled her hair and moved into the kitchen.

“Morning everyone.” Flynn said as he came in; freshly showered and dressed for the day. They all greeted him as he moved into the kitchen with Asher. The two got to work on breakfast, it had become an unspoken thing. The men took care of food and clean up while the women reaped the benefits.

“I’m going to go to get changed.” Lucy said as she decided to take the time before breakfast was ready to make herself a tiny bit more respectable. She pushed up from the table, Flynn came around to her.

“Want your hair up?” he asked.

"Please." She said, she wondered if he was a mind reader or if she was that predictable. But nonetheless, Flynn pulled a hair tie out of his pocket and fixed her hair into a messy top bun. As much as she wished she could do her own hair, there was something intoxicating about having Flynn run his fingers through it. Even in the most perfunctory manner as he did now.

“Thank you.” She said, she left the main room and headed to her and Flynn’s room. She quickly showered in the ensuite and awkwardly dried off before she changed into her outfit of the day. She looked at her hair, knew there would be knots and decided it was better to just leave it.

When she returned to the living area, the men were plating up breakfast. She could sense the underlying tension in the room as Flynn gave a shrug. His expression was one of exhaustion, not physical but emotional.

“Just in time, sit.” Maria said with a smile.

“What did I miss?” Lucy asked, she retook her chair at the table.

“Asher and I spoke with Gabriel this morning.” Maria said, Lucy felt her insides tighten up as the was not the first time this subject had been broached. She knew Flynn needed time, he’d expressed as much but his parents were pushing for it. As well as another grandchild, it started with small jokes, but the serious nudges were coming now. Especially for Flynn to reconcile with brother.

“How is he?” Lucy asked casually.

“Good, we chatted for a long while.” Asher said, Lucy had a feeling that there was a lot more to the conversation but Flynn’s parents weren’t going to say so in front of Gabriel.

“That’s good. I look forward to meeting him one day.” Lucy said, she thanked Flynn as he placed her breakfast before her.

“We were hoping it would be soon.” Maria said, the men placed down the other plates and joined them.

“We don’t know what our schedule will be.” Flynn told her.

“It’s true; when we get back. We’ll have a better idea but for now we can’t commit to anything yet.”
Lucy said backing her husband. She picked up her knife and fork to eat.

“But we’ll meet Uncle Gabriel right?” Holly asked.

“Yes, but it won’t be for a little while.” Lucy said being the ‘bad’ guy in the equation and buying Flynn more time.

"Oh, ok.” Holly said before she tucked into her own breakfast. Lucy looked to Asher and Maria across the table while they smiled and casually ate their breakfast. Lucy knew she had made a serious faux pas instead of caving into their subtle demands.

“Oh no!” Jiya laughed, as Bacon shook his head and softly whimpered. The poor puppy had been smacked in the face by a tennis ball that Karl underhanded him. In Karl's defense, it was Bacon who had not learnt his mouth was too small to pick up the ball yet. But the puppy tried. “Oh no, come here.” She said, Bacon started to but stopped to back to the ball and managed to sink his teeth into enough of the ball's fluffy exterior to pick it up. One he was sure he had it, he came to her.

“Told you that Bacon was not a bright dog.” Karl said with a chuckle, he sat beside her at the table. Sweet Pea in his lap, luxuriating in the back rub Karl was giving him. Jiya shook her head at him as she took the ball and lifted Bacon into her lap.

“Don’t listen to him. You are a smart dog as I know you meant to headbutt that ball.” Jiya cooed at Bacon as she scratched the puppy behind the ears. The puppy yipped happily and licked her hands.

“You’re spoiling him.” Karl informed her.

“It’s my mission in life to ruin your dogs.” Jiya told him, she gave Bacon a good rub down earning her some more puppy kisses.

“Great, though I guess it’s better that you ruin my dogs and not my women.” Karl quipped.

“Like you have a bevy of ladies at your beck and call.” Jiya scoffed, she let Bacon slip to the floor to play with his tennis ball.

“Maybe I do.” Karl said in a smarmy manner. Before Jiya could reply; Denise, Connor and Rufus came into the room. They sat at down at the table looking incredibly serious. Jiya frowned as she wondered if maybe she had missed some pre-meeting business as they seemed to look like a united front. She felt strangely on the outside, a feeling she didn’t like.

“This looks rather serious.” Karl said as he stroked Sweet Pea’s head. Jiya couldn’t help the faint smile as he looked like a 70s bond villain in his suit with the Pomeranian in his lap.

“It is.” Denise said.

“Ok, am I in trouble?” Karl asked them in a droll manner. He took in the serious expression and Jiya’s slightly confused one.

“No, we have one final mission that needs to be addressed.” Connor told him as he passed the dossier across the table. Karl placed Sweet Pea on the floor and leaned forward. He opened the folder and found grainy CCTV images, he frowned as he looked closer to see himself standing next to Rufus and Lucy in what appeared to be a dodgy part of Sao Paulo.
“This is for 2015, we have a hard and fast rule about not going into our own timelines. One I kept to and want to keep to.” Karl told them as he closed the folder. He could see the annoyance and disappointment and didn’t care. Denise looked the most displeased.

“You don’t have a say in it. It’s already happened which means you’re going to do it.” Denise pointed out. “So, the question is; what will your price be.” She stated.

“No, there is no price as I’m not interested in losing my mind. No matter what obscene amount of money you’d throw my way.” Karl said firmly.

“Karl, hear us out because here’s the thing. It has to happen.” Jiya said softly, she felt him put up the walls and she had a feeling when Karl made a decision he committed fully.

“It already has happened which means that we don’t have to.” Karl argued, Rufus snorted a laugh. The two men shared a glare of annoyance for different reasons. “Find something amusing?” he asked Rufus.

“Just your rudimentary understanding of Time Travel.” Rufus said.

“So, it’s happened in 2015 but you, Rufus and Lucy from our present haven’t gone back to make it happen. If you don’t, it won’t happen.” Connor explained.

"And we’re looking into trying to find a way to combat you and the others being in your time period but it has to happen. If Flynn doesn’t get the Journal or hear what Lucy has to say then none of this happens. If we change one person from the mission, it could change and unravel all of our hard work and sacrifices over these past few years.” Jiya told him.

“Yes, even with my rudimentary understanding of Time Travel; I do understand that. I just don’t understand why me. Also, I don’t like this.” Karl said bluntly, Jiya didn't even flinch as she understood why he was not on board but she also felt the need to push him into it.

“I saw you in my visions of this event. You're going to go even if you hate it.” Jiya told him, she shared a long look with Karl. He searched her eyes, she knew he was trying to see if she was lying. But she was telling the truth.

Not that they had ever discussed in depth but he knew about her visions and he held a healthy respect for it. He trusted what she saw, Jiya never trusted him fully in the past. But Flynn explained to her that it was a cultural thing for Karl. That Karl's parents had been Sinti and Karl had grown up hearing stories and seeing first hand the ‘gifted' Sinti who had passive psychic powers such as empathy, precognition, retrocognition, or psychometry among other more physical powers. That they used their powers for good, to save people's live and preserve their culture. It was deeply ingrained in their way of life to have a deep respect for those who were gifted and their elders.

What confused Jiya was that Flynn had said Karl left his people and their way of life many years ago. Flynn didn't go into the story claiming it was Karl's to tell not his. But even now, it seemed Karl hadn't shed the beliefs and traditions instilled in him as he took Jiya more seriously than he did an image lifted from CCTV database.

“You had another vision?” Rufus asked Jiya, she broke eye contact with Karl and looked to Rufus.

“Yes, it's the same but just more details fill in. So I now know how it will all go down. Karl, you’ll go with them as you're meant to. It’s roughly 5 minutes of exposure. From what we know, people go insane or die after existing in their own timeline for more than 10 minutes. If you could be replaced, we wouldn't be sitting here and right now I need you to get on board.” Jiya explained to him.
“When does this mission happen?” Karl asked her, he wore a conflicted expression.

“I believe it's one to two years from now,” Jiya said with certainty, she didn't want to give the exact date as she didn't want the future to change from what she saw. She knew Flynn and Lucy would have another child, if they didn't have that child...Jiya didn't know what the consequences would be. She didn't want to, which meant withholding information.

“Not five?” Rufus asked in confusion.

“No.” Jiya said firmly, she remembered the baby that Lucy held in her arms. She felt a tightening in her chest as she felt the sadness and fear of losing the present. Of losing their children as if they were her flesh and blood.

“How can you tell it's that soon?” Karl asked Jiya before anyone else could.

“I prefer not to say, it's deeply personal.” Jiya said as she knew lying to Karl would not be good for their friendship. She didn't want him to feel played.

"Personal? Now is not the time to withhold information." Denise said.

"It's not relevant to the mission at hand. You'll just have to trust me and trust what I've seen." She told the table, she could none of them were happy with that answer.

“I need a smoke.” Karl said.
Chapter 36

Lucy smiled and waved as Holly sat in the saddle of a dark brown stallion horse with Flynn. The two rode slowly in circles the round pen. The two were smiling and enjoying themselves, Asher spoke with the owner of the property and Maria stood next to Lucy.

“Asher and I love riding the horse trails wherever we can find them. Flynn was the same, he loved riding as a child.” Maria said with a reminiscent smile.

“He told me he wanted to grow up to be a cowboy when he was a kid.” Lucy mused, she waved again as Holly waved at them.

“It started with Tex Willer Comics and those Clint Eastwood spaghetti westerns. He was infatuated with it all. He was so upset when he realised that he was born a 100 years too late be a cowboy like the ones in the movies.” Maria said with a chuckle.

“What about Gabriel? Did he want to be a cowboy too?” Lucy asked, she kept watching Flynn and Holly. She committed the moment before her to memory.

“No, Gabriel wanted to be many things but never really settled on one dream. He didn’t mind horse-riding, but his real passion was cars and mechanics. He loved getting into the guts of things and figuring out how they worked.” Maria said.

“But he didn’t go into engineering?” Lucy asked as she remembered Gabriel was a mechanic.

“No, he had no interest in university or becoming an engineer. Instead he’s a mechanic, it makes him happy. I think that’s all I can ask for as a mother.” Maria said with a soft smile.

“So, Garcia told me that he has an uncle who owns a ranch outside of Velika Plana.” Lucy said, slightly changing the topic. Maria smiled.

“Yes, Mihael is still with us. His son Marko runs the ranch now but when the boys were young, we’d go out for the spring holidays and let the boys run wild. Garcia loved helping around the place, looking after the animals and riding the horses. I always thought he’d end up working for Mihael after the war. But Garcia had other plans.” Maria said wistfully.

“Life had other plans.” Lucy said.

“You know, I never thought I’d see you cut and run even when you could make a huge pay day.” Jiya said as she found Karl topside of the Bunker; smoking a cigarette. She hadn’t waited for the others to interrogate her. She just got up from her chair and followed Karl, claiming she’d get him to come around.

“I said I needed a smoke. I wasn’t lying unlike you and the ‘deeply personal’ part of this mission.” He said as he took a long drag of his cigarette. He playfully nudged ball that Bacon had dropped at his feet. He made sure to pick his foot up before Bacon tried to bite his shoe.

“I know.” Jiya said, Karl gave a slow exhale feeling calm as the nicotine washed through his system. He also felt pretty good that he had read her right and that she admitted to lying even if he knew it was just a white lie.

“I wasn’t lying when I said that I don’t want to go back to 2015. I don’t want to mess with my
immediate past or come back as a cracked egg.” He told her in a frank manner.

“No one does but if you don’t go then all of this could unravel.” Jiya told him.

“You say that, but History always finds a way of going on; no matter who the players are.” Karl argued.

“I think you know why it has to be you.” Jiya countered, she took a deep breath and levelled him with a serious look. “You know exactly where Flynn is and the most direct route to get there from when we pick a landing site. You even know the best landing sites. You like your life right now, if you don’t go then you could lose it all.” Jiya told him.

“Hmm” Karl murmured in a disgruntled agreement.

“It has to be you with them. Please Karl, just do this for us. It’s not just you on the line here.” Jiya pleaded, He looked at her for a long moment wondering when he’d ever seen her look so desperate and scared. Never; came to mind and it was compelling to just cave in to make Jiya feel safe. To give her the calm she seemed to desperately crave.

“Tell me what the deeply personal thing is.” Karl demanded, Jiya reared back and shook her head.

“I can’t.” Jiya said. Her answer only made him nervous and incredibly curious.

“You can, you saw the mission. So, what aren’t you telling me? Do I die on that mission? Do I go insane?” he asked her bluntly, he didn't want there to be any secrets in regards to this mission. He didn't like time travel as he felt it was messing with the natural order of the universe.

“No, you all come back. Safe and sound.” Jiya said, annoyed that Karl was sniffing around her for information.

“Then what is it? Rufus? No, you don’t give a shit about him anymore.” He said, Jiya pursed her lips because she couldn’t really deny that. She tried to hold onto how she felt for Rufus but her feelings had changed out self-preservation. She loved a different Rufus and the current Rufus didn’t want her. She needed to move on. “That leaves Lucy.” he said, he smiled. “Come on, tell me what has you so twisted up in knots that you’ll come up and try to talk me into what I consider to be suicide.” Karl told her before he took another drag of his cigarette.

“I can’t tell you because you wouldn’t believe me.” Jiya told him.

“I can tell when you’re lying. So, try me.” He said before he exhaled the smoke over his shoulder away from her. Jiya sighed as she mentally weighed up her options and decided that telling Karl and having him sign on was better than him walking away altogether.

“You can’t tell the others. No one.” She warned in a low voice.

“I promise to take it to me grave.” Karl said as he crossed his heart with his fingers. She looked around to make sure no one was around and leaned in close.

“Lucy has a baby.” Jiya told him in a low voice as she didn't want them to be overheard.

“How is Flynn and Lucy having another baby deeply personal to you?” Karl asked her.

“It's not. I just don't think it's my place to blab that kind of information around. But I also feel a deep responsibility to ensuring this last mission goes perfectly.”
“Because if it doesn’t then we could potentially be erasing two rugrats instead of one?” Karl asked her, he stepped away from her and took in their surroundings and to flick some ash off his cigarette.

“Yes, every life matters, everyone has a path that has a ripple effect on many other lives. I don’t like the idea of erasing children from the present or what will be our present because you’re afraid of a tiny headache.” Jiya told him.

“I’m not afraid of a headache. It’s the insanity, it’s also unnatural to exist time travel into a timeline you already exist in and even worse if you’re in the close vicinity to your past self.” He said, he was well within his rights to be uncomfortable with what she was asking of him.

“I know but you were in Argentina. It’s hardly close.” Jiya argued.

“Close enough.” Karl told her.

“I can’t believe you’re afraid of a little insanity when you risked your life to go undercover with a 200 yr old cult!” Jiya shouted at him, she couldn't help it as months of pent up frustration got the better of her. Her entire job in the bunker was always passive or her fighting to be taken seriously. When she was taken seriously, it was usually brushed aside for 'later'.

“That’s different.” Karl told her, not raising his tone.

“How?!” She asked incredulously.

“It’s work.” Karl said, Jiya's jaw dropped as it made no sense to her.

“This is work.” Jiya told him.

“Work I don’t need.” Karl told her, as if there was a difference.

“Urgh, but I saw you in my vision. So, just tell me what I have to do to make you go!” Jiya told him in frustrated tone.

“I want to know the exact date I leave and the gender of the baby.” He told her, Jiya blinked as she was stunned at his demands.

“And?” she asked him, she waited for the punch line or in this case the price tag.

“That's it. Date and time, gender.” he said with a shrug, Jiya felt a little dizzy from the whiplash.

"Why are you caving so quickly?" She asked him.

"Because I don't want to have you on my ass trying to sell this to me for a year. I'm already obscenely rich, so I'm taking the option of knowledge. But don't think that my surrender means I'm with you. I'm still against time travelling into our own timeline.” he told her.

"Seriously?" she asked him.

"There will be a baby pool. I want to win it.” he added.

“You’re unreal.” Jiya said as she didn't know how to feel or what to think.

"What?" He asked teasingly as he knew exactly what he was doing.

"It's cheating." She told him, she couldn't help but smile a little at the absurdity of the situation.
"What's the point in all these visions if you can't have some fun with them?" he asked her, before she could answer he spoke. "Anyway, it's my price. So, come on." he told her, he motioned for her to come to him but she took it as a gesture of 'cough up the information'.

"You have to keep it to yourself and pretend like you didn't know." She told him.

"I will." he promised.

“Come here.” Jiya said as she crooked a finger at him. Karla leaned down with a smile. Jiya leaned in and whispered the gender of the baby. Karl pulled away with a grin. “Now you have to sit on that information for at least another three to four months.” Jiya told him.

“I can keep a secret.” He assured her.

It was mid afternoon when Flynn carried a sleeping Holly into the house. His parents had stayed behind for dinner with their friends while Flynn, Lucy had begged out with Holly. Lucy had to admit she was looking forward to an evening with just Flynn and Holly.

She also knew Flynn needed some time to decompress from his parents' nudges to reconcile with Gabriel. Lucy knew she would have to tell Flynn that his parents' expectations were pretty normal for siblings. She remembered her mother always made a point to make Lucy and Amy to reconcile after they had their fights. How her mother told how important family was, it seemed contradictory in hindsight as Amy had been erased by her mother or more to the point; Rittenhouse. She shook off the memory of her mother's words, how she spoke of Rittenhouse like it was a god-like entity. No matter how much they tried to brainwash her, Lucy could never purposefully erase another person let alone the people she loved.

Flynn took Holly to her room and laid her down on top of the bed covers. He pulled the throw blanket from the bottom of the bed and draped it over her. Once he was sure she wasn't going to wake up, he quietly crept out of the room, closed the door and joined Lucy in the kitchen where he gave a relieved sigh.

“That was a fun day.” Lucy said with a smile.

“Yes, but I am glad to be back here as Holly was losing her mind over everything with fur.” He said with a grin, they both chuckled in an exhausted manner as they remembered Holly's exuberance. She hugged and petted nearly every animal on the farm that would tolerate the contact. They had loved watching and experiencing her joy and her wonder at things they had taken for granted. “She wants a whole farm.” Flynn added.

“We're not getting a farm full of animals.” Lucy told him.

“No, I’m so glad we’re on the same page about that.” Flynn said, a little relieved as he was willing to give into some of Holly's whims but he was not ready for the responsibilities of a farm. He pulled Lucy into his arms and pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

“But.” Lucy drawled playfully, as there was always a 'but' in these conversations. She wrapped her arms around him and took a deep inhale drawing comfort from his scent and the strength of his body against hers.

“But?” he asked.

“Your Mom said that your Uncle owns a farm in Croatia.” Lucy said as she pulled back to look up at him.
“And?” he asked out of curiosity.

“We could move to Croatia for part of the year. Be closer to your parents and within driving distance of a family owned farm would have it’s perks.” Lucy told him, she took the small opening to discuss their future.

“Except you don’t speak any civil Croatian and my parents would drive us both insane like they are right now.” He told her.

“Maybe, but they’ll still drive us insane from afar via skype. At least if we have a home there, we don’t have to stay with them when we visit. We’d have our own space and did I mention your Uncle has a farm?” she asked him with a smile.

“You did.” He said in amusement.

“I also think owning property over there would also help your parents ease up on their thing about you and Gabriel.” Lucy told him.

“Maybe, but I think I just need to go see him and get it over with.” he said, it wasn't about reconnecting with a man he didn't even know but just about getting his parents off his back.

“Which slides in perfectly if we go over and buy a house because then your parents will there to help me with Holly. Your parents want you and Gabriel to get along, it’s what parents with more than one child do. They like to be a big happy family together.” She explained, he looked thoughtful for a long moment.

“I’m uncomfortable with your level of Croatian.” he said, changing the topic away from Gabriel. She didn't mind as she only wanted him to keep an open mind about their future.

“You’re telling me I can’t get by on what you’ve been saying in bed?” she asked teasingly, Flynn gave a quick kiss on the lips before he laughed.

“You should only say those things to me.” he told her with a smug grin.

“Fine, but I’m serious, we haven’t got a lot holding us here in the US. We move to Croatia, we have your parents to help us with Holly. We’re a skip and hop from all of Europe and Asia. All that history and culture for me to dig into. Holly is bilingual, she could even pick up more languages. It’s got potential for us.” She told him.

“You are selling this hard.” He said with a grin, as he could see she had given this a lot of thought.

“I’m just trying to make everyone happy but allow us the space to grow as our own family.” Lucy said, she played with the front of his shirt.

“I don’t want to bend our lives to my parent’s will.” He told her softly.

“It was just a thought.” she said gently.

“I know and I’m willing to entertain the idea, but I think we should not rush into anything. Not while you’re still injured, not while we’re not sure what’s going on with the project at the bunker. Or while my parents are pressuring us to have more kids and for me reconcile with my brother. To be honest, it’s all a little overwhelming.” He said.

“Ok.” She said.
“I really just want time with you and Holly. Just the three of us for a while first.” he said which was his most honest desire for their next few months. He wanted to see what they were like without other people around to act as buffers between them. He wanted more moments like today with Holly. Moments where they shared the world with their child, helped her learn and grow.

“Ok, then why don’t we move out of the bunker and find a nice little property far from the city noise.” Lucy offered.

“Why do I feel like you’ve been researching this?” Flynn asked her, she gave a sheepish smile.

“Because it’s what I do.” She said with a half shrug. She moved out his arms and went over to the lounge room and pulled her tablet computer from her backpack. She came back to him and turned it on, opening up a few websites. “Here, I found three places. One is about a half an hour drive from the bunker the other two are about one to two hours drive from the bunker. But all in quiet forest like destinations, large yards. One has a barn where you can have some horses or even a pony for Holly.” she said as she showed him the pictures.

“I thought we said no farm animals.” Flynn said teasingly, Lucy chuckled.

“Not right now, but it’s good to leave our options open for the future. Honestly, I didn’t think she’d want an entire farm of animals when I was looking into this.” Lucy conceded in an awkward manner, Flynn chuckled. “And I found one place in Croatia which according to Google maps is about a 10 minute drive from your parents’ place.” Lucy added as she opened up another website from her bookmarks.

“This is the place?” he asked, the pictures were not inspiring as the property looked old and rather neglected from the photos.

"It needs some TLC but I think it’s worthwhile. We should also buy the one of three near the bunker. We have the money, real estate is usually a good investment. What do you think?” Lucy asked him.

“I think it’s a good idea, we should check out the ones here that are stateside and probably discuss the house in Croatia with my parents. They could do the legwork of walking through the property and seeing how much ‘TLC’ is needed and if it’s worth the investment.” Flynn said, conceding to her plan as it wasn’t a terrible idea and he could see it was important for her to put down some roots. He couldn’t blame her for feeling that way as he too wanted a home again.

“I want to travel like you suggested, but we need a home base that isn’t the bunker or my mother’s house.” Lucy said as she put her tablet computer on the bench.

“Have you thought about what you want to do with your mother’s house?” he asked her, she shook her head.

“No, I know I have to go there. I just can’t fathom it at the moment.” Lucy replied.

“Then don’t think about it as there’s no rush.” He assured her. “Coffee?” he asked.

“Please.” Lucy replied with a smile.

“Are you really going to date Karl?” Rufus asked Jiya, they were in the lifeboat upgrading the operating systems.

“It’s just dinner. Karl only made it his payment because he knew it would get under your skin.” Jiya
said, a light blush burning her cheeks as she couldn't believe the nerve. The nerve of both Rufus and Karl. But she understood Karl's reasoning, he was keeping Lucy and Flynn's future child a secret and pretending to be in the dark with the others about Jiya's 'deeply personal' stuff. She wished she had a better poker face a Karl had read her like a book.

“Or he likes you and he used the situation to his advantage.” Rufus said, which brought Jiya to the other man who had a lot nerve questioning her for agreeing to the dinner.

“I don’t care as he agreed to go on the mission.” Jiya told him, it was true. She didn't see what was wrong with dinner. It wasn't like she was going to have sex with Karl.

“you’re ok with-“ Rufus started by Jiya cut him off.

“What? Whoring myself out?” she asked dryly as she filled in the blanks. She rolled her eyes as he'd been acting like she were some virgin being lead to the altar for sacrifice.

“I wasn’t saying that.” Rufus told her.

“You insinuated it. It’s only dinner, nothing more. The reason he left in the meeting was that he felt like he was being put on the spot. So, he needed a smoke and a moment to think about it without four people staring at him. Or insulting his intelligence.” Jiya said bluntly.

“Right.” He said, they lapsed into a brief silence for a moment before Rufus spoke. “So, are you going to share what the personal aspect of your vision was?” he asked.

“No.” Jiya said, she felt no compunction to tell him.

“You know, I’m sorry for how everything turned out between us.” He said with remorse.

“Me too, but this is what it is.” Jiya told him with a sigh.

“So, you think we can’t figure a work around for being in our own timeline without going insane?” he asked her, Jiya shook her head.

“No, but we can get the lifeboat there. That’s the easy part but you, Lucy and Karl will need to be fast. So, you’re going to have to work with Karl to find the best landing area for the shortest exposure time.” Jiya told him.

“Well, given it’s happened. I’d say we’ll be successful.” Rufus said Jiya couldn’t help the exasperated sigh that escaped her lips. She hated how he made it sound like every mission could performed off the cuff with no preparation.

“It’s not that simple. You need to do the prep work. Practise the timing of the mission. It can’t just happen on a whim.” She told him.

“Not even my wardrobe?” he asked teasingly trying to add some levity but he immediately regretted it when she glared at him.

“I’m not joking, you and the team will need to refine this mission down to the second because Lucy will need as much time as we can give her to speak with Flynn. There will be no second chances on this.” Jiya told him.

“There never have been second chances.” Rufus remarked.

“But this is our history, the downfall of Rittenhouse and the preservation of free will when it comes
to our future and the choices we make from this year and onward.” She told him.

That evening, Lucy, Flynn and Holly shared their first dinner as a family. Just the three of them. Lucy had to admit she loved it, not that she found the extra company bad. She just liked to know that she and Flynn could be with their daughter without a person to bridge the gap. To reiterate the feelings that this was their family, their life together.

They shared a lovely meal of leftovers before retiring to the living room to play games and generally much around. Lucy smiled as she watched Holly’s intense concentration as she decided on which Jenga block she wanted to pull from the tower.

“This one.” Holly announced as she pointed at the block for Flynn to help her as he had been when it came to games that needed two hands.

“Ok.” Flynn said as he got up onto his knees behind Holly. The two worked together to gently pull it out.

“I don’t know about that one.” Lucy told Holly as she watched them pull out a large jenga piece from the tower. The tower wobbled and swayed but miraculously stayed intact as Flynn took the piece and placed it on the top of the tower. He gave Lucy a smug 'how’s that' smile as they were at the stage where one tap and the tower could fall.

“Your turn, Mommy.” Holly said with a smile as she sat on the floor next to Flynn.

“Ok, I think this one will bring down the tower.” Lucy told her, she had little faith in her skills. She knew she should’ve accepted Flynn's help to pull the blocks out but she figured she could do it on her own. She had so far, if one didn't count the last three questionable moves she had made. She moved to the tower and started to pry it out of the tower. She grimaced at how the other blocks shifted.

“Daddy, you better catch it.” Holly ordered as she could see the tower moving in a haphazard manner. Flynn laughed at Holly's tone as she didn't want the game to end or the tower to fall. He shook his head at her as she waved her tiny arms in a flustered manner.

“That would be cheating. If it falls, it falls.” He told Holly, she gave a humph of frustration as she plonked down on her bottom and watched. Lucy continued to gently pry out her chosen block.

“Uh-oh.” Holly said as the tower wobbled dangerously. Lucy pulled out her piece and held her breath but it didn’t help as the tower toppled over into a mess. “No!” she exclaimed.

“Oh, that’s it. You guys won.” Lucy said with a smile as she still held her block.

"That means bedtime." Flynn announced as he pulled Holly close to stop her rebuilding the tower.

“One more game.” Holly pleaded, Lucy and Flynn shook their heads as they already allowed her to stay up past her bedtime by half an hour. They were just enjoying their time together that they didn't want it to end.

“Tomorrow.” Flynn told Holly.

“But-“ Holly started but Flynn cut her off.
“No, butts.” Flynn said as he pretended to bear hug her and growled. Holly giggled.

“I gotta wait for Nanna and Grandpa.” Holly said.

“They won’t be home until tomorrow. Let’s go. Bed time.” Flynn said in a form tone.

“Can’t we call them?” Holly asked.

“They are with friends tonight and you said goodnight to them this afternoon. Come on.” Flynn said, he got to his feet and took Holly with him in his arms.

“I’ll be there in a minute.” Lucy said as she packed up the Jenga pieces into the box. Flynn took Holly to her room. By the time Lucy finished cleaning up, she found Flynn and Holly up to the last story.

She smiled as Holly struggled to keep her eyes open. Flynn looked up from the book, he kept telling the story. He’d read it that many times that he knew it by heart. He finished the story, and closed the book.

“One more story.” Holly said sleepily, Flynn smiled before he kissed her forehead.

“Tomorrow, I love you and sweet dreams.” He murmured to her.

“Love you too.” Holly said as she snuggled into the bed. Flynn lifted himself out of the bed. Lucy said her goodnight and told Holly she loved her before wishing her beautiful dreams. She and Flynn watched Holly sleep for a few moments before they left her room.

“Is it terrible that I enjoyed it being just the three of us tonight?” Lucy asked as they headed to the living room and sank down onto one of the long couches.

“No, I enjoyed it too. I also think it will be good to have our own space that isn’t underground. We should definitely look at those houses next week.” He told her. They shifted and relaxed on the couch into a more comfortable position. Lucy rested her head on his chest and gave a sigh, Flynn smoothed his hands down her body until he rested his hand low on her back and one on her hip.

“Great, I'll make the calls.” she told him, she felt him relax underneath her. "I’ll miss being around the others but at the same time, I want a nice bathroom and space that is entirely ours.” She said with a smile.

"I could think of a few things we could do in our own place." Flynn mused with a sleepy voice.

"Such as?” she asked, she waited for his response but after what felt like a minute passed of silence. She lifted her head up to see he had fallen asleep. She gently smacked his chest, he stirred awake and looked a little perplexed in an adorably sleepy manner.

"Hmm?” he asked her, his earlier statement forgotten his exhaustion.

"Bedtime.” she told him with a smile.
The following day,

“So, what do you think?” Flynn asked his parents. Holly and Lucy were still sleeping in from the long but enjoyable day they all had yesterday. He didn’t want to admit it but he was ready to leave with Lucy and Holly. For just the three of them to have time together. But they had promised to stay three weeks and it was only a few more days to go. Then they would be in separate lodgings again, something Flynn was looking forward to.

“I think it’s a wonderful idea but we thought we’d stay here for a while. But why don’t you call Marko and get him to look at the house in Croatia. I’m sure he’d be happy to for the business and catch up.” Maria told him as she placed the tablet computer on the table. She didn’t look too enthusiastic about Flynn and Lucy buying a house.

But he knew that she wanted them all under the one roof. Normally, Flynn would be ok with that, but he’d come to learn and he and Lucy did need their space and time to be Holly’s parents as well as foster their own relationship without his parents around. He knew it wasn’t a two weeks’ job and done, it would take months or even years.

“Marko Knežević or cousin Marko?” Flynn asked as Marko was a very popular name in his grade at school. He knew at least seven Markos but only two he'd want to talk to.

“Knežević, though cousin Marko could do it but it’s a longer drive for him and not his field of expertise.” Asher remarked.

“Of course, I just forgot that Knežević was in construction. Do you have his number?” he asked them, Asher nodded.

“I can give it to you now, if he says it's worth it. Then you can go over by yourself and check it out with him. After which you can hop over to Paris and see Gabriel.” Asher suggested to Flynn as he rose from the couch to get his phone from where he last left it.

“I’m going to talk to Gabriel soon. I said I would, I just need some time to get our lives settled and look after my family.” Flynn told Asher and Maria a little more firmly than he felt necessary but it was becoming stressful to talk about Gabriel.

“Your father and I know that. Take your time, but Christmas is coming up and if it’s possible I would like my sons to sit at the same dining table and be civil.” Maria told him.

“I'll do my best.” Flynn said wryly.

“Otherwise, we’d love you and the family to be close by.” Maria said, Asher nodded in agreement as he returned to couch and wrote out Marko’s phone number on a piece of paper.

“You know, you could all come over there after Holly’s birthday. Stay with us, we can look after Lucy and Holly while you go to Paris.” Maria offered.

“I appreciate the offer but I have to discuss it with Lucy and see what work says.” Flynn said as he knew these ‘gentle’ nudges would only continue. But he also knew that Lucy and even had had their fill of his parents for a little while. He loved them but he and Lucy needed to find their own feet without others propping them up.
“There we go. Try to remember there’s a time difference between here and there.” Asher said.

“Will do, and thanks.” Flynn said as he pocketed the number.

“Hey Mom! I brought the- Hi.” He said as he stopped short at the sight of his mother cooking with another woman. Here he was holding a bag filled with too much bok choy in his opinion.

“You got the bok choy?” Janice asked with a smile.

“Yes, not sure why you’d need this much bok choy so early in the morning.” Rufus said a little dumbly as he was a little transfixed by his mother’s friend who was gorgeous 5ft 5 African American woman with a beautiful short afro bob cut. She wore skinny jeans and t-shirt that had picture of cartoon taco wreaking havoc on the golden gate bridge.

“For eating of course and thank you for getting the bok choy.” She told him, she kissed her son on the cheek as she took the bag from him. “Annalise, I’d like you to meet my son; Rufus.” Janice said making the introductions.

“I know your son, Janice.” Annalise said warmly as she held out her hand. Rufus shook it in return and then once it was over; Annalise went back into the fray of the kitchen with Janice. The two looked to be cooking up a feast for a large group given the mess and conflicting aromas in the air.

“You do?” Rufus asked, he hoped he didn’t have a sexual history with the woman as he didn’t need more baggage in his life. He frankly didn’t want to be jealous of himself.

“You’re a tech billionaire. I doubt there’s anyone in San Francisco who doesn’t know you or own one of the many innovations produced by Mason Industries. But I have to admit I’m a writer and tech guinea pig for Wired.” She told him, Rufus’ eyes went wide as she worked for online tech magazine.

“Wow, and you’re here in my Mom’s kitchen.” Rufus stated, uncomfortable as he knew rich people were stalked by the media. He just didn’t think he’d find them in his Mom’s kitchen.

“Your Mom and I go to the same church.” Annalise explained.

“Have been for a couple years and we have do meal preps once a fortnight.” Janice said cheerfully, the two shared a smile. They looked incredibly comfortable with one another and Annalise seemed to know the kitchen layout better than him which did lend to them telling the truth.

“It’s a lot of food.” Rufus said, not able to relax as he was sure the woman was looking for a story.

“We’re planning for a fortnight’s worth of food. So, yeah. It’s a lot.” Annalise said with a smile, it faltered slightly as she saw his discomfort. “Janice is teaching me to cook while enduring my kitchen failures. But I appreciate having home cooking that I can heat up after a long day.” Annalise said the last part to Janice.

“Annalise helps me expand my horizons with new recipes.” Janice said as she and Annalise went back to chopping up the vegetables on the bench.

“So, when you say tech guinea pig…” Rufus drawled.

“I test and review products coming out. But my real passion is writing about how emerging
technology affect culture and society as a whole. So, don’t worry, I’m not snooping for stories about you. I’m just here for the food and company.” Annalise promised him, Rufus took a deep breath and exhaled feeling only a little bit better about the situation. He just made a mental note to get a background check on her.

“Cool, do you ladies need help?” he asked them, he plastered a smile on his face.

“You don’t have work?” Janice asked him.

“I’m the boss, I make my own hours Mom.” He said with a smile, he had already decided to take the day off. At least at home with his Mom, he might get some free food.

“Well, you can make the zoodles.” Janice told him.

“On it.” Rufus said.

Flynn crept into his and Lucy’s room, and quietly closed the door behind him. He then carefully climbed into bed next to Lucy as she was pretending to be asleep. He smiled as carefully stroked her hair away from her ear and neck.

“You going to sleep all day?” Flynn murmured in Lucy’s ear before he kissed her neck.

“Maybe.” She said with a sleepy smile.

“Was last night too much?” he asked in amusement given she was the one who had woken him up to make love. It was probably the first time they had gotten away with having sex and not being interrupted or feeling as if they would be discovered by some random hiker.

“No, you were perfect and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I’m just feeling very lazy today.” Lucy said, she opened her eyes and looked at him. He was already dressed for the day, his hair brushed and everything.

“Or you’re hiding from my parents.” He mused.

“I’m not, I’m just warm and comfortable.” She half lied as she pulled the blankets up around her chin and gave a tiny yawn.

“Mmm, it is toasty in here.” He agreed as he reached for her. She moved in close to him. Her bare skin grazing against the denim of his jeans and soft jumper.

“Is Holly up?” She asked.

“Not yet, she decided to sleep in too.” He told her.

“I’ll worry when she smells the bacon and doesn’t get up.” Lucy said as she knew breakfast hadn’t been made yet. So, it was still early.

“I spoke to my parents about us moving to Croatia. They loved it but only if I reconcile with Gabriel before Christmas.” He said, Lucy fought to not roll her eyes as she didn’t like ultimatums.

“It’s August, we have Holly’s birthday coming up. Her cast is coming off in two weeks’ time as is mine…maybe. That’s going to wipe out a month at least. I’m not sure what to do about rehab.” Lucy sighed as she felt like whatever the crux was of Gabriel and Flynn’s problems couldn’t be resolved in
under 3 months.

“You’ve stopped using the sling which is progress.” Flynn said.

“What if my hand doesn’t get better?” she asked softly, letting her concerns get the better of her. She knew it was selfish but she wanted her hand and fully operational now. She wasn’t sure how to feel about the long term of having to relearn how to use it again.

“Then we’ll figure it out from there but it’s too early to call it. You haven’t started rehab.” Flynn reminded her.

“I just don’t think my inability to undress you will continue to be cute. It’s actually very frustrating and we haven’t even gotten to how will write again. Can I even type as a back up.” She said.

“You’ll just need to practise more with your left hand. The rest will figure itself out in time. Until you’re healed or know the extent of the damage…we’ll find ways to adapt and luckily, I am an adult and I can undress myself.” he informed her.

“Do a little dance too?” She asked teasingly.

“Better get some singles ready.” He joked, Lucy burst out laughing. He started humming some music and dancing some smooth stripper moves in the bed that only made her laugh harder.

“Stop.” She told him as she struggled to breathe from laughing. Tears blurred her vision as it was too much.

“Not into it?” he asked innocently as he didn’t stop humming or moving.

“I can’t breathe.” She sighed before she fell into a fit of giggles again.

“And we’ll finish by bringing our palms together. And you’re going to create a little energy, a little friction. Warm your hands for a nice gesture of love.” Natalie, the yoga teacher said in a soothing manner as she sat at the front of the class and rubbed her palms together.

Jiya sat on her mat at the back repeating the same actions, along with the rest of the class. They were closing on a relaxing 90 minute class.

“Get a little heat going, go a little faster. Then bring your hands to your heart.” Natalie instructed. Jiya placed her hands on her chest feeling the warmth spread through. Natalie instructed the class to feel the warmth of their hands and to keep breathing in a slow and peaceful manner. “Give thanks for this time that you have taken for yourself. Namaste.” She said in a soothing manner.

Jiya closed her eyes and let the serene feeling of accomplishment and relaxation drift through every fibre of her being. She opened her eyes and softly smiled as she enjoyed the class. She enjoyed being around people again, to feel the energy of them around her. The way the morning started with a frenetic energy but after the class there was a sense of purposefulness and calm.

Natalia left the room, allowing the students to finish the practise with a few moments of silence. After a few moments, the class slowly packed up their gear to disperse for the day. Jiya rolled up her mat and picked her water bottle before she left the classroom. She moved to the lockers to grab her gear.

“Jiya.” Natalie said with a warm smile.
“Yes.” Jiya said, she turned to the older woman.

“How did you enjoy the class?” Natalie asked her.

“It was just what I needed.” Jiya said before she pulled a sweater on. The days were starting to get a little cooler as Summer came to an end.

“Good, I have to say your form today was beautiful. I hope you consider coming back again for more classes.” Natalie told her, Jiya smiled from the compliment as she practiced Yoga in the bunker from youtube videos. It was good to know she was doing it right, or at least ‘beautifully’.

“I’m going overseas for a holiday but after that I’ll be back.” Jiya said as she slung her bag over her shoulder.

“Fantastic, well I’ll let you go and enjoy your holidays.” Natalie told her.

“Thank you.” Jiya replied, she watched as Natalie checked in with other members of the class. Then looked around the space and took a deep breath as she really liked the place. She was definitely coming back again especially given it was close to her new apartment.

Later that afternoon,

“Try to leave some flowers for the bees.” Lucy told Holly in a light manner as she watched her daughter tear wild flowers out of the ground. The family had gone for a small hike with packed picnic to a small clearing. They had shared lunch before enjoying the afternoon.

“But they are so pretty.” Holly said before she and Maria went about picking flowers. Flynn hugged his arms around Lucy, she rested back against him with a sigh. She rested her arms on his, her fingers drawing slow and aimless patterns.

“I’m sure the bees will survive.” Flynn mused.

“The flowers won’t.” Lucy told him, a soft snore emitted from the left side of the picnic blanket. The couple turned to see Asher had fallen asleep while reading his book. The couple softly chuckled as they turned back to watching Holly and Maria. “This is really nice.” Lucy said.

“It is.” Flynn said as he couldn’t agree more. He loved having a family again, having his family back. He felt more and more like his old self every day. Yes, he was different but he felt the joy of life returning.

“You’re sure you can eat all this. I don’t mind taking some home.” Rufus said with a smile as he helped Annalise carry her premade meals to her car. He’d had a great day with his Mom and Annalise.

He couldn’t really remember the last time he’d spent an entire day with his Mom; even in his past. He’d always been caught up in his work and missing out on things but here, he had the time. He loved it as he missed connecting with people who were relaxed and easy going. People who weren’t so hyper-focussed on defeating a cult or meeting their goals for the year.
“I can definitely eat all of this by myself.” Annalise promised him, she opened the boot of her car. They packed in the bags. “Thank you for helping us today.” She said.

“I did get a free lunch out of it.” He said with a smile.

“I know your Mom loved it. She has really liked you being home more often.” Annalise told him, Rufus ducked his head but for the first time it wasn’t in embarrassment or guilt. It was in shy joy as he finally felt like he winning back his life and family. To have a third party tell him that his Mom was happy to see him helped.

“I’ve been coming to the realisation that there’s more to life than work.” Rufus said with a shrug.

“I hear you.” Annalise commiserated, “You know, there is a great Thai restaurant that just opened up. Do you want to go check it out?” she asked.

“As in a date?” Rufus blundered as he couldn’t believe she was asking him out. Not when she was hot enough to get any guy.

“Yes, I was thinking Thursday night.” Annalise said with a smile as she seemed to enjoy his awkwardness. She pulled out her iPhone to check her calendar or so Rufus assumed.

“Sure, yeah. I love Thai food.” Rufus bumbled as he wished he had more game. “If you text me the name of the place, I can make the booking.” He offered.

“It’s already booked for 7:30pm, if you give me your phone number; I can text you the details.” Annalise said with a smile and lovely blush. Rufus said his phone number allowed and within seconds he received a text from her. He opened the message and smiled.

“Great, I’ll pick you up at 7?” Rufus asked her.

“Sure.” Annalise told him, within a few seconds he had her address and with that they said their goodbyes. Rufus waved as she drove off. Even though he felt conflicted by having a date so quickly after the mess with Jiya. He was also a little excited and happy at the prospect.
A week later, Lucy and Flynn were relieved to return to the safety and comfort of the bunker. The elevator doors opened and Holly shot out of it like her ass was on fire. The couple smiled in amusement as their child was not a natural runner. Her arms flailed everywhere as she went in search of Auntie Jiya.

“JIYA!!” Holly shouted excitedly, only a couple hours ago she had been crying her eyes out as they left Maria and Asher. Now, one nap later; she was excited to be home and to see Jiya. Flynn and Lucy dumped their bags in the hallway by their room and followed behind Holly at a slower pace. Not because they weren’t excited, they were just exhausted from the trip back.

“Hey kiddo! Oh, I’ve missed you so much.” Jiya said, she lifted Holly off the ground into a tight hug. Her heart full as she had missed the Flynns and Holly’s energy bouncing off the walls of the bunker.

“I missed you heaps too.” Holly told her, it pulled on Lucy and Flynn’s heartstrings as they were reminded of the special bond the two had. Neither wanted to come between Jiya and Holly as they felt the bond was important and had to remain.

“How was your holiday?” Jiya asked as she loosened her hold on Holly and looked at the three of them.

“It was fun but you should have come.” Holly told her.

“I had to work.” Jiya said with a sad expression, one she put on for Holly’s sake.

“Well, I got you a present!” Holly said excitedly.

“You did?” Jiya asked with a smile.

“Uhuh, I’m gonna get it.” Holly said as she became dead weight in Jiya’s arms to get to floor. Jiya smiled in amusement as she placed Holly safely on the floor to see her run off again.

“I’ll follow her.” Flynn said to Lucy as he chased after Holly as the present for Jiya was very fragile for Holly’s hands. She still had an arm cast on making her grip even more unsteady.

“Hey.” Jiya said, she hugged Lucy without hesitation like old friends would.

“Hey, it’s nice to be back.” Lucy said as she returned the embrace and after a moment the two broke apart.

“Yeah?” Jiya asked in amusement. Lucy smiled as it wasn’t really the location she missed but more the atmosphere and people in the bunker.

“Yeah, how’s it going here?” Lucy asked as they moved to the dining table and sat down.

“Great, we’re halfway through the upgrades. We will need to talk later.” Jiya said in a low voice, she didn’t want Holly to overhear them.

“Good talk or bad talk?” Lucy asked her.

“Good, just about Sao Paulo.” Jiya said, she tried to allay any fears Lucy might have. "It's just that it's not a conversation for Holly's ears." she added.
“No problem, we’ll talk after Holly is asleep.” Lucy suggested, Jiya nodded in agreement.

“Everything ok?” Jiya asked, she couldn’t help it but notice that Lucy was a little stressed and tired. Not as exhausted as Jiya had become accustomed to but Lucy was not looking 100% refreshed from her holiday.

“Yeah, the holiday was great but Flynn’s parents are just full on. It got a touch ugly and exhausting towards the end.” Lucy explained, she had to admit she was glad to be away from Maria and Asher. She loved them but the pressure they put on Flynn to reconcile with Gabriel had become intense. She understood their desperate need to mend broken fences in the family but their Flynn- the Other Flynn must have been incredibly obstinate to have such a barrage of nudges and pushes to get him to do anything.

“Why?” Jiya asked in confusion.

“His parents desperately want Flynn and his brother Gabriel to make up.” Lucy said with a tired sigh, glad to speak a little more freely about it. She and Flynn had discussed it to death but they knew they’d talk in circles until he saw his brother.

“Oh, yeah. That’s not going to be easy.” Jiya said making a face.

“You know about it?” Lucy asked out of curiosity. Jiya tapped her temple, a gesture that Lucy knew as Jiya’s way of saying 'I saw it in a vision'.

“Visions and to be honest I spoke with the Other-Flynn about him going off mission to save his brother. He never thought he would be the reason he grew up with an older brother. But from what he told me of his youth, they got along well as kids but their teens was a mess. Apparently Gabriel has zero civic pride and was a ‘coward’. It was or is a big deal for Flynn that Gabriel didn’t fight for Croatia’s independence. He took it personally but in fairness, he was barely 17 when he joined the military and he is so passionate about it and patriotism in general.” Jiya said with a shrug.

“Hmm.” Lucy hummed thoughtfully as she couldn't argue with that as Flynn had proclaimed himself to be a patriot from the beginning of their relationship.

"You know, he always said he and Gabriel would get locked into their younger selves' mentally over this stuff. He sees his brother and gets disappointed and angry as he felt Gabriel abandoned him as much as he did their country." Jiya said.

"It doesn't help that Gabriel is seen as the ‘Golden Child’. He can do no wrong except for waste his potential but even then…as long as he’s happy, his parents are happy." Lucy said, Jiya nodded in agreement. "I get that, I was the Gabriel in my family. I know Amy resented me for it. She hated how I wouldn't break out of my Mom's mould or hold my own views before caving to what my Mom thought." Lucy blew out a slow breath as she remembered the person she had been before she continued.

"I was just so desperate to please her, she was my hero. I wanted to grow up to be just like her. I loved that we shared history and Amy just didn't get into it. I guess she saw something she didn't like in our Mom and well, Mom had a plan for me. It wasn't until college that I wanted to be different and even then, I didn't really deviate from her plan. Amy hated that so much.” Lucy said, she couldn’t help but reflect on her own history and feel old bitterness arise. Amy had the freedom to become the person she wanted to be, while Lucy had to conform. She was always pushed into conforming and it never stopped; only the methods became more gruesome and inherently cruel as Rittenhouse proved.

“Amy loved you, she just wanted you to be the version of yourself that you wanted but maybe you
were too scared to be.” Jiya said softly. Lucy took a fortifying breath and nodded as it pained her how much of her life was spent trying to mold herself into some version of a woman that her mother or some man wanted her to be. How much time Amy had spent on trying to get Lucy to see that.

“I understand that now.” Lucy said, Flynn wanted the same for her. She had to admit she felt most like herself when she was around him, Jiya and Amy. Sure, when she first met Flynn; she felt trapped by his idea of who he believed her to be. Her 'Journal' self. But he didn't hold onto it for very long, in fact he was the first man to say he wanted to know her and genuinely mean it. Unlike some who just wanted to know who she was; so they knew where to started breaking her down. All to rebuild her into what they wanted. To be able to experience the difference, it made her appreciate Amy, Jiya and Flynn all the more as they only wanted the best for her with no selfish intentions. “I know I am not raising Holly the same way my Mom did with Amy and I. I don't want her to feel the pressure I did growing up.” Lucy told her.

“I think you’re doing a great job so far.” Jiya told her.

“Thank you.” Lucy said appreciating the compliment. “So, how’s things with Rufus?” she asked changing the topic.

“There’s nothing to report. We’re on opposite ends of the clock. I only see him for maybe an hour a day and he doesn’t talk about anything unless it's work or about Karl.” Jiya said with a roll of her eyes.

“Karl?” Lucy asked in confusion.

“Long story. But hey, Rufus is dating someone else now. So, he’s moved on which is good right?” Jiya asked her.

“Is it Karl?” Lucy asked mockingly, Jiya chuckled.

“No, beautiful woman with the cutest afro. He’s happy, well he looks happy.” Jiya told her, Lucy frowned as she felt conflicted because she wanted them both to be happy but a small part of her had hoped it would be together. She knew she’d have to let that go, she just wished Rufus had waited a little longer before moving on or shown more discretion.

“How do you know?” Lucy asked out of curiosity.

“Visions. The gift that keeps on giving.” Jiya drawled sarcastically as she tapped her temple, Lucy felt a terrible sinking feeling as she felt for Jiya. She did not envy her and her visions.

“I’m sorry that’s terrible.” Lucy said with empathy.

“It’s ok. Really, he was going to move on anyway.” Jiya told her with a shrug as she downplayed it. She wanted Rufus to be happy, she just needed to get over her own expectations not being met.

“It’s not, I want you both to be happy even if it’s not together. You shouldn’t have to see Rufus’ love life in visions.” Lucy told her.

“Hopefully it was fate’s way of telling me to move on and I am getting there. I have an apartment.” Jiya told her, the last part made her smile as she was really looking forward to living in her new apartment. To going to yoga on the regular and eating out more, having friends and a social life again. All the things that the Bunker limited severely in its experience.

“Congratulations!” Lucy said with a smile as it was great news.
“Thank you, I’m also travelling to Japan after Holly’s Birthday for 3 weeks and then over to Europe for another 3 weeks. I haven’t nailed down exactly where I’ll be going for that leg of the trip but I’m excited.” Jiya said with a happy sigh.

“That’s great! You know, Flynn and I were talking about buying a place in Croatia and one here in San Francisco. We’re thinking of going over to Croatia with Holly for a visit. Flynn needs to see his brother and maybe us girls could have a mini vacation together for a few days. You, me and Holly.” Lucy suggested, she loved the idea of the three of them hanging out; outside of the bunker. She wanted to Holly to understand that moving out of the bunker didn’t mean giving up Jiya. It also gave the three of them to build their friendship and memories around something that wasn’t classified.

“Yeah, I might be in the area. If you’re serious about it, just give me dates and I’ll see if I can swing it.” Jiya told her.

“Definitely, we’ll talk details later.” Lucy said with a smile as she could hear Flynn and Holly coming back. She and Jiya turned to see the two come into the living area.

“Be careful.” Flynn told Holly in a gentle manner as he followed closely behind Holly who was carrying a large jar of Honey. She refused to let Flynn help her as she’s been adamant to give it to Jiya herself. Luckily, Jiya was quick to meet them halfway and take the jar before it slipped from Holly’s tiny hands.

“You got me honey?” Jiya asked in excitement as she lifted the jar up and inspected it.

“Uhuh, it’s yummy and tastes heaps better than what comes out of the bear.” Holly told her, Jiya chuckled but said nothing as she wasn’t going to go to get into a lecture about how the honey was made and why some honeys tasted different based on how it was produced.

“We went to a farm where they study bees and they collect the honey from the hives and sell to help maintain the project. It’s really delicious.” Flynn explained to Jiya.

"I wanted bring home some bees but Mommy said we're not allowed to keep bees cause you gotta have degrees for it. We don't have right ones.” Holly said in disappointment, Jiya smiled in amusement as Lucy gave a shrug and wore an expression ‘what could I say?’.

“That’s a shame but this a thoughtful gift. Thank you.” Jiya said as she took the jar and walked over to the kitchen bench. “I think we should make toast and have some of this honey.” She added with an excited smile.

“Yes, please!” Holly cheered.

A few hours later, Rufus strolled into the bunker. He smiled as he and Annalise had been texted on and off all day. He had a feeling the date would be a success if the text messages were anything to go by.

“Rufus, hey.” Lucy said, he looked up from his phone to see her standing before him. Dressed in sweat pants, t-shirt and kimono. Her hair tied up in a messy bun. She looked better, her bruises were all gone, her arm was out of the sling but still in its removable cast. Her skin was brighter and healthier than he’d seen it in over a year.

“Hi, isn’t it like 3 in the afternoon?” he asked, she was dressed for bed or how he remembered her dressing for bed.
“Yeah, we had to bathe Holly early cause she covered us both in honey and I figured I’d skip a step for tonight.” She said as she waved around her outfit. “How are you?” she asked.

“Good, you?” he asked as they started walking to the living area.

“Very good, family trip was great. Holly loves nature and animals, to see her get to enjoy it; it was beautiful.” Lucy said with a genuine smile. She, Flynn, Jiya and Holly had had a great lunch and afternoon so far.

“You look really good.” He told her.

“Thanks, I feel really good. Better than I have in years.” Lucy said honestly.

“It’s good to put Rittenhouse and all that stuff behind us. At least it will be when this is finally over.” Rufus agreed, he had to admit he wanted to let it all go and just forget the past three years happened. Hell, he wanted to forget he even helped design a time machine but he could fix those problems. He could only live with them.

“What about you? How are things with your family?” she asked him.

“Great, my little brother still hates me but my Mom loves me more than my other-self. So, that’s something.” Rufus said wryly as he didn't know how to feel about it. But he really needed to let go of comparing himself to his other-self.

“I’m sure your brother will come around.” Lucy assured him.

“Yeah, I know. I just gotta be persistent and keep showing up. I’m going to his basketball game on Saturday with my Mom. Apparently, I haven’t been to one in years which is true even for me. But not anymore, I’m going to be there for every game and annoy the hell out of him.” Rufus said before he gave an awkward chuckle.

“He’ll appreciate it even if he doesn’t show it.” Lucy said.

“Thanks.” He said appreciating the reassurances. “So, what’s next for you and Flynn?” he asked casually.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“Well, there’s only one mission left but it’s not for a year or so. You’re not going stay here, are you?” he asked her.

“No, Flynn and I have got our eyes on three houses near here. We’ll be checking them out and going from there. But we both want Holly to acclimate to living above ground sooner than later as we only have a year before she goes to kindergarten.” Lucy explained.

“Yeah, probably not a great idea for her to talk about how she lives underground.” He mused.

“No.” Lucy said a chuckle, she heard Rufus’ phone sound as he received a text. “So, big plans this week?” she asked.

“No, just work and my family.” Rufus lied, he didn’t want to tell Lucy he was moving on in fear of judgement and he really just wanted it to be his for the time being. If something came out the date or Annalise and he became a thing, then he’d tell Lucy and the others. But for now, he was keeping that aspect of his life private.
Later that evening, Rufus had left for the night after a couple hours of work. The Flynns and Jiya had sat down for dinner. Soon after, Holly was tucked in for night; Jiya cracked open a bottle of wine. She got them up to speed on her visions, the mission and Karl being involved and the rough timeline on when it would happen down to the month and year.

Jiya had decided to keep the exact date to herself and Karl because she knew visions had a way of changing. She also didn’t know how the Flynn’s kept a calendar. They could be slow at crossing off a day or fast which meant she had a 50-50 chance of being wrong. She also didn’t want Lucy or Flynn to know about the baby as she felt they’d deserved a chance to come to terms with it when it happened and not before. She knew what it was like to see one version of the future and be disappointed when it didn’t happen. She just didn’t want to know where the couple stood on the matter.

“That’s where we are at.” Jiya finished as she explained everyone’s part in the mission and how the meeting had gone down with Karl. Lucy nursed her second glass as she was feeling pretty good with it mixing with her pain meds. But didn’t want to push her luck. Flynn and Jiya however were onto their third glass.

“Karl agreed to go for free?” Flynn asked surprised as Jiya hadn’t said how much Karl would be paid. He wasn’t surprised in the least that he would be babysitting Holly as Flynn knew he couldn’t go. He was completely ok with being at home as he remembered that night and it was important it went as smoothly as possible.

“Yes.” Jiya said, then she made a face. “Well, no. He wants dinner.” Jiya corrected her, Flynn and Lucy frowned.

“Like dinner with all of us?” Lucy asked for clarification, confused as she waited for the strings to be attached to said ‘dinner’.

“No, just dinner with me.” Jiya said awkwardly, she knew how it sounded and she had to admit it was funny to see both Flynn and Lucy react at the same time with the exact same expression.

“Alone, like a date?” Lucy asked out of curiosity. A sly smile playing on her lips as she looked to Flynn, he smiled as he had a secret which made Jiya squirm as she wondered what they knew and she didn't.

“I don’t know, but I told him there would be no sex or whatever. It’s just dinner and he’s paying. So, it’s technically free for us.” Jiya told them.

“Are you comfortable with this?” Flynn asked Jiya.

“Yes, completely. Karl and I have already had a few meals together. So, it’s fine.” Jiya assured them, the couple looked a little perplexed and then Jiya realised that they thought she meant they were dating. “As friends, we ate out as friends.” She clarified.

“Ok.” Flynn said a little bemused.

“But this time it’s you and Karl on a date.” Lucy said teasingly, her smile was innocent but she was clearly enjoying herself as she threw out the bait. Jiya snapped it up out of reflex.

"It's not a date and frankly, he only agreed to it because he wanted to get under Rufus’ skin. They’ve not been able to become friends due to the whole Rittenhouse and bad history thing.” Jiya said dismissively before she finished her glass of wine. She did not like the gleam in Lucy’s eyes.
“Or he thinks you’re hot and wants to be freed from friend’s zone.” Lucy speculated, Flynn snorted a laugh.

“I highly doubt that.” Jiya scoffed as she knew Karl well enough to know he was not interested in her like that. He only wanted her as a friend which was fine with her as she enjoyed his company. He seemed to know all the best places to eat which was a huge bonus for her. Then the wine got the better of her brain as it wondered for a nano-second what a date would be like with him and if she’d enjoy it. She realised she knew the answer.

“You’re blushing.” Flynn said, he and Lucy chuckled as Jiya felt her cheeks.

“It’s the wine.” Jiya grumbled as she felt herself going a darker shade of red, she pushed her errant thoughts away as she and Karl were friends. Nothing more.

“You like him.” Lucy said in awe, Flynn nodded as the two were teaming up to tease her.

“As a friend. He’s a good guy who has been really great and supportive.” Jiya informed her, she didn’t like how defensive she sounded.

“Oh, you like, like him.” Lucy enthused.

“Ok, someone has had enough wine.” Jiya told her, before she picked up the bottle and poured herself another glass. “I’ve not had enough.” She mumbled.

“Awwh, it’s ok. I get it. He’s very sarcastic and charming.” Lucy said.

“Talented.” Flynn added.

“Tall and handsome.” Lucy said, adding to the list.

“Really?” Flynn asked Lucy while Jiya tried not to fall off her seat from shock as her friends had never had a go at her like this before. She wasn’t sure if she should laugh or tell them how wrong they were about the situation.

“Not as tall or handsome as you.” Lucy assured Flynn.

“Ok, you two can stop as it’s only dinner and Karl is my friend. Period.” She told them, going for the latter and she regretted it as they smiled at her. "No, no more teasing." she told them.

"Ok, we'll stop but just don't tell Holly. She'll be devastated if you two don't get married after one date." Flynn said, Jiya balled up a napkin and threw it at him. He laughed as he caught it.
A couple of days later, Flynn pulled down the driveway to the last house on their list of prospective future homes. It was a golden yellow, single storey home with white trims and a wrap-around porch. It looked beautiful set in the changing leaves of Autumn.

“This is beautiful.” Lucy said as she took in the property, it was the smallest parcel of land at only 15 acres but it had a lot going for it as it backed onto a nature reserve. The house was single storey, it was fitted with renewable energy sources like solar panels and had been renovated in the past year. It was completely up to code and updated kitchen with brand new appliances, a hot water system etc. The only downside was no barn or stables to keep a horse but there was the enough space to build one.

“Has potential, how’s Holly?” he asked Lucy, she looked over her shoulder to Holly who was sleeping in her car seat.

“Still out. We probably should have left her at the bunker today.” She said with a chuckle. It had been a long day for them all and Lucy was hoping this last property was the one. She didn’t want to start her search over.

“Probably but can't change that now. So, let’s see how this one flies.” He mused as Holly had been very particular about the properties they had seen. She had not been afraid to voice her opinions very loudly. He pulled the car to a stop beside the real estate owner’s vehicle.

They both hopped out and Flynn moved to the back door and opened it. He rubbed Holly’s arm to wake her and spoke softly in Croatian. Lucy now understood enough to know he was telling their daughter it was time to wake up in an endearing manner.

“Are we there yet?” Holly asked still groggy from sleep.

“Yes, ready to see it? It’s the last house and then we’ll go have dinner and a slice of pie at the local diner before going home.” He told her, bargaining for good behaviour.

“I like pie.” Holly said, Flynn smiled as he lifted her out of her seat and placed her on the ground.

“I know you do, but remember best behaviour.” He told her.

“I’m always on my best behaviour.” She informed him in an uppity manner. Flynn wore a wry smile as he was sure he and Lucy were in for one kicker of an open house. He closed the backdoor to the car and the two walked around the car to Lucy.

“Hello?” A man called out, the three looked to the house to see a Caucasian man in his late 40s dress in a suit come out the front house. He carried a folder with him as he came down the path to meet them. He looked friendly enough but there was an ‘asshole’ air to him that put Lucy off.

“Hi, Mr Quinn?” Lucy asked, the man smiled.

“That’s me, but you can call me George.” He said as he came down the pebbled path to greet them.

“I’m Garcia Flynn, this is my wife Lucy and our daughter Holly.” Flynn said making the introductions.

“Yes, I spoke with Mrs Flynn on the phone.” George said as he shook hands with Flynn. Then
awkwardly went to shake hers but gave up when he saw the cast.

“Yes, thank you so much for accommodating us at such a late hour.” Lucy said, they’d plan to get here after lunch but traffic had gotten the better of them.

“You’re welcome, though I have many other properties that are just as beautiful as this house but with more land and amenities.” He told them as they walked to the house.

“We don’t need a lot of land, just some space and quiet.” Lucy said as she was exhausted with being constantly up-sold into bigger properties when they didn’t need it or want it.

“Well this parcel of land is perfect for that. As you know, you’re a 15 minute drive from the closest town and school district. The parcel is 15 acres, majority of which is forest and hills. There is a creek but it’s small and more of a drain way to the nature reserve at the back of the property. So, you’ll have no flooding issues.” George told them.

“I noticed the large garden out front.” Flynn said.

“Yes, the last owner was big on permaculture and growing as much of food off the land as possible. When he passed; the gardens went a little wild but can easily be brought back to speed with some TLC. Now let’s go see the inside.” He said as he directed them inside.

“This is beautiful.” Lucy murmured as they walked into a beautifully designed interior. It was a large open living space with the dining and living room. An open door to the left led to the kitchen. Holly raced into the lounge area and pounced on the couch.

“Hey, gentle with the couch. It’s not ours.” Flynn warned Holly, she gave him a cheeky smile before she slid to the floor and raced to his side. She was in a weird mood but Flynn put it down to being in a new situation. He held out his hand, she grabbed it with hers and he felt a warmth spread through his chest. He loved having her close and holding hands, even if she acted like a wrecking ball swinging around his legs. It just reminded him of how short time was and to appreciate the small things in life.

“As you can see it has been recently renovated, all modern appliances and you need not worry; everything it up to code with electrical and plumbing. The house is insulated for the cold and windows are double glazed. I know with older homes it’s a concern but not this house.” George assured them. Flynn turned his attention away from Holly to the house as they needed a home. He technically knew more about buying houses than Holly or Lucy.

“Can we have dogs here?” Holly asked George, Lucy and Flynn smothered smiles as Holly had been very studious in asking every agent if the property could have dogs.

“Well, if your parents buy the house then they and you can do what you like. There is plenty of space for dogs including a fenced in backyard.” He told Holly, she gave him a serious expression and nodded; pleased with his answer.

“Why is it fenced in?” Lucy asked out of curiosity.

“Easier to deter local wildlife from showing up on the back door. Don’t worry, there’s no dangerous animals in the area.” He assured them.

“Can we get degrees to keep Bees?” Holly asked him.

“We’re not going to keep bees.” Lucy told Holly who pouted at being blocked from owning bees yet again.
“But we can plant a beautiful garden filled with native plants to feed the bees that come through our backyard.” Flynn told Holly as a compromise as he was with Lucy. He loved animals and nature as much as the next person but he was not interested in having bee hives on the property.

“We were in Yosemite a couple days ago, we visited some farms and now our daughter wants every living creature under the sun.” Lucy explained to George, so he understood that their daughter’s questions had context.

“My son was the same.” George said with a smile. “Like I said, backyard is perfect for a dog or dogs. There’s plenty of space to run and play outside. Like I said, there is a permaculture garden that is very handy if you love growing your own food. Now, if you’ll come this way; I’ll show you the other rooms.” He said as he directed them to follow him.

“I’m so glad we could get together outside that bunker.” Connor said as he and Rufus sat in a conference room in Mason Industries headquarters in the CBD of San Francisco. They’d given their coffee order to a waiter, Rufus had to admit it was a strange experience as he never ventured into the corporate side of Mason Industries. Even when he was wooed, he’d been shown the research and development departments. They were not as sleek as the level they were on right now.

“I assume everything is ok?” Rufus asked.

“Yes, it is but we just need to talk about what you’d like for your future. You were or are a very prominent figure in the tech world, in some ways you were the face of Mason Industries' future.” Connor explained.

“I haven’t given it a lot of thought.” Rufus said hedging his answer as he didn’t want to make promises he couldn’t keep.

“It’s important that you do as there is a lot riding on what you decide.” Connor told him.

“Well, I want to keep working for Mason industries but I’m not like the other Rufus. I’m not interested in the limelight. I just want to develop technology to help make life a little easier.” Rufus said, Connor smiled.

“It’s exactly why I started Mason Industries. But I guess you answered my question about stepping into my shoes when I want to retire.” Connor said ruefully.

Half an hour later,

Flynn stood in the doorway of the study with Holly cradled in his arms. She was officially done with house hunting and Flynn couldn’t let her face plant on the floor for a nap or tantrum. The real estate agent had stepped away to take a phone call.

Flynn smiled softly as he watched Lucy walk through the study. It was decent sized room with wall to wall bookcases and a large window. Flynn could see her sitting at the desk; studying with the books piled high around her as she scribbled down notes and typed something on a laptop.

He had to admit this house was the first one that felt like home to him. Lucy stood at the window where the fading afternoon light glowed through the window. She turned and looked at him with a beautiful smile. He could see their whole life ahead of them and it filled him with immense joy as he remembered not having a future before him. There was only bouncing from one moment to the next. But now, he and Lucy had years. Years to enjoy and live the life they so desired.
“I’m bored, can we go have pie now?” Holly grumbled, Flynn rubbed her back in a soothing manner as Lucy gave a soft chuckle. They didn’t blame her as it had been a long day of driving and new surroundings.

“Very soon, Daddy and I have questions for George.” Lucy told Holly as she closed the distance between them and smoothed a hand down Holly’s hair.

“So, what do you think about this place?” Flynn asked Lucy as they moved into the hallway and back to the living area.

“I think it’s a really lovely home.” Lucy said, not wanting to give away too much as George returned from his call.

“So, what are we thinking?” he asked them, repeating Flynn’s question.

“I want pie.” Holly said, the adults chuckled.

“Soon.” Lucy told Holly softly. Flynn looked to George, knowing the man had little patience if there wasn’t a potential sale. He pretty much had the same amount of patience as Holly when Flynn thought about it.

“We’re thinking we need to talk about it and get back to you in the next day. But we’re very interested and looking to move in as quickly as possible when our offer is made.” Flynn told him, he and Lucy share a smile but they seemed to be on the same wave length as Lucy had a feeling this house was the ‘one’.

“If the owners agree to the offer there is a 10 day cooling period before you can move. But if you made an offer above asking price then I’m sure they could be swayed to reduce the cooling period by 5 days or potentially less depending on how fast you want to move in.” He told them with a snake oil salesman smile.

“We’ll keep it mind. Thank you for coming out and showing us the property.” Flynn said, not turning it down but being careful with his words.

“My pleasure, and I hope to hear from you soon.” He said as he shook hands with Lucy and Flynn before showing them out.

“Now we have pie?” Holly asked.

“Yes.” Flynn answered with a chuckle.

“Is this a date?” Karl asked Jiya teasingly, they walked down the street to find a restaurant that took their fancy.

“No, it’s dinner between friends. Also, you know I figured this could be your payment for going on the mission.” Jiya said as she had told him about Lucy and Flynn mercilessly teasing her and warning Karl not to feed their delusions. She knew he loved getting into the spirit of things.

“You’re looking extra beautiful for dinner cause you think you owe me?” Karl drawled, he looked her over with keen eyes. Jiya shook her head at him as she knew he was stirring her and complimenting her at the same time.
“No, I just felt like dressing up.” She told him and it was true. She wanted to the extra effort in and feel beautiful. She did as she wore a midi length red v neck dress with a leather jacket. Her long hair pulled into a messy chignon. Her make up a little dressy with cat eye makeup, a subtle blush and red lips. She had tossed on some ankle boots and considered herself ready.

“Ok,” he said letting it go, “But this is not the dinner. I'll decide when and where I get my payment dinner.” he told her.

"Really?” she asked him in a wry manner.

"Yes, really. Now, what are you in the mood for?” he asked her, as he gently grabbed her elbow and steered her out of the way of some rowdy young men who had just clocked off for the day. Jiya didn’t miss the ‘fuck off’ look Karl gave the men as they passed them. It seemed to sober the men as they passed by them quietly. Jiya had to admit it made her feel safe, not that she needed to be protected as she could pulverise the men without breaking a sweat. But it was nice to know someone had her back and saved her from getting riled up.

“I don’t know. What would you like?” She asked, Karl shrugged and pulled out his phone to get an idea of what was around.

“There’s a new Thai place a couple of blocks over. They have a table free at 8pm, we could book it and grab a drink at a bar nearby.” He suggested as he flashed his phone to her.

“Let’s do it.” Jiya said with a smile.

Rufus hit the buzzer for Annalise’s apartment building. He couldn’t help but feel a little nervous flutter of anticipation. He’d spent a week waiting for this date, he was kind of excited at being with someone outside of the mayhem of Rittenhouse and the bunker.

“Hello?” Annalise asked over the intercom.

“It’s Rufus, I know I’m kind of early. So, I’ll wait down here until you’re ready.” He said, he cringed as he had zero game. Any man would’ve used it as an open invitation to go upstairs but he only thought of it after the moment passed.

“Don’t worry, I’m good to go. Be right down.” She said, Rufus stuck his hands into his pants and walked down the stairs of the apartment building to the footpath. He looked around the neighbourhood, it was a trendy area of San Francisco which told him that Annalise was either rich or managed to snag a rent control apartment.

A few seconds later, Annalise appeared with a smile that felt like a breath of fresh air and a beautiful outfit. It made Rufus glad he had worn a suit as she was stunning in a navy blue maxi dress with a thigh high slit and a white blazer over the top. Her sleeves rolled up to her elbows. She wore delicate jewellery and her hair loose with a small quiff.

“Hey.” She said as she met him on the footpath.

“Hi, you look beautiful.” He said.

“Thank you, you look very handsome.” She told him, Rufus couldn’t help but smile as he pulled on the suit jacket.
“Thanks, I figured I’d put on one of my best suits.” He replied, a small moment of silence passed between them as they just smiled. “Well, shall we?” he asked as he gestured in the direction of the restaurant.

“Sure.” She said, Rufus held out his arm. He enjoyed the smile she gave him as she looped her arm in his and they started to walk together. “So, how was your day?” she asked him.

“So, what did we think of the houses today?” Flynn asked, before he ate some of his chicken cobb salad. The family had stopped in at the local diner near the last house they’d seen. It was a real throwback to the sixties but was kept in fantastic shape. They chose a booth, Flynn and Holly on one side and Lucy on the other.

They were all looking exhausted from their day of house-hunting. It was surprising how looking at three houses could take it out of them. But after a meal, they’d hop in the car and be an hour’s drive from the Bunker. Lucy and Holly could sleep, Flynn could catch up once they got back.

“I liked the yellow one the best.” Holly said. She dipped a veggie nugget into some ketchup before eating it. She hadn’t been happy with having to eat dinner first but Flynn assured her that there would be pie as soon as she finished her dinner.

“The yellow one was my favourite too.” Lucy said, she gave closed lip smile as it appeared the Flynn family were all on the same page when it came to buying a new house.

“Mine too, so I guess this means we’ll have to make an offer and see if we can get it.” Flynn said.

“Can I paint my room orange?” Holly asked them.

“No.” Lucy said with a chuckle.

“Why not?” Holly asked.

“Because your room has to be relaxing and orange is not a relaxing colour. But, if you’re lucky…” Lucy pulled her phone out and googled bed frames. “You can have an orange bed frame like this one.” She bargained, she showed Holly a picture of a metal bedframe that was tangerine orange.

“Ok.” Holly agreed, Lucy smiled at the small victory before she put her phone away.

“Done, but we’re not going to be moving tomorrow. It will be a couple of weeks.” Lucy told her.

“I know, Uncle Karl will give me Bepo for my Birthday and we’ll be above ground then. It will all be perfect for when Lucky and the baby come.” Holly told them, Lucy shot Flynn a look as if to say ‘see, she’s still talking about the baby.’ Something they’d discussed before.

“Holly, you know we aren’t having a baby for a very long time.” Flynn told her.

“I know, you gotta put the baby in Mommy’s tummy and then she holds the baby for like a year. That’s a long, long time.” Holly said in a sage manner. It was hard for both Lucy and Flynn to not snort a laugh and maintain a serious expression.

“It is.” Flynn agreed.

“We also don’t know about Bepo yet.” Lucy added, Holly didn’t look convinced.
“Bepo is at Uncle Karl’s farm. You’ll see, he’ll find us.” Holly said with a smile before she took a bite out of veggie nugget.

“Here we are.” Karl said as they walked past the restaurant window; Jiya stopped as she felt a sense of déjà vu. She looked through the window, there was Rufus and it hit her. It was her vision playing itself out. She watched Rufus laugh and smile with a beautiful woman that was not her. She couldn’t help but feel like she was gut punched.

“You know, I could go a pizza. What do you think?” Karl asked as he stood beside her, Jiya’s sight pulled back and she saw her reflection. She must look pathetic but when she turned to Karl expecting sympathy. She was met with casual indifference which was incredibly comforting.

“Yeah, pizza would be great and more beer.” She told him, he gave a nod in agreement.

“I know a good place.” He told her in a soft tone as he guided her away from the restaurant.
“It was a disaster!” Annalise said as she and Rufus laughed over her latest adventures with the newest tech on the market. “So, just F.Y.I. the new phone is not water resistant.” She finished with a happy sigh.

“I’ll remember that when I update my phone.” Rufus said before he took a swig of his beer.

“Well, your company’s products are doing better than your competitors. So, I’m sure your new phone will be safe.” She mused.

“Maybe but I might have to look into waterproofing.” he quipped with a grin, as he was enjoying himself immensely. The food was delicious, the conversation easy going and Annalise was great company. He loved how normal it all felt.

“It’s a real untapped market of people who accidentally drop their phone in the toilet.” She deadpanned, the two chuckled.

“I’ll look into it for sure.” Rufus lied with a grin.

“Please do. So, tell me Rufus; what do you do for fun?” Annalise asked him.

“I-“ he paused as he had to think about it. But then he didn’t want to sound like a nerd. Then he realised if he was going to have a relationship with Annalise; something he really wanted. He needed to be truthful. “I like to Netflix and chill, video games and you know…normal stuff.” He told her with a shrug.

“I’m not fantastic at video games but I’m 100% into Netflix and chill.” She said with a smile.

“Have you seen the new season of Daredevil?” he asked her.

“Oh, it was so good. I think season 4 has been their best season yet.” Annalise said, her eyes lighting up with excitement.

“Her was really beautiful. They are going to be really happy together.” Jiya predicted as a little too much beer and a lot of self-pity while waiting for pizza got the better of her. Bacon sat in her lap looking as forlorn as she felt. Karl’s ‘pizza place’ was really his apartment and getting Pizza delivered. She honestly didn’t mind as she could take off her shoes and wallow comfortably in her misery. Her vision came true and she knew Rufus was having a great date. It was truly over for them. But fragile part of her wondered why she wasn’t ever ‘perfect’ enough for Rufus.

“No, she’s average. You just think she’s beautiful because she’s with Rufus.” Karl said as he placed the pizza boxes on the coffee table. “Have some pizza.” He told her as he lifted the lids off the boxes. The delicious aroma of the pizzas filled the air. Bacon perked up at the smell of it and placed his head on the coffee table with pleading eyes. Sweet Pea however was too snobbish for pizza as he was already in his doggy bed snoozing.

“She’s beautiful. There was nothing average about her.” Jiya corrected him, as she made sure not to fall for Bacon’s puppy eyes and feed him.
“She’s like a 6. You’re a 9 and you go to a 10 when you doll up.” He told her, there was no artifice to his words which made Jiya’s wounded ego feel a little better. Just a little as she knew he was just bolstering her up so she didn’t cry.

“Thanks.” Jiya said, she took a slice of pizza and took a bite.

“Anyway, it’s his loss for letting you go. Now, you gotta move on with your life. As this whole moping over him drags you down to an 8. It’s not pretty.” Karl told her, Jiya flipped him the bird as she was the middle of eating that she couldn’t reply. He laughed before he grew serious.

“Jiya, you’re a beautiful and intelligent woman. You won’t be single for long.” He promised her.

“Uhuh.” She remarked dryly as she didn’t believe him for a moment. How could she explain that she found it hard to believe when she’d been living in a bunker for nearly 4 years. Three of those years were in a fairly toxic relationship. She sighed as hindsight was a cruel bitch.

“Do you want to have sex?” he asked, Jiya couldn’t help but smile at his audacity. He made offer so casual like he was asking her if she wanted a glass of water.

“No, not when it’s a pity fuck.” Jiya told him, though the offer was tempting as she could potentially fuck the sad and Rufus out of her system. But Karl was her friend, if they crossed that line there was just no uncrossing it.

“I would think of it as an ego boost fuck.” He told her, Jiya snorted a laugh.

“No, thank you, so this is your pizza place?” she asked him, changing the topic.

“Wow, I’ve been waiting twenty minutes for that question. Yes, it’s comfortable and there’s TV.” He told her.

“You consider this a date?” She asked him, she could see him bringing women home for pizza and a movie. He shook his head.

“It’s not a date. We’re two friends sharing a meal.” He reminded her.

“What? no, I mean would you do this as a date?” she asked him before she took a bite of her slice.

“Not the first date.” He mused as he polished off the slice in his hand and reached for another.

“What would a first date look like with you?” she asked out of curiosity.

“Hot air ballooning at dawn, then champagne breakfast in the park.” He deadpanned.

“Bullshit.” Jiya said, he laughed.

“You're right and I don’t know, it depends on the woman.” He said frankly.

“So, you wing it? There’s no ‘go-to’ moves?” she asked.

“I have moves, don’t you worry but yeah, I mostly wing it. You can’t plan out everything before you know who you’re dating.” He argued.

“Good point.” Jiya agreed.

“Anyway, you’re about to go on holidays where you can sleep with anyone you want and never see them again. It's perfect for getting over a break up.” Karl reminded her.
“Holidays aren’t about hooking up.” Jiya told him.

‘It is for me, you travel and what’s better than sharing it with new people that you can shag?’ he asked her, Jiya could help but crack up into laughter as it was the stupidest thing she’d heard.

A couple of hours later,

“So are we going to pay above the market value?” Lucy asked Flynn as they were getting ready for bed. Holly was fast asleep in her own bed, she had slept the entire ride home and Flynn carrying her to bed. It made Lucy a little jealous as she wanted to be carried given how exhausting the day had been.

“No, we should get the property inspected and make sure there aren’t any hidden costs. Then make an offer.” Flynn said as he sat down on the bed and scrubbed a hand down his face.

“That study is really beautiful.” Lucy said as she pulled on her oversized t-shirt and then kicked off her pants.

“I’m sure there will be other studies if this one doesn’t work out.” Flynn teased.

“I don’t know. It was love at first sight.” Lucy drawled mockingly as she stood before him and rested her arms on his shoulders. Her fingers played with his hair as the back of his head.

“Let’s see how it works out.” Flynn said looking up at her, he rested his hands on her hips and pulled her a step closer.

“Ok, speaking of studies and homes.” Lucy said more seriously.

“Hmm?” Flynn asked.

“My Mom’s home.” She said.

“What about it?” he asked.

“I want to rent it out.” She told him, she had given it a lot of thought on the way home from house-hunting.

“Are you sure?” he asked her, she nodded and loved that he cared about how she felt instead of just taking everything at face value.

“Yes, I don’t want it sit empty like those places we saw today. It’s a beautiful house and my childhood home. I have so many happy memories there and I think it needs life. It just needs a new family.” She told him, she knew if she could rent it out to new people then the house would be loved again. It would have happier memories and meaning to her than an metaphor for how empty her side of the family was now they had passed on.

“Ok, what do you need me to do?” he asked her.

“Not much, just be there with me. Help with heavy lifting. It hopefully won’t be too much as I want to rent it fully furnished. But for that to happen, I’ll need to remove everything that has my Mom and my name to it.” She said.

“We should ask Jiya if she’ll babysit Holly for us.” Flynn said, planning ahead already and still very
much on the same page as Lucy.

“I completely agree, today felt long.” She said in agreement.

“It was, and in hindsight we shouldn’t have tried to cram it all in one day.” He said thoughtfully.

“We won’t with my mom’s place. We’ll go in next week and assess it, then decide how long it will take and do it slowly.” She said, she ran her fingers through his hair and smiled softly at how his eyes closed in relaxation.

“I like that plan.” Flynn told her, he pulled her into his lap and looked into her eyes with longing and contentment.

“Well, I know it will take time. It’s a lot of history pack up.” Lucy told him with a chuckle given the pun.

“We have plenty time, I was thinking of about our future today.” He said.

“Yes?” she asked with a smile.

“Hmm,” he nodded. “how we’ll maybe have another baby, watch Holly and that child grow up and teach them to be a semi-normal people.” He told her, a soft smile spread across his lips as he imagined it all over again.

“Impossible as we are far from normal but do continue.” Lucy said. They both chuckled, she pressed her forehead to his and tightened her hold around his shoulders.

“You’ll teach or write, whatever makes your intellectual side happy and fed. We grow old together and spoil our grandchildren rotten.” He said.

“I love the sound of that.” She said softly, Flynn pulled his head back and looked at her. He reached up with one hand and grazed his knuckles across her cheek.

“I love you.” He said softly and earnestly as he brushed a tendril of hair behind her ear. It was the first time he’d said the words to her and it not be part of an illusion for Holly or his parents. It made Lucy’s skin tingle as her body filled with warmth.

She never felt desperate for his vocal declaration of love as he’d shown her in so many other ways that he loved her. She had felt an emotional connection from the first time they met. She just never expected to evolve like this. But she knew he had loved her for a very long time and it felt good to hear him say it.

“I love you too.” She replied before she brought her mouth tenderly to his in a kiss that was slow, warm and gentle.

“Well, this is me.” Annalise said with a smile as they stopped outside her apartment building.

“I had a really great time tonight.” Rufus said, he felt pretty amazing about the entire night. Annalise was an intellectual soul like him but where his smarts laid with technology. Hers laid within understanding people and society.

She made him think about his own contribution not just in technology to make life easier but how Mason Industries as a whole changed lives. From the employees to the consumers. He frankly never
thought it about, no, he had when he was a kid. But somewhere in his teens and graduation he'd become hyper-focused on the development of the perfect coding, engineering. It more about the object he was creating than the human element.

Annalise in a small way reminded him of Lucy as Lucy was always factoring in the human elements of their missions. But Rufus had to admit that he felt Annalise was more in tune with the world around her. She didn’t separate herself from her subject, she was immersed with them. Something Lucy and he struggled to do in the past as he always felt outside of his own time. Kind of like now but it was interesting to see the world he lived in through Annalise’s eyes.

“Me too, you know there’s going to be Movies in the Park next week. I saw that they will playing The Last Jedi or we could go to the Dendy, they are having a Studio Ghibli Festival for the weekend.” She suggested, clearly interested in seeing him again. Rufus was all for going on a second date.

“We could do both on different days.” Rufus said, Annalise’s smile broadened.

“Ok, I’ll text you the details and we’ll suss it out.” She said.

“Sounds good.” He said, he was already looking forward to seeing her again.

“Well, I better go up.” She said, she stepped up onto her tip toes and pressed a kiss to Rufus’ cheek before he could react, she was walking up the stairs.

“Night.” He said.

“Night.” She replied before she disappeared inside. Rufus smiled as he fought the urge to do a happy dance.

Karl turned off the movie and looked to his left, he smiled as Jiya was starfished in the lounge next to him. Bacon half laid on her stomach, he lifted his head up and looked at him. He signalled at the puppy to get off of Jiya, Bacon's tail wagged in a sloppy manner as he gave a yawn. Instead of following Karl's orders, he rested his head back onto Jiya's stomach.

Karl shook his head as he knew picking up Bacon would wake up Jiya. She needed the sleep as he knew she hadn't been sleeping well due to visions and late hours of trying to get the project wrapped up. It didn't help that they ran into Rufus moving on while Jiya felt jammed up by her work and their break up. Karl had to admit, he really didn't know how to help other than listen to her and feed her pizza. That and keep a bucket nearby, just in case she vomited. Luckily, it hadn't been used.

They talked for a while about random things before turning on the TV for a movie. It had been nice to relax and have a night in. He liked Jiya, she was fun to hang out with. It helped immensely that she didn't want anything from him. Ok, there was the mission but in general she wasn't looking for power or money from him. It made their friendship uncomplicated and enjoyable as he didn't have to try and figure out her game.

Jiya let out a loud snore, Karl pressed his lips together as he tried not to laugh. He rose from the couch and carefully draped a blanket over the top of her and tucked it around Bacon who had become her sleeping buddy. He’d worry about Bacon’s insubordination another day.

He lowered the blinds on the windows and dimmed the lights. He went to kitchen and grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge and ibuprofen he kept in his junk drawer. He placed them on the coffee table for Jiya before he went to his bedroom for the night.
The following day,

Flynn and Holly sat in the waiting room of the rehab centre Lucy had been referred to. They’d just come from the doctor’s office where Holly had her cast removed. Something Flynn was thankful for as Holly’s arm was getting incredibly ripe. He now knew why as Holly held a snap-lock bag that contained the evidence of why it had turned abnormally ripe. Flynn would normally call it's contents; ‘trash’, but Holly was adamant that it was ‘treasure’.

“I told you my arm was itchy.” Holly said to Flynn, he gently took her hand before she could scratch her arm where she had a gnarly rash. The cast was gone but new problems had cropped up in its place.

“Well, I don’t know what to say except that you shouldn’t have stuffed things into cast.” Flynn told Holly, shaking his head at her as he really wanted to laugh as her expression was too much. She looked at him with a mixture of incredulity and exhaustion.

“I was keeping the secret treasure safe. I didn’t think it would get stinky or itchy….or stuck.” She told him in a matter of fact manner. Flynn couldn’t help but chuckle at her.

“I love you.” Flynn told Holly as he pulled her into a hug and kissed her cheek. Holly beamed as she clambered him for a better hug. He chuckled as he cuddled her close. He looked up and saw Lucy before them.

“How did it go?” Lucy asked with a smile.

“I got my secret treasure, Mommy.” Holly announced gleefully as she climbed out Flynn’s lap and held up the bag of her goodies.

“Whoa.” Lucy said she took the bag looking at the contents with a morbid curiosity. “That’s my mascara.” She said as she identified one of the many objects in the bag. She was about to open the bag and take it back.

“It was in Holly’s cast.” Flynn said, Lucy zipped the bag up with a cringing expression.

“Oh, yeah, no.” Lucy said as she passed the bag back to Holly and then frowned as she realised that she probably should’ve kept the bag from Holly. To try and disappear it later than encourage Holly into keeping things.

“We will throw it out with everything else except the coins. They just need to be washed.” Flynn commented.

“But it’s all treasures.” Holly said defensively.

“We’ll find you new treasure that hasn’t been up your cast.” He promised her, Holly pouted and Flynn smiled wryly before he spoke again to Lucy. “We have to get an ointment for the rash. But other than that, Holly’s arm is completely healed.” Flynn said.

“Good.” Lucy said in relief as she took the small victories where and when she could.

“How was your doctor’s appointment?” He asked her, Lucy nodded as she ordered her thoughts. It had been a mixed bag of sorts as Dr Watanabe said everything was healed but she still had a long road with rehab before her hand was back to at least 60% functionality.

“Bones are mended and tendons are slowly healing. I don’t have to wear my cast except at night or when it needs to be supported.” Lucy said.
“And rehab?” he asked, she made a face as she hated rehab already. Their wishy washy talk of her being a 'Strong Jedi Warrior' just made her roll her eyes given it meant nothing to her. She most definitely didn't feel like a warrior, she felt like a child being patronised for not being able to close her hand properly.

“Not fun, but I have exercises to do until I’m back here next week.” Lucy said with a sigh, she remembered the struggle to make even the smallest twitch of her fingers.

It made her realise how much she had taken for granted. It was going to be a hard journey to get her hand back. Part of wished it was easy as she was tired of everything being so hard. She also didn’t like how every time she tried to move her fingers she thought of Wyatt, how the memory of him dislocating her fingers flashed through her mind. She felt like Wyatt was going to haunt her forever but she couldn’t say that out loud especially not in front of Holly.

“You’ll get stronger with time and persistence.” Flynn assured her in a soft manner as he rubbed her back. Lucy nodded, she pushed her darker thoughts away.

“Yeah, they say in six weeks I shouldn’t need the cast to support my arm.” She said, trying to find the positives and smile as Holly was watching them.

“See. Now, I say we celebrate.” Flynn said with a smile, Holly cheered in excitement.

“Can we do it at home?” Lucy asked them. Flynn gave a nod as he wore an empathetic smile.

“We’ll pick up some supplies from the shops on the way home.” He said.

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“Didn’t expect you to come by today.” Connor said with a happy smile as they shook hands in the lobby of Mason industries.

“Jiya and I are stuck with our problem, I found the best way to get around a problem is to take my mind off of it. I figured maybe there was something I could do here or pick up where I left off.” He said, their last meeting had ended on a sad note as Connor expected him to step into the spotlight. But talking with Annalise, it made him realise that he needed to think of his future. His long-term goals, he frankly couldn’t abandon Connor or the company that had given him a lot.

“Of course, come on.” He said as he motioned for Rufus to follow him. “But next time, just walk right in like you own the place. It is technically yours…well 50% anyway. You’re their boss as much I am theirs.” Connor said in a jovial manner.

“I will next time.” Rufus said, they stepped into the elevators. “The thing is, I want to honour your wishes.” He added.

“My wishes?” Connor asked.

“About stepping up to take over when you retire.” He said, Connor looked genuinely surprised. “But I want an extremely slow transition into being the public face and obviously I need training and be taught how to run an actual company.” Rufus said, Connor smiled brilliantly.

“You’ll be my protégé again.” Connor said.

“Did I ever stop being your protégé?” Rufus asked.
“You did when you bought this tragic looking hoodie.” Connor told him.

“It’s comfy.” Rufus told him.

“Maybe we can compromise and put the hoodie under a blazer or leather jacket.” Connor told him in a gentle manner.

“Really?” Rufus asked him incredulously.

“Your appearance is important not just for the company but also your self-esteem. You’re not in college anymore.” Connor chided him. Rufus snorted a laugh.

“This was a great idea.” Jiya said as she had joined the family for sundaes to celebrate the Flynn family victories. She and Lucy were cleaning up as they washed and packed away the dishes. She had enjoyed herself and she loved how she really felt like a member of their family as Lucy and Flynn had come a long way in the past few weeks as parents but also as a friend to her.

“You ok?” Lucy asked, she noticed Jiya had been a little deflated since they returned.

“A little hungover. I drank too much beer and indulged in a little self-pity.” Jiya admitted, she was ready to let go of this bunker life and move into the next phase. She knew in a couple of weeks she and Rufus would solve the issue the lifeboat travelling into a timeline where the passengers already existed. It wasn’t protecting Lucy and the others, that was impossible but they needed the lifeboat to remain intact and functioning while the team were completing the mission. It would also be bad if the Lifeboat folded in on itself because of a time paradox but she was banking on the theory that it had survived the journey once, it could do so again.

“Weren’t you having dinner with Karl last night?” Lucy asked her, jiya refocused on the conversation at hand.

“Yes, I also crashed on his couch and no I didn’t have sex with him.” Jiya told her before Lucy could ask.

“Ok.” Lucy said in a cheeky manner.

“He offered, but I turned him down. I was so messy last night and he was really great with me.” Jiya said truthfully, she was still surprised at how casually he just offered her a one night stand. It was oddly charming but then Karl was like that most of the time. He had been great in the morning, he let her sleep in, made her breakfast and fresh coffee. He then drove her back to the bunker. He told her funny stories that made her laugh and it had been a really nice pick me up after her vision coming true.

“How did he offer it?” Lucy asked out of curiosity. Jiya shook her head.

“No, we’re not having that conversation.” Jiya told her as she was not going to open the door for Lucy to tease her some more.

“Alright, so did you see that your earrings ended up in Holly’s cast?” Lucy asked changing topics.

“Yeah, I have them soaking in disinfectant.” Jiya said with a chuckle as Lucy’s expression of disgust was priceless. “How was your doctor’s visit?” she asked.
“It’s ok, fractures are healed, tendons haven’t snapped or anything. They are just really tight and hard to move.” Lucy said, she looked at her right hand with a sad expression.

“It’s going be tough but if it helps, I know you get back the use of your hand.” Jiya assured her.

“I was trying to flex my fingers and all my mind could do was remind me of how it happened.” Lucy said softly. “I remember my terrible hand writing and how I can barely hold this bowl. Wyatt broke it-me.” She added in a despondent manner.

Jiya took the dish towel and bowl out of Lucy hands. She set them aside and took her hands into hers. She locked eyes with Lucy as she needed Lucy to hear her.

“I can’t promise your handwriting won’t be shit. But I can promise you that your right hand will heal. What you survived and the fact you can put on a smile every day makes you stronger. These hands” she squeezed Lucy’s hands for emphasis. “These hands will touch, hold and carry more precious things in their lifetime with no problems.” Jiya told her.

“What did you see in those visions of yours?” Lucy asked her, Jiya smiled softly.

“If I told you, it would ruin the surprises ahead of you.” Jiya said cockily, she released Lucy’s hands and her expression grew serious. “Wyatt didn’t break you and when you do your stretches for your hand or whatever exercises they gave you. You should force yourself to think about all the things you’ll be able to do in the future like hold Holly’s hand. Braiding her hair, playing with puppies. Anything but the past and that asshole.” She added.

“You’re right.” Lucy said.

“Of course, I am.” Jiya said with a smile, the two friends chuckled softly as the inside joke in reference to Jiya’s vision sank in.

“Thank you.” Lucy said earnestly as she appreciated Jiya's words and her support.

“Anytime, but seriously, you’ll be ok. We all will.” Jiya assured her.
Later that afternoon,

Lucy laid on the couch in the living room with her tablet. She was making what was possibly her ninth to-do list. She knew it was getting out of hand but there was so much she needed to do; in the short and long term. She hadn't even gotten into her own personal goals as she had just been solely focused on Holly and Flynn and getting their lives set up. There were other unfinished business that needed to be addressed like her mother's estate and understanding exactly what happened with her mother. Lucy had to fit in her rehab exercises and frankly, she still trying to decide if she was going to see a psychologist or not. Part her felt an obligation to, as if seeing one would tick a requisite box and thus she could let it go. But she doubt it worked like that.

She heard Holly's footfalls and the familiar dragging of her poor monkey toy on the concrete ground. Lucy turned off her tablet and sat up with a smile on her face. It became more genuine as she saw Holly's sleepy face and mussed hair from literally rolling out of her bed.

“Hey Monkey.” Lucy said with a smile as she placed her tablet on the coffee table.

“Hi.” Holly said softly, she walked over to the couch and placed her monkey on the couch and leaned on the edge.

“What’s going on?” Lucy asked as she patted the couch cushion next to her. Holly smiled as she climbed onto the lounge.

“Daddy is still sleeping.” Holly said as she laid her head in Lucy’s lap and clutched her toy close to her chest.

“We’ve have had a few busy days. You want to talk about what’s been happening?” Lucy asked as she stroked her fingers through Holly’s hair. She gently untangled the knots in her daughter's hair, Lucy still marvelled at being parent and how she felt deeply attached to Holly even though she technically didn't birth her.

“No, I’m ok.” Holly said with a sigh which told Lucy that she was downplaying it. Lucy also knew when Holly fiddled with her toy that something was up. Lucy knew better than to ignore it.

“It’s a lot of big changes. I would understand if you were a little afraid or even sad.” Lucy told her.

“I’m gonna miss Jiya.” Holly admitted in a small voice.

“Jiya will visit us a lot and we’ll see her too.” Lucy assured her, Holly pushed up out of her lap and looked up at her.

“I know but it won’t be every day.” Holly told her.

“No, it won’t but she’s still going to be in our lives for a very long time as she’s a member of our family.” Lucy said.

“Yeah, but she won't live with us.” Holly sighed, she still looked sad.

“I know, but she would have moved out eventually to make her own home. It's what people do.” Lucy wrapped her arms around Holly. “It will be ok.” She told her.
“Yeah but what if we’re all unhappy and hate the house and we don’t make any friends and we’re all alone.” Holly told her, Lucy pulled back and looked down at Holly. She felt her heart break at seeing the fear in Holly's expression and her sadness that everything would turn bad.

“We won’t know until we move there. As for making friends, I’m sure we’ll be ok especially you as you’re incredibly smart and funny. You’ll make friends with kids your own age.” Lucy assured her.

“How can you be sure? I never played with anyone as old as me.” Holly reminded her.

“But you will, you know if you want we can look at day care.” Lucy suggested.

“What’s a day care?” Holly asked in confusion.

“It’s a place where kids go to have fun and learn interesting things while Mommies and Daddies work and do adult stuff. But you’d be on your own as Daddy and I can’t go.” Lucy told her.

“Why not?” Holly asked.

“We’re too old. But I’m sure we could find one that is half days. So, we’d have breakfast together and then Daddy and I would drop you off and you’d have the morning with them and some lunch before we pick you up.” Lucy told her, she secretly hoped daycare ran along the same structure as it did in the old timeline.

“I don’t know.” Holly said with reticence.

“It’s ok, you get to think about it and if you ever wanted to leave, you just tell one of the adults and they’d call us. It wouldn’t be a problem at all, and I think it would be a great way to meet the kids who live near our home.” Lucy told her. “But it’s up to you, we won’t force you to go. So, think about it and let me know.” she added as she smoothed a hand over Holly's hair in a soothing manner.

“Can we look now?” Holly asked, Lucy smiled as she was glad Holly had an open mind about.

“Of course.” Lucy said, she picked up her tablet computer and turned it over.

“That’s it.” Rufus said in awe as the computer told them that the last adjustments to their program were successful in a preliminary test. They had spent all afternoon and evening working on the calculations to make their final trip into the past work. Finally, it had clicked and it was a relief. Not because Rufus wanted to escape the bunker or Jiya. But that their trip would be a safe one as he did not want to die from time travel...again.

“I’ll keep running simulations just to be on the safe side given we can’t test it out. But yeah, that’s it.” Jiya said as she stretched her arms above her head before she yawned.

“Ok.” Rufus agreed, he sat back and gave a small smile. “You know, this has been a good evening.” he commented.

“Yeah, it’s a bit like the old days.” Jiya said in amusement.

“The tacos are better.” Rufus pointed out.

“Yeah, Flynn is a great chef. So, I saw you on a date last week.” Jiya said as she decided to just be upfront with Rufus. She knew their lives would forever be entwined but needed to establish some boundaries and some kind of working relationship with him.
“You did?” Rufus asked a little surprised.

“I wasn’t stalking you, I was out with Karl and we nearly ended up in the same restaurant. You looked happy with her.” Jiya said, acknowledging that one truth out loud seemed to unravel a knot of mixed emotions. It strangely felt good as it made her realise they weren’t hanging onto baggage from one another. That she finally saw Rufus as a different man.

“Yeah, Annalise is a really great person. I’m enjoying her company.” Rufus said carefully.

“Good, I’m glad.” Jiya said with a closed lip smile.

“Thank you, it means a lot.” Rufus said awkwardly, “So, you and Karl…what’s going on there?” he asked, Jiya snorted a laugh and roll her eyes.

“We’re just friends, he’s really good for me as he reminds me there’s more to life than all of this.” Jiya explained. Rufus frowned in confusion.

“I didn’t think you needed reminding of that.” he told her.

“Sometimes I do, we’ve spent so long down here. It’s easy to forget there’s a whole world out there to be explored and for me to find my place in again.” Jiya explained.

“Well, you're technically on holidays as soon as these simulations come back with positive results.” Rufus reminded her.

"Yeah, it will be good to get away. Have you thought about your next moves given this..." she gestured around them, "is practically over." she asked.

"I've had some thoughts, but not interested in travelling at the moment. I just want to stay in one place and be with my family. Mend those fences and find my place in this world." he said with a wry smile.

Later in the evening,

“I’m sorry we didn’t get to discuss daycare thing with you before talking to Holly.” Lucy said as she crawled into bed and laid down with a sigh as the mattress welcomed her tired body.

“It’s ok.” Flynn said as he turned off the lights and climb over her to his side of the bed.

“It’s not, we should talk about this stuff together beforehand so that we’re on the same page.” Lucy said as she lifted the blankets helping him under the covers.

“I agree with you, I think it would be good for Holly to go.” Flynn said as he got comfortable, he had to admit he was looking forward to moving out of the bunker as it meant a bigger bed.

“Thank you, you should’ve seen her face when she asked me if she would make any friends. Holly was so scared of not being accepted.” Lucy said in a low voice, she still felt gutted by her daughter's insecurities coming to surface.

“She’ll be ok.” Flynn assured her.

“I know, but it broke my heart as it’s our fault for keeping her down here.” Lucy said as she dropped her head onto her pillow and moved closer to him. She had to admit she liked these quiet moments before sleep and when she woke with Flynn. No matter what they discussed, it felt intimate and easy for one to bear their soul without judgement.
"It wasn’t by choice, it was necessity and we still managed to have a very social child. I know she’ll make friends. We can use her time in day care to take care of your childhood home.” He said as he turned to his side to face her. Not that he could see her face but he could tell how she felt. How many times had he had the same insecurities and concerns for his child.

“Exactly what I was thinking too.” Lucy said.

“I do think it will be good for her as Holly needs to interact with kids her own age. To be able to ease her into it, is a good idea. She will be going to kindergarten next year. That’s full time.” Flynn remarked.

“Hmm, we’ll have to look into that soon.” Lucy said.

“We will, but this is marathon not a sprint.” Flynn reminded her, Lucy gave a tired laugh.

“Yes, it is. But I feel like sometimes I'm just drowning in to-do lists and not knowing what to prioritise.” Lucy confessed.

“We’ll get it sorted, tomorrow the building inspection report will be in our hands and we’ll decide if want to make an offer or not.” Flynn said.

“We might have a dog tomorrow.” She told him, as they were going to one of Karl's dog farms which Jiya had decided should be referred to as an animal rescue. Lucy knew Holly was going to find 'Bepo' and want to bring him home to the bunker.

“Karl promised me that the puppies are too young to leave the farm yet. If we make an offer and it's accepted there is a 90 day settlement on the house, the puppy will be ready to come home in three weeks.” He said as he laid onto his back again.

"Fingers crossed the house will be ours. Not because of the puppy but for us as I feel like we keep stalling out being down here. Everything feels so far away and stressful.” She told him, she closed the space between them and rested her head on his chest and hugged his torso.

“I know, maybe we should look into a short term rental that we can move into to transition from the bunker.” Flynn suggested, he curled his arm around her and rested his other hand on her arm that draped across him.

“Yeah,” she sighed as she knew it was tiring Flynn to drive them all the time. They realistically had no reason to stay in the bunker now that Rittenhouse was gone. "Maybe we should ask Karl to push back the adoption until we've got a house." she added.

"I will, I don't want to worry about a puppy peeing all over that pristine and very white rental home." Flynn mused.

"Speaking of, I think we should stay with your parents for next week." she suggested.

"We just escaped them." Flynn groaned and Lucy wore a wry smile as he was right.

"I know, it's just that we can take over their rental. It's a familiar space to Holly. She knows it's not a forever home and it has that backyard. Not to mention it's a 10 minute drive to my Mom's place." Lucy said reasoning with him as they both knew another week with their parents would put them to the test.

"We know my parents want more time with Holly." Flynn said, something his parents would love. "Ok, I'll call them tomorrow after we get back from the farm." he sighed.
"I'll talk to Denise about moving boxes and what exactly we have to do to get our belongings sent to our new address." Lucy said, she already had it on her list of to-dos.

"Why don’t we worry about that next week, this week we just focus on Holly’s birthday and stopping her from smuggling puppies home tomorrow." Flynn suggested, Lucy gave a sigh and nodded as she was glad for the reprieve he was gifting her.

“We got our hands full, don’t we?” she asked in amusement, she was already mentally planning on Holly's outfit tomorrow to not include pockets.

“We do.” He agreed with a smile. “Now, let’s get some sleep, tomorrow is going to be a long day.” He said, Lucy nodded before they shared a relaxing kiss and she rested her head on his chest again.

The next day,

“Here we are.” Flynn announced as he parked the car in the parking lot outside of Karl’s farm that doubled as an animal rescue. Though farm was a very basic word for what the property appeared to be. It was more like a large compound than a traditional farm. It had numerous buildings and kennels fenced in yards scattered across a large space, it could’ve easily given off a harsh industrial feel. But it didn’t as the landscape artist had worked their wonders in incorporating functional gardens in and around the place. It gave off a very professional feel but at the same felt warm and inviting to visitors.

“Yay!!” Holly and Jiya cheered happily from the backseat. Lucy and Flynn shared a wry smile as listening to Jiya and Holly sing, world build imaginary scenarios for the past hour was like having another kid in the backseat.

They all got out of the car, Flynn helped Holly out. As soon as her feet were in the ground, she was running towards Karl who was coming down the path to greet them.

“Hey everyone.” Karl said with a smile as he walked towards them, he caught Holly just as she neared him. He looked relaxed as he wore jeans and long sleeve Henley top with the sleeves rolled to his elbows. It had a logo of the company's name 'Sanctuary Hills'.

“Uncle Karl!” Holly said happily as she hugged him. He gave her, the usual awkward pat on the back as he settled Holly on his hip. He had long since given up the notion he could put her down when he wanted to and just followed Holly's lead.

“You ready? I got every kind of dog you can think of, even some Llamas.” Karl told Holly.

"Llamas aren't dogs." Holly said as she giggled at him.

"I know that. I was testing you. You passed." Karl said in amusement. "High five?" he offered as he held up his hand, Holly shook her head. The adults chuckled as Holly left him hanging.

“Did you find Bepo and Lucky?!” She asked him.

“I don’t know, only you know that.” Karl told Holly as if she was an old and wise woman instead of a nearly 4 yr old child.

“I'll find them.” Holly promised him.

“Ok, a lady with a mission. I like it.” Karl said in amusement as he looked to Jiya, Flynn and Lucy. “How was the drive?” he asked them.
“Pretty easy. How big is this property?” Flynn asked him out of curiosity.

“It’s a couple hundred acres, not all of it for the dogs. We got a small Christmas tree operation and we have a few acres for the local school to learn about perma-culture farming with a decent pumpkin patch for Halloween. Some farm animals; goats, cows and Llamas. The hills are all just wild forest for the sake of it. We have the veterinary clinic, the school with kennels for dogs in training, abandoned pups and other smaller animals like cats and what not. Some cottages for the staff who live onsite.” Karl said as he gestured to the different areas to indicate what was what. They headed up the front pathway to the main building.

"Sounds like there's a lot going on." Lucy said.

"It used be owned by another cult before I bought it and transformed it into this. Not Rittenhouse, though they did help me get a great deal by getting the previous owners arrested and their property confiscated by Homeland Security. The locals love me as I created more jobs and brought in fresh blood. The local council even gave me an award." Karl said with a grin, Lucy and Flynn shook their heads as the man had a gift of making the best out of a bad situation.

“It’s beautiful out here.” Jiya said, Karl smiled as he took in the surroundings. It was a beautiful day, sure the animals made a racket but mostly it was peaceful and the air was cleaner. The scenery was beautiful as he kept the farm simple and functional while maintaining a 'homey' feel. It also helped with moral for animals and humans alike.

“Yeah, I like it but as you’re about to see it can get pretty hectic out here.” Karl said to them all as he could hear the trainers starting their classes. He looked to Holly. “You ready to walk on your own?” he asked her.

“Nope, I can see everything from up here.” Holly told him, she hugged her arms around his neck so tightly that he knew he would not be able to let her go.

“Ok, well, let’s get the tour started.” He told them all.

“You stalking me now?” Kevin asked Rufus as he climbed into the stands where Rufus was sitting. Rufus made a point to show up and watch Kevin's practise. It was something Rufus hadn't done in years, he remembered when he used to do his homework while Kevin played ball with the kids at the local basketball courts. It was the only way Rufus could keep Kevin out of trouble and be able to keep on top of his schoolwork while babysitting when their Mom was working.

“I am.” Rufus said with a grin as they shook hands.

“Not cool, Bro.” Kevin said as he sat down next to him on the bleacher.

“You won’t give me a chance so I’m just going to hang around until you do.” Rufus told him.

“Still not cool.” Kevin said, he waved as his friends who were heading out. The next tier of basketball players took to the courts to practise.

“I know, I was a shitty brother who lauded my intellect and money over you. But I have changed, in time you’ll see it. I just want us to be brothers again.” Rufus told him.

“We’ve never been brothers. There’s been you the Golden child and me the average one.” Kevin told him, Rufus barked a laugh as he had always felt it was the reverse.

“You’re hardly average, you’re a foot taller than me, smarter and better at sports. You could be
president if you wanted be.” Rufus told him, Kevin scoffed.

“Not likely, I don’t have the patient for that garbage.” Kevin told him.

“You never know but it’s entirely up to you. So, want to go grab a burger and a milkshake?” he asked him.

“What are we twelve?” Kevin asked.

“No, but you’re eighteen and can’t have a beer yet.” Rufus pointed out.

“Fair call, you’re buying lunch.” Kevin told him.

”Done, but you have to shower.” Rufus told him, Kevin smiled as he rose to his feet. He pulled at his uniform top and took a deep inhale and sighed happily.

”That is the smell of hard work and victory, Big Bro.” Kevin said smugly.

“And here is where we keep the babies who need a little extra TLC before they can be assessed for training and potential adoption. So be very gentle with them.” Karl said as he brought them into a large gated yard just off from the main office.

The others understood immediately as the sound of the gate closed over 15 puppies of different breeds waddled and rolled over to them. All still struggling with their tiny bodies but enjoying a romp in the grass.

Holly raced into the middle of the action, the adults were just in awe of all the cuteness that was happening. Lucy and Jiya moved into the fray of puppies with Holly unable to resist while Flynn and Karl stood back. They weren’t worried about being left out as the puppies who weren’t getting attention from the women were slowly drifting their way.

“So, Bepo is in this crowd?” Flynn asked in a low voice to Karl.

“Yep, don’t know which one is him but like I told you they all need another three weeks to grow which is perfect given you’ll be in your new home by then.” Karl replied, the men smiled as they watched the women and Holly coo over all the puppies.

“That’s the aim but we’ll see.” Flynn said.

“Daddy! Look! I found Bepo!” Holly said as she lifted a chocolate brown French bulldog mix with a black mask out of the pack of puppies. The puppy barked the cutest little noise and whimpered as his tiny tail wiggled happily.

“Look at that, she’s got a puppy.” Karl quipped as he smacked Flynn on the back. Lucy looked at him with a mixture of amusement and ‘I told you so’. She had predicted Holly would find Bepo. Flynn crouched down beside her and Holly.

“How can you be sure?” Flynn asked Holly in amusement.

“Cause he looks like Bepo from my dreams. Isn’t he cute?!” Holly asked excitedly as she settled Bepo into lap and stroked his back. The puppy shook with excitement as he didn’t know if he wanted to be petted or to run and play. It was just pure luck he hadn’t peed himself with all the excitement.

“What about this one?” Flynn asked as he picked up one of the many puppies at his feet. It looked
near identical to the puppy in Holly’s arms.

“Nope, this one is Bepo. He knows us.” Holly said with a smile as she got onto her belly and giggled as Bepo accidentally headbutted her chin. Flynn carefully placed the puppy he held back onto the ground. Lucy rubbed his arm in a soothing manner as they both discussed this inevitability. He wasn’t trying to avoid but he did wonder how Holly knew with such certainty that the puppy was Bepo.

“You know Holly, I thought the same thing when I saw Bepo too.” Karl said, he crouched down next to Holly and pulled a lightweight fabric collar out his pocket. It was braided with the name ‘Bepo’ into the weave. “So, I got this made.” He told her, Holly’s eyes lit up and she sat up again; wanting to get a closer look at the collar.

Lucy and Flynn shot Karl a dirty look as Karl definitely planned for it all. Jiya watched them all in amusement as puppies crawled over her legs and exploring the new scents in their world.

“It’s so pretty.” Holly said in awe.

“Now, are you sure this puppy is Bepo?” Karl asked her in a serious manner as he scratched Bepo behind the ear.

“I know my own dog.” Holly told him in a ‘duh’ tone.

“Ok.” He said with a grin, he clipped the collar onto the puppy’s neck. “There we go, this puppy will be known as Bepo for now and forever.” He said, Bepo shook his head and body then frowned at the new collar as it was a new sensation for him. But soon he was distracted as Holly hugged him close.

“Hi Bepo Flynn. You're our family now.” Holly said, she giggled when Bepo licked her nose. Lucy, Flynn and the others smiled as it was a heart warming moment.

“Now, Holly, I need you to hear me on this.” Karl said, he gently tilted Holly’s face up to him; so she would pay attention to him.

“Ok.” Holly said.

“You can’t take Bepo home today.” He told her.

“Why not?” she asked, her smile dropped into an expression of confusion.

“He’s still a baby and needs a lot of special care only we can give him here. But you can play with him and visit him when Mommy and Daddy bring you here. I'll send you updates every week. Ok?” Karl asked her in a gentle manner.

“Ok.” Holly agreed in a sad manner but Karl was not getting sucker in as he smiled.

“It’s not all bad, when you’re in your new home; Bepo will be old enough to live you guys.” He told her.

“That will hopefully be in 2 months time.” Flynn said to Holly.

“2 months?! but that forever after my Birthday!” she exclaimed in a dramatic manner. "Can he come to my party at the Zoo?” Holly asked Karl as she cuddled Bepo close.

“No, he’s too small for Zoo. But soon as you move into your new home, I’ll bring him right over.”
Karl promised her, Flynn and Lucy were appreciative of him taking one for team and being the bearer of bad news.

“Yeah?” Holly asked with a hopeful smile.

“Yeah, first thing.” He promised her, he booped her on the nose and then rubbed Bepo’s head before he rose to his feet. “Now, I’m going to get your Daddy or Mummy to sign the adoptions forms.” He told her.

“Yay!” Holly said.

“I’ll go.” Flynn said to Lucy, he gave her a quick kiss before he rose to his feet and followed Karl out of the pen.

“Let’s see this Bepo character.” Lucy said with a smile as she and Jiya moved to Holly’s side. Lucy chuckled as Bepo haphazardly rolled out of Holly’s lap to play with his siblings. She could see how Holly was able pick him as Bepo was the smallest out of his siblings. The proverbial runt of the pack. Not that Lucy minded as he seemed to have a pretty happy disposition and had a healthy dose of curiosity when he came her way and sniffed at her knees.

“He’s definitely a Flynn.” Jiya deadpanned when Bepo tried to crawl under the skirt of Lucy's dress.

"Yep! I told you we'd find Bepo.” Holly said smugly, Lucy shook her head with a smile while secretly glad that Jiya's joke flew right over Holly's head.
Flynn muttered a curse in Croatian as he turned his phone face down on the bench of the front reception and looked at the paperwork in front of him. His parents were back in town and already nagging him to bring the family over. As much as he loved them, he'd love it if they were just a little less clingy.

“What?” Karl asked in amusement as he knew it was the adoption papers. He stood on the other side of the desk, the receptionist had left to grab herself a coffee.

“My parents are back in town and want us over for dinner tonight. It was not an invitation. Lucy wants us to stay with them until they go. Then take over their rental before we move into a property we own. But my parents just don’t stop texting until they get an answer.” Flynn sighed as his phone beeped signifying a new message. He ignored it while he signed and initialled the paperwork. He had read through the paperwork. He trusted Karl to know the man wouldn’t screw him over.

“Taking over their rental shouldn’t be too much of a problem.” Karl said.

“How do you know?” Flynn asked.

“I own the house they are renting.” Karl said with a shrug.

“Seriously?” he asked.

“I own a lot of investment properties. You remember Amar, he always said that bricks and mortar are the best long-term investments.” Karl told him in a smug manner.

“Amar never made it past the rank of private.” Flynn reminded him as the man they were discussing had not been the brightest star in the night’s sky. At least Flynn didn't remember the man being very bright but maybe he was now.

“No, he didn’t but he left the military and now owns a chain of very popular restaurants. He's raking it in. So, his advice isn’t completely unsound.” Karl pointed out.

“Fair point.” Flynn conceded.

“Anyway, I’ll get my real estate agent to call you to talk you through the leasing and prices.” Karl told him.

“No mates rates?” Flynn asked mockingly.

“I have puppies to feed.” Karl deadpanned as he gestured around him, the noises of happy dogs and people chattering just to prove his point.

“Fine, as long as it’s not too extravagant.” Flynn said.

“No, not for long term rentals. I’m sure you can afford it.” He said.

“Good to know.” Flynn said with a chuckle as he wasn't sure if he should be concerned or not. But he reminded himself that Karl was his friend and friends did not screw friends over.

“You know, if you have more kids then your folks can focus on them instead of you and Lucy.” Karl offered switching the conversation to Flynn’s earlier predicament.
“I’m not having kids to use them as a buffer between my parents and I. I just need to go see my brother and resolve our differences. It should get them to settle down.” Flynn said, last night; Lucy spoke about her to-do lists but he had his own as well. Making things right with his family and finding some balance was at the top of list right after making a home with Lucy. Giving them the security and support they needed and he craved to give them.

“I doubt it, but you can try.” Karl said wryly.

“Lucy and I were thinking of going over to Croatia for a few of weeks from now. Lucy and Holly would stay with my parents while I do a day trip to my brother’s.” Flynn explained and Karl chuckled which was a little off putting.

“Think you can resolve a feud that is over 20 years old in 24hrs?” he asked Flynn incredulously.

“I can try.” Flynn said but he knew Karl was right. It was unrealistic to think he could fix things with his brother in a day. But he needed to just see him and see exactly what laid between them. That and so he could say he was trying instead of avoiding his brother.

“Good luck.” Karl said earnestly, before he opened a drawer and pulled out a medium sized box. “Here is your welcome home kit. It got some basic stuff and some pamphlets that talk about making your home ready. You know, things you’ll need and checklists. That way you can be prepared ahead of time.” He explained.

“This is extensive.” Flynn observed as he flicked through the pamphlets on dog ownership and insurance.

“It’s a pretty serious thing, some say it’s like having a baby. I think it’s like having a really clinging best friend and roommate who never pays for dinner and can out run you every day of the week.” Karl said, Flynn smiled.

“I’ve never had to toilet train a roommate before.” Flynn quipped.

“You will when Bepo moves in.” Karl told him, “Now, we will chip him for you and you should find a local vet for his general health care. Vaccinations, neutering etc. You won’t be able to travel overseas with him until he’s about 4 months old. I’d recommend going on holidays first, then coming back and taking him home. It’s easier on the pup to feel like he has a permanent home.” He added.

“I agree, let’s set the pickup time for 6 weeks from now.” Flynn said as he passed the paperwork back to Karl.

“No problem, I’ll let the staff know.” Karl said, he quickly looked through it all the papers to make certain everything was in order.

“Thanks.” Flynn said.

“You’re doing me the favour by adopting him. Now, you’ve signed all the paperwork. There’s just the fee to pay, then I can say ‘Congratulations, you now have a dog in the family’.” Karl told him.

“Let’s do it.” Flynn said as he pulled out his wallet. Karl lifted up an EFTPOS machine onto the bench.

“Anything else before I put this through? I can get you a Christmas tree if you want.” Karl said as he typed away on the computer setting up the account to bill him.

“It’s a little early.” Flynn said, Karl smiled as he gestured for Flynn to use the EFTPOS machine.
“But you wouldn’t happen to have any rental properties with two bedrooms?” He said as he swiped his credit card and put in his pin to approve the payment.

“Looking to rent before you move into the house?” Karl asked.

“Yes, Lucy was thinking we’d stay in her mother’s home but there’s a lot of bad history there.” Flynn told him, Karl nodded as he didn’t need to be told what happened as he already knew.

“Hmm, I can’t think of anything off the top of my head.” Karl pulled out his phone. “But I’ll text you my real estate guy’s number. He’s very good at his job as he manages all my rental properties. So, he’ll be able to find you a place that suits your needs.” He said as he sent the contact details to Flynn before he went back to the computer.

“Thanks.” Flynn said.

“It’s nothing, given I am Holly’s Uncle that makes us family.” Karl quipped, his phone pinged and he looked down at it to read the message. “Huh, your Mom wants me over for dinner.” He said in a sing song voice.

“Mom invited you?” Flynn asked in disbelief.

“Yeah, look for yourself.” Karl said as he showed the text message from his mother. He couldn’t help but notice there was quite a conversation going on. “Yes, your Mom and I talk a lot. I am her favourite son.” He told him smugly.

“Yeah, ok.” Flynn said with a laugh.

“So, what do you think?” Connor asked as they strolled into the office. The same office Connor had once occupied in the original Mason Industries R&D building when all of this mess started.

“It’s your office in the Mason Industries.” Rufus said, he couldn’t help but marvel at the room as he never really coveted the space. But nowadays he liked walls and keeping himself apart from the rest of the world; to have his own space to breathe and think. He needed it, just to catch up on everything he’d missed and the person he wanted to be for his job.

“You said you preferred to be down in the trenches with the workers. This is just a cut above them as a manager, you’ll learn to appreciate having a door.” Connor said in amusement.

“I like it, I like it a lot.” Rufus said.

“I saw your proposal for developing more consumer friendly medical technology.” Connor said.

“Yeah, I think the long term benefits and predicted profits would outweigh the initial R&D costs. More accessible medical technology is needed for an aging society as living costs are higher than the living wage.” Rufus told him, Connor nodded but Rufus felt like the man didn’t really get it.

“I understand that, but we can’t give away products at cost as we have a business to run which means turning over a profit.” Connor reminded him. “Getting into medical technology is a long game of jumping through a lot of hoops with medical boards and the FDA. Then there is the never-ending argument of where we draw the line on datamining our customers.” He added.

“I know, but other companies have opened the door to this quandary already. It’s all voluntary at the end of the day.” Rufus told him.
'Well, you'll need to do more research before we can divert funds to it. I think you'll see it's a lot harder and more expensive than you believe.' Connor told him.

"We'll see." Rufus said.

Later that afternoon,

“So, did they accept the offer?” she asked Flynn as he came out of their room where he had been speaking with the realtor. They had received the reports from the building inspector and council about the property and found everything to their liking. So they decided to make an offer, Lucy had to admit it made her nervous as she liked to spend hours to months deciding on big purchases and yet they’d made a huge decision in less than a month. She was waiting for something to go wrong.

“Yes, we have to do contract exchange on Monday with their lawyer. I made an appointment with them at 11am. I also spoke with Karl’s realtor to take over the lease after my parents leave.” Flynn said.

“What does Karl have to do with it?” she asked with a frown.

“He owns the house my parents are renting.” Flynn said,

“Is there anything he doesn’t own?” Lucy asked incredulously. Flynn chuckled.

“I don’t know.” He said with a shrug and he didn't want to know given he was sure Karl amassed a large fortune for his work with Rittenhouse.

“Well, I do think we should stay here until after Jiya leaves. Spend the time packing this place up. I don’t want to abandon Jiya before her holidays and I feel like she needs us...But we’ll talk more about it later.” She said as she saw Holly run up to them and didn’t want Holly getting confused by their conversation.

“Ok.” He said in a low voice before they pulled apart and looked at their daughter.

“Do I look pretty for Nanna and Grandpa?” Holly asked them as she pulled on a butter yellow dress that Maria had bought her a few weeks ago. She has paired it with a raspberry cardigan and silver shoes.

“Definitely.” Flynn said as he fixed one of her pigtails that had come loose from all of her wardrobe changes. Lucy smiled as it was adorable watching Flynn have to bend over and fix Holly’s hair. Holly’s blasé manner like she expected to be primped before heading out.

“Are we going to sleep over with them?” Holly asked.

“No, Mommy and I have some work we need to do tomorrow.” Flynn lied.

“Oh, ok.” Holly said, she looked somewhat disappointed but she smiled nonetheless.

“Don’t worry we’ll see Nanna and Grandpa a lot before they go home to Croatia.” Flynn reassured her, he offered his hand to her. Holly grabbed onto it before taking Lucy’s. They headed to the elevator.

Half an hour later,
Jiya was sitting at her desk gnawing on a red twizzler as she watched the simulation complete and the results came in. She sighed in boredom, everything was within parameters but as she sat there, she wondered if the simulation was as good as the real thing. She looked at the lifeboat sitting in the landing bay. She bit her bottom lip and wondered if she should just go for it.

If she could jump into her timeline, then jump back to the present. She could prove it would work and that the updates to the lifeboat systems worked. It was the same risk her Rufus had taken and it had killed him. But he had been cocky, he thought he could compensate for any discrepancies during the flight. She however had over a years worth of calculations and multiple simulations that crunched the numbers for her and said it was finally safe. She wanted to know it was safe for Lucy and her team when they went, it was better to know beforehand than after the fact.

She knew Lucy and the others wouldn't be home until later. So, she could be back with real data to crunch without them ever realising she was gone. It was too tempting to let it go to waste.

“Screw it.” Jiya said, she unplugged her laptop and raced to the lifeboat.

“Hello!” Maria said warmly as she and Asher opened the front door of the rental home. It was the same place they had rented the first-time round. It was comforting to return to the known for Lucy and Flynn as they didn't have to worry about Holly and if it was too overwhelming for her.

“Nanna! Grandpa!” Holly said, she was embraced by the older generation of Flynns. Lucy and Flynn waited their turn with smiles. As stressful as Maria and Asher could be, it was good to see Holly with them. To see the older generation interact with the younger one.

“Your cast off.” Maria said with a smile to Holly.

“Yep, good as new.” Holly said, mimicking the same phrase the nurse had used to describe her arm. “I got itchies but the cream makes it stop but it tastes gross” She explained as she showed off her arm and rash. The rash was disappearing but it was a slow process.

“You’re not supposed to eat it.” Asher told Holly with a smile before he lifted her up into his arms for a hug. Holly clung to him like a baby Monkey, enjoying the height and the attention.

“Lucy, how are you?” Maria asked as they exchanged hellos and Maria ushered them into the house.

“Good, thank you.” Lucy said as she returned the embrace that Maria gave her. She smiled as the embrace was warm and motherly. Lucy missed those kinds of hugs.

“Garcia.” Maria said warmly, she smiled a smile that was reserved only for her son. Lucy stepped out of the way and watched as they embraced for a long moment.

“Mama, Dad, good to see you both.” He said he half embraced his father who held Holly in his arms. Then turned to Lucy to help her with her coat. Lucy thanked him, he put it on the coat rack with his own.

“UNCLE KARL!” Holly shouted happily, Asher placed her on her feet; she raced over to Karl who had been lounging back one of the couches.

“Hey munchkin.” Karl said as he lifted her into a hug.

“What are you doing here?” Holly asked him.
“I came for family dinner.” He said as he moved her onto the couch beside him. “That’s a cute dress you got there.” He said.

“Nanna bought it for me.” Holly said proudly, before she spotted Bacon at his feet. “You brought Bacon!” she said happily as she slid off the couch to the floor to Bacon. The puppy had dutifully sitting still, but he was vibrating with excitement. As soon as Holly petted him, he lost his composure and got to his paws and ran circles around Holly then Lucy and Flynn. Greeting them in his own way as he recognised their familiar scents. His tail wagging, he happily whined as Holly giggled and petted him some more.

“Calm down, you weirdo.” Karl told Bacon with a chuckle as he rose to his feet to greet Flynn and Lucy. But Bacon did not heed his word as he jumped on Karl's leg and tried to lick him. Karl looked down at the puppy, this time Bacon got the message as he sat down but he was squirming with restless energy.

“Couldn’t leave him at home alone?” Flynn asked Karl as they shook hands.

“Maria said I could bring him.” He said with a grin, his earlier sentiments of dogs being a clingy roommate came to mind.

“Where’s Sweet Pea?” Holly asked while she hugged Bacon.

“He went home to his family.” Karl told her.

“Oh.” Holly said, she looked a little saddened by the news.

“It’s a good thing, he’s right where he should be. He was very happy to be back with his family again.” Karl explained to her.

“If he’s happy then so am I.” Holly decided, Bacon slipped out her arms and laid onto his back; begging for a belly rub. Holly happily obliged him. The adults smiled at Bacon and Holly's adorable antics.

“Who is hungry?” Asher asked changing the topic.

“I am.” Lucy said, she was starving and ready to eat. She wasn't the only one as everyone else agreed in their own way.

“Ok, then go wash your hands.” Maria told them.

“Should we wash Bacon’s paws?” Holly asked as they into the kitchen dining area of the house.

“No, he’s not eating with us.” Maria told her.

“Won’t he be hungry?” Holly asked curiously as Bacon followed Karl as he disappeared into the downstairs bathroom to wash his hands.

“He already had two servings of dinner and dessert at 4pm. Dogs like to have dinner very early.” Asher said as he lifted Holly up to the kitchen sink and ran her hands under the water before he dried them for her.

“Oh, ok.” Holly said, Asher returned her to the ground and she raced to the table and climbed into the chair next to Karl’s. Flynn and Lucy smiled as they sat opposite the two not surprised their daughter would choose to sit next to Karl given Bacon was under his chair.
“Dinner smells amazing as usual.” Lucy said as her stomach rumbled at the delicious aroma coming from the kitchen.

“Thank you.” Asher said with a closed lip smile as he pottered around; getting the appetizers plated.

“So, what’s new?” Maria asked as Asher placed some Soparnik and Burek on the table. Lucy immediately reached for the Soparnik and snagged a slice.

“We got Bepo!” Holly announced happily.

“You have a dog now?” Maria asked surprised.

“Not yet.” Flynn clarified, he didn't want his parents thinking they left a puppy alone in their current home especially given his parents loved animals. They would not have minded having another dog in the house.

“Bepo’s still a baby and needs a lot of time to get bigger before he can live with us.” Holly said before she stabbed a Burek with her fork and dropped it unceremoniously onto her plate.

“We’ve been working and looking at properties as we might be buying some very soon. When we move in then Bepo will move in too.” Flynn said with a smile.

“That’s great but where are you staying now?” Maria asked with a frown.

“We’re still in the same place but we’re looking into short term rentals.” Flynn said casually, he and Lucy didn't want to tell them about taking over their rental property because they wanted the weekend.

“Auntie Jiya can’t live with us though.” Holly said in a sad voice.

“That’s cause she’s got an apartment where she will live after her holidays.” Karl said, not helping Holly’s demeanour as it reminded her that times were changing. Life as she had become accustomed to was going to disappear.

“Asher and I can’t wait to meet Jiya, we’ve heard so much about her from Holly and Lucy.” Maria said with a warm smile.

“Auntie Jiya is the best.” Holly said behind her hand as her mouth was full.

“Holly’s right, you’ll like her. She enjoys good food and is brilliant with technology.” Karl said to Maria.

“Someone has a crush.” Flynn teased lightly. Maria and Asher exchanged amused glances as Karl was blushing.

“I admire her greatly. We are friends.” Karl said as he could see everyone around the table getting geared up to tease him.

“But you can marry Jiya, Mommy and Daddy says it’s the best to marry your best friend.” Holly said in a knowledgeable manner before she picked up a slice of Soparnik.

“It’s true.” Lucy said, she sipped her wine and tried to smother a smile at Karl's trapped expression. He was truly backed into a corner, his neck bright red which was interesting to see as she never really imagined him as someone who'd crush on a person. She figured him for a man who just went for what he wanted with such confidence that he always won.
“But my best friend is already married to your Mom.” Karl told Holly, she rolled her eyes at him.

“You can have more than one best friend.” Holly informed him, the others around the table smiled and chuckled.

“I’ll remember that.” Karl told her, he looked to Maria “So Maria, how long are you and Asher going to be in America for?” he asked.

“We’ll be here for another week after Holly’s birthday. Then back to our home in Croatia.” Maria answered.

“Dad, you want some help?” Flynn asked as he could see Asher was messing around in the kitchen.

“I’m fine. But your mother and I were hoping that we could look after Holly while you and Lucy are working.” Asher said, he was slowly cooking gnocchi to go with the Pašticada that was bubbling away on the stove.

“We wouldn’t want to impose.” Lucy said.

“It’s not an imposition.” Asher assured her, Maria agreed with him. Lucy and Flynn exchanged looks as it meant pushing their idea of putting Holly into daycare back even more. Lucy decided it was probably best to let this one go. Flynn nodded as they silently agreed to let his parents win this round. It was only for a week.

“We’re working half days, next week. We’d really appreciate the help.” Flynn said agreeing to the help.

“Great.” Maria said with a smile.

“Holly, you better not be feeding Bacon.” Karl told Holly in a low voice.

“I dropped it by accident.” Holly said innocently, Karl looked down at Bacon who was licking his chops as he finished eating something he didn't need.

“Between you and Jiya, I’ll have a spoiled and obese dog.” Karl chided in a playful manner. Holly shrugged innocently before she picked up another Burek.

“Kids, food on the plate or in your belly.” Flynn said to Karl and Holly before he got up and helped his father pass out the dinner.

The Lifeboat landed smoothing in 1992 in a heavily isolated area of San Francisco Park. Jiya heaved a sigh of relief as the jump had been smoother than past jumps. All the systems were functioning within normal parameters. She opened the hatch and gave a sigh as it was a warm summer’s night.

She smiled as she could see the fireworks as 4th of July celebrations were in full swing. She looked down at her watch and timed how long she should risk it.

It had already been 5 minutes and she already felt the small pangs of a headache but other than that she felt fine. She decided to push her luck and continue watching the fireworks as she sat on the ground just outside the Lifeboat.
“She was obviously smarter than you, cause she dumped your stupid ugly ass.” Kevin told him, he and Rufus sat on the front porch of their mother's home sharing ginger beers as they had enjoyed a family dinner. After dinner, they had washed up they went to the porch to chill out.

“That’s harsh.” Rufus told him. “But true,” he added before they both laughed. Normally, Rufus would feel pretty sore about his break up with Jiya especially given the deeply traumatic and rich history they shared. But it felt good to laugh, even if it was out of context.

Though it wasn’t like Rufus could tell Kevin the truth and even if he could, he doubted his brother would believe him. Frankly, it felt good to put it behind him and pretend it didn’t happen while keeping the better memories. If anything he’d come to learn that he wanted to put the whole Rittenhouse and the war behind him as quickly as possible. He didn’t want anymore secrets. He wanted the kind of secrets that he could eventually share with people like developing new apps or technology for users. He wanted to get back to his roots and have his only problems be about balancing his checkbooks and his work/life balance.

“Anyway, it’s not like you’re suffering a drought given Mom says you’re dating Annalise.” Kevin told him before he took a long pull of his ginger beer.

“You asked Mom about my love life? Awwh, I didn’t think you cared.” Rufus drawled mockingly.

“I don’t, but Mom loves Annalise and won’t shut up about you two.” Kevin said with a roll of his eyes.

“I’m amazed she didn’t try to hook you two up.” Rufus said, Kevin shook his head.

“No, she’s too old for me. Anyway, Mom wants me to get my ‘wild’ phase out of my system before she plays matchmaker.” Kevin said with a grin.

“How is that wild phase going?” Rufus asked in amusement.

“It’s going.” Kevin assured him, Rufus snorted a laugh as he wasn’t entirely convinced but knew better than say as much.

Jiya blew out a breath as her headache reached new heights of pain. It felt like her face was being stabbed with ice cold knives. Her ears began to ring and she felt more than heard the sound distance itself from her awareness. She leaned over and vomited, unable to hold herself together.

She knew she had to leave; she had barely passed 15 minutes but it was clearly too long as she struggled to get back inside the lifeboat. When she did, she closed the hatch and felt her pain subside from unimaginably bad to she could string some words together through the pain. She felt the blood trickle from her nose but ignored it as she knew she’d die if she stayed any longer.

She crawled to the pilot’s seat and pulled her harness on. But it refused to go together, she gave up as the pain was returning and worse; she couldn’t hear anything but a high pitch ringing noise.

She closed the hatch and activated the lifeboat, she brought up the emergency auto-pilot program. She hit the button for ‘Home’ and as her vision faded to black; she hoped she got home in one piece.
Hours later,

“I didn’t think we’d escape.” Lucy said in amusement to Flynn as they headed to the kitchen. The dinner had been fun but exhausting. It was good to be back in their own space, something they both valued greatly given Flynn’s parents had been very pushy in what they wanted. It didn’t help that it impinged on Lucy and Flynn’s plans. Plans, they had needed to talk about given they needed more than vague idea of what they wanted. So, they tucked their sleeping daughter into her bed before going to the kitchen to talk. Lucy knew if she laid down while talking, she’d fall asleep.

“Might have been easier to leave Holly behind but I don’t think she’s ready to sleepover without one of us there.” Flynn said, he frowned as something was a little off in the bunker.

“I know I’m not ready.” Lucy said, Flynn wrapped an arm around her shoulders and gave her an empathetic smile. But the smile didn’t last long when they neared the lifeboat. “What?” she asked as Flynn had stopped completely and was looking at the lifeboat with a frown.

“It looks like the lifeboat has moved. The hatch is closed, it’s never closed.” He said concerned.

“Maybe Jiya closed it to keep Holly out?” Lucy suggested.

“Maybe.” Flynn said, but he couldn’t help himself as he pulled the staircase over and climbed up to the Hatch. He pulled on the emergency release for the hatch and it opened. He stuck his head inside and saw Jiya. “Jiya!” he said in a sharp manner.

She didn’t respond as he climbed into the lifeboat. He saw the blood coming out of her ears and nose. She was deathly pale with dark circles under eyes and she was barely moving. He quickly felt for a pulse and breathed a sigh of relief as it was steady; if somewhat a little slow.

“What’s wrong with her?” Lucy asked as she stood at the open hatch.

“I don’t know, can you clear the lounge for me?” he asked.

“On it.” Lucy said, she disappeared. Flynn undid Jiya’s harness and lifted her out of the chair. It was not easy to manoeuvre her in the small space. But he managed to get her out of the lifeboat and onto the lounge in the living area.

“Jiya?” he said as he gently tapped her face, but she didn’t stir. He rolled her into the recovery position as he couldn’t think of what else to do. “Jiya is out cold.” Flynn told Lucy when she returned to his side with a dampened tea towel.

“What was she doing?” Lucy asked, she passed the tea towel to him.

“I have no idea but I guess we’ll find out when she wakes up.” Flynn said as he gently dabbed the blood off of Jiya’s face and ears.

“Should we call a doctor?” Lucy asked.

“No..No doctors.” Jiya groaned, she slowly came to. She looked like she was in great pain as her body tensed up and she struggled to breathe deeply.

“Jiya?” Flynn said.

“Ow.” She said as she tried to push herself up. She heaved a breath as she had the worst migraine
and felt like she had been body slammed by a gridiron team. Her mouth was dry but there was a
metallic edge in taste as she tried to swallow her nausea.

“Hey, take it easy.” Flynn said as he helped her sit up. He gave her the damp tea towel, she pressed it
to her forehead to cool herself down as it sometimes helped her migraines. But not tonight.

“Mmm.” She murmured, feeling incredibly queasy as she fought the urge to vomit.

“What happened? Was it your visions?” Lucy asked her in concern and Jiya shook her head.

“No, I was testing a theory.” She told them.

“A theory?” Flynn asked. Jiya took a slow breath as she suffered through the pain and nausea while
trying to find her words.

“Can the Lifeboat travel into our timelines where we already exist? Yes, it can. It won’t have any
problems but you physically can’t stay where you exist for longer than 15 minutes at best.” She told
them, glad she could summon that much brain power to say as much.

“I’m sorry, you travelled into your timeline, alone.” Lucy stated in disbelief.

“Yes.” Jiya said.

“Are you insane?!” Lucy shouted at her.

“Lucy, keep your voice down otherwise you’ll wake up Holly.” Flynn said softly, Jiya looked at
Lucy surprised to see her so angry. It took her a moment to remember she wasn’t the same woman.
Her Lucy would’ve been interested to know the results with mild concern whereas this Lucy was
deeply concerned and unhappy with no interest of the results. It was weirdly comforting for Jiya like
she needed to be reminded that she had people who did care about her beyond her job.

“I also have a splitting headache.” Jiya said casually.

“Why would you do that?!” Lucy hissed at her, Jiya realised it wasn’t anger but deep concern for her
safety and health.

“I had to know for sure.” Jiya explained, but still incredibly cryptic as she didn't want to give away
the surprise of Lucy and Flynn's future child and how Jiya wanted to help preserve them. Preserve
Lucy and her sanity.

“I’ll get you a bucket and some water.” Flynn said pragmatically.

“Please.” Jiya replied, glad he could see she was most likely going to be sick. She closed her eyes
and sank further into the couch.

“You risked your life like that?” Lucy asked in a soft manner as she sat on the coffee table opposite
her. Jiya lifted the tea towel and shot an incredulous look.

“You guys risk your lives all the time and yeah, I wanted to be certain. You have a family, I wanted
to make sure you and the others would come back ok. It seems the only thing that will happen is a
splitting headache and slight deafness in one ear.” Jiya told her.

“You need to be taken to a hospital.” Lucy told her.

“No, I hate hospitals.” Jiya told her, she thanked Flynn as he passed her a glass of water and placed a
bucket on the floor.
“You were unconscious and bleeding from your nose and ears. You can’t do stupid shit like that, especially alone.” Flynn told Jiya, she weirdly felt like she had become their pseudo-child.

“Ok, I won’t because I got the data I needed and don’t need to do it again.” Jiya told them, she touched at her nose and one of her ears pulled her hand back to see the light traces of blood. She saw the blood on the tea towel and her stomach rolled.

“Jiya!” Lucy hissed in a low voice. “We can’t lose you which is why you should go to the hospital.” She added.

“You won’t lose me, I’m indestructible.” Jiya said in a matter of face manner.

“Prove it by going to the hospital and having the tests.” Lucy told her, the two women stared one another down as Jiya knew Lucy was stubborn. Jiya was too sick to really keep up the fight.

“Ok, fine, if it will get you off my case.” She groused, she realised she sounded like a grumpy teenager.

“Good.” Lucy said with a victorious smile, but even saw there was also concern in her features.

“Come on, I’ll drive you.” Flynn said as he rose to his feet.

“I need to save the data and turn off my laptop.” Jiya said, not ready to move.

“I’ll get it.” Lucy said, she rushed to the lifeboat.

“I’m ok. In fact my ears have stopped ringing. Maybe we don’t need to go” Jiya informed him. Flynn gave her a look almost identical to Lucy's earlier one. "Fine, we'll go.” she conceded.

“We’re still worried. I know Lucy would feel better knowing you're ok.” He told her, she gave a resigned nod. Lucy came back with the laptop. Jiya quickly saved the data and sent a copy to her drive account before she shut down the computer.

“Ok.” She said, she placed the water on the table and picked up her bucket. She slowly rose to her feet. Flynn cupped her elbow to steady her. “I’m ok.” She assured him as she stepped away from them to find her feet and to grab the bucket. He nodded as he moved to Lucy's side.

“You ok?” Flynn asked Lucy, he gently rubbed her arm.

“Yeah, just keep me posted.” Lucy told him.

“I will.” He promised, Jiya watched as the two shared a quick kiss and felt a pang of envy as she missed being part of couple and in love. The two broke apart and Flynn walked over to her, “Let’s go.” Flynn told Jiya.
A few hours later,

“I agree, by all means do so. I’ll bring home breakfast. I love you too.” Flynn murmured into his phone as he sat on the end of Jiya’s bed. Jiya listened to the whole conversation, it helped as Flynn’s voice was soothing and almost melodic against the chaotic symphony of noise in the ER.

Her head was still throbbing but it was now at a level 7 on Jiya’s pain scale which to her was bearable. Her hearing had returned and the ringing had mostly stopped which helped as well. She knew after a days’ rest; she’d feel like herself again. It was always how it worked with her migraines from the visions. Just that she had no visions that came with this migraine. It was weirdly refreshing as she didn't want to see any visions or alterations to the future she had already seen.

“What are you two up to?” Jiya asked Flynn when he got off the phone with Lucy.

“We’re buying a house, Lucy is starting to pack our bags to move into my folks holiday home to get out of the bunker while we’re waiting for settlement to go through.” Flynn said as he put his phone away.

“That’s great.” Jiya said with smile.

“Yeah, you know you can always move in with us. We’re going on Monday, which I know is when you fly out. But if you’re still unwell, then you can stay with us. I know it we’d be happy to keep you around. I think Lucy would like you to stick close to make sure you’re ok.” Flynn remarked in good humour.

“I’m not your child.” Jiya said drily, though it felt like it tonight between Lucy's motherly concern and Flynn taking her to hospital like a dutiful father.

"I know, but you are family and so the offer to live with us always there.” Flynn assured her, Jiya gave a closed lip smile; touched by his sentiments. She was about to say as much when the curtain opened and Dr Jill Lawson stepped in and closed the curtain around her.

“How you doing, Jiya?” She asked, she was dressed in a cocktail dress and dolled up to the nines as she’d been called in for Jiya. She however had donned a lab coat with an ID badge.

“I’m not well.” Jiya said drily, though it felt like it tonight between Lucy's motherly concern and Flynn taking her to hospital like a dutiful father.

"I know, but you are family and so the offer to live with us always there.” Flynn assured her, Jiya gave a closed lip smile; touched by his sentiments. She was about to say as much when the curtain opened and Dr Jill Lawson stepped in and closed the curtain around her.

“How you doing, Jiya?” She asked, she was dressed in a cocktail dress and dolled up to the nines as she’d been called in for Jiya. She however had donned a lab coat with an ID badge.

“Better than when I got here.” Jiya said, she had been given an IV of fluids and time to rest between all the tests. She hated telling Jill of her idiocy but as their primary physician she needed to know exactly how any ill health came about.

“Good. So, the results are in.” Jill said as she flipped the cover from her tablet computer.

“I’ll leave.” Flynn started to say, to give them privacy but Jiya cut him off.

“Stay. It’s ok.” Jiya assured him, it also saved her from repeating herself later. Jill have a nod and looked at the screen in her hands.

“Oh, MRI and CAT scan are clear. You do have a perforated ear drum but it looks like it happened a couple weeks ago. That is rather strange given you said you only complained of the pain and hearing loss a few hours ago.” Jill said as she closed the cover on her tablet.

“That doesn’t make sense.” Jiya said with a frown.
“No, but it’s healing – Actually, you’re healing at a much faster rate than normal and I prefer we not dig too deeply into this unless it’s absolutely necessary. Otherwise you could end up on a radar that you don’t want to be on. If you catch my meaning.” Jill said honestly, she looked at Jiya with a serious expression as they knew at some point Jiya and her medical case if not handled properly could end up with Jiya losing autonomy over her health and life.

“Yes,” Jiya agreed as she didn’t want to be a science experiment. Not like Stanley Fisher or his predecessor had become from their bad time trips. She knew she was treading a fine line between maintaining her independence and becoming like them.

“So, what I’m going to write this off as just part of your current condition with no mention of your unauthorised trip and say the ear damage is minor from…” She looked around as she thought of what she could say when asked about it. “Head trauma you suffered from a seizure related ailment.” She said.

“Thank you.” Jiya told her sincerely, Jill smiled warmly as she was a true friend of Jiya's and those in the bunker.

“You’re welcome, but for the record; I do really believe you’re ok. Every test result came back normal, only the slight damage to your ears. I do think what you need now is rest. So, I’m going to discharge you because you don’t need to be observed and you’d be better off at home where you’re comfortable and not in this mess of noise.” Jill told Jiya.

“What if she has any other symptoms in the next 48 hours?” Flynn asked Jill.

“Give me a call and I’ll come right over but I think whatever this is…it’s mostly resolved itself when Jiya returned home.” Jill told them.

“Mommy.” Holly whispered, Lucy stirred awake and nearly jumped as Holly’s face was so close to her own their noses were touching.

“Hey, what’s the time?” Lucy asked sleepily as she felt like she had closed her eyes for all of 5 minutes.

“I dunno.” Holly said as she flopped dramatically onto Flynn’s side of the bed. Lucy picked up her phone and groaned at the light of the screen almost blinded her.

“Holly, it’s 4am.” Lucy complained as she placed her phone back on the bedside table.

“I woked up.” Holly said innocently.

“Woke up.” Lucy corrected before she hugged Holly close and closed her eyes hoping to get back to sleep. But she knew it would be slim chances given she could feel Holly vibrating with energy. Where Holly got that energy? Lucy had no idea.

“Where’s Daddy?” Holly asked.

“Jiya needed some medicine. So, she and Daddy went to get it.” Lucy told her.

“Is Auntie Jiya ok?” Holly asked in concern.

“She just has one of her her headaches. But don’t you worry, she’ll be right as rain when she’s had
some sleep. Something we should do right now.” Lucy told her.

“But I wanna play.” Holly said, Lucy shook her head and wrapped her arms around Holly a little tighter.

“No, sleepy time. Just do Mommy a favour and close your eyes for a little while.” Lucy said, Holly giggled and squirmed out of her arms. She rolled onto Flynn's side and sat up with exuberance that was not fair.

“No, let’s play.” Holly sad.

“No, it's sleep time. You promised to sleep until 6am.” Lucy told her with a playful pout. Holly looked thoughtful for a long moment, Lucy could see the cogs turning in her head.

"I know but I'm not tired.” Holly said.

"Ok, well I still want you to rest. So, get under these blankets and I'll let you watch the videos of Bepo.” Lucy told her. She smiled as it worked. Holly scrambled into the bed and Lucy pulled the blankets over her before she picked up her phone. She found the video files and wondered if she was getting into bad parenting area. But she didn't care at this moment as she was too tired to think of what was supposed to be the 'right' thing to do.

Holly shifted in close and the two watched a video of Bepo in Holly's lap. All his cute snuffles and little yips coming over the phone speakers. "He's cute." Holly whispered.

"I know, we'll get him a bed and some toys in the next few weeks.” Lucy said with a smile as Bepo on the screen gave a loud yawn before stretching out to snooze.

"You think Nana and Grandpa will take me to see him?" Holly asked her.

"I'm sure if you ask very nicely, they might." Lucy said.

Rufus turned over and groaned as his laptop in the lounge room was making a racket. He rose from bed and stretched his arms over his head. It didn't help his exhaustion but it wasn't like he had a long day ahead of him. He pulled on a sweatshirt and headed into the lounge room.

It was still a mess from the night before, empty glass with milk stains and many chocodile wrappers littered the coffee table where he'd been working. He looked at the screen and smiled as the simulation he'd been running was complete. He sat down and picked up a half eaten chocodile left from the night before and ate it before he clicked on the results.

He watched the numbers cross the screen and a smile graced his lips as he felt the weight of the world lift from his shoulders.

“Are you ok Jiya?” Holly asked in concern, the Flynns and Jiya sat at the dining table with a dozen pastries before them along with glasses and cups of juice and coffee. Lucy rubbed Flynn's back as he looked as exhausted as she felt. But Jiya looked the worst as her hair was askew and she was incredibly pale and had dark circles under bloodshot eyes.
“Yeah, I just have one of terrible headaches I get.” Jiya said as her health was jumping all over the place from semi okay to feeling like she had been chewed up and spat out.

“Oh, I’m sorry.” Holly said, Jiya gave her a soft smile and gently tugged on a tendril of Holly's hair.

“Me too, but you know after breakfast I’ll go to bed and be 100% for your birthday tomorrow.” Jiya promised her.

“Good, cause we’re going to the Zoo tomorrow.” Holly told her, her whole face lit up with excitement.

“Yes, we are.” Jiya said mimicking Holly's excitement. She felt a tiny boost of energy at Holly's brilliant smile as she loved that Holly was finally able to leave the bunker and have her childhood dreams come true.

“Morning all.” Rufus said as he strolled into the bunker with a bounce in his steps.

“Hey Rufus.” Lucy said surprised to see him. Flynn gave a half way as he took a sip of his coffee and then bit into his second cherry turnover.

“Did you stay up all night running simulations?” Rufus asked Jiya as he pulled up a chair and sat down with them all.

“Yeah.” Jiya lied, Lucy and Flynn held their tongues as they didn’t really know what to say and didn’t want to rat Jiya out. “All well within normal parameters.” She told him which was the truth.

“Great, I guessed this would be the outcome and my results said the same thing which is why I called in Karl.” Rufus said with a smile.

“How did you get his number?” Lucy asked.

“I asked Agent Christopher for it.” Rufus said before he picked up a mixed berry muffin and bit into it.

“Uncle Karl is coming?” Holly asked with a hopeful expression. Flynn and Lucy inwardly cringed as they knew Holly was hoping Bepo would arrive much earlier than they told her.

“Yeah, he is but this is a work thing.” Rufus said awkwardly, Holly's face fell.

“Oh, am I going to Nanna and Grandpa’s today?” Holly asked Lucy and Flynn, changing the topic as she clearly had an agenda to see her dog whether the others wanted to or not.

“No, because we're not doing any work today as Jiya is feeling unwell. I figured we could do some house cleaning.” Flynn said to Holly. Holly made a face as she clearly wasn't a fan of cleaning but she said nothing.

“Migraine?” Rufus asked Jiya.

“Mhmm.” Jiya murmured as she drank some of her water and nibbled on her croissant.

“Can you hold out just for this meeting?” he asked her.

“I’d prefer we not have this meeting right now.” Lucy said honestly, she wanted to spend time making sure everything was ready for Holly's birthday and to look after Holly so that Flynn could get some sleep.
"Me too, it's not a great time. We got things we need to do on other fronts." Jiya said to Rufus, she looked at Holly hoping he'd get the hint.

"Well, I called in Karl and it shouldn't take too long." Rufus said, he got the hint and ignored it which surprised them all as Rufus was usually more agreeable. "He should be here soon." he added.

"Someone call my name?" Karl asked as he strolled in at a leisurely pace with Bacon at his side on a leash.

“Uncle Karl!” Holly squealed in delight. Jiya and Flynn groaned at the loud noise. "Oops, sorry." she said as she slipped off her chair and crawled under the table. She soon stood before him. "Did you bring Bepo?" she asked.

"No, I didn't but I got Bacon." Karl offered as he unhooked the leash from Bacon's collar and let the two say 'hello' to one another. "Mind looking out for him while I talk with the others?" he asked Holly.

"Can we go outside?" she asked.

"No, right here where I can see you." Karl said, she frowned but it disappeared when Bacon licked her face and she giggled; distracted by the puppy. Karl chuckled as he sat down at the table. "So, what did I miss? and may I?" he asked, he pointed to pastries. Flynn nodded and Karl picked up a blackberry scone and tore in half. He then stole Jiya's knife and used it spread some butter on his scone.

"Nothing yet." Jiya told him.

“Thanks from bringing the dog, should a good enough distraction for Holly.” Rufus said in amusement, he watched Holly was playing with Bacon and she seemed to be happily in her own world.

“It’s not as simple as tossing Holly a puppy and leaving her to her own devices. She’s nearly four and needs supervision.” Jiya snapped Rufus as his gung ho attitude and disregarding the team's wants was getting under her skin.

“I’ll look after Holly given I’m not needed for this conversation.” Flynn said, he downed the rest of his coffee and he shared a quick peck with Lucy. “Holly, let’s take Bacon upstairs and play catch.” He said.

“Ok, come on Bacon.” She said happily. Bacon looked at Karl, he gave a nod and the puppy followed Holly. Lucy watched them walk away wishing she could play catch with them then have this meeting.

“Jiya, you look like shit.” Karl commented before he took a bite of his scone.

“I feel like shit.” Jiya grumbled, she sighed as she just wanted to go to bed and sleep.

“Late night?” he asked with a smile.

“Migraine." Jiya said as she could not muster a smile. She appreciated his look of sympathy.

“Damn, we can reschedule this meeting.” Karl said as he leaned back in his chair, he obviously decided it was time to relax and enjoy his scone than work.

“No, we can’t.” Rufus said.
“We should.” Lucy said, glad it was three against one but surprised that Rufus was pushing for a meeting. Especially given she knew their mission to Sao Paulo wasn't happening for another year.

“Jiya told me this mission wouldn’t be happening for a year or more. So, really it would be overkill to sit around talking about it now when it's so far away.” Karl stated just what Lucy was thinking.

“Or we go as soon as possible, like today. I figured we would be waiting a year because we wouldn’t have the lifeboat ready. But we do, so let’s do this and get on with our lives." Rufus stated, it became clear to the others that Rufus wanted to close this chapter of his life as soon as possible. It made sense but his rushed manner was upsetting particularly for Lucy as she felt like he was going to disappear completely from their lives. She also didn't want him to end up resenting them for waiting so long either.

"Well we can't go." Karl stated in a no nonsense manner before he finished the first half of his scone.

“Why not?!” Rufus asked incredulously, Jiya slunk down in her chair utterly exhausted as she didn’t want to have this conversation. "Is this because of Jiya's visions cause Lucy can cut her hair and take off the cast.” he told them.

"Really? you think this is down to Lucy cutting her hair?" Karl asked mockingly, Rufus glared at him in annoyance.

"Then what is it? The Lifeboat is ready, we're here." Rufus argued, Karl pursed his lips and did not blink as he stared Rufus down. Jiya looked at the table as she didn't want to say what was in her vision and blow what was a private matter between Lucy and Flynn. She secretly hoped Karl would not open his mouth and spoil it either.

"This isn't the kind of mission you can half ass." Karl told him.

"How hard is it to give a guy a diary?" Rufus asked incredulously, they all know it was his impatience speaking as he wanted this to be over.

"Rufus, we only get a 10 minute window to do this. I have to speak with Flynn about where he was, I have to scout Sao Paulo for a landing site and find the fastest route to Flynn for all of us. Then shave it in half so Lucy has as much time as she needs to do her part. Her part which is the most vital as it lead to all of us being right here and now. Then we have to practise it, in the present minus the lifeboat. So, we don't lose ourselves or die due to wasted time. So, this preparation is going to take time, weeks possibly months cause we need to do this with precision." Karl told him firmly.

"Karl is right." Jiya said, inwardly relieved that Karl hadn't just blurted that Lucy was pregnant.

"Lucy needs to recover from her injuries cause -" Karl looked at Lucy "No offence, but you're slow on your feet." he told her.

"It's a fair assessment." Lucy said.

"And it's ok, you're in recovery." Karl assured her as he didn't want her thinking he was resenting her in any way. He turned his attention to Rufus, the problem team member. "Lucy needs to get better, she needs to be at 100%. She's not the only one.” he told him.

"You're saying I'm slow?" Rufus scoffed.

"It wouldn't hurt for you start getting into better shape now. The faster we are on our feet, the more time we have." Karl said with a shrug as he was being pragmatic but he was also scrambling for any reason to delay the mission.
"I just want this to be over." Rufus told them, he shook his head in disappointment.

"Well, it's not happening today. But we know the lifeboat is ready and your job is done for now. So, go and I'll update you in six months' time about where I'm at." Karl told him, he picked up the second half of his scone and buttered it. He took a bite finishing his say.

"I feel like an ass for wasting everyone's time." Rufus said.

"I got a free scone." Karl said with a shrug, he wasn't bothered at all.

"I'm going to go." Rufus told them.

"Stay and have lunch." Lucy said as she didn't want Rufus leaving like this but he shook his head.

"I got things to do." Rufus told her, he rose from the table and walked away. His tense energy left with him, but Lucy felt saddened at him walking away instead of staying with them.

"I didn't want to say it." Karl said.

"Then don't." Jiya told him, Karl smiled but he looked to Lucy.

"I figured you were going to have a baby." he said, he didn't flinch as Jiya kicked his shin under the table. Lucy gave him an incredulous look. "Just saying it's the only thing that could take a year. Given you'd have the baby and need a few months to bond and get back in shape." Karl told Lucy.

"I'm not pregnant." Lucy told him.

"You can't just assume that." Jiya snapped at him as she backed up Lucy even when she knew the truth.

"Ok." Karl said in a matter of fact manner, but he knew his words planted a seed in Lucy's head. She frowned at him and then shook her head.

"I'm going to bed." Jiya announced as she rose to her feet. She gave a slow exhale and straightened up.

"Want me to tuck you in?" Karl asked her teasingly.

"You can bring me some water and another chocolate croissant." Jiya told him.

"Yes, Boss." Karl said with a grin.

Lucy watched the two walk away with a small smile on her lips as they made such an odd pair as friends. But even so, as they disappeared she had to wonder if Jiya kicked Karl for being an ass or because her vision. Lucy remembered that Jiya assured that her hand would heal and be able to hold her baby. Her brain decided to immediately count the weeks since her last period.

"Oh boy..." Lucy breathed.

"What the hell?!" Jiya said as she clipped Karl over the head. The man had the nerve to snort a laugh as he placed the water and pastry on her bedside table.

"What?" he asked mockingly as they both knew. Jiya was grateful she had to foresight to close the door to her bedroom so she could speak freely even if she couldn't shout at him like she wanted to.
"You told her she was pregnant." Jiya reminded him, she couldn't get over it. He had played Rufus so well and then dropped the ball with Lucy.

"I said I assumed." he corrected.

"knowing it would get stuck in her brain until she has a pregnancy test. What is wrong with you?!" She asked him, he chuckled as he ducked before her hand could clip him again.

"Nothing, but you're cute when you're annoyed." he said as he pulled up a chair and sat down.

"Karl." She groaned, she sat on her bed and dropped her head in her hands. She was too tired for these theatrics.

"Look, you can't hide it from her forever and Lucy obviously needed a mental push to the real conclusion as to why we have to wait a year." Karl argued, Jiya knew he had a good point even if he went about it the wrong way.

"She would've figured it out." Jiya said.

"It's still a surprise that you didn't give away." he pointed out.

"I should thank you for that?" Jiya asked.

"No, but now you can rest easy knowing that Rufus is off your back about the vision. Lucy will understand you not sharing as some things are meant to be a surprise. Life just got a little easier, so get into bed and get some sleep." Karl told her.

"I'm not thanking you." Jiya grumbled as she kicked off her shoes and did what he said and crawled under the cover.

"I know, I'll see tomorrow at the party." he told her, she gave a nod and Karl wore a closed lip smile as he rose from his chair and left her room. After the door closed, she gave a sigh letting her pent up anxiety go.

After Karl had left, Flynn and Holly returned downstairs to find Lucy a little dazed. Flynn turned on an episode of Sesame Street for Holly, she was happily on the couch; singing along in Croatian with the show.

"Rufus left in a huff. Are you ok?" Flynn asked as he joined Lucy at the dining table.

"Yes, and no." she said, shaking her head. "Rufus was just gung ho about us going back to Sao Paulo. I'm not ready to go." she told him, Karl's assumption about being pregnant eating at her more than what she would say to Flynn in 2015.

"Then don't go-" Flynn started but she cut him off.

"It's not an option." she told him.

"Yet." she said with a wry smile, she realised she couldn't keep what Karl had said to herself.

"Well, Karl actually pushed it off but then he believed that Jiya put the mission as a year from now because I might be pregnant." Lucy said, she watched Flynn carefully to see his reaction. He looked surprised but only in a subtle manner before he wore a sly smile like the idea agreed with him. She was relieved to see he wasn't freaking out.
"Interesting theory." He mused.

"We've been using protection." she told him in a low voice.

"Which is not infallible." he reminded her, Lucy propped her head on her elbow and looked at him with an anxious expression.

"So, you're ok that this might be real?" she asked him.

"Lucy, I'm fine. It means I will definitely be staying home given I will be on diaper duty." he joked, he chuckled as Lucy playfully shoved his shoulder. He caught her hand in his and held it, his smile softened from humour to happiness. "I am ok with whatever our future holds." he assured her, he in fact felt really good; happy about the potential of what might be.

His phone beeped, they both smiled as they knew it was either his parents or a realtor. He picked up from the table and turned it over. He smiled.

"Good news?" she asked.

"Rental on my parents house is very reasonable. The contract is in my email. I just have to sign it and send it back. We will have a house until settlement goes through on hopefully our new home to be." he said, his phone beeped again. He snorted a laugh. "My parents say the cake is ready and they will drop it off at the restaurant and meet us inside the entrance of the Zoo." he added.

"Fantastic." Lucy said with a smile.

"So, do you want to wait and see if you're pregnant or will you take the test?" he asked her as he turned his phone face down and gave her his full attention.

"I want to know, but I don't want to do a whole rush out and get a pregnancy test. So, I'm happy to wait until after your parents go home and Holly has her party. I know I haven't had a period since getting here but I also don't feel pregnant. Though I'm not sure when that starts." Lucy said as she didn't want to steal Holly's thunder and nor did she want to Flynn's parents to find out until they were definitely sure of it.

“About 6 weeks in or so. Some women don't have symptoms at all." he said.

"Good to know." Lucy said, they smiled at one another. Lucy realised that Flynn was going to be a font of pregnancy and baby knowledge.

“If you’re ok here with Holly, I’ll go get her present.” Flynn told her.

“Yes, we'll be fine. I feel bad we left it this late.” Lucy told him, they hadn't had any time away from Holly to buy her a present and they couldn't order it online and have it delivered to a top secret base. It made Lucy appreciative of Flynn doing all of the heavy lifting especially on so little sleep.

“Don’t beat yourself up," he said softly as he clearly read her mind. "We’ve had a lot going on, and we got it sorted out. So, I’ll be back in a couple of hours with the present.” He told her, she gave a nod.

“Ok, drive safe.” Lucy murmured, he leaned down and cupped her chin with one hand; they kissed. He pulled back and smiled softly, he brushed a thumb across her jaw and then rose to his feet. Lucy watched him as he said a quick goodbye to Holly and left the room. Lucy gave a happy sigh and rose from her chair, she headed to the couch to join Holly.
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